

**An Oral History**

**with**

**Cheryl Bennett**

**SSC History Project**

**Interviewer: Martin Oramous**

**2006**

# Biography

Cheryl Bennett is a Member Professional Staff/ NASA Project Support with Mississippi Space Services at the John C. Stennis Space Center. She currently also serves as the Facility Manager of B-1100, the Main Administrative Complex. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Secondary and Elementary Education from the University of Southern Mississippi and Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College.

Cheryl was a Kindergarten School Teacher in the Bay Waveland School District from 1986-1987. She was a Second Grade School Teacher in the St. Tammany School District from 1987-1988.

She began her career at Stennis Space Center in 1988 with Pan Am World Service, Inc. in the Teacher Resource Center as an Information Services Coordinator. Cheryl moved to the Visitors Center Program in 1989 and was responsible for managing day-to-day operations of the NASA's Stennis Space Center Visitor Center Programs. She became Information Services Supervisor with Johnson Controls World Services, Inc. in 1993 and was responsible for managing support to the NASA Public Affairs Office, Technology Transfer Office, Resident Agency Support and EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program. Cheryl became Public Services Manager with InDyne, Inc. in 1999 and was responsible for managing support to the NASA Public Affairs Office. She became a Member Professional Staff/NASA Project Support with Mississippi Space Services in 2003.

Cheryl is the recipient of numerous honors and awards including the NASA Outstanding Public Service Medal, NASA's Group Achievement Awards and NASA's Public Service Group Achievement Award.

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## An Oral History

With

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*This is an interview by the Stennis Space Center History Office. The purpose of this interview is to document the story of key personnel during/after Hurricane Katrina at SSC. The interview is with Cheryl Bennett and is taking place on February 27, 2006. The interviewer is Martin Oramous. Also present are Paul Foerman and Shelia Reed.*

**CHERYL BENNETT:** Cheryl Bennett and I'm a member of MSS's Professional Staff responsible for supporting the NASA Center Operations group. I also serve as the Facility Manager for B-1100, the Main Administrative Complex and also B-1210.

**MARTIN ORAMOUS:** How long have you worked out here?

**CHERYL BENNETT:** I've been out here since May, 1988. I came right before we renamed the Center to the John C. Stennis Space Center. We did that on August 3, 1988. Began my career in the Teacher Resource Center and then moved into the Visitors Center Program not too long after that then moved over to the Center Operations group in my current capacity in 2003.

**MARTIN ORAMOUS:** When was the first time that you realized that there is a bad hurricane headed here and I maybe better do something about it?

**CHERYL BENNETT:** Well, because of my role as a Facility Manager, I was well aware of the storm that was in the Gulf and how it was brewing and it was getting bigger and bigger and what impact it was going to have on Stennis Space Center. Also, because the Emergency Operations Center Director is in our group of Center Operations, Don Griffith, I was actively involved in working with him on getting the Center ready for the storm.

When I left here on Friday afternoon, I knew that I was going to be coming back some time around Sunday morning or late Saturday evening to get involved as a Facility Manager in Stennis Space Center and what was going to need to take place to secure the facilities and to secure the building and also to prepare us for the potential use as a shelter by the visiting public if we needed to if the storm was going to be as bad as what we anticipated that it was going to be.

**MARTIN ORAMOUS:** What did you have to do between Friday and Sunday? Where do you live and what did you have to do with your home?

**CHERYL BENNETT:** I live in Pearlington and have lived there for over 30 years. We did our usual, secured the house. I said, "I will put all my pictures in between the mattresses. We'll put guns underneath the beds and in between the mattresses." We had never had water during Betsy or Camille. We knew that we would probably get some structural damage. It would probably be roof damage so we secured everything there. We own two boats, a 50 foot shrimp boat and a 50 foot oyster boat. My husband got the captains and we rode them up to Stennis Space Center to the locks area and secured them up there. By Saturday evening we were all secured and knew what we needed to do. We gathered up our family which is our two daughters, my mother-in-law and my grandson. My son-in-law wouldn't come. He decided he was going to ride it out with his dad. So, we gathered up our family and they had all of their personal belongings. We brought everybody with us to Stennis Space Center because we were going to ride the storm out here. My husband is also employed here with Jacobs Sverdrup out at B-4010 so he knew he was going to have some responsibilities there as part of the ride-out crew and with that group in the Test Complex. We just secured everything around our houses as we normally do for a storm never dreaming that once the storm passed through it was going to bring 7 ½ ft of water to us too. We just secured it for wind.

**MARTIN ORAMOUS:** You got flooded. How did Pearlington make out in your area?

**CHERYL BENNETT:** It was weird. The night before the storm came, on Sunday night, the representatives, there were two guys from FEMA and MEMA. They came and stayed with us on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor in B-1100. We were talking back and forth with them and they were telling us, especially the FEMA guy, the information that he had gotten before he came and how bad that this storm was really going to be. When we were talking with him and telling him where we lived, we said, "We feel real safe here. We didn't feel safe at home but we'll probably just get some wind damage." He said, "You may get a little bit more than wind damage." I said, "Well, no, Camille was bad." It was a really bad storm. As a matter of fact, in Camille we came here, I was 13-years-old. We came to Stennis Space Center stayed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the old wing of B-1100. That was what was so weird because I was there for the worst storm that ever hit the Coast and then here we were going through the worser storm that ever hit the Gulf Coast but basically the same area, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor B-1100. The weirdest thing was that when Camille came through we lost sections of the roof in the old wing and we had to evacuate from the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor down to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and into the 1<sup>st</sup> floor because literally there were just hundreds of people here for Camille and we didn't have all the wings and the other buildings. This was the primary building that we sheltered folks in then. When Katrina came through I was on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor once again and we lost the roof and it was like deja vu all over again. The biggest difference was in the two storms for us and where we live is that we had flood waters where as in Camille we had flood waters but not to the area where I live at in Pearlington.

As the storm was going through and all of the things that were happening here, we had thousands of people out here, roofs flying off of buildings, things happening outside, continuous emergency needs throughout the Center, trying to keep the public calm not nearly having enough people to do what we needed to get done but everybody pulling together to make sure at first the most important thing was that the public was taken care

of and that the Public was aware that there was danger. This was very, very serious but also to make them feel that they were safe and that they were protected. That was probably our biggest challenge the whole time that we were out here.

I had a little extra on my plate because I wanted to make sure that my family was O.K. too. Fortunately, I had them out here but I wasn't able to stay with them. Fortunately, my children are grown. So, that wasn't as big of a concern but my mother-in-law who is elderly, she's 85, she was really confused about everything that was going on because it was out of her routine. The storm passed. Everybody survived it. The public did great. It was the 3 weeks following the storm that they didn't do as great as they did in the first couple of days of the storm and after the storm because we lost our power. There were lots of people here displaced. Lots of people wanting to get and see what their homes looked like. A lot of reports coming in both official and unofficial telling us lots of things.

The first couple of days after the storm it was probably 3 days after the storm before I went home. My husband went home the night after the storm passed on Monday. He went home late that evening probably around 6:30 or 7:00. He drove as far as he could get on Highway 604 and then he walked about 7 miles into the house over trees. It took him probably 4 ½, 5 hours to get in. By then, the dark had set in. He had a flashlight. He and his two cousins went in. When he opened the door to the house, we had large animals hanging on our walls. He was a big hunter at one time. We had an elk that he killed in Colorado and when he opened the front door, the elk was in the hallway. Well he just shut the front door because he knew that what he had feared had happened and of course that we had had water. Then he heard some screams down the road. So, he went down the road and found three people and a boat. So, he loaded them up in the boat and they pulled it with an elderly lady and two elderly men. He pulled them and got them out as far as they could. He had a radio from work. So, he radioed us. We sent someone to pick them up as close as we could get to them and brought them back to Stennis Space Center.

The next morning we began the emergency operations, helicopters flying in and out bringing people and taking rescue stuff not only to the Michoud Facility but along the Gulf Coast and throughout the community. The FEMA guy that rode it out with us was there and he came in and he was telling all these stories about Pearlinton. The water and there were 30 foot waves that came through. I was just sitting there listening to him but it was like a daze. My husband went out and came back in and told me. When he came into the EOC, he told me, it's funny because he fussed at me every year for paying our flood insurance. Our house is paid for. I just paid all the insurance because I just thought it was a good thing to have. The first thing he asked me when he came back into the EOC he said, "Did you pay the flood insurance this year?" I said, "Yeah, why?" He said, "Because you are going to need it?" I said, "No, there's no way. There's no way that we would need flood insurance." He said, "Oh yeah, you're going to need it." At that point and time it was like we will deal with this later because we had all this stuff going on around here. Then when you go home and you look at all of the devastation and you just wonder how in the world are you ever going to take 30 years and rebuild it because that is how long we had been in our home for 30 years and rebuild it to what you once had.

Then you go a little bit further down the road and you see all of the devastation. When you look in regards as to what happened to us, when you go just a mile down the road from our house to see because our community is a poor community. There was probably only 10 of us in the whole community that had flood insurance, that even prepared for things like this to happen. When you go a little bit further down the road and you see your neighbors and the elderly people and the people who didn't have anything, no flood insurance and you see that they've lost everything that they have, that's probably the most devastating part of the whole situation. But, time passes and people start to get a grip on it and rebuild and that rebuilding process has happened for us in Pearlington as it has at Stennis Space Center. The days after the storm here at Stennis Space Center was just... I use the word awesome because I have never seen a group... when the storm got ready to hit we thought we were prepared. We had from a Facility Manager standpoint, from a Center standpoint, from an agency standpoint, we had everything in place. We had done everything that we were supposed to do and then a Category 5 storm hit with a level of devastation that nobody could plan for and the impact then was not just to us. It was for hundreds of miles it reached out. The people that we helped or needed to help were just thousands and thousands. FEMA started coming in. It was awesome to be a part of that process as it was evolving and see. You hear on the News about all this stuff about the government is not working together. The agencies don't know where the left and right hand is going. That's true to an extent. Who in the world could ever be prepared for what has happened here? When you see there was a lot of things that happened like they needed to happen and were planned to happen like they needed to happen. The level and the magnitude of help that was needed that came from this Center, none of us could have planned for it. The way this Center pulled together to help the community and to help their people was just awesome and to have been a part of that was just unreal. Teams were grouped and organized and needs were assessed. Requirements were looked at and focus teams were brought together and people went out into the community and we did things to help. At the same time, these same people were doing things to bring Stennis Space Center back up and running, back operational. We opened our doors after about a month for semi-normal operations, not normal operations. The whole time we were thinking about what we had to do to get Stennis Space Center up and running. The Michoud Facility up and running but yet still we never forgot that we had a community that was outside of our gates that needed us and we were there to help them too and then what we did for our people. It was just absolutely awesome.

I learned so much about human nature. That was probably one of the biggest things. I learned how people can be very, very grateful and people can be very, very ungrateful, how people expect more than what they should receive, how people are so thankful for what they didn't think that they should have received. It was just an unreal experience.

**MARTIN ORAMOUS:** Was there anything that struck you particularly either good or bad about the way people acted? Anything that happened or something that you never would have expected, any kind of circumstance that just out of blue you never would have thought would happen in a circumstance like that?

**CHERYL BENNETT:** It gave me a whole new respect for a lot of people that I work with and for a lot of people that I live with. People that I thought would never step to the plate to do whatever it took to help either Stennis Space Center or the surrounding community. I did not find anybody that I was directly associated with that I was disappointed in. Everybody stepped to the plate. Did what it took to do whatever needed to be done. Everyday, every minute of the day there was a new challenge. Never did we wake up at 4:00 o'clock in the morning to start the new day that we thought that this was going to be easy, piece of cake, the same thing we did yesterday, not going to happen that way as we tried to bring the facility back online from a facility standpoint as we tried to take care of the people with no air-conditioning primarily in B-1100 and feed the masses that were here. They were looking for us and the masses that were coming in because they knew Stennis Space Center was a safe haven. I never found a situation that I was disappointed in. It just seemed like everybody took themselves outside of themselves and said, "What can I do to help? What can I do to bring Stennis Space Center back or to bring the community back just what can I do to help?" I was just overwhelmed at the people that wanted to help. Even the evacuees that were staying here, there were so many of them that said, "Give me something to do. Let me help somebody. I can't help myself because I don't have a way to leave. I don't have anything to go home to so let me do something to help the people that are here."

The Clinic was not nearly up to schedule to what it needed to be. We were able to find nurses among the evacuees that were willing to help. We were just so very fortunate. There were so many people that did so much that I could not put my finger on one person to say that they did more or surprised me more than anybody that I was affiliated with during the whole time. I stayed here about 3 weeks before we actually physically left Stennis Space Center to go sleep somewhere else, not at our home. We did find a little place to stay in for a couple of months until we got our trailer at our house so that we could be there and start the repair process. It's funny though I saw so many people go through the same things that we went through after we went home. They were saying, "Gee, we don't have anything. We don't have a home." Some of them didn't have jobs. We were so lucky. We didn't have a home but we had a job. It's funny how the people who lost their homes among the Stennis group that I was associated with that still had jobs. That were just so thankful that they had the jobs to go to, to be able to come to, where there were people who lost jobs and homes. We were just very, very fortunate.

**MARTIN ORAMOUS:** What role did you play in those few weeks right after the storm here at Stennis? Was it something that you're not accustomed to?

**CHERYL BENNETT:** It was a lot of what I was accustomed to but at an elevated level. I carried a radio at all times. Primarily what I did was worked with the facilities group to coordinate activities Center wide whether it was electrical, whether the carpenters were needed to try to get the buildings up and going, to try to handle some of the emergency needs of the buildings whether it was the roof or a leak or water wasn't flowing through the faucets like it was suppose to, just everything that had to do with facilities. I worked with some of the NASA teams as a liaison between the facilities group and them to prioritize things that needed to be done to get the Center back up and running. Directly, I

took a lot of my direction from the Emergency Operations Center because those calls were coming in through them, worked with the Shops and the Leads in the Shops to get the things prioritized and done that needed to get done. Primarily that's what I did the whole 3 weeks that I was here. I got tired of hearing my name on the radio. "Come in Cheryl Bennett."

**MARTIN ORAMOUS:** What were the most urgent needs? Communication, power, food?

**CHERYL BENNETT:** Communications and power. Food we were pretty fortunate especially once the MREs came in, Meals Ready to Eat. We were really set then. Water and accommodations by accommodations I mean, we had employees that were on the ride-out crews that had their family members with them. They were scattered out in different buildings, not all of the buildings had emergency generators in B-1100 we were only able to run the emergency lighting. We had no air-conditioner for almost 2 weeks. It was August. It was hot which added to the fuel of making our refugees a little antsy with where they were. We were trying to feed everybody site-wide pretty much through the cafeteria in B-1100. Then as the storm passed and the teams starting coming in from other areas with the FEMA organization before they started getting their food situation lined up, the Reserves, the Coast Guard and all these different people that were coming in they would eat in our cafeteria too. So, we were trying to feed those masses as well. Lots of people did lots of things that they don't normally do. Fortunately, I never had to cook. I don't like to do that a whole lot. So, fortunately I never had to cook but mainly what I did was coordinate activities among the repairs to the facilities, getting the facilities back up and running, prioritizing what needed to be done for not only the comfort but to secure the buildings as well because we had a lot of damage to some of the facilities throughout the site.

**MARTIN ORAMOUS:** It's been right at 6 months since the storm. What kind of shape do you think we are in now? Do you think things around here will ever come close to being like they were before not necessarily at Stennis because Stennis wasn't impacted the way the community was?

**CHERYL BENNETT:** At Stennis I think that we are in good shape. It's just amazing how quick we came back. We still got a lot to do. We're back to business as usual. Pearlinton, in the community that I live in, I go home I'm actually the first road as you go into Pearlinton off of 604. For me to go down into Pearlinton, I do it on purpose. It's not because I have to come that way. I try to go through there at least 2 or 3 times a week if nothing else to remind me how lucky I am because we have almost got all the sheetrock finished in our house. We've done all the rewiring. The new roof is on it. All new windows are in. All new doors. Things are progressing. The backyard still has 30 trees down in it but that's the least of our concern. Things are moving right along for us but as you get deep into Pearlinton and visit some of my husband's family members, they are living in their FEMA trailers like we are but their houses are gone, completely gone. The house that my husband was born and raised in floated off of its foundation and is waiting to be bulldozed. His mother hasn't owned it for some years but that is what he



still considered home and liked going pass there and remembering his younger life and his dad and his brother. There's lots of homes being bulldozed. The community which is a historically rich community was the only community that was left by NASA when NASA took over the five communities that they did. For some reason they left this little triangle that was landlocked by Highway 604, 607 and Highway 90 and the Pearl River. It's a little triangular piece of property. It won't grow. It can't grow any further than what it is. A lot of the people that were left there have since left because they don't have the means to rebuild. You are going to have to build to the new codes probably if you were 50% or more. So they're going to have to go up. Some of the older people have moved to their children's communities to live with them. The community is starting to... a lot of church help in there. A lot of outside help has come in. It's starting to try to rebuild but it's going to be years and years before it rebuilds to any sort of community. The school that was located there, the talk is possibly that it won't rebuild. It only had 110 kids in it but it was what made the community a family oriented community. If it doesn't rebuild then it will probably become a retirement community and me in my older age, I'll retire there I guess.

It's kind of up in the air as to what kind of community. It will never be the community that it was. The younger people have moved away because they don't want to rebuild there. They had to get their kids back in school. The same things that you hear throughout the Gulf Coast and New Orleans area, you're hearing in every little community. I go a little bit further down the road. My daughter lives in Bay St. Louis. Fortunately, oddly enough she was in area that water surrounded them and she got nothing. She didn't get any wind damage, no water damage and within 3 days she had lights. It was unreal. It was unreal. But then you go just 30, 40 feet down the road and there are houses that got water in it. We own land in Lakeshore, MS in Bayou Caddy where we keep our boats. The road that we have our lots on there were houses all up and down that road. When we went down to check on our lots because basically all we had there was a pier that we needed to check on, there was not a single house standing. When we crossed the railroad tracks going towards the beach in Bay St. Louis there was literally nothing, not a single house was standing. There were nothing but slabs. You go down there today and that's still what you see. There is some cleanup that has started. It's not coming fast to those areas because those areas that were total devastation, the crews are trying to get the areas that are livable back to some sort of shape. It's a little bit slower from the railroad tracks to the beach because those areas are going to be years before... but all those beautiful homes that withstood Hurricane Camille. I remember riding Highway 90 after Hurricane Camille with my daddy and he was in construction and there were things that he built along the Mississippi Gulf Coast that withstood Hurricane Camille. Now, you drive those areas in Bay St. Louis, you take the beach from Bay St. Louis from one end to the other and the same thing from Pass Christian to Biloxi and all of those landmarks, you don't even know where you are half the time because the landmarks that were there are gone. I think it will be 5 years and beyond before we even see... Camille took us years and years to get over that but this... I mean there is so much more devastation but you see so much hope. So many people, we are going to overcome this. This is our home. We're going to do what it takes to get back. This may happen next year or it may happen in 40 years, who knows. Our first instinct when we went back to our house was that we were going to

bulldoze it. As a matter of fact he did start knocking the bricks off the back of it. I said, "Wait a minute. Let's assess this a little bit closer O.K. Let's talk to some people and see if we don't have something that we can work with here." He said, "No, I'm just going to bulldoze this. I'm going to move down there on my lots on the water. If I'm going to have to live in the water I'm going to look at it everyday." After 3 or 4 weeks of thinking about it and soul searching and really assessing he said, "O.K. well we can do this. We can do this." There's so many people that it just took them weeks... the first thought was, "I just can't do this. This is it. It's over. This is all. It's taken everything that I have and own."

A lesson that I've learned through all of this though is I told my husband, I said, "We have been married for 31 years. We had a whole lot of stuff and a whole lot of assets but in the next 30 years we're going to have a whole less stuff and whole lot of less assets." So, that when a situation like this happens again, there will be a lot less for us to lose. The next time they say a hurricane is going to hit the Mississippi Gulf Coast; I will take every picture that's important to me. I will take my hard drive from my computer. My husband said, "We don't need anything. Leave all that stuff here. Just secure." We lost pictures of his mom and dad, pictures of his grandfather, pictures of both of us when were babies, his brother who he no longer has but we didn't lose anything that wasn't replaceable. Everything that we lost was replaceable. All of our family is O.K. There is so many people that lost their family members. We are just so thankful but it's a new awakening for a lot of people. An opportunity for you to do that checklist of what's important and what's not important. A lot of time for you to sit back and say how thankful you are. The Mississippi Gulf Coast will come back. Pearlinton will survive this and everybody will survive it with it. It'll just be a different sort of place to live. We'll just be better for it I'm sure. A lot of lessons learned. Wherever you go, I told my husband there is no where you can move and escape devastation. It's everywhere. Everybody has their own kind of devastation. It's nature. That's the way it is so you learn to live and manage it and not let it manage you and move on. So that's what we are doing. We are moving on.

**MARTIN ORAMOUS:** You have lived here a long time. You have a lot of memories. Katrina wiped out a lot of things. Is there anything particular that you will really miss, whether it be just the sense of community that's not the way it was or particular landscapes? Is there anything that really stands out for you?

**CHERYL BENNETT:** I'm going to really miss my St. Augustine grass. It took me 30 years to grow that. *Laughter...* I had 3 acres full of it. Now I have zero.

**MARTIN ORAMOUS:** It doesn't like saltwater does it?

**CHERYL BENNETT:** No, it does not like saltwater. I'm going to miss our community. As you grow and your kids grow and you get involved in different things and your jobs change and your family life changes. All of those kinds of things, you just tend to accept and move on and go with the change. But when something like this happens and you take a step back and look back and you go to remember an Easter Sunday in my mother-in-law's yard where we always took pictures of the kids by the azaleas because she had

beautiful azaleas, you can't do that anymore. There aren't any azaleas. There aren't any more yards, just sitting on the front porch at someone's house because our community is one of those communities if somebody is out in the yard, a bunch of people would just stop and have conversation. We don't do that anymore because everybody is busy trying to rebuild their lives. They're busy trying to get back to what they had. We had kind of started to lose that a little bit only because the kids were grown but we kind of started seeing that come back a little bit because the grandkids came along. So, everybody stopped to share their moments with their grandkids. Mine's doing this and I hear you've got another one because we are a small community. You are going to miss going to the Post Office. The Post Office and the store were the two places that you could go on a Saturday morning and see anybody you wanted to see in Pearlington. Everybody got their mail on Saturday morning because they worked and didn't have time to stop by the Post Office. You would probably see 25 or 30 people in the choice of trying to get your mail out of the mailbox that you haven't seen in a month, in a week or even a year. We're going to miss having those opportunities to just kind of come together or even at church because we lost all of our churches. The church that my husband and I went to sat close to the river. It was built in 1889. It was a real old church. It was moved here from the Gainesville community. It was a real old church, a Methodist Church. The only place to worship in the whole community is the Baptist Church and they're almost there with getting it ready. It was a brick building. All of the wood-framed churches, the older churches, the Catholic Churches, the Methodist Church, all of those churches are gone. It's hard to go through the town now and remember special times because when we used to drive by my mother-in-law's house after we had to sale it and she came to live with us, we could still say, "Remember when Jamie and Jackie had that cute little picture with Bridget and Chick by those Azaleas. Gee, I wish we could do that again. I bet so-and-so would let us probably bring the grandkids in and have their pictures made by that oak tree with those azaleas." But you can't do that now because all of that's gone. There's not any of that left anymore but it will come back. We're starting to see some green show. It'll come back.

**MARTIN ORAMOUS:** Is there anything that we haven't talked about or touched on that is particularly noteworthy for you?

**CHERYL BENNETT:** No, I think we probably pretty much covered it all.

**MARTIN ORAMOUS:** Anything else, Shelia?

**SHELIA REED:** Do you have any words of wisdom for anyone in the future that might experience the same thing you have?

**PAUL FOERMAN:** Especially here at Stennis.

**CHERYL BENNETT:** First thing, when you have the potential for devastation, take heed to what the weather people are telling you, take heed to what your local officials are telling you. Get to a safe place wherever it might be. Don't worry about material things because those things can be replaced. There were so many people that stayed in the their

homes that rode it out in their attics that came so close to losing their life and even their family members lives. Just take heed of what the local officials are telling you. Get to a safe place. When you come back and see that devastation, just know that it's going to get better. That's the worse. It's only going to get better from there on out. Accept your challenge. Take responsibility for it. Don't wait on someone else to take responsibility for you just try to do what you know that you can do and move forward. Don't stay behind because if you do it can kill you. It can mentally and physically bring you all the way down. I saw that happen to a lot of people and tried to talk them out of it but they just got so engrossed on what they had lost and what they didn't have anymore instead of moving forward and trying to start anew.

**MARTIN ORAMOUS:** How about what you actually had to do here at Stennis as far as what had to be taken care of. Is there anyway to prepare someone who might be faced with that in the future?

**CHERYL BENNETT:** Now there is. When we first knew that Hurricane Katrina was coming, no way could you prepare for this devastation at the level of magnitude that we were going to get. Nobody had experience, there was just no way. We did all the things that we knew that we needed to do because of experiences that we had had with past hurricanes, specifically Hurricane Camille. Now we know that we need more medical help here. That we need more employee and professional assistance to help people deal with emotions and feelings that are happening ... In the future, people are going to be way more antsy than what they have been in the past because now they have experienced the worst. Their only thought is that Camille was the worst and then here's Katrina and it was the worst. Well, can there be a more was the worst to come our way? We'll never close our doors to the public. I just don't see how we can do it. I don't think we ever will because you are always going to have people that are not going to be able to leave because of means or not going to leave. You know what Stennis Space Center can shield people from. Hopefully in the future we'll be better prepared to shelter the public. From my standpoint, the next one that comes through, I will be right back here doing what I can do to not only help Stennis as a Center but also to help whatever public is here to make sure that we can keep them safe and get them back into their communities. My family will probably be right here with me. We'll stick it out together. That's just what seems like happens every time something like bad weather comes our way every since the Camille days I come to Stennis Space Center even before I ever worked here so I'll be back here seeing what I can do to help and be a part of any of the recovery and relief.

**MARTIN ORAMOUS:** And probably just expect the roof to come off. *Laughter...*

**CHERYL BENNETT:** Oh, definitely the roof, definitely the roof. You've got to lose the roof on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. *Laughter...*

*(End of Interview)*