

FAUBOURG MARIGNY

IMPROVEMENT

ASSOCIATION



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Les Amis de Marigny

January 2006

Helping to make Marigny a better place to live and work

www.faubourgmarigny.org

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General Meeting 1/16

Our general meeting will be January 16th at 6:00pm at St Paul Lutheran Church. Due to the construction at St. Paul Lutheran we will not have our normal pot luck.

Our Guest will be Richard Tapio from OSHA. He will be discussing the safety and health aspects of remodeling/rebuilding your home. This includes the safe removal, handling and disposal of mold. If you have a particular question you want answered from OSHA at the meeting, please email it to chrisc@faubourgmarigny.org.

2006 Memberships are now due

Please mail in dues
(Membership form on back page.)

President's Message

The end of a year is always a time to reflect on the events of the past twelve months. Undoubtedly, this last year will be the one stained with the memory of Katrina.

This disaster's effects are still lingering, and we will have to make adjustments to our daily lives for many months to come. Some changes will be temporary, while others will be permanent. Regardless, we will persevere, and the FMIA will



be there to support the neighborhood as it changes in the aftermath of Katrina.

For the most part, our Marigny neighborhood was spared the horrific devastation that this flood brought to so many areas. Yet we did suffer loss in the form of the buildings that succumbed to the high winds and water, some of which may be lost forever. And we will forever miss our neighbors that will leave to build new lives elsewhere. While we are saddened by what we have lost, we remain a strong, thriving neighborhood, and the FMIA will be there to help rebuild our beautiful historic community.

Katrina struck a painful blow, one that we will feel for years to come. Yet within this tragedy comes an opportunity like no other to change the way things have been done in the past. It is a time for us to simply say we will not accept the old ways of doing things anymore. Individually and collectively, we will have to do our part in shaping our future, and the FMIA will proudly lead the charge.

Together, let us make 2006 the year history will mark as the year we changed for the better, rebuilt our community, and reshaped our future.

Meetings

FMIA General and Board meetings are open to the public. Board meetings are the first Wednesday of each month. The next Board meeting is Wednesday, February 1st. See FMIA website for location. General meetings are the third Monday of each month (except for December and August) and begin at 6:00 at the Historic St. Paul Lutheran Church, 2624 Burgundy Street. The next meeting will be Monday, Jan. 16.

News Email List

Join our news email list to receive email announcements. To join the news email list, simply click on the Join Now link at the FMIA website and send the email that automatically appears. You will receive an email confirming your subscription. Follow the instructions within the email and you are ready to go.

Neighborhood Cleanup in Two Weeks

We are organizing another cleanup week, January 30th - February 4th.

The Army Corps Trash Pickup Team will be going through the neighborhood that week to pick up large debris, which includes appliances, construction debris, and household refuse.

Put out all your debris curbside (not on the sidewalk) by Sunday January 29th in piles that correspond to the categories below:

- Construction Debris and Furniture and MICROWAVES
- Vegetative Debris (tree limbs, logs, vegetation)
- Household Garbage (This should be in bags)
- White Goods (Refrigerators, Dishwashers, Washers, Dryers, AC Units)

The following debris will need to be dropped off at designated areas. (Please check the website for locations of the designated areas, or call 888-312-0812.)

- E-Debris (Computers, TV's, electronics)
- Household Hazardous Waste (Pesticides, Paints, etc.)

Put trash in the street curbside and NOT on the sidewalk. Additionally, do not park in front of or behind the debris piles. If there are cars parked in front of or behind debris they will not pick up the debris.

(A Do Not Park Sign is available in pdf format on the FMIA website.)

FMIA phone number

We are pleased to announce the FMIA now has a new voicemail box at 888-312-0812. Please use it to leave questions, comments, or suggestions for the board.



Volunteer Cleanup Day

(to follow the Army Corp's removal of large debris):

Please help us clean up the neighborhood on Saturday February 4th from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Stop by our sign-in table in Washington Square Park between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. to be assigned to a block.

If there is a particular block you want to clean, e.g. your block, or you would like to be pre-assigned a block, please email outreach@faubourgmarnigny.org or call 888-312-0812. (You can find a map with block numbers on the FMIA website.)

You will need to bring your own broom, dust pan or other cleaning supplies. We will provide the bags at the parks.

If you have any questions, comments, suggestions or concerns please email outreach@faubourgmarnigny.org

Thank you for helping bring back our neighborhood.

Large Debris Pick Up

If you have other large debris that needs to be picked up after the January pick up, you will need to call 1-800-849-1355. When you call, the operator will log your call based on the nature of the information. Be sure to indicate all the types of debris, i.e. construction and demolition, vegetative, appliances, electronics, household garbage and hazardous waste) you have so they can notify the appropriate agency for pick up.

- Mission Statement -

To protect, maintain and support the Faubourg Marigny in the City of New Orleans...to promote the physical, cultural, architectural and historical values of said section and to secure adequate enforcement of all laws of the City of New Orleans and the State of Louisiana affecting or pertaining to it.

For the full mission statement go to www.faubourgmarnigny.org

From the New Editor:

As a newcomer to the neighborhood (I moved here a year ago), I knew little about the FMIA before Katrina. That changed when, like many residents, I began attending meetings after the hurricane. I also learned that there was an FMIA Board that makes those meetings happen.

More recently I've learned that besides organizing meetings, the board does other work in the Marigny and on behalf of the people who live here.

Many residents will be aware of much of this work, such as the well-attended music and caroling event last month. However, I suspect many are not aware of some of the board's less visible work. For example, during 2005, besides providing residents access to representatives of Entergy, Bell South, Cox Communications, FEMA, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Water and Sewerage Board and others following Katrina, the board has:

- * created an FMIA website in May of 2005, including a forum for residents, a Katrina page (to provide links to businesses and services and help evacuees find each other), information on the Marigny's history and architecture, and announcements of meetings and events in the neighborhood.

- * sent letters to Mayor Nagin and Councilwoman Jackie Clarkson requesting that the city use neighborhood designations rather than zip codes in organizing recovery work and offering to help in the city's recovery.

- * erected a community notice board outside St. Paul's Lutheran Church on Burgundy Street for use by residents of both the Bywater and the Marigny who are unable to use the website (see page 5).





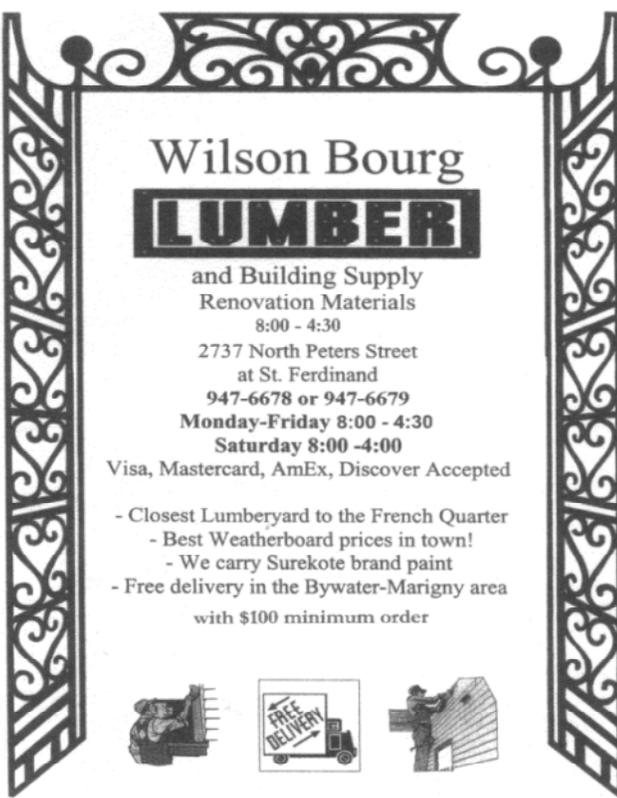
*bought copies of The Neighborhood Story Project to give to local schools (The Neighborhood Story Project is a compilation of essays by New Orleans high school students about their neighborhoods. The compiler, Abram Himmelstein, also read from the book at an FMIA general meeting.)

* provided another well attended home tour of various historic Marigny homes such as James Michaelopoulos' studio/home at 2112 Chartres Street and La Petite Bijou Inn at 937 Royal Street.

* designed and sold (or presented) 144 mugs commemorating the Faubourg Marigny bicentennial (1805-2005). Another batch is on the way.

In 2006, the board is working on providing Sunday jazz, an art market, and a green market in Washington Square Park in the Marigny.

Please let me know if you have comments, questions, or suggestions about the newsletter at simonjhand@gmail.com or 982-5854.



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Orchids & Onions

Orchids

- to all those businesses that opened up ASAP to provide food and drink to those who were in the Neighborhood.
- to all those who have voluntarily bagged up and cleaned, not only their post Katrina rubbish, but also their immediate neighborhood.
- to Kay King for her work on the neighborhood cleanup in December
- to Pastor Goodine of St. Paul's Lutheran Church for helping host the neighborhood's meetings in the weeks after the hurricane and for all his work in the neighborhood.

Onions

- to those who have tossed their unbagged garbage on the sidewalk, and those who feel it is okay now not to pick up after their dogs.
- to all the landlords who tossed their renters' belongings in a disorganized, unbagged heap on the sidewalk.

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One small dent in the trash, one giant leap in trash removal for Marigny

A big "Thank You!" to all who braved the cool, wet weather in December to participate in our 1st neighborhood cleanup after Katrina.

We cleaned 53 of the 92 blocks in our neighborhood, with 31 blocks pre-assigned the week before and another 23 blocks assigned that day.

The great work of a couple dozen of the helpers—some from neighborhoods as far away as Metairie and Atlanta—started at Washington Square Park where they signed in and got trash bags, generously donated by Schiro's, Wilson Bourg Lumber and Lowes.

This cleanup made a substantial difference in beautifying our neighborhood.

Kevin Wu

Licensed Massage Therapist
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Special Thanks Also . . .

To our commercial neighbors who supported this important effort: Schiro's, Mona's, Wilson Bourg Lumber, Monahan's 13, Praline Connection, Electric Ladyland Tattoos, United Hardware, The Bank, R Bar, Marigny Brasserie, Apple Barrel, Mike Bikes, Mimi's, and Flora's.

Another big "Thank You" to The Army Corp of Engineers and their contractor. We coordinated their collection of the trash gathered by our volunteers and the debris piles throughout the Marigny. They canvassed the neighborhood the week before to pickup large debris and helped out that day by continuing the large debris pickup as well as the regular trash pickup. Saving the best for last, our last "Thank You" goes to Kay King for spearheading the cleanup and to the volunteers who managed the sign-in table. Thanks Rita, John and Leigh!

Marigny Perks

Friendly Neighborhood Coffee Shop

- *Open 7am to 10pm seven days a week*
- *Free wireless internet*
- *Sunday New York Times sold*

*Pastries, soups, salads, sandwiches, cake,
gift baskets, specialty drinks,
and more.*

*Come on Sundays from 11 am to 3 pm
for "etc".*

*Located at 2401 Burgundy @ Mandeville.
(Faubourg Marigny)
(504-948-7401)*

Community Information Board

The FMIA Community Information Board was built back in October to help people communicate.

The Board is for anyone in the Marigny and surrounding areas to post information about our community such as housing for rent or needed, services wanted or offered, lost & found, events and more. The Community Information Board is located at St Paul Lutheran Church and is on the fence facing Burgundy.

The requirements for posting are:

- size limit: 8.5 X 5.5 or smaller
- only post on one board
- no offensive, degrading, or non-productive posts
- information must be current.

A big thanks to Tommy Gremillion for the design and building of the board, to Andy Richards for painting the marquee, to Polly Brown for the laminated categories/signs, and St Paul Lutheran for the space.

Please stop by and check it out and pass the word along.



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Caroling Success

Thank you to all who helped make this year's caroling in Washington Square Park such a success. We had over 400 friend and neighbors join in the caroling fun. It was a magical night.

We would like to especially thank Rebecca Berry, Jep Epstein, and the Pfister Sisters for leading the Caroling, Grandpa and George Blackman for their impromptu performances, the Marigny Brasserie for donating the cookies and refreshments and all those who helped in the cleanup the day before. (We filled 19 bags of trash and leaves.)

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2006 Mardi Gras Calendar

Over 50 photographs of the colorful and outrageous Mardi Gras celebration.....



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In the Land of Dreamy Diaspora

Yours Truly in a Swamp

By Leonard Earl Johnson

Maurice: "You hear we be going on the metric system because of that Hurricane Katrina?"

Boudreaux: "No, you don't tell me!"

Maurice: "Yes, we are. Already we got a half leader in the White House." ~ heard in the Crescent Bar, Hammond, Louisiana

The Warning

"It is high time you got out of there," L. A. Norma said, from Los Angeles. I could hear her Camel Cigarette smoke over the telephone. "Don't you know Hurricane Katrina's turned towards New Orleans and grown to a category five!"

Katrina is only the fifth category-five hurricane on record in American waters. It hit New Orleans at a glancing blow as a force four. We would have survived in good shape had the levees not given way. The City's levees were thought able to withstand a category-three storm. Flood control improvements were under way, and the effort might not have saved us, but we should all understand that before August 29, 2005, the day Katrina hit, the Bush administration cut by forty percent the budget for upgrading those levees.

Norma heard we were in the National Hurricane Center's predicted landfall cone days earlier. She promptly fled by jet plane comfortably nibbling on peanuts and Vienna sausages. I figured the storm was still destined for a second Florida visit. Besides I was still paying for last year's evacuation for Hurricane Ivan.

I picked up the remote and turned on the tv. Mayor Nagin washed into focus standing beside suburban Parish leaders. They all said, "It is time to get out of Dodge," curiously Western words for such quintessentially south Louisiana politicians. None of them said how this was to be done without a car. I don't even have a driver's license.

I phoned Amtrak and got no answer. Online I found no train service available in any direction from New Orleans. Much the same airline information came from a nice voiced lady at Louis Armstrong International. "All flights are canceled or over-booked," she said, "and the airport itself will close pretty soon."

Escape

We followed bumper-to-bumper traffic over roads that washed out to sea hours after we passed. I escaped with Melanie, a writer with a vision who teaches English at Fredrick Douglas High. She owned a small red truck and an insane cat that sat catatonic inside a cage upon my lap for the eight hours it took for the normally one-hour trip to Lake Pontchartrain's North Shore.

We stopped once to move our hand luggage and grocery bags from the truck's bed to a dry Lincoln Continental captained by George of Tommy's flowers, on rue Rampart. I used the opportunity to piss in the wind - a metaphoric situation seldom experienced literally.

We arrived in Hammond, with the first rain squalls and the first of many bottles of champagne. Shelter was the home of our host and savior, David, a former monk from the nearby abbey. We lived there without electricity and under a six p.m. till dawn curfew for most of that first week.

In the mornings, over battery-powered radio, we heard increasingly bleak news from the United Radio Broadcasters of New Orleans, fifteen stations (including "Halleluiaah 107") now relocated to Baton Rouge and simulcasting over WWL-AM 870, New Orleans' most powerful radio station. We drank like a hurricane party for two weeks. Then the radio spoke of not going home at all, at least not for who-knows-how-long. George split with his dog, Panda, for his daughter's home in Florida.

Realization

With George's departure the reality of our situation struck. We were not having an extended hurricane party; we were displaced souls in need of greater direction than champagne and a fallen monk.

I moved on to Lafayette, home of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (affectionately known as "U La La"), and the home of old friends from the days when we



did time for the Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Life is always good in Lafayette, a prosperous oil town of 190,000, with a pronounced (some say mispronounced) French culture and budding tourist industry. Untouched by the storm, an exile community of 40,000 New Orleanians had been taking shallow root there - both poorly in the Cajun Dome and elegantly at "Second-Saturday's Art Walk," a monthly coordinated gallery opening where salesmen from New Orleans' posh Arthur Roger's Gallery, and artists from RHINO (Right Here In New Orleans) Louisiana Arts and Crafts Gallery greeted each other with hugs, cheers and boudin.

Don Marshall, director of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival Foundation, chatted with author Rick Bragg and RHINO's anodized aluminum sculptor Cathy Cooper-Stratton. All in air-conditioned comfort as mosquito-free as a Swamp can be.

Back home things got better. Then worse. Without water pressure Sax Fifth Avenue fell to the looter's torch, and the despair in the Louisiana Superdome, and the Morial Convention Center were gut wrenching.

In Lafayette, outside the Jefferson Street Market, an art and craft market, Peter, the steel drummer from New Orleans' Spotted Cat sat curbside smoking cigarettes and lamenting he, too, knew what it means to miss New Orleans.

Plenty of Time to Point Fingers

All the City, Parish, State and National politicians wagged their heads and sagely said there would be plenty of time to point fingers later. Then they immediately pointed at each other. Then they all pointed at themselves, which is to say, they agreed none of them were to blame for losing The City That Care Forgot.

Not the Karl Rove smear factory, of course, and not L. A. Norma. Rove's army of spin doctors started immediately on Mayor Ray Nagin and Governor Kathleen Blanco and soon their venom filled television's empty talking heads and spilled out into homes across America.

Norma took the traditional position blaming the media itself, that old tried-and-true whipping boy Americans so love to suspect of controlling their very thoughts. (Funny they never think of turning it off.) "The news media's

passing the blame for FEMA's slow response to Nagin and Blanco is like blaming Martin Luther King for segregation," she screamed from Los Angeles.

COMMITTEES

Advertising – Polly Brown – 943-7318

Blight – Will Riehm – 415-1270

Caroling – Kellye Deel 615-9467

FSACOZD - Deborah Oppenheim – 319-4262

Hospitality – Chris Costello – 710-8789

House Tour - Reg Medellin – 220-7579

Membership - Gary de Leaumont - 944-4279

Neighborhood Watch - Interested?

Newsletter – Simon Hand – 982-5854

Special Projects - Gary de Leaumont - 944-4279

Neighborhood Development - Tom Loesch –
289-6137

Washington Sq. Prk - Gary de Leaumont - 944-
4279

Website - Chris Costello - 710-8789

Zoning - David Berman - 945-8014

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They pointed out that they were neighbors, and committed to running a business that would be an asset to the neighborhood. There was no doubt about this, but Malec explained that land-use issues were not about personalities; and that whatever policy was applied to their property would have to be applied to every property meeting the same criteria.

John Lockett of the 2200 block of Chartres was introduced to talk about Residential Permit Parking for the Rectangle. We had already asked Councilmember Clarkson to have a study initiated of the matter. He pointed out that the problem was particularly bad for the 2200 and 2300 blocks of Chartres; the 500 and 600 blocks of Marigny and the 2200 block of Royal. He felt that the RPP program could begin with these blocks, and that others could be added later. By consensus, we would ask Ms. Clarkson to try to expedite the study, with emphasis on these blocks.

Brown and Costello presented possible designs for T-shirts, polo shirts, and coffee mugs with the FMIA logo and reference to the 1806-2006 bicentennial. Moved and passed to authorize them to spend not more than \$500. to have mugs made immediately. Consideration of other items to follow. They also suggested studying having small placards made up that could be put on neutral grounds to publicize General Meetings. By consensus, asked to do so.

Nominating committee. De Leumont reported that seven of the current Board members would be standing for re-election, and that he had been in contact with several others who might be interested.

Old Business: Costello reported on a meeting with Ms. Clarkson and the landlord of the Marigny Brasserie (640 Frenchmen). They had applied for a conditional use permit to allow them to be technically classified as a “cocktail lounge” in order to have more liberal allowance for music than allowed for a restaurant under the Frenchmen District.

At the meeting, which was also attended by some of the immediate residential neighbors a compromise was reached that the conditional use could be allowed subject to the provisos that the closing hours would be no later than 10 pm weeknights and 12:30 am weekends; that no more than 40% of their gross sales could be of alcoholic beverages; that trash would be put out only on the Frenchmen St. side; that they would agree to add a title restriction preventing use as a cocktail lounge or night-club for the next ten years.

Moved and passed that Board endorsed this compromise; and that we would ask to have it noted for the record that this would fulfill the 20% quota of land-uses in the Frenchmen

Odds and Ends

Aug. 3, Board Minutes 2005

Ric Fifield’s Studio, 600 St. Roch

Present: David Berman, Polly Brown, Chris Costello, Gary de Leumont, Tim Farley, Brian Frye, Tom Loesch, Michael Malec, Deborah Oppenheim.

Absent: Michael Garran, Ed Kleppinger, Reg Medellin, Larry St. John

Called to order by President Malec at 7:00.

Minutes of Board Meeting of July 6 were accepted.

Malec introduced Keith Scramuzza the owner of Sukko Thai restaurant (1913 Royal) and the owners of the building. He once again is pursuing the possibility of adding a liquor license. He was aware that a liquor license cannot be issued for a building that is zoned residential - as his is. He learned from City Planning about their “historic non-conforming use” policy by which a spot zone might be considered for a historically commercial building, usually for the purpose of bringing it back into commerce.

They explained that they had no intention of ever using the building as a bar - which would require a conditional use permit, and that they would be willing to discuss deed restrictions on the future use of the building.



district that could be cocktail lounges. Oppenheim would attend the Council meeting to speak for the Board.

Old business:

Sukkho Thai: Berman pointed out that City Planning considered the "historic non-conforming use" policy when rejecting this application in 1998 and that the 1999 land-use plan designates this area as residential. If the policy was applied here it would create a precedent for the entire neighborhood. Moved and passed unanimously that we could not support a zoning change. Loesch would inform them.

Loesch reported that Rep. Juan LaFonta very kindly gave him a check for \$50. for FMIA in support of Night Out Against Crime - but under the mistaken impression that we were the sponsors. By consensus, Loesch will contact him to thank him and ask if he would want the donation converted to a Newsletter ad or a Caroling sponsorship.

Adjourned 9:15.

Aug 22, 2005 Minutes, FMIA General Meeting St. Paul Lutheran

About 50 people in attendance.

Pres. Michael Malec called the meeting to order at 7:15

Tom Loesch announced that St. Paul would be having a spaghetti supper on Aug. 23, open to the community. In the fall they will be having an arts festival.

Polly Brown made available invitation cards that she and Chris Costello had made up. Members can give a card to neighbors to invite them to our meetings.

Malec introduced State Rep. Juan LaFonta (District 96, including Marigny above Franklin Ave.) He outlined his efforts for the neighborhood in the past session. He introduced a bill to create a Marigny Commission, analogous to VCC; got it through the House, but it was defeated in Senate. He is working to help us and other neighborhoods to deal with the problem of projects that morph into large projects that never could have gotten approved. He singled out Councilmember Jackie Clarkson as another steadfast ally of the neighborhoods. He pointed out the strategic wisdom that preservationists have to build alliances, and avoid unnecessarily alienating potential allies. Too many issues come down to money vs. people. Without alliances, the people tend to lose.

There are various proposals to limit the State's right to expropriate property for the purpose of economic development by private interests.

He is pushing for tax credits for renovation of residences.

Asked about State support for the Saints: Answered that Tom Benson is a "greedy old man" and that he should get "not a dollar" of State money. He does want money for social programs; he is starting a midnight basketball program.

Neighborhood Development Committee: Tom Loesch reported on City Planning's revised draft of Riverfront 2005 Plan. The revision does reflect our input. Although not giving us all we wanted, it reflects a compromise between our views and those of the developers - who wanted heights of 120 or even 150 feet to be allowed.

The first drafts said that buildings of 75 feet would be allowed at "major nodes" i.e. focus and access points to the River. (Elysian Fields and the Press corridor are our two - Franklin Ave. is a "minor node".) The language has been changed to say that buildings of 75 feet "could be considered" there. Loesch pointed out that the real fight will be in the next round: translating what is now merely a plan into an ordinance that will have force of law. Conditions will have to be spelled out that a project might meet to be allowed to go above 50 feet. E.g. underground parking might be made a requirement.

Gene Cizek said that the plan is too vague; that we must be vigilant.

deLeaumont pointed out the current zoning along the River is HMLI in which everything is a conditional use; that means that although nothing is unconditionally allowed, anything can be asked for. It therefore really gives us no sure protection, and in the current political climate, he finds it frightening.

Loesch said that while he was not happy with the entire plan, if the ordinance is crafted properly it could help the neighborhood. He considered it sensible strategy to position ourselves to be at the table when the ordinance is worked out. The entire City Zoning Ordinance is up for re-writing (another attempt) and much of our zoning needs to be changed. For instance, the recently approved Gendusa Bakery condo project (1801 N. Rampart) is considered by many to be too big - but it is considerably smaller than what is allowed by current zoning. (It was HDLC that managed to work with the developers to get the size down.)

Loesch felt that we need to pick our battles, and the important ones are coming up. The pressure for "economic development" is so great that it scares him. We should see what protection for the neighborhood we can get out of this plan.

Liz Tahir said that VCPORA was concerned that the plan allowed development along Esplanade. Loesch quoted from the Plan that "the U.S. Mint and small historic buildings along Esplanade Ave./



Frenchmen St. are off limits for redevelopment purposes.”

The last public hearing will be Aug. 23. City Planning acceded to our request to extend the deadline for written comments until Sept. 7, after our next Board meeting. The Board would take a position on the final draft based on what they hear tonight and at that hearing. Loesch encouraged members to go and testify to their individual views.

Zoning: Berman said that City Planning had a request for the former Schoen Funeral Home (500 block of Elysian Fields) to re-zone the entire square to HMC-2 (commercial). Part of it now is HMLI (see above). He said that what might be problematic is the request also to rezone as part of the parcel a vacant lot that opens onto Marigny St.

Nominating Committee: de Leaumont announced that the Past Presidents' Council elected Tom Loesch as their representative on next year's Board of Directors. Other nominees are incumbents: Polly Brown, Chris Costello, Gary de Leaumont, Tim Farley, Brian Frye, Ed Kleppinger, Reg Medellin, Deborah Oppenheim, and Larry St. John. Also Wendy Hollger, Robert Reddington and Dave Seymour.

Deborah Oppenheim explained about the Neighborhood Story Project in which public school students wrote about their neighborhoods and had the books published. FMIA bought sets for our neighborhood schools (Colton, Bishop Perry, St. Paul) and the Alvar Library. She presented a check for the books to Abram Himelstein the Program coordinator. He thanked us graciously and said that they were hoping to extend the project this year. The books are available at (among other places) Faubourg Marigny Art and Books on Frenchmen.

Adjourned at 8:30

General Meeting Minutes 10/17

Meeting Called to Order

The following nominees were elected to the Board:

Polly Brown, Ed Kleppinger, Tom Loesch, Tim Farley, Brian Frye, Chris Costello, Deborah Oppenheim, Gary deLeaumont, Reg Medellin, Larry St John, Robert Reddington, David Seymour, Wendy H.

Jackie Clarkson explained what happened pre and post Katrina and called for a meeting on 10/24 where she would have Heads/Representatives from the City Departments, Entergy etc.

Jackie was followed by a discussion of what things we thought were important to have covered at the 10/24 meeting. The highlights are below.

Issue with Zip Codes – Separate by neighborhoods

Curfew – Why is Marigny/Bywater different?

Bellsouth – Timeline of when service will be back on; Can businesses that rely on phone service have a higher priority

Cox Cable - Timeline of when each service will be back on line

Police – Issues with looting

Robert's - dumpsters need to be emptied, foul smell, status of Grocery store

Entergy – Gas Service: Rules for inspections use boundaries instead of zip codes, Timeline of when each service will be restored, can the city waive the inspection fee?

Trash – Schedule for pickup, create a drop off site for trash, Trash Pickup 1-800-849-1335

Housing Help – What are the rules for renters/landlords? Resource: NOLA Legal Aid 504-340-1381, lawhelp.org

Jackie Clarkson's Office –

City Hall 658-1030

Algiers 364-5609

Emergencies 392-2092

Ideas from Claire (504-251-8998)

Supply pickup at Markey Park

Organize Roof Tarping

October 24, 2005, FMIA Emergency Board Meeting

Present: Chris Costello, Brian Frye, David Seymour, Robert Reddington, Gary deLeaumont, Polly Brown, Deborah Oppenheim and Ed Keplinger (via phone)

Absent: Reg Medellin, Tom Loesch, Tim Farley

Chris Costello called the meeting to order at 2:00, Sunday, October 23, 2005

Old Business

Approved Minutes from August Board and General Meeting and October Board Meeting.

Old business was deferred until board meeting of November 3, 2005 to be held at 600 St. Roch at 7:00pm.

New Business:

1. Election for new board:

Nominations: President – Chris Costello, Vice President – Brian Frye, Treasurer -Robert Reddington, Corresponding Secretary - ?, Recording Secretary-Deborah Oppenheim - by consensus the Board was approved.

2. Monday, October 24, 2005 Jackie Clarkson and others Meeting to be held at St. Paul's Lutheran

Priorities for Meeting



- Services : Ask of each: what is current, needs to do and timeline for Entergy, Cox, BellSouth, Sanitation, Security- Police 8th and 5th District . Parks and Parkway , Post Offices
- Housing – regulations – availability, temporary and evictions
- What City offices are open, status and contact numbers
- HDLC
- Universal dump area
- Zip code dilemma
- Safety and Permits – specific questions – public safety, inspectors, and general questions
- Commercial interest
- Miscellaneous

Volunteers: a brief statement regarding Chairman and volunteers for Caroling

- List of Committees needed for volunteers: HDLC, Jackie Clarkson's office, Caroling, Home Tour, Flyers Distributors, Newsletter, "Claire", Attendees for Meetings, Community Information Center

Community Information Center the board agreed by consensus to put up the information board but the location was not set but. First choice for the location is St. Paul Lutheran and then Washington Sq. Park.

Newsletter - Are we going to have a newsletter, format, and Chairman? Information is being explored for next board meeting.

Phone – 800 Number - this is old business but revisited because of necessity for disbursing information . Information is being researched for next board meeting.

Schedule for Meetings:

November 3, 2005, Board Meeting 600 St. Roch Ave, 7:00
 November 7, 2005, Quick General Meeting at St. Paul's, 6:00
 November 21, 2005 General Meeting Pot Luck, 6:00
 December 5, 2005 Quick General Meeting at St. Paul's, 6:00
 December 11, 2005 Caroling Washington Square TBD

Adjourned at 3:30

November 3, 2005, FMIA Board Meeting

Present: Chris Costello, Brian Frye, David Seymour, Robert Reddington, Reg Medellin, Polly Brown, Deborah Oppenheim and David Berman.

Absent: Tom Loesch,

Chris Costello called the meeting to order at 7:00, Wednesday, November 3, 2005.

It was approved by consensus to have the visitors Rainbow Family of Light talk before old and new business.

Members of the Rainbow Family of Living Light were invited to the board meeting to discuss the New Orleans Welcome Home Kitchen because a few neighbors were complaining that assorted tents, tarps, trailers, and a bus were parked beneath the trees. Volunteers began serving residents three hot meals daily once they arrived. Within days, other groups such as the Barefoot Doctors, and Food not Bombs joined Chaves' group to provide medical services, clothing, and a place to be connected. Felipe added that spiritual connection and renewal for those in need is necessary for all. Veda Manuel a resident of Midcity which has no services had 4ft. of water in her house comes to the kitchen to wash her hands, eat a hot meal, and because of the kitchen feels like there is "hope" for the future. Lynn mentioned that the Kitchen respects the community and their needs and wanted to explain the set-up of the kitchen. The people who are working are those in the tents. It is not a tent city and they did not let anyone camp. Violence, alcohol, and drugs are not allowed in the square. The gates are closed at 7:30 pm. She also mentioned there is a critical need for temporary shelters for people who have lost everything and have nowhere to go. Many supporters of the Rainbow Family of Living light spoke in support of the kitchen. It was mentioned that Dr. Evangeline Franklin chief of clinical services and employee health initially gave Deanna a physician assistant with Barefoot Doctor the verbal agreement to allow the group to operate at Washington Square and unlocked the gates. The group asked for FMIA support. The group needs to have trash and debris picked and portals potties. The march to City Hall is tomorrow, Thursday, November 4, 2005 at 2:00 in support of the Rainbow Family.

Old Business: Meetings for the October 17, 2005 and emergency board meeting of Oct approved

1. Letter to the Mayor regarding zip codes is being drafted and the awareness that B & B are available in the Marigny.
2. Election of Reg Medellin, corresponding secretary was unanimously approved.
3. A new committee called Community Outreach will be chaired by Polly Brown. Reg Medellin offered to assist. Deborah Oppenheim offered to head the educational component of the Community outreach. All other committees were approved by consensus. David Berman will remain chair of zoning for now.
4. Phone Expenses: The idea pre Katrina of having a 1-800 was discussed to help get the word out about FMIA since not everyone has access to internet. The cost \$65.50 Bellsouth and \$45 Cox was discussed. The outcome of the discussion was to evaluate the need by having three volunteer board members one per month for three months is in charge of the virtual number with voice mail. Requests, questions, concerns, etc. will be record and given to the appropriate



board member for answering. After the three months, the board will re-evaluate if a permanent phone number and voice mail is needed. Brian Frye is taking first month, David Berman, second and Reg Medellin and Deborah Oppenheim will take the third month. Reg Medellin second the motion and was approved by consensus.

New Business:

1. Chris Costello is traveling for three weeks to Australia and Brian Frye will conduct the Quick Meeting on November 7, and the general meeting on November 21. The time for each will be 6:00 pm and no pot luck for the general meeting. November 7 quick meeting is for questions, sharing and to disseminate available information. December 3rd will be the board meeting at Rick Fifield's studio at 600 St. Roch for 7:00pm.
2. Caroling will be December 11, 2005 at Washington Square. Kellye Deel is our new chair and she is asking for volunteers. The budget of \$600 for flyers, song sheets, refreshments and supplies was unanimously approved.
3. David Berman, chairman of Zoning said that the Ten Principle of Rebuilding New Orleans, a city Council Document should be supported by FMIA. The board unanimously approved a letter of good to be written to Jackie Clarkson endorsing the Ten Principles.
4. Billboard - A sign company has donated space on N. Rampart for FMIA to use. The space is free but FMIA would have to by \$300 for the vinyl and FMIA would only have the use of the billboard till Christmas. The location and price was a deterring factor. A banner was proposed instead of the billboard to have events, meetings, Home Tour, Bicentennial posted. It was approved.
5. Reimbursement for supplies for signs was approved.
8. 501C - tabled for now.
9. Articles of Incorporation - the bounding areas of the Marigny ends at Franklin and these needs to be changed for reasons of legality. It was tabled for now.
10. Rainbow Family : Since only a few residents of the Marigny have expressed their disdain, while other residents are supporters plus the fact that the group was serving Marigny residents as well as residents of other harder hit neighborhoods, the board voted to take no position.

Schedule for Meetings:

November 7, 2005 Quick General Meeting @ St. Paul's @ 6:00
 November 21, 2005 Regular General Meeting @ 6:00
 December 11, 2005 Caroling Washington Square time to be announced

Adjourned at 9:00pm

Submitted by Deborah Oppenheim, Corresponding Secretary

November 7, 2005

FMIA Quick Meeting @ 6:00pm

Brian Frye welcomed the group for Chris Costello. The first person he introduced was Eugene Cornelis the District Director for SBA.

Eugene Cornelis discussed the two sides of SBA benefits

1. Regular SBA economic development for LA which advocates for small business.
2. Disaster SBA is a bank for disaster. The first type of Disaster SBA is Business SBA Loan property or equipment damage up to \$1.5 million @ 4 %. Homeowner SBA up to \$200,000 @ 2.68% for 30 years depends upon your repayability and \$40,000 for content @ 2.68% which can be combined to the later. This does not include refinancing unless the bank wants to foreclose then it is feasible. The deadline for SBA is January 11, 2006 and an application can be obtained at Canal Place 10th floor.

New Orleans Food Co-Op is planning to have a location in the Marigny. Dates and location will be announced.

Rainbow Family of Light They asked for community support at the City Meeting on Tuesday, November 8, 2005 @ 2:00pm. They understood the concern of some residents of the Marigny and they wanted to reiterated their objectives of giving New Orleans residents 3 hot meals daily, medical attention, joyful place, warmth and compassion, and information. There were many supporters of the group who addressed the meeting and praised the Rainbow Family commitment to rebuilding New Orleans.

Community Bulletin Board Polly Brown told the group about the Community Bulletin Board at St. Paul's Church on Burgundy. Volunteers are needed for the December 11 Christmas caroling in Washington Square and to contact Kellie Deel.

Handout As of November 1, 2005 a handout was given to the participants for businesses which are opened in our neighborhood, Important numbers and dates, and current status of services.

Entergy Concerns re Entergy. 1-800 Entergy

Schedule for Meetings:

November 21, 2005 Regular General Meeting @ 6:00
 December 11, 2005 Caroling Washington Square time to be announced
November 21, 2005, General Meeting @ 6:00pm

Brian Frye, Vice President welcomed the group for President Chris Costello .



Caroling: Chair Kellye Deel is requesting interested volunteers to help with the caroling. Please contact her for details.

Outreach: Chair Polly Brown presented the fabulous Bicentennial mugs which are on sale for only \$5.00. It is a great thoughtful gift for Christmas and it help supports FMIA community outreach program.

Paul Cramer Bywater Neighborhood Association invited all to the Christmas party on December 12 at Elizabeth Restaurant 7- 9:30.

General Comment

- St.Paul's Lutheran Church on Annette St. is having Thanksgiving Dinner 1 – 5
- Kay King 814- 388-9275 presented the concept of cleaning up the Marigny similar to the French Quarter efforts. The proposed date is December 17th 9:00 – 3:00. Jackie Clarkson will try to get the Core of Engineers to pick up the heavy stuff. Dumpsters were discussed and various means of payment suggested. It was suggested to have it coordinated with the Bywater. Those who are interested please bring brooms, bags, and other necessary cleaning tools for the event. This will have to be confirmed with date, time, and location.

Charmaine from Algiers Post Office (362-4217) reiterated the problems with the postal service. Due to the lack of staff (only 450 are back out of 3000), mail service is infrequent. There are approximate 7 carriers for 70117 and 7 for 70116 zip codes. There is only 1st class mail being delivered. Changes will be made in the processing which will be in St. Rose. Pre Katrina, there were 406 mail routes and now will have 200 routes. If one has medication which has to be delivered, please call the post office and speak to postal employee. Most mail boxes have been picked up and mail was disposed of due to contamination. At the postal trailers, from 10- 4 behind the Arena, letters and parcels can be mailed. There is also a drop off at KOPS on Elysian Fields.

Jackie Clarkson, our Councilwoman thanked the group for the opportunity to serve. She stressed the need for zip codes to be indicative of the neighborhood not the district.

Ken Faust of Entergy - People were outraged on the grinding question - why the outages! Mr. Faust explained the system is overextended. The substations went under during the storm and Marigny is borrowing power from other substations. He felt since the last meeting, the electricity is getting progressively better. Many angry and frustrated people from mentioned that before the storm, there were numerous outages. The question regarding payment was

another concern of the group. There are three Care Centers for billing (handout given) There will be a higher cost due to the higher cost of fuel. Bills are calculated in the arrears and August usage is delayed and was sent in September. Most bills were estimated to the end of the month. Mr. Faust did say that no one will be disconnected due to billing and if there is a problem one can discuss it at the Care Center.

Keith Huckers of Bell South – Bell South and Horizon are working for the Marigny and Bywater at the Franklin Office. Can't guarantee how long it will take to get the residents and businesses their phone service and is estimating the possibility of January or February for connection. He mentioned to call Customer Service which caused immediate negative response from those who have been calling continuously. The sentiment of the residents and the business owners was powerful –no one can operate without phone service. The temporary solution was to have “slick –on- wheels” which is an extremely large almost 10 story mobile unit which could provide phone service and even broadband. Where to put this large bulky unit was the question. **Jackie Clarkson** said she would look into a location as well as others mentioned various locations. This suggestion needs follow –up. All residents of the Marigny and Bywater must call BellSouth to show the company that this area is largely occupied and the demand is prevalent.

Elliot Perkins of HDLC discussed the expedited process for permitting. Please see Mr. Perkins at the end of the meeting or go to the HDLC office 830 Julia Street during business hours. They are closed daily from noon – 1:30.

A representative from Cox discussed the cable situation. They are restoring cable service as fast as they can. There was a discussion if the outages damage the cable.

Schedule

December 11, 2005 Caroling Washington Square time to be announced

December 7, 2005, FMIA Board Meeting

Present: Chris Costello, Brian Frye, David Seymour, Robert Reddington, Reg Medellin, Polly Brown, Deborah Oppenheim,

Guests: Simon Hand and Will Riehm

Absent: Tom Loesch

Chris Costello called the meeting to order at 7:00, Wednesday, December 7, 2005.

Previous Minutes from 11/2 Board Meeting, 11/21 General and 11/7 Quick General meeting were approved and corrections will be submitted .



Simon Hand was introduced and is volunteering to be the editor of FMIA newsletter. It was approved by consensus.

Next Board will be January 4, 2006 @ David and Bob's 540 St. Ferdinand St 7:00 pm

Washington Square Jeniese Black 915-3930. Problems relating to Washington Square are:

- Damage to the side by Frenchman at the corner
- The new person to open the park is "Tony" and will only open the park from Tuesday – Saturday 9:30 – 4:00 when possible. He opens Jackson Square.
- Maintenance will not be available due to the no budget
- If maintenance is done by an outside source, it must be approved
- It was suggested that volunteers help clean the park monthly. This was something FMIA has participated in the past. Bags needs to be provided however, they will eventually pick up if placed on the Elysian Field side in the middle.
- Rainbow People left the park very clean
- Gary will call and ask for a wish list of repairs, costs, and general information
- Dave wants to present the volunteering to the general membership
- PR is needed and suggestions included Christopher Inn adopting something, businesses helping, Bishop Perry, web site, neighbors, FMIA volunteers

Marigny/Bywater Clean-up December 17th Do we want to support this?

- Kay King is coordinating and Chris Costello are the coordinators plus Jackie Clarkson's office, and the Corp of Engineers
- Maps will be available at Washington Park and Markey Park for volunteers to sign up for a square block.
- Bourg Lumber is donating some supplies and hopefully there will be others donated.
- Chris is going to ask businesses to let volunteers use their rest rooms. If the businesses choose to donate edibles, it won't be refused.
- Deborah is going to call the Red Cross and Salvation Army to see about water
- Chris is working up the flyers with directions for residents. Deborah is going to assign areas to each volunteer for their flyer distribution.
- FMIA board members have volunteered to flyer the Marigny
- Press releases to WWOZ, WWNO, NOLA website, FMIA website, and TP

Committee Reports

1. Caroling Kellye Deel (615 – 9467) **December 11, 2005**

- \$300 security deposit and will pay the security guard \$120 plus a token tip to Tony for opening the gate.
- Pfister Sisters and Rebecca Berry are assisting with the caroling
- Marigny Brasserie donating liquid refreshments and discount for drinks
- MC is secured
- Volunteers are asked for cleaning the park and set up at 3:00 pm on Sunday, December 11th.

2. Zoning David Berman

- HDLC has an application for a new building on Spain and Burgundy
- Rick Fifield will be our contact for anything on City Planning agenda regarding the Marigny
- Hubig Pies has one year from date of storm to apply for a building permit and preserve their grandfathered status, another year to get reopened.

3 Advertising Polly Brown

- Get the word out re mug sales
- Mugs will be used as goodwill when appropriate
- Mugs will be delivered to Caroling Sponsors of old without asking for donation, just invite
- Small amount spent on gift-wrapping is to be reimbursed

4. Treasurer: Bob Reddington (will send his report)

5. Home Tour – Reg Medellin tabled till January

6. Special Projects Gary deLeaumont

- The historic signs have been approved and needs three more signatures for them to be placed in the designated areas.

- Chris was going to follow this up

7. Membership Gary deLeaumont

- Need to use first class stamps
- Advertise in newsletter membership is due January
- Those who signed up in November will be rolled over for January 2006 dues

8. Frenchmen Street Deborah Oppenheim

- Blighted building on Frenchmen street
- Invite businesses to December 17th clean-up

9. Blighted Sub Committee Will Riehm 415-1270

whriehm@bellsouth.net has volunteered to head this sub committee. Approved by consensus

- Gigantic issue for the city
- Interested in the Holy Trinity Church which is falling down
- He will make contact with Elliot Perkins, HDLC
- He will make an inventory of blighted buildings in the Marigny and report back to us at the January board meeting

10. Education Committee Deborah Oppenheim

- Neighborhood Story Project tabled till January

Newsletter Editor Simon Hand

Simonihand@gmail.com – discussion of what to be put in the newsletter which will be extremely bulky



- Membership, volunteers, Leonard's Tale, David's Stoop, Onions and Orchids, all the minutes, advertising, pictures, welcome note maybe from the President Chris Costello, announcements, what we have been doing such as: community bulletin board, website, clean-up, caroling, outreach thru flyers and clever signs at Washington Square, early gathering of FMIA board members for emergency board meetings, informational meetings (2) and one general meeting, informational sheets, phone numbers, elected officials, and of course our website

Recovery issues:

- How to assist on recovery approved by consensus. Reg will write a letter asking each of the following departments: Safety and Permits, CPC, Mayor, Parks and Parkway, JC, Sanitation, Governor, HDLC, 5th and 8th District
- Zip code issue – tabled till January
- Writing campaign for National, State, and Local issues – Chris Costello will contact Michael Malec for information and to see if he will monitor
- Levee Board issue: educate the membership, possibility of a panel – to be discussed in January

Change non-profit status to 501G and Article of Incorporation tabled till January

HDLC Rick Fifield

- asked us to support HDLC not moving to City Hall because it is imperative for HDLC to be autonomous, accessibility, convenient, our historic preservation and ally, and most importantly not to disappear and be smoothed
- Chris Costello will contact Greg Meffert, Elliot Perkins, and Jackie Clarkson to discuss this and will give feedback to the board ASAP. A motion was unanimously approved to use e-mail

Slick on Wheels – Chris will call Jackie Clarkson's office and gather information.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:15pm

In the Land of Dreamy Diaspora, Part II

Yours Truly in a Swamp, by Leonard Earl Johnson

October 2005

"Calling Bush an oilman is like calling Pretty Boy Floyd a banker." ~ heard in the Mello Joy Coffee Shop, Lafayette

The Second Month Out

A vintage yellow-and-white pickup sits on Jefferson Street in downtown Lafayette, Louisiana. Its seat covers are made from old coffee bean gunnysacks, and the name painted on its doors matches the one on the building where it sits, "Mello Joy Coffee"

It is lunchtime. Inside a crowd of hip downtown workers, bankers, art lovers, and the displaced souls from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita order black bean soup and New Orleans style muffalatas. A muffalata is a cheese, cold cut and olive-crush sandwich on round Italian bread that looks kind'a like a large muffin. It was invented at Central Grocery on Decatur Street in New Orleans' French Quarter. The original version is not much like Mello Joy's.

Their muffalata notwithstanding, the Mello Joy has pretty good food. It also has the local papers that always gather at such places, and free Wi-Fi Internet connections. Hurricane refugees read *The Times-*

Picayune online, and receive e-mails bundled into harvests of many thoughts and names: Have you found so-and-so? Do you know where some musician is playing? Are you going back? Did you hear Chef Austin Leslie, the inspiration for the short-lived but critically acclaimed tv-show, "Frank's Place," evacuated to Atlanta and then died?

Diana Sullivan, President of RHINO, the New Orleans artist cooperative located on never-flooded Saint Peter Street and torched Canal Place, writes from Memphis of hopes to reopen one, maybe both locations. Sara Ash, another RHINO artist, writes from Baton Rouge where she returned from her Vermont escape to volunteer with FEMA.

Everyone writes and talks about their good-and-bad times in exile, and high or low hopes for returning to The City FEMA Forgot.

A volunteer lawyer from Wisconsin, another e-mail says, quit FEMA in frustration after the second hurricane and new bureaucratic obstacles. Sara and others toil on knowing they will do some good, somewhere, sooner or later. She is of dogged Eastern stock, and was once a Peace Corps volunteer.

The Road In and Out

A few blocks away from Mello Joy, at the Amtrak Station, a sign on the departure-and-arrival board informs us that trains north to Chicago, usually joined in New Orleans, must now be boarded in Jackson, Mississippi, nearly two hundred miles from Lafayette. That train usually originates in New Orleans and is named "The City of New Orleans." Now it no longer reaches our City of dreamy wet dreams.

"The Sunset Limited," the train west, must be joined in San Antonio, Texas, over four hundred miles away. There are no trains listed to the east, and no information is given about getting to these departure sites.

The train does not look like a likely evacuation choice should a third hurricane appear.

A scruffy young man with a guitar sits on a bench outside the depot strumming the chords of Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land." He stops singing and tells us that his pockets jingle with FEMA money, but his memory jangles with the images of those horrific days when others sat for days on rooftops, cowered in hospitals without food or medicines, and drowned in nursing homes awaiting rescue.

He sings Guthrie's line, "Some will rob you with a six-gun / And some with a fountain pen."

"Government that governs not at all is government that governs best," he says, in a pretty good imitation of George W. Bush, complete with his punctuating snorting laugh.

FLASH: The City of New Orleans has returned to New Orleans as of October 9. The Crescent to New York City has also resumed service. The westbound Sunset Limited to Los Angeles via Lafayette is said to not be far behind. The eastbound train will end in New Orleans until 2006 due to extensive damage to the bridges between New Orleans and Florida.

Friends Indeed

Like displaced persons everywhere we recognize folks from home as instant friends. I find myself calling people "baby," a common New Orleans expression, more than I ever did in New Orleans, and hugs



are given and received much more easily. We ask each other how we are doing. Where did you live, and the all-important question, "How's your house?" Sometimes they don't have to say.

"We were two blocks up from the Seventeenth Street Canal," an elderly couple tells us at Lafayette's Cathedral of Saint John the Evangelist, after a special memorial mass conducted on the two-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the Acadian exodus from Nova Scotia to Louisiana, when the English forced French Catholics out of Protestant Canada. This is the subject of Longfellow's poem, "Evangeline," and the origin of the French in southwest Louisiana - a long and isolated distance from New Orleans before Interstate-10 traversed the Atchafalaya Basin. It is from this exodus we gained the word "Cajun," (a linguistic evolution from Acadian); and the unique music and cuisine beloved by locals and - since Chef Paul Prudhomme - the whole world.

This year, the Most Reverend Michael Jarrell, Bishop of Lafayette, added the New Orleans Diaspora to the Cathedral's Commemorative Mass for Refugees. Zachary Richard, a revered Cajun musician, sang "Ave Maris Stella" (Hail Star of the Sea), a cappella, as tears dropped all around us.

* * *

Back at the Mello Joy

After mass, we searched for satellite pictures of our houses, bars, banks, and neighborhoods. We looked for our life. Our old life. And we looked for indications about our new one. We read an e-mail from FRENCH QUARTER FICTION publisher, Joshua Clark, who never evacuated. He stayed behind writing controversial dispatches for Salon.com about drinking at Molly's, dodging the militia, and wiring a cleanup-broom to the outstretched hand of the statue of Christ The Redeemer in the garden behind Saint Louis Cathedral. Some enjoyed them, but others read them as self-indulgent dancing on the lip of our grave. Prankish, perhaps, but he informed a dispersed population of "everyday life" in a most un-everyday time.

His e-mail asked New Orleans dispersed literati where-are-you-now and please post on the site K. A. R. E. S., Katrina Arts Relief and Emergency Support, where donations can be made and a percentage from FRENCH QUARTER FICTION sales is donated to such relief effort. <http://www.NewOrleansLiteraryInstitute.com>

* * *

Another friend e-mailed this quote: "I think to a man, we will live with the pain of this experience." It is from Colonel Douglas Mouton, commander of the National Guard's engineers, and the man who halted their entry into the Morial Convention Center because his engineers were not trained in crowd control.

"The restoration of order at the Convention Center, "when it came," Mouton said, "was phenomenally quick. I think the frustration we all have - the country has - is, why couldn't it have been done a lot quicker?"

For a lighter take try, "Bush sells Louisiana back to le French" -- <http://www.bsnews.org/articles/56>.

In the Land of Dreamy Diaspora, Part III

Yours Truly in a Swamp, by Leonard Earl Johnson

November 2005

"I couldn't catch them during the real Mardi Gras and I can't catch them now." ~ George W. Bush, commenting on beads falling at his feet while visiting a Habitat for Humanity site in Covington, Louisiana, after Hurricane Katrina (costumed in hardhat, work gloves, and a wraparound tool belt, perhaps from Nordstrom)

* * *

Home Alone

Spray painted on the front of Squalor Heights is a large orange X inside a circle. It looks slightly like a 1960 peace symbol. At the top, "C L B," then the poetic date, "9-11," and finally the number of dead found inside, "0."

I slept that first night back on a pallet in the living room. It was eerie, but it was home and I needed to be there. The garret looked like a hurricane had hit it - which is to say about as it always looks. There was no one else in the neighborhood. There were no lights, no street noises, and no noise inside the building that I didn't make. What if someone broke in? There was no phone to call for help. There was no help to call! Fortunately, there was no one to break in. I slept uneasily, awakening every time a gust of wind fluttered the Pope's Flag covering the front dormer.

Next morning, standing at the kitchen dormer, looking towards the blank wall of the worrisome new house built inside the courtyard of a Creole cottage three doors down, I wondered if that wall had blocked winds that might have blown through my dormer and lifted Squalor Heights up over The River. On the corner one block over, the wall of an ancient two story brick building lay tumbled into the street.



One block from Squalor Heights

Crossing the Electric Divide

The nearby faraway French Quarter beckoned with electricity, telephones, water (poison then but now said to be just yummy). Even Bacco was open - sans their famous ten-cent martini. Public washrooms had big jugs of potable water for hand washing, and garbage trucks rumbled about the streets exchanging smells and trash.

The air was vacant of automobile fumes and fat with aromas leaking from duct-taped refrigerators curbside in front of every building in Town. People posted their thoughts on them with indelible Magic Markers. "Voodoo 2005," was on all of them. This, it was said, would keep scavengers from washing them out and reselling them.



"Catch this, Bush!" was painted on one.

After Saints owner Tom Benson's shabby grab for all the FEMA funds, "Do not open, contains Benson's heart," appeared.

We took evening beer at Molly's on Decatur, staying past dark listening to Nina Simone on the Juke Box singing, "Put some cream in my Sugar Bowl"

There was not one light crossing Esplanade into Faubourg Marigny, and I had to pick my way through piles of rubble, and feel my way up shaky stairs to Squalor Heights.

All The City smells. Our parts (the less damaged parts) are very depressing. I avoided the devastated parts but noted driving out towards the freeway how the watermark followed us growing ever higher.

* * *

Le Beat Goes On

Weeks later, I rode over from Lafayette to New Orleans with Stephen Latimer, first cook at Upperline, and his wife, Lisa. By then his restaurant's owner, JoAnn Clevenger, had announced they were reopening. His job was secure. Lisa, a City librarian, was not so lucky.

Squalor Heights was still a shabby lady in waiting. It is damaged and will support neither utilities nor tenants for some time.

I've been in New Orleans a few days, as I write this, dog/house sitting in a French Quarter home untouched by more than delivery of a huge new refrigerator. Every morning I walk to The River to drink Café Du Monde coffee beside John T. Scott's sculpture, "Ocean Song." Scott lost his home and studio. His lovely sculpture lives on, flashing sunlight at The River and recalling power and good times.

Curfew has been raised to 2a.m., and Andrei Codrescu read at The Gold Mine one night. Later in the week, Stacy Hoover threw a party with good wine, jazzy jammin', artists waxing, hustlers hustling, and a few angry young poets. Most New Orleans writers fled Katrina knowing well the developing plot line. They trickle back slowly. Tonight the young scribes rule.

It was a good party, though less like Paris and more like Berlin in '29. We danced on our grave with a wary eye towards survival. In the courtyard three young men thumped their chests and said Bush was not dumb, "just lacked TV presence" to sell his ideas.

They forgot it was his idea to confuse September Eleventh with Iraq; plunder our national treasury; abandon levee improvements before the storm, and our rescue after.

All Sailors know scuttling your ship to steal the brass is dumb. No matter how many youths are willing to sail with a crazed captain he is still dumb.

* * *

Everyone is making trash piles, it is the new art of New Orleans. I sit at my desk cleaning out drawers. Would the I. R. S. ever really want my pocket calendar from 1989? Outside, hammers fall in rhythmic staccato. Five people are now on my block and they all have hammers.

* * *

On Track Again

New Orleans' population is down (or up) to sixty-thousand. After the forced evacuation following the storm, it was thought to have been sixty.

The wonderful Marigny Brasserie has reopened, and more scribes are back. Dean Paschal (BY THE LIGHT OF THE JUKE BOX") and I shared a meal there that would have been great pre Katrina. A "hippie" free food kitchen and supporting tents have taken root across the street in Washington Square. The non-homeless speak of running them out of town for their good works. Sigh!

On November 4th, the Sunset Limited arrived, for the first time since the storm. It came from Los Angeles, with stops in refugee towns like Houston and Lafayette. It arrived in New Orleans four hours and four minutes late, but it was a welcome sight discharging among its passengers L. A. Norma toting a hand grip and a carton of Camel Cigarettes.

"I haven't had a cigarette in three days," she said lighting up outside the station. "Where is everybody?"

Editor's note: LEJ's Yours Truly In A Swamp has been picked up by [The African-American Village](#). "the magazine of African-American colleges and universities."

Yours Truly in a Swamp, by Leonard Earl Johnson

December 2005

"Christmas in New Orleans is not like going over the river to grandmother's house."

The club on Saint Charles Avenue has tried all season (with little success) to coax yuletide spirit from inebriated patrons. Above the mahogany bar dangle sparkling six-inch blue snowflakes, and a toy gray helicopter lifting refugees off a blue-tarp roof. The lone bartender has tethered each by an invisible thread. He also sports a red stocking cap, with cotton around the rim and silver bells dangling from its tapered tip.

Still, the stars hang limp and the bartender looks weary as Papa Noel after dashing across Big Swamp City distributing favors and rescuing the hopeless.

I have come to this dreary bar to meet an old friend just arrived aboard The City of New Orleans from Chicago, that broad-shouldered city on the other end of the Amtrak line. He has been riding – as a dedicated fan – with Arlo Guthrie, on his "City of New Orleans Tour," stopping along the way giving concerts and raising money to buy instruments for New Orleans post-Katrina musicians. Tonight, we plan on hearing Guthrie and Willie Nelson at Tipatina's.

I spot him at the end of the bar, overdressed and over-served. New Orleans' temperatures have flirted with eighty-Fahrenheit all day, yet he sits there in a camel hair topcoat, a wool suit and a silk tie. A mural behind the bar twinkles with tiny blue lights sprinkled over a snowy hillock full of white deer nibbling mistletoe berries dotted among evergreen boughs. The mistletoe berries are represented by tiny red lights.



"Mistletoe is poison," my friend is telling the bartender, "and the berries are white."

A beer distributor from Saint Louis, Missouri is also behind the bar. He is passing out free samples of Red Wolf Beer. My friend takes a free beer and lifts it towards me. I move down the bar and accept the brew.

"Must be a Santa after all," my friend says to the largely empty room.

From a green felt table to our left, an elderly couple I always see in this bar looks up and smiles. No one is dealing and his cards are laying face up. I tip my beer towards them. They are wearing evening clothes and his gold studs are set with diamonds that flash back at the twinkling mural. She is ashen blond and wearing a red sequined gown. She unzips his tuxedo trousers. I nod and say in stage whisper that she is an expensive date. He laughs and says, "How better to spend my FEMA money." She laughs and slaps him softly, playfully.

"Where is the "vice squad?" my friend asks in a real whisper.

"Protecting patrons from the Feds at some Canal Street brothel," I say.

My friend is in his cups and hanging his observations with Chicago bluntness. "Christmas in New Orleans is not like going over the river to grandmother's house, is it?"

"It's a good system," I say, "vice cops protecting brothel patrons, and people in evening clothes entertaining themselves for free." We look again at the blond. My friend adds, "Maybe not free, but a lot less than the cops are charging." We both laugh.

The beer distributor hands us two more Red Wolves. He wants to finish and leave. My friend asks, "Shouldn't you call this stuff Red Riding Hood?" None of us know what he means by this, but we all laugh the laugh required of our respective stations.

The beer distributor gives us two full six packs of Red Wolf, and says, "Please, I got'a catch a plane back to Saint Louis

The bartender says, "Let me put that on ice for you gentlemen." I leave to go to the restroom and my Chicago friend yanks a hanging snowflake from its tether. He bellows to the bartender, "Who the hell told you to hang blue snowflakes in this swamp?"

The bartender is startled and blurts back, "The corporate fatheads in Chicago who own this bar!" The bartender does not know he is talking to corporate fathead number-one. The Saint Louis beer

distributor smiles weakly and moves towards the double French doors, through which we see a waiting limousine with rental license plates.

The man in the tuxedo falls off his chair. The woman in the red gown helps him to his feet and they stumble outside, each holding onto an article of the other's clothing. They lunge into the limo and motion for the Saint Louis beer man to join them. He shrugs and climbs in.

Coming out of the restroom, I put a quarter in a slot machine and watch the last of my FEMA money whirl away. I don't care, it is Christmastime and my friend is in town to wine and dine us for three fat days. We have known each other since college. He likes having, as he puts it, "A creative bum for a friend." I like having a rich one.

In a wastebasket by the slot machines I see seven paper teddy bear Christmas tree ornaments, each with the name of someone lost in Hurricane Katrina. I pick one up and read the name, "Kallisa Breaux," printed across its stomach. Underneath is written, "August 29, 2005." I gather the paper teddy bears and put them in my shirt pocket.

Back at the bar, we finish our beers in silence. The bartender, smarting from my friend's harsh words, punches up "Blue Bayou" on the jukebox, and glares at him. He still does not know he is glaring at his ultimate boss.

We stand to leave. I tell the bartender to keep the remaining Red Wolves. My friend gives him a one hundred dollar bill and his business card. "Tell those fatheads in Chicago to go jump in Lake Michigan, New Orleans is a bankrupt swamp not a snowy wonderland."

Outside, my friend stares at the empty curb. "Where the hell's my driver?" he says, throwing his hands in the air. I say, "Forget it, let's walk."

He slips out of his topcoat and hands it to a bewildered man in dirty blue jeans and a faded Katrina T-shirt. We move along towards Tip's. I take the paper teddy bears from my pocket. My friend holds one up to the street light and says, "Ah, Christ, what am I supposed to do about this?" Then he hands it to a passing drunk.

"Let's distribute them like hand bills," he says, and we walk to ipatina's singing, "We three kings of Orient are . . ." When someone asks, "Where is your other king," we hand them a paper teddy bear. "Bearing gifts we travel so far . . ."



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