



# DE NOVO

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The Law Library of Louisiana

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## Historic Preservation Law Experts to Speak March 21 Friends of the Library Series Offers Free CLE

The second program in our "Learning at the Law Library" series, "Protecting New Orleans Through Historic Preservation Law—A Light-Speed Overview," will be presented on Thursday, March 21, by three of the city's most respected experts on the subject. Both members of the legal community and the general public are invited to learn from James Derbes, James Logan, and Lloyd "Sonny" Shields, who will speak at the library from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m. Lloyd Shields will concentrate on constitutional issues in historic preservation law; James Logan will review federal statutory matters; and James Derbes will

focus on New Orleans and Louisiana cases. A discussion and question period will follow the formal presentation, and refreshments will be offered. Any Louisiana attorney who holds membership in the Friends of the Law Library will be able to receive 1.5 hours of Continuing Legal Education credit for attending the MCLE-approved course. Friends dues (basic membership only \$25) may be paid during the registration period beginning at 4:30 p.m. There is no charge for the public or attorneys not seeking CLE credit.

Ironically, the historic preservation topic was selected by the

board of the Friends of the Library back in pre-Katrina times. Messrs. Derbes, Logan, and Shields were scheduled to do their presentation in late October. The catastrophe experienced by the New Orleans area has made the subject one of even greater significance to all residents as plans for renewing the city are developed and implemented. Our audience will have an opportunity to ask the speakers to reflect upon earlier efforts by preservationists who overcame threats to our the city's architectural heritage and to hear their recommendations for the future. 8

## Blame it on Bienville: Flood Control Needed from the Start

by Georgia Chadwick

In 1718 Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne Sieur de Bienville picked the site for the settlement of New Orleans because of its strategic location in a bend in the Mississippi River, not far from Lake Pontchartrain. This location afforded the French an enormous amount of control over the trade and goods shipped from other locations along the river. Bienville directed the engineer De La Tour to lay out the city adjacent to the river. The land by the river was a bit higher, having been built up by periodic flooding, but the new city was surrounded on three sides by swamps. A flood inundated the city while it was under

construction, and Bienville considered leaving the site. De La Tour directed a levee to be built in front of the city to protect it from the overflow of the river. The work was not completed until 1727 when Governor Perrier announced that the completed levee was about a mile long and 18 feet wide on top.

The levee helped to protect New Orleans from river flooding, though the city was also subject at times to flooding by waters from Lake Pontchartrain or Lake Borne or just from high intensity rainfall. Ditches were dug around each lot and square and around sides of the city as well to help drain the water. These ditches also served for the

disposal of human and household waste, and these unsanitary conditions gave rise to typhoid fever, yellow fever, cholera and other diseases.

New Orleans survived and later began to prosper. Plantations were established along the river above and below the city, and each property owner was responsible for levee construction and maintenance on his own property. This arrangement served as Louisiana's flood control policy until the middle of the nineteenth century. levee districts, which had the power to tax residents of alluvial land for the purpose

*continued on page 2*

## Blame it on Bienville *continued from page 1*

of constructing and maintaining levees did not come into existence until 1856.

The entire Mississippi Valley became part of the United States in 1803 with the Louisiana Purchase, and settlers and traders in vast numbers brought their goods and provisions down the river on flatboats, keelboats and rafts. Louisiana became a state in 1812 about the time that the river became even more important as a transportation and trade route with the development of steamboats. The cities of St. Louis, Memphis and New Orleans served as the supply centers for settlement of lands to the west. By 1840, New Orleans had a population over 100,000 and was the fourth largest city in the nation.

The federal government's early involvement with the lower Mississippi River had been in the construction of forts by the Corps of Engineers. Between 1810 and 1830 the following were built: Forts Jackson, Macomb, Pike, and Livingston and the smaller Battery Bienvenue and Tower Dupres. In 1841 work was started on Fort St. Philip and Fort Jackson.

Now that the Mississippi River was wholly owned by the United States, representatives from the developing west urged Congress to fund exploration and mapping of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers and to clear obstructions from their channels. In 1820 Congress appropriated \$5000 for the Board of Engineers to make a survey, maps, and charts of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers and for the purpose of facilitating and ascertaining the most practicable mode of improving navigation. The report, which was presented to Congress in 1823, described the Mississippi River as follows: "This mag-

nificent River, which unites, in a manner, the Gulf of Mexico with the Canadian Lakes, is the great thoroughfare by which all waters from the Alleghanies to the Rocky Mountains pass to the Ocean." The report states that "When the floods of the Mississippi have attained their greatest elevation, the whole valley through which it runs is submerged, and presents a breadth of water, in some places, of 30 or 80 miles." It was noted when the river returned to its channel some water remained on the west side of the river forming lakes and swamps. The Board of Engineers also explained that during floods the river deposited its heaviest particles on its banks and as the water moved on it had less to deposit. It is mentioned that below Baton Rouge the river ceased to carry on its work of destruction and creation as it was confined by artificial embankments. They state: "In proportion as population increases, these dykes will be extended up the river to arrest its ravages: time can alone people the extended margins of the river, and from it, alone, can we expect the complete embankment of its shores."

In answer to the increasingly difficult and expensive work of building levees which had proceeded in fitful spurts up and down the Mississippi River and its tributaries by individual landowners, the delta states created levee districts to provide a more coordinated approach in order to spread the cost and work in an equitable way. However, formidable financial and engineering challenges were still facing the levee districts, and they joined with navigation interests in seeking help from Washington. The period before the Civil War was marked by the appearance of river conventions which drew support from a variety of interested parties as well as politicians. In 1845 at the Memphis

Commercial Convention John C. Calhoun called for federal aid to remedy the ineffectiveness of uncoordinated local action in making life and commerce along the Mississippi safe and as productive as possible.

In 1849 and 1850 extreme floods not only devastated Delta farmlands but also inundated large parts of New Orleans. In response Congress enacted the Swamp Land Acts of 1849 and 1850, which granted the riparian states about 27.8 million acres of flooded lands lying within their borders. The states were required to levee and drain the lands and to pay for the work by selling the reclaimed land. The federal government hoped that this would solve the flood problem, but the cost of reclamation was underestimated, and the work itself was mismanaged by the states, most notably in Louisiana. Unfortunately the federal government's first attempt at flood control had failed by the mid-1850's.

Another act passed by Congress in 1850 was to lay the groundwork for the federal flood control programs for many years to come. Congress appropriated \$50,000 "For the topographical and hydrographical survey of the Delta of the Mississippi, with such investigations as may lead to determine the most practicable plan for securing it from inundation, and the best mode of so deepening the passes at the mouth of the river as to allow ships of twenty feet draft to enter the same." The federal government had decided to learn more about the Mississippi before trying to control it, and the great Delta Survey of 1850-1861 would prove to be

one of the most decisive events in the history of the Mississippi River Valley.

The appropriation for this survey was split in order to fund two separate surveys. The first survey was accomplished under the direction of the Secretary of War by Charles Ellet, a well known civil engineer. Ellet's study, *The Mississippi and Ohio Rivers*, was completed in 1851 and sent to Congress in 1852. Ellet's theory was that the use of tributary reservoirs could effectively handle flood control on the lower Mississippi hundreds of miles away. He did not believe that levees alone could manage the river but rather some outlets must be available. The second survey was undertaken by Captain A.A. Humphreys and Lieutenant H.L. Long of the U.S. Corps of Topographical Engineers. Humphreys' study, *The Physics and Hydraulics of the Mississippi River* was much larger and was not finished until 1861. He emphatically supported his conclusion, based on an exhaustive examination of the river, that using only levees was the one and only way to prevent flooding of the Mississippi. The result of these two studies not only offered a comprehensive and updated study of the river but also two vastly different ideas as to how the government could prevent flooding. However, years would pass before any comprehensive plan to control flooding was implemented in the lands recognized early on by the French to be so valuable. δ

*Georgia Chadwick's history of flood control efforts will be continued in the next issue of DeNovo.*

# Hell and High Water: The Johnstown Flood of 1889

by Carol Billings

If you mention Johnstown, Pennsylvania, to most Louisianians, they're likely to ask "Where's that?" Possibly they might have heard of it recently when native son Congressman John Murtha (D-Pa.) called for pulling our troops out of Iraq. Actually the small city of around 25,000 about 70 miles east of Pittsburgh is notorious for a great disaster that in many ways parallels New Orleans's Katrina experience. Both contemporaneous and more recent accounts of the infamous Johnstown Flood ask whether the destruction resulted from natural forces or human error. Charges of engineering incompetence, callous influential residents, and class conflict abounded. More than 2,200 people died, and a mammoth recovery effort was required to assist desperate survivors.

The *New York Times* for June 1, 1889, reported "an appalling catastrophe" in which the steel company town had the day before been "practically wiped out of existence and that hundreds if not thousands of lives have been lost." Built on a flood plain at the fork of two rivers, Johnstown had experienced flooding in recent years as a result of narrowing the river banks to gain space for growth. Fourteen miles up the Little Conemaugh River, 450 feet higher than the city, Lake Conemaugh sat on the side of a mountain, held by the old South Fork Dam. Townspeople knew that the dam was poorly maintained, but the annual spring threat of a break had simply become a joke about town.

At 4:07 on Memorial Day afternoon a low rumble, growing to a thunderous roar, warned the horrified residents that the dam, weakened by heavy rains, had

broken. The History Channel's website, quoting the U.S. National Park Service, describes "20 million tons of water crashing down the narrow valley. Boiling with huge chunks of debris, the wall of flood water grew at times to 60 feet high, tearing downhill at 40 miles per hour, leveling everything in its path." Barbed wire from a destroyed wire works in the flood's path entangled many of the desperate victims struggling to escape the avalanche of water and crushing debris.

Homes and businesses in downtown Johnstown were crushed by the torrent, as thousands huddled in attics or floated on the rubble. "Many more had been swept downstream to the old Stone Bridge at the junction of the rivers. Piled up against the arches, much of the debris caught fire, entrapping forever 80 people who had survived the initial flood wave." Hundreds of victims were never found, and many bodies never identified. Makeshift hospitals and morgues were set up, and volunteers passed out food and clothing. As the *New York Times* reported, the aftermath of the disaster was horrible. Pennsylvania militia were called upon to maintain martial government. Bands of tramps attempted to loot the dead, and several were shot. Other towns in river valleys in the region also experienced flooding and an outbreak of typhoid fever.

In a great outpouring of compassion, the Nation contributed money, supplies, and medical aid. Clara Barton, then 67 years old, arrived with doctors and nurses from her newly-organized American Red Cross and set up a field hospital, kitchens, and temporary housing.

The great villains of the story were the wealthy members of the South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club. Pittsburgh steel and coal magnates, including Andrew Carnegie and Andrew Mellon, had built themselves a retreat with luxury "cottages" in the mountains, having bought the abandoned reservoir, patching up the old dam, and raising the lake level. Although it became clear that the "repairs" were inadequate and not supervised by a real engineer, a successful lawsuit was never brought against the club members.

For readers who would like to know more about the Pennsylvania disaster, popular historian David McCullough in 1968 first published *The Johnstown Flood* (Simon & Shuster). There are also later editions in hardcover and paperback. To end this story on a positive note, we are happy to report that Johnstown did indeed recover, even overcoming another flood in 1936. The city also has several other characteristics in common with New Orleans. The economy is based largely upon tourism; so a major attraction is the Johnstown Flood Museum. Best of all, Johnstown is preparing for its 9<sup>th</sup> annual Friendly City Polka Fest, scheduled for the first week in June. You can catch Lenny Gomulka's band at St. Mary's Church on June 4. Rosie and the Jammers will play for the polka mass at St. Casimir's Church.

Several websites provided valuable information for this article: [www.johnstownpa.com/History](http://www.johnstownpa.com/History) and [www.historychannel.com](http://www.historychannel.com).&



Carol Billings

## GETTING TO KNOW US

Is your court, firm or class interested in participating in a Law Library of Louisiana Orientation? For more information call: Carol Billings @ (504) 310-2401

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Georgia Chadwick

### Spotlighting Black History

Plan to visit the library's exhibit featuring major events in African American History. Materials in four exhibit cases are all derived from books in the collection or from sites accessible on the Internet. The exhibit is divided into four major historical periods: The Legal Status of People of Color in Ante Bellum America; Emancipation, Reconstruction & Jim Crow; The Struggle for Justice Leading up to the 1960's; and Making the Dream Come True.

Most prominently represented are major events of legal significance, such as landmark U.S. Supreme Court opinions and civil rights legislation. Many photographs of famous people and events make the legal issues come alive. Dred Scott, Reconstruction Lt. Governor Oscar J. Dunn, the Little Rock Nine, A. P. Tureaud, James Meredith, and Justice Thurgood Marshall are all there along with many others.



# Louisiana Adopts Uniform Construction Code in 2005

by Georgia Chadwick

Act 12 of the 2005 First Extraordinary Session adopted a mandatory statewide uniform construction code and established a council to govern the construction, reconstruction, alteration, and repair of residential and commercial buildings. This new uniform code applies to all parishes in the state and will be enforced to ensure proper compliance. Many parishes already have construction codes in place but as with traffic laws, not everyone obeys the speed limit. In some parishes or municipalities building codes may have been lax or nonexistent. The uniform construction code will apply to structures rebuilt in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and to all buildings built state-

clear message to Washington and to the insurance industry that Louisiana will be built stronger and more able to resist natural and man-made disasters. Act 12 requires insurance companies to offer reduced rates or discounts on insurance premiums to customers who comply with the state uniform construction code.

Seven codes were adopted by the new statute to comprise the Louisiana State Uniform Construction Code, five of which were developed and are published by the nonprofit International Code Council Foundation. The ICC has opened an office in Louisiana to assist parish officials and building trade professionals with training and questions about the codes. They also donated copies of these codes to the eleven par-

The Louisiana State Uniform Construction Code Council shall consist of nineteen members who shall be appointed by the governor, are subject to Senate confirmation and will serve three year terms. Council members will not receive any compensation for their commission duties. The function of the council is to review and adopt the state uniform construction code, to provide for training and education of code officials, and to accept all requests for amendments to the code.

Parish officials are racing to comply with the new law which states that the wind and flood mitigation requirements

*The building codes adopted by the new law require the use of durable construction materials and improved methods of construction and design to provide greater resistance to storm winds, flying debris, and flooding.*

wide. However, certain farm structures, industrial structures and hunting and fishing camps are excluded from certain portions of the code.

The building codes adopted by the new law require the use of durable construction materials and improved methods of construction and design to provide greater resistance to storm winds, flying debris, and flooding. The codes dictate that structures built closer to the coast must be able to withstand up to 150-mph winds. The long-term cost of construction may be lower but there is no doubt the cost of building or repairing a home or commercial structure will increase. In passing this law, however, the legislature wished to send a

ishes declared federal disaster areas including Orleans, Calcasieu, Cameron, Iberia, Jefferson, Lafourche, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Tammany, Terrebonne and Vermillion parishes. The ICC produced codes are the following: the International Building Code, International Existing Building Code, International Residential Code, International Mechanical Code, and International Fuel Gas code. The Louisiana State Plumbing Code is published by the state although the ICC publishes it as well and the National Electric Code is published by the National Fire Protection Association. The library has copies of all of these codes and we keep older versions of the various codes for historical research.

as prescribed in the 2003 International Residential Code and the 2003 International Building Code shall apply to the eleven parishes noted above as emergency measures. The wind and flood mitigation requirements shall be effective thirty days from the effective date of the act for parishes and municipalities that already have code enforcement procedures in place, and for those without procedures, the requirements shall be effective ninety days from the effective date of the act.

The International Code Council has a website with information on their codes which may be of interest: <http://www.iccsafe.org> 8

## Disaster Preparedness Materials

by Cathy Lemann

Following Hurricane Katrina, the Law Library wondered if we should add to our collection of materials on disaster planning and recovery. We thought that there might be interest from court managers as well as affected employees.

I was pleased to find a reasonable number of books in our collection. Many were State Justice Institute or National Center for State Courts publications on planning for disaster, but we also own the more theoretical *Catastrophe: risk and response*, by Richard A. Posner published after 9/11. I wanted to find books published following 9/11. I looked at a couple of

web sites, Amazon and RedLightGreen. I performed a periodical search using LegalTrac and WilsonWeb to locate articles and book reviews on disaster planning and response. I was able to locate a couple of more recent books which we have ordered.

To find web sites that would address preparedness and recovery, I turned to the *Librarians' Internet Index*, [www.lii.org](http://www.lii.org). This wonderful site has mini-reviews of web sites chosen by librarians as trustworthy sites. I was amazed to discover more than 100 sites devoted to disaster preparedness and more than 125 sites relating to disaster recovery. Many of the sites related

directly to Katrina and hurricane issues.

I prepared a quick guide which listed what we have in our library. I looked at a number of the sites from the *Librarians' Internet Index*. While I did not look at all 225 sites, I selected a few that I thought would interest people. These included planning for evacuating a pet, tax relief, and coping information. I highly recommend looking at the Librarians' Internet Index for more web sites related to disaster planning, disaster recovery, Katrina specific information, as well as other topics. To see the guide, go to [www.lasc.org/law\\_library/disaster.pdf](http://www.lasc.org/law_library/disaster.pdf). δ



Cathy Lemann

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## UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT RECORDS AND BRIEFS IN THE LIBRARY

by Miriam Childs

The Law Library has two resources for patrons who would like to read more than just the opinion of a case argued before the U.S. Supreme Court. *Landmark Briefs and Arguments of the Supreme Court of the United States* (KF 101.9 .L36) is a selection of cases argued before the Court since 1789. The volumes contain transcriptions of the oral arguments and reproduce the briefs filed in a particular case. *U.S. Supreme Court Records and Briefs* (KF 101.9 .A345) is a microfiche collection of all the briefs and opinions of cases argued before the Supreme Court during a particular term. The library's microfiche begins with 385 US 23 from 1966 and goes through the end of the most recent term.

*Landmark Briefs* began as an 80-volume set that includes case selections through the 1973/1974 term. Since 1974 each volume is published as a supplement to the original set. The full text of the opinions of the selected cases was added as a separate volume beginning in

1989. The cases and briefs that are included in *Landmark Briefs* have been chosen by legal scholars and are representative of cases that have shaped how we live as Americans. Some of the most famous cases included in the set are *Plessy v. Ferguson* in volume 13; *Brown v. the Board of Education* in vols. 49 and 49A; *Roe v. Wade* in volume 76; and *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* in volumes 99-100. Not only are the full texts of the briefs and arguments reproduced, but also petitions for writs of certiorari, motions to deny, briefs in opposition, amicus curiae briefs, merit briefs by appellant and appellee, and supplemental briefs. This resource gives first-hand insight into the country's legal, political, economical and social development.

*U.S. Supreme Court Records and Briefs* reproduces on microfiche the opinions and briefs for each case argued before the Supreme Court during a particular term. This collection is housed in one of the microfiche cabinets adjacent to the microforms room in the Library. Through the end of the

1973/1974 term, the fiche are filed in citation order. Starting with the 1974/1975 term, the fiche are filed in Supreme Court docket number order. Each fiche has the case name printed across the top. The *United States Supreme Court Digest* (KF 101.1 .U55) should be consulted to locate a case citation and/or docket number. Thumbing through the collection can be a serendipitous experience. I stumbled upon the *Loving v. Virginia* case from 1966, which rendered a Virginia law prohibiting white people from marrying "colored" people unconstitutional. This paved the way for legal marriage between African Americans and whites in states which up until that point still disallowed the practice.

There is quite a wealth of information to be found in these resources. Reading one argument, opinion, or brief will prove how much the Supreme Court has affected, and continues to affect, the lives of all Americans. δ

## NEWSPAPERS IN THE LIBRARY

by Greg Duhe

The library has many local and national newspapers: *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, *New York Times*, *Baton Rouge Advocate*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New Orleans City Business*, *National Law Journal*, *Legal Times*, *Government Technology*, *Information Today*, *Biz New Orleans*, and the *Greater Baton Rouge Business Report*. The newspapers are located in the state wing next to the copiers.

In addition to print editions, the library also has the *Times Picayune* and *National Law Journal* in microform. The *Times Picayune* is available on reel microfilm from 1837-1990, near the print papers, and *The National Law Journal* is on microfiche from 1978-2005. *The New York Law Journal* is available on microfiche from 1979-2003. All newspaper microfiche is kept in both the microform room.

*The New York Law Journal* is designed to help busy attorneys keep up with new developments and trends in New York's legal community. Readers get the latest legal news, court information, statutory and regulatory decisions, and legal analysis written by staff lawyer-editors. Each issue contains sections devoted to different areas of law.

*The National Law Journal* provides timely legal information of national importance to attorneys that other publications exclude. The journal includes decisions of all thirteen federal circuit courts and selects verdicts of national consequence. The journal also includes a column dedicated to analyzing critical issues facing the legal profession and how legislation will affect business and courts.

## STORM SURVIVOR: NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC LIBRARY

by Miriam Childs

One of the first things that the Law Library was concerned with after Hurricane Katrina struck was the fate of its sister institutions in the city. News trickled out about various libraries, but news of New Orleans Public closing all but three branches and laying off at least 75% of its staff caused concern in many quarters. However, with the passage of time, the situation has improved.

According to Wayne Everard, New Orleans City Archivist who also works in NOPL's Louisiana Division, staff members returned to the main library on Loyola Ave. October 3 to begin cleaning up. A few windows in the Technology Center had been blown out, which meant the replacement of some keyboards and monitors. The largest worry was the condition of the basement, which contains the City Archives. Thankfully, the basement did not take on any water. The comprehensive government documents collection going back many decades, containing rare Congressional materials, also remained safe from harm.

At first, only a total of nineteen

staff members returned to staff three branches: the main branch, the Hubbell branch in Algiers, and the Nix branch on Carrollton Ave. These branches opened on October 31. All other branches still had far too much damage and destruction to open, some more than others. In January the Children's Resource Center on Napoleon Ave. and the Latter Branch on St. Charles Ave. reopened. The remainder of the branches are closed indefinitely. New Orleans Public was later able to re-hire many of its former employees, both on a full time and temporary basis.

The branches are open for limited hours, but materials are now allowed to circulate. All branches have Internet access, and the main branch offers free wireless on the first and third floors. Wireless will soon be added to the other branches. Though items can circulate, there is no transportation of books and materials from one branch to another. Currently there is a reciprocal borrowing agreement between the New Orleans Public and Jefferson Parish Public library systems. This is a service that has long been considered. The condi-

tions of both systems in the wake of the hurricane fast-tracked the implementation of the agreement.

Mr. Everard reports that the activity in the Louisiana Division is steady. The genealogists have returned in smaller numbers, and he's interacted with some patrons engaged in serious research. In addition, contract FEMA historians have been utilizing the library's resources. There is a FEMA disaster recovery center on the first floor of the library's building. Some of the people in the disaster center wind up in the library using its copy machines and PCs.

The New Orleans Public Library Foundation has been working tenaciously to raise funds for rebuilding the system. The Foundation is particularly committed to improving the protection of the City archives. The hope is to capitalize on what was a very close call and be ready for the next disaster, just in case. More information about the Foundation's efforts, as well as photos of the damage caused by Katrina, can be found at [www.nutrias.org](http://www.nutrias.org). 8



# After The Storm: Barbara Blackwell's Odyssey

by Ruth Mahoney

No one who works in the Supreme Court Building will ever forget Katrina, but one staff member's odyssey was especially dramatic. Barbara Blackwell, an Administrative Assistant in the Judicial Administrator's Office, along with her family and a few friends, were evacuated by boat from the rooftop of her Gentilly home on August 29 by the New Orleans Fire Department after dialing 911. They were brought to I-610 and told that there was only one destination for them -- the Superdome. After searching in vain for a hotel, they registered at the Superdome. Once inside, they they were not allowed to come back out. There were no lights, televisions or radios.

The family spent three nights in the bleachers where they "slept" in fifteen minute shifts in order to prevent people from pilfering their belongings. Barbara reported that people intent on committing misdeeds used flashlights to signal accomplices when potential victims were asleep. On the fourth day they were "herded" into buses waiting in the vicinity of the New Orleans Center, which Barbara described as "like being on Bourbon Street on a very crowded Mardi Gras Day." At this point she got separated from her family and boarded a bus for an unknown destination, which ultimately turned out to be Arlington, Texas. Other family members ended up in McKinley and Houston, Texas.

While in a shelter in Arlington, Barbara met a lady who let her use her home computer in an attempt to locate her family. In Houston, her sister Jean posted a listing of missing family members on the internet, and while doing so, befriended a person who worked for a major internet company who was in touch with the Oprah Winfrey Organization. Oprah's Angel Network sent a limousine to

Barbara's shelter, and took her to a hotel in Houston. They also brought the rest of the family to a Houston hotel. The following day Jean met Oprah at the Reliant Center in Houston to be interviewed on CNN. There was an "element of surprise" for Jean when the entire family came on the set, where they were all reunited! Barbara said that although they were only on the air a few seconds, Oprah was very engaging. It was during the television interview that Mr. Gray Hymel, a businessman and volunteer in the Reliant Center shelter, offered his deceased mother's home to the family for as long as was needed. Some family members stayed, but Barbara did not because she had made contact with her supervisor, Attorney Al Dittmann, who also evacuated to Houston. He informed Barbara how to contact the Supreme Court located in Baton Rouge, at the First Circuit Court of Appeals. Through Debra Scott, Barbara was able to secure an apartment in Denham Springs.

Upon returning to New Orleans, Barbara discovered her home had gotten five feet of water. She is currently living in a hotel and is in the process of getting the necessary permits to rebuild. Barbara works closely with the Gentilly Civic Improvement Association, which is an umbrella agency for various homeowners associations dedicated to helping people make neighborhood plans to present to the Bring Back New Orleans Commission. Through her civic work in the community, she was invited by Norma Jean Sabiston of America's Wetland Foundation to join Women of the Storm.

Women of the Storm is a non-partisan, non-political alliance of over 130 women from the New Orleans area and South Louisiana whose mission is to persuade members of Congress to visit South Louisiana and the Gulf Coast and see first-hand the dev-

astation wrought by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. They also seek to bring attention to the need for coastal protection as a key to rebuilding and revitalizing the Gulf Coast. "We were all on one page," said Barbara. "The powers that be could not take an aerial view. They had to grasp the full essence of the devastation. They had to walk in the areas, smell the different odors as a result [of the storm], to see for themselves close up [that] these were human beings with whom they were dealing.... We want to see if we can get 50% of revenue from offshore drilling for wetlands [restoration], and we want to show that we can be self-sufficient." The Women of the Storm all had the same passion for New Orleans, and they wanted to keep it in the forefront of the media.

The Women of the Storm flew to Washington, D. C. on January 30, where they attended a press conference and proceeded in pairs to visit congressional offices. Each team visited four offices where they met with staff members. Barbara and Tulane Law Professor Tania Tetlow called on the offices of Representatives Jim Kolbe of Arizona, Mark Foley of Florida, Rahm Emanuel of Illinois, and Lloyd Doggett of Texas. They also spent time in the offices of Senators Landrieu and Vitter and Congressman Jindal. They returned to New Orleans that evening with a resolve to follow-up with e-mails and letters to the lawmakers. Barbara said she felt "empowered" by this journey; and emphasized that the Women of the Storm were very unselfish women whose sole purpose was to help everyone affected by the tragedy.

And indeed they did make a difference: on March 2, thirty-five members of Congress arrived for a three-day visit to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region. 8



Barbara Blackwell



Ruth Mahoney

Do you have any  
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