

INSIDE THE STORM

Louisiana Bowlers Talk About Their Horrifying Experience Surrounding Hurricane Katrina

What was it like to live through the biggest national disaster in U.S. History? We can't tell you because we only experienced it from afar. But for our great friends Page Dew and Shannon Duplantis, it hit much closer to home.

Page Dew, a silver level U.S. bowling coach, is a fifth generation New Orleanian who now lives with his wife Patsy in Colorado, but he grew up in the beautiful Garden District of the Crescent City. He spent the final week of August trying to find more than two dozen relatives still living there. Patsy's family is in the Baton Rouge area, and she reports that, thank God, all are safe; but for several nervous and anxious days, no one knew their status.

Shannon Duplantis is the undisputed best woman bowler ever from the state of Louisiana, with five PWBA regional titles, including the prestigious PWBA Regional Players Championship. In 2000, she won the WIBC Bev Ortner Award for a national high score of 867. It was the best of seven 800's she has rolled. She also has 22 perfect games. She is a former Player of the Year and Rookie of the Year in both the Southeast and Southwest PWBA regions, and won the coveted Southwest Sportsmanship Award. She is the current President of the New Orleans Women's Bowling Association.

Duplantis was born in New Orleans in 1969 and has lived there her entire life. She

shares a home with her parents, Lorraine and Gene Duplantis in the Bywater section of the city, aptly named because it is surrounded on three sides by the river, the lake and the canal. She has a BA degree from Loyola University where she works as a head cashier in the Bursar's Office. She has been working at Loyola for the past seven years. Her best bowling friend Judy Vogel, who is also a PWBA regional champion, has been working at Loyola for 31 years. She lives in Slidell which was also devastated.

We thought about writing a story about this horrible storm and inserting a few choice quotes from our Louisiana friends, but their stories are so compelling and filled with very

justified emotions; we couldn't possibly convey it properly - so here is a first-hand account of what those terrible days were like for two New Orleanians, in their own words.

Next month, we'll have an update from both, and add more chapters in the months that follow. As this goes to press, Judy Vogel and the Duplantis family are fleeing their temporary homes in Houston to get away from another category five storm, hurricane Rita. Neither has seen their home since evacuating before Katrina. Our prayer is that they will be able to return soon and start rebuilding their homes and their lives.

-- Jim Goodwin

A Little History, Honesty and Worry from a Fifth Generation New Orleanian

by Page Dew

I am originally from New Orleans, my wife, Patsy is from Baton Rouge. On her mother's side, the Duvics, are from Baton

entire Mississippi Valley, witnessed by one of my cousins. Over the centuries, diseases such as yellow fever, and cholera have



Page and Patsy Dew, left and right, on the balcony of their Colorado home with PWBA bowlers Rachel Perez and Carol Norman

Rouge, but many of her father's people, the Terrebonnes, live not far from Grand Isle where hurricane Katrina struck Louisiana. The Terrebonnes have experienced many hurricanes, so they tend to leave when they approach. We assume they followed their usual precautions. All of the Duvics are safe.

For the past week I have been working the phones and the internet trying to locate my relatives. I have six first cousins, 15 second cousins and numerous third cousins who live in the Orleans, Jefferson, St. Bernard, and St. Charles parishes. So far, I have located all of my first cousins and it appears the rest of the cousins are safe. As with every family from that area my people are now scattered across the South. One of my cousins is a retired police officer and has a police ID which allowed him to return September 6 to Metairie where he lives. He was lucky, he only has about 6 to 9 inches of water in his house. He lives in an area that never floods (Not counting this time) I expect him to be able to return permanently once essential services are returned to his neighborhood.

What we are seeing is what every native New Orleanian, such as I, has known since they were born, that is the City is not a safe place at any time, but especially when a hurricane arrives. The dirty little extended secret New Orleans officials never want to admit is the City has not been a safe place since its founding in 1718. Flooding has been ongoing for centuries, the last the result of Hurricane Betsy in 1965, which I witnessed. In 1927, New Orleans was also a victim of a flood that encompassed the

careful and not to venture away from the star city attractions. My family has been there at least five generations, so we understood and understand the benefits and hazards of living in America's most unique city. Those who chose to live in the Crescent City are now living a nightmare scenario. I am very lucky to have been born and to have been a part of the culture of the area. I am also fortunate to now live in Colorado, high, dry and safe.

Race relations in New Orleans have always been different from the rest of the country. Slavery is an ugly scar upon the South, yet New Orleans was different even during that period. New Orleans people of color fought on both sides during the War Between the States. Many blacks in New Orleans have French names and are Catholic, unlike in other Southern states. The University of New Orleans, Tulane, Loyola, Dillard and Xavier Universities are well-known educational centers with prominent alumni. The leadership of the City has been African-American for approximately thirty years. Few racial incidents have occurred since desegregation began with the 1954 Brown vs Board of Education Supreme Court decision. The city has been majority black for several decades. A large Vietnamese population can also be found in East New Orleans.

Already the finger pointing has begun, but it is a useless endeavor. The fact is every level of government failed the people of South Louisiana. As a Republican I would love to say the current administration is not culpable, but I cannot. The President's leadership network has performed poorly,

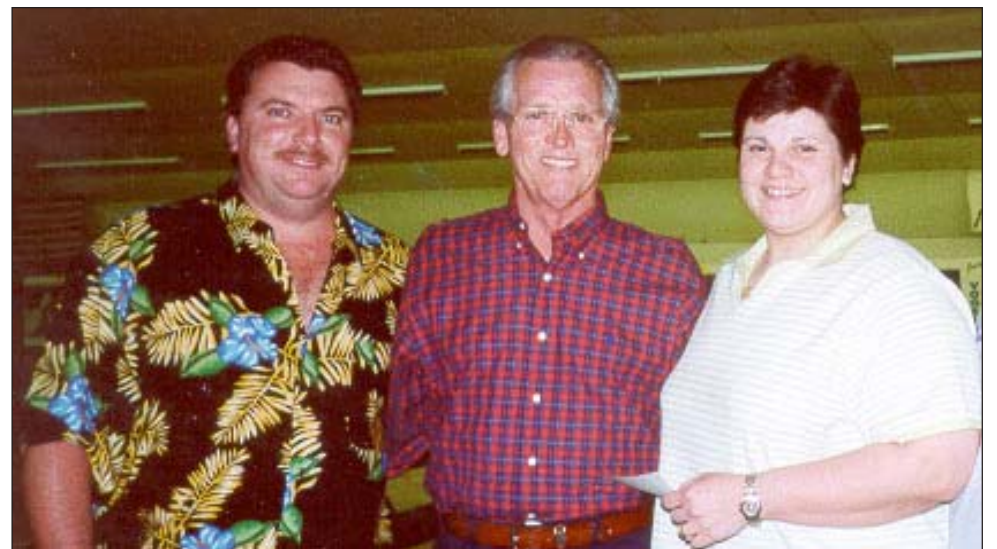
decimated the Isle of Orleans. Crime has always been a part of the City. Violence, including murder, is embedded in its historical fabric. The looting and other crimes we have seen on television is not a surprise. I have warned visitors that planned (prior to the "Perfect Storm") a visit to "The City that Care Forgot" to be

"I Prayed To God To Let Us Get Through This Hurricane Safely"

by Shannon Duplantis

August 26 - Life seemed normal on Friday night as I bowled in my Patio Mixed League at Colonial Lanes in Jefferson, LA. As my fellow teammates and I discussed our plans for the weekend, we discussed whether or not we

at mass, my fear of this hurricane was growing stronger and stronger. Later that night, as I watched the latest forecast models and the hurricane's movements, I knew we were going to experience the worst. My parents did not want to leave,



Shannon Duplantis, right, picking up one of her PWBA checks presented by Derek Williams and Jerry Cowen in Port Arthur, TX

thought the hurricane would come our way. Many of my teammates thought that this was going to be the "Big One" that everyone warned us about, but I hoped and prayed that God would spare us once again. Little did I know that Hurricane Katrina had plans of her own and had my home in her sight.

August 27 - Saturday morning, I had attended a fundraiser breakfast at the Treasure Chest Casino in Kenner with my local women's bowling association. As we were eating breakfast, we started to hear announcements made by the Treasure Chest that they were closing the second and third decks of the casino. As I heard these announcements, I wondered if they knew something that the local citizens didn't know. While watching every-one move to the first floor, one could see the fear among the citizens. Various televisions were reporting local broadcasts of Hurricane Katrina's projected path and giving mandatory evacuation notices.

As I drove home from the fundraiser, I was stunned to see the amount of traffic leaving the city. I could not believe that the lines to the gas stations and banks were miles long. Stores of all types were closing early and boarding their windows and doors. Having never experienced a hurricane of this catastrophic strength before, I felt a fear starting to build inside of me. I tried not to reveal this fear to my family because I wanted to remain strong for them. My family and I went to mass and our mass celebrant dedicated the mass for our city's protection. While

as they had experienced Hurricane Betsy and Camille and had very little damage. They felt certain that we were going to be fine.

August 28 - Sunday morning, more mandatory evacuations were given, and then I heard the worst...a mandatory evacuation of Orleans parish. My parents still did not want to evacuate their home; they felt it was not necessary. My imagination began to soar as I feared the unknown. Many of my friends started to call me to ensure that I was going to evacuate with my family. The more calls I received the more my fears grew. A close friend, Johanna Clark, called and asked me to evacuate to the 12-lane Pine Tree Lanes bowling center that she manages in Picayune, MS. She was concerned about the high tidal surges that were going to come from the hurricane. I convinced my family to do so at the last minute since we are surrounded by three bodies of water...the Industrial Canal, the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain. My mom, dad and I packed up the car with our immediate necessities including a cockatiel and a four-month-old puppy. My sister and brother-in-law came along with us and transported my cat as well.

Eastbound traffic on the twin spans to the Slidell area was very congested and even more so since contra flow was in effect and drawing to an end. My dad knew various backstreets to the area and we were able to get to Picayune within two and a half hours. This drive normally takes fifty minutes from my home on a

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both Democratic and Republican Congresses have ignored the obvious flooding dangers for years, even decades. Many local and Louisiana State authorities were slow, incompetent or both. The political structure of the area has been corrupt forever, leading to poor service. You can think of the New Orleans and Louisiana political framework as a house of cards. When any stress is put upon it, it falls, and it was no match for Katrina.

On the positive side, kudos to the state of Texas, particularly Houston and Dallas, our military (Thank God for General "Kick Ass" Honore) bless the U.S. Coast Guard, the Red Cross, The Salvation Army, our churches and individuals who have opened their homes and hearts to others. The real test will come over the months and years to come. It is easy to provide for others for a few days or weeks, but after a while the providers will run out of patience. What then?

The future is not bright for my home state, contrary to what our politicians have opined. I do not believe the city of New Orleans or the area down the Mississippi River will ever return to a place of prominence. Those with little before the storm will not return. Why should they? The city itself will again rise from the waters, but not as before. The next census will definitely tell the story far better than mere words.

For many years I lived and worked in Baton Rouge, our State Capitol only an hours drive west of New Orleans. It is a diverse city with influences from the traditional South, New Orleans, Cajun country and it's African-American citizens. It is home to refining and chemical plants which provide an economic infrastructure. Two major universities, Louisiana State and Southern University, are intellectual foundations. A week ago Baton Rouge was the size of Colorado Springs, Colorado. Today it has twice as many people as before and is now the largest city in Louisiana or Mississippi.

Pascagoula, Mississippi, in Jackson County, is located on the Gulf Coast near Mobile, Alabama and just east of Biloxi and Gulfport. I once operated a business in Pascagoula. One of my former employees, Todd Adams, is now the Director of Emergency Services for Jackson County. I have not heard from him, but I know it and the entire Coast area is suffering. My prayers go out to my old friends in South Mississippi. Some of my extended family have a home in Bay St. Louis, near the Louisiana/Mississippi line. I have no idea where they are or how they are doing. I hope for the best.

I have three children and five grandchildren who live near Bogalusa, Louisiana which was in the path of the storm. Luckily all are fine, but of course uncomfortable because of a lack of all the services we take for granted. On the positive side, their area does not flood, so I believe time and hard work will restore their way of life.

It is important to the entire country that the port New Orleans become effective again. Louisiana natives understood the importance of shipping, oil and gas to the United States, but sadly the majority of our nation did not. Hopefully the national learning curve has been elevated. Over the past half century Louisiana and Texas have been subjected to air and water

pollution to fulfill the country's energy needs. My home state has two nuclear power plants that I know of, more are needed. Other states have chosen to prevent drilling and refining, but happily used the natural resources emanating from Louisiana and Texas. It is time for those states to come to the table and contribute to our energy requirements.

New Orleans processes more tonnage by water than any other place in the United States, and therefore, it is the keystone for trade to our country. It is especially known as the "Gateway to Latin America." If you eat bananas, or consume other food products from the tropics, they probably came through the port of New Orleans. Without New Orleans, our nation would be a second class country. It is vital it return to its primary import/export economic place in our society.

Our Colorado home continues to remain available for our family and friends from Louisiana. None have yet elected to join us, but we are prepared just in case.

Page Dew is a former radio industry executive and current avid bowling instructor. After a very successful career in the radio business, he and his wife Patsy left their Louisiana home to build their 'dream house' in the beautiful mountains of Colorado. Patsy is a former CFO for the Federation Internationale des Quilleurs which was based in Colorado Springs when Jerry Koenig was its President, and Page is now learning the pro shop business. He is also a former columnist for Stars & Strikes. In our early years as a regional publication before going national, he penned a column entitled Dews News from Louisiana. -- JG

Shannon continued

good day. Once I arrived at the bowling center, various businesses were boarding up and lines to the gas stations began to form for blocks long. Thoughts went through my head as to whether or not, I was getting my family far enough to safety or was I taking them from the frying pan into the fire? I hoped and prayed that the building was sturdy enough to withstand the hurricane. Nightfall approached and squall lines from the hurricane began to come through the area. As the night progressed our eyes were glued to local television broadcasts with their updates of the hurricane.

August 29 - Around daybreak on Monday, the winds were getting stronger and the squalls were getting bigger and bigger. We eventually lost power to the center around 7:30am. The winds were getting stronger and stronger and the rains were falling harder and harder. As I watched the heavy rains fall and the grey clouds move in, I prayed to God to let us get through this hurricane safely. We could hear tree limbs and various items blow across the tin roof of the bowling center; which seemed to us as if the roof of the center was tearing off. At times, it sounded as if someone was bowling on the roof. Sounds of freight trains started through the area; therefore, I knew somewhere close tornadoes were touching down. Time went by so slow and when the winds and rains started to settle, the next band of rains seemed to come down even heavier. Trees were blowing over and falling down. Many of these trees were uprooted with the ce-

ment still attached. I never dreamed that strong winds could cause that much damage.

Late morning approached and it seemed that this was going to be the worst of the hurricane. Ceiling tiles within the building were being sucked in and dropped down as if the ceiling tiles were breathing on their own. The air conditioner units, smoke eaters and ceiling fans began shaking back and forth. More and more sounds of freight trains coming through were getting closer and closer. Then all of a sudden, it sounded as if the whole roof was being torn off and we all ran for cover into the bathrooms. My family and I began saying the rosary to spare the lives of the small children that were with us at the center. Their ages ranged from seven weeks to three years old. The winds had to have been at least 160 mph. Objects were flying all over, signage from various businesses were torn apart, shingles from homes and anything that the hurricane wanted to toss in the air. I have never seen anything like this in all my life. I have witnessed gusts of winds, but none with the power and strength as these. The building next door had 15 feet roll up aluminum doors; which the wind literally destroyed. Segments of these doors were all over. While watching all this happen, all my family and I could do was pray.

Soon the rain and winds began to calm down while the eye of the storm passed just south of us. As we went out to access the damage to our building and the buildings around us, we noticed a gas leak in the area. Then the bowling center started to take in the gas smell. We called 911 and were told that someone would be sent out after the hurricane...no sooner. Thank God we had a plumber with us who waded through the waist high water, found the gas leak and turned the meter off. At this time, we lost all land and cell phone lines. Talk about feeling trapped and lonely. We noticed the buildings on the sides of the bowling center were heavily damaged. The damages sustained to the surrounding buildings were as if tornadoes ripped through the area. I guess that was the freight train sounds that we heard while the hurricane was approaching. Thank God none of those destroyed our building.

After about an hours break, the winds and the rain began again. This time it wasn't as bad as before. I could handle winds and rains of this type. About an hour later, the sky became normal again. I looked into the sky and began to see beautiful blue trying to peak through the grey clouds. This was truly a sight for sore eyes. Even though the hurricane left a devastating mark on Picayune, MS, I thought for sure I would be able to make my way back home to New Orleans soon....or so I thought.

That night we hooked up generators to supply the bowling center with fans, radios and lights for the evening. While listening to a local radio station, we heard the most horrific news of all, the news that the levee systems in New Orleans had breached in three places causing the "the New Orleans bowl" to fill. This was everyone's worst nightmare. The levee had breached at the 17th Street Canal and then on the New Orleans East side of the levee, which caused the water in Lake Pontchartrain to be equal to the water in the city of New Orleans. Soon the levee breached at the Industrial Canal, which flooded homes from Arabi to Violet, Loui-

siana. These waters surpassed many if not all roofs in the area. As I heard this news, I felt so lifeless. Then we hear that the major roadways to the east, the Twin Span bridges were destroyed. The water and winds eroded the spans in sections. Hearing news of this nature just caused my heart to sink. What was going to be left to the city that I called home, would my home still be there? To top off our night, two young men tried to steal our generators. Thank God they were not successful.

So many horror stories being broadcast and no means of communication with the outside world were driving me crazy. As I sat and watched the tears fall from my parents eyes, I prayed to God asking how could this happen to us. I thought God would always be there to protect us and not let anything like this happen to us. My family has always taught me though that God does everything for a reason. One may not know the reason now, but God would make it known. For three nights, my family and I slept in the pit of lanes 9 and 10 and each night I cried to sleep for I knew the life I was accustomed to would be no more.

August 30-31 - The next two mornings as one looked at the sky, they would have never known that a hurricane came through the area, but when you looked on the ground, the visible evidence was everywhere. My mind could only imagine the damage that was done in my neighborhood, especially my home. Would life ever be the same for us again?

My family and I stayed at the bowling center until Wednesday afternoon. Being an avid bowler and loving the sport so much, when someone asks me if I could live in a bowling center, I now have a different thought of that question. The days seemed to go by so slow and the normal everyday commodities that each person takes for granted were missed so much. Trying to feel fresh was just not going to happen. Desperate measures caused me to use a garden hose outside to wash my hair to feel somewhat refreshed.

September 1 - Thursday morning, we decided to leave Picayune and headed for Houston. I had no family members in the Houston area, just some friends. My family and I had to go somewhere because at this point, we were homeless. That night, we stayed in the reception area of a banquet hall in Tomball, Texas, managed by Joanna Clark's sister. The next morning, the game plan was to search for an extended stay hotel or even an apartment because we were not sure how soon we would be able to get back into the city. Many hotels were already booked and many companies started to rent apartments for their employees to relocate. After going through various pages in the phone book, we came upon an apartment that would be willing to take my family, including my animal family.