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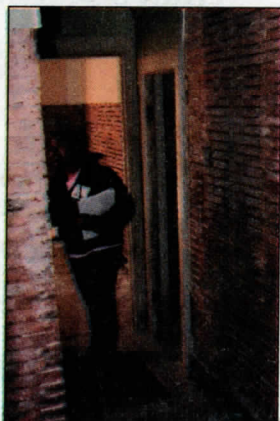
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the Patriot Talon

The Big Easy



See inside:



A student reporter's reaction to the 'new' New Orleans
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One year later: a 'new' New Orleans

Student journalist recounts visit to hurricane ravaged city

By India Moss
Staff Writer

Everything I envisioned about post hurricane New Orleans reflected the hours and hours of video images I had watched on television. The devastation caused by the force of Mother Nature made a lasting, if not profound impression.

Images of people stranded on their rooftops. People trudging through toxic water carrying what little possessions they could on their backs.

The cameras recorded the sea of residents seeking shelter in the wind-battered Superdome and instead, finding cramped, unsanitary and miserable conditions.

I was shocked something so disastrous could happen in America – a country we like to believe is invincible.

All of these things flashed through my mind as I entered the outskirts of New Orleans on a charter bus filled with University students, faculty and reporters. University of New Orleans officials invited us for a weekend of basketball, rebuilding, and fellowship to thank The University of Texas at Tyler for playing host to them during the hurricane.

My introduction to the Big Easy wasn't what I expected. Everything appeared clean and fresh; no signs a hurricane had ripped through. A billboard size advertisement inside a highway underpass greeted us with a promise of a "new" New Orleans.

The Superdome appeared untouched and filled with convention participants, instead of stranded residents begging for aid on national television.

It was evident our downtown hotel survived the storm without much damage. Gold-plated glass doors led to a lobby of crystal chandeliers and marble floors.

Mirrored elevators with jazzy music took us to warm rooms with amazing views of the French Quarter and plush beds with fluffy pillows.

Bourbon Street appeared revived – back to its normal state of chaos. Shops were open, music blasted from dark club entrances, hoards of people walked, danced and stumbled in the street as others threw Mardi Gras beads from balconies.

More civilized sections of the French Quarter still supported fancy restaurants and churches, while homeless people slept on benches and tourists snapped photographs.

On the way to the UNO campus – located in the levee district of the city – the scenery changed dramatically. Conversations softened to whispers as we looked through our windows at broken streetlights, leaning

Official notices posted on the majority of abandoned homes warned of health and safety hazards.

India Moss
freshman, journalism

signs, fallen trees, abandoned cars, broken windows and houses with debris lines where flood waters had reached.

Buildings displayed scrawled messages of "Help Us" and spray-painted numbers left by search groups to denote death tolls.

During the Saturday afternoon games the Patriots' and Privateers' basketball teams reunited for the first time since nearly a year ago.

Once the competitions ended, the players hugged, greeted each other, and spent time catching up.

They met again on Sunday for about four hours together as the team members volunteered at the New Orleans Habitat for Humanity Project, called Musician's Village.

Rain had soaked the lower Ninth Ward and the wet, moldy, abandoned houses heightening the smell of decay.

Official notices posted on the majority of abandoned homes warned of health and safety hazards. Inside, fragile floors cracked as you walked, and layers of dust and dirt covered every surface.

Patches of mold covered walls and ceilings. Watermarks 180 centimeters high made me visualize homes filled with water that had destroyed everything a family worked to obtain.

On the bus ride home I thought about the reality of what I had seen. Television images are one thing, but seeing the devastation with my own eyes proved to be quite another.

I began to realize a newfound understanding and sympathy for all of the hurricane victims and their plight. The city and its people became real and tangible instead of a place and people I had heard about on the news.



Staff photo by Kyle G. Horst
Walking into an abandon house in the the Ninth Ward, India Moss silently takes in the details of the damage done last year by Hurricane Katrina.

Through all the vast destruction and emptiness, however, I saw hope and determination.

I admire the thousands of men and women volunteers who have taken time out of their own lives to help rebuild the city.

It seems an endless job, maybe even thankless one for some, but I believe there is a "new" New Orleans on its way.

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Silent band pays tribute to the past

By Kyle G. Horst
Staff Writer

While other students were working on the Musicians Village project with Habitat for Humanity, a fellow student journalist, India and I went on a "walking tour" of the Ninth Ward.

As we made our way through the dreary streets, a middle-aged man and his friend standing by his truck suddenly hailed us.

"You from FEMA?" he yelled.

India and I looked around to see if he was talking to us, but we didn't answer him.

"Are you from FEMA," he asked again. "Where's my money?"

A chill suddenly shot through my body, because the man thought I was from FEMA, and had kept his money from him.

Then I saw a flagpole with a drum set running up the side

and topped off with a trombone.

I was hooked. I had to talk to him.

After telling him we were not from FEMA, I started asking about his yard and its decorations.

His immediate reaction was "What?! I think it's all junk."

The phrase "wicked awesome" ran through my mind.

The man revealed himself as David Fountain, the owner and creator of "The Katrina Band House."

Fountain said he fled his home with everyone else during the hurricane and returned on Oct. 7, 2005 to find his house in shambles and almost everything he owned ruined by the floodwaters.

He said he started his "Katrina Band House" after the Musician's Village Habitat project started down the street from



Staff photo by Kyle G. Horst

Above: The grand entrance to the Katrina Band House. The sign gives volunteers directions to the Habitat For Humanity's "Musicians Village" project.

Right: A mannequin sits in a flat-bottomed boat with his drum set.



him.

Fountain invited us into his home, which was filled with musical memorabilia, such as a print of Billie Holiday, and a donated piano — all of which were water damaged.

He said

he was renovating his house one room at a time.

The kitchen was in working order, and so was the bathroom. The master bedroom though was still in a state of disarray, with the watermark on the wall still visible.

Back in the living room, I saw Fountain's home computer, a

new Hewlett-Packard, with a widescreen monitor, a card table with liquor bottles on it, and a disarray of papers.

The striking contrast of the new home fixtures with the old water damaged ones made an impact on my day.

Outside, his decorated yard and roof contained some of the musical debris lying around after Katrina.

Fountain said his odd yard art attracted the attention of Habitat For Humanity volunteers who would stop by and admire his decorations.

Fountain noted that volunteers donated most of the instruments, and a local band called "The Gospel Chords" donated two of the trombones.

Fountain said the members of "Katrina's Silent Band," included "Mother Katrina," a dressed mannequin, which stands on the band house's roof, singing the silent lead; with "Baby Katrina," an abandoned child's doll, singing backup; "Santa Clause," a washed up Christmas ornament, plays saxophone; the wolf-man, a creation in itself, plays lead-keyboard and Reverend Lowdown, a cigar smoking, gun-toting fiend, conducts the entire thing.

"People think it's all junk, but art-like," Fountain said. "What d'ya think?"



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Volunteers provide fo

▣ Students work in Ninth Ward district to construct new homes for displaced musicians.

India Moss
Staff Writer

Musician's Village is the New Orleans rebuilding project conceived by performers Harry Connick Jr., Branford and Ellis Marsalis.

The three musicians and New Orleans natives collaborated with Habitat for Humanity to restore some peace to the Upper Ninth Ward, an area hit hardest by Hurricane Katrina.

The village is made up of 70 homes for displaced New Orleans musicians and other qualifying Habitat partner families, according to the Habitat website. Future plans call for the construction of 150 other homes in the Upper Ninth Ward neighborhood.

In December, construction manager Ken Francois described the project as a "hand up" not a hand out.

He said families interested in moving into a house must be able to devote 350 hours of community service to Habitat for Humanity and repay a 20-year, interest-free loan.

A large part of the success of Musician's Village is in the hands of volunteers, Francois said.

Together, The University of Texas at Tyler and The University of New Orleans supplied nearly 70 volunteers on Dec. 10, enabling days of work to be completed in just hours.

Past volunteers include President Jimmy



Staff photo by Kyle G. Horst

Women's basketball coach Terri Deike yells out words of support to the UNO and UT Tyler teams while they prepare for their Habitat for Humanity tasks.

Carter, President George W. Bush, Sen. Barack Obama and tennis stars Venus and Serena Williams.

Musician's Village receives millions of dollars in donations from groups and businesses like None Such Records, Texas Roadhouse, and Dave Matthews Band.

Francois said he retired from the Air Force in 2000 and has built 40 Habitat for Humanity houses in his hometown of San Antonio.

He said when the hurricane hit he wondered what he could do to help. So he offered his services in New Orleans.

Francois said he arrived in New Orleans on May 1 and described the Ninth Ward as being in "terrible condition."

"There were damaged cars stacked near an overpass and houses shifted into the road," he said.

Francois said there are other rebuilding projects in the Ninth Ward still being developed, but he wants to see these other groups "stick their necks out" like Habitat for Humanity did, and begin building.

Rebuilding

Francois supervised students from the University who volunteered on an overcast Sunday morning, unpacking lumber to begin building more houses in the Ninth Ward.

Students were given hammers, hard hats, gloves and surgical masks to begin the efficient process outlined by Francois and his crew.

Rachel Marlowe, 19, a sophomore from Marshall lived in New Orleans prior to the Hurricane and commented on the changes she saw while volunteering.



Working on the Texas Roadhouse house frames, Kelli Walker (left) and E

"It was surreal and neat being back in the same area but with totally different scenery," Marlowe said.

Marlowe said she had helped Habitat for Humanity in New Orleans before the Hurricane.

"This project was in a much lower income area than before," she said.

The contrast between the piles of rubble and the rainbow-colored Habitat houses was striking, students said.

Will Edmond, 22, a senior from Douglasville said it felt good to help.

"It was an experience most people don't get, to help rebuild Musician's city," Edmond said.

Francois said he plans to complete his work in New Orleans and return to his San Antonio home after eight months of construction.

He said a memory he will carry with him after his stay in New Orleans came from an article he saw about Musician's Village with a photograph of 22 brightly painted homes built under his supervision while in New Orleans.

Francois said the image shows a great amount of progress in the Ninth Ward



Staff photo by Kyle G. Horst

Above: Spanish transfer student Sami Badawi for the University of New Orleans takes nails out of a board.



Above: Joey Barnitz grabs Humanity supply shed.

Foundation for new city

❑ Toy drive benefits sick children in New Orleans's Children Hospital.

By India Moss
Staff Writer

While students hammered and rebuilt some of the Ninth Ward, University cheerleaders distributed toys at the Children's Hospital in New Orleans.

A week before the men and women's basketball games in New Orleans, cheerleaders held a school-wide toy drive.

Students, teachers, faculty and staff were able to donate toys or money, said cheerleader Jennifer Jones, 18, a business major from Tyler.

Jones said they received "a lot of toys" and \$400 in donations to buy more.

"There were many toys left over, which were put in storage for incoming patients," she said.

The young recipients were excited to receive the donated toys and have the cheerleaders visit the hospital, Jones said.

"I enjoyed it. Everyone was really nice and the children were really happy to receive the toys and were glad we were there," Jones said.

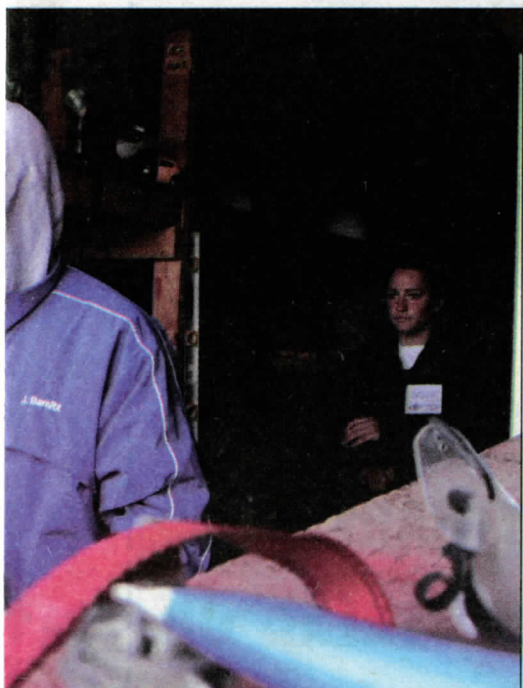
After distributing the toys to the young hospital patients, cheerleaders played with the children and their new toys, Jones said.

Jones said she had never been to New Orleans before the December basketball trip and was anxious to see the city and how much rebuilding had taken place.

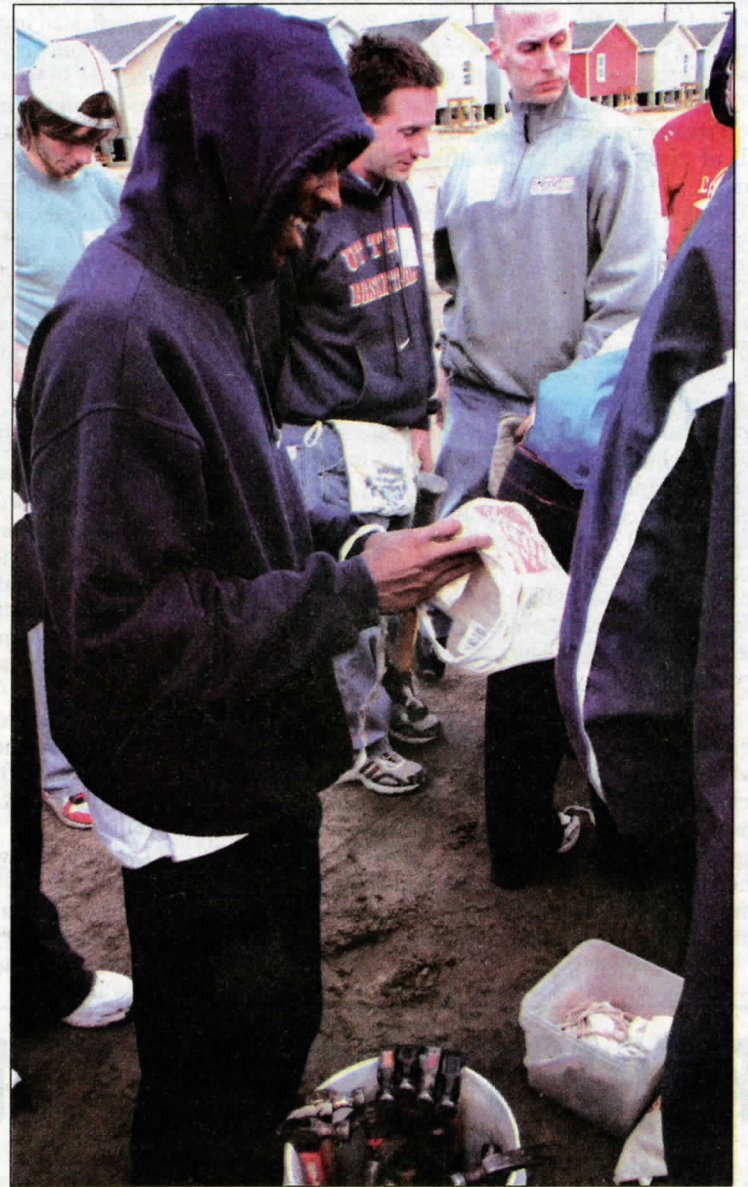
She said she only saw a few parts of New Orleans. "More had been rebuilt than I expected," she said.



Staff photo by Kyle G. Horst
ca Aguilar (right) tap out nails with hammers.



Staff photo by Kyle G. Horst
some supplies from the back of the Habitat For



Staff photo by Kyle G. Horst

Above: Grabbing a hammer and an apron Shaun Reynolds cracks a joke before going to work.

Left: Finishing up the last of the frames, Melinda Honey, right, taps the last few nails out of the frame while teammate Candace St. Julain watches.

Bottom: A sunset over the city after a hard day's work.



Patriots fall to Div. 1 UNO

Jeremy Cotham
Sports Editor

When the University's men's and women's basketball teams each took the court on Dec. 9 against the University of New Orleans Privateers they played a game that had a lot of meaning to both schools.

UNO officials were paying the University back for giving the Privateer men and women's teams hospitality in the fall of 2005 following the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

UNO played its fall semester home games at the Patriot Center.

Both the men and women's basketball teams came home without a victory but women's basketball coach Terri Deike said they came home with a greater sense of feeling of what Katrina left behind.

"When you see New Orleans and what Katrina left behind, even though it was a year later, it makes the story come to life," Deike said. "Everyone hears on the news how bad it was but you don't realize it until you are there to see it and experience it."

The women fell to the Lady Privateers, 69-56, while the men dropped a 76-52 decision without their leading scorer.

The UNO campus, which is about 10 miles north of downtown on the shores of Lake Pontchartrain, still had some effects left from the hurricane and the game had to be played in the volleyball gymnasium.

Women's game

The women played the first game at 2 p.m. and opened the game by shocking everyone and going into the locker room at halftime with a 34-28 lead.

"It was a great feeling to be up at halftime and we were playing great defense even though we were outmatched with height," Deike said. "We were also shooting very well and had a good feeling going in at half, but we knew how good they were and that they would eventually wake up."

The Lady Privateers did wake up, sparked by Talishia Young, who had four points at the half but finished with 19 points and nine rebounds.

"Their size in the second half turned the tide," Deike said. "We just couldn't overcome their size. There's a big difference between D-I players and D-III players. They were just much bigger players than us."

Even though the Patriots were giving up about three to four inches on about every play, they were still able to tie UNO in rebounds (39-39).

Leading the way for the Patriots was Sha Shead, who poured in a game-high 20 points while Sarah Stanley chipped in with 11.

The Lady Privateers outscored the Patriots in the second half, 41-22, shooting 60 percent in the half and finishing at 46 percent for the whole game.

Men's Game

In the men's game, which was played after a reception that was held with administrators from both schools, the Privateers jumped out to an early 3-0 lead and never trailed after that.

The Patriots, who were without leading scorer Brandon Weasby because of a knee injury, were down 39-28 at half, but it was the start to the second half that was the dagger in the heart.

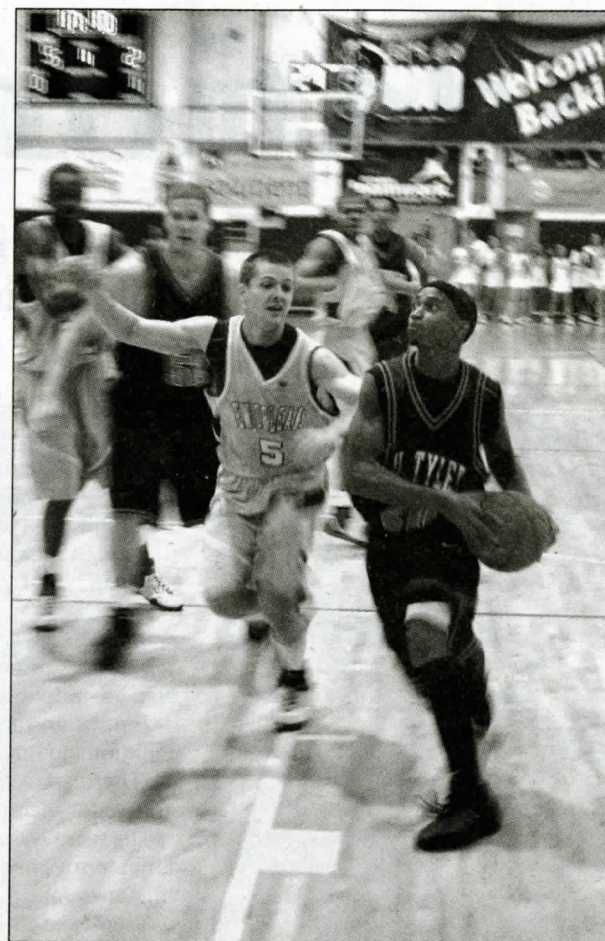
UNO came out in the second half and put up 11 straight points in the first three minutes to build a 50-28 lead.

The only player in double figures for the Patriots was sophomore Anthony Reese, who finished with 10 points.

Just like in the women's game, the men were at a height disadvantage, but still managed to out rebound UNO, 27-23.

Leading the way in scoring for the Privateers was Shaun Reynolds with 25 and Bo McCaleb with 23. For the game, UNO shot a resounding 58 percent, compared to the Patriots' 43 percent.

The Patriots bench did come through big on the game,



Staff photo by Kyle G. Horst

Leading the drive: Patriot Jeff Cotton, right, goes for a layup against UNO defender Joey Barnite.

outscored the UNO bench, 52-9.

"Overall, it was a good trip for our kids to take," Deike said. "Just the experience to go there and see the city and to play a Division I school was a new taste for them and I hope they got a lot out of that trip. I know I did."

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Rebuilding



Staff photo by Kyle G. Horst
Right: Early in the morning, Kelli Walker (left) begins her community service by taking nails out of the unusable house frames.

Above: a panoramic composite photo of the Ninth Ward area where Musician's Village is located.



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