

*Escape from the Storm*TM

September 2, 2005

Greetings,

“Hurricanes aren’t too bad when one is trapped in New Orleans at the Royal Sonesta with room service. Now that is what I call a Reverend Tony disaster.”

That was the lead I wrote last Saturday morning, sitting on the veranda of the Sonesta. But waiting for standby on the last flight out of New Orleans last Sunday before The Storm, it felt more like the Titanic. We had even dined Saturday night at Galatoires, the last meal they will serve for quite some time.

I have been trying to figure out why Lady Claire and I survived while so many others were trapped or worse and the best I can come up with so far is to tell you the story about the escape.

Sunday morning was perfect, not a cloud in the blue sky and not a soul at the Royal Sonesta’s pool either which was strange because Saturday morning there were still people hanging out from the night before, some of the Wives v Jocks were still attempting to mate.

Mayor Nagin was ordering a mandatory evacuation of everyone except emergency personnel, the media **and** hotel guests so I asked Lady Claire to order room service while I went to the liquor store for more gin and wine and to

Walgreens for snacks because I was not going to pay mini-bar prices unless and until things got desperate.

It should not have but did surprise me to find everything boarded up except for the Daiquiri bar of the Sonesta which was serving half price pitchers of daiquiris. That and the mention of snakes coming out with a flood finally made me understand that this might not turn out quite the way as I had first thought.

About 11 am, after room service, nice hot showers and putting on our travel clothes, and Lady Claire looked especially fine as is her custom, she took her suitcase and went down to the front to start looking for a cab. I finished packing and joined her about 10 minutes later. While waiting, Lady Claire and I were interviewed by Fox TV and Ben Crawford saw us.

Since we were checked out, the Sonesta could not rent us a room or else violate the law. And since we were no longer hotel guests, we were subject to the mandatory evacuation. So we had no choice but to get to the airport because I was not going to spend 3-5 days at the Superdome.

There were only five of us still left at the hotel, Andrew, a way hung over real estate guy from DC and two young ladies in their 20s who had a rent car at the airport and were driving to Lafayette.

We had been trying to get a cab for over an hour when out of the blue heaven came a van big enough for all five of us and our luggage. The driver had

a Haitian flag hanging from the rear view mirror and I think he was dealing drugs or people or maybe both as he drove.

But he knew all the back roads including an alley and a church parking lot, delivering us to the airport in about 40 minutes. He even toted our luggage to the curb. Since it took Belmont and Frank an hour and a half by interstate to reach the airport exit when they left at 4:30 AM Sunday morning, we would not have made our flight without Mr. Haiti #1. Belmont and Frank made it safely back to Jackson by noon Sunday but they were without electricity until late Wednesday afternoon.

Southwest had already canceled our 5:30p flight and their 3:30p was full and had all of the 4:30, 5:30, etc. on their standby list. But during the cab ride, the hung over guy got a ticket to Houston on Continental so I called and got us on the 5:30p arriving in Austin at 9:45p which was not too bad. We ended up flying stand by on the 3:30p which was Continental's next to last out of town.

Four Yums way up for Continental who had flown special support personnel in that morning so that their local people could tend to their own business. I learned this from the Agent at the gate who was based in Austin. He also told me that everyone flown in were all flying out on the last plane which made us feel much better.

While we were checking through security, several buses pulled up and out swarmed a lot of really large black people. My first reaction was that they were busing people from the Superdome to the airport and in a sense that was correct. The Saints had chartered planes to take their players, families and support personnel to San Antonio and also escape the storm.

We took off about 3:45p in cloudy but not threatening weather and the Superdome glittered in the distance as we headed home. Our luggage beat us to Austin so we went straight to Matt's because I really, really did need a margarita.

So why were Lady Claire, The Reverend Tony and all of The Saints saved when so many still don't know what fate has in mind. Well maybe only to tell the story or more likely because we had the means. We had the cash to get the cab and get the cab to take us to the airport. We had Continental Elite and a credit card. The Saints travel by charter.

The poor people who didn't get out couldn't get out because they had no means, no transportation. They are infirm, old, many now dead and they had no way to get out. Theirs is a miserable fate. So if you are so inclined please send a contribution to your local food bank especially if your town will be sheltering refugees like Baton Rouge and Austin will be.

But most importantly we had all of you praying for us, even the atheists and agnostics. Thanks for all of your good vibrations, we could feel your energy.

The Reverend Tony

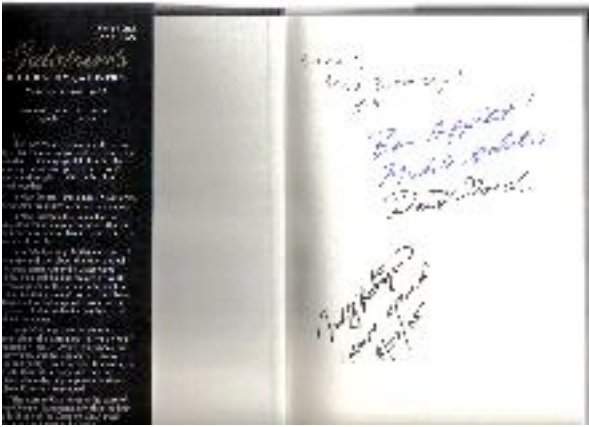
Photos from the Last Weekend in New Orleans



The Chef's Table at Commander's Palace with Adam our waiter and Tory McPhail, chief chef and you can tell that because he has the tallest hat. Belmont is in back between Frank and me.



The Last Supper at Galatoire's with Bob our waiter.



The book Belmont is holding is the Galatoire's story and she had them all sign it. Breaks my heart but it does establish the provenance.



This is sunrise on Sunday morning the day before The Storm blew in that Belmont took on their way back to Jackson. Belmont said that the birds would fly in formation first one way and then the other, sounds freaky.

September 9, 2005

Greetings,

Before the announcement of the latest scam, one more comment about the people of New Orleans who chose to stay. They had to leave their pets behind because the public shelters would not take pets. I could never leave my kitties behind and none of you would either. When pets became allowed people started leaving. In Cuba, refugees from a hurricane are allowed to bring their pets (including chickens) and their TVs!

Lesson No. 1 - Save the Pets, Save the People!

As you may recall the original plan for the hurricane weekend was to consume one million calories which did not occur but only because the Chalmette Battleground was closed and therefore we did not lunch at Rocky and Carlo's but listened to that french woman sing at The Napoleon House. So that reduced the calorie intake by about 200,000 and for those of you interested Rocky and Carlo's is gone too.

It will take a while to accept that Lady Claire and I attended the last Friday Lunch at Galatoire's and it was everything and more. We arrived about a quarter before noon and the main room was packed with women dressed so fine, pearls, pearls, pearls girls everywhere so went upstairs to the bar for a cocktail.

Sitting at the bar already was a 20s oriental in rep tie and khakis drinking a Martini up with olives and reading his pathology text. Then a lawyer ordered "Dewars on the rocks and make that a double" and his friend ordered a Manhattan while their lady friends drank Cosmos.

Bob brought us the usual, garlic salads and souffle potatoes to start then Lady Claire had the fish with jumbo lump crab and I had the strip rare. They served her so much jumbo lump crab that she barely touched the fish.

Later in the afternoon the room starts to rock, more lawyers arrive and table hopping starts in earnest. We left about 3 pm just as it was beginning but we had to leave or miss out on the Chef's table at Commander's Palace.

Friday evening was The Chef's Table at Commander's Palace. We arrived a bit late but Ti Martin was waiting along with Chef Tory McPhail and our waiter Adam who later agreed to participate in the five year unsupervised study required by the FDA for my latest scam **Sex Before Dinner**[™] which was in double secret pre-preliminary preproduction for The Food Network until The Storm put it up on the shelf until The Big EZ is restored.

We will be holding auditions at Matt's tonight for **Sex Before Dinner**[™] but you must actually have sex before you arrive because there is not really a good place for that at the restaurant.

The Last Supper at Galatoire's began about 7 pm but unlike Friday lunch the main room was almost empty, we were probably the fifth table out of about 40. Bob brought us soufflé potatoes without our even asking which is tres sweet.

After many martinis and hugs we retired earlier than usual because Belmont and Frank were leaving for Jackson at 4:30 am which is way too early for me. Actually the only reason we did not leave with them was that they came in Frank's cute new Audi convertible for the picnic to the Battleground and Rocky and Carlo's instead of the Sequoia which would have been enough to accommodate all of us and our luggage.

And the rest of the story begins at the top of the page. Peace, love and understanding, I remain The Reverend Tony™.