

The Return™

New Orleans, March 2006

Our first visit back since The Storm and also the first day back on the job for Malcom, the doorman/greeter at the Sonesta who returned to work the same day we checked in. Malcom helped us get the cab out of town back in that other lifetime.

Malcom was evacuated to the Cajun Dome in Shreveport then wound up in Brookshire, Texas working at Jack in the Box and Dollar General Stores. The Royal Sonesta also sent him some money until he could find a way to move back. Malcom lost everything.

Many have not moved back and many of those will not move back according to the lady who ran the coffee bar in the lobby. She thinks she saw Richie Mouton once but he has not played the Mystic Den since The Storm.

Richie played the upright bass and was one of those guys whose music came directly out of his fingers.

Bob was still at Galatoire's but his home in the Carrolltown area got about 5' of water from Lake Ponchartrain but he can probably rebuild depending on the insurance claim. Bob was our waiter on the Saturday night before Katrina hit on Monday. Belmont thought she had seen a ghost when he first came up to our table.

Pammy lost her home and is living with her parents in Alabama. Pammy was our bartender at the Absinthe House.

Also open for business is Acme but not Felix which probably will not reopen. The Palace Cafe is open but Brennan's, Mr. B's and Dickie Brennan's Steak House are not and I do not even want to talk about Commander's Palace.

This quote about Commander's Palace is from Lally Brennan, the grand dame of the Brennan family and taken from The New Orleans Menu which is a great web site if you like the food of New Orleans. Their link is www.nomenu.com

"It's Pandora's box," Lally said. "Every time we think we've found all the problems, another one turns up. They're still excavating the place, according to the dumpster I spoke with in front of the restaurant last week."

Napoleon's is open but with a limited menu and limited hours which is not unusual. K-Paul's is open too which is too bad except for the Cajun Martini.

Saks and most of the Canal street mall will not open until November, probably to make sure this hurricane season doesn't carry it all away again.

Most of the people we met were in either real estate development or insurance, both sides of the table too. Seems like there are different coverages for wind/rain damage and flood damage. If you house floods because the wind blew off your roof AND from the storm surge, then you have a coverage issue, which the insurance companies just love.

I believe the most difficult thing the city has to overcome is the lack of employees for the hotel and restaurant industry. Most of those were minimum wage (at best) workers, the same people you saw in the Superdome or the Convention Center and are the refugees from The Storm.

These two photos pretty much sum up where New Orleans is now. This one was taken at the Starbucks on Magazine a couple of blocks from Whole Foods™. This is the high part of town and did not flood but did get wind and rain damage and of course much looting. Also near the Garden District, the Zoo and Tulane.



Lady Claire suggested this one taken at the airport. The headline on the magazine reads "NFL Preview 2005" which would have been on the newsstand just before The Storm.



So please help these people out before it is too late. Unless real tourists start showing up to dine and drink then many of those restaurants will close, never to reopen. Geaux to New Orleans early and often and take ALL of your money. Laissez les bon temps roulez à nouveau.