

## Mississippi Journal

Dick Ecker

### 10/13/05 (Thurs.)

Picked up the van in Aurora and then picked up the donated alternator from Dr. Peterson in Elmhurst. The drive home with it convinced me that it was not a good idea to take it to Mississippi in the van. Stored it in our garage until adequate transportation is available. Packed the van.



### 10/14/05 (Fri.)

Drove about 10.5 hours and stayed the night in Granada, MS. Enroute, I received a call from Liz Doucette of the Union Church in Hinsdale, who planned to go to Pearlington with Fran Evans, arriving about noon on Monday (10/17). I told her I would find a place for them to camp and would find them work until they were needed for our project.

### 10/15/05 (Sat.)

On the road by about 8:00. Reached Stennis airport at about 12:45 pm and met Sandy Molenhouse at International Aid (described by Sandy as a Christian Red Cross—IA is the official aid distribution agency for Hancock County...except clothing). Got my ID badge at EOC Hq (Emergency Operations Center, Hancock County) at the high school next to the airport. Then began a tour of the area with Sandy. Started in Bay St. Louis, where we had a bag lunch in a large feeding tent in a K-Mart parking lot. We then drove through Bay St. Louis and Waveland to view the damage—still very apparent even after seven weeks. We made a stop at the point where Hwy 90 crosses St. Louis Bay over a causeway—which is no longer there. There we met a local couple who had lost a house on the west shore of the bay, north of where we were standing. Like most locals, they seemed anxious to talk about their losses.

We continued to view the devastation in BSL and Waveland, stopping at Word of Faith Church in Waveland, where the church runs a POD (point of distribution) for local residents. At the POD, residents can pick up food, ice, bottled water, donated clothing, and other necessities—all free. Standing outside one of these facilities, you can see a constant stream of people emerging with bags full of supplies. In fact, outside the distribution point in the K-Mart lot next to the food tent in BSL, people could be seen queuing up with K-Mart shopping carts. Word of Faith Church has modified its church building (still standing, but in need of much repair) to house volunteers, who man the POD and do other work in the area. The church has also dedicated a portion of its grounds as a site for FEMA trailers, even putting in a sewer line to accommodate the trailers.

We stopped next at Lakeshore Baptist Church in Lakeshore, west of Waveland. The only remnant of the church visible on the site is the steeple, standing upright next to the road. The storm destroyed the homes of every member of this congregation. The congregation has erected a Quonset tent to use as a sanctuary and is actively involved in the community relief and

rebuilding effort. Many of the people in the community were on well and septic. We were advised that the most critical current recovery need is for water pumps. Most residents in that area have shallow wells and surface pumps, which were destroyed by the flooding. People need electricity plus a serviceable water source and septic system to qualify for a FEMA trailer.

From there we drove to Pearlington, where we toured the devastation and visited the elementary school that currently serves as the center of activity in the community. There, the



gymnasium serves as a distribution center for residents, the football field serves as a parking area (both for cars and for tents and vans of volunteers). The school parking lot accommodates port-a-potties, showers, laundry facilities, fire trucks and outside storage, the administrative office houses a medical clinic and several classrooms provide shelter for residents with nowhere else to go—and for longer-term volunteers.

Stopping at a site along Pearlington's main street (Hwy 604), we were fortunate to encounter Rocky Pullman, Hancock County

Commissioner for Pearlington. Rocky helped clarify some of the recovery issues and volunteered to introduce me to church lay leaders in the community (none of the serving pastors live in the community). I asked if he could do it tomorrow, if I came to worship at his congregation (First Southern Baptist Church). He agreed, but advised that I would have to bring my own chair to the service.

We returned to the airport and I moved my belongings into a vacant tent across a driveway from the IA warehouse. We ate at the mess tent a couple of blocks from the warehouse, where hot meals are served morning and evening. A clean restroom is available in one of the school buildings, a short walk from the warehouse. (A high school and middle school are located at the airport site. Some of the school buildings have been used to house EOC, but because school had resumed the day before I arrived, they were preparing to move elsewhere.)

### **10/16/05 (Sun.)**

Past the school with the restroom—about 100 yards—is a large shower trailer with perhaps 10 shower stall on each end, one for men and one for women. Each stall has a dressing area about the size of a phone booth and a shower area about the same size—and sharing a fair amount of the water with the dressing area. There I took my first shower Sunday morning. After that experience, I decided that it is easier not to take clean underwear and socks to the shower, but simply return to my tent in sweats and bare shoes and dress there.

After breakfast (grits, scrambled eggs, sausage patty and biscuits)—I left for Pearlington (a little over 20 miles) for 10 am services at the First Southern Baptist Church. I took along a case of bibles (I had brought 4 cases with me)—and my camp chair. There I met Chandler Reynolds, deacon chairman. The service was conducted by a visiting minister. It was held on the front porch of the church—a red brick structure that was intact but had been gutted down to the metal studs by cleanup crews. After service I found Rocky, who led me around town to point out churches and, where possible, to introduce me to church leaders. The Roman Catholic parish, St. Josephs, is just down the street from Rocky's church, but they were celebrating mass as we drove

by, (the church was totally missing—leaving only an expanse of concrete supports...and a ramp for the handicapped leading nowhere), so I noted the location and we drove to the Greater Mt. Zion AME Church. There was no one at the church at that time that represented congregational leadership, but Rocky noticed Mr. Jack Lewis in the area, who is a leader in the First Baptist Church. Rocky left me with him. I explained our mission to Mr. Lewis, took his name and number and the name and number of his pastor and asked if he knew who I could contact in leadership at the AME church. He pointed down the street to a lady in her yard and suggested that I go talk to her.

I did, and met Orealia Marshall from the AME church and her husband John. After explaining our mission to her, I asked if she could point me to any leaders from other churches in the community. She led me across the block to where Jacqueline Bradley was sitting under a canopy next to her house. Jacqui is a



leader in New Hope Baptist Church. I explained our mission to her and said I'd be in contact. Then, after getting a little lost, I returned to the main part of town and found the members of St. Josephs having a time of fellowship after mass. There I met the priest, Father O'Brien (not a local resident) and he introduced me to Camile Lichtenstein to whom I outlined our mission. (While I was visiting with parish members, I met Dr. Piascek, who was at the Argonne National Laboratory for a year in the early '70s while I was on the scientific staff there. He was in a different division and I didn't

know him. All of the church leaders I met gave phone numbers for me to contact them.

I then drove around familiarizing myself with the community. While stopped to take a picture of the condemned First Methodist Church, a passing motorist offered a friendly greeting. A few minutes later, I encountered the same gentleman stopped at a home site littered with debris (as almost all were). He was inspecting the wreckage of an inverted boat trailer. I stopped and greeted him and, as he seemed eager for conversation, I got out of the van and listened to him for at least half an hour describing how his family had experienced the hurricane, his appraisal of the devastation and his personal experiences—and frustrations—in dealing with the relief and recovery process. I will be keeping my eye out for him as I drive around town in the days to come.



Finally, I went to the school and found Greg, a volunteer from Omaha trained by the Salvation Army, who is managing the distribution center. I told him of Liz and Fran and their need for sleeping arrangements and for volunteer work for the short run. I asked that, should they arrive without my being notified, he see to these details and he agreed. I also talked to a man named Joe Clark at the information desk in the distribution center about the matter of water



pumps, which I had learned were becoming a major issue to get people qualified for FEMA trailers. He advised that a company had offered help in installing pumps if we could get them. I said I'd look into getting them.

While I was in the parking lot of the POD (the football field) preparing to leave, I was hailed by a man in his car who asked if I was Joe Chandler (?). Apparently, he had seen my badge and had made a wrong connection. I confessed not only to being other than the man he sought, but also to having been on the scene for only a very short time.

However, he persisted in questioning me and I endeavored to answer as best I could. He represented a Rotary Club group interested in becoming involved in the recovery effort.

While I was talking with him, I got a call from Moe, who advised that Staci Page, head of the relief effort in Pearlington, wanted to talk to me. I found Staci in the distribution center and we went to the mess area to talk. I explained our exact plans to her and expressed my concern that lack of water pumps could delay delivery of FEMA trailers. She advised that Joe Clark had the situation confused and that the company in question was contributing the pumps—not the people to install them. We then discussed means for getting the pumps installed and I volunteered to help. We were joined later by Shaun Clark, who is scheduled to replace Staci as head of the Pearlington relief effort on Wednesday.



I returned to the IA warehouse, where the staff was preparing a steak, shrimp and corn-on-the-cob dinner to be cooked outside the warehouse, right across from my tent. There they had a gas grill set up and a gas burner that could accommodate a large pot. Someone had acquired a TV set while they were out shopping—and an assortment of DVDs. After the meal, some of the more hearty (and younger) souls set up the TV in the warehouse and played one of the DVDs. I retired to my tent.

### 10/17/95 (Mon.)

After a shower and breakfast (the same as yesterday), I drove to Pearlington and reported to Greg (head man at the DC) to see if he knew of something I could do. I said that I could do plumbing, electrical or carpentry work. He had just been talking to John Marshall, whom I had met yesterday and whose FEMA trailer was leaking water under the kitchen sink. So I volunteered to help John with his problem. Greg also suggested that I could help the two Native American firemen from Arizona, who were building display tables for toys in the DC.





I went with John to his trailer, where I found that the leak was caused by a loose fitting on the drain trap under the sink. I noticed that the water pressure, when I tested the leak, was cycling because there was no pressure tank in the system. The pump was providing water directly from the well. I suggested that the pump would probably not last very long in that configuration. John had cleaned it up some after it was flooded in the storm, but its days were probably numbered. He agreed and said that there was a tank at his son's house a couple blocks away and that he

hoped to salvage it and install it in his water system. The well at that site had fallen victim to a fallen tree—a very large tree from the look of it.

The son's home was a 16x60-foot trailer that had been originally mounted on two long, parallel slabs. Now it sat slightly atilt and crosswise of the slabs. I advised John that, even if we could get the tank to his house, we'd still need PVC pipe and fittings to install it in his system. He said he might have a source for fittings and said he'd track them down and contact me at the school when he had them.

Meanwhile, a lady named Shirley Acker from the street behind John's had been at his house earlier and said that her water pump stopped working after it had been connected to the outlet on her new FEMA trailer. I drove to her house to check out the problem—which was no easy task, as the house now blocked half the street.



Shirley told me that the pump had worked fine when it was connected to the generator, but would not run on power from the trailer. A check of the outlet showed that it had power. Looking at the water system, it was obviously one that had endured the flood. I asked Shirley what he husband had done to recondition the pump motor before using it. When she said "Nothing," I was pretty sure what the problem was—a burned out pump motor. This was a pretty typical result when people ran their pumps without cleaning and lubricating the motors. Even with cleaning, they wouldn't be expected to survive for very long. It took a while to convince Shirley that the fact that the pump had worked with generator power and not with house power was strictly coincidence.

Back at the school, I met Soloise and Heart, the two firemen from Arizona, and began to prepare the boards for the tables Greg wanted. All we had to work with was 2x4s, some 5/8" sheathing and some 8d sinkers, which were too long for some needs and too short for others. The 2x4s had to be ripped with a dull power saw (which kept overloading the generator being used to power it) to get the 2x2 edges Greg wanted on the tables. I spent most of the rest of the day working with them.



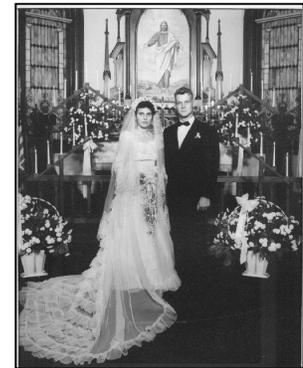
The two firemen were from group of 17 working for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, who had volunteered for relief work in the area. Most seemed to

be working in and around the school. Soloise is Apache. I heard that there were five different tribes represented in the group. [Note: I just heard what sounds like a mocking bird calling outside my tent (6:45 am). Haven't seen much wildlife of any kind since I've been here.] Soloise told me that he works only during the fire season (Apr-Oct) as a firefighter and as a carpenter the rest of the year. Heart doesn't talk much. He did tell me that the last wildland fires they had fought were in June and July.

Toward the end of the day, Soloise remembered that he had met a guy named John looking for me earlier outside the school (we were working behind the school), who said he had the parts for hooking up his pump, but when I went to John's house, he wasn't there. Then I returned to Stennis. The evening was uneventful and I hit the hay about 10 pm, after working on this journal. (I had brought along a 75 watt trouble light with my tools, which I hooked up in the tent with a long power cord from the warehouse.)

### 10/18/05 (Tues.)

Today is my 52<sup>nd</sup> wedding anniversary. After breakfast and a shower, I called Myrna to wish her a happy anniversary. Drove to Pearlington. Went to John's trailer to see if he had all the material needed to fix his pump. He was not there, but his wife told me that her mother's pump wasn't working. She directed me to the house next to the AME church, where "Miss Lillian" showed me into her trailer and I tested the GFI circuit into which the pump had been plugged. It was dead. However, I could not locate the GFI reset outlet in the trailer and left confused, promising to come back when I had more information.



As I was leaving, Orealia (Miss Lillian's daughter) came into the yard and said the air conditioner in her trailer wouldn't work. (The temperature had been pushing 90 these last few days.) I went back with her and asked if she had checked the breaker—but she didn't know what I was talking about. I found the breaker tripped and reset it. I left being hailed as a miracle worker.



Back at the school, I helped my Indian friends build saw-horses to use as supports for the toy tables (later used for winter clothing when the weather turned cold). At lunch, I met some FEMA guys who assured me that a GFI reset outlet would be somewhere in the trailer, although sometimes in an obscure location. After lunch, I returned to Miss Lillian's and found the reset outlet hidden behind some toilet articles on the bathroom sink. I reset it and checked the pump, which was now running. But then I was confronted by Miss Lillian's other daughter, who lives in a tent next door. She complained that when I had unplugged the pump earlier, I had also pulled the plug on an extension cord that ran into the area of her tent. Then the GFI problem became clear. The extra load from the fixtures in the tent next door had overloaded the GFI circuit. I showed the daughter where the GFI reset was in her mother's trailer and how to reset it—as there was no question that the overload would happen again.

Spent the rest of the afternoon installing toy tables in the DC. Then left for Stennis. Ate dinner with the warehouse crew, who had picked up ravioli dinners from a Red Cross feeding

truck. Heard from Moe that the trailer kits have been shipped and are due at the warehouse on Friday.

**10/19/05 (Wed.)**

After breakfast in the Stennis mess tent and a shower, I left for Pearlington. Talked to Moe on the way, as my cell phone most of the time doesn't work in Pearlington.

Checked in at the school and tried to find out how many FEMA trailers are in Pearlington. No one there knew. I was told that only FEMA knows. Assumed that the people at IA could find out, but decided to drive around town myself and just get an idea of how many there are. On my way, I stopped by John Marshall's trailer to see what he had acquired to install a tank on his water pump. John was not there, but the tank was. However, it was clear that it would never work. I told Orealia that and she agreed, so I went on.



I found a lot more trailers than I expected and got a look at a lot of Pearlington I had never seen before, getting a bit lost on one occasion. On the way, going down a street near the river, I saw a young man sitting on the porch of what remained of a large, two-story house. I stopped, walked up to the porch and greeted the man, explaining that I was attempting to acquaint myself with the streets before making some deliveries later in the week. Almost immediately, an older man appeared, motioned the younger man out of his chair and asked me to sit down. As with most residents, this man seemed anxious to talk about what the house we were sitting in looked like before the storm, the task before them to restore it and his frustration with how slow services were being restored—particularly electric power. As we talked, the electric service truck drove up and I left him to deal with them.

On an elevated back overlooking the river across the street from his house, a very large tugboat is now landlocked. The man had told me that the boat, which had been moored some distance down the river, had been converted into a bed and breakfast by the couple who owned it and that they had ridden out the storm on the boat.

Back at the school, I got in a conversation with Marcia, who helped at the information desk at the DC, where services and needs are matched up. As I related some of my experiences (and frustrations) with residents who are unfamiliar with the operation of the travel trailers that FEMA is providing, she asked if I could follow up on a request from an elderly resident who complained that she wasn't getting any gas for her trailer. The only information



Marcia had was that she thought the lady's name was Ruth and that she lived on 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue. She asked if I would check it out.

Only one house on 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue had a trailer and appeared likely to be the home of the lady in question. However, no one was home. When I got back to the school, Marcia was in conversation with Terry, a lead trailer inspector for FEMA. They were discussing the problem with the lady Marcia knew as Ruth (actually, her name is Annie), who it had now been determined lived at the 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue address I had just visited. She asked if I could go with Terry and show him where the trailer was located. He also asked if I could help him find a "Miss Lillian," who had complained that she had a gas leak. What followed was an invaluable education on how FEMA trailers are supposed to be installed and used—and what can go wrong if they are badly installed or misused.

We went first to Annie's and discovered that the gas valve had never been turned on. While we were inspecting the gas valve, Terry noticed that the 12-volt battery was missing from its mount behind the gas cylinders. He explained that, although these trailers were installed to be used in place, they are still travel trailers with all the properties typically designed into them—including a 12-volt system to run the lights when the trailer is not connected to AC power. He also explained that, although these trailers were intended to be connected permanently to 110V AC power with a standby 12-volt circuit powered through an AC/DC step-down converter, the converter needs a battery in place to work the way it was designed. In the short run, it will still power the 12V circuit without a battery, but will ultimately burn out the converter—and possibly trash the whole electrical system.

At present, no AC power had been restored to the site where Annie's trailer was installed. Terry checked to see the best way for power to be brought from a nearby pole and explained that the contractors employed by FEMA to do this were contracted only to bring a single 30-amp outlet within reach of the trailer's power cord (perhaps 20 feet). Obviously, the contract did not take into account the possibility that water might be supplied by a pump from a well. These pumps need a separate 20-amp circuit which, if installed, would have to be done at the resident's expense. So it is reasonable to expect that most residents will simply plug the pump into the trailer's GFI circuit through the exterior outlet, having never been advised to do otherwise.

At "Miss Lillian's," where I had already discovered the problem of having a pump plugged into the GFI circuit, Terry found that her complaint of a gas leak was very much valid and made a report for repair of the valves. While we were there, he looked at the pump and the electrical hook-up and reiterated the need for a dedicated 20A circuit for the pump. He also noted that the battery was missing from her trailer.

When we got back to the school, I agreed to remain available to follow up on requests for help with their trailers or for help qualifying their sites for the installation of a trailer. No more requests came this day.

I continue to meet interesting people. Today, I met two mental health professionals; Carol, a social worker from Springfield, IL and Rebecca, who is a psychiatric nurse from Spokane, WA. The third member of their team is a fellow named Keith. Their job is just to be around and available to listen if people want to talk—residents or relief workers.

Later in the day, I found Soloise and one of his fellow firemen building a frame for a tent in the parking area/football field (it even has a surviving goal post on one end). I lent a hand as the firemen finished erecting the frame.

Yesterday, I had met Rev. Fields, pastor of the AME church, who invited me to a service to be held this evening at 6:00 in the dining area. So, I stayed in Pearlington and had dinner with

Liz and Fran and hung out in the area till the service began. It started a bit late, so I had to leave before it was over so I could get back to Stennis before dark.

Back at the warehouse, Leslie (currently managing warehouse operations) advised me that they were moving their operations center out of the warehouse across from me and into a Quonset tent next to the loading dock at the other end of the complex. Called home and then turned in about 10:30. For the most part, the weather has been hot during the day and comfortable at night. A couple of days there was a lot of fog which, by morning, had condensed on the pine branches high above my tent and woke me in the morning as it dripped on the tent like a gentle rain.

### 10/20/05 (Thurs.)

After usual morning rituals, went to Pearlington and met Liz and Fran at their tent finishing breakfast. Yesterday they had told me about Rex, a guy about 60 who was living on a houseboat in New Orleans when Katrina hit. He rode out the storm on his boat and survived—but the boat didn't. He was sent to a shelter in Houston, where he was shot twice by one of his fellow refugees—once in the buttocks and once in the



knee. He still uses a cane to walk. Rex has set up camp in a corner of the football field with a tent and an elaborate array of tarps (blown away by a strong wind by the time this picture was taken), where he has set up a variety of easy chairs reclaimed from the debris that is everywhere around town. He even has a TV and DVD player—also a dog. He has a large truck with a sign on the side “Mr. Fixit.” In the back of the truck he keeps a variety of tools and supplies.

The ladies suggested that I get Rex involved in some of the installation and repair jobs needed at FEMA trailer sites or at sites needing to qualify for trailers. So, when Joe Clark at the information desk in the POD asked me to give him a list of parts needed to install new pumps and create dedicated 20A circuits for the pumps, I sought out Rex to go along.

I found him in his “palace,” sitting in one of his easy chairs and listening to a CD with earphones. He was happy to accompany me on my mission. We checked out a couple of installations to find out what might be needed, discussed the possibilities and reported back with a list.

Then I went on a couple of calls for Marcia, one to visit a fellow who just needed a new pump. While I was there, he showed me his unique septic system in which the effluent had been pumped through a sprinkler in his yard. Good for the grass, but a bit questionable in terms of sanitation. However, from what I had learned, virtually all septic systems in town had regularly overflowed “gray water” (partially processed sewage) into ditches or low places on the property. So, this fellow’s solution may have actually been more sanitary than most. I asked how high the water had come at his place and he pointed me to a mark on the light fixture of his ceiling fan. He also showed me his porch light, which was still full of water.

The second call was a request for help getting water restored on a property. No one was at the site, which had once been one of the large 16x60 trailers. Like the other I mentioned earlier, it had been tossed off its foundations. I searched the site to find a well head, but never found it. I suspect that the house ended up on top of it. No FEMA trailer would be installed on this site.

Meanwhile, Liz and Fran continue to attract interesting characters. One of them, a fellow named Tony from Jackson, MS, had come down to the Gulf to make some extra money hauling debris, for which he had been paid by the state at \$3.00 per yard. To make this venture maximally profitable, he had constructed a huge trailer capable of carrying 31 cubic yards. Recently, however, he had not received any requests for his services and had spent some of his idle time making the acquaintance of the ladies from Hinsdale, whose tent was not too far from the trailer that was his current home.

Tony became a major player in the drama that was the Pearlington POD when the glut of accumulated clothing became so great that a decision was made to discard it. In fact, Greg had set up huge displays of clothing on the sidewalks outside the gymnasium (distribution center) in the hope that he could find takers for the garments.

Tony, when he heard what was planned, told the ladies that he had recently been at a POD in Waveland, where they were desperate for clothing items and he volunteered to transport the Pearlington excesses to Waveland in his trailer. Liz and Fran, who had spent much of the week sorting clothes for Greg in the DC, told him of Tony's offer—and the great clothing exodus began.

While that was going on, I drove around Pearlington, continuing to make an estimate of how many FEMA trailers had been installed. I estimated at least 60—probably more. Many of them—at least those I could see clearly from the van—appeared not to have batteries.

Back at the school, Tony had returned with a request from the Waveland POD to include some canned vegetables with the next load of clothing. This time, I helped load the trailer, as Greg's sidewalk display disappeared—along with a pallet containing some canned beans and some peanut butter (interestingly, all in beer cases) and a pallet of baby formula.



I returned to Stennis; ate, read some, wrote some and retired.

### **10/21/05 (Fri.)**

Usual morning rituals. It was suggested that, since the operations center was moving to the other side of the site—and the warehouse near my tent was going to be occupied by another agency—I should move my tent over near the new operations tent. So I loaded all of my stuff into the van in preparation.

My plan for the day was to hang around the warehouse until our shipment arrived, then talk with Sandy, who was due back today, and plan when and how the material would be distributed. Sandy had the contacts needed to determine who in Pearlington had trailers and were eligible for starter kits.

The semi arrived mid morning, right while everything was being rearranged in the warehouse to accommodate the contractors who are doing repairs on the building. Because Sandy would not be available till later, I left for Pearlinton about noon to find out for myself who had trailers and who needed kits. We decided to simply drive around town, identify sites that have trailers, knock on the doors and ask. That's exactly what we did.



Liz and Fran (given the names “Thelma and Louise” by Carol, the orange-shirted social worker, who was sitting in the mess tent with us when we hatched the plan) would take one part of town, Tony another and I a third. Among us, we made about 70 contacts, 55 of whom needed a starter kit. About 15 were already adequately supplied with household goods and declined. We decided to get together as early as possible tomorrow to start distributing the kits.

Back at Stennis, I ate dinner (beef stew, rice, lettuce salad, peas and chocolate cake) and found Sandy, who was still busy with other things. So, because it was becoming too late to move the tent, I moved back in (at least sufficiently to spend the night) and then met with Sandy, who will try to get us a truck to deliver kits to Pearlinton and a secure place there to store them while we make deliveries.



Called home, wrote in this and hit the hay.

### 10/22/05 (Sat.)

Woke at 6 am. Had the usual breakfast (eggs, grits etc.) They took away the showers on the other side of the woods behind my tent, so I decided to take a sponge bath and shower tonight in one of the two new showers in the back of the warehouse.

Because of the work removing insulation from inside the ceiling of the warehouse, everyone was encouraged to wear a dust mask while in the building—which I did. I was advised that a semi trailer would be available for loading our kits later in the morning, so I began to inventory the contents of a kit, to confirm that they had everything on the item list. I found everything except the bathroom waste basket. Given the concentration of items in the bins—and their total lack of wasted space—I may well have overlooked it. Even if it was left out of the kits, it was no great loss and I decided not to pursue it. While I was waiting for the semi to return from an earlier delivery, I emptied my van and loaded it with three kits.

Kept in contact with Liz in Pearlinton as estimates of when I stuff might be loaded were updated. Meanwhile, Sandy was out with a camera crew recording for her church relations work some of the things that were going on east of Pearlinton. Finally, it was determined that our load would be at the Pearlinton POD at about 2 pm and I arranged to meet Sandy there at that time. Alerted Liz of those plans.

At about 11:30, I got a call from Pat Carlson, who was driving with four other ladies from Christ Church toward Pearlinton from Mendenhall, MS, where they had been working as part of a CCOB mission project. She said they were about an hour away. As they would be passing right by the turnoff to the airport, I suggested that they come here first, as I wouldn't be in Pearlinton till 2:00. They arrived about 12:45.

We gathered in the tent IA uses for breaks and I tried to summarize the current situation in the area and what I had learned while I was here. Mostly I answered their questions. At about 12:30, the semi driver came into the tent for directions to the Pearlington POD, so I had to cut short our visit. I suggested a route for the ladies to follow to get the best total view of the area—down into Bay St. Louis from the airport and then west through Waveland and Lakeshore into Pearlington and to the POD—where I would be arranging the delivery of the trailer kits. I would see them there unless I was out on a delivery myself.



The load was at the POD when I arrived, but the only forklift there was in use unloading another trailer, so we had to wait over an hour to begin unloading ours. Meanwhile, some of the people from Pearlington, to whom we were scheduled to deliver kits, were at the POD with their own transportation.

So, we began to unload kits by hand and distribute them there in the parking lot of the school. Everyone received a bible with each kit. Then we decided to load up Tony's pickup by hand from the semi trailer and he and Fran began to make deliveries from our lists. (He could get three kits in each load.)

Sandy arrived with her camera crew while all of this was happening. They taped some of what was going on. Then Sandy suggested that we load a couple of kits in her van and have Liz accompany her to deliver them.



When the forklift came, we began to offload the truck. People continued to come by who were on our lists and were given their kits there in the parking lot. When Tony and Fran returned, Tony suggested that the forklift be used to transfer two pallets (4 kits) directly to the back of his truck so they could increase the efficiency of deliveries.

When the 10 generators were offloaded, I told Joe Clark that they were his to dispose of as he saw fit. He hugged me and said, "It's a miracle. I need exactly ten generators...right now." They were moved to a more secure area on the school site. The 25 TVs were also stored in a more out-of-the way location to give them a bit more security.



The kits had to be stored outside in the parking lot, but they gave us two very large tarps to cover them so that the locals would be less inclined to curiosity over what was there. Then we left one of the Pima firemen to oversee the material and I went with Jason Sewell—a youth pastor from a suburban Detroit church, who had come to work in the IA warehouse and had accompanied Sandy earlier in the day—and delivered the three kits in my van and three more before the setting sun (and fatigue) suggested that we had done enough for one day. However, the indefatigable Liz, Fran and Tony decided to retrieve Tony's flashlight from his trailer and deliver one more load. Jason and I headed back to the warehouse.



At the end of the day, we had distributed 44 kits (out of 60 taken to the school) and perhaps 10 TVs. (We had no policy on the distribution of the TVs, which were included with the kits whenever it was determined that there was a need—particularly if there were children in the family.)

Uneventful evening. Tried unsuccessfully to get the World Series on the radio.

### **10/23/05 (Sun.)**

Woke as usual about 6:30. There were 15 kits remaining in the warehouse, so after breakfast (raisin bran and a couple of cold pancakes...can't face another day of scrambled eggs), I loaded two kits into my van and left for Pearlington where I met Liz at the school at about 9:30. Fran and Tony were already out delivering kits. They came back just before I left for 10:00 church at the Southern Baptist Church, where I had worshiped last Sunday. It was still "bring your own chair," but this time inside the gutted church. Many more people this Sunday, including a group of men from Virginia, who were in Pearlington re-roofing the church building. I saw Rocky Pullman before the service and asked to talk with him for a few minutes after the service.

After opening prayer, several hymns were sung, led by a CD player and the men from Virginia. The sermon was offered by a recent seminary graduate, who had moved from Florida to Diamonhead, MS just weeks before Katrina hit. Like most along the Gulf coast of Mississippi, he had lost his home in the storm. He preached a powerful sermon on how his attitude about dealing with the needy had changed since he had become numbered among the needy himself. It was a stirring message—straight from the heart.

After service, I met with Rocky and told him of my experiences with the FEMA trailers—in particular the absence of batteries from the majority of them and the insufficient electric service for sites with water pumps...which includes virtually every site in the community. He was unaware of both circumstances and assured me that he would take immediate action to get the situation corrected.

I returned to the school, where I found Jason waiting, and we went off to deliver the two kits in my van to people on my list. When we returned, all of the remaining kits had been picked up by Liz, Fran and Tony, so we waited together for them to return. Finally, we called and were told that they still had several kits remaining to be delivered, so we decided to eat (the Salvation Army feeding truck had just arrived) and then I would take Jason on a tour of some of Pearlington he hadn't yet seen—particularly the churches.

On the way, I took him to see the tugboat bed-and-breakfast that was grounded across the street from Mr. Russ, whom I had stopped to visit a few days earlier. Just as we drove up, the crew pulled up behind us in Tony's pickup with the last of the deliveries, which was for Mr. Russ, who now had his FEMA trailer. We unloaded the kit for the Russ's, stopped to visit for a few minutes and then returned to the school.

I told the crew that I would be in touch early tomorrow about how the last 13 kits would be distributed, and Jason and I returned to Stennis. I hated to miss the farewell powwow planned by the Pima Indian group for this evening, but I don't like getting back after dark. It turned out to be a good decision, as I was asked later that afternoon to vacate my tent (which was needed by another group) and move into a vacant (identical) tent already set up on the other side of the warehouse. So, once again, I loaded my stuff into the van and moved it into my new quarters.

Unfortunately, there is no electricity available over here right now, so I have to make do with a battery-powered lamp and my flashlight.

A new caterer now provides meals in this area, but they had to set up a new tent, which would take a couple of days. Today, tables were set up outside, but it is getting very cold at night, so I put my dinner in a doggie box and took it to my tent where at least I was out of the weather. This caterer makes better grub. Tonight we had steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, mixed vegetables, salad with a large choice of dressings and chocolate cake. They even serve decaf coffee...first I've had since coming here.



It was cold and windy in the night. Whoever put up this tent didn't close any of the side vents, so it was very drafty. Slept OK in spite of that. Will close those vents tomorrow.

### 10/24/05 (Mon.)

The mess tent is still not up. Grabbed some hot grits and milk from the chow line and ate raisin bran and grits in my tent. Still very cold and windy.



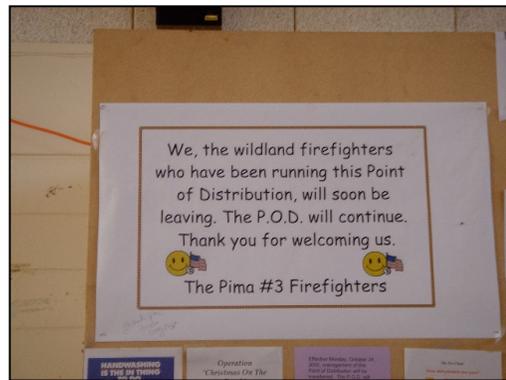
Sandy arranged for me to take the last 13 kits to Pearlington in an IA rental truck. I left about 11:00, having alerted Tony that I was coming. Liz and Fran were packed to leave but still there when I arrived. While we were talking, the Salvation Army mess truck came and we ate at a table with an aging Pearlington native who, like most of his fellow

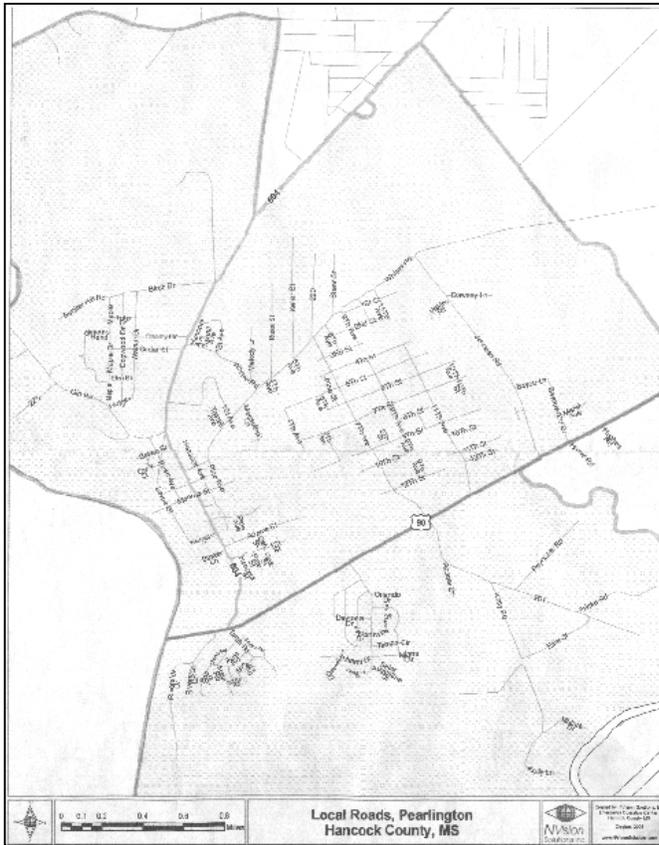
citizens, had stories to tell about the storm. Liz and Fran told a touching story of the Pima Indian powwow the night before. Hopefully, they will record the details of that event so it can be included with the narrative of our days in Pearlington.

Tony and I left them to finish their



preparations for hitting the road home and we hit the streets of Pearlington to find the last few addresses on our list. It was no small task. With all the recovery activity, it's hard enough to get up some of those streets in a van. The truck was often a real challenge. And, as a map of the town indicates, many streets have dead ends and then resume the other side of some woods, a couple of blocks away. It took us over two hours to find five addresses, which completed my list.





We returned to the school with eight kits and seven TVs. The people at the POD agreed to distribute them according to their sign-up list—which was growing rapidly as word got around. However, by the time we got them unloaded, three people on Joe’s list appeared in the parking lot and relieved us of three kits and two TVs. So, only five kits and five TVs remained at the end of the day. Joe and Shuan at the POD also agreed to take charge of receiving, storing and distributing any additional kits we might send down.

I bid a farewell with thanks to Tony, having already given him \$90.00 to reimburse him for gas and the use of his truck, and returned to Stennis. At dinner, Sandy asked if I could go with her to Lakeshore tomorrow to visit a home site on which a woman she had met hoped to have a washer and dryer installed for her aging parents, and which could be available for use by other family members and people in their neighborhood. I said I’d be happy to

go. I have never failed to learn something useful about the area and its people when I tag along with Sandy.

It was very cold. I showered in the warehouse (at least the water was hot) and hit the hay early as it was too cold to sit up. Went to bed in my sweats and socks to stay warm.

### **10/25/05 (Tues.)**

Woke up before six, but stayed in bed till 6:30, avoiding till the last minute the exposure required to get into my clothes. The mess tent is up now, but of course it’s not heated, so the food doesn’t stay warm long. Only the bran flakes stayed at the proper temperature.

Mid-morning, Sandy and I left for Lakeshore. We stopped at an elementary school (Gulfview?) where they were cleaning the gym for storage of bottled water. Then we went to Lakeshore Baptist Church and visited the POD there—in a Quonset tent next to where the church used to be. Met the pastor there. He remembered me from my first day in the area. Learned from a man who was clearing the area that the community was hit first by a tornado and then a storm surge.

The people we were scheduled to visit (Archie and Grace) live only a short distance from the church, and we received directions to their home from the pastor. Their house was scattered all over the area and they were now living in a FEMA trailer. Beside the trailer is a large concrete slab that had once supported a carport and workshop. Lying around in what had been his workshop was a magnificent collection of tools, many of them still in the overturned mechanics tool chest. A boat motor and power washer were both sitting there, but neither could

be cranked. He had had three boats, one of which was never found. The others were destroyed. He also had a horse that was never found.

He has an artesian well that has been capped and connected to a pump next to the carport slab. He had just about completed running power to a satellite box in the carport that will have a 220V circuit available. I advised Sandy that it would be very easy to install a washer and dryer at that location. The drain water—at least for the present—can be run into the woods (or what’s left of the woods) at the back of the property.

The steel sheeting he had recently used to re-roof his house was mostly still intact (although the two halves of his roof were now at opposite ends of his property). He will be able to use the sheeting to roof the carport, which still has major support timbers in place—and he has plenty of tarps to enclose the slab where the appliances will be installed. While we were at Archie and Grace’s home, I got a call from Nan Barnhart, asking me to track down the last name and address of a couple she had met in Pearlington last Saturday. She wanted to write to them.

We then went to the Morrell Center, which is being build by the Morrell Foundation (founded by Morrell Osmond of the famous entertainment family) on state park land provided by the governor on a short term (one year?) basis. It is intended to be used as housing for volunteers (100?) and also laundry and shower facilities for locals. In three weeks they already have the building just about ready for finish work—an amazing feat.

Then we drove back to Stennis, had lunch and I called Doug Calhoun to ask that they consider sending a washer and dryer for Archie and Grace on the next load from Sears. Then I left for Pearlington.

Joe Clark at the POD was able to give me the most likely name and address of the Mary and Charlie that Nan had visited. I also confirmed with Joe that space would be available at the school site to house volunteers (in tents) if we came back with some later.

As I drove into a site at about the address Joe had given me, I recognized a lady working near her trailer whom I had photographed with her neighbor, after we gave them kits yesterday at the school. I particularly recalled the neighbor, who had showered me with thanks for the gift. Turns out that her neighbor is Mary—the one Nan had met—and she came out of her trailer next door to greet me as we were talking.



Mary confirmed that she had talked to Nan on Saturday and was delighted to hear that Nan wanted to write her. Then she said that she had just made a big pot of soup and invited the neighbor (Pam) and I to come to their trailer and join her and Charlie for a bowl of soup. We both accepted and I ended my last Pearlington visit (this time) on a high note over a friendly bowl of excellent vegetable-beef soup and good conversation with Mary, Charlie and Pam.

They live on Hwy 604 (main street) and their house had been blown or washed onto the highway. By the time they returned after the storm, the house had been destroyed and carted away (along with all of their possessions) to clear the highway. Charlie is a maintenance supervisor for a shipyard in New Orleans that now builds armored vehicles for use in Iraq. Today was his first day back on the job since the storm.

Went back to Stennis, packed the van, took a shower and am now putting finishing touches on this journal—my fingers rapidly losing their feeling from the cold. I will be in the sack early again to escape the cold. Tomorrow morning, I leave for home.

**10/26-10/27/05 (Wed. & Thurs.)**

Uneventful trip home. Stopped over in Marion, IL.