

Created by: Katie Pierce and Cameron Quick, Schaefer Middle School

Grade level: 6-8

Primary source citation: MSNBC's *Citizen Journalist*, "CJ Experience: Hurricane Katrina," <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/9076525>.

Allow students, in groups or individually, to examine the articles located at the above link while answering the questions below in order. The questions are designed to guide students into a deeper analysis of the source and sharpen associated cognitive skills.

Level 1: Description

1. Are all of these excerpts taken from the same state? How do you know?
2. What year did Hurricane Katrina take place?
3. Are the excerpts being written in 1st, 2nd or 3rd person?

Level 2: Interpretation

1. How would you have felt to leave your family and friends behind?
2. Do you think all people felt the effects of the hurricane in the same way?
3. Why do you think some of the areas that were in the path of the storm were called "war zones?"

Level 3: Analysis

1. Can you explain what a hurricane is?
2. What do the excerpts tell you about hurricanes?
3. What could this tell you about global warming?

From NBC News: CJ Experience: Hurricane Katrina

<http://www.nbcnews.com/id/9076525#.Wmeng6inGUk>

Returning home to East New Orleans

We been living in the home for 3 years and it has 4 bedrooms and 2 1/2 bath. At its highest, the water reached four feet in the home. Although it will be a lot of work, we will return to the home and re-build as soon as we are able.

--Gennith Johnson, New Orleans

To see more photos of the Johnson home, click here

Saved by her N.O. angels

An excerpt from a submission by Diana Jackson, Orinda, Calif.:

Tuesday morning, the hotel announced that there was some water rising on Canal, and that we would have to wear bracelets identifying us as guests. They had reports of looting and gunfire, so all but one door were locked. They also announced that they would only be serving one meal each day, and that the backup generator would probably last only another hour or two. They strongly encouraged anyone with a car to leave the hotel, as there was word that roads to the west were open. I asked if they might try to arrange carpools, and they said no.

I packed my bags and went down to the lobby to see if I could get a ride anywhere, with anyone. There were a lot of people leaving who did not want to take any passengers. I spoke to a woman who said that a man had accepted her offer of \$1,000 to take her and friends out of N.O. She said that while the valet was getting the car, a manager of the hotel approached the driver and advised him not to take strangers! They eventually found a stray cab.

I waited until the lobby was nearly empty, and cried for the first time.

To read the remainder of Diana Jackson's story, click here

Surviving in St. Tammany Parish

I am in Pearl River, LA (St. Tammany Parish). We hear very little about our parish on the only radio station we can receive WWL-AM 870. We survived the storm and now we are

struggling to survive the aftermath. We have downed power lines, with poles ripped completely out of the ground, trees uprooted, and water in some of our homes. I do not have electricity, running water, and just got phone service. I am using (2) generators to keep my refrigerator and freezer from spoiling. I am using a 5 gallon bucket with kitty litter for restroom facilities (I am the Kitty). I heard about FEMA on Thursday giving water, ice and MRE meals. Southern Alabama Churches are passing out personal hygiene items. Gas lines are one mile long and we had to drive 100 miles for the nearest grocery store that was working. I would like to thank all the FEMA employees for being here to help us your supplies are a GOD send. I would also like to commend the power company CLECO for working so very very hard to return electricity to the businesses via generators so we all can survive the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. THANK ALL OF YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT AND PRAYERS SO THAT WE WILL SURVIVE.

--Marilyn Wallace, Pearl River, La.

A city of heavy silence

I just returned to DC from New Orleans after volunteering with relief organizations. It was hard to imagine I had been enjoying the Mardi Gras there only a few months ago. My first impression of the city was heavy silence. Unless a helicopter is flying over or a convoy of trucks is nearby, once you venture into the side streets you are very much alone. New Orleans had been a city with ghosts but now it feels like a city of ghosts. If you've read "The Stand" by Stephen King, you know what I mean. My most faithful companions in the city were the flies. They are everywhere, and they followed me to the edge of town, like good hosts bidding me to come back again soon. The smell is almost solid, and as I treaded carefully between branches and debris in flooded areas, I couldn't help remembering the sinful smells of New Orleans - the beignets, gumbos and exotic perfume coming from voodoo and palm reading little shops. Colorful shiny beads are everywhere, hanging from trees and half-buried in stinky mud. As I was leaving the city, one of the other volunteers reminded me that it is bad luck to leave New Orleans without beads. I felt like a half-looter half-priestess as I picked up a string of silver beads from a tree and squeezed it in my hand all the way to Baton Rouge.

--Jade Boneff-Walsh, Alexandria, Va.

Lost business, found family

We had taken a loan against our house to open a pottery business. We made hand made

pottery and I had all the equipment -- four kilns, a slip machine, molds, slab table, as well as clays of various types and glazes and \$1,000.00 of Chemicals just purchased to mix our own glazes.

I had business insurance but did not have flood insurance. When I went to our shop the floor had two plus inches of mud on it. The shelves in the store had been pushed around as if someone drove through the shop. This was caused by the surge of water from Lake Ponchartrain. Our shop was located in Old Town Slidell, which is about four miles from the lake. According to the water line in the shop we had about 5 feet of water. This has destroyed all the equipment, which was new as of December 18, 2004.

Needless to say our business has been destroyed and we don't know what we can do going forward.

On another note: my brother is missing and my sister is missing. My brother Joe Courtney, who lived in Kenner, La., decided to ride the storm out at a friend's place in Metairie, La., which is just outside New Orleans city limits. I have been trying to get in touch with him since last Tuesday after the storm had past. I cannot seem to get any information from anyone on my brother he has a birthday coming in five days and I don't know if he is even alive. My sister, Donna Wexiel, lived in Chalmette, Louisiana has not been heard of since the storm.

UPDATE (Sept. 6, 6:48 p.m., ET): Good news! Found my sister in Texas, and just moments ago got in touch with my brother. Have him and his family coming to my house as they lost everything.

--*Brian Courtney, Slidell, La.*

Feeling fortunate

My husband and I live in McComb, MS, about 90 minutes north of New Orleans. We were w/o water for four days and remain w/o electricity to date. We were lucky and suffered no property damage; we lost trees only. We were not prepared for the destruction of this storm and had little food, water, and gas to get by. My father-in-law brought us a generator, gas, water, and food from Texas to help us survive. His generosity has been a lifesaver and has helped us get by on the long, hot days. Yesterday, my neighbors and I cooked breakfast on the grill and served those in the neighborhood who wanted to eat. Afterwards, we had Bible study because we could not go to church. This was the first time my neighbors and I have

conversed to such length. It's a shame that it took such despair to bring us together. Nevertheless, our neighborhood has banded together and learned from this tragic situation. We are truly blessed here in McComb, MS. We have undergone nothing compared to what others have experienced. We have been temporarily inconvenienced only, and our lives will soon resume to the status quo. Our hearts and prayers are with those less fortunate than we.

--*Mindi Blalock Selman, McComb, Miss.*

No quick fixes

A temporary fix is not enough. I am a minister living in Mobile, Alabama. Eleven miles south of us in the city of Bayou La Batre. A 12'4" tidal surge took out homes, vehicles, and fishing boats of hundreds of families. This is a fishing community. The mayor of Bayou La Batre brought many families to the doorstep of the Bayou Wesleyan Church, pastored by a devoted man, Roger Bowers. Even though hundreds of pounds of food, water and clothing have been donated, the church needs large army tents to store the goods that are still being donated. Used trucks, cars and boats need to be donated for the people to pick up supplies and return to their livelihoods.

--*Jeff Givens, Mobile, Ala.*

Destruction in Bogalusa

I am from Mobile, Ala. I went to Bogalusa, La., which is 90 miles NE of New Orleans, on Friday to spend time with my husband his family to help them move. By the time we realized that Katrina was headed our way it was too late. He has elderly grandparents who need oxygen, insulin, and is in a wheelchair and we could not leave. I was forced to remain in Bogalusa to ride out the storm. New Orleans is not the only affected area in Louisiana. Bogalusa was torn to shreds.

The house that we moved out of just one day before Katrina hit has almost completely collapsed. The roof fell in and the floors were buckling. Trees down on homes and businesses everywhere. Water as high at 3 to 4 feet deep. Absolutely no power, water, or most of all communication is available. People's homes are destroyed. I was finally able to make it out of the city on Thursday morning to return to Mobile, where conditions, though bad are still much better than Bogalusa.

My family is using a generator to supply oxygen to my husband's grandmother. However due to gas shortages, I fear that gas will soon run out for the generator which is a necessity for her to live. I've never seen such destruction. Brand new buildings torn to shreds. Insultation flying around everywhere. Hundred foot pine trees and oak trees completely ripped from the ground and thrown 20-30 feet from where they originally stood. I plan to bring them more supplies this weekend. They are in need of help also.

The mayor of Bogalusa completely lost his home but Tuesday morning he was at city hall doing everything in his power to get running water. If someone could please get the word out that these people are in need also. I understand that many parishes in Louisiana are. Washington Parish was hit hard. Covington, and Mandeville are also in Washington Parish. There is still no communication here so there is no way for me to contact my family except to simply go over there. Someone please help them and everyone please join me in prayers for their community as well as the other communities affected by Katrina's wrath. I love the Gulf Coast. I've lived here my entire life and Katrina has destroyed my home, everything I know. God bless all the victims.

--Tara Madison, Mobile, Ala.

Feeling blessed

Our community has been completely destroyed. I live in Stark Bayou, a neighborhood of 90 homes. My home is still standing with only some slight flood damage, my neighbors are living there until they can repair their flood damage. My parents took us in further north in Meridian Miss. We all feel extremely blessed. We still have our family, health, home, and our jobs. We will be helping many, return their lives to normal as soon as we are allowed to go home. God Bless the USA, and thank you to all the good people of the world for your prayers and financial support of our communities.

--Terry Ward and Family, Ocean Springs Miss.

Emotional in Mobile

I live in Grand Bay, Alabama, and we felt the power of Katrina, too. However, I know I am blessed because my 4-month-old son is fine, I know where all of my family members are, I have a house to go to. I waited in line two hours on Wednesday to get water and ice only to

be turned away, I waited again Thursday for 4 hours and was able to get water, ice and MRE, I was so happy I just cried. I needed to bottled water for my son's formula bottles. I was afraid I was going to run out. I feel so sorry for those people who have nothing left, especially those who are trapped in New Orleans. Those horrible fools who are hindering the rescues of other people in New Orleans, I pray that GOD will rain down his wrath upon them! They will answer for their hatefulness and evil ways, maybe not in this lifetime, but in the hereafter, they will answer heavily!

--*Jessica, Mobile, Ala.*

Shelters sprouting

The monumental task of caring for thousands of evacuees at Houston's Astrodome is being repeated in smaller scale in dozens of shelters throughout southeast Texas. Beaumont has sheltered 1,200 persons in the Ford Center, the county's convention complex; Orange, Port Arthur as well as the smaller towns of Lumberton, Kountz, and others are housing persons in community centers and churches in groups of 100 to 250. The outpouring of support of clothing, bedding, & food from individuals, churches, as well as the local chapters of the Red Cross and Salvation Army is enormous. Similar micro-stories of support & aid are being repeated from Texas to Tennessee to Georgia.

--*Ryan Smith, Beaumont, Texas*

Getting out of control

Baton Rouge is like a war-zone. STILL no electrical power even though there wasn't that much damage to the city. No power trucks to be seen. They have started shooting and looting here. No gasoline, no motel rooms, no rental cars. I am worried going to work about leaving my home unattended. I-10 has people parked everywhere sleeping in their cars. The shelters and hospitals here are full. This area doesn't need politicians visiting, it doesn't need money....IT NEEDS LEADERSHIP & ORDER. God help us all if somebody doesn't step up and get control of this situation. True, Monday we were "in disaster mode", but it's Friday today and it's getting worse.

--*Wayne Roberts, Baton Rouge, La.*

'As long as needed'

I volunteered at the Red Cross Shelter located at Hirsch Coliseum in Shreveport, La., today.

Close to 600 refugees were brought in by school bus from the New Orleans area. More may have arrived after I left for the day. They were mostly orderly, appreciative, exhausted and treated with love and respect. They received triage, medical care if needed, mental health counseling, showers, food, toys, diapers, clothing and a safe place to sleep. The children were being enrolled in school and school supplies were plentiful. We will love on them as long as needed! Louisianans are faithful and generous!!

--Lisa Richardson, Bossier City, LA

Escaping from 'Armageddon'

From Anthony Smith, Sterling Heights, Mich.: My wife and I arrived in New Orleans on Friday, August 26th and were staying at the Holiday Inn in the French Quarter when the hurricane arrived. We lost power and running water on Monday morning around 6:30 a.m. The Hotel Manager, Mr. Darius Grey, and his staff were very professional and compassionate at the same time, they made sure the guests had something to eat and bottled water to drink. A portion of the New Orleans police used the lobby as a command center. As the situation continued to deteriorate in the streets the guests were asked to evacuate to the Convention Center on Tuesday, August 30th.

By the Grace of God we were sent a Savior in the form of William Johnson, Director of Security for the hotel. Mr. Johnson was evacuating to Galveston Texas, where he had sent his family earlier in the week and offered to give us a ride to Galveston with him, this man didn't know my wife and me from the "Man in the Moon" but was willing to take us with him. Once he had secured the hotel with the help of some of his staff he packed us into his Saturn Ion and we began our trip from "Armageddon".

To read Anthony Smith's entire story, [click here](#)

Never planned for this

As I'm writing this, I may be experiencing some signs of early labor. I've been planning the birth of my second son for nine months, but I never planned for a hurricane evacuation. My home is in Slidell and sustained only roof damaged and downed trees, but many other homes in Slidell are destroyed and under water. Thank God most people did evacuate. My family and I are staying in Baton Rouge with a friend, and guardian angel. People here have been amazing. The hospital has a plan for all of the "displaced OB patients" and many

doctors have volunteered to work with the hundreds of pregnant women who cannot contact their doctors and need prenatal care. Electricity in Baton Rouge is still sporadic. We spent the last two nights in the club house of another apartment complex. The outpouring of support is overwhelming. We are so thankful. Today, our electricity is back on and we now have AC and hot water. We are glued to the TV because we feel so out of touch with what is going on even though we are in the middle of it. We have heard reports of looters in and around Baton Rouge. Truckloads of evacuees are camped out in parking lots because there is nowhere else to go and gas is hard to find.

--Hilary Bordelon, Slidell, La.

Still in New Orleans

I am Donald A. Sauviac, Jr. a criminal defense attorney. As of Thursday Sept 1, 2005 at 7:49 a.m. I am holed up in a third generation family home located at Weiblen and Vicksburg Streets in the Lakeview area of New Orleans. My wife and four daughters left just before the storm and managed to make it to Memphis, Tenn. where they have three rooms with friends who left Metairie. I have two collie dogs and a bird here with me. The dogs are holding up on the second story flat roof with the generator. I am on the second story of the house a converted double. I have a 22 ft. pontoon boat tied up on the side street. I have plenty of food and water. I keep using the generator to charge up my phone and listen to the radio to figure out what is going on around me. I just moved into this house from a house in Metairie, which is known for flooding. As fate would have it the Metairie house that was up for sale is high and dry with no apparent damage.

The house I'm in had calf high water up to the second step of the inside stairwell. The water has subsided in the last day it only covers the first step. (the house is up on piers and from the sidewalk it comes up to my chest standing -- I guess the total depth was about 5 ft. Until yesterday I had clear running water in the upstairs sink, toilet and tub -- probably ok for washing off but not to drink. In a two block area there seems to be about a dozen people who are staying at this time. We check in on each other and talk by wading down and/or from windows or rooftops.

For the past few days I was charging on neighbors cell phone with the generator and used that phone occasionally to get a call out. At this time I have cell service in the very early a.m.

and late p.m. I even have wireless Internet service which just started working. My wife and children are frantic they want me to leave but I won't. This was my maternal grandparent's house that I as a child evacuated to during hurricane Betsy when my parents' home in Gentilly went underwater and we were evacuated by boat.

To read Donald's entire story, [click here](#).

Tough times in Baton Rouge

My family made it to Baton Rouge, La. All I can say is we are alive. Our area was just restored power yesterday. We had 16 people living in one house. One has Alzheimer's and it is devastating to her. The Baton Rouge area has had an influx of about 500,000 people and they are unable to support them. Even though most stores (Wal-Mart, Winn Dixie, Albertson's, Sam's) are open, food and supplies are being consumed at a rate never seen before. McDonalds, Wendy's, Arby's etc are already sold out of food and waiting re-supply. There needs to be an effort to move evacuees to other areas of the country. I see none. Gas supplies are extremely low and driving to get what food there is takes, in some areas 1 hour to go two miles.

--B. Bassett, Kenner, La.

A short respite

I own a small nursing home in east Texas. On Monday, we gave refuge to a family of 27 coming out of Jefferson Parish. One of the vehicles in their seven car caravan experienced mechanical problems and they waited on the busy roadside for almost three hours. I contacted a local chicken franchise and with their help was able to feed this family. My staff and I were thankful to be able to offer them cool shelter, restrooms, and a short respite from their journey for a couple of hours. The seven children were given stuffed animals and time to move about freely. The adults were frayed and the short time we watched the children allowed them to rest. When they left us they were heading to a small hotel 20 miles away where they had reservations. They had already received word that they had lost everything!

-- Judy Stallone, R.N.; Carthage, Texas

[Video: CJ on Scarborough Country](#)

Crisis at University Hospital

Through text messages and intermittent cell phone calls I have learned that 1,300 patients

and staff remain trapped mere blocks from the SuperDome at the University Hospital on Gravier Street (in New Orleans). My fiancé, Dr. Jessica Lee, is a 3rd OB/GYN resident there. She volunteered to staff the ward and has been there since 6 a.m. Saturday. They've got a bit of a web of communications going, handing off cell phones to different people – some messages come from Jes on other phones, other times I get calls from relayed messages. Last night, a message was relayed from a friend-of-a-friend in Chicago. Here's what they report: No power, sewage, food or water for 48+ hours, all exits are flooded, save one that leads to more water, no supplies have been delivered, 11 doctors shared 2 flashlights last night, many dead are reported in the hospital, the generator in the basement flooded, no helipad exists, no word from the outside world on a rescue or a plan, the stench is said to be unbearable and the collective mood and health standards are going downhill quickly.

I simply want to call attention to the fact that there is a much bigger catastrophe happening than we are being told -- there are much more emergent matters away from the bussing of the SuperDome to Houston - thousands are in dire straights at this moment in area hospitals without relief. Many lives are still in danger.

--Jason Newton

'It could be worse'

We evacuated to Houston on Saturday. Three children, a husband, a dog, and two cars. I left my oldest daughter, her husband, and two children back in Folsom, La. with her in-laws. They have a three year old and a three month old. They thought they were far enough north of the city to be ok (about 90 miles, I think) I have been out of contact with them since the storm services, until this morning. I finally heard from my daughter just a few minutes ago. They are in a house with about 15 people with limited food and water, and limited gas in the vehicles to get anywhere. The roads are heavily blocked with trees up that way and they are not able to get out anyway. My husband, Brad, tried to get to them and could not. Of course, we are getting anxious over here, and the limited communication is not helping things at all. My husband returned to check on the house and family, and he is also a property adjuster, so is standing by for "deployment".

We have heard from several of our friends via the internet. Many many of them are just planting where they landed, registering their kids for school in locations scattered all over

the country: Tennessee, Texas, Arkansas, New Mexico, Penn. The reality of the situation is sinking in with my 13 and 14 year old. They are just devastated, understanding that life as they know it has now ended. I just hug them and tell them things could be worse. At least we still have each other.

--Christine McPherson, Mandeville, La.

The kindness of strangers

My aunt, who has suffered her entire life from muscular dystrophy, is now trapped on the 9th floor of the Lakeside Hotel with no electricity, an unsafe structure and little food. She is a woman who can not move even to save herself, is surrounded by broken windows and collapsed ceilings, and she is just a few blocks away from the failed levee along the Causeway, just watching the rising waters helplessly. We, her few remaining family members, have been desperately trying to find a way to get her to us here in Houston and out of New Orleans. However, with the rising water, critical patients and overburdened ambulances she has been labeled a "low priority" and we cannot find the help we so need. I do want to thank a good Samaritan, Keith (sp?) who is a local New Orleans doctor who has stayed behind to help those in need, including my aunt. The first communication we have had with her in over a day was due to this wonderful man; he allowed us to use his cell phone to converse and has tried with all his might to find a way to get her to safety. He has brought in a battery run fan to cool her and to assist in trying to make her more comfortable. He has assured us that she is resting as well as she can. In New Orleans time of need it is a great comfort to know that there are so many kind souls who are reaching out and trying to make a difference. God Bless you all.

-- Liz Hiserodt; Houston, Texas

Leaving campus behind

I'm a sophomore at Tulane University and was forced to evacuate the same day I arrived on campus. I threw my luggage into my room, gathered my friends and, with my father, drove to Houston. Everything that I had at school is presumably lost, as I am living on the first floor. I have a couple days worth of clothes and yet I know that it could be so much worse. My thoughts and prayers are with the people I met in Houston... the people that lost absolutely everything and were just looking for a way back to their broken homes. I am back in New York now and we do not know when we can go back to school or what there will

be to go back to. Even so, I feel lucky and will do all that I can to help the people who are now suffering from the city that I came to love so much.

--*Elizabeth Spector, Croton, N.Y.*

Fear, tears and heartache

What do you say to a husband of 25 years when you see the fear, tears and heartache in the lines of his face? We haven't heard from his family, a brother, a sister and more importantly, the one who gave him life, his mother, since 10:00 a.m. Monday, August 29th, 2005. That is his sole family on his side and not being able to find out anything at all is taking its toll. They live in Bogalusa, a town about 70 miles from New Orleans and about 28 miles from Covington. You go through so many emotions when you can't convince your loved ones to leave and get to safer conditions. You can't stop the force of water nor the wind. It's material things that mean a lot to people, but what is that compared to life? Life, is about changes and growing and learning. Trust in God helps a person roll with the hard punches of life. We are praying for everyone caught in the path of Katrina. We hope to hear some word soon from our family in Bogalusa.

--*Kathy Sellier, Channelview, Texas*

'our house and ur house gutted and flooded'

I sit here like countless others, displaced by Katrina. We left our home in Ocean Springs, Miss. (just over the bridge from Biloxi and casinos) on Sunday. The only info we have is from a text message a neighbor who stayed, was able to send us. his words: "our house and ur house gutted and flooded". We live about 150 yds off the beach in an area called front beach. I have made constant attempts to reach friends, neighbors and co-workers. I have heard from a few, but still no contact from so many. helpless now, I wonder what is really left on my home site. When will I be able to travel back to at least see for myself what is left? And yes, I do count my blessing. My entire family is safe, and we did pack some valuables. So now I keep a positive attitude, looking forward to getting back, rolling up my sleeves, and putting my life back together. My prayers are with all who have suffered thru this disaster.

--*John Barberio, Ocean Springs, Miss.*

A waiting game

Katrina has turned my life into a waiting game. Many of my friends including myself taught the children in the 9th Ward. Which seats will be empty when we return? I am blessed to

have many good friends in New Orleans where we all lived. Four of my friends and I decided to evacuate to Columbia, Missouri where we were blessed to have a home opened to all of us. We watch in horror as new footage arrives knowing our homes, cars, and worldly possessions are gone but more so because we still don't know so much. One of my friend's father has not been heard from since Sunday night who lived in Slidell and waited out the storm. Another friend decided not to leave and has not been heard from since Saturday. We scan the images on the TV and internet hoping for a glance of our homes, but most importantly our friends and family. I am young and able to rebuild, I just hope that my students and their families are safe and able to return to school when the city has recovered from this horrible disaster.

--Candice Szeliga, Uptown, New Orleans, La.

Sheltering those in need

In Flowood Miss, we had 100-plus mph winds. ... My house in Flowood must have had GOD looking after it. All we ended up with is a little roof damage. We didn't even lose power. No so for everyone else. At 11 p.m. a Vietnamese family showed up at my door yesterday. Apparently they had spent the previous night in a van. The storm then only had 50 to 60 mile an hour winds. They said they were from New Orleans and had evacuated the night before. Not knowing the area they tried to wait out the worst of it at a Subway Sandwich Shop (but) the Subway turned them away. I told them to come in and they spent the night. This morning they left going to Texas to stay with family. I believe that if I had turned them away like the Subway did, I would not have fared as well as I did. I hope when they get home that their house is still there. They said they had just moved there from Idaho last month. Anyone reading this please pray for them and everyone else in this terrible mess.

--Glenn A. Sheppard, Flowood, Miss.

Difficult for evacuees, too

I've heard people say about those who didn't evacuate that "they deserve what they get," but I can tell you as I sit here 700 miles from home with absolutely no news reports about my area (the Westbank just isn't as sexy to reporters as the French Quarter, I guess) that very few people in the world deserve what even the evacuees are going through, much less those who were too poor, infirm or jaded to evacuate. The state correctly errs on the side of caution every time a storm forms and orders an evacuation. While it's fortunate those other

storms never hit, it leads to a "crying wolf" mentality that had even me behaving foolishly when I got the word from neighbors early Saturday morning that we were being evacuated. "It's not going to hit here," I said, and I toyed momentarily with the idea of hiding in my house to ride it out; but with young boys I didn't think long about staying.

Nonetheless, I was careless about packing, leaving important papers, jewelry and a treasured car behind to fend for themselves. Of course it's true what people tell you when they want to cheer you up: what matters is that your family is safe. The insurance will cover your property (or will it?). But some things, like 40 years worth of family photographs, kids' blue ribbons from school, grandmother's jewelry and a fully restored classic Porsche stupidly left in the carport can never be replaced, even if their "monetary value" is recuperated.

--Lance Lindley, Belle Chasse, La.

Stranded tourist

We are in the Sheraton on 500 Canal St. (in New Orleans) across from the Marriott, which did get damaged. Many other hotels, like Loews, Hilton and the ones in that row, by Harrahs Casino did have many windows broken and the curtains are blowing in the breeze. The Marriott seemed to shelter the Sheraton a bit. Sheraton only got outside panes of the thermal windows broken. The 8th floor skylight window got lifted up so that floor got pretty wet, but the 5th floor ballrooms where about 900 people were housed stayed pretty dry. We walked up to our 38th floor room about 4 p.m. and all was well in the room and stairway. The power in the city, at least here, is still out and they are providing emergency lighting in the hotel with generators.

There are two cars crushed from the brickfront of an old building across the way. ... Everybody stayed very calm. The hotel started taking in local people about 4 p.m. They have been feeding everybody, including some police and firemen. A Times photographer and others are staying here and I have gotten some news from them. The people have been very calm and it doesn't seem to matter who you are, where you are from, what you do, etc. Old and young are getting along.

--Larry Jackson, Redding, Calif.

Frantic feeling

I have lived in Laplace (La.) ever since I was born, so the radical hurricane season and the dangers it brings are not new to me; however, this is the first time I have feared the aftermath so greatly. Against my initial wishes (which are surely different now), I was forced to evacuate to a relative's house farther north in Baton Rouge Saturday night. Because I did not think the hurricane would not cause damage Laplace itself, and because I was in such a rush to pack and evacuate, I left everything in my house as it was: my most cherished car and new drum set included. As I tuned into the news reports Sunday and today and realized how Hurricane Katrina was predicted to affect New Orleans, I was stricken with the greatest fears and worries. Now in Lafayette with my family, I dearly pray for my home, my school, my possessions, and of the most importance, my friends who decided to wait the storm out in Laplace. I sit here now with a phone pressed against my ear with my shoulder trying frantically to get in touch with anyone. God please help us in this one.

--Ben Bourgeois, 17 years old, Laplace, La.

Feeling it 500 miles away

The enormity of this storm is mind-boggling. 500 miles away from New Orleans, here in Huntsville, Alabama, the effects of this storm are already being felt! The wind is steadily picking up, starting to bend the branches of our trees, especially the soaring, 200-yr old oak that towers over my house from the corner of our backyard. We normally get our storms from the SW, but these winds are all coming from the "wrong" direction - hooking around from the SE -- an ominous sign. Several nearby school systems have begun closing schools early; others have announced possible closings for tomorrow in anticipation or dangerous conditions. We are preparing for a long night. Even this far from the initial landfall of the storm, predictions are surprisingly dire: Tropical Storm warnings, with all the accompanying warnings: flash floods, tornados, etc. Our greatest fear here is what looks like will be some monumental flooding -- we haven't had rain here for several weeks, the clay ground is too hard to absorb everything we are going to get hit with. It's like expecting a brick to suddenly absorb water! There will certainly be serious flood damage. We are praying hard for everyone who will be in harm's way because of this monstrous storm.

--Anna Raebel, Huntsville, Ala.

Narrow escape

When I arrived in New Orleans Friday afternoon to begin a weekend vacation to celebrate my birthday, Katrina was still a category 1 storm in the Atlantic. Saturday, after a lovely day under cloudless blue skies exploring the French Quarter, eating fabulous Creole fare, and listening to an impromptu jazz and blues concert in Jackson Square, I found out that the hurricane had moved into the Gulf of Mexico and was threatening the city. By Saturday evening several airlines had cancelled service to Louis Armstrong Airport, and Greyhound and Amtrak had stopped running. When I called my airline that night, they said that my 7:23 p.m. August 28 flight was still on schedule. After all, the weather was fine, why should they strand so many tourists when the storm of century was approaching?

As the night wore on and I saw that more local businesses and restaurants were closing and posting signs that they would not reopen until Wednesday or Thursday, I became really concerned. Then my hotel posted a notice that they too would be closing. I was traveling with a friend who was pregnant, and even though we are both seasoned hurricane veterans, we didn't want to be stuck without a hotel room or transportation out of N.O. So I called Hertz, reserved a car for 5:00 a.m. Sunday morning, moved my plane reservation from a N.O. departure to one from Birmingham, AL, three hundred miles north of the city, and grabbed a few hours of sleep. By the time we got to the airport before dawn on Sunday (which was thanks largely to a savvy cab driver who skirted a jammed, unmoving I-10 and took surface streets to get us there in under 45 minutes) we picked up what I believe was one of the last rental cars left. We traced the cab driver's city street route out of the city and headed east on I-10, the opposite direction as most everyone else escaping the Big Easy, and made good time to I-59 N and safety. My flight from Birmingham left on schedule, and I made it home to San Antonio in time for dinner with my family. I can't believe how lucky I am, because despite Sunday's calm weather, the airport closed early that morning, and I would have been stuck with 10,000 poor folks in the unairconditioned Superdome. I am amazed that the trains, planes, and buses stopped running so long before the weather turned, in effect, stranding thousands in a city headed for disaster. What is their excuse?

--Judi Free. San Antonio, Texas

[Video: Strong surge 150 miles east](#)

Report from Houma

I am in Houma, Louisiana. We are west of the storm and we have been receiving winds of at least 80 to 100 mph. The winds started to increase in power around 3 a.m. and are still gusting hard at 10:30 a.m. So far we have been without power since 10 p.m. on Sunday night and we have lost part of our fence and many shingles off of the roof of our house. We have not had any flooding, but the storm has certainly been frightening. We still have water and phone service.

--Kaya Eschete, Houma, La.

Moved in Friday, evacuated Saturday

I am a freshman at Loyola University New Orleans. We moved in Friday and evacuated Saturday. I came home to Franklin, La., in St. Mary Parish. The sugarcane crop is being flattened and a tree fell in my yard, but the weather is not that bad yet and we still have electricity. My aunt is here but her husband called from their home in Raceland, La. and said that shingles were flying off their roof and water was coming into the house. We are waiting it out and hoping that the damage is not as severe as what has been predicted.

--Anne Longman, Franklin, La.

Bringing out the best and worst

I work night audit at a hotel in Alexandria, Louisiana. Sunday nights are usually nice and quiet. Not tonight. Tonight, I had families flooding in, begging for rooms. I've had to tell everyone to head for Texas or Arkansas, and give dozens of people the number to the Red Cross or directions to emergency shelters. Natural disasters seem to bring out the best and worst in people. What do I mean by the worst? Instances like the man who has two rooms reserved, called to let us know he wouldn't be coming, but to make it a no show and charge him anyway, so no one else would get his room. (This would be one of the few times we would cancel outside of our normal policy without charging for the reservation.) Or the woman who said if she'd wanted to stay in a shelter, she would have stayed in Houma. But then, still, there was the gentleman who came to check out of his room at 5:30 in the morning, and ask if it would be against the rules for him to invite an elderly couple, who were sleeping in their vehicle, to come in to his room, shower, and freshen up. No, I don't see a problem with that at all.

--Amanda, Alexandria, La.

It begins

It is just past midnight on Sunday night here. Strong gusts and horizontal rain is pelting my house right now. The wind must be 50-60 mph in 20 minute intervals. I can also see lightning flashes outside. Ivan flooded my home, Dennis bashed it again. If we get more than a 10 ft. storm surge I'll flood again. I don't think we can take any more of this. I pray for New Orleans.

-- *Kragh Folland; Gulf Breeze, Florida*

Received Sunday, Aug. 28:

Calm before the storm

As southern Louisiana prepares for the worst, the calm before the storm has hit the city of Baton Rouge following two days of dreading the inevitable. After enduring the shortages and long lines for gas, thousands have fled to the homes of relatives and friends. Beginning around 6 p.m. Sunday evening, local stores began closing their doors to brace for the wrath of Katrina. Stores were crowded from dawn to dusk, filled with residents seeking any last supplies to help them survive the next days. Families reminisce on their previous hurricane experiences and fear losing all of their memories and belongings trapped in their houses. While the memories may differ, all agree on one thing, no Louisianian has lived through a storm of this magnitude. As the night progresses, the wind has slowly hastened, bringing with it occasional down pours of rain as the outskirts of Katrina make their way through Louisiana. We can only watch the destiny of New Orleans from a distance now; praying and hoping that this great city of history, soul and charisma will once again thrive.

-- *Christy Tebbe, Baton Rouge, Louisiana*

Quiet ... for now

Baton Rouge, here; I am currently sitting in my den keeping a look out to the 10 grazing horses and property, while the rain softly falls. It is quiet outside. Whiffs of wind comes and goes. It is calm and suspenseful. I live in rural area surrounded by lovely homes, in the city of Baton Rouge. I can appreciate the way the horses react to this. I choose to let them roam so to sense where to escape from falling branches. Each of the mares have 'dog' tags on their halters, with my name and phone number, so should the winds and falling trees destroy the fences, the roaming quarter and paint horses with their colts can be recognized. If I was not

concerned for the horses, I would have taken leave and driven to Oklahoma, where my parents live. As of now, it is calm, and the radio is constantly reporting ... my laptop is watching the movement of the big green blob on the weather map of a mass which is larger than the state of Louisiana. There is no major activity now.

-- Kristina Murphy, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Long ride away from home

I have lived in New Orleans for all of my life, almost nineteen years. In that time I have never evacuated. My father is 64 and he has never evacuated. My grandmother is 97, and as far as I know has never evacuated. This time, however, we are taking no chances. My entire family has left the city and the greater New Orleans area. For all of our cavalier attitudes about drinking hurricanes, not running from them, we are frightened. And its still hard, even having left the city. It took one of my friend's parents six hours to get to Baton Rouge, a trip that normally takes an hour. It has taken literally all day for my family to reach Mobile, Alabama (where I am in school and currently waiting to be picked up). This drive usually takes two hours. My mother told me not to worry, that my father would be here soon to pick me up, but what I'm really worried about is the frighteningly real possibility that even when it is safe to go back to New Orleans, we won't have a house.

-- Molly LeBlanc, New Orleans, Louisiana

Classes delayed

My name is Jeremy Wyatt, and I am a freshman at Tulane University. Our orientation was scheduled to take place over the next couple of days, yesterday, August 27th, being the first. Katrina has forced myself and others out of New Orleans, those who are unable to return home are being bused to Jackson State in Mississippi. I am greatly concerned over both the beginning of classes and the damage that will be wrought by Katrina upon Tulane's campus. I write you from my home in Fort Worth, TX, where I will patiently and attentively await the OK to return to campus.

-- Jeremy Wyatt, Fort Worth, Texas

Katrina's impact on South Florida:

No one was prepared

I'm the editor of the Florida Keys Keynoter and Key West Keynoter, the newspapers of the Keys. We in the Keys had no idea Katrina would hit us this hard, since it jogged hard south

in the middle of the night; when we were all asleep. We have massive, widespread flooding, a hangar blew apart at the Middle Keys airport due to a tornado blowing threw, trees are down everywhere -- your usually Cat. 1 hurricane. But the thing about this one is no one was prepared. We thought it would be in Vero Beach, four and a half hours to the north, by now. Just goes to show, the National Hurricane Center usually does a great job. But Mother Nature rules all. And as for my newspaper, if I thought I had any shortage of stories Thursday for Saturday's edition, Katrina changed all that.

--Larry Kahn, Marathon, Florida

Scary, powerful and wet

Hurricane Katrina has created a 3-foot swamp here in the Cutler Ridge/Perrine area of Miami Dade County. Apartment dwellers here awoke to see their cars totally under water. First floor residents had water up to their mattresses. We have been with out electricity since 7:30 p.m. Thursday and now at 4:45 p.m. Friday our building has power restored. Last night we were pounded for over four hours of steady sheets of rain, thunder, luminous, green lightening and the occasional sound of a "freight train passing." We were not sure what to think....tornado? wind sounds? Palm tree damage is great and the humongous "canals" of water are slowly draining but the leaves, branches and debris are not allowing the water to drain properly and efficiently. No one approaches due to the fear of encountering a live power line. Mosquitoes will have a feast in this standing water ! This storm was scary, noisy, powerful and very very wet. Thank God my friends in the apartment are ok and alive.

--Mayra Mora, Perrine, Fla.

Trees down, car stuck

The photos that I sent you were taken in front of my house. I got home about 8:30 p.m. coming from a Mass held at our local Church, and felt devastating winds and couldn't imagine what was happening. I decided to shelter my car in the carport and locked all the doors in the house waiting for the storm to pass. At about 10 p.m. I heard a strange whistling noise and I went into my room with my children. In those few minutes we heard a huge roar and heard a crashing sound coming near us. I did not want to investigate what was happening until I was sure that the storm passed. When I awoke in the morning I opened the front door and to my amazement I opened the door into a jungle. I was

surrounded by branches and wired vines. I could not believe what was happening. I soon realized that the Trees from the other complex had fallen in and on top of my house. At first glance I noticed that everything was okay but then noticed that My car was blocked in the drive way and I couldn't take it out. I can't believe this was a level 1 hurricane. I will not forget this Hurricane and will always be prepared because you shouldn't think it will not come again. I hope these kind of photos show people how we can never think anything like this can't happen.

--Ricardo Parra, Kendall, Fla.

Surprising damage

As a student in South Florida, I should be more than happy about this seeing as how I just got two days off. Unfortunately though, as I came home last night at around 12, which was when the winds calmed down I couldn't help but to cringe at the destruction which was wreaked upon my home. Traffic lights where literally on the floor and more than half of the trees in the median on Flagler were brought down to the ground by this seemingly feeble category 1 hurricane. In my years of living here I've been through many hurricanes and apart from Andrew I don't believe I've ever seen this much damage.

--Ernesto Martinez, Miami, Fla.

High water, high winds

I live in Tavernier (in the Florida Keys) on the 7th floor of a condo. A lot of water came through my accordion covered sliding doors. A lot of high winds still at this time. (7:53 a.m. Friday). No one told us we would have such a impact like this.

--Linda L. Leshner, Tavernier, Fla.

Visitor's perspective

Sitting in dark at Embassy Suites Hotel in Ft. Lauderdale -- reading MSN update on storm on Blackberry since hotel (was) without power. Winds still howling. Funniest thing so far was a rowboat which flew off somebody's car winding up in little hotel creek on property. Hotel sent guests up to suites at 8 p.m. to hunker down.

--Louis Tempkin, Sierra Vista, Ariz.

Rough takeoff

I just arrived back in Seattle after leaving Miami on a flight that departed at 5:25 p.m. (Thursday). While we were boarding the flight the jet way was rocking back and forth in the wind and the plane continued to do the same once we boarded. The pilots told us at the gate that they had our safety in mind and would not attempt to leave if we were at risk. I fly frequently and often and have never experienced winds like we had on take off. When we landed in Chicago all of the passengers gave the pilots a well deserved round of applause.

--David Fitzgerald, Seattle, Wash.

Unexpected strength

Hello to everyone: I work in Hialeah, Miami-Dade county where we had the eye of the hurricane and could notice the difference before, within (calm) and after with the strongest winds ever seen. I can not imagine how is to be in a category 3-5, but the city ran out of power, watching falling trees and branches. So far spoke with some friends within Broward and Miami-Dade county and they were in the same situation. We were expecting less wind and more water and was almost the opposite.

--Jose Bejarano, Miami, Fla.