

# The Aftermath

It's been two months since the horrible storm happened – Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast August 29. For bowlers Shannon Duplantis and Judy Vogel, from New Orleans and Slidell, the past 60 days has been surreal.

It is difficult to imagine what it must be like to have your life turned upside down, and only those who have been personally and directly affected by this unprecedented di-

saster can portray what it has done to their family, their friends and neighbors, and their lives.

Last month, Shannon gave Stars & Strikes readers a first hand account of what it was like to be in the middle of the storm, and Page Dew wrote about the anxious days spent searching for relatives unaccounted for. This month, Shannon describes the heartbreaking task of seeing her New Orleans home for

the first time after the storm, and Judy Vogel writes about her home and neighborhood in nearby Slidell, Louisiana.

Judy's home, which was built on pilings to prevent flood damage, was one of only six homes in her immediate neighborhood of 22 homes that survived the storm, but with extensive damage. Judy points out that the media cannot possibly describe the emotions that she and her neighbors feel when view-

ing the devastation – the emptiness, the smell, and the overwhelming realization of lives destroyed cannot be fully described – unless you are physically there – and both of these incredible ladies show us why they are not only champion bowlers – they are 'champions of life'.

Here are their poignant accounts of "the aftermath". – JG

## The Media Cannot Capture the Emptiness

By Judy Vogel

"The Aftermath of Katrina." We have all seen and heard this phrase many times over the past two months. It's meaning different for many of us. It's affects devastating for many of us. It's true understanding known only to those who have witnessed it. Yes, the media has shown everyone what Katrina did to much of the gulf coast of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. The photos are frightening, the stories unbelievable. But the media just doesn't fully depict what really happened on August 29, 2005.

Katrina's powerful 160+ miles per hour winds destroyed many homes and businesses, but it was the fury that came afterwards that truly devastated the gulf coast region. Tidal waves estimated at 25 feet (can you really imagine a 25 foot wave!) came slamming into the lives of millions.

Life as we knew it was changed. For the areas outside of the New Orleans levees, the tidal surge was horrendous. Homes were literally picked from their foundations and moved several feet, several blocks, even miles away. Some crumbled to a pile of debris. Others that were left standing were left in such shambles! Some only left small mementos of what used to be. And others made new landmarks, sitting atop other homes. The force of water is apparent in what is left.

Although I have never witnessed first hand the destruction of a tornado, I imagine it would be similar to this devastation, only on a much smaller area and without the flooding. Katrina has left her mark on property and lives in hundreds of square miles.

Arial views provided to us by news crews everywhere showed the vast area encompassed by Katrina's path. But what you cannot grasp by media footage is the smell of destruction. Flood waters that have settled in for a while have a horrific odor. And you cannot see the silence on the news stations. Neighborhoods known for the bustling activity of its residents are quiet and empty of people. And all the vegetation has changed from a lush summer green to a putrid dismal gray. Yes, the landscape has changed in so many ways.

It is just unbelievable how strong the water must have been as it came ashore. While New Orleans suffered the nightmares of the numerous breaks in the levees, I'll take you across Lake Pontchartrain to Slidell, Louisiana for an assessment of where I call home.

Since you could not travel the Interstate 10 route (the Twin Span bridges were badly damaged) the usual ten minute drive would take sometimes and hour and a half. Once

with their homes and furniture, their boats are littered along the highway, some right in the middle of homes or partially atop roofs. You can see clear through many of the homes, where just some of the 2 x 4 walls remain. The sheetrock, furniture, everything on the first level washed away. On some multilevel structures, the outer walls of the 2<sup>nd</sup> level have been stripped away and you can see furniture still in place and kitchen cabinets still hung on walls.

The elite subdivisions of Eden Isles, Clipper Estates, Oak Harbor and Lakeshore Estates all with beautiful waterways behind every home, were not spared an ounce. Boats that were once docked behind almost every home were smashed into homes, sitting on top of homes, sunk in the canals, or just moved somewhere else. Now an astonishing drive down a once beautiful area shows all the belongings of these people out on their curbs. Flood waters tore a hole right through their lives.

This same devastation can be witnessed along Highway 433 between Interstate 10 and the Rigolets Pass. Many of these homes were within a block from the lake and some even closer. Most sat on pilings at least 10 feet high, but that was no match for a 25 foot tidal surge. Many of the homes are simply not there anymore. On my street alone, there were 22 homes when I evacuated. When I returned, there were only six left, battered and damaged, but still standing. More fishermen lost their homes, their livelihoods; more lives devastated, more unbelievable destruction.

"The Aftermath of Katrina." Thank God most of us still have our lives and our loved ones and friends. The Gulf Coast will be resurrected. It may take quite some time, but it will come back. The area was much

too beautiful to leave and it will one day be that way again. I have faith that Mother Nature will allow new green to cover the awful gray and I already know that seafood is once again abundant in our beautiful Lake

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Judy Vogel



Shannon Duplantis

During the drive home, I tried to prepare myself for the worst. As I drove home through Beaumont and Lake Charles, I got a glimpse of what to expect since they had just suffered devastation from Hurricane Rita. Unfortunately, my thoughts of what I

might see were no where near the reality that I came face to face with.

Driving up to my house, it looked solid as a rock, not even a shingle out of place. As I suspected, the flowers in the garden were dead, the grass was covered in mud, phone and cable lines were down and of course, trash was all over the place. I thought to myself, I could live with this...this isn't so bad. As I approached my door I noticed the

evident water line on the glass of our screen door. The water line showed to be higher than the locks on my door. After taking a deep breath and asking God to give me strength to face what was inside, I put the key into the lock and tried to turn the key but no luck. The water had frozen the lock on the door knob. I tried to turn the key so many times, that I bent the key. I figured there was no way that I could get into this door so I decided to try the kitchen door. Once again, I could see the water mark was over the locks on this door as well. After putting the key in the lock, I tried to turn the key and it immediately broke off in the lock. I thought to myself, was God trying to tell me not to go in? I felt so helpless and the surrounding site of my neighborhood

made matters worse, because everything around me was dead. It was an eerie feeling.

I had given up on this excursion and decided to leave when a thought came to me that my aunt, who lived across the street from me, had a set of keys to my house when I was in high school. I realized I graduated from high school seventeen years ago but thought it worth the chance to look and see if those keys were still there. My parents inherited my aunt's home since my mom had been her primary care taker for several years. I did have the keys to her house with me and as was able to get into her house with no problem. From the water marks on her house she only had about a foot of water inside of her home; however, her home is raised about four feet. While going in to her house my parents called me on my cell phone. I told them what I was doing and they both assured me that the keys were not in her house anymore. They had removed the keys after her death two years ago. Still I thought I would go to the cup in her cabinet and just look. To my delight, the keys to my house where there and even on the same key ring that I used in high school. Certainly, to me, this was my aunt intervening for me.

I ran over to my house to try these keys and was able to open the locks on the door.

*"Unfortunately, my thoughts of what I might see were nowhere near the reality that I came face-to-face with."*

Then I had to face the chain lock that my dad put on before we left. Adrenaline had built up in side of me as I pushed on the door frame and broke the chain off the door panel. What faced me was certainly not what I had expected. My home was taken over by mold and the retched stench from the refrigerator and freezer. The refrigerator had fallen forward and all of its contents had emptied onto the floor. It sat like this for over a month, so you can just imagine the grotesque smell. My immediate reaction was to just back out of the door. Flies, gnats and maggots were all over the place. Judy and went gone back to the van to put on boots, gloves and face masks.

Upon entering my house further, I noticed that the kitchen table and chairs were mere slats of wood. Items from other parts of my house were now in the kitchen. All of the cabinets doors were bellowed out and the contents in the cabinets were all over the kitchen. The adrenaline that had built up inside of me had been released and my body felt totally weak. How was I going to tell my parents that their home of forty-seven years was absolutely destroyed? The devastation that I imagined in my mind was certainly not what was put before me.

I made my way through to the bedroom side of the house only to find more wreckage. The hard wood floors looked like they were speed bumps and the individual wood

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*"What you cannot grasp by media footage is the smell of destruction. And you cannot see the silence on the news stations. Neighborhoods known for the bustling activity of its residents are quiet and empty of people."*

you arrive on the Northshore, you will not believe your eyes. The destruction is overwhelming. You will witness the shattered homes and belongings of the people along this stretch who once supplied us with many of our abundant seafood delicacies. Along

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## With Devastation Comes Opportunity For Renewal

By Paul Kreins

*Not since the early 90's when Hurricane Andrew destroyed Don and Paula Carter's bowling center in Homestead, Florida has there been a storm that was devastating to the bowling business. Dozens of centers were destroyed as extensively damaged by Hurricane Katrina.*

*When Hurricane Rita made a direct hit on Port Arthur, Texas in late September, it blew right over Paul Kreins Park Central Recreation Center. This very nice 40-lane facility held up pretty well considering the power of the*



*storm, but with more than \$1 million in damage, will be out of business for a few weeks.*

*Here is Paul's description of the damage and his plan for re-building. -- JG*

October 1 we made a trip to Port Arthur to get our first look at the effects of Hurricane Rita on our center and our town. It was not a pretty picture.

As we got closer to Port Arthur, the devastation became greater and more widespread. Our first look at our center was breathtaking. A week earlier this beautiful center was the hub of activity in the community. Now, it was strewn with debris – sheet metal, signage from nearby businesses, insulation, flashing from the face of the building, light fixtures and unidentified trash.

The power throughout the area was still out, so our first look at the inside of the center was limited to what we could see with flashlights and the sunlight streaming in through the shattered glass of the entry doors.

The first thing we noticed was the damp carpet where the powerful wind had blown rain into the building. Mold and mildew was growing everywhere fueled by the damp, humid conditions, lack of ventilation and Southeast Texas' triple-digit heat.

The restaurant and lounge were relatively intact with the exception of ceiling tiles that had crashed to the floor, soaked with rain that had poured in from above. Every ventilation and air conditioning hatch had blown away, leaving large openings for the storm to pour into the building. "Minor" cracks and tears in the roof became evident as "daylight" peeked through the gaping spaces created by missing ceiling tiles.

As we approached the control counter,

we gasped, "Oh my God!" Everything above the counter – ceiling tiles, beams, trusses, metal framework, mirrors and the entire canopy that had once encircled the desk – were piled onto the counter and floor around the desk. It looked as if a bomb had exploded above it.

Directly in front of the desk, the walkway leading to the front entrance was strewn with broken glass, flyers, posters, ceiling tiles and insulation. Ironically, a poster promoting our "Star Wars" league had been torn off the wall and laid among the debris on the floor. Its message: "MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU." The front of our building faces north. This was apparently the place where Rita came into the building with her full FORCE.

Almost everything from the front of the building to the settee area was damaged. The game room, meeting room, arcade and offices all took a hit. Oddly however, it appeared that very little was affected beyond the concourse. The bowler's area, the approaches, the lanes and the pinsetters all seemed to be spared Rita's wrath. Strangely, not a single pin among 40 lanes had fallen over.

I went up on the roof to survey the damage. It was extensive, especially to the air conditioners. Virtually all the protective sheet metal panels covering the units had been ripped away leaving the electronics and mechanics completely exposed.



Some of the debris scattered on the roof seemed to have come from other buildings.

Examining the center during this first visit was a bit surreal. It felt like an out-of-body experience – as if I was dreaming it all or viewing it on a television screen.

Whatever happens, the important thing is that we all came through this safely. And, despite how bad it is and how severely we (and our employees) have been affected by it, we still came out WAY better than thousands of people in Lake Charles, Cameron and other coastal Louisiana and Mississippi communities. Our prayers go out to them during this truly tragic time.

*Paul Kreins and his partners took over the operation of Park Central Recreation in 2004. Paul is an award winning bowling writer and BWAA member who also publishes the 'Monday Morning Marketing Report' sent to hundreds of bowling center owners weekly, and is a part of the Bowlers Journal business report.*

AFTERMATH - Judy continued

Pontchartrain.

One final thought that the readers of this bowling publication might appreciate. I have some 20 or 30 bowling balls that survived the storm along with my home. Although my home and the balls did get flooded and I have been told I shouldn't consider using the balls in their intended way again, I have another idea for them. You see Slidell has enough land fill on its hands now. So once the grass is green again and the flowers are in bloom again, you just might see a spectacular view in my landscape. Colorful bowling balls lining my garden! Take that Mother Nature!

AFTERMATH - Shannon continued

pieces had crested up and popped out of their herringbone pattern. The furniture was either on its side or upside down and all my mom's precious mementoes were all over the floor. Picture frames and albums containing pictures of my sister and me when we were young were as if we didn't even exist. The pictures were just like water colors all blended together. Mold had severely taken over the walls and as I walked through the hallway, it gave an appearance of a horror film where the mold was drawing in closer on me. I wasn't able to stay long in the house, just long enough to know that the home that I remember and left on August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2005 will never be the same. I was able to take a few pictures of my house to show my parents upon my return from New Orleans.

On the drive back, I had time to ponder how I was going to tell my mom and dad about the damage that Katrina left in my home. My mom has such close sentimental ties to our home because her father, Henry Fos, built our home. While my dad was in the service, stationed in Germany, my mom remembers watching her father build the house for her, and she can still hear the excitement in his voice when he would tell her of things that he was adding to the house. This was all that she had left of him, even more so now since all of our pictures and movies reels were destroyed by the water.

When I returned back to Houston, I sat my parents down and explained to them

the situation of our home and ensured them that I would be willing to help in any way that I could to restore our home to what it was. Unfortunately, my pictures spoke a thousand words and they knew our home would never be the same. Over these past few weeks, my mom is as if she is on an emotional roller coaster ride. One minute she feels confident that she will be able to handle the damage, emotionally and financially and then she has set-backs of uncertainty. After all, my parents are both sixty-nine years old and feel that they are too old to start all over again.

As of right now, we have been making trips home on the weekends to go through our belongings to see what we can possibly salvage. Unfortunately, that is not much. My mom was able to recover a few of her religious statues and those that she recovered were miraculously not destroyed. However, many of my bowling plaques were destroyed. I was able to retrieve my RPC Players Championship vase, but the wooden base and name plate were ruined. My WIBC Bev Ortner award for the highest series of the season also survived the hurricane; although, I found my Robby Sportsmanship Award shattered on the floor. The more we go through the house, the more we find various items that turn out to be our little treasures.

I know that my family and I are suffering the same heartache and pain that other people are suffering. So many times I have asked myself, just what did we do wrong to deserve this? My parents are not in the most perfect physical health so I worry about how much they can actually withstand. It is truly heartbreaking to watch them both go through their personal belongings and reminisce about certain items. The uncertainty of just when will we be able to resume the lives that we once had is the worst of all. I keep thinking that it is all just a bad dream, but the smell in the house slaps me back into reality. My family and I are survivors and with the grace of God will come through this distressing time.

*Shannon Duplantis and Judy Vogel are both PWBA regional champions and two of the best women bowlers in Louisiana. Between them, they own 7 regional titles, and they are members of both the Louisiana and Mississippi WBA Halls of Fame*

### Louisiana damage report - provided by Kent Lowe and Marc Pater

**AMF ALL-STAR LANES IN KENNER:** Water and roof damage and repairs are labeled extensive. The center hopes to be up and running by year's end.

**BOWLING USA SLIDELL:** The back wall destroyed, extensive water damage, including under the lanes. Repairs are to begin soon to hopefully get the house up and running January or February.

**CIRCLE BOWL BATON ROUGE:** Lost power for five days with extensive damage to the air-conditioning unit. The loss of power was the most extensive for any local bowling venue.

**COLONIAL LANES:** The center is up and running after losing power for three weeks. The restaurant continues to serve as a site to feed troops, police and the Red Cross.

**EXPRESSWAY LANES IN GRETNA:** The roof collapsed over some of the lanes. The plans are to repair in hopes for an early 2006 opening.

**MID-CITY LANES (THE HOME OF THE FAMOUS ROCK AND BOWL IN NEW ORLEANS):** The city's oldest lanes had water on the first floor, but the lanes are on the second floor. There is no timetable to re-open.

**IMPERIAL LANES IN ARABI:** The hardest-hit center in the state with 13 feet of water in the center. The lanes are a total loss and rebuilding is dependent on many factors, but if it does, it will be two to three years down the road.

**RIVER BEND LANES IN LAPLACE:** Some water in the center, but not too much damage and the center is back in operation already.

**SPORTS CENTERS USA IN LAKE CHARLES:** No damage to building, waiting on reopening of the city in the week ahead to start back after Rita.

**TIFFANY SPORTS CENTER IN MANDEVILLE:** Had a large tree fall through roof and the house had much water damage. Plans to repair and reopen in February or March.

**MAGIC CITY BOWL IN BOGALUSA:** Extensive damage. Reopen status to be determined.

**PETRO BOWL IN LAKE CHARLES:** Unable to contact center officials on status.

**SUGAR/ORBIT LANES IN NEW ORLEANS:** Extensive water damage. The center is closed with reopening status in doubt.