

*Work projects were well planned and supervised particularly in light of they started from ground zero.*

*Alan*

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*January 2, 2010 through January 9, 2010: New Orleans, Louisiana*

*Emotions:*

*The gamut of emotions that washed through my body during the initial tour of the city of New Orleans was overwhelming, to say the least. Sadness, despair, and hopelessness were quickly replaced by a sense of utter confusion as I struggled with the sad reality that after five years of “re-building”, the city nonetheless appeared as if a nuclear bomb had been detonated. After all of the outpouring aid and relief funds that were so wonderfully amassed during the days, weeks and months following the hurricane, I found it very perplexing that it didn’t seem to make much of a dent in the outlying communities. What did the city of New Orleans do with the millions and millions of government relief dollars that poured into their coffers? In addition to the millions of dollars received from our government, New Orleans also obtained many millions more that had been collected and handed out by scores of compassionate organizations. What did the city do with all of that money? If all of the money was used specifically for the re-building of the city and it just wasn’t enough, why haven’t our lawmakers earmarked additional funds to continue the re-building process? If the money was not used for the re-building of the city (as I was told was the case by numerous citizens), what was it used for, who made that decision, and why has there not been a congressional investigation into its disappearance? As these types of questions continued to engulf my mind, a different emotion began to creep and stir inside my being... anger. On our way back from the tour, I can vividly recall sitting in the back of Carolyn’s van not being able to rid myself of the word that kept replaying over and over in my head... “unacceptable”. It is unacceptable that New Orleans looks the way it does five years after Hurricane Katrina. It is unacceptable to realize so many human beings and their families have been forgotten and abandoned for such a long period of time. It is unacceptable to witness entire neighborhoods uninhabitable – a vast expansion of empty lots and vacated homes completely destroyed by flood waters. It is unacceptable that the corruption seated in the Louisiana and New Orleans legislature neglected to take care of their own people with the funds specifically donated to do so. It is unacceptable to realize our politicians continue to argue and fight for so many costly and unnecessary programs, yet ignore the truth that surrounds a city in despair. It has been one month since my visit to New Orleans and my anger and frustration over its state of affairs is as fresh as the very first day. Unacceptable.*

*Satisfaction:*

*I traveled to New Orleans with the goal of helping to re-build a most distraught and neglected community. That goal was achieved with the help of 20+ eager and compassionate individuals who worked extremely hard for an entire week – often times planting flowers, pounding nails, screwing screws and sawing wood in thirty degree temperatures. The hard work and determination demonstrated by everyone gave me a sense of pride never quite felt before. More often than not, the impression of today’s society is that of selfishness, self-indulgence, disrespectfulness and apathy. It was so very refreshing to be surrounded by a group of people who gave with all of their hearts – who gave for the betterment of a community populated with people unbeknownst to them. In return, we were blessed with the unexpected friendships that came from numerous New Orleans’ residents who were so very grateful that we had not forgotten about them. The expressions of thankfulness cast upon their faces as we relentlessly worked to better their lives will never be forgotten. The tears that ran down their cheeks when realizing that they are indeed cared for will always be remembered. I traveled to New Orleans with the goal of helping to re-build a most distraught and neglected community. I returned to Massachusetts with the unforeseen sense of complete satisfaction never before felt in all my years.*

*Thank you Shantia for all that you did and continue to do – you are an angel.*

*Dennis*