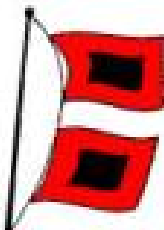




## Katrina Chronicles



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To tell thee all the dangers of the Deep ...  
Black Hurracans; thick Nights; Thunders that keep  
The World alarm'd, and threaten the Last end:  
Would be too tedious; indeed vain and mad,  
Though a brasse Tongue, and Iron lungs I had.

Luis DeCamoens

These words of Portugal's famed Renaissance poet about life at sea are framed in a plaque on our late partner Henry Salassi's wall in the Baton Rouge office of Chaffe McCall, L.L.P. Although written centuries ago, they describe the perils and challenges that Hurricane Katrina visited on New Orleans, our firm, and our people in August and September 2005. Here is a brief chronicle of some of them. They are stories of courage, compassion, and hope for us all.

### **Friday, August 26, 2005**

At 3:53 p.m., in an e-mail entitled "Katrina-The Hurricane," Tim Doody, our firm's administrator, urged everyone in the New Orleans office of Chaffe McCall on the 23rd through 25th floors of the Energy Centre building to close window blinds and doors, remove papers from desks, and make the usual storm preparations before leaving work. After crossing southern Florida as a Category 1 hurricane, Katrina was on a course that endangered New Orleans and the central Gulf Coast. Although we expected to be open for

business on the following Monday, Tim's e-mail left the answering-service number for future messages.

At Tim's request on Friday evening, Melissa Kellum in our Information Systems Department backed up the firm's computer payroll, billing records, and documents stored in the iManage system. She downloaded the data on tapes and discs and took them to her parents' house near Folsom, Louisiana, where she and her family would seek refuge the next day.

While the storm was still hundreds of miles away in the Gulf of Mexico, no one could forecast precisely where it would land. Many of us left the office on Friday evening and walked down Poydras Street to see the NFL-preseason game between the Baltimore Ravens and the New Orleans Saints in the Louisiana Superdome. We never imagined that the stadium would become an object of world attention in the coming days for reasons far different from sports, concerts, or conventions.

Hoping that Katrina would turn to the north and bypass the City as so many other hurricanes had before, New Orleanians listened to the latest weather advisories but heard increasingly bad news. On satellite imagery, Hurricane Katrina was a circular-saw blade spinning toward Louisiana. We were in what meteorologists call the "cone of uncertainty," a strike zone of possible landfall that stretched from Texas to Florida.

### Saturday, August 27, 2005

On Saturday morning, harbingers of the approaching storm began to appear throughout New Orleans and surrounding parishes—lengthening gas lines, crowded supermarkets and hardware stores, and the sounds of hammers and power saws as residents boarded their windows. Heavy traffic began to creep out of the City on Interstate 10 as a voluntary evacuation began in earnest. Some Chaffe McCall attorneys went to the office to complete unfinished tasks before leaving for what appeared at the very least to be a long weekend away from the Energy Centre. Katrina was now a center of energy moving ever closer.

By Saturday night the storm still had not turned away from New Orleans, and the City's anxiety level ratcheted up with reports that the hurricane could grow to Category 4 or 5 intensity. At 7:30 p.m., Tim sent a second e-mail to the firm announcing that Chaffe McCall's New Orleans office would not be open on Monday. The building management had decided to close the Energy Centre at noon on Sunday and announced no further plans. Tim urged everyone to check with the answering service for further messages and wisely cautioned all to “[a]s always, be guided by safety and common sense.”

### **Sunday, August 28, 2005**

This was a day of decision. Those who chose to leave the City began the slow torture of bumper-to-bumper traffic. The typical car trip of 90 minutes or less from New Orleans to Baton Rouge now took several hours, as drivers nervously eyed their fuel gauges and waited in long lines for available pumps at a dwindling number of open gas stations. Although the state's contraflow lane-reversal plan eased the congestion at some points on I-10 outside of the metropolitan area, the main highway within the City was jammed, and many alternate routes and cross streets in surrounding parishes were gridlocked.

The people of Chaffe McCall scattered in different directions toward distant hotel rooms or the homes of relatives and friends at locations out of the storm's path. Others decided to stay home or to cross town to ride it out at other places inside New Orleans, relying on the hurricane-protection levee system and the chance that the City might be on the western or "dry" side of the storm. Many people in New Orleans and the surrounding areas had no means to leave. Whatever the Hobson's choice, if any, one way or another everyone faced Katrina.

### **Monday, August 29, 2005**

Katrina made landfall as a Category 4 hurricane with maximum sustained winds of 145 m.p.h. shortly after 6:00

a.m. near Buras in Plaquemines Parish before smashing into the Louisiana/Mississippi state line. One of our partners, Jonathan McCall, weathered the storm with his wife Jane and his mother at the Garden District home of a fellow partner, Bill Grace, his wife Anne, and their family. Their historic residence on St. Charles Avenue had been the scene of many Chaffe McCall receptions and parties. Long before Katrina's eye passed New Orleans, the winds had howled throughout the dark morning hours as the family members rushed to contain ceiling leaks after chimneys crashed onto the roof above them like bombs.

Across town in Lakeview, Drew Houlihan of our firm's copy center also had an uneasy night. As his house rocked and creaked in the winds, he was concerned that the next gust would shear off its roof. In the adjacent neighborhood of Gentilly, Mary Latuso, a legal secretary in our civil litigation section, and her son Donald were staying with Mary's brother at his home. They played cards and then tried to sleep as Katrina shook the house and uprooted trees.

After passing the City and moving inland, the hurricane left behind a wake of destruction in St. Bernard Parish, New Orleans East, Slidell, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast. For a short time, much of New Orleans appeared to have been spared yet again, as the protection levees seemed to have held fast. Evacuees heard encouraging reports and read television news crawlers that gave signs of hope. But that all changed in

a matter of hours when water began pouring into the City's Ninth Ward, Gentilly, City Park, and Lakeview neighborhoods from breaches in the levees and flood walls of the Industrial, London Avenue, and 17<sup>th</sup> Street Canals connected to Lake Pontchartrain.



When it appeared that the worst of the storm was over for him on early Monday morning, Drew hoped that the minor street flooding in front of his house would soon subside. But to his dismay, the water level started to rise, quickly claimed his car in his driveway, and began to enter his living room. As he waded knee-deep in it and began carrying valuables up the disappearing stairway to his attic, his neighbor arrived in a small boat and called out to him. Drew grabbed his wallet, threw some clothes into a plastic bag, and boarded the skiff. Using scrap lumber as oars, they paddled with much effort

down the street through a strong current and reached higher ground on a railroad track blocks away.



Farther to the east, in Gentilly, a torrent of water began flowing down Mirabeau and Elysian Fields Avenues. Mary's brother hastily hauled his outboard motor boat from his garage and moored it to his house before it became trapped in the rafters. The family moved upstairs to the second floor of the residence as the flood inundated its first level and furniture began to float from room to room. They spent a fitful Monday night without electrical power, while helicopters buzzed in the darkness overhead, and they heard distant cries for help from neighboring residents in their attics or on their rooftops.

One of our senior partners, George Pigman, had spent part of the weekend at a New Orleans hotel, before it closed on the day before the hurricane made landfall. He weathered the storm at his house Uptown and later joined his children in the Carrollton section of the City. But flood waters began to fill the streets around them. With many other people, George and his family boarded a large moving van near Notre Dame Seminary that took them to Baton Rouge. From there, George moved on to the Eola Hotel in Natchez before continuing his exile in Hot Springs.

Close to St. Charles Avenue, our partner Jonathan McCall and his family were fortunate to be in a section of the City that was wet only from Katrina's heavy rains. Fallen trees and branches blocked the surrounding streets. Hearing only conflicting radio reports, the McCalls were isolated and unaware of the spreading devastation. The flood water that extended to Mid-City, Carrollton, Broadmoor, and portions of the Central Business District would stop short several blocks away from them. The McCalls were truly in a Crescent City, on a sliver of dry land hugging the curve of the east bank of the Mississippi River from Uptown through the French Quarter and the Faubourg Marigny. Together with Algiers on the west bank and some other neighborhoods at higher elevations, it would form the remaining land in Orleans Parish still above water.

In Baton Rouge, fewer than one hundred miles away to the northwest, John Olinde, a partner on our firm's Management Committee, had evacuated with his family to his parents' house. Katrina had clipped the Capitol City as well, downing trees and power lines. After repeated attempts, Tim, our administrator, finally reached John by phone at 11:00 p.m., and they agreed to meet at Chaffe McCall's Baton Rouge office the next morning. Tim had already heard that the hurricane had totally destroyed his house in St. Bernard Parish. He was planning to join his family in Houston later the next day.

**Tuesday, August 30, 2005**

By Tuesday morning, the flood waters had inundated almost 80% of New Orleans. Rescuers in an air boat picked up Drew after he had spent the night outside, marooned on the concrete walkway of a church that had become an island in submerged Lakeview. They took him to a ramp of Interstate



610 serving as a boat launch. Drew boarded a bus and began an odyssey that would take him to four more places of refuge before he returned.

Hearing news that parts of neighboring Jefferson Parish on the western side of the 17<sup>th</sup> Street Canal had not flooded, Mary and her son, Donald, decided that their best plan of escape from Gentilly was to return somehow to their house in



Metairie. Mary's brother transported them by his motor boat to the intersection of Elysian Fields Avenue and Gentilly Boulevard, which looked like a narrow sand bar in the flood waters. Katrina had transformed the streets of Gentilly into a network of canals that were 8-10 feet deep. Along the way, they saw many residents standing in water on porches or perched on higher balconies and roofs. Mary's brother noted their addresses and vowed to return to help

them. In the next few days, until more rescue workers arrived, he personally saved more than 75 people before evacuating himself to safety.

Mary and Donald spent most of Tuesday riding in a Good Samaritan's pirogue to I-10 West and then walking in blazing heat for over fifteen miles toward Metairie. They hiked the elevated portions of the highway through downtown New

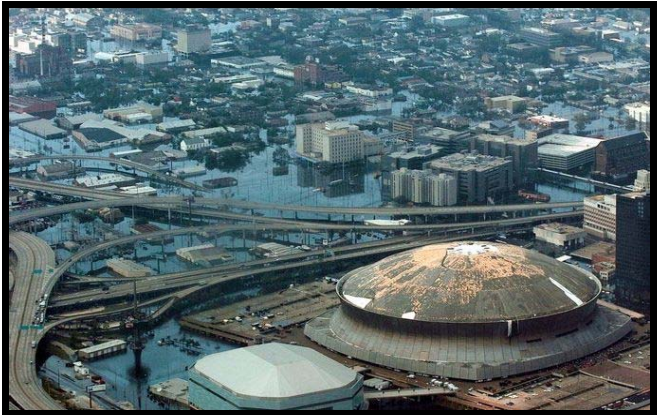
Orleans and waded in waist-deep water at low points on the Pontchartrain Expressway, back tracking at times to find an open path on the same interstate highway that had been the major evacuation route from the City only two days earlier. Along the way, macabre and bizarre flotsam drifted by them: a floating casket, an unopened bottle of Big Shot Pineapple Soda, and a bewildered canoeist looking for a passage to the Mississippi River as his way out of the City.

After several hours, Mary and Donald reached the railroad tracks near the cemeteries at the end of Canal Street and walked across the trestle bridge over the 17<sup>th</sup> Street Canal to their house in Jefferson Parish. It was dry and had sustained only minor damage. After a brief rest, they drove to Houston in Mary's car on Tuesday night, giving a ride to a hitchhiker and her pet pit-bull terrier, who had also walked from Gentilly to Causeway Boulevard in Metairie.

On Tuesday morning, our firm's nurse-paralegal, Connie Gordon, and her physician husband saw flood water begin to encircle the downtown hotel near Claiborne Avenue and Canal Street, where they had stayed since Sunday while Dr. Gordon was on voluntary call at Tulane Hospital. They waded with their luggage and two pet parrots to the Hospital a short distance away, where the doctors and staff were evacuating patients by helicopter from the building's rooftop landing pad. They remained there for the rest of the week as Tulane

Hospital cleared its own facility and assisted in the evacuation of the staff and patients at nearby Charity Hospital.

Connie and her husband spent a final harrowing night on a concrete floor of Tulane Hospital's high-rise parking lot with little food and no electricity or bathroom facilities, as police and security officers kept watch to secure the Hospital's doors and stairwells. Connie heard reports of gunfire and word that snipers were shooting at the helicopters and at pedestrians on the elevated walkway across Tulane Avenue. They finally left on Friday, September 2, in one of the last choppers airlifting the remaining hospital staff after all the patients had been evacuated.



Greg Walsh, another of our attorneys who had remained in New Orleans, likewise witnessed scenes of a storm-ravaged

City. He and his wife, Meg, a nurse at Children's Hospital on Henry Clay Avenue, had stayed uptown during the hurricane. In the following days, Greg helped to secure the Hospital and clear a stand of bamboo in nearby Audubon Park for a pathway to evacuate the young patients to helicopters that were landing on its softball field. On late Tuesday morning, when he rode his bicycle downtown to retrieve his car from the parking lot in our building, the flood waters had already reached the Central Business District, and barricades were in place at Girod Street. A block away, the Energy Centre stood as inaccessible to him as Mont St. Michel at high tide, a fortress on an islet surrounded by the water of Lake Pontchartrain. Greg saw people walking and wading to the Superdome, their shelter of last resort. And on his return trip to the Hospital, he witnessed looting on St. Charles Avenue.

At 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Tim and John met in the Chaffe McCall's Baton Rouge office on the second floor of Two United Plaza, which now had electrical power. They had initially hoped to discuss a timetable for a return to New Orleans, but television reports confirmed that the City had extensive damage from the flooding. Multiple fires had also raged in different parts of town, including the West End on the lakefront, where the historic Southern Yacht Club had been totally destroyed. In better times, the firm had hosted luncheons and receptions there.

Resuming Chaffe McCall's operations at any time soon in the Energy Centre was impossible. Tim cancelled his plans to join his family in Houston, and the attorneys and staff of the firm's five-lawyer Baton Rouge office began focusing on how to relocate Chaffe McCall's 60 attorneys, support personnel, and their families previously based in New Orleans and to help them restore their lives and livelihoods.

At noon, Tim, John, and Chip Saunders, another attorney from our New Orleans office, visited the building manager of Two United Plaza to discuss leasing more space. They acted decisively, and by 2:00 p.m. Chaffe McCall had signed a short-term lease for an additional 2,600 square feet of office and storage area on the fifth floor.

Alice Indest of our firm's Information Systems Department arrived and began addressing the critical need to expand and activate the full computer system. She located additional laptops, secured a wireless connection from a generous neighboring law firm across the hall in the Baton Rouge building, and tried to acquire more connections to the Internet. Jay Young and Phil Sims, two more of our New Orleans attorneys, rented office furniture and obtained equipment and supplies for the expansion.

The resident partners in Chaffe McCall's Baton Rouge office—Scott Barney, Keith Armstrong, and Scott Landry—immediately joined the effort. Their knowledge and local

contacts were invaluable. Four of our secretaries present in the office began the vital task of making calls to locate attorneys and staff. One of them kept a journal of events. Hurricane Katrina had seriously disrupted telephone service, and repeated calls were often necessary to make a connection. The group worked a 16-hour day, the first of many to follow.

### **Wednesday, August 31, 2005**

Because a fully working computer system and access to the New Orleans office database were critically necessary to expand the Baton Rouge office, John dispatched our new associate, Matt Terrell, to find Melissa, our ISD staff member, who had been isolated with her family in a rural area outside of Folsom, Louisiana without any way to communicate since the storm. Matt left Baton Rouge without a cell phone that would work, without an address for Melissa, and without knowing whether any gasoline stations would be open on the long trek (none was). In the great tradition of Elbert Hubbard's classic essay on dedication to a mission, "A Message to Garcia," Matt found Melissa at her parents' house in the woods after several hours of searching. She had the firm's backup computer data and would join Alice Indest on the following day. Meanwhile, Tim had located James Zeller, another ISD specialist, and he agreed to return from Memphis to restore the system.

On Wednesday afternoon, the manager of Two United Plaza informed John that he had received over 200 messages

from people who were seeking office space in Baton Rouge. The manager agreed to supply wire to a contractor whom Chaffe McCall had hired to connect its new computers. The contractor then reestablished Internet service to the building management as well as to Chaffe McCall.

The staff in Baton Rouge continued to track down the firm's missing attorneys and personnel on phones that connected only after 15 to 20 attempts. Meanwhile, the attorneys whom they reached in turn contacted the firm's clients. All of them understood the disruption that the storm had caused. Our clients' loyalty and concern lifted everyone's spirits and bolstered the firm's recovery. The hurricane had impacted many of them as well, and together we met the challenges.

Chaffe McCall's post-Katrina expansion in Baton Rouge also quickly led to new offices in other cities. Derek Walker and Walter Becker, who had evacuated to Houston with their families, obtained temporary space in a considerate client's office. They later leased dedicated space for a Chaffe McCall office for themselves and six more attorneys, including Dwight LeBlanc, Dan Tadros, Parker Harrison, and Lance Sannino of the firm's admiralty section, as well as Nannette Jolivette and Eric Gisleson. Our librarian and a file clerk would soon join them. Our assistant administrator also played a vital role in setting up the Houston branch.

In Lafayette, Chuck Blanchard, Trey Sundmaker, and Phil Sims leased space in a downtown building and furnished an office that would be occupied by Chuck, Corinne Morrison, Julie Savage, and Susan Woods. Two secretaries and a paralegal would join them. Our new Lafayette landlord was extremely accommodating, accepting faxes and mail for the firm as we organized the office.

In Dallas and Mobile, with the help of fellow lawyers they knew there, Bob Rooth and Brent Talbot secured shared office space for themselves and four more Chaffe attorneys, Greg Wyrick, Doug Holmes, Greg Walsh, and Susanne Burstein.

On news broadcasts, the Energy Centre appeared to be intact, though we later learned that a window in a 24<sup>th</sup> floor conference room of our office had broken. Other businesses and buildings in downtown New Orleans did not fare as well. Some of them were damaged both by the storm and by looters.

Dramatic helicopter and boat rescues of residents on the rooftops of their flooded homes continued in the City. Without the heroic efforts of the military, law-enforcement officers, and volunteers, the death toll of more than a thousand people in Louisiana would have been much higher.

### Thursday, September 1, 2005

While scenes of desperate citizens awaiting evacuation at the Louisiana Superdome and the Morial Convention Center in the central business district of New Orleans were broadcast worldwide, Mayor Nagin ordered all other persons voluntarily remaining in the City to leave on their own if they had the means to do so.

Eric Gisleson's son, Soren, a lawyer, had stayed in the Hyatt Regency Hotel with his family since the storm. In the predawn hours on Thursday morning, they evacuated with another family in a pickup truck they had parked in the Energy Centre annex lot. After driving on sidewalks to avoid flooded streets, they reached the on-ramp to the Crescent City Connection and crossed the bridge to the west bank with a military convoy as fires burned below.

On Thursday morning, Greg Walsh and his wife also left town with friends en route to Dallas after Children's Hospital had been evacuated. As they entered I-10 West in Metairie, they passed crowds of people near Causeway Boulevard, who were waiting to board evacuation helicopters and buses. In the opposite direction, convoys of National Guard vehicles and trucks towing rescue boats streamed into the City.

Later that day, Eric's son-in-law, Steve, a physician, would walk downtown on Tchoupitoulas Street from Children's Hospital to the bridge, hitch a ride on a passing

bus, cross the River to the west bank, and then walk from the fire-damaged Oakwood Shopping Center in Gretna to Eric's locked house in Algiers Point. By phone from Monroe, Louisiana, Eric told him where to find the hidden keys to his truck parked in the driveway so that he could drive to Tuscaloosa, Alabama.



Jonathan McCall saw looting on St. Charles Avenue and Magazine Street and learned of the Mayor's evacuation order. The McCalls drove through tree-strewn streets and crisscrossed the River on the Huey P. Long and I-310 bridges to find an open route out of the City.

In the Baton Rouge office, Alice, Melissa, James, and the newest member of the ISD team, George Lunsford, continued

to labor long hours to restore the computer system, gain access to the Internet, and re-establish e-mail. A friend of the firm volunteered to assist them. Because everything in the firm's system had been routed through New Orleans before the storm, more work was necessary to access documents in the New Orleans database in addition to creating them elsewhere. The team ordered new equipment for the growing numbers of attorneys and staff members about to relocate to Baton Rouge and the four additional offices.

The vendors and service providers who came to Chaffe McCall's aid in its time of need also played a major role in the firm's recovery. They installed new telephone lines, ran cables for computers, restored our ability to communicate via e-mail with our clients, and delivered office furniture and supplies. In their zeal to do whatever it took to complete their jobs well, some of them almost became like members of the firm's own staff.

At a 3:00 p.m. teleconference on Thursday, with all available personnel whom the firm had contacted, John Olinde summarized the recent developments, reassured all that Chaffe McCall had survived the storm, and encouraged everyone to report to work on the following Tuesday if possible, either in Baton Rouge or at one of the firm's new locations. Although our Energy Centre office was locked and without power or elevator service, the firm's files were safe. John urged all attorneys to notify our clients that Chaffe McCall was up and

running and that we could do their existing work and handle new matters. In letters, e-mails, and phone calls, we thanked them for their loyalty and patience and assured them that we were continuing to serve their best interests.

A primary concern was the crowded housing market in Baton Rouge and Lafayette, where many other hurricane evacuees and businesses from the New Orleans area were temporarily relocating. Katarina Cederbom, our Director of Human Resources, and Kathy Young, one of our associates, worked hard to find apartments and homes for personnel and their families. John Olinde and other attorneys with existing ties in Baton Rouge also tried to place people with friends and relatives. The firm rented available hotel rooms that were quickly filled. John received several calls from fellow lawyers outside the firm who asked him to buy houses for them sight unseen. He referred them to professional real estate agents. Baton Rouge had become a boom town overnight.

### **Friday, September 2, 2005**

The Baton Rouge office continued to buzz with activity. Through an alternative e-mail service, attorneys and staff were now able to reach each other by computer. The firm located more evacuees and informed them of the latest plans. As housing prices in Baton Rouge skyrocketed, the firm purchased a townhouse and leased two unfurnished apartments that were still without power since the storm.

Throughout the day, as more Chaffe McCall employees began to arrive or call in, Katarina learned the true meaning of her job as Director of Human Resources. Many of the firm's people had lost their homes and nearly all their possessions in the hurricane and flood. They were now uprooted and had to find new places to live and new schools for their children. The firm looked for solutions, hoping to help all who could return to work immediately and to assist others to find employment in other cities if they could not. Some employees waited to rejoin Chaffe McCall when it reopened its New Orleans office. Meeting these needs under ever changing conditions was a difficult task that defied a job description and required much compassion and understanding.

### **Saturday, September 3, 2005**

The expanding Baton Rouge office and the new locations continued to take shape. The ISD team installed new computers. Katarina and Kathy searched for housing to satisfy an increasing demand in a tight market. Trey Sundmaker located partitions to subdivide the present large offices, miraculously finding a supplier in New Iberia who delivered them on time as promised on one day's notice. The firm also bought furniture and mattresses for the townhouse and the apartments soon to be occupied by some of our displaced attorneys and staff.

## Sunday, September 4, 2005

In an important and welcome milestone in our firm's recovery, we made contact with our managing partner, Corinne Morrison, who had evacuated from New Orleans with her family, some friends, five dogs, and a cat to a house in a rural area near Bogalusa, Louisiana. Unfortunately, they landed right into the path of Katrina and watched the devastation all around them as they hunkered down.



For almost a week afterward, fallen trees and other debris blocked the country roads and all major highways in the Bogalusa area. The hurricane had downed land telephone lines, and cell phones were inoperable. Finally, five days after the storm, Corinne found a cell phone tower on Highway 25

outside of town and got a call through to the office in Baton Rouge.

### **Monday, September 5, 2005(Labor Day)**

John Olinde and Trey Sundmaker returned to New Orleans with an outboard motor boat to check on Drew, our



copy specialist, whom the firm had been unable to locate since the storm. From their point of departure at the 17<sup>th</sup> Street Canal and Veterans Boulevard in Metairie, they saw a vast flooded area of New Orleans that stretched to the horizon. From a distance, it resembled a swamp with utility poles and

partially submerged houses instead of cypress trees and marshy islands.

In this surreal setting, John and Trey navigated on the deeply flooded streets, taking care to avoid colored patches in the water around them—sunken cars barely



visible beneath the murky surface. At Drew's house, they broke an attic window with a hatchet and called inside. Days later, Drew would call back from Austin, Texas where he had joined his family after staying in Thibodaux, Houma, and Houston.



John and Trey then traveled by boat to Robert E. Lee Blvd. at the Orleans Canal Bridge, where they disembarked and walked atop the levee toward John's neighborhood near Lake Pontchartrain. The flood waters ended two streets before John's block, and they were able to walk to his house, where

they rescued his dog, Mozart. John's house stood structurally intact beneath a fallen tree. The lakefront neighborhood, which would otherwise have been alive with residents celebrating the last holiday of summer, was silent and empty. No one else was on the streets, except for a man carrying a sawed-off shotgun. He too had checked on his friend who had ridden out the storm and survived.



### **Tuesday, September 6, 2005**

As technicians installed new wiring for telephones and computers, the returning attorneys and staff of Chaffe McCall arrived at their newly expanded offices in Baton Rouge. The firm's location there had increased in size from five attorneys to thirty in a mere eight days. Corner offices now contained multiple offices in as many corners. Amidst it all, our Baton

Rouge partners and staff opened their doors and shared their space.

On the second floor of Two United Plaza, Rob Fisher, Tom Forbes, Ivan Rodriguez, and Scott Soule replicated a part of the admiralty section of the 23<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Energy Centre. On the fifth floor, Howell Crosby, Bill Grace, Sabrina Vickers, Shawn Bridgewater, and Keith Benit would occupy a new corporate and real estate practice area in the recently leased space near our administrative offices. They stayed in close contact with Ted and Julie George, who had relocated temporarily to North Carolina. Hal McCard, who had evacuated with his wife to Atlanta, would work there until he could return to the firm's health law section in New Orleans.

Civil, commercial, employment, and appellate litigators—Peter Feringa, Phil Shuler, John Olinde, Ed Wallace, Harry Holladay, Kathy Plemer, Chip Saunders, Jonathan McCall, Doug Grundmeyer, Jay Young, Mike Bush, Michael Spencer, Tuck Marshall, Peter Rotolo, Phil Sims, Trey Sundmaker, Lynn Wolf, and Kathy Young—were in offices on both floors and later in additional office space leased on the third floor of the Two United Plaza building. Eleven secretaries and four paralegals would soon be at their desks. And, shortly afterward, everyone would welcome Drew back to the mailroom and copy center.

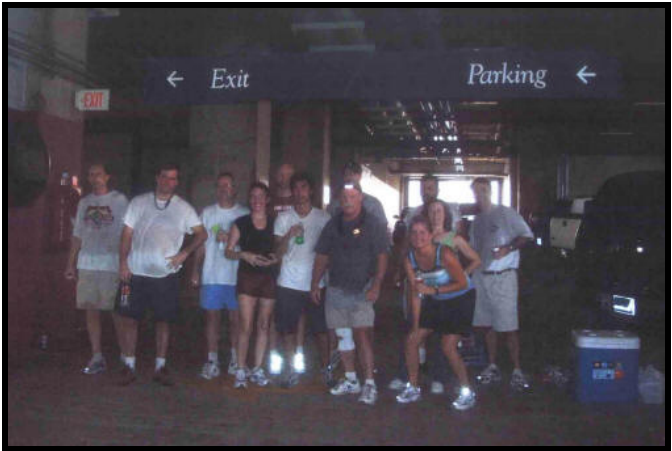
To function fully in Baton Rouge, the computer system required hardware that had remained inoperable in New Orleans after the storm. Three gutsy attorneys—Howell Crosby, Trey Sundmaker, and Ed Wallace—secured a pass into Orleans Parish and reached the Energy Centre. Without any electrical power or elevator service in the building, they climbed 23 stories through its dark interior stairwell to retrieve a heavy file server from the Chaffe McCall office after hacking a hole through the computer room’s wall. They made two more ascents to recover other essential equipment before returning to Baton Rouge later that evening.

At a firm-wide meeting and conference call, everyone understood the importance of returning to work and contacting our clients to inform them of the changes since the storm. Hurricane Katrina had disrupted the judicial system. Louisiana’s Governor issued an Executive Order staying all legal deadlines, and state and federal courts posted notices on line about their closures and temporary offices. But numerous case files still remained active, and the firm’s attorneys continued to attend depositions, draft pleadings, and write briefs. Chaffe McCall was a life line and a chance for stability for all of us in the aftermath of the catastrophe.

### **Wednesday, September 7, 2005**

Encouraged by the successful trip on the previous day, another caravan of intrepid “stair troopers” returned to New Orleans to retrieve essential files and equipment from our

Energy Centre office. Armed with flashlights and miner's lamps, they formed a bucket brigade to carry them by hand down 24 stories. They also located and retrieved several vehicles that the firm's attorneys and staff had left behind in the building parking lot before the hurricane. Through their supreme effort, they returned to Baton Rouge in heavy traffic later that day with eight cars and SUVs full of documents and material. More expeditions followed.



The firm's management committee met, carefully evaluated expenses, and organized a relief effort for employees, many of whom had lost everything in the storm. Ivan Rodriguez coordinated the distribution of donations of clothing, food, furniture, toys, school supplies, gift certificates,

and cash to people and their families in need. Julie Savage helped a number of people to register for available benefits. As President of the American College of Mortgage Attorneys, the head of our real estate section, Howell Crosby, set up a Hurricane Katrina Adopt-A-Family Program, whereby employees of member firms in the Gulf South could apply for needed assistance from law firms in other states. Ted George and Greg Wyrick would later inform us of recent changes in the tax laws to assist residents and businesses affected by the storm.

Our partner Charlie Chassaignac, his wife Carla, and their son Chase contributed to the relief effort in a very personal way. Nightly for more than a week, with the Fathers' Club of St. Aloysius School in Baton Rouge, they served hot meals to 400-500 state troopers, swat-team members, and National Guard troops at a church dining hall in Kenner, Louisiana. Those first-responders were rescuing victims and restoring order to the City in the days after the hurricane. Many of them from other states especially appreciated the steaks, jambalaya, gumbo, and red beans and rice—a taste of Louisiana that was a welcome change from their MREs and rations. In addition to being its own reward, the Chassaignacs' good deed resulted in a boon to them. State troopers found and evacuated Charlie's 80-year old cousin from his house in Algiers just as his food supply was beginning to run low.

### **Thursday, September 8, 2005**

As Chaffe McCall's practice of law resumed, the firm built a new conference room in the Baton Rouge office. Our attorneys prepared to take on new work with a prospective client. Corinne Morrison, Howell Crosby, Nannette Jolivette, and Bob Rooth made a successful presentation on our behalf. In a firm-wide meeting, we assessed our progress and divided into teams to assure that the practice would continue to thrive. Three new associates—Stephanie Morris, Kurt Duncan, and Ben Fox—would join the firm in early October, when the courts were expected to resume operations.

### **Friday, September 9, 2005**

The firm leased additional space in the third floor of the Two United Plaza Building to house the offices of Phil Shuler and the lawyers of our labor and employment section. Attorneys began to complain about the shortage of secretarial help, a sure sign that things were returning to normal.

Members of the management committee took time to reflect on the lessons they had learned in the aftermath of the storm. From their hectic experience in the previous two weeks, they considered the following points to be paramount in dealing with such a catastrophe:

1. Have a disaster plan and update it at least once a year.

a. Make plans to open or expand an office in the city nearest in location to the disaster city. Our experience was that employees and attorneys desire to work as close as possible to their homes. New Orleans was inaccessible, and Baton Rouge was the closest city. Most attorneys and employees wanted to work in Baton Rouge, even though we had offices in other cities.

b. Consider a contact person, such as a real estate broker, who can quickly locate housing in the nearest city. Within one or two days after the disaster, virtually no affordable homes or apartments were available in Baton Rouge, and the housing markets in Lafayette and Houston also experienced sharply increased demands.

c. Every employee and attorney should be given a number to call in another area code in the event of a disaster. Hurricanes disrupt the normal means of communication. Our experience was that land telephone lines and cell phones in the area codes in or near damaged locations worked only intermittently or not at all for several weeks after the storm.

d. Every employee and attorney should provide a land-line telephone number of a relative or friend who is located out of state and who will know how the employee or attorney can be reached after the disaster. Do not expect cell phones, computers, or land lines in the affected areas to operate properly.

e. Make sure you have an independent computer server in another city. Your computer server(s) in the disaster city may be destroyed or rendered inoperable.

f. Have a plan to retrieve hard files. If you have time, box crucial hard files and carry with you what you can before the storm. If you cannot transport the files, keep them boxed in one location away from windows. Once you are able to retrieve hard files after the disaster, much time will be saved if they are in one place.

g. Consider having alternate e-mail addresses and service providers to communicate with clients if your primary system is inoperable. Set up a website as quickly as possible with information about the firm's status.

2. Be flexible after the disaster. Good and bad things will happen, and you must adapt.

3. Call clients. They will be understanding, and they are crucial to your survival. You will value their loyalty, and the crisis will strengthen the bond of trust between you.
4. Conserve cash. Have at least one account in a bank that has a main office out of state. After Hurricane Katrina, local banks would only allow businesses to withdraw \$300 (regardless of their account balances), because all of the banks' computers were down.
5. Keep in constant contact with other law firms or businesses who have relocated away from the disaster city. You can gain very valuable information on how others have resolved problems.
6. Make sure your employees and attorneys are fully informed. They are your greatest asset, and they appreciate your candor.

Indeed, more than ever before, the firm had learned to appreciate the Herculean efforts of its people, their spouses, and friends—many of whom had worked tirelessly and selflessly, casting off job titles and taking on unfamiliar tasks to rebuild Chaffe McCall.

### **Saturday, September 10, 2005**

Bob Rooth called John Olinde to announce that the interested client had accepted Chaffe McCall's recent proposal to represent it in a complex new matter. In an e-mail to the firm, John recapped the changes and challenges that we had experienced and met since the hurricane.

From Houston, Derek Walker replied with more good news of additional new cases, noting that we had made a tragedy "as positive as possible" and could "return some purpose and normalcy to our lives" by continuing to work and keep busy.

In Lafayette, Corinne Morrison wrote from the heart to express how proud she was of everyone who had "pulled together in this incredible crisis and concentrated on moving forward," pushing "through personal problems, personal losses, and tragedy to come to the aid of our firm and its future."

### **Sunday, September 11, 2005**

In the Sunday papers of Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Lake Charles, Shreveport, Alexandria, and Opelousas, Louisiana, Chaffe McCall thanked the people of those cities, the State, and the nation for their hospitality and compassion to the victims of Hurricane Katrina. The firm's newspaper notice

concluded, “We look forward to a bright future for Louisiana and the Gulf Coast.”

We would soon begin to realize that vision. By the following Friday, September 16, 2005, George Lunsford in ISD had set up printers and wireless networks in our Lafayette and Houston offices. All the people of Chaffe McCall could finally communicate fully with each other and our clients at any of our offices. Later in the month, after staying overnight at his house in the Uptown neighborhood of New Orleans for the first time since evacuating, Brent Talbot reported on the City’s progress in recovering from the storm and thanked all for their “hard work—particularly those who have soldiered forward in the face of personal tragedy and those whose decisiveness, creativity, and loyalty have put us at this point as a firm.” And Bill Grace soon announced that another major company had engaged Chaffe McCall to represent its interests, further validation of our perseverance and our clients’ trust in us.

We continued to work together as a functioning law firm in the following weeks, while looking forward to our return to New Orleans. We would mourn the loss of Henry Salassi, our first partner in our Baton Rouge office, who passed away on October 1, 2005. The threat of Hurricane Rita would postpone the reopening of the City and would force us to evacuate our newly established offices in Lafayette and Houston. And repairs to our building and office in New Orleans would delay

our initial plans to go home in mid-October. But our moving day would finally arrive. And our long-missed co-workers would soon rejoin us in the Energy Centre.

### EPILOGUE

First-year students of Louisiana property law learn that Lake Pontchartrain is an “arm of the sea.” Hurricane Katrina demonstrated that rule of law in a horrible way. Nearly a month later, Hurricane Rita struck southwestern Louisiana and made a similar case in Calcasieu Lake.

The flood waters have since receded, leaving behind in many neighborhoods of New Orleans and coastal Louisiana a gray veneer of sediment that the sun has baked and cracked into a mosaic of shards. Returning residents—including many in the Chaffe McCall family hit hard by the storm—have begun the long process of clearing the debris and rebuilding their own shattered lives and property. More will return home later, but others sadly will not.

In the aftermath of Katrina, some parts of New Orleans and the surrounding parishes have quickly revived. Although the City’s beloved streetcars will not run again for some time, the unflooded areas of Orleans, Jefferson, and St. Tammany are awakening with life and commerce. But other neighborhoods in the City and parts of Plaquemines, St. Bernard, and the Gulf Coast devastated by the wind and water

still remain largely uninhabited. They will take longer to rebuild.

For a while, North Rampart Street will mark the line where the lights of the French Quarter meet the dark night that fills the nearby blocks of vacant houses as the flood once did. And for a time, Elysian Fields—the avenue celebrated by Walker Percy, John Kennedy Toole, and Tennessee Williams—will be a haunted road from the River to the Lake through the deserted parts of town. But the darkness will not last, and the lights will shine again in the Old City and beyond.

On October 24, 2005, Chaffe McCall, L.L.P., Louisiana’s oldest continuously operating law firm, reopened its New Orleans office. Committed to our clients and community, we have joined our fellow residents and businesses in revitalizing the City.

As Chip Saunders has written in his historical account of our firm’s practice, “In 1826, Thomas and John Slidell, two very prominent attorneys in Louisiana, founded a law firm” at a time when “Victoria was still a princess, the Spanish Inquisition was still in progress, [and] the first railroad in the United States had yet to be built. . . .” Since its founding almost 180 years ago, Chaffe McCall has remained in New Orleans, enduring the Civil War, yellow fever epidemics, and numerous storms named and nameless. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina tried the mettle of the firm and its people. Once

again—with God's help and that of our families, clients, colleagues, and friends—we passed the test.

Douglas L. Grundmeyer  
New Orleans  
November 2005