

Remembering Katrina



Good morning, y'all. The weather is actin' like it can't decide whether to fry us where we stand, or drench us with a monsoon. Checking the weather radar reveals the remnants of a hurricane named Danny about to strike Florida and yet another one name Erika kickin' up a fit along the same path. Maybe we'll get some rain from all of the activity, certainly hope so.

Talking about hurricanes always reminds me of Katrina, and it turns out this is the tenth anniversary of Katrina making landfall in New Orleans, La. Now in case you didn't have people there, or business interests there, you might not have followed the Katrina tragedy as closely as I did. I had both. My cousin Sissie and her family lived across the lake in Mandeville. Sissie and her family were always kind enough to put me up when my travels carried me to the New Orleans area.

My business interests in the great state of Louisiana were kind of a funny story. Daddy died in 2001 and at the time of his death he had a vending business that serviced the machines in men's rooms all over the South. You know the ones I'm talking about, the ones that sell combs, salves, creams and well uh, protection. As we've all seen from movies about the Mob, protection is a big business and Daddy had scored his share of the protection game from some poor fool that didn't know when to hold 'em and when to fold 'em. Anyway, Daddy's gone and the fellow that serviced the machines for Daddy just didn't look like he could be trusted. He was a cock-eyed fellow named Will B. Cheatum. While I didn't have any proof yet that he was cheating Daddy, the fact that when you tried to talk to him you couldn't look him directly in the eyes was proof enough for me. After securing all of the locations from Will, we parted company and I started traveling all over the South. Turns out, "protection" is good business. It was particularly good in Louisiana where the population was overwhelming Catholic. Like Daddy used to say, "faith goes out the window when lust comes in the door", and the good folks of Louisiana provided the Lites with a good steady income.

In my travels to Louisiana I was accustomed to seeing shop owners drag out their plywood and board up their window fronts to protect against the upcoming storms during hurricane season. I knew the rumors about what disaster would befall the city of New Orleans if a hurricane ever hit "just right". Ten years ago today, one of the largest, strongest hurricanes ever recorded hit New Orleans "just right", and the people of New Orleans were not prepared. It is easy for any Monday morning quarterback to point out the mistakes of others. We can all acknowledge that many folks didn't heed the warnings as they should have. Speaking for myself, Old Bud beat a path for the Georgia hills that Bandit and Cledus would have been proud of. I watched America's greatest tragedy from the comfort of my armchair.

I do not use the phrase America's greatest tragedy, lightly. In my lifetime we have screwed some things up royally, with thousands and thousands of dead, but the dark in my heart lets me rationalize that the destruction of others was not as bad as the destruction of our own. The people of the Gulf suffered the worst natural disaster we've known and Washington couldn't decide whether to wind their butts or scratch their watch. Apparently the decision was finally made, and the phrase "screw 'em they don't vote for us anyway" was attributed to Dick Cheney. The people of New Orleans were in a hell without fire, chest deep water was the constant reminder of their misery. There were no city services and even the police turned into a rogue band of wolves. People with no refuge waited on roofs or wherever they could to stay dry; waiting for their government, their tax dollars, to help them in their hour of need. Thousands of people were jammed into the Super Bowl, which was supposed to be an evacuation site. Imagine being in Hell, in the dark, with thousands of strangers, and all of the toilets backed up. President Bush's momma thought they had it pretty good, she is quoted as saying, "And so many of the people in the arena here, you know, were underprivileged anyway, so this is working very well for them."

We have tried to disrupt local cultures all over the world to change the demographics to favor "American Interests". Viet Nam, Iraq, throw a dart at Central and South America, are a few examples of the indigenous people who have received "special attention" by our government in order to change their hearts and minds. Doing nothing for the people of New Orleans in the aftermath of Katrina has had a longer lasting result with much greater effectiveness.

Until we meet again New Orleans, *Laissez les bons temps rouler!*