

# WELCOME TO MISSISSIPPI

By Holly Lisle

Guest Editorial, from Mark Flemmons

*O.K. I'll make an attempt to tell what's going on down here right now. It's hard to do for several reasons. First, because there is so much, it's hard to talk about. Let's try to focus on the positive.*

*You're right to be sick about New Orleans. They've turned into a bunch of animals over there. The idiots are shooting at the people who are trying to help them???? I think for the most part it's due to frustration.....*

*Everybody is so focused on what's going on in the Superdome, the Mississippi story is going un-reported.*

*It's one of the bright things that are happening here now.*

*We are NOT leaving our people to wallow and starve in their own filth, and the cadavers of loved ones. We're finding the live ones and getting them north as fast as possible. Most of the hundreds showing up here have at least had a meal, and a bath.*

*Haley Barbour the Governor and his administration will come out as true heroes in this disaster once the total story is told. The differences between the Louisiana and Mississippi responses are truly startling. Haley and FEMA had already had Mississippi declared disaster areas TWO DAYS before Katrina hit.....What does that mean? A lot.....*

*It means we had a two day head start on recovery. It means we had pre-positioned response teams...FULLY EQUIPPED! It means we already had supplies being loaded on trucks to go to the coast while the hurricane was still going on. It means Federal representatives from FEMA were already IN State when*

it hit. Which means somebody on the Satellite Phone moving troops and aid our way while Louisiana was still trying to get ....

We have been dealing with looters a little differently on the coast. Once you shoot a few and leave their bodies laying in front of the store with their arms full of booty, the rest get the idea pretty quickly. Hasn't been a big problem. In the case of breaking in to get survival supplies...food and water. The police have shot the locks off the doors and helped take the stuff to distribution points.

School buses to haul refugees to shelters north, an idea Louisiana JUST figured out by the way, have been running shuttle since Wednesday morning.

They are pouring in here by the hundreds. Red Cross has been doing a GREAT job on setting up relief shelters in our area.

The local Governments have opened all of the convention centers and school auditoriums to them. I know it's hard to believe, but the local Friday night Football games have ALL been canceled this week. Our efforts are going elsewhere this weekend.

My daughter is the editor for the local University newspaper. She asked me what she could do for these folks, and I told her" The main thing they need right now is bottled water". So she made a few phone calls and set it up with her newspaper and the local T.V. stations....in 24 hours they had collected over 600 gallons. This story is typical and is happening all over this part of the state.

Pulpwood haulers (lumberjacks to you Yankees) who showed up at Interstates and main feeder hi-ways heading south. Started cutting up the downed trees with their own chainsaws, and loading them up with their hydraulic boom hauling trucks. Opening the way south for our relief effort...nobody called them....they just showed up and started doing what had to be

done. Welcome to Mississippi.

The local churches are jumping in too. Emmanuel Baptist has been cooking and serving three meals a day for 1500 people at the shelter there since Wednesday. Where is the food coming from? Strangers are just showing up at the convention center and dropping it off. Red Cross is providing some of it, but the majority is just showing up...from people who aren't seeking and never will be recognized. It's happening all over the state. again and again. Welcome to Mississippi.

Our local hotels are full of people here from New Orleans.....most are starting to run out of money, so we have begun collecting for their hotel bills and providing them with meals at the shelters. Quite a few in town have taken them in to their own homes...knowing they may be there for months. I filled up one guy's tank at the gas station Tuesday because he only had enough money for a few gallons. Welcome to Mississippi.

Just stopped and put an antenna on one of our E.O.C. Trucks headed south to Ocean Springs. Their headed down to do a fuel supply run. While here, my daughter came in with another 300 gallons of bottled water, asking where she could store it. I said" How 'bout the back of this truck?" :))) This is how it works, over and over and over

Sorry if this E-mail seems a little jumpy, I've been adding to it all day. As I get a minute and as thoughts occur to me. Things are happening all around me, and it's hard to sort it all out while "in the moment". I think that's the way this story will be told....later

..It's going to take a while.

While I'm thinking about it....BIG thank you to Motorola. I'm almost as proud of being a Motorolan as I am a Mississippian. You guys may not know about it yet, but Motorola has put on a Herculean support effort. I was involved on the fringes for a

while, but the effort to send radios and infrastructure has been nothing short of phenomenal! My guys on the coast called with a SEVERE need for repeaters and W.T's. They had a few towers and antennas still standing, but the repeaters were in about three feet of water. After a few phone calls around the campus there in Schaumburg, I was given the Bridge call number for the emergency request line. Made a call back to my guys and passed it on.

I'll be sheep dipped if Motorola didn't have equipment THERE the NEXT DAY!!!!!!

HOT DANG!!! That's the way you do it.:)))

Mississippians have loooong memories. This one will NOT be forgotten. Anybody see Jim Geary up there...kiss him for me. Lord knows I won't.:))) And anybody else that you know was involved in Motorola's support effort. Tell them Mississippi gives a heartfelt "God Bless You" Most of us cry at least once a day. You can't deal with the hundreds we have coming in here everyday and not be affected. I've seen big bears break down and just fall apart. Mostly blaming themselves for not getting out in time. That choice cost him a wife, child or in some cases both. They all usually say the same things. "I didn't think it would get that bad." All you can do is listen and try to comfort. Sometimes you see guys just staring into the sunset...not saying anything...but you see those jaw muscles working hard to hold it in.

I had one tell me yesterday "We had to choose, Stay in the attic and drown, or climb on the roof into a 150 mile an hour wind. She was screaming my name as she flew away." How do you respond to that? You don't...you just cry with him and listen...

Loose children who don't know where Mamma or Daddy are, or even if their alive. Ten year olds, trying to be "mama" or "daddy" to a little sister or brother.....it will tear your

*heart out.*

*Most also know there is NOTHING to go home to. The house is gone, and in most cases the job too. They show up here with the clothes on their back, and that's it. It's all they have left. It's hard, just too hard for words.....you do what you can, but.....*

*FORGET about Mississippi burning. That was our dark, distant past. Watch us NOW. This is Mississippi today. We've opened our Homes, Hearts and wallets to strangers in need. We don't care if their White, Black, Brown or Polka -dot.*

*Were going to be O.K., It will take years, but we're dealing with it. We will deal with it the way only a true southerner can...one day at a time. Were out of gasoline today. All the local stations have run out.*

*My phones are still acting squirrely on out of state calls and my cell phone has been a paper weight since Tuesday. But I did sleep in my own bed last night, and took a hot shower this morning. There is food in my house, and I know where all my family is. You take these things for granted, until their gone.....*

*Forward as you see fit...*

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