

THE LOG OF THE GUINSTON GUTTERS II

Second Trip – November 2005

Our second mission to New Orleans was somewhat better planned, manned and equipped than the first. We allocated two full days for travel each way, did more thorough vehicle preparation, and scheduled five full workdays on site. We eliminated all tools and equipment not required for clearance and demolition, simplified our meal planning and reduced our load of perishable food.

Our departure was blessed with good weather, and we were invited to stop for lunch at a church in the Shenandoah Valley. On our way through southern Virginia on Saturday evening, we discovered that tolerance of the Highway Patrol for speeding by disaster aid convoys does not extend beyond 15mph above the posted limit. Apart from this \$164 misunderstanding, the southbound drive was relatively smooth and uneventful. We arrived at the John Calvin Church Sunday evening with no further incidents.



Our first gutting job on Monday morning was a large frame single-story house owned by an 80-something Granny who had been evacuated to Baton Rouge. The floodwaters had reached 3 feet up the first-floor walls; some of the household goods such as glassware, curios and kitchenware appeared salvageable. We attempted to sort the salvageable contents out as best we could before cleaning out the rubbish, but this went very slowly until the owner's son-in-law arrived to make the executive decisions. This house provided our introduction to the contents of refrigerators left closed up without power for over two months.

Our second job on this trip was a house recently purchased by Susan, a nurse who had worked through the storm and flood at a nearby hospital. Her main reason for buying it was so that her young daughter could attend the local "magnet" school (now closed). Here we were introduced to the phenomenon of sewer gas, trapped under pressure between a plugged garbage disposal unit and the city sewer connection; this had the delightful combination of biologically active toxic slime, nauseating smell, and explosion hazard.



Our Thursday evening night out took us again to the French Quarter, where we became more acquainted with the range of local cuisine, including jambalaya, crawfish sauteed in hot sauce, po' boy sandwiches, and grilled alligator.

Friday we cut up and removed fallen trees from the front yard of one of the ladies in Metairie who volunteers as a cook at the fellowship hall for their Wednesday community dinners.

Saturday and Sunday we traveled home without major incidents (we expect to make at least one wrong turn, accidentally separate our vehicles, or just get lost at least once on every trip). We arrived home early Sunday evening with less fatigue than on the previous trip.