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# Table d'hote



by Wade McIntyre

## 'Before (During) After'

It's been five years since Katrina struck New Orleans and broken levees loosed water and all hell on the city.

Today, single photographic images taken in the city at that time, and in the continuing aftermath, easily free floods of images pent up in our collective memory.

Because I don't watch television, I'm the rare bird in America who has yet to see more than a handful of moving snippets of the devastation.

But I've poured over thousands of Katrina and Rita still photos on the Internet, in press releases, in newspapers and magazines ads and on museum walls.

The night Rita hit South Louisiana I was in a bar in New Orleans photographing and interviewing French Quarter residents who remained in the city, stubbornly guarding their property, after everyone else had been evacuated.

On the drive in that afternoon, past downed electric wires and poles, mountains of trash, and not a single person save an occasional National Guardsman on patrol in his Hummer, I never took a single photo.

On the downtown side of the Quarter an old brick building lay collapsed in the street, a huge pile of rubble. I cut over to another street without a thought of photographing the unbelievable sight.

There were people, crazed warriors you might say, in the French Quarter, and they had stories to tell and photographing them would be easier and a part of their story.

But the rest of the New Orleans was destroyed and deserted, and after having lived there for seven years, seeing it go from the way I knew it, day, to the way it had become, blackest night, was more than I could stomach, more than I could photograph.

Which is why when a book about Katrina like "Before (During) After" comes along five years after the storm, I can only marvel and say "Thanks."

Twelve photographers with New Orleans roots and very different visions are featured with photos taken of the city before Katrina, during or in the first days after the storm, and in the long, continuing aftermath.

It is no small feat for a photographer to be immersed in an apocalyptic, generation shaking event, to capture the moment, and then remain with the subject for years, photographing for posterity, and for themselves.

Each of these twelve photographers succeeds on varying levels. Initially, I was most captivated by the photos of Lori Waselchuk. She spent nine years in South Africa photographing color night scenes, and translates that vision to daytime Katrina struck New Orleans, often shooting in black and white. When I next study the photos, perhaps my favorite will be Eric Julie, who while living in New Orleans photographed both it and Haiti. He lost ten years of work in the storm and began creating mixed media collages after having to leave the city without his photography equipment.

Essays written by each of the 12 photographers reveal a moving personal journey and changes in style and approach to photography that would never have occurred without Katrina, or if the photographer had not delved into the storm's aftermath.

It's been five years since Katrina, yet the images in this new book published by UNO Press remind us that, really, it was only yesterday.

Someday, far down the line, maybe those still around will revisit "Before (During) After" and share the book and its photos with someone curious about the event known as Katrina.

Perhaps when doing so they will say, "This is not all of what it was, but all that is here is true of the things we used to make ourselves stronger."

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