



Media Contact: Tom Scheinfeldt
Center for History and New Media
George Mason University
4400 University Drive, MSN 1E7, Fairfax, VA 22030-4444
Telephone Number: (703) 993-4585
Email: info@hurricanearchive.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Preserving Hurricane Stories Online

NEW ORLEANS, February 13, 2006-The compelling images and stories seared into the memories of all who lived through last year's hurricanes will endure through an online hurricane archive. Anyone may visit the *Hurricane Digital Memory Bank: Preserving Stories from Katrina, Rita, and Wilma* at <http://www.hurricanearchive.org> to read the submissions of others before contributing their own memories and pictures to this growing collection. All experiences related to the storms are sought, whether one was directly affected by the storms or served as a volunteer hundreds of miles away. This archive project uses electronic media to collect, preserve, and present the stories, images, and responses of the devastating 2005 hurricane season. The goal is both to foster some positive legacies by allowing the people affected by these storms to tell their stories and to assist historians and archivists in preserving the record of current events.

First-hand accounts, on-scene images, blog postings, podcasts, and other audio files are some of the materials being collected. Digital technology offers people the opportunity to record experiences in the moment, but many of those digital recordings are quickly discarded. Hurricanearchive.org seeks to save those creations in a permanent database for scholars and a wide audience for generations to come. Contributors also may phone 504-208-3883 to record their stories.

The University of New Orleans and the Center for History and New Media, CHNM, at George Mason University created this digital history project in partnership with the

Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History and Gulf area partners, with funding from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. Hurricanearchive.org builds on prior work to collect and preserve history online, especially through CHNM's ECHO (<http://echo.gmu.edu>) science and technology history project and the September 11 Digital Archive (<http://www.911digitalarchive.org>), which gathered more than 150,000 digital objects related to the attacks. The Library of Congress permanently houses those materials. Both projects are part of a growing practice of using the Internet to preserve the past through "digital memory banks."

About University of New Orleans

The University of New Orleans (UNO) is Louisiana's premier urban university. Facing massive challenges following Hurricane Katrina, UNO resumed its Fall 2005 semester in early October with a combination of on-line and on-site courses offered on satellite campuses. UNO was the only New Orleans university to reopen in 2005. Building upon its rich academic research tradition, UNO sponsors a group of projects to identify, record, and alleviate the effects of Katrina on the citizens of Louisiana. An important goal of the university is to provide appropriate physical and electronic venues for storing and disseminating the collected data as the Gulf Coast rebuilds.

About CHNM

CHNM maintains a wide range of online history projects directed at diverse topics and audiences, making them available at no cost through its website. CHNM combines cutting edge digital media with the latest and best historical scholarship to promote an inclusive and democratic understanding of the past as well as a broad historical literacy. Since 1994, the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University (<http://chnm.gmu.edu>) has used digital media and computer technology to democratize history to incorporate multiple voices, reach diverse audiences, and encourage popular participation in presenting and preserving the past.

Highlights from the Hurricane Digital Memory Bank

Stories:

“As with every other hurricane I decided to stay thinking it was a false alarm.”

<http://www.hurricanearchive.org/details.php?id=252>

“When the power returned Monday night we saw the news coverage of New Orleans, the city that I had come to love in the ten years that I lived there looked like it would never be livable again.” <http://www.hurricanearchive.org/details.php?id=2>

“No words could adequately describe what I actually saw in Pass Christian. After his visit, my brother-in-law Trey reported that “the walls were blown out.” I couldn't grasp what he meant until I saw it, and discovered he meant just what he said: there are large sections of walls that are just gone -the interior sheetrock is gone; the exterior siding is gone.” <http://www.hurricanearchive.org/details.php?id=36>

“The first thing we did when we arrived for cleanup was try to figure out what furniture could be saved. Then I started pushing mud off of the patio. There was 3-4 inches of that muck everywhere.” <http://www.hurricanearchive.org/details.php?id=397>

Images:

A Subway sandwich shop once stood here in New Orleans:

<http://www.hurricanearchive.org/details.php?id=196>

Homeowners discover the rubble left where their home stood in Pass Christian, MS:

<http://www.hurricanearchive.org/details.php?id=70>

A gas station in Port Arthur, Texas attempts to remain open after Hurricane Rita:

<http://www.hurricanearchive.org/details.php?id=5>

A child walks through rubble in Slidell, LA:

<http://www.hurricanearchive.org/details.php?id=341>

A New Orleanian cleans out their refrigerator after a 2-month absence:

<http://www.hurricanearchive.org/details.php?id=192>

A home stands isolated by water after a levee broke in Montegut, Terrebonne Parish, LA:

<http://www.hurricanearchive.org/details.php?id=488>