

The Log of the Guinston Gutters

New Orleans Mission Trip 11

18-27 October 2008

The Guinston Gutters Road Crew left earlier than usual this trip – by 5:45 AM. Itinerary: breakfast at Ingram's Diner and Museum of Lawn Art (Jefferson, MD), followed by dinner and overnight lodging at Northminster Presbyterian Church in Chattanooga, TN.

Sunday morning, the Flying Squad departed immediately following worship service around 11:00 AM for BWI. The fliers telephoned the roadies about 1:30 PM. It was no surprise to find that their location was Barnhills Restaurant in Meridian, MS.

Shortly after leaving Meridian on I-59, the roadies convoy encountered the remains of a deer killed by preceding traffic and scattered piecewise by an 18-wheeler immediately in front of our vehicles. Bill's van only needed the Bambi-Bits scraped off its front, but Big Red lost its muffler/tailpipe connection and became quite obnoxiously loud.

The New Orleans arrivals began about 10:00 for Diane Ezzell who was able to join Jefferson Presbyterian Church for their morning worship service. Around 4:30 the road crew (Walter and Sue Blumenfeld, Bill Thompson, Elizabeth Decker, Wayne Deller, Donald Ruff, and Rich Dohm) arrived. The Flying Squad (Linda Seibert, Ralene Miller, and Linda Jordan) landed and were transported by Paul Davis to the church around 5:30. Paul hurried back to his house and picked up Sally, Andrew and the delicious dinner they had prepared. They brought red beans and rice, sausage, ham, salad, French bread, chive butter, and crème cake. We had a great evening of fellowship with the Davis'. Everyone was weary from traveling and fell into bed by 10:30 PM.



About 2:30 Monday morning Elizabeth awoke feeling very bad. By 4:30 Wayne was sick and Sue was starting to feel bad, too. By 8:30AM Bill was down and out and Walter and Rich were also starting to feel bad, but spent the day working. Elizabeth, Wayne, Bill and Sue spent most of Monday in bed...or in the restroom. The remainder of the team began our week of work at the Perkins house.



Our team was given the challenge to finish the walls – plastering, spackling, sanding and repeating this procedure every day (the next crew will paint). We were also tasked with installing hardiboard underlayment for floor tile, and strengthening a poorly-installed front door. Since the Perkins house was a church building, it was our intention to complete these jobs as nicely as possible. We were encouraged in this by Martha Ittenbach, a member of Jefferson Presbyterian Church who worked with us. Lotte Comeaux and Martha Marzilli stopped over to check on the progress, too. Their visits were appreciated because drywall finishing is a very tedious task...especially when half your team is “under the weather”.



Paul and Sally were afraid they had made us sick from their dinner the evening before until we told them that the fliers were still healthy. Ralene and Linda J. fixed lunch for

the members of the team that were feeling well enough to eat. Then all those well enough went back to Perkins to continue mudding and sanding. It seemed as though the virus was confined to the road crew, so that evening after work, the fliers evacuated to the Davis home in an attempt to stay healthy. Paul and Sally made chicken soup for the members that were ailing and then Paul took the four that were well to the Oriental Triangle for dinner. By Tuesday morning Walter was down; by late afternoon, Rich joined Walter in the "sick bay." Sue and Bill were still feeling pretty bummed, too. After work Tuesday, the healthy people cooked spaghetti dinner, the unhealthy people had toast, more of the Davis' chicken soup and orange jello. Paul stopped by with pound cake hoping it would be something the recovering crewmembers would be able to try. Following dinner a Bible study was led by Martha Ittenbach. Afterwards, the fliers went back to Paul and Sally's to sleep still trying to avoid contamination with the intestinal pathogens.

At 6:00 AM Wednesday Linda J. started feeling poorly and left Paul's for the church "sick bay." Most of the team was back on their feet or at least one foot by this time. More mudding and sanding were the order for the work crew. Ralene cooked a neck pumpkin and made pumpkin pies for the Thursday night dinner.

During lunch a hungry-looking man named Dan Patterson stopped in asking for money to pay his rent. He told us he was originally from Michigan where he worked as a cook for Bennegan's Restaurant. When he became unemployed, his wife and children went to Florida and he found work in Louisiana for an off-shore oil drilling company as a cook. He had come ashore for time off, but wouldn't be able to pick up his pay check until Friday. He promised to come back to wash cars/trucks to pay us back and offered prayer before he left. Later Sue and Walter went to the motel and paid for a 2-night stay. That same evening Dan returned to thank everyone for their generosity.

This particular evening dinner was prepared for our team by the Jefferson Presbyterian Church. We were served a magnificent and had a grand evening of fellowship with our many friends we've gotten to know here. Following dinner, a Bible Praise service was held. A young man with a walker who had suffered a stroke shared his faith and love of the Bible. He told us to "Praise difficult times so that you have a story to share the Glory of Christ." We were reminded that even illness can be an opportunity to become close to the Lord. Each morning the team again held Bible study and prayer asking for healing and faithfulness.

Elizabeth, Wayne, and Linda Seibert spent part of Wednesday touring the city with Paul, Sally, and Andrew. They toured Lakeview and saw some of Katrina's destruction and the rebuilding. About half of the homes are still in dire need. Paul pointed out the flood lines and the markings on each house. They had a typical New Orleans dinner of gumbo, fried artichokes, and a mound of fried seafood. After eating they toured the French Quarter complete with the cathedral on foot then feasted on beignets and Café Au Lait. On the return home they drove through the Garden District which was lit for Halloween.



Thursday morning part of the team stayed at the church and helped with Jefferson's food bank. We invited the food bank workers to join us for lunch.



The work at Perkins Thursday was again mudding and sanding. Bill and Walter built a sturdy door frame with a deadbolt to secure the house. Mark (Project Homecoming) brought panelboard sheets to be installed throughout the bath, hallway and kitchen. Monica (AmeriCorps) joined us to help with the drywall work.



Ralene, Linda J. and Linda S. began cooking at 12:30. The main course consisted of Walter's beef prepared in homemade pot pie (Pennsylvania Dutch style), home-canned sauerkraut and pork, hand-mashed potatoes, fresh PA frozen buttered corn and Fettuccini. For dessert, we made pumpkin pies, apple crisp and pretzel salad. Side dishes included home-canned pickles, beets, and chow chow from Ralene's garden. During the evening, the Gutters presented Jefferson Presbyterian Church with a check for \$1200.00 that was raised at our annual May yard sale. Tony Marzilli accepted on behalf of Jefferson with a heartfelt and tearful thank you and prayer that blessed all of us and our dinner. Our two congregations have grown to love each other and Christ was given all the Glory this particular evening. Ralene presented Walter with George, the Guinston Gutter Gator mascot and gave him detailed instructions for care and feeding.



Friday morning Tony Marzilli, Donald, Linda S. and Ralene visited the First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans to deliver men's clothing donated by Nancy Taylor. Nancy's husband, Gene, had served as a Guinston Gutter volunteer on several trips and had planned to join us on this trip. But Our Lord called him home first, early in June. By bringing Gene's clothing to the homeless men's shelter in New Orleans, it brought comfort to Nancy and to all his friends in the Guinston Gutters.

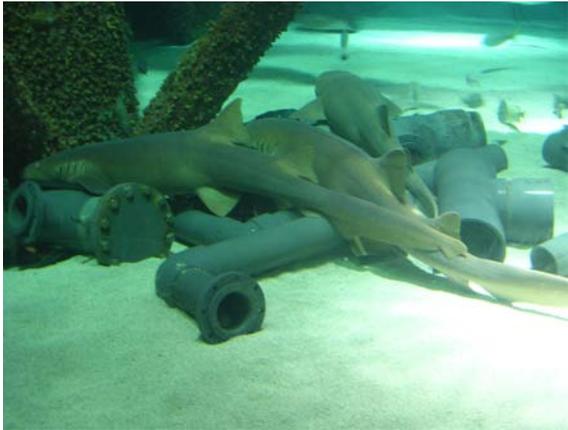


Finishing touches were completed in the Perkins house on Friday. The PSL /AmeriCorps people came with their texture splattering equipment to apply texture to the walls. Some people taped windows, doors, and floors, some scrubbed walls, some organized tools and equipment. By late afternoon, the walls were textured and ready for final painting, the floor was ready for tiling, and the front door frame and locks were secure.



After lunch, Diane and our two Lindas did a massive cleanup job on the Jefferson volunteer quarters, kitchen and fellowship hall, as well as Paul & Sally's guest facilities. By 4:30 Sally arrived to escort the flying volunteers to the airport. They said goodbye to everyone and wished them all safe trips home. Friday evening was Paul & Sally's fish fry ...a feast of lots of different fish, gumbo, boiled peanuts, pecan pies and pralines. When the fliers arrived at the check in counter, they were told their flight had been canceled. They cheered and immediately hailed a taxi and directed it to the Davis home! Our taxi driver was a young man named, Khaled who shared his "Katrina" story and his views on the political corruption and his opinions on the city's problems. We encouraged him to be an activist and work to make positive changes. We felt fortunate to meet a young man with such potential. Arriving unannounced at Paul's house for their party was a surprise and opportunity for lots of laughs.





Saturday morning was a time to relax and plan a fun day with our angel, Paul. He volunteered his Saturday to guide us through the New Orleans Aquarium, then shuttled our fliers to the airport once again. The rest of the Gutters visited the World War II Museum and ended their day with a Halloween party hosted by Lillian Moore, the church secretary.





The road crew began the long trek home Sunday morning, arriving back at Guinston church about 8:30 PM on Monday. At the finish of our first mission trip with massive group illness, we were very glad to be home.

