

HURRICANE KATRINA

An open letter from PRCC President William Lewis

Dear Friends:

Hurricane Katrina has reminded all of us that life is fragile and that we should never take tomorrow for granted. The aftermath of Katrina left us with so much devastation and yet so much to be thankful for.

Life has become more precious and the material things of our daily existence seem not to be quite as important. There seems to be a new humbleness in our people and a new resolve that the things of life may quickly melt away, but the spirit of goodness that abides within us will overcome the tragedies of life.

So it is with our institution. Pearl River Community College suffered a severe blow from Katrina's winds. On the Poplarville campus, many of our buildings received substantial damage, some beyond repair. The roofs of 22 buildings were damaged.

Some with only a few shingles missing, while the roofs of other structures were completely removed by the hurricane's relentless winds. Many of our build-

ings survived with little damage. Several of our buildings, however, including historic Moody Hall (the oldest classroom building on any community college campus in the state) and White Coliseum, are damaged to the point that they may have to be re-built.

Damage to the Forrest County Center and to our new Advanced Technology Center in Hattiesburg was minimal.

The story at the Hancock Center was a different one as the building was totally devastated. The Hancock Center, which had been in operation for only a few months, was located on Highway 90 in Waveland and received substantial damage. All of the contents of the building have been completely lost and the building we were leasing will need major renovations.



Lewis

The 2005-06 school year had begun with much promise. A record enrollment of over 4,300 students had enrolled at the college. The largest marching band in our school's history and a football team that was ranked No. 1 in the country in the pre-season polls were precursors to a fantastic school year. The year held much promise and still does.

Our employees and students have stepped forward with a renewed enthusiasm and support for one another. The community college family from other community colleges around the state rallied around our institution and sent a large contingent of workers to help us get back on our feet. We have received a helping hand from many individuals and organizations. President George Bush even made a historic visit to our campus on Sept. 5 and helped boost our spirits.

We are determined, and I am convinced, that great things will come from this adversity. More than ever before the services that Pearl River Community College provides are needed by the citizens of south Mississippi.

PRCC will help our region of the state to re-build, to become more productive and beautiful than ever. While we wish that this monster storm had not unleashed its fury on us, we will emerge a stronger and more focused institution.

Thanks to all of you who have expressed concern and have offered your support during these trying times. We look forward to the return of some normalcy in the life of our college and our personal lives.

Please know that Pearl River Community College will continue to strive to be an institution where the spirit of family is demonstrated each and every day. We will do our best to support our students, our alumni, our employees and the region of our great state that we serve.

We are, again, focused on seeing that great things come from the unfortunate adversity that has fallen on us.

Sincerely,
William Lewis, President

PRCC survives another storm

By DR. JOHN GRANT
Special to the Dixie Drawl

For over 40 years Batson Hall stood with three-story tall white columns as part of an impressive array of buildings on the Pearl River College campus overlooking U. S. Highway 11.

On the morning of Aug. 18, 1969, the roof of Batson Hall was upside down with much of its third floor across the street next to the old President's Home.

Batson Hall would later be torn down; the damage was too great to repair. That stately building was a victim of the most intense hurricane ever to strike the U.S. mainland. Her name was Camille, and her eye passed directly over Poplarville on Sunday, Aug. 17.

Those of us who experienced that night can never forget it. Sometime before midnight the electricity had already gone off, and my parents, my two sisters, my brother (who slept through the whole thing!), and I had taken shelter in an inner hallway.

Radio station WWL in New Orleans was the only station we could pick up on our battery powered radio. Indelibly printed in my memory are the words of a CBS radio network news announcer who said: "No section of the American coastline has ever faced the danger that Mississippi's coast faces at this hour as Hurricane Camille sits poised offshore with 200 mile per hour winds."

That was the first time I had ever heard of even the possibility of a hurricane having 200 mile per hour winds!

For many years time was measured and events were remembered as "before Camille" or "after Camille." It would be weeks before schools would start back; it would be years before the Coast would be rebuilt.

Gradually people restored their property and life returned to normal, although the definition of normal was changed.

Everyone knew there would be hurricanes after Camille, and there were. There was Frederick in 1979 and Elena in 1985. Still later would come Georges and Ivan. But all of those were mere shadows of Camille and did not strike this part of Mississippi with the fury of Camille, which remained "gold standard." Surely there could never be another so destructive as she. But, thirty six years later, there was.

Aug. 29, 2005, will forever be remembered as the date of the worst natural disaster in American history, surpassing even the great flood of the Mississippi River in 1927 and Hurricane Andrew in South Florida in 1992. Hurricane Katrina's winds were not quite of the intensity of Camille, but she was huge, and her storm surge along the Coast was as much as thirty feet.

My wife and other family members, as well as family members of another College staff member, took shelter on the ground floor of Moody Hall on Sunday night, Aug. 28. By daylight the wind was blowing briskly and I watched through the glass front door of the building as a large oak come down across the street.

The wind increased steadily during the morning and, by 10:30, was screaming out of the east. Large pieces of Moody Hall's roof could be heard tearing loose. As several of us were looking out the west door of the first floor, a huge chunk of roof, consisting of three-by-six tongue and groove decking, came crashing down. We backed away from that door in a hurry!

The wind would increase in speed for another hour and a half. At times we could not see the Career-Technical Building across the street for the white, wind-blown rain, but when we could see, the roof of the north wing of that building could be seen flapping up and down, although it ever did completely blow off.

We knew the roof of Moody Hall had failed, at least the part over the auditorium, and soon ceiling tiles began to sag and collapse. We worked quickly to move pianos and other instruments out of the falling water. I went upstairs and looked into the auditorium. The stage was wrecked, and daylight could be seen above it. I stayed upstairs and watched the storm through the front doors until a particularly violent gust shook those doors, made my eardrums pop, and ran me back down to the ground floor.

The eye of Katrina passed over sometime shortly after noon, although the sky never cleared completely and the wind did not totally stop. My wife and I decided sometime in the early afternoon to see if we could make our way to her aunt's home in the southern part of town as she was anxious to go home. A short way down Highway 11 we encountered a metal sign coming toward us end over end up the road. We dodged it and soon decided to turn around and return to Moody Hall. Finally, about 4:30, we were able to leave the building and return home.

The winds of Katrina, though they were spread over a much greater area, were somewhat less intense than those of Camille. There are still many trees standing; they are not all reduced to snags. But, the damage to the campus of Pearl River College was far more extensive. For one thing, the campus is much bigger now than it was in 1969 and there are more buildings to be damaged. Moody Hall, the oldest building used for instruction on any community college campus in Mississippi, suffered extreme damage just as it did in Camille. (It was also badly damaged in Hurricane Elena on Labor Day in 1985.) White Coliseum may also have suffered its final insult.

As this is being written we have been back in class in Poplarville for a full week. We started back after just three weeks, just as was done by my father and others who worked at the College in 1969.

Pearl River Community College has endured for almost a century since its beginning as Pearl River County Agricultural High School in 1909. It survived World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II. It survived terrible hurricanes in 1947 and 1969.

It has now survived Hurricane Katrina as well.



PRCC President William Lewis met with employees in Malone Chapel, where he outlined plans for resuming classes at all locations. Malone Chapel suffered minimal damage from Hurricane Katrina.

My date with a girl named Katrina

By TERROD JACKSON
Dixie Drawl Staff Writer

Yeah, it was really crazy to have to eat Peanut Butter and Jelly for five days in a row. Why were people missing cows? I wore the same outfit for three days out of the week.

Why does my phone say, "Due to the Hurricane your call cannot be completed," when people call it? My friend went to jail for two days for curfew violation in Columbia.

Hearing gun shots just to check on my aunt, was one thing, but hearing about a guy shooting his sister over a bag of ice in Hattiesburg was another. This is a date that will either bring out the very best of people or the very worst!

My date started with a huge 95 year-old oak tree in front of my home in Columbia. It didn't want my neighbor to go home. It simply blocked her driveway and front entrance, and her neighbor's too! What was really scary was seeing it play Russian roulette with our house and the ground. This tree was right beside the house and it was rocking. It could have sat on my car if it wanted to. It's too bad that our water, cable, telephone, and electric line were disconnected by that fallen old tree.

So what to do now? The water line (broken in half) was spewing from the tree, the live electric wire was in the branches, and the tree also took my television show "Pimp My Ride" away, too. Well, there was my cell phone. It worked for about one hour and then "Whoop!" There it went too.

I am definitely running out of options. I can only sleep for so long. I also worried about my friends on the coast. I was lucky to have a house compared to a lot of people. I am a very creative person and even I was starting to run out of options! It's crazy.

After the storm, I had to be really creative! Nobody likes working in the yard, so I made it fun! I put on part of my Air Force uniform and

some face paint. I crawled under the house on a mission to fix the broken water pipe that the big old, nasty oak tree took.

It's too bad that the city turned off the water due to lack of electricity and too much water pressure around town. So that we didn't have to potty in the woods, we decided to save rainwater from the storm. It was placed into the bathtub to flush the toilet.

We also had to travel to the middle of town to get water from an underground secret artisan spring! Of course everybody knew about it and I had to get in the huddle of people to fill up coolers and buckets of water.

Yes, it's sad to say but, people were taking baths in the water that we were trying to get to survive.

Family value went way up. We really came together. Barbeque was everywhere. The whole town smelled like a big pork chop with some ribs on the side.

When our neighbors needed some candles we had plenty. We helped people who couldn't get ice and water from FEMA by offering ours. It was amazing. When we were hungry, Grandma still knew how to use that ole gas stove.

Days later, we didn't have any more meat, because Wal Mart didn't open. Waiting in an eight-hour gas line was out of the question. My sister did. She told me that people fought over it. While they fought another guy snuck in with a gas jug and took some gas.

I have a friend that barbequed in Lampton, a little community near Columbia, for everybody. Now, that was gravy. People from South Carolina even came by to cut up the huge oak tree in one hour.

There were some bad stories though. Once my cell phone sorta kinda worked, I was able to call some of my coast friends. I had to play Dr. Phil. They went through some rough stuff. My best friend lost her childhood home. She tried to contact her parents, but some how she found

them displaced on the beach living in some tents. Their Waveland homes were destroyed.

The house smashed into the neighbor's house, the roof came off landing across the street, and there were some mysterious panties found on the destroyed car.

I had another friend, who lost her apartment instantly. She had dead neighbors when she was able to go back and check her house out. Freaky! I also heard that there were even lawn mowers in some power lines!

I love my family though. We made jokes and played games.

"Hurricane Katrina is a black hurricane," my crazy stereotypical brother said. It was a bad joke. But it was also funny too! Statistically, there are more black girls named "Katrina" than any other race. I mean, when I think about it, I wouldn't date Katrina, but I had to.

She was a mean and feisty woman. I heard a lot of jokes and some newer ones too. Katrina being the big bad wolf and Rita is next in line for the fight so she is "taking her earrings off!"

The fact that we can joke around and still play spades and Yahtzee under candlelight was incredible.

With no electricity we were having family talks under very beautiful starlight.

At one time, I thought that I was going crazy! What? No more football withdrawals?

When the power came back on, I used a flashlight at night and didn't even think about the light switch.

Why did I get water bottles from the cooler when the refrigerator worked? Electricity, phone, and cable were missed right?

I realized that I took the modern day items for granted, that I will not do again.

The date, that my parents had, with Hurricane Camille in 1969 made much more sense now.

Terrod Jackson is a sophomore student at Pearl River Community College.

Camille, Katrina: Many similarities as far as PRCC is concerned

POPLARVILLE - Dateline, Aug. 17, 1969.

One million dollars: That was Hurricane Camille's gift to Pearl River Junior College Aug. 17-18. The storm's 160-190 mile-per-hour winds caused extensive roof damage to all buildings on campus except the student center.

Fast forward to Monday, Aug. 29, 2005.

Hurricane Katrina devastated South Mississippi, including Pearl River Community College, with a force not seen since Hurricane Camille 36 years ago.

Those are two dates that will be remembered for quite some time at Pearl River Community College. Despite the length of time between the two storms, they do have their similarities.

Here is what was written about Camille in the September, 1969 *Dixie Drawl*.

"Besides the roofs, the library, gymnasium, auditorium and vo-tech center received major interior damage, partially due to daily rains after the hurricane.

Batson Hall, freshman girls' dormitory, lost its entire roof and is considered a total loss. The new bus repair shop was wiped out; faculty housing was severely hit with one faculty building, the Veterans Apartments, losing its roof.

"With several construction companies repairing damages, buildings on campus are rapidly taking shape. The classrooms and usable dormitories have been re-roofed and are occupied. The interiors of the library and the administration building are being re-done; the gym floor is being torn up and relaid. Restoration of the lighting of the T.D. Holden Stadium is only tentatively scheduled with metal light poles replacing the downed Redwood ones. Most of the debris - trees, shrubs and roofing - has been cleared with the help of the faculty, students, service men and city employees."

Some of the buildings on campus damaged in Camille received the same damage in Katrina.

Take Moody Hall, for example. The damage report from Camille read:

"Total loss of auditorium roof and ceiling; caved into auditorium; loss of stage, curtains and drapes; extensive damage to walls, floors and fixtures; extensive damage to Spanish tile roof over main part of building; water damage to ceiling, walls, floors and fixtures. Cost of repairs: \$59,069.90."

Basically, that's the same damage report from Katrina, except, of course, the cost of repairs.

The damage report for Shrivvers Gymnasium from Camille reads:

"Roof completely removed; extensive water damage to interior of the entire building. The floor must be replaced in the gym. Cost of repairs: \$41,706.36."

The damage report for the bus shop from Camille reads:

"Building demolished. Cost of repairs: \$11,650.45." We could go on and on. Some of the other buildings

damaged from Camille and their cost of repairs included:

■ Academic Building	\$49,876.58
■ Fine Arts Building	\$ 1,463.07
■ Library	\$29,366.87
■ Lamar Hall	\$31,631.84
■ Pearl River Hall	\$10,385.85
■ Crosby Hall	\$2,362.67
■ Bilbo Hall	\$86,445.06

When all was said and done in 1969, the total cost of repairs from Hurricane Camille was \$694,195.72. Early estimates from Hurricane Katrina put the figure somewhere between \$15-25 million.

The Dixie Drawl article on Hurricane Camille concluded like this:

"Once more, with the exception of the few "topless" trees and buildings, the PRC campus is resuming its traditional appearance."

The same could be said for today.