WHY PLAYBOY GOT INTO PORN

CEO CHRISTIE HEFNER IN THE MIDWEST'S ONLY SUNDAY MAGAZINE

Sunday

PLAYING CAPOTE

Philip Seymour Hoffman on his stellar role

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT SECTION 7

USC Coach Pete Carroll, Matt Leinart celebrate win.

SO CLOSE, IRISH

No. 1 USC escapes Notre Dame upset bid

SPORTS SECTION 3

Chicago Tribune

FINAL

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159TH YEAR — NO. 289 © CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Sunnis swarm Iraq polls

Little violence on day of constitutional referendum

By Liz Sly and Aamer Madhani
Tribune staff reporters

BAGHDAD—On what turned out to be one of the most peaceful days in Iraq in recent memory, millions of people walked through eerily quiet streets Saturday to vote in a referendum on a new constitution that could either unite the country or tear it apart.

Though there were scattered incidents of violence at polling stations, no suicide bombers blew themselves up, no car bombs exploded, and the only two civilians reported killed were shot dead accidentally by nervous Iraqi security forces guarding voting centers.

The calm was in stark contrast with January's landmark democratic election, when more than 50 people died nationwide in a blitz of bombings that failed to deter voters but left no doubt as to the Sunni-dominated insurgency's determination to undermine the political process.

Also in contrast with January's vote, Sunnis were among the most enthusiastic participants, swarming to polling centers in areas that saw little voting activity the last time around, when embittered Sunnis mostly boycotted the process.

In scenes reminiscent of those wit-

PLEASE SEE **IRAQ,** PAGE 10

Photo for the Tribune by Cheryl Gerber

Michael Guste is the general manager of Antoine's, which lost its rare-wine collection when the power went off.

Antoine's next course

A culinary icon reflects the struggle to rebuild a city

First in an occasional series the Tribune will publish in coming months

By Howard Witt
Tribune senior correspondent

NEW ORLEANS — The maitre d' is dead.

He perished at home, along with his son, sometime after the levees broke and the floodwaters rushed in and his tiny house in northern New Orleans filled to the ceiling with fetid water.

Most of the rest of the restaurant's staff of 130—the chefs, the waiters, the wine stewards, the busboys, the dishwashers—are scattered across 14 states, the homes they fled no longer habitable, the jobs they worked no longer assured.

Hundreds of pounds of decomposing lobsters, steaks and soft-shell crabs fill the walk-in freezer. The ceiling beam in the main dining room is bowed and sagging ominously. Part of an exterior wall collapsed.

There will be no dinner at Antoine's, the fabled restaurant just off Bourbon Street in the heart of New Orleans' French Quarter. At least not any time soon.

Yet the struggle of this iconic fixture to resuscitate itself in the wake of Hurricane Katrina is a story that will mirror New Orleans' fight for revival, for Antoine's touched nearly every neighborhood and social stratum across this wounded city.

For 165 years, through fires and hurricanes, wars and recessions, and the changing fortunes of the two families that have been the restaurant's only owners, Antoine's managed to endure, offering timeless French cuisine served by tuxedoed waiters to patrons

PLEASE SEE **ANTOINE'S,** PAGE 18

WHITE SOX 8
ANGELS 2

THE PLAYOFFS

CHICAGO LEADS
L.A. 3-1

SOX ON A ROLL

Chicago 1 victory away from berth in World Series

By Dan McGrath
Tribune staff reporter

ANAHEIM — Cue the air-raid sirens.

You know, the sirens that wailed throughout Chicago the night of Sept. 22, 1959. Citizens who weren't aware of the deep and longstanding affinity Mayor Richard J. Daley and Fire Commissioner Robert Quinn had for the White Sox feared Russian nukes were surely on the way.

Nope. Turns out the Sox had clinched their first American League pennant in 40 years in Cleveland. When you wait that long for baseball's second biggest prize, a little siren music is not an excessive celebration.

Well, the 2005 White Sox are one win away from the team's first pennant since that one so Daley's mayoral son Richard M., an equally ardent Sox fan, might want to have his finger ready.

The Sox took a daunting 3-1 lead over the Los Angeles Angels in the American League Championship Series on Saturday night with a no-sweat 8-2 win before 44,857 crestfallen Angels fans and an equally subdued Rally Monkey at Angel Stadium. They will go for the clincher at the same venue on Sunday night and try to secure the city's first World Series berth since '59.

Paul "Mr. October" Konerko slugged his fourth home run of the postseason and A.J. "Eddie Haskell" Pierzynski hit his third to support the splendid pitching of Freddy Garcia, who turned in the Sox's third consecutive complete game just days after becoming a father for the first time.

Konerko, for the second straight night, homered in the first inning, a three-run shot off Ervin Santana that gave Garcia some margin for error. Pierzynski's came in the fourth, two innings after he once again had irritated the Angels into apoplexy by apparently tipping Steve Finley's bat on what became a double-play grounder.

Tribune photo by Charles Cherney

Juan Uribe and Paul Konerko exchange high-fives as catcher A.J. Pierzynski congratulates winning pitcher Freddy Garcia after the White Sox's 8-2 victory over the Angels in Game 4 of the American League Championship Series.

COMPLETE COVERAGE IN SPECIAL SECTION

Illinois Republicans souring on president

By Jeff Zeleny and Rick Pearson
Tribune staff reporters

Pessimism over the war in Iraq and skepticism about the economy at home have cost President Bush support among the most reliable segments of Illinois Republicans, a Tribune/WGN-TV poll shows, and now nearly 6 out of 10 voters statewide disapprove of his job performance.

The government's tepid response to Hurricane Katrina and a summer-long spike in gasoline prices also have helped drive Bush's job-approval rating down to 33 percent in the state, the lowest point among Illinois surveys involving his administration. A similar poll in May showed Bush's approval rating at 41 percent.

Support for Bush has dropped 14 points in the last year among Republicans, and GOP officials fear that could complicate their efforts in next year's races for Congress and governor. For the first time in his presidency, half the voters in Chicago's Republican-rich collar counties disapprove of Bush's job performance, a departure from last fall when he carried all five suburban counties.

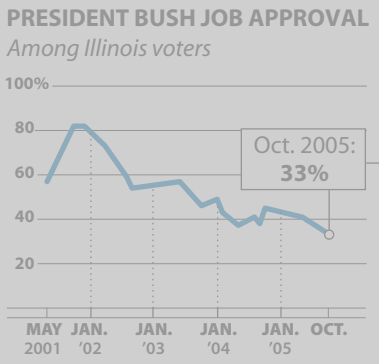
Though Illinois voted Democratic in both of Bush's elections, including handing Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) the state's 21 electoral votes last year, dissatisfaction emerging from traditional Republican strongholds illustrates the challenges confronting the president during his second term.

In addition to Bush's low standing among voters in the collar counties of DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will, 54 percent of voters Downstate now say they disapprove of his performance. Downstate voters generally are more conservative and have in the past been more supportive of Bush. But his disapproval rating among those voters has climbed 12 percentage

PLEASE SEE **POLL,** PAGE 22

Tribune/WGN-TV poll

PRESIDENT BUSH JOB APPROVAL
Among Illinois voters



OCTOBER BREAKDOWN

Statewide	33%
Cook County	23%
Collar counties	37%
Downstate	42%

Note: Poll of 700 Illinois registered voters taken Oct. 5-9. Margin of error ±4 percentage points.

Chicago Tribune

Museums take up evolution challenge

By Lisa Anderson
Tribune national correspondent

NEW YORK — Natural history museums around the country are mounting new exhibits they hope will succeed where high school biology classes have faltered: convincing Americans that Charles Darwin's theory of evolution is a rigorously tested cornerstone of modern science.

At Chicago's Field Museum, curators call their upcoming effort "Evolving Planet." The University of Nebraska State Museum in Lincoln calls its program "Explore Evolution." And here at the American Museum of Natural History, the exhibit that opens next month is called simply "Darwin."

Numerous battles in school districts around the country and a landmark federal case unfolding in Pennsylvania, however, make one point clear: When Darwin's widely accepted scientific explanation of human development collides with widely

PLEASE SEE **EVOLUTION,** PAGE 16

Weather: Sunny; high 67, low 46.

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Online at chicagotribune.com

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REVIVING ANTOINE'S: LOSS AND RECOVERY IN NEW ORLEANS

‘Antoine’s is part of the fabric of what New Orleans is about, and what we’re about as a family.’

—Rick Blount, Antoine’s chief executive officer and great-great-grandson of the founder

In April, it was lunch business as usual at Antoine’s. The French Quarter restaurant had endured for 165 years, through fires and hurricanes, wars and recessions, and the changing fortunes of the two families that have owned it.

Minneapolis Star Tribune photo by Joel Koyama

ANTOINE'S

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

in a choreographed dining ritual virtually unchanged through five generations.

No cataclysm of history was enough to stop the clock on one of the nation’s oldest and most famous restaurants, a place where the New Orleans gentry handed down reserved tables in their wills, where free-spending tourists gawked at the 22,000-bottle wine cellar, where the biggest Mardi Gras *krewes* held their precarnival banquets and displayed their jewel-encrusted costumes in antique glass cases.

Until Katrina.

The fearsome Aug. 29 hurricane displaced more than a million people, flooded tens of thousands of homes, tore through every layer of this complex and colorful city—and rent the fabric of Antoine’s right along with it.

Now the owners of the restaurant, whose ancestors have called New Orleans home ever since Antoine Alciatore spent his last franc to journey to America from France and start the business in 1840, face a daunting struggle to repair the damage, reconstruct their supply lines, rebuild their staff and, they hope, resurrect a business that is part of New Orleans’ lifeblood.

The restaurant drew many of its entry-level workers from the Lower 9th Ward and Bywater and East New Orleans—poor and working-class districts of the city that were so completely flooded they may never be rebuilt.

Veteran waiters, many of whom had spent decades working at the restaurant, lived the middle-class American dream in neighborhoods such as Lakeview and Mid-City, where the insidious waters rose to destroy all their hard-won possessions.

Antoine’s patrons were drawn from the city’s upper crust as well as its tourists and conventioneers—core constituencies whose wealth and spending power used to keep New Orleans running but who have scarcely begun to return.

The restaurant’s suppliers and contractors are spread across the city in concentric circles of Katrina-induced misery. The produce merchant’s warehouse exploded and burned. The seafood supplier’s warehouse flooded and is now coated in toxic muck. The refrigeration-repair company lost all of its trucks and equipment to the floodwaters.

And those are just the known problems. Like countless other businesses and homeowners across the city, Antoine’s faces a protracted battle with its insurance companies over fair compensation for its losses. Expenses are ballooning for labor, supplies and housing, all in desperately short supply. With no homes to return to, some of the restaurant’s most valued employees already are finding new jobs and starting new lives in Houston and Dallas and points farther away.

Simply locating contractors to haul away trash bins overflowing with spoiled food and debris has consumed days of effort.

In his darkest hours, Rick Blount, Antoine’s chief executive officer and great-great-grandson of the founder, wonders how he will ever reopen the restaurant’s doors.

“Antoine’s is part of the fabric of what New Orleans is about, and what we’re about as a family,” he said. “If the world completely conspires against us and we can’t open up, then we will have to accept our fate. But unless that happens, we will be back.”

The dark hours don’t last long, however. Jovial and gregarious, Blount, 48, is much more inclined to simply dive into the work at hand. Last week found him donning rubber gloves and a paper mask on his way into the main walk-in freezer to begin hauling out its rotting contents.

AP photo by Kevork Djansezian

After Hurricane Katrina, Antoine’s had to pay thousands to an emergency dry-out company to pump the dank building full of dehumidified air.

Star Tribune photo by Joel Koyama

Clifton Lachney, 71, (shown in April) was Antoine’s maitre d’. He died with one of his sons.

Photo for the Tribune by Cheryl Gerber

Michael Guste (left), the general manager, and Michael Regua, Antoine’s executive chef and a 33-year employee of the restaurant, go over a list of employees recently.

Photo for the Tribune by Judi Bottoni

Rick Blount, Antoine’s chief executive officer, examines damage to the roof last week.

As soon as he opened the door, the stench hit like a putrid wall. Blount just grinned and plunged inside.

The employees

It takes more than a year to train an apprentice waiter at Antoine’s to memorize the menu, take orders without writing anything down and serve every patron with the gentility and punctiliousness of a bygone era. It can take even longer for a senior cook to master the art of preparing oysters Rockefeller or baked Alaska, two signature dishes the restaurant boasts of having created.

Cliched as it may sound, Antoine’s skilled, trained and experienced employees are the restaurant’s most precious assets. Many have worked their jobs for decades. They cannot be replaced simply by putting an ad in the newspaper or signing a contract with a temporary staffing agency.

Michael Regua, 54, Antoine’s executive chef and a 33-year employee of the restaurant, typifies the feelings of many. He does not want to work anyplace else and has already rebuffed job prospects in Austin, Texas. But he also has a car loan and a mortgage and repair bills for his storm-damaged New Orleans house coming due.

“Hopefully, with unemployment payments, I can hang on for a while,” Regua said.

At the other end of the Antoine’s hierarchy, newcomer Tamyra Lee, 25, a $6.70 an hour cook at the restaurant for the last year, wants to return to her job as well. She was rescued, with her three young children, after a week trapped inside their flooded house in the Lower 9th Ward. After a series of long bus trips between temporary shelters in stadiums and churches, she landed in a motel in La Porte, Texas, where she’s now looking for an apartment and a job.

“Antoine’s said they would still have our jobs, so I’m going to stay here for a few months until they get back up and running,” Lee said. “People are nice here and everything, but it’s not my home. I want to go back home.”

Michael Guste, 43, Antoine’s general manager and another great-great-grandson of the restaurant’s founder, has so far managed to locate nearly all of Antoine’s 130 employees and ascertain that they are at least safe, if not settled.

But the 18 who are still missing, including 85-year-old Lucille Smith, a cook who has been at Antoine’s for 50 years, are weighing heavily on his mind.

Late last week, he set out in his car to begin a mission through the destroyed zones of the city to visit each of their abandoned homes, in hopes of finding clues to their fates.

“These people were like our family,” Guste said. “You want to know that everyone got out safely. You want to know they didn’t try to stay at home.”

What Guste was looking for was the telltale “X” spray-painted on the exterior of every dwelling in New Orleans by search-and-rescue workers as they made their way through the city. Each quadrant of the symbol contains coded information, including the date when searchers went through the building and their fire, police or government unit.

The bottom quadrant was the one Guste dreaded reading. That’s where the search crews recorded the number of dead recovered inside.

The symbol on Clifton Lachney’s house reads “2-D.” Two dead.

Lachney, 71, was Antoine’s maitre d’. An accomplished Cajun guitarist and gentle soul fondly admired by the staff, he had been a fixture at the restaurant for 43 years.

No one knows exactly how Lachney died after the floodwaters filled the small rooms of the rented clapboard house on Robert E. Lee Boulevard where he lived with his disabled 28-year-old son, Jeffrey. The searchers found their bodies on Sept. 19—fully three weeks after Katrina hit.

What is known is that Lachney, who did not drive, declined offers from members of his church to help him and his son evacuate, preferring to stay behind to try to weather the storm.

His son Scott, a truck driver in Florida, had just survived his own brush with Katrina as the hurricane struck there first. He couldn’t leave his family in time to drive to New Orleans to get his father and brother.

“My dad was stubborn,” Scott Lachney said. “He rode out [Hurricane] Camille and figured he could ride out Katrina. I talked to him the day of the storm, that Monday, about 1 p.m. He looked outside, said it was probably about 2 foot of water in the yard, but said he had no concerns. That was the last time I heard from him.”

The Lachney family has suffered terrible tragedies in recent years. Two of Clifton Lachney’s other grown children died in 2002 within months of each other, a son in a truck accident and a daughter the victim of scleroderma, a painful auto-immune disease. Clifton Lachney’s wife died last February of complications from diabetes.

Now Scott Lachney, like many Katrina victims, is enduring yet another ordeal: the struggle with state and federal officials to release the bodies of loved ones so they can be buried.

He hopes he can get back to his father’s ruined house before the authorities demolish it, to retrieve his beloved guitar. It is lying on the floor of the blackened living room, one of the few objects identifiable in the noxious sludge that covers the floors, the walls and the jumbled scraps of furniture.

The obstacles

With a rum drink in one hand and some plastic beads in the other, a visitor taking a casual stroll down Bourbon Street can almost forget that 80 percent of New Orleans is still virtually empty of human beings, some seven weeks after Katrina struck.

The French Quarter, perched

PLEASE SEE FOLLOWING PAGE

ANTOINE'S

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

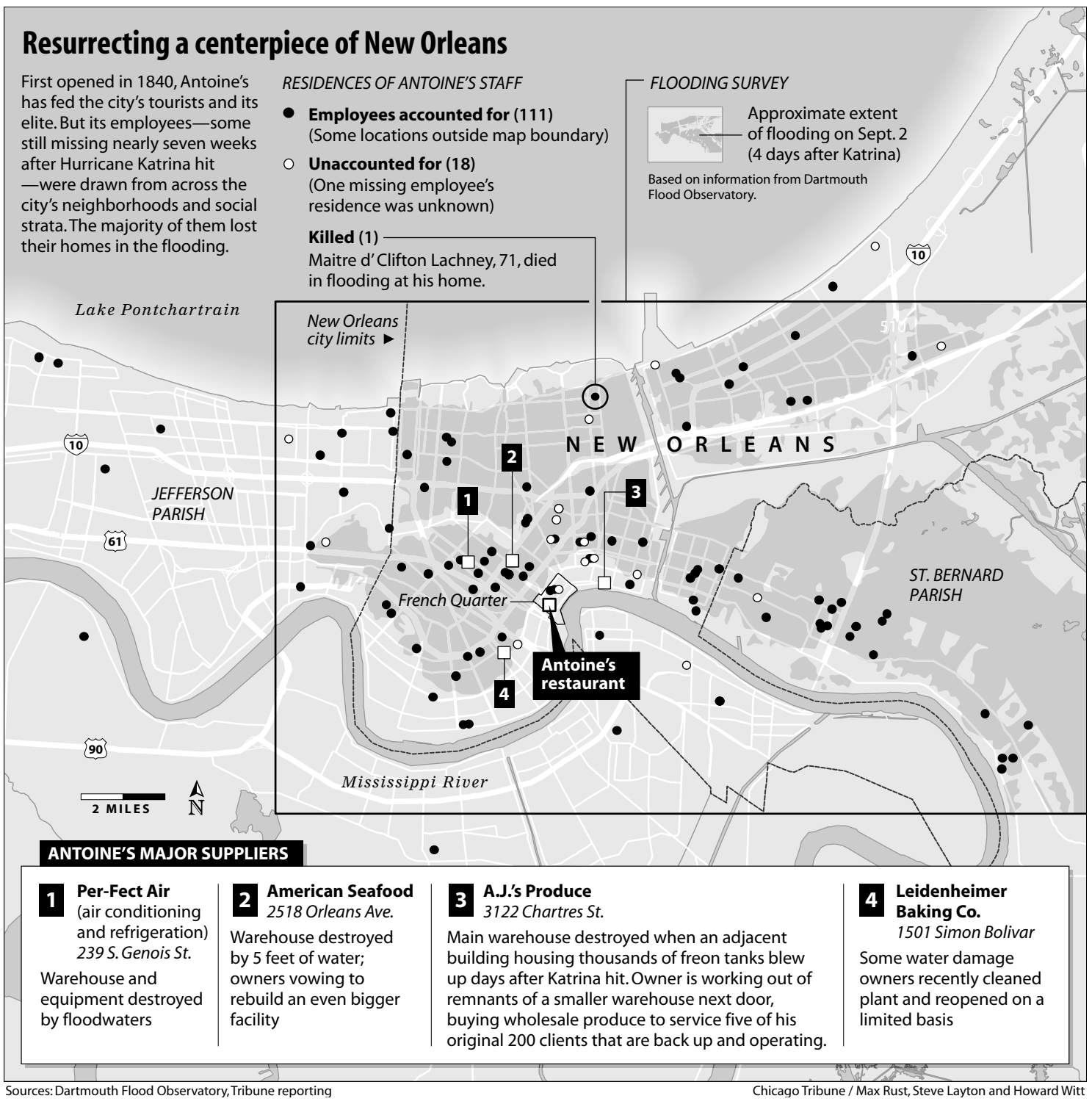
atop some of the highest ground in this below-sea-level city, never flooded when the hurricane burst the levees that so precariously hold back the waters of the Mississippi and Lake Pontchartrain.

So some businesses that escaped the worst of the wind damage or fires or the fouling of their premises by rotten food have been able to slowly reopen their doors to serve the burgeoning crowds of federal emergency workers, out-of-town cops and firefighters, utility contractors and cleanup crews who now make up the bulk of the city's population.

In this island of New Orleans unreality, dozens of restaurants are once again serving meals, the bars pulse with live music, and the barkers have resumed their sidewalk posts to beckon patrons inside smoky strip clubs.

Even Antoine's, at first glance through the windows of the brightly lighted main dining room, looks like it might be ready to serve tonight's five-course gourmet meal. The tables are set with stiff white tablecloths and carefully folded napkins, the silver oyster forks are arranged just so, the menus featuring lobster thermidor as the special of the day are stacked at the front desk.

Closer inspection, however, reveals that all the silverware is badly tarnished, the chairs are covered with dust and the menus were printed before Katrina struck, back when there were chefs and sous-chefs and line cooks and pantry cooks to prepare the listed dishes. Up above the street, a blue tarp flaps in the wind, halfheartedly protecting a gaping hole where a fourth-floor brick wall used to be, before the hurricane pulled it down.



Sources: Dartmouth Flood Observatory, Tribune reporting

Chicago Tribune / Max Rust, Steve Layton and Howard Witt

With 15 distinctive dining rooms that can accommodate more than 700 patrons simultaneously and a kitchen area as big as a good-sized house, Antoine's ranks as one of the largest restaurants in the city, and it suffered grave damage in proportion to its size. The owners can only watch anxiously as smaller competitors rush to reopen their doors and stake out market share.

If they are nimble like pontoon boats lifted easily off the blocks, Antoine's is the Queen Mary, trapped in dry dock.

"We're deathly afraid that the business guys who used to eat lunch with us every day are now eating with Dickie Brennan," said Blount, Antoine's CEO, referring to another one of New Orleans' famous restaurateurs who already has reopened several of his establishments.

When they first returned to survey their restaurant a couple of weeks after Katrina struck and spied the collapsed wall, some water streaks running from the ceiling and a bit of mold, Antoine's owners figured they could get the restaurant up and running by early October.

Gradually, though, the extent of the hidden damage revealed itself. The entire rare-wine collection was ruined when the power went off and the air conditioners died. The industrial refrigerators and freezers were so polluted by rotting food they may have to be replaced. Power surges burned out parts of the restaurant's aging electrical and alarm systems. The computers were fried.

And suddenly, the shuttered restaurant was hemorrhaging cash: $15,000 a day to the emergency dry-out company to pump the dank building full of hot, dehumidified air; thousands more to the contractor to shore up the collapsed wall. And tens of thousands to meet two September payrolls for the entire restaurant staff—a moral obligation the owners said they felt to help their dispersed employees, even though there is no work for them to do.

The future

As the autumn days grow shorter and the busy holiday season approaches, Blount and Guste face an agonizing choice.

Do they rush to reopen a portion of the restaurant, before all the physical damage is repaired, the veteran staff is reassembled, the best suppliers are lined up and the full, meticulous "Antoine's dining experience" can be guaranteed?

The risks with that approach are high. The restaurant could lose money waiting for enough of its traditional customers—wealthy New Orleanians and expense-account conventioneers—to come back to the city and fill its tables, which may not happen until well into 2006. And those customers who do return could be disappointed with something less than the haute cuisine and crisp service Antoine's has reliably offered for more than a century.

"I'm not sure if I'm doing more damage to my employees by uprooting them from wherever they are now and encouraging them to come back, only to get to December and have to lay them off again because there's not enough business," Blount mused.

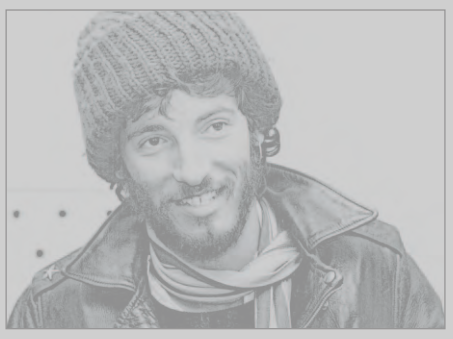
Or do the owners keep the doors closed for as long as their business-interruption insurance will last, using the interval to rebuild their supply networks, restock their wine cellar and complete urgent repairs and other long-postponed maintenance to the restaurant's interconnected buildings, some of which date to the Spanish rule of the city in the late 18th Century?

That route may carry more peril. Much of the staff could move on to new lives and jobs, while the customers could move on to other restaurants.

And, most ineffably, Antoine's could fade from the daily dialogue of the new New Orleans. The very city that the restaurant helped define could move forward into its next incarnation and leave Antoine's behind.

hwitt@tribune.com

THE BOSS
'Born to Run' still lives
ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT SECTION 7



Sunday

ASK AMY
He digs sex, BUT ...
Q SECTION 13

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CHICAGOLAND
159TH YEAR — NO. 317

Questions mount on state hiring

TRIBUNE INVESTIGATION

By Ray Long, John Chase and Ofelia Casillas
Tribune staff reporters

On his first full day as Illinois' new governor, Rod Blagojevich dramatically displayed his reform agenda by firing dozens of his predecessor's allies and ordering a freeze on state hiring.

"I intend to use every power I have and my discretion as governor to eliminate unqualified, unnecessary and overpaid individuals wherever I find them in state government," the Democrat declared in January 2003.

The symbolism of Executive Order 1 was an electric way of telling Illinois voters that the cronyism associated with Republican George Ryan was over. But the job freeze had another effect: concentrating personnel decisions within Blagojevich's office, which has to sign off on agency hires and promotions.

Now, a federal criminal grand jury probe, at least two investigations by Blagojevich's inspector general and a host of complaints by ex-state workers are raising questions about the governor's vow that qualifications, not politics, determine who gets a state job.

A Tribune examination of job placements in agencies that have been under investigation found a system that has allowed the Democratic governor's allies to secure high-paying, high profile positions despite questionable experience.

Blagojevich has said the state and federal inquiries are not "a bad thing if you're confident that your systems are working and that you know that you try to do things honestly, ethically and responsibly."

Yet Blagojevich's hiring system has resulted in at least three men with no law-enforcement experience—a factory supervisor, a car-parts manager and a farmer—getting jobs as assistant prison wardens. In one case, a former Blagojevich campaign worker with a history of drunken driving arrests even got a job in traffic safety.

Blagojevich aides say the candidates went through proper channels, earning the positions regardless of political pedigree. They also point out that the state payroll has dropped to 57,000 employees from 69,000 since 2003, though much of that was due to an early-retirement program instituted by Ryan.

Since at least March, federal prosecutors have been conducting an investigation into alleged hiring irregularities involving two top Blagojevich hiring officials and a top personnel officer

PLEASE SEE **HIRING,** PAGE 24

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME?

Tribune illustration based on architectural renderings. Perspective and scale are approximate.

Trump Tower Chicago
1,361 feet
(under construction)

Fordham Spire
2,000 feet
(proposed)

Broadcast Tower
2,000 feet
(proposed)

Source: Emporis — Chicago Tribune

Four years after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks led some to predict the death of the skyscraper, Chicago is again reaching for the sky, with a rash of new tower proposals that promises the biggest redefinition of the skyline since the 1970s, when Sears Tower became the world's tallest building.

Today, however, the towers are not office buildings but residential skyscrapers, including Donald Trump's 1,361-foot cloud-buster, already under construction along the Chicago River, and the proposed Fordham Spire, a 2,000-foot tower that would rise just a few blocks south of an equally tall broadcast tower near Navy Pier.

What does Chicago's latest case of tower mania mean for the poetry of the skyline and the prosaic street-level activity that does just as much to define a city's character? Tribune architecture critic Blair Kamin takes aim at that question in today's Arts & Entertainment. **SECTION 7**

REVIVING ANTOINE'S LOSS AND RECOVERY IN NEW ORLEANS

Photo for the Tribune by Chris Graythen

John Hoffmann Jr., who washed dishes at Antoine's, is living in a camper in Bentley, La.

Still adrift after the storm

Those uprooted by Katrina wonder if they'll ever return to the place they called home

Second in an occasional series

By Howard Witt
Tribune senior correspondent

NEW ORLEANS — First Hurricane Katrina took John Hoffmann Jr.'s home, which flooded, then exploded, and then burned.

Next the storm took Hoffmann's job of 23 years washing dishes at Antoine's Restaurant, a position that vanished when the heavily damaged New Orleans landmark suspended operations for the first time in its 165-year history.

And then the hurricane took Hoffmann's father. Ailing and elderly, he died on a lumpy mattress inside a spartan cabin at a bleak central Louisiana campground just a week after being evacuated from the storm's path.

Today, Hoffmann, 46, sits bereft and bewildered inside a small camping trailer stranded some 250 miles from New Orleans, with no idea how he will ever get back to the only city he has ever known. He has little money and no car. All of his possessions now fit inside a tattered gym bag.

"I don't like it up here," Hoffmann said. "Everything is so

PLEASE SEE **ANTOINE'S,** PAGE 14

Firm helps U.S. shape news abroad

Pentagon also wages war of images, words

By Stephen J. Hedges
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON—In an effort to fight what it sees as an insidious propaganda war waged by terrorists, from incendiary Web sites to one-sided television images of the Iraq war, the Pentagon has been quietly waging its own information battle throughout the Middle East and Central Asia.

One of its primary weapons is a controversial, secretive firm that has been criticized as ineffective and too expensive.

The Rendon Group, directed by former Democratic Party political operative John Rendon, has garnered more than $56 million in Pentagon work since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Those contracts list such activities as tracking foreign reporters; "pushing" news favorable to U.S. forces; planting television news segments that promote U.S. positions; and creating a grass-roots voting effort in Puerto Rico on behalf of the Navy, Pentagon records show.

The contracts, some of which were obtained by the watchdog group Judicial Watch through a Freedom of Information Act request, reveal that the Bush administration is engaged in a war of images and words with Al Qaeda and other radical groups.

Civilian and military leaders say the contracts are necessary to fight the media wars waged by Islamic fundamentalists who

PLEASE SEE **RENDON,** PAGE 20

This outdoors store is big. Really big. Really, really big.

By Mike Hughlett
Tribune staff reporter

ROGERS, Minn.—Tom Mackie got a shopping list from his hunting buddies before he set out on the 123-mile trek from his home in the northwestern Wisconsin woods to this Minneapolis suburb.

His friends knew he was making a pilgrimage to Cabela's. And to the outdoors crowd—those into hunting, fishing or just feeling woodsy—Cabela's is a shrine.

The store mates big-box retail with old-fashioned spectacle. There's a "library" of rare guns. A 35,000-gallon aquarium stocked with native fish. A virtual zoo of stuffed critters: bears, deer, elk and so on. And for the kids, and a few adults, too, a shooting gallery.

The Chicago area may get a taste of Cabela's: The fast growing Nebraska-based chain is planning stores in Hammond, Ind., and Hoffman Estates.

To land a Cabela's, both cities are planning to pony up millions of dollars in tax breaks.

Tax breaks to retailers have

PLEASE SEE **CABELA'S,** PAGE 18

INSIDE

Weather: Cloudy; high 55, low 29.
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Online at chicagotribune.com

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ANTOINE'S: 138,000 households from New Orleans are displaced

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

far away. All I want is to go home and go back to my old job."

Yet as lonely as he is, Hoffmann has plenty of company. Hurricane Katrina drove nearly all of Antoine's 131 employees from their homes in and around New Orleans, flinging them across 16 states into shelters, churches, motels, the homes of relatives—and profound uncertainty.

Now, more than two months after the Aug. 29 storm, those employees represent one restive caravan in a new American diaspora, a giant rootless community populated by at least 138,000 households that remain dislocated from New Orleans alone.

A few of the Antoine's evacuees have decided to start their lives over, finding jobs, apartments and friends in cities built well above sea level where hurricanes can no longer menace them.

But many more, working poor to begin with, are still wandering, living tentative lives subsidized by emergency rent vouchers. They long to return to homes that no longer exist, and they are tormented by questions: Where can they live? When will the restaurant reopen? Will they still have jobs?

There are few answers, for the Antoine's employees or anyone else.

The owners of the fabled French Quarter restaurant, whose struggle to revive their stricken family business has become a barometer for the wounded city as a whole, say they want to reopen by Christmas, or New Year's, but in any event in time for Mardi Gras in February—they hope.

Managers have located nearly all of the restaurant's employees and say they want to hire back everyone who can return. But they have no idea whether there will be enough customers to support a full staff in a city that likely will remain bereft of most residents, tourists and conventioneers well into next year.

Meanwhile, city, state and federal officials have set up rebuilding commissions, impaneled advisory boards, convened public meetings and issued news releases. But still they cannot answer the most basic questions about when, or whether, 110,000 flood-damaged houses in the New Orleans area will be repaired or rebuilt, how the local economy can be restarted or even whether the levees that gave way during Katrina will be built stronger to withstand the next killer storm—and restore confidence in the city's future. Congress already is balking at the projected costs, which run as high as $20 billion.

All of which leaves the Antoine's staff utterly adrift.

Mechelle Davis, 39, a bartender at the restaurant, ended up in a jail cell in Laurel, Miss., accused of felony identity theft for her alleged part in a scheme to collect names and Social Security numbers from Katrina evacuees in order to make false claims for emergency assistance.

Tamyra Lee, 25, a cook, is sleeping on the floor of an apartment barren of any furniture in Pasadena, Texas. Having escaped her flooded New Orleans home with three children clinging to her arms, today Lee is surviving on food stamps and $93 a week in unemployment insurance in a place so remote she must pay $24 for a taxi every time she needs to get to the grocery store.

Kelli Lege, 25, a waitress, has decided to quit New Orleans forever and start fresh in Ft. Worth, where she has already landed an even better job at an upscale restaurant.

But Charles Carter, 23, another Antoine's waiter, is digging in, spending his days gutting the moldy first floor of his flood-damaged house as he awaits the reopening of the restaurant where four generations of his family have made their livelihoods.

"I wouldn't think about looking for another job," Carter said. "They've been so good to me and my family for all these years. It would be hard to give up on them."

Photo for the Tribune by Johnny Hanson

Tamyra Lee, a cook at Antoine's, and her two small sons now have an apartment in Pasadena, Texas. Their rent is covered for a year.

The despondent dish man

'They didn't judge me'

John Hoffmann Jr. doesn't know it, but back in Chalmette, La., there's a notice from a government inspector taped to the green front door of his home, which was about the only spot the inspector could have affixed it, because there is no longer an actual home standing behind the door.

"I visited your residence today to perform an inspection for the application you made with FEMA for disaster assistance," reads the form letter left by the inspector for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, who, to post it, had to walk through the rubble and twisted metal strewn in front of the charred carcass of the strip mall where Hoffmann's apartment used to be.

"Since you were not there," the letter says, "I was unable to complete the inspection. Your application for housing assistance … cannot be processed until the inspection is completed."

The three-paragraph notice informs Hoffmann that he must call the inspector to arrange an appointment. But the part where the inspector's name and phone number are supposed to be filled in has been left blank.

Not that it really matters. Hoffmann has only a few hundred dollars in the bank and no way to get from his camper in the woods in Bentley, La., back to Chalmette to see the letter taped to his door. And even if he could make it back, Hoffmann couldn't read the Kafkaesque notice anyway. He is learning-disabled, an 8th-grade dropout and illiterate.

"I can read 'Danger,' " Hoffmann explained. "That's about the only kind of sign I can read. There aren't many jobs for a person like me. But at Antoine's, they didn't judge me."

Within the confines of his mental disability, Hoffmann had managed to arrange a satisfying life: a job he could do where people didn't try to cheat him; an apartment where he could be independent; a bicycle he could ride to work.

But Katrina unmoored people like Hoffmann who had little to begin with and marooned them hundreds of miles away with even less.

Hoffmann chose not to evacuate in advance of the hurricane. He was loath to miss the last Saturday night pre-hurricane shift washing dishes and the $6 per hour he depended on to survive; he had weathered many storms; and, he figured, he lived on the second floor of a concrete building.

He did not reckon on the levees bursting, the water rising to his balcony and, two days later, a gas main exploding and sending flames lapping at his bedroom wall. It was only by the grace of a rescue boat that happened to be motoring by that he was plucked to safety.

Yet that was just the start of Hoffmann's odyssey. The boat deposited him on a spit of dry land near the St. Bernard Parish jail, where he spent several days before a bus took him to a giant shelter in Dallas.

He had no idea where the rest of his family was. All he knew was that two days before the hurricane struck, his sister had bundled their father into a car and evacuated him from St. Rita's Nursing Home, the same home where 34 patients later perished in Katrina's floodwaters.

The family ended up at a shuttered religious campground in Pollock, La., where several other Katrina evacuees had found refuge. But on Sept. 5, Labor Day, John Hoffmann Sr., 69, himself a waiter at Antoine's for 47 years before cancer forced him to retire in 1999, died in his sleep. He was a victim, his family believes, of the extraordinary stress of Katrina.

It took another week for Hoffmann Jr. to discover that his relatives were staying at the campground and finally make his way there.

Photo for the Tribune by Chris Graythen

Charles Carter (right) and his father, Val, work on Charles' house in Metairie. Charles started as a busboy at Antoine's when he was 15.

"Every day, our dad was asking, 'Did they find John Boy yet?' " said Simone Ruiz, 45, Hoffmann's sister. "I had to tell him, 'No Dad, not yet.' He died without ever knowing if John even survived the hurricane."

Late last month, the campground closed, and the evacuees were forced to disperse yet again. Hoffmann moved a few miles up the road to the camper, which had been occupied by his niece until she found a house to rent.

He has applied for a trailer from FEMA, which he hopes can be located closer to New Orleans so he can return to work when Antoine's reopens.

But that's the application the nameless FEMA inspector won't process until Hoffmann returns to the front door where his home used to be.

The troubled bartender

'Not a very friendly place'

Mechelle Davis has a different sort of problem from the rest of her Antoine's colleagues. Davis was driving her sister's truck in Laurel, Miss., when a police officer pulled her over and asked if he could look inside the vehicle. The next thing she knew, she said, she found herself in handcuffs, being bundled off to jail.

"Mississippi," she said, "is not a very friendly place."

For the past two years, Davis has worked as a bartender at Antoine's, alongside her husband, Jerry, who was a cook. The day before Hurricane Katrina hit, the Davises loaded their two children into their car and headed to Laurel, to stay with relatives.

The rented house they left behind in New Orleans was destroyed in the flooding, along with all of their belongings. Now their future is clouded by Mechelle Davis' brush with the law.

A Jones County grand jury has charged Davis, along with her sister and another alleged accomplice, with five counts of identity theft, accusing them of posing as FEMA officials in order to collect personal information from other Katrina evacuees staying at a Laurel shelter.

Davis insists she was only gathering information from her own relatives who were displaced by the hurricane, in order to help them fill out FEMA disaster claim forms.

"They said it was identity theft," she said. "But we came with my mom, my uncle, my cousin, it was a bunch of us. It was all our information."

Jones County District Atty. Anthony Buckley, however, said the evidence will prove otherwise.

"The people they took the information from, they certainly weren't connected by kinship," Buckley said.

If she is convicted, Davis faces 2 to 15 years in jail, Buckley said. Although she is free on bond, Davis cannot leave Mississippi until her trial. So she and her husband say they are reluctantly looking for temporary jobs in Laurel.

The struggling cook

'I'm still just thanking God'

New Orleans has always been a poor place, its economy largely dependent on the tourism industry and the tens of thousands of low-wage service jobs that, before Katrina anyway, kept the hotels and restaurants and bars and strip clubs running. Nearly a quarter of the city's 485,000 residents lived at or below the poverty line, according to government figures.

But the Big Easy was also that rare American city where the working poor could often do better than merely survive. Neighborhoods like Mid-City, Gentilly, Bywater and the Lower 9th Ward, as well as close-in suburbs in adjoining St. Bernard Parish, were filled with affordable, if dilapidated, houses and apartments. Buses were plentiful. The cost of living was relatively cheap.

Those were the neighborhoods where most of the Antoine's employees lived. They also were among the lowest-lying parts of this below-sea level metropolis, which meant that when the levees broke, they were largely wiped out.

Tamyra Lee's New Orleans life, like that of dishwasher John Hoffmann Jr., was carefully balanced. Alone since her longtime boyfriend was sent to prison on a drug conviction, Lee had just moved into a rented house within walking distance of Antoine's because she doesn't have a car. She worked enough $6.70-an-hour shifts preparing salads to earn nearly $20,000 per year—sufficient, with the help of food stamps, to provide for her three young children. Her grandmother watched the kids while she was at work.

After Katrina struck, the floodwaters rose chest-high on the street outside Lee's house, but because the building was slightly elevated, water covered only the floors inside. Lee and her children retreated atop a couch for several days, until a relative came by to ferry them to the Superdome.

There family members were loaded onto buses, but in the confusion Lee's 8-year-old daughter got separated. She ended up with her grandmother in Ft. Worth, while Lee and her two sons, ages 5 and 2, were sent first to the Astrodome in Houston and then to a church shelter and a motel.

All things considered, and despite the fact that she has yet to be reunited with her daughter, Lee says she counts herself as fortunate.

A couple of weeks ago, the City of Houston found her a one-bedroom apartment in suburban Pasadena. Between the city and FEMA, the $313 monthly rent is covered for a year. She used a $2,300 emergency check from FEMA to buy clothes, food and cooking essentials. Her older son has started kindergarten in a local school.

Without a car, however, or someone to watch her toddler son, a job is out of the question. Yet so, too, is returning to New Orleans, because she has no place there to live.

"I don't really know what we're going to do next," Lee said. "I'm still just thanking God that we all made it out alive."

A tale of two waiters

'I didn't want to leave Antoine's'

The professional waiters have the best jobs at Antoine's. A veteran server with a long list of regular customers can earn $60,000 or more a year. And the skills they attain—the ability to memorize complicated orders for a dozen patrons without writing anything down, or master a wine list with hundreds of bottles—mean those waiters also are the Antoine's employees best positioned to land on their feet someplace else.

Kelli Lege discovered that just a few days after she arrived in Ft. Worth, where she journeyed to stay with her mother after evacuating New Orleans, her home for the past six years. The owner of the Reata Restaurant, a downtown steakhouse, hired her on the spot, solely on the strength of her position at Antoine's as an apprentice waitress.

"I didn't want to leave Antoine's," Lege said, "but every time there's a storm in the gulf, it's not worth it to me to have my family worry about me so much. It was just time for me to be with my family here."

Single and without any children or strong ties to New Orleans, Lege said it was easier for her to decide to quit the city than it may be for many of her former Antoine's colleagues.

Lege's friend Charles Carter, however, has made the opposite choice, much to the relief of Antoine's managers, who worry about how many experienced waiters they will retain.

Antoine's is the only workplace Carter has known; he started there at 15 as a busboy. Eight years later, he has inherited the loyal customers served by his father and uncles who were Antoine's waiters before him. His fiance, Candace Johnston, is an apprentice waitress at the restaurant, and his house in suburban Metairie, though damaged by the flooding, is habitable.

"I'm the last of four generations who have worked there," Carter said. "Every few days I go walk past the restaurant. That's how anxious I am to get back."

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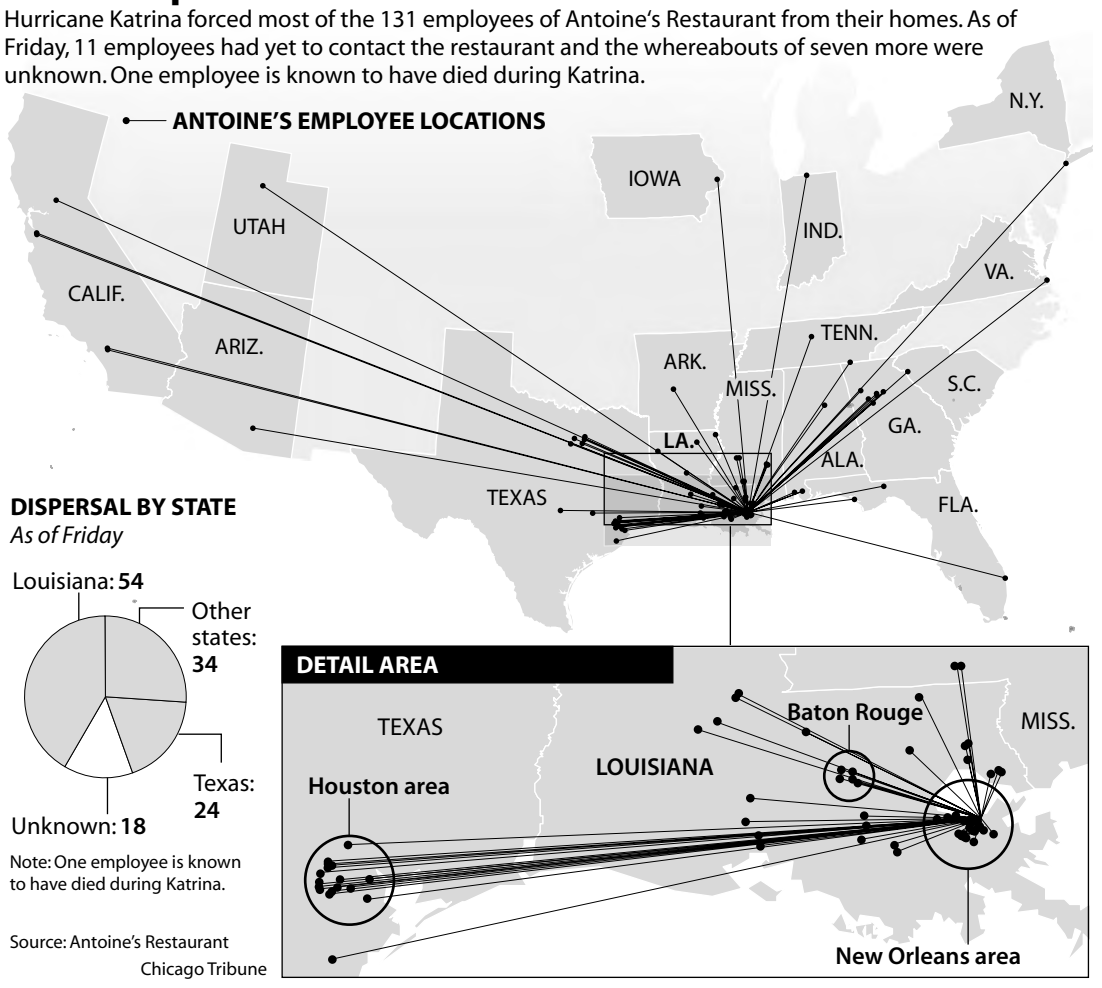
■ Part 1 of the series: **chicagotribune.com/antoines**

A staff dispersed

Hurricane Katrina forced most of the 131 employees of Antoine's Restaurant from their homes. As of Friday, 11 employees had yet to contact the restaurant and the whereabouts of seven more were unknown. One employee is known to have died during Katrina.



DISPERSAL BY STATE
As of Friday

Note: One employee is known to have died during Katrina.

Source: Antoine's Restaurant

Chicago Tribune

REVIVING ANTOINE'S: LOSS AND RECOVERY IN NEW ORLEANS

Insurance thicket imperils comeback

Shuttered since Katrina hit, a French Quarter institution's losses mount during haggling on its claims. Such woes are ubiquitous in Louisiana.

Third in an occasional series

By Howard Witt
Tribune senior correspondent

NEW ORLEANS — There were 11,256 bottles of wine in the cellar of Antoine's Restaurant on the morning of Aug. 29 when Hurricane Katrina struck, some of them rare, most of them expensive and all of them ruined when the power failed, the air conditioning died and the ruinous heat and humidity of late-summer New Orleans could no longer be kept at bay.

Yet the restaurant's managers say the insurance company that covered the wine cellar, rather than quickly settle a claim for the value of the entire collection, proposed haggling over the cost of each bottle as the restaurant seeks to replace it—a painstaking process they expect will take years.

Meanwhile, each day the landmark French Quarter restaurant remains closed while struggling to repair storm damage and reassemble its staff—it has been more than 100 days and counting—Antoine's loses more than $17,000 in potential revenue. Yet the managers complain that the insurance company that provides the restaurant's business-interruption coverage has advanced only $250,000 so far toward the loss, which likely will exceed the policy's limit of $1.9 million.

"They sell you business-interruption insurance to keep you from going out of business in a catastrophe, but it turns out that's not how it works," said Rick Blount, Antoine's chief executive officer and the great-great-grandson of the restaurant's founder, who is hoping to reopen by Christmas Eve. "It will eventually pay, but not in time to save your business."

The next great tribulation

After the winds, the floods, the deaths and the massive destruction, the battle over insurance claims has emerged as New Orleans' next great tribulation. The city's silent, dust-blown streets, lined with 110,000 ruined houses, still await the return of three-quarters of the exiled population, as well as the reopening of marquee attractions such as the convention center, the Superdome, the fabled streetcar lines and three-quarters of the restaurants. And insurance problems are one major reason the gears of the recovery seem so clogged.

It's not just Antoine's, a bellwether New Orleans institution whose effort to revive itself mirrors the halting resurrection of the city it has served for 165 years. State officials warn that 4 in every 10 Louisiana small businesses, starved for cash flow, face failure while waiting for their insurance claims to be settled. Emergency loans from the federal Small Business Administration are barely trickling in: Fewer than 8,000 loans had been approved by mid-November, out of more than 200,000 Katrina-related applications.

Allstate Insurance Co., the second-largest insurer in the state, had managed to close 58 percent of its Katrina-related claims as of early December, more than three months after the storm.

"It's definitely overwhelmed the insurance industry as a whole, so things are moving slowly," said John O'Brien, a New Orleans insurance broker who specializes in writing policies for historic French Quarter businesses, including Antoine's. Ultimately, insurance industry experts predict that insurers will pay out more than $40 billion for damage caused by Hurricane Katrina. Yet thousands of policyholders who have received their insurance checks find themselves fighting over settlements they perceive as too low and unfair. The state insurance commissioner's office has logged more than 26,000 inquiries from policyholders and received nearly 1,700 formal complaints so far.

More ominously, an estimated 60 percent of homeowners and business operators across the state carried no flood insurance and face the looming expiration of grace periods on mortgages for properties that in many cases no longer exist.

'False sense of security'

"People got lulled into a false sense of security over the last 40 years," said Robert Wooley, the Louisiana state insurance commissioner, noting that many homeowners assumed that the levees would protect them.

"It's just human nature," added Wooley, who lives in Baton Rouge, the state capital. "I'm the insurance commissioner and I'm underinsured. I don't have flood insurance. But if the Mississippi River levee breaks, this whole area is gonna flood. I'm taking a chance like everybody else."

Even those New Orleans residents with flood insurance who are satisfied with their settlements and would like to begin rebuilding are hobbled by multiple uncertainties. They're unsure whether they should try to elevate their houses to protect them against a future flood. They don't know whether they'll be able to afford new insurance coverage, or if it will even be available. They are waiting for local and state officials to decide whether their neighborhoods will be condemned and turned into flood plains.

Congress and the White House have given them little confidence that the federal government will provide the tens of billions of dollars necessary to build a better system of levees and floodgates to protect this below-sea-level city against future killer hurricanes.

"We're caught here between people wanting to return and an economy that needs to recover," said Michael Olivier, secretary of the Louisiana Department of Economic Development. "But the level of devastation is creating a huge uncertainty, and without rebuilding the levee system to a more secure degree, it will absolutely impact the confidence of business and investment to return to the city."

The absence of that confidence can be seen on the drive along Canal Street from Antoine's to Charles Daroca's house in the city's Lakeview neighborhood.

Photo for the Tribune by Chris Graythen

Charles Daroca, chief financial officer of Antoine's Restaurant, is struggling to help resurrect the business as well as his home.

The series

The Tribune is following Antoine's Restaurant as the New Orleans landmark struggles back to life in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Earlier stories in the series and additional photos can be found at **chicagotribune.com/antoines**

Cemetery of ruined homes

Before Katrina, the pleasant 5-mile drive took Daroca, the restaurant's chief financial officer, through tree-lined neighborhoods past an encyclopedic sampling of New Orleans' distinctive housing styles: Victorians and bungalows, shotguns and duplexes, housing projects and McMansions.

Nearly every one of those homes flooded when the hurricane burst the city's protective levees. Today, Daroca's drive traverses a cemetery of ruined and abandoned homes, most still filled with mud and mold and the putrefying contents that used to be furniture, clothing, books and pictures.

Yet outside every fifth house or so, a reeking pile of sodden wallboard, lumber and other debris spills onto the street—a sight that boosts Daroca's spirit.

"Those people are gutting their houses," he explained. "It means they want to rebuild."

Daroca, 46, a lifelong New Orleans resident, wants to rebuild his 4,400-square-foot Lakeview home, which steeped for weeks in 10 feet of water. He's spent every weekend for the past two months in a mask and gloves, tearing out the first floor to the joists and the walls back to the studs, stripping his beloved home down to its skeleton so the mold would stop growing and restoration could begin.

But Daroca, his wife and their two children, exiled for now in a rented townhouse in the New Orleans suburb of Destrehan, have decided to wait before taking any further steps. The problem is not money: Daroca had $250,000 in flood insurance and has received his settlement check, which he calculates should cover the cost of the repairs. The problem is uncertainty.

There still is no electricity in Daroca's blighted neighborhood. Only a handful of Daroca's neighbors have indicated that they intend to return. There are no functioning schools or stores or groceries or coffeehouses for miles.

"I live in a flood zone, but I don't know if my neighborhood will be protected in the future," Daroca said. "I don't know if my house has to be raised. What do I have to do? The frustration of it is, there is nowhere to go for answers, no official to ask what you can do."

Will insurers jump ship?

Another kind of ambiguity looms over the areas of Louisiana and Mississippi hit hardest by Katrina: whether insurance will be available, and affordable, in the future. Already the chairman of Northbrook, Ill.-based Allstate has indicated that his company is planning to reduce its exposure in the region, through a combination of approaches that could include new-business moratoriums and higher premiums.

"We think the risk is too great and too unpredictable," said Michael Trevino, an Allstate spokesman. "We can't charge the right amount of premium to collect in order to pay claims."

State Farm, the largest insurer in Louisiana with nearly 35 percent of the homeowners business, has said it still is writing new insurance policies, but premium rates are under review.

Wooley said he foresees no insurance crisis in his state—for now.

"I think if we do the right thing—make the insurance companies pay what they are supposed to pay, but don't try and make them pay something they weren't obligated to pay—I think they'll stay here," Wooley said. "But premiums are going up, there's no doubt."

What concerns Wooley—and the insurance industry—are proposed laws and lawsuits, like one filed by Mississippi's attorney general, that seek to force insurance companies to pay claims for flood damage under homeowners policies if the policyholders did not have separate flood insurance. That federal flood insurance, which is underwritten by the National Flood Insurance Program and capped at $250,000, is required for homebuyers in some low-lying areas to obtain a mortgage, and optional for everyone else.

Supporters of such efforts argue that the flooding was caused by storm surges and levee breaches directly attributable to Katrina's winds, and wind damage is covered under homeowners insurance. Moreover, they contend that the federal government's own flood plain elevation maps did not require the purchase of flood insurance in many of the areas that ended up submerged.

The insurance industry strongly disputes that it should be liable for flood claims when every policy contains language explicitly excluding floods.

For some, opportunity knocks

For all the tension over insurance issues, there are a few pioneers who have discovered unimagined opportunities amid the confusion and the ruins. Margaret Maher, a single mother of two elementary school children who lost all her belongings when her rented house was destroyed in the flooding, is about to buy her first home, thanks to Katrina.

The five-bedroom house, in an upscale subdivision in St. Bernard Parish adjacent to New Orleans, was valued at $324,000 before floodwaters filled it and every other house nearby to the first-floor ceiling. Now the first floor is stripped bare to the studs, like Daroca's home, awaiting reconstruction.

Maher, 32, the human resources manager at Antoine's, never could have afforded such a home before the hurricane. But the peculiarities of post-Katrina economics are now working in her favor.

The home's owner got a $250,000 settlement from his flood insurance and is selling the distressed property to Maher for $101,000, meaning he walks away better than whole. Maher, meanwhile, can obtain a special low-interest Federal Housing Administration loan, available to victims in disaster areas, for enough to cover the purchase price and $55,000 in necessary repairs—and her monthly payment will be only $200 more than she was paying to rent a much smaller place.

Maher knows it may take years before her withered new neighborhood looks anything like the kid-friendly place it was before the hurricane—to say nothing of the devastated parish as a whole. But she says she's endured other crises in her life before Katrina—a serious illness, the premature birth of her son—and she prefers to remain optimistic.

"This neighborhood is going to come back strong," Maher said. "Sure, our life will be limited for a while. But it's limited now. At least we will have a house. At least that will be normal."

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SPORTS

6 Pro Bowl-bound Bears

Urlacher heads up cast, including 5 on defense

AT PLAY

Winning wine bars

We rate spots in city, suburbs to sip

Chicago Tribune

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159TH YEAR — NO. 356

Three-judge panel says the detention status of Jose Padilla can't change until the Supreme Court hears ex-Chicagoan's appeal

U.S. rebuked in terrorism case

By Michael Tackett and Andrew Zajac
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON—A conservative-leaning federal appellate court in Virginia on Wednesday sharply rebuked the Bush administration for its handling of the high profile terrorism case against Jose Padilla, ruling that he cannot be transferred from military custody to face conventional criminal charges until the Supreme Court has a chance to consider his status as an "enemy combatant."

The court said that the issues presented in the Padilla case—whether he could be held as an enemy combatant and tried through a military tribunal system—needed to be addressed by the nation's highest court, and that the administration should not be allowed to selectively choose the means by which to try him.

In its ruling, the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond said the government's actions have left "the impression that Padilla may have been held for these years, even if justifiably, by mistake, an impression we would have thought the government could ill afford to leave extant."

The court said that while a president's power to detain an enemy combatant should not be taken lightly, the government cannot "yield to expediency with little or no cost to its conduct of the war on terror," an impression the court thought the government could not afford.

The administration had sought to drop the initial case against Padilla—that he was an

PLEASE SEE **PADILLA,** PAGE 16

Senate corks push for Arctic drilling

AP photo by Lauren Victoria Burke

Republican Sen. Ted Stevens of Alaska (right), who supports Arctic drilling, and Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) leave the Senate chamber after a contentious voting session Wednesday.

Compromise is reached on Patriot Act

By Jill Zuckman
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — An exhausted Senate on Wednesday decisively blocked drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge while Vice President Dick Cheney dramatically arrived to cast the tie-breaking vote to trim spending for Medicare, Medicaid and other social programs by $39.7 billion over the next five years.

As senators desperately tried to wrap up their work for the year and head home for the holidays, they broke their stalemate over the USA Patriot Act, which gave law enforcement added authority to hunt down suspected terrorists following the Sept. 11 attacks. Bowing to a bipartisan group of lawmakers worried about preserving civil liberties, the Senate agreed to extend the law for six months while negotiating new rules governing, among other things, searches of library records, business records and medical records.

Senators also approved a defense authorization bill, which allows for a 3.1 percent pay raise for the military and a ban on the use of torture. And they sent the $453 billion defense appropriations bill, without the Arctic drilling proposal, back to the House for approval.

"We know this Arctic. You don't know the Arctic at all," complained an emotional Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), who has fought to open the Alaskan wildlife refuge to drilling for the last quarter-century. "It's 2,000 acres of the Arctic. Is that worth this fight?"

But other senators called the search for petroleum in the pristine region a financial boondoggle for the oil industry. They said it would harm herds of caribou and other wildlife,

PLEASE SEE **SENATE**, BACK PAGE

■ Deal in Senate extends Patriot Act by six months.
BACK PAGE

REVIVING ANTOINE'S
LOSS AND RECOVERY IN NEW ORLEANS

Suspicions fire racial tensions

Antoine's is an oasis of relative peace as rumors haunt city

Fourth in an occasional series

By Howard Witt
Tribune senior correspondent

NEW ORLEANS — Gina Blandin has a theory about what caused the flooding disaster that befell New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina struck last August, an idea that has little to do with engineering studies or physical evidence and everything to do with the poisonous history of race relations in this starkly segregated city.

"I think they blew up those levees and let the water come in," said Blandin, who lost her apartment in the Mid-City neighborhood to the floodwaters and is now living temporarily in Houston. "They were happy that this storm hit, to get all of us black people out of the city."

For Blandin, a bartender at Antoine's Restaurant, the landmark French Quarter institution that is struggling to reopen four months after Katrina hit, and many other African-American residents who were driven from their homes, the evidence suggests unseen powers ordered the sabotage of New Orleans' protective levees to cause low-lying black neighborhoods to flood.

The plot, according to those who believe it, was to use the deadly hurricane to transform this majority-black city into a whiter, richer place. And ev-

PLEASE SEE **ANTOINE'S,** PAGE 12

Church finds twin miracle in vestibule

By Dave Wischnowsky
Tribune staff reporter

Employees at North Austin Lutheran Church on the city's West Side found themselves celebrating a Christmas season birth besides Jesus' on Wednesday morning when a baby carrier containing twin newborns was discovered inside the church's vestibule.

The healthy babies—a 6-pound, 6-ounce boy and a 5-pound girl who doctors say are no more than 2 days old—were still attached to their umbilical cords.

The staff at Oak Park's West Suburban Medical Center, where the infants were taken, named them Baby Joseph and Baby Mary.

"That's terrific," said Rev. Thetis Cromie of North Austin Lutheran. "You can bet that I'll be saying something about Joseph and Mary during my Christmas Eve and Christmas Day sermons."

Tribune photo by Scott Strazzante

Newborn twins, "Baby Joseph" (left) and "Baby Mary," were found Wednesday at North Austin Lutheran Church in Chicago.

A custodian at the church spotted a blue-and-white baby carrier with its lid shut about 8:15 a.m. Wednesday. The carrier was sitting inside the unlocked front door of the church at 1500 N. Mason Ave.

After alerting a secretary to his discovery, the custodian took the unopened baby carrier

PLEASE SEE **BABIES**, BACK PAGE

2 holidays too close for comfort?

By Margaret Ramirez
Tribune religion reporter

On Sunday morning, millions of Christians will attend Christmas services to celebrate the birth of Jesus. A few hours later, Jewish families will gather to recite Hebrew prayers and light a candle on the Hanukkah menorah, a celebration of another miracle.

For the first time since 1959, in a coincidental convergence of calendars, the first night of the Jewish festival of lights will fall this year on Christmas Day.

While the simultaneous holidays present obvious dilemmas for interfaith couples, Jewish leaders said the proximity between Christmas and Hanukkah has always posed challenges for the Jewish community in America.

For Jews and Christians who marry, the problem known as the "December dilemma" means facing the question of whether to meld two traditions or pick one primary religion to follow. But even among Jewish families, it can prompt heated debate on the best way to celebrate Hanukkah while being bombarded with all things Christmas.

PLEASE SEE **HOLIDAYS**, BACK PAGE

INSIDE

Weather: high: 35, low 32

ANTOINE'S: Some suspect failing levees were sabotaged

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

erything that has happened since—the delays in reopening the poorest districts, the shuttering of the city's public housing projects, the sluggish delivery of federal storm aid, the mass layoff of the city's mostly black municipal workforce—has only reinforced the fear of many exiled black residents that New Orleans will be reconstructed without them.

"There have already been great changes in the composition of who New Orleans is and what she looks like," said Cynthia Willard-Lewis, the City Council member who represents the Lower 9th Ward, upscale Gentilly and several other predominantly black districts that were flooded. "Now the question becomes, who can return?"

It is a question strongly informed by history in a city that, before Katrina, was 67 percent black, 28 percent poverty-stricken and deeply marked by the flight of whites to the suburbs.

"Even before Hurricane Katrina hit, greater New Orleans was one of the more troubled metropolitan areas in the nation," the Brookings Institution wrote in an October report. "Sharp racial segregation and high concentrations of poverty, decentralization and a slowing economy all challenged the region."

So did outright racism. David Duke, the notorious white supremacist and former Ku Klux Klan leader, was elected to the state Legislature by white voters in Metairie, next door to New Orleans, in 1989. The city's signature Mardi Gras organizations, or krewes, were not officially desegregated until 1991.

After Katrina hit, officials of the nearly all-white parish of St. Bernard, bordering New Orleans' Lower 9th Ward, ordered rail cars dragged across the roads as a blockade. In Gretna, a majority-white suburb just across the Mississippi from New Orleans, police officers stood guard to turn back New Orleanians trying to flee across the Crescent City Bridge.

And even now, residents of predominantly white communities across southern Louisiana, citing fears of crime and "outsiders," are resisting efforts by the Federal Emergency Management Agency to locate temporary trailer parks for storm evacuees in their neighborhoods. The not-in-my-back yard phenomenon has begun surfacing in wealthier New Orleans neighborhoods as well.

What particularly worries Willard-Lewis and many of her constituents are the proceedings of the Bring New Orleans Back Commission, an advisory blue-ribbon panel appointed by New Orleans Mayor C. Ray Nagin to draft a plan for the wounded city's future. The commission's recommendations are due in early January, but already a major study prepared for the panel by the Urban Land Institute, a non-profit land-use think tank, has raised alarms.

The institute's experts bluntly recommended writing off huge swaths of the city and postponing their resettlement far into the future so that less heavily damaged neighborhoods might be resuscitated first. The study argued for this approach in part because of uncertainty over whether the federal government will spend the tens of billions of dollars flood-protection experts say would be needed to shield those low-lying areas from future storms.

Right in the institute's crosshairs were some of the city's most historic and vibrant black neighborhoods.

"To have a one-time cataclysmic occurrence that brings water over 80 percent of the city and then just redline certain neighborhoods is extremely troubling," said Willard-Lewis.

But to Alden McDonald Jr., a member of the Bring New Orleans Back Commission and one of the city's prominent business leaders, the sacrifice of even his own neighborhood of Gentilly may be necessary for the larger city to survive.

"It's reality that's bringing this about," said McDonald, president of Liberty Bank & Trust, the third-largest black-owned bank in the U.S. "We're going to have a loss of population, real simple. If you have a loss of population, you will have vacant housing. It's a formula for blighted neighborhoods. That's the No. 1 issue we have before us."

The water took its time getting to Gina Blandin's apartment building, arriving nearly 24 hours after Katrina hit New Orleans near dawn on Aug. 29. And when the floods did come, rising to 4 feet all around her, they stopped short of the historic French Quarter just a few blocks away.

These facts only added to Blandin's suspicions.

"The hurricane was completely over, and you go to sleep and the next morning there's water everywhere. How did that happen?" she said. "Why else would it have happened at night? The French Quarter got no water. They knew what they were doing."

One resident of the Lower 9th Ward, the home of much of the city's rich black culture until every house was damaged or destroyed in the flooding, testified before a congressional panel earlier this month that her neighbors heard explosions coming from a nearby flood wall just before the water rushed in.

"I was on my front porch," Dyan French told the House committee probing the response to Katrina. "I have witnesses that say they bombed the walls of the levee. And the debris that's in front of my door will testify to that."

Louis Farrakhan, the leader of the Nation of Islam, first raised the possibility of sabotage in September. He asserted that in one of the levees "there was a 25-foot hole, which suggested that it may have been blown up, so that the water would destroy the black part of town."

The theory that someone intentionally sabotaged the levees to target black residents might easily be dismissed as urban paranoia. After all, many predominantly white neighborhoods in and around New Orleans also were inundated.

Moreover, forensic engineering experts studying the disaster universally have declared that the levees failed due to design and construction flaws, not dynamite. The explosive noises some 9th Ward residents reported hearing were caused by the cracking of the concrete levees and a huge barge that slammed into the flood walls during the storm, engineers assert.

"We can see lots of evidence why those people could have heard very loud sounds that could have sounded like explosions," said Robert Bea, an engineering professor at the University of California, Berkeley, and a member of a National Science Foundation panel that investigated the levee failures.

"As that concrete is breaking, it will emit sounds that probably to them sounded very much like muffled gunshots," Bea added. "Then they would have these very large booming sounds as that barge was slamming against the walls. Those residents probably heard what they heard, but they came to the wrong conclusion. We didn't see any signs of explosive action."

Yet the paranoia and conspiracy theories are rooted in real history. Such sabotage of levees has happened before.

In April 1927, as torrents of water from the Great Mississippi Flood bore down upon New Orleans from hundreds of miles upstream, the city's bankers and backroom power brokers maneuvered the governor to approve dynamiting a down-river levee to relieve pressure on the city's flood walls. The decision spared wealthy white districts of New Orleans but doomed neighboring St. Bernard Parish and low-lying black neighborhoods to a devastating flood.

The notion that some political leaders regard Katrina as a lever to permanently alter the city's demographics also might sound a

Photo for the Tribune by Sean Gardner

City Councilwoman Cynthia Willard-Lewis (center) hugs Connie Smith (left) of New Orleans East, which was devastated after Katrina.

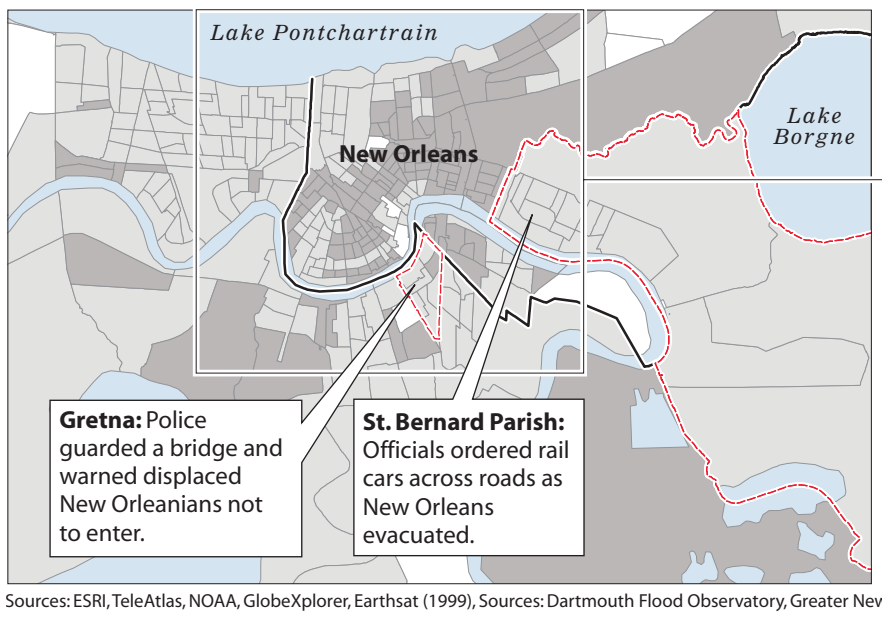
Race relations strained in the Big Easy

After New Orleans' black residents were severely affected by flooding, some suggested levee breaches were intentionally engineered to reduce the African-American population of the city. This theory, as well as reports of white suburbs preventing displaced blacks from entering following Hurricane Katrina, have refueled racial tensions in the area.

NEW ORLEANS-AREA RACIAL COMPOSITION

The inner city is predominantly black while the suburbs are mostly white

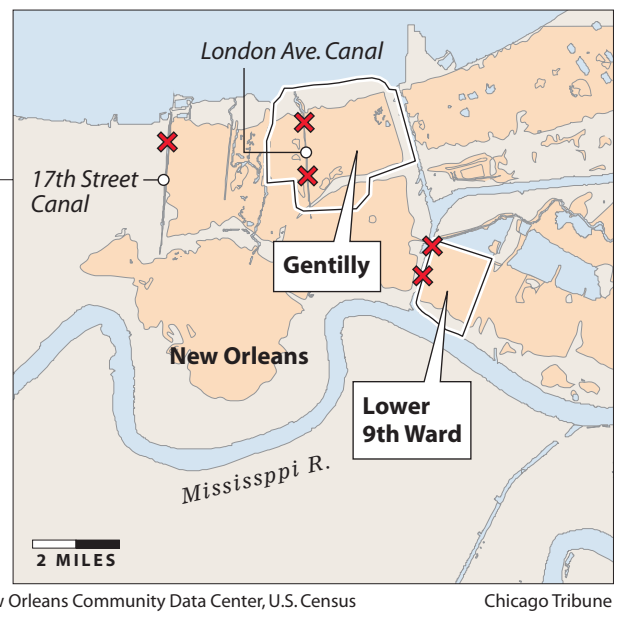
Majority white · Majority black · No racial majority · New Orleans boundary



NEW ORLEANS FLOOD EXTENT

Floodwater inundated black neighborhoods, including Gentilly and the Lower 9th Ward. White areas also flooded.

Levee breached · Flooded area *(extent on Sept. 2)*



Sources: ESRI, TeleAtlas, NOAA, GlobeXplorer, Earthsat (1999), Sources: Dartmouth Flood Observatory, Greater New Orleans Community Data Center, U.S. Census Chicago Tribune

Photo for the Tribune by Johnny Hanson

Gina Blandin, an Antoine's bartender displaced by the flooding, believes New Orleans' levees were damaged on purpose.

lot like hysteria—except that several politicians have come close to saying as much.

"We finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans," Rep. Richard Baker (R.-La.) was quoted by The Wall Street Journal as saying. "We couldn't do it, but God did."

"New Orleans is not going to be as black as it was for a long time, if ever again," Alphonso Jackson, the secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, told a Houston audience, according to the Houston Chronicle.

The continuing shutdown of the city's public housing developments—even those that did not flood—has only deepened suspicions of neighborhood activists that a mass gentrification of the city's poor districts is being planned.

The Housing Authority of New Orleans, operating under HUD receivership because of past mismanagement, contracted with a security company to weld heavy steel plates over the doors and windows of nearly every public housing apartment.

"Their thinking is, the longer poor people and black people stay away, the more unlikely they will be to come back to this city," said Jay Arena, leader of C3/Hands off Iberville Coalition, a public-housing advocacy group. "It's a plan to fulfill Jackson's prophecies. We call it class and ethnic cleansing."

HUD officials deny they are trying to drive public housing residents from their former homes. Rather, they say, they want to ensure the housing units are safe before allowing residents to return.

"While a unit may appear to be safe from the outside, inside it's not safe," said Donna White, a HUD spokeswoman. "Once those safety assessments have been done, we'll be in a better position to get more families back into their homes."

William Frey, a demographer at the Brookings Institution who studies New Orleans population trends, said he hopes that happens soon.

"New Orleans has a very rooted population and a unique demographic personality," Frey said. "People will wait six or nine months to see what's happening. But after that, they may lose hope of returning. Then you won't have New Orleans. You will have somewhere else."

For all the racial tensions that have long roiled New Orleans, Antoine's Restaurant seems to have remained an island of relative tranquility in the divided city that has hosted it for 165 years. By the accounts of dozens of black and white employees alike, a climate of egalitarianism has prevailed in the back of the house, even if the patrons sitting at tables in the front were often members of the city's white, moneyed elite.

Nor would it matter to Blandin if few of her fellow workers shared her belief in a conspiracy to blow up the levees: Employees say they often banter good-naturedly about politics, race and other sensitive topics.

"We are like one big, happy family at Antoine's," said Blandin, in a comment repeated by many of her colleagues. "We just didn't have racial problems there."

About a third of the 131 employees working at Antoine's before Katrina struck were black, according to the restaurant's personnel records. That proportion will hold steady when the restaurant reopens at the end of the month with a skeleton staff of about 50, managers say—which means Antoine's, at least, will not be aggravating the African-American depopulation trend that Willard-Lewis and other leaders fear.

One measure of harmony at Antoine's is the remarkable longevity of its employees, many of whom have spent decades working at the restaurant.

They do not do it for the money. Most of the cooks, bartenders, dishwashers and busboys were earning below $7 an hour before the hurricane shuttered the restaurant, although Rick Blount, Antoine's chief executive officer, had scheduled a round of across-the-board raises for October—increases that will be boosted even higher when the restaurant reopens, Blount said.

Instead, many workers say they stay because of people like Michael Guste, Antoine's general manager, who, like his cousin Blount, is a great-great grandson of the restaurant's founder.

Guste said he suffered a terrifying experience in October, when he was driving home from the restaurant with his 12-year-old son in the passenger seat of their sport-utility vehicle. As they neared their house in Metairie, Guste recounted, two men waving guns began to tailgate them. Guste said he floored the accelerator as the two presumed carjackers gave chase, eventually eluding them by ducking into the parking lot of a shopping center.

Guste reported the incident to the police. But when a New Orleans newspaper reporter called him a few days later seeking an interview about the crime, he declined to talk about it.

The men wielding the guns had been black, Guste explained, and New Orleans still was raw with racial stereotyping in the wake of the wild rumors of crimes—most later disproven—supposedly committed across the city as the floodwaters spread.

"I didn't want the incident to get sensationalized," Guste said. "I didn't want to represent the mantra of division. One isolated incident is not a reason to consider all of our problems to be of just one class."

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About the series

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Part 2: Katrina drove nearly all of Antoine's 131 employees from their homes, flinging them across 14 states into shelters, churches, motels, the homes of relatives—and profound uncertainty.

Part 3: Before the restaurant can reopen and the city can rebuild, complex issues of insurance coverage must be resolved.

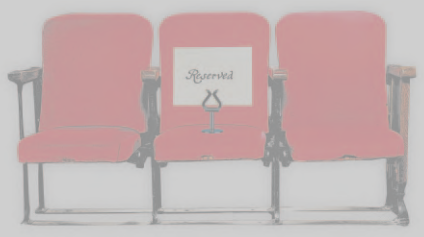
Today: In a city long riven by racial tension, Antoine's is an island of relative tranquility.

Earlier stories in the series and additional multimedia material can be found at chicagotribune.com/antoines

ONTHETOWN

ON NEW YEAR'S EVE, WE SAVED YOU A SEAT

No plans yet? This is your last chance.



MOVIES

OUR HOLIDAY MOVIES QUIZ

For kids and grown-ups

SPORTS

BILL JAUSS LOOKS BACK ON 50 YEARS

Tribune sports veteran's farewell

Chicago Tribune

FINAL

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159TH YEAR — NO. 364 © CHICAGO TRIBUNE

As students challenge them and colleagues mock them over the state's evolution debate, educators get stuck in the middle

In Kansas, teaching biology is survival of fittest

By Lisa Anderson
Tribune national correspondent

OVERLAND PARK, Kan.—Hours after students merrily departed for the long winter break, lights still blazed in Ken Bingman's biology lab at Blue Valley West High School here.

The bright TV lights belonged to the camera crew from "Nick News With Linda Ellerbee," a children's newsmagazine show on the Nickelodeon cable channel. "Nick News" was just the latest in a long line of those seeking the veteran biology teacher's take on the country's most spectacular recurring science squabble: the Kansas State Board of Education's on-again-off-again relationship with Charles Darwin and his theory of biological evolution.

For the moment, that tenuous and tempestuous engagement is off again. And Kansas biology teachers like Bingman once more are caught in the middle of a raging culture war.

On Nov. 8, the board adopted state science standards containing the harshest criticism of evolution in the nation. The standards pointedly cast doubt on Darwin's theory that all life on Earth shares common ancestry and developed through the mechanisms of random mutation and natural selection. Repugnant to many religious conservatives, modern evolutionary theory is considered by the vast majority of scientists as a cornerstone of modern biology that has withstood rigorous testing over time.

In an even bolder step that drew international derision, the board redefined science as a discipline not limited to observations in the natural world and opened the door to supernatural explanations. While unspecified, these might include the

PLEASE SEE **KANSAS**, BACK PAGE

Worst jobs in science

Popular Science magazine's top 10 list includes:

HUMAN LAB RAT

MANURE INSPECTOR

KANSAS BIOLOGY TEACHER

ORANGUTAN URINE COLLECTOR

For an explanation and the full list, please see **BACK PAGE**

REVIVING ANTOINE'S
LOSS AND RECOVERY IN NEW ORLEANS

Photo for the Tribune by Sean Gardner

Bill Finegan (left) toasts Antoine's with his family Thursday, exactly four months after Hurricane Katrina ravaged New Orleans. Finegan has dined at Antoine's for more than 50 years.

Reopening night

A French Quarter icon is back in business, but feat is clouded by post-Katrina uncertainties

Fifth in an occasional series

By Howard Witt
Tribune senior correspondent

NEW ORLEANS — Scaffolding still surrounds a huge hole in the southeast wall, the staff is a shadow of its former size, only two of 15 sprawling dining rooms are functioning, half the specialty dishes have been lopped off the menu and there was a last-minute scramble to find shells for the signature Oysters Rockefeller.

But Antoine's Restaurant reopened its heavy wooden doors Thursday night, exactly four months after Hurricane Katrina shuttered the historic French Quarter icon and forced New Orleans to its knees. And in this ruined city famished for any morsel of good news, the return of Pompano Pontchartrain and Baked Alaska was a cause for relief, and even elation.

"Thank God we are back," said James Liuzza, a 20-year Antoine's employee and the restaurant's new maitre d', whose predecessor drowned when Katrina's floodwaters filled his home to the ceiling. "Maybe a little bit of normal is coming back to New Orleans."

Normal, however, remains a relative term in New Orleans, a city where less than a quarter of the former residents have returned, officials count 360,124 requests for housing, the hospitals have just 140 available beds and Bourbon Street still echoes like an empty canyon.

The struggle of the two top managers at Antoine's, Rick Blount and Michael Guste, to resurrect the restaurant founded by their great-great-grandfather 165 years ago mirrors New Orleans' efforts to

PLEASE SEE **ANTOINE'S**, BACK PAGE

Stem cell advances a fraud

U.S. scientists vow S. Korean scandal won't derail research

By Ronald Kotulak
Tribune science reporter

Reports of dramatic advances in human stem cell cloning by a South Korean scientist were declared Thursday to be fakery, setting back international hopes for quickly developing breakthrough therapies for many diseases.

The fall from grace of Hwang Woo Suk, whose research briefly made him a scientific rock star, is a discouraging development for a field of study considered the most promising in medicine.

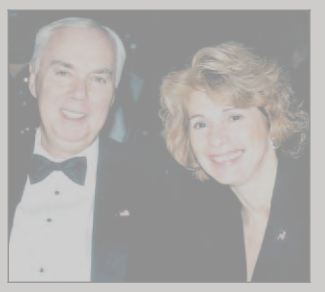
Yet U.S. scientists interviewed Thursday said the impact of the fraud is temporary and it will not derail research into treatments based on adult and embryonic stem cells.

Moreover, despite the negative publicity the fabrication brings to a high-profile field, the fact that Hwang's colleagues ultimately detected the fraud proves science still has effective self-policing powers, they said.

"Actually the scientific proc-

PLEASE SEE **STEM CELLS,** PAGE 13

MORE INSIDE



2000 photo courtesy of the Mell family

Mell family's hopes dashed

Desperate to help his wife, Marge, who is battling an incurable brain disease, Ald. Richard Mell flew to Houston in June in hopes of meeting South Korean stem cell researcher Hwang Woo Suk.

He caught up to Hwang in a hotel lobby. The Northwest Side alderman was overwhelmed by the scientist's promise to help.

"I started bawling in front of him, because I was so excited by the possibility," Mell said Thursday.

COMPLETE STORY, PAGE 13

TRIBUNE UPDATE

FBI: Banker won trust, betrayed it

Latinos' accounts drained in Highwood

By Josh Noel and Lisa Black
Tribune staff reporters

A former employee of a Highwood bank entrusted with handling accounts for Latino customers has been charged with embezzling hundreds of thousands of dollars, FBI officials said Thursday.

Estela Ramos, 46, of Highland Park, has been charged by the U.S. attorney's office with defrauding U.S. Bank of Highwood by embezzling nearly $359,000 of federally insured funds from dozens of accounts. Most of the holders of those accounts were Mexican immigrants who speak little English, bank officials said.

Ramos, who worked at the bank for 27 years, faces a fine of up to $1 million and up to 30 years in prison if convicted.

She has not been arrested but is to appear in court on a date yet to be scheduled, FBI spokesman Frank Bochte said. She could not be reached Thursday.

The FBI investigation "is ongoing just to determine the extent of the fraud and identify victims," Bochte said.

The bank fired her in November and has reimbursed custom-

PLEASE SEE **FRAUD,** PAGE 24

TRIBUNE SPECIAL REPORT: BATTLE FOR THE SKIES

BOEING'S BIG TEST: SUCCESS

Dreamliner exceeds expectations, but can company meet demand?

Last in a series

By David Greising
Chief business correspondent

WICHITA, Kan.—At year's end, the comeback at Boeing Co. seems as solid as its tally of airplane orders. The storied American planemaker strongly outsold archrival Airbus SAS this year, setting course to recapture the title Boeing owned until Airbus snatched it away two years ago: world's biggest aircraftmaker.

But the Chicago-based company's turnaround, largely due to the stunning demand for its superefficient 787 Dreamliner, came at a heavy cost, both to Boeing's pocketbook and to its employees.

The pressures created by the sales splurge could put Boeing's corporate transformation at risk. Nowhere are the crosscurrents more evident than at the sprawling former Boeing plant in this Great Plains city.

The Wichita complex turned out the B-29 Superfortress at the height of World War II. Now it is the crucible for Boeing's push to dump production plants and instead head up a confederation of contractors worldwide that supply major plane sections for Boeing to assemble.

PLEASE SEE **BOEING,** PAGE 16

Tribune file photo by George Thompson

A worker at the former Boeing plant in Wichita assembles a 777 cockpit area. The facility will supply sections of the new 787.

INSIDE

Weather: Rain; high 39, low 31
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Online at **chicagotribune.com**

FROM PAGE ONE

ANTOINE'S: Doors open, but future is uncertain

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

rebound from one of the worst natural disasters in the nation's history.

Blount and Guste had to repair extensive storm damage to the restaurant's historic buildings, battle insurance companies for reimbursement and reconnect with their suppliers, many of whom suffered severe damage themselves.

The managers tracked down their 131 employees, most of whom became refugees when the hurricane flooded and destroyed their homes; six remain unaccounted for. When government agencies failed to provide temporary housing, the restaurant's human resources director found enough trailers, apartments and bunks on cruise ships to accommodate those among a core staff of 30 cooks, busboys, dishwashers and waiters who needed a place to live.

By opening its doors Thursday night, Antoine's beat out such fabled five-star competitors as Brennan's, Galatoire's and Commander's Palace, all of which remain among the 80 percent of New Orleans restaurants that remain shuttered.

Months of losses ahead

But in a city still largely bereft of the monied local residents, free-spending tourists and expense-account conventioneers who formed the lifeblood of the economy, no one believes this race will necessarily go to the swift. Antoine's is bracing for months of red ink.

"We have lost prime-season business, holiday business and our beloved local clientele," said Guste, Antoine's general manager. "We will just be getting back on our feet when the traditional slow summer period hits. And then the gulf waters will be heating up and it will be hurricane season again. It would just be unthinkable to have another punch to this city."

Much about the restaurant on Thursday looked, smelled and tasted familiar to the longtime patrons who eagerly resumed their places at tables tended by tuxedoed waiters who knew them by name.

Months of tarnish had been buffed from the silver, china long layered with dust was spotless and even the prices on the menu were unchanged, although many of the more elaborate dishes that required preparation by multiple cooks were missing. The walls were filled, as always, with thousands of photos, autographs, newspaper clippings and rare pieces of Mardi Gras memorabilia, all freshly dusted and cleaned.

"It feels like I've come home," said Patricia Reilly, an Antoine's regular who was among the first customers to be seated when the doors opened at 5:30 p.m. "I was walking past the windows every day, watching their progress as they tried to reopen. And everything tastes even better than before."

Behind the scenes and out of sight of the diners, however, much was different. The kitchen, fouled for weeks after the hurricane by hundreds of pounds of rotting meat and seafood putrefying inside huge freezers, was stocked with new stainless-steel equipment. The main dining room remained off-limits because a huge wood support beam was sagging from water damage. The wine cellar, once filled with more than 11,000 bottles of premium wines all ruined by heat and humidity after the storm, sat empty; a few hundred replacement bottles were stashed near the bar.

Meanwhile, the restaurant's entire cost structure has been thrown into uncertainty. Blount, Antoine's chief executive officer, acknowledges that most of the restaurant's low-level employees had been underpaid before Katrina hit: Many cooks and dishwashers earned less than $7 per hour.

Wages, other costs jump

But in the new post-Katrina economy, where workers are scarce, fast-food restaurants are paying $9 an hour plus $5,000 signing bonuses. Blount boosted average wages by more than 45 percent.

Other expenses are increasing as well: Costs for building supplies for repairs are rising because of high demand; gas and electric rates are set to increase because consumption is so depressed; food vendors have raised their wholesale prices and tacked on surcharges for fuel and travel time.

Before Katrina, Antoine's needed to fill about 220 of its more than 850 available seats each night to break even, with the average check amounting to $69. In its new, attenuated configuration, the restaurant can accommodate 300 people at most. On opening night, the house was about half full.

"We have no idea what our new break-even point is," Blount said. "Do we have to adjust portions? Do we have to raise prices? Do we even have any idea how many customers we can expect each night? The answer to every question is, 'I don't know.' "

Blount, who took over management of the restaurant less than a year ago, faces an even more daunting task. He must make over the aged restaurant's management and operations, and even perhaps the classic French menu, if Antoine's is to thrive in the new New Orleans.

Long before the hurricane, the restaurant had faded from most critics' favor, and its customer count was only beginning to rebound from a four-year post-Sept. 11 tourism slump. There was rampant waste, lax accounting and even some employee theft, Blount said.

"When I got to Antoine's, it was just like walking into your grandparent's house when they were really old," he said. "The routines were so entrenched. There was a toaster. … It was a 1920s toaster that nobody had ever updated or even thought about the possibility."

But Blount knows he must proceed carefully.

"We're not going to do the latest fusion food and wraps and crepes and the Atkins diet," he said. "Antoine's is still going to be what it's good at, what it's best at, and that is staying absolutely true to its New Orleans cuisine roots."

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Part 4: In a city long riven by racial tension, Antoine's is an island of relative tranquility.

Today: Four months to the day after Katrina struck, the restaurant greets its first returning customers.

Earlier stories in the series, and additional multimedia material, can be found at chicagotribune.com/antoines

Photo for the Tribune by Sean Gardner

Antoine's waiters read the new menu before the restaurant reopened Thursday—with less than a quarter of its pre-Katrina staff.

KANSAS: Fissure runs deep over science policy

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

biblical account of creation in Genesis and intelligent design, or ID, which presents itself as a scientific theory positing that some complexities of the natural world are best attributed to an unnamed and unseen designer. Most ID proponents believe the designer is God; most scientists believe ID is creationism in a lab coat.

The state science standards—which take effect in 2007, unless a more moderate board is elected in 2006 —are not binding on school districts but may be reflected on state assessment tests.

Bingman, 66, has seen it all before. A veteran of 43 years in Kansas biology classrooms, he not only served on the committee that wrote the standards the board just revised, but he also worked on the committee that produced standards another conservative board changed in 1999 to eliminate most references to evolution. In between, a moderate majority board restored evolution to the standards in 2001.

If that seems confusing, imagine the effect on the students, said Bingman as he sat in a classroom festooned with student-crafted models of DNA's double helix.

"They're violating the integrity of science," he said of the current board. "In doing that, they're confusing the students not only about what is science, but confusing them about what is religion. So, it's a lose-lose."

Christopher Iliff strongly disagreed. The Kansas attorney also is a board member of Intelligent Design network, inc., a non-profit organization based in Shawnee Mission, Kan., that promotes "objectivity in origins science" and champions standards critical of evolution.

"What the Kansas standards do is encourage more thorough analysis of the existing scientific basis for evolution. I think what it will encourage is discussion of what I think are huge gaps in the purely materialistic explanation that is offered for evolution," said Iliff.

Steve Case, assistant director of the Center for Science Education at the University of Kansas, said the new standards are "embarrassing, but I'm more worried about the impact of our students being asked about their science education during college interviews."

Case, who also was on the standards writing committee, said he is reconvening the panel in January to complete the work interrupted by the board's decision to ignore the standards recommended by the majority of the committee and to adopt revisions proposed by a conservative minority.

'Worst jobs' listing

The last three months have been rough for many of Kansas' nearly 650 high school biology teachers. In October, "Kansas biology teacher" made the top 10 in Popular Science magazine's annual list of the "Worst Jobs in Science." It came in at No. 3, surpassed only by animal "manure inspector" and the worst job of all: "human lab rat."

On Dec. 7, Kansas earned an F-minus for its science standards—the worst in the nation—in "The State of State Science Standards 2005," a report published by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a non-profit group supporting research and reform in K-12 education.

"They took good, solid science standards and they adulterated them. So, I think those low marks were deserved," said Bingman, the son of a Missouri farmer and brother of two biology teachers.

Bingman recalls the 1999 board attack on evolution. "It was academically agonizing.… I'm kind of ashamed to admit it but it took me a couple of nights before I had a decent night's sleep—that's how hard it hit me," he said.

But this time around he said it's worse. Given the board's decision, the national political climate and the growing number of religious conservatives active in public education, he said, "I think they will feel very much empowered and this is what I see as different now."

For example, Bingman said, over the years he probably had students who disagreed with evolution; typically 10 percent of his students are creationists. But "those students really weren't vocal. … Now, it's in your face, I mean, it's in your face.

"Not only do they say that intelligent design is right, they even talk about your politics and call you a liberal and those kinds of things which I think inappropriate in a classroom," he said.

"I can show you a paper a kid turned in … that said that I'm a liberal," he said, plucking an essay from a pile of papers.

Assigned to discuss five solid pieces of evidence for evolution, one 14-year-old student wrote: "Although there is more than one viewpoint on the issue of how we all got here, Mr. Bingman is forcing [us into] believing his views by teaching us one-sided education. This is much as how the liberal media is forcing the public into disowning the war and Pres. Bush's policies. Despite my viewpoints I am forced to write about the theory of evolution."

Said Bingman, "I've never had anything like that before in 43 years of teaching. It's one instance, but it's symptomatic of what we're seeing in some young people."

Close to Kansas City, Blue Valley West, one of the state's best public high schools, is located in booming Johnson County, the most affluent in Kansas. The school educates 1,300 students within its red brick and green glass walls and its teachers are somewhat buffered from anti-evolution pressure, said Bingman.

But in a state where about 80 percent of school districts are small and rural, Bingman said, "I do fear for some of the students in classrooms in smaller areas… where I think the real damage can be done.

"I think teachers will probably do a couple of things. One is, they will slight the teaching of evolution and then, when it does come up, I think they will maybe offer their own religious views about how things came to be as they are."

Public polls weigh in

Polling consistently shows a majority of Americans favors teaching both evolution and creationism. However, the U.S. Supreme Court has banned creationism from public schools as a violation of the 1st Amendment's prohibition on state establishment of religion. Only about half of all Americans surveyed are familiar with the term "intelligent design."

Over the last 20 years, polls also consistently find that almost half of all Americans believe God created humans in their current form within the last 10,000 years.

For a biology teacher in a small-town school, Bingman said the anti-evolution pressure could be enormous. "Because you teach all the sciences perhaps, or most of the sciences. Your wife may in fact be a teacher in the school…and there can be all sorts of harassment, not only to you, but to your wife and worst of all to your students or to your own children who are students in the school."

Such harassment of teachers and their families occurred in Dover, the rural Pennsylvania school district whose board-mandated inclusion of ID in biology classes was struck down Dec. 20 in a decision by federal District Court Judge John Jones III.

Jones found the policy to be religiously motivated and a violation of the 1st Amendment. He further found ID to be a religious belief, not a scientific theory.

A survey of science teachers in March by the National Science Teachers Association found 31 percent felt pressured to include creationism, intelligent design or other non-scientific alternatives to evolution in their classes; an equal number felt pushed to de-emphasize or omit evolution. Teachers said the pressure comes from parents and students, not administrators.

In the case of Kansas, ridicule is coming from all sides. "How do you feel when you say, 'I'm Ken Bingman and I've been teaching biology for 43 years and I'm from Kansas,' " and you are greeted by peals of laughter, said Bingman, recalling a regional meeting of the NSTA in early December. "It's pretty sad."

Iliff also has heard the snickers. "Obviously I don't like it when my home state is the object of ridicule. On the other hand, 50 years from now when I think intelligent design will be a standard part of the discussion of origins, Kansas may be looked at as the place where it all started."

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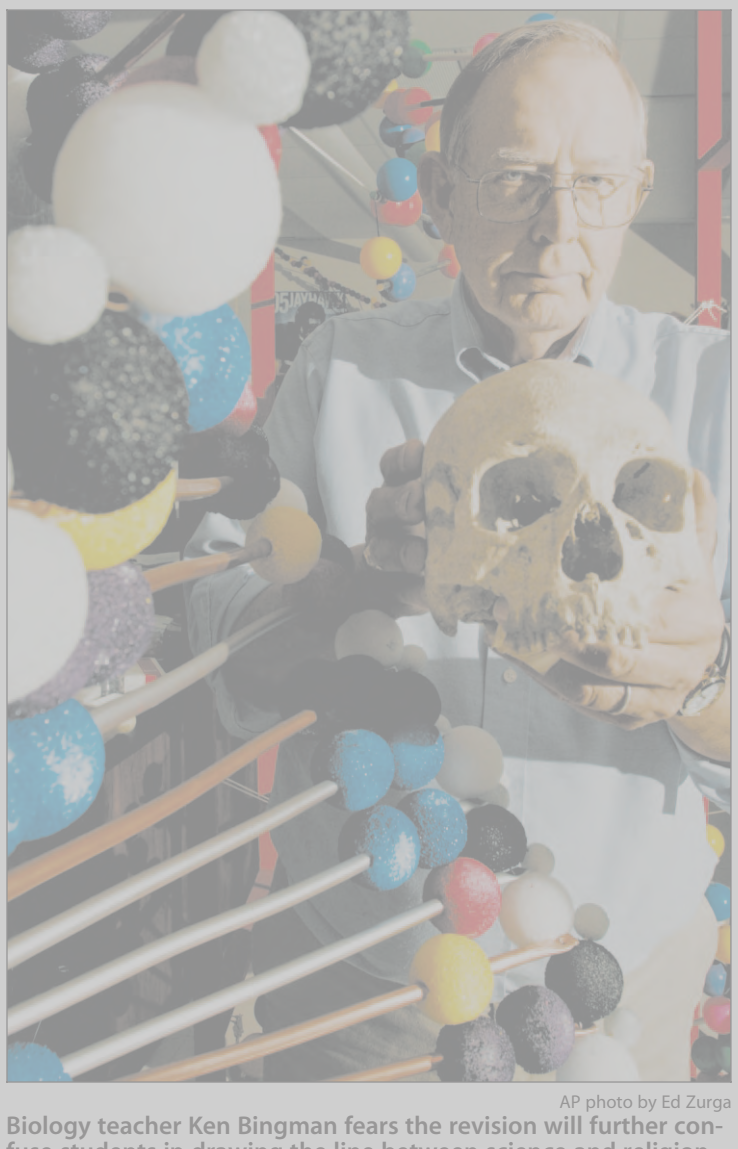

AP photo by Ed Zurga

Biology teacher Ken Bingman fears the revision will further confuse students in drawing the line between science and religion.

Drumroll, please!

"The 10 Worst Jobs in Science," as listed by Popular Science magazine, October 2005:

1. Human lab rat
An industry-funded University of California, San Diego, study paid students $15 an hour to have small doses of a root killer and nerve agent shot into their eyes and noses.

2. Manure inspector
The University of Georgia's Center for Food Safety gathers animal poop to test ways to eliminate dangerous bacteria from animals and our food.

3. Kansas biology teacher
"The evolution debate is consuming almost everything we do," says Brad Williamson, a 30-year science veteran at Olathe East High School.

4. "Extremophile" excavator
A U.S. Geological Survey team works with putrid, stinky mud in California to study an "extremophile" microbe that eats arsenic.

5. Nuclear weapons scientist
The Wen Ho Lee case and other embarrassments at Los Alamos dull the luster of this job.

6. Volcanologist
When a volcano erupts, they rush in, despite dangers that have led to the deaths of dozens of such scientists in recent decades.

7. Semen washer
At sperm banks, they prepare the donations for freezing.

8. Do-gooder
The non-profit Earthwatch Institute charges people to join their scientific expeditions, some of which are romantic (studying the giant statues of Easter Island) and some not (fending off the mosquitoes in Manitoba peat bogs).

9. NASA ballerina
A dancer was hired by NASA to perform next to a robot built to sense the presence of movement nearby and move out of the way.

10. Orangutan-urine collector
Anthropologist Cheryl Knott of Harvard University collects urine samples from endangered primates in Borneo.

MOVIES

BOLD 'NEW WORLD'

Colin Farrell in Terrence Malick's Pocahontas tale

TEMPO

typewriters

and the modern writers who love them

ONTHETOWN

Bands call a club home

Chicago Tribune

FINAL

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159TH YEAR — NO. 20 © CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Bin Laden warns of attacks

1st audio message in year offers vague talk of 'truce'

By Cam Simpson
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON—In the first message released by Osama bin Laden in more than a year, the Al Qaeda leader boasted of successful operations in Iraq and Afghanistan while also threatening Americans that his militant network would bring attacks to "your homes."

Technicians at the CIA concluded with "high confidence" Thursday that the recorded voice aired by the Arabic satellite network Al Jazeera belonged to bin Laden, officials said after testing the audio.

It was unclear from bin Laden's audio statement when he recorded it. Al Jazeera said the message was recorded last month, and bin Laden himself appeared to refer to a news story first published Nov. 22. That would suggest that it was no more than about eight weeks old, according to a full translation completed by The Associated Press.

The statement, which also held out the possibility of an undefined truce, appears in part to be bin Laden's answer to public speculation that he was dead.

During a speech in New York, Vice President Dick Cheney said the message carried a reminder for the American people: "It seems more than obvious to say that our nation is still at risk of attack."

White House spokesman Scott McClellan said, "Clearly, Al Qaeda and the terrorists are on the run. And that is why it is important that we do not let up and that we do not stop until the job is done. And that's what we will do."

American intelligence and counterterrorism officials speculated that Al Qaeda leaders had kept the recording on the shelf, timing its release for maximum propaganda value.

Some of those officials suggested that a U.S. missile attack on a Pakistani village near the border with Afghanistan last Friday, in which 18 civilians and a handful of allegedly key Al

PLEASE SEE **BIN LADEN**, BACK PAGE

Getty/AFP photo

An undated photo of Osama bin Laden accompanied his message on Al Jazeera.

REVIVING ANTOINE'S LOSS & RECOVERY IN NEW ORLEANS

Jobs are plentiful in the city, but housing is not. Chuck Wonycott, a waiter at Antoine's, found refuge on a merchant marine ship and counts himself lucky.

Tribune photo by Heather Stone

Wonycott has coffee on the ship he calls home. "At least this is something—a place I can stay so I can go back to work," he says.

Workers' plea: Gimme shelter

Sixth in an occasional series

By Howard Witt
Tribune senior correspondent

NEW ORLEANS—Home for Chuck Wonycott these days is a cramped metal bunk with a thin foam mattress deep in the bowels of an old merchant marine ship docked at the Port of New Orleans. His closet is a narrow locker. His dining room is the ship's mess hall. His bathroom resembles a bus station's.

It's a long way from the comfortable home he used to share with his aunt in eastern New Orleans before Hurricane Katrina filled it with 5 feet of water. But Wonycott, 42, a waiter at Antoine's Restaurant who spent four terrifying days with his 83-year-old grandmother waiting to be rescued from the city's convention center before ending up in Florida, figures things could be worse.

He still could be stranded far from New Orleans, like an estimated 300,000 residents scattered across the country nearly five months after the Aug. 29 storm because there's nowhere in their former city for them to live. And he could be unemployed: Fewer than 1,800 New Orleans businesses have reopened so far, out of more than 15,000 operating in the city before the hurricane.

"At least this is something—a place I can stay so I can go back to work," Wonycott said one morning this month, ushering a visitor through the

PLEASE SEE **ANTOINE'S,** PAGE 17

U.S. wants to google ... Google

Demand for data on Web searches may spark fight on privacy rights

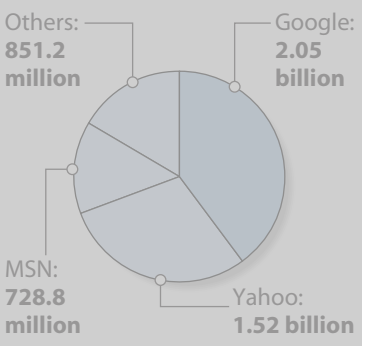
By Mike Hughlett
Tribune staff reporter

Google Inc. is refusing to obey a Justice Department demand that it release information about what people seek when they use the popular search engine, setting up a possible battle with broad implications for Internet privacy rights.

The Justice Department asked a federal court this week to force Google to turn over a trove of information on how people use the Internet. A subpoena, first sought over the summer, seeks activity on Google's search engines for a single week, a request that Google says could lead to identifying millions of people and what they were looking at.

SHARE OF ONLINE SEARCHES

Americans conducted 5.15 billion searches online during November, up 9 percent from the same period the previous year.



Source: ComScore Media Metrix

The government, which says its request will not result in identifying individual computer users, wants to use the information to resurrect an online pornography law shot down last year by the U.S. Supreme Court. It wants to search Google queries to see how often users inadvertently run across sexual

PLEASE SEE **GOOGLE**, BACK PAGE

Illinois may require HIV test for babies

By Judy Peres and Maura Possley
Tribune staff reporters

The Illinois General Assembly is considering legislation that would force hospitals to determine the HIV status of every newborn baby with or without the mother's consent, setting off alarms among AIDS activists, civil libertarians and healthcare experts who worry about privacy violations.

The bill, approved Thursday by the House Human Services Committee, has the support of the Illinois Department of Public Health. That's an about-face for the department, which did not support mandatory testing in 2003. That year the legislature passed a voluntary testing program to prevent the transmission of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, from pregnant women to their infants.

Dr. Ram Yogev, a pediatrician at Children's Memorial Hospital and leading advocate of mandatory testing, said it's critical to know whether a newborn has

PLEASE SEE **HIV,** PAGE 14

Rocking God's house, husband, wife pack pews

By Lolly Bowean
Tribune staff reporter

As soon as the funky groove of the guitar and keyboard rang out at Christian Faith Fellowship Church in Zion, the worshipers jumped to their feet, waving their hands, bouncing their shoulders and stepping to the beat.

Apostle E. James Logan jumped up and down in time to the music while mouthing the words to the song: "Awesome God. Mighty. Omnipotent." His wife, Pastor Deborah Logan, stood by his side, her arms drawn close to her chest and eyes closed as she rocked to the music.

"There's nothing like for-real praise and worship," James Logan said to the 500 people gathered at the non-denominational church for midweek Bible study.

Nine years ago, the Logans' high-energy charismatic style of worship—combined with the fact that the husband and wife share the pulpit—drew criticism from conservatives in the small, struggling church. Now, with more than 2,000 members, the church is recognized as Lake County's largest African-American congregation, according to the city of Zion.

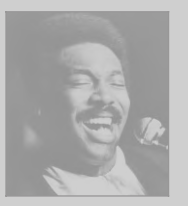
The couple's message reaches so many people they have been named this year's most in-

PLEASE SEE **PREACHERS**, BACK PAGE

Tribune photo by José Moré

Apostle E. James Logan and his wife, Pastor Deborah Logan, share the pulpit at Christian Faith Fellowship Church in Zion.

INSIDE



Weather: Snow; high 44, low 32
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Online at **chicagotribune.com**

Tribune photo by Heather Stone

Workers swarm a car in New Orleans this month, hoping to land a job. Unemployment is high despite a construction boom.

ANTOINE'S: Firms offer fat bonuses to lure workers

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

chilly bunk room where the beds were stacked three high in rows just a few feet apart. "Compared to the convention center, with dead bodies all around, this is an improvement."

This is company housing, Katrina-style. Ships, campers, trailer parks, hotel rooms, dormitories and factory floors—all are being pressed into service as makeshift housing by New Orleans-area employers desperate to crack a vicious circle that is hobbling the city's recovery.

The economy can't rebound until more businesses can reopen. But businesses can't reopen until workers can return. And workers can't return until they have places to live in a city where 80 percent of the land area flooded when Katrina burst the floodwalls and ruined 110,000 houses.

It all adds up to a labor paradox: The New Orleans unemployment rate rose to 17.5 percent in November even as clothing stores, fast-food restaurants and delivery companies are offering thousands of dollars in signing bonuses to fill vacant positions. So scrambled are the region's demographics that the available workers and the open jobs just don't match up.

> ***'You can't wait for the federal government to do everything for you.'***
> —Warren Reuther, president of the New Orleans Exhibition Hall Authority

"You have a lack of housing in the New Orleans area, utilities out in a good portion of the city, people looking for schools for their children, you don't have day care or transportation," said Ed Pratt, spokesman for the Louisiana Labor Department. "Those are just some of the reasons why people are staying put where they are and not going home."

Many employers say they've given up waiting for government agencies to solve the housing problem. The Federal Emergency Management Agency, for example, has received about 24,000 requests for travel trailers in New Orleans, but as of last week had placed just 3,075, according to city officials.

Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco, meanwhile, had to step in to mediate a feud between New Orleans Mayor C. Ray Nagin, who wants to set up temporary trailer parks throughout the city to house returning residents, and members of the City Council, who don't want those trailers in their back yards.

'Forget the government'

So businesses, civic groups and entrepreneurs have begun to tackle the housing crisis.

"Forget the government," said Warren Reuther, president of the New Orleans Exhibition Hall Authority, who is leading an effort to create a trailer-home Hospitality Village beneath the Crescent City Bridge to house key service workers in the tourism industry. "You can't wait for the federal government to do everything for you. If you do, then when something happens and they're not around, you're going to die."

Habitat for Humanity is planning to build a Musicians' Village so displaced entertainers can once again fill the city with their music. The Port of New Orleans has set up trailers for essential dockworkers. Carpenters are living inside the ruined houses they are rebuilding.

The Sheraton Hotel, which like many of its counterparts is using some of its rooms to house its own employees, has devoted one manager to the full-time job of searching out rental apartments for homeless staff members.

And some employees of Antoine's, one of the city's oldest and most recognizable restaurants, are living on a grimy merchant freighter arranged for by the Louisiana Restaurant Association to provide bunks for the dishwashers, cooks, bartenders and waiters every restaurant urgently needs.

"I thought for sure the government at some level would have solved my problems for me, but since that doesn't look like it's going to happen, we have to go this route," said Rick Blount, the restaurant's chief executive officer, whose struggle to revive his family's 166-year-old French Quarter landmark mirrors New Orleans' effort to rebound from Hurricane Katrina.

"If our employees had the resources to solve their own problems, they would," Blount said. "If they are going to be able to help us, we have to help them first."

Antoine's reopened its doors Dec. 29, four months after the hurricane damaged its historic buildings, drove away its expense-account patrons and dispersed nearly its entire staff of 131. But so far, fewer than 50 employees are back at work—there's not enough business yet to support any more—and the restaurant's managers had to scramble to find trailers, apartments and bunks for many.

Those employees returned, like every other worker in the new New Orleans, to a radically changed labor market.

Wages up sharply

For one thing, wages are up sharply, a function of the scarcity of available workers. Most of Antoine's cooks, dishwashers, bartenders and reservationists got raises of 40 percent or more, bringing even the lowest-paid employees to nearly $10 an hour. Many long-serving employees say it is only their devotion to the restaurant, and their satisfaction with their jobs, that keeps them from jumping at even more lucrative wages being offered elsewhere.

The construction trade is experiencing a particular boom: Laborers can earn up to $40 an hour gutting flood-damaged houses and repairing them.

Such opportunities have attracted large numbers of undocumented, unskilled workers to southeastern Louisiana, construction industry experts say. Many are living in tent cities or crowded into cheap motel rooms and are easily cheated by unscrupulous contractors.

"We've seen a lot of reports about exploitation of those workers, who are not being paid," said Derrell Cohoon, chief executive officer of Louisiana Associated General Contractors, a construction trade group. "That is troubling for this industry. We want to think the people we represent wouldn't be involved in taking advantage like that."

For other low-wage workers, many of whom lack cars, transportation is a major obstacle. The city's public bus and streetcar network is operating just a fraction of its former routes. Some are commuting to New Orleans from Baton Rouge, a trip that can take two hours.

Other symptoms of the recovery, we can't get our signature bread. So we're just taking regular French bread. We don't have enough manpower to cut our own fish, so we are subcontracting the actual filleting. It's a lot easier for us to judge the quality of a whole fish than it is to judge the quality of a fillet. But we don't have that luxury right now."

Economists note one additional, and unexpected, factor that is pinching the New Orleans-area labor market: government relief benefits.

"It's been very frustrating to many private-sector businesses: They know there are people out there who don't have jobs, but when they go and offer them positions, people say they are not ready to work yet," said Loren Scott, a labor market expert at Louisiana State University. "People are looking at their FEMA checks and their housing allotment and their unemployment benefits and they are saying, 'Hey, I am going to wait awhile.' They are getting enough assistance that they don't need to go back to work."

hwitt@tribune.com

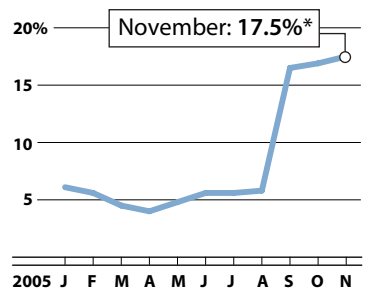
TRIBUNE UPDATE

■ The struggle of Antoine's Restaurant to rebound from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina mirrors the larger story of New Orleans' fight for revival, and the Tribune is following the French Quarter landmark's progress.
Earlier stories in the series, and additional multimedia material, can be found at **chicagotribune.com/antoines**

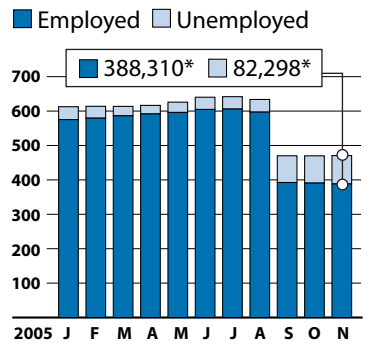
Job picture cloudy

New Orleans businesses have had a hard time finding workers due to a shortage of housing since Hurricane Katrina hit in August. At the same time, unemployment has skyrocketed as fewer businesses remain open.

UNEMPLOYMENT
For New Orleans metropolitan area, not seasonally adjusted



WORKFORCE
For New Orleans metropolitan area, scale in thousands



*Preliminary
Source: U.S. Department of Labor
Chicago Tribune

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U2 BESTS WEST AT THE GRAMMYS

And maybe winner Barack Obama IS a rock star

AT PLAY

The $5 haircut

Our team put their locks on the line so you don't have to

Where to woo

We rate the best spots and gifts for your squeeze

Chicago Tribune

FINAL

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New fat stats for fries? Not lovin' it.

Self-testing reveals McDonald's nutritional data was wrong

By John Schmeltzer
Tribune staff reporter

It was not an announcement McDonald's Corp. wanted to make, or fast-food fans wanted to hear: French fries from the Golden Arches are less healthy than originally thought

Correcting a labeling error, the hamburger giant acknowledged Wednesday that the trans fat content in an order of its large fries is one-third higher than previously stated, containing 8 grams of the heart-endangering fat instead of the 6 grams listed on brochures and McDonald's Web site.

2 FDA's suggested maximum grams of trans fat per day

6 Trans fat grams formerly reported in a large order of fries

8 The new number of trans fat grams reported in a large order of fries

In addition, the Oak Brook-based company said, the total fat content of its large fries is 20 percent higher, 30 grams rather than the 25 grams listed, while total calories rose to 570 from 520.

The company said it would update its publications to reflect the new measurements.

It was a black eye for McDonald's, which in October trumpeted its initiative to print nutritional data on its packages to help consumers make informed choices about what to eat. The packaging is being rolled out in Turin, Italy, the site of the Winter Olympics.

Trans fat is believed to be so dangerous to the heart that the government, which told pack-

PLEASE SEE **FRIES,** PAGE 16

REVIVING ANTOINE'S
LOSS AND RECOVERY IN NEW ORLEANS

Photo for the Tribune by Chris Graythen

A 10-foot float of Mayor C. Ray Nagin is prepared for Mardi Gras' Krewe of Muses parade.

The Big Uneasy

Good times will roll at Mardi Gras, but it also highlights divisions of recovery, wealth and race

Seventh in an occasional series

By Howard Witt
Tribune senior correspondent

NEW ORLEANS — The lavish Carnival banquets already are under way at Antoine's Restaurant, the parading clubs are finalizing their ornate processions and the reviewing stands are in place along St. Charles Avenue. Everything, in other words, looks to be ready for the annual Mardi Gras celebrations beginning here next week.

But a deep unease has settled over the Big Easy with the approach of the first Mardi Gras since Hurricane Katrina and the disturbing juxtapositions that are certain to result. Floats soon will move down boulevards that just five months ago were under water. Drunken revelers will careen across the same sidewalks where ailing and elderly storm victims dropped dead in the late-summer heat.

And only a few blocks from the colorful tourist havens in the French Quarter, the Garden District and downtown, endless brown vistas of flood-ruined houses still stretch as far as the eye can see.

New Orleans boosters are determined to put on a party this year to celebrate the 150th anniversary of a festival that is unlike anything else in the nation. They hope to tell the world that the Aug. 29 hurricane knocked them down, but not out; that the city is ready to welcome back the tourists who supply the local econo-

PLEASE SEE **ANTOINE'S,** BACK PAGE

EPA chief turns coal lobbyist

Mercury foe now represents a top polluter

By Michael Hawthorne
Tribune staff reporter

AP file photo

Renee Cipriano now argues against tough mercury limits proposed by her former boss, Gov. Rod Blagojevich.

As director of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Renee Cipriano pushed for tough limits on the mercury pollution that contaminates every river, stream and lake in the state.

Six months after she left state government, Cipriano still is talking about mercury. Only now she's working for a power company that's trying to scuttle mercury standards proposed last month by her former boss, Gov. Rod Blagojevich.

In yet another example of state officials passing through a revolving door between government and special interests, Cipriano is one of two former top Blagojevich aides hired as utility lobbyists, according to recently filed registration forms.

A third Blagojevich confidant continues to represent Midwest Generation, owner of five coal-fired power plants in the Chicago area, while acting as chief spokesman for the governor's re-election campaign.

Cipriano said she and others in her Chicago law firm were hired by St. Louis-based Ameren to work on a variety of issues, including Blagojevich's proposal to cut mercury pollution from coal-fired power plants by 90 percent within three years.

Ameren and other utilities argue that the state's rules would cost too much and provide few, if

PLEASE SEE **LOBBY,** PAGE 8

MORE INSIDE

■ Hair tests find high mercury levels. **PAGE 8**

■ Mercury warnings pushed for tuna cans. **PAGE 8**

Pentagon aims ax at Illinois Guard

In realignment, U.S. wants 1,000 GIs cut

By Mike Dorning
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon has ordered the Illinois National Guard to draft plans to cut 1,000 positions as part of a national effort to reduce the authorized strength of the Guard and shift the composition of reserve forces, the state's commanding general announced Wednesday.

Maj. Gen. Randall Thomas, adjutant general of the Illinois National Guard, acknowledged that the Defense Department plan calls for the state Guard to receive some new positions in compensation. But he said it is unclear how many new positions the Illinois National Guard would receive, how long that would take or what capabilities any new positions would provide.

Assessing the overall impact, Thomas said, "It's a loss of capability both for us as a force provider for the global war on terrorism and for the governor on homeland security missions."

The potential reduction is driven by budgetary pressures as the Pentagon seeks to develop new high-technology weapons systems and transform the National Guard and Reserves to reduce emphasis on combat oper-

PLEASE SEE **GUARD,** PAGE 20

Evangelicals launch environment crusade

By Frank James
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON—A group of evangelical Christian leaders kicked off a national campaign Wednesday to urge Congress to pass legislation to limit carbon dioxide emissions, contending that decreasing the human role in global warming was central to putting faith into action.

The evangelical leaders said they were acting not only out of a sense of stewardship for the Earth as God's creation but also out of concern for the poor who are most often the hardest hit by hurricanes, floods and other natural disasters linked to climate change.

Through a national advertising campaign using television, radio and print media—including an ad running in Thursday's New York Times with a statement signed by 86 of the Christian leaders—the evangelicals said they hoped to further the growing momentum for environmentalism within many churches.

Evangelical Christians for many years have been por-

PLEASE SEE **WARMING,** PAGE 7

INSIDE THURSDAY'S TRIBUNE

Weather: Sunny; high 35, low 24
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Online at **chicagotribune.com**

FROM PAGE ONE

ANTOINE'S: Two-thirds of residents can't go home

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

my's lifeblood; and that, despite the fact that two-thirds of New Orleans' residents remain exiled from their ruined homes, this city still knows how to have a good time.

It's a message of particular urgency for Antoine's, one of the city's oldest and most famous culinary landmarks, whose dining rooms are filled with Mardi Gras memorabilia and whose owners are counting on a successful Carnival to defibrillate their stuttering business. Like nearly every other restaurant, bar, antique store and boutique in the French Quarter, Antoine's is open, but hemorrhaging cash.

Their brave front aside, however, the city's tourism leaders acknowledge that the signals from this year's Mardi Gras will be decidedly mixed. They worry that TV images of elaborate parades and raucous Bourbon Street parties, beginning Feb. 18 and culminating on Fat Tuesday, Feb. 28, could undermine the city's plea to the nation, and especially Washington, that New Orleans still needs billions of dollars to rebuild.

"The message that it sends to the rest of the world unfortunately is that, 'Oh, they just want to have a party,' " said Jeff Anding, director of convention marketing for the New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau. "The reality is that it's a psychological shot in the arm for locals who are here, and a test to demonstrate to the world that yes, we can still handle mass events."

Nevertheless, local health officials are unsure how they will handle an influx of tens of thousands of visitors when the city has only two functioning hospitals, with a total of just 400 beds, and a temporary clinic at the convention center. There is concern over how city workers will manage to remove the hundreds of tons of trash typically left behind by Mardi Gras crowds at a time when many neighborhoods still groan beneath millions of cubic yards of storm debris piled along the streets.

And some African-American leaders, whose communities were among the hardest hit when the hurricane destroyed most of New Orleans' predominantly black neighborhoods, fear that Mardi Gras celebrations led by white elites will only deepen racial tensions in this starkly segregated city.

"Eighty percent of those whose homes were destroyed were African-American, while 80 percent of the people who are going to do Mardi Gras are white," said Ernest Johnson, president of the Louisiana state branch of the NAACP. "You have black folks who are still out of the city and can't come back to their homes, and you have white people who want to have a party. You have to draw the conclusion that this is a racial divide."

Even the members of Zulu, the historically black social club whose Mardi Gras parades attract some of the biggest crowds, are awkwardly divided over whether to participate in this year's festival.

The club's leaders are vowing to parade and insist they have a mandate from their members, half of whom lost their homes when New Orleans flooded.

"We were severely impacted by Katrina," Zulu President Charles Hamilton declared at a news conference last month marking the opening of the Mardi Gras season. "But to the man, we feel that Zulu must parade in 2006. We must take the lead in bringing our people back. This will be very important to show the world that we're here."

That sentiment is not unanimous. Lawyer David Belfield, an evacuee living temporarily in Atlanta and the "king" of the Zulu parade in 1994, thinks a Mardi Gras celebration will be unseemly at a time when so many displaced black residents cannot afford to return to the city and rebuild their homes. With the support of some other Zulu members, he is challenging the legality of the club meeting where the decision to parade was made and is seeking a restraining order to stop the procession.

"There is a time to parade and have fun. But my argument is we parade and have fun after we take care of the business, which is giving people a reasonable opportunity to return to their homes and start the process of rebuilding," said Belfield. "It's wrong for you to tell me to come home and party at Mardi Gras when I can't even go back to my house or my job."

Still, Belfield, Johnson and other black leaders opposed to this year's Mardi Gras remain a distinct minority.

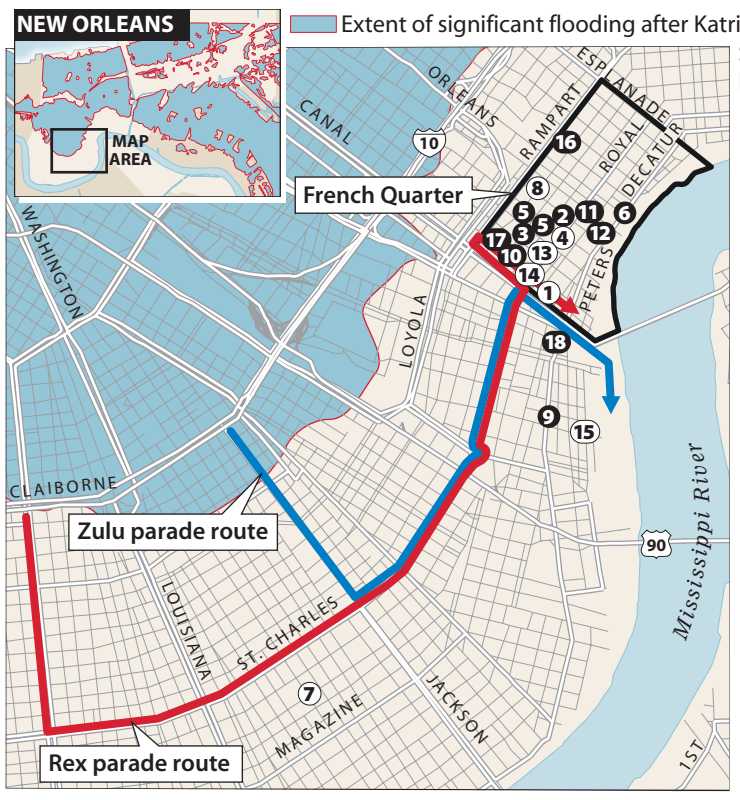
"We have people that are still out there questioning whether we should still have Mardi Gras this season," New Orleans Mayor C. Ray Nagin said at the Mardi Gras news conference. "Well, guess what? Today we officially announce the beginning of the Mardi Gras season. So we are moving forward."

Tribune photo by Heather Stone

Dorise Blackman plays "Do You Know What it Means to Miss New Orleans?" last month in front of Cafe Du Monde, a landmark restaurant that has reopened.

Tourism returning to the Big Easy

Tourists at this year's Mardi Gras celebrations will see many of New Orleans' famous restaurants closed and fewer hotel rooms available. While much of the city remains devastated from Hurricane Katrina, two of Mardi Gras' largest parades—Krewe of Rex and Krewe of Zulu—are scheduled for Feb. 28 (Fat Tuesday).



STATUS OF FAMOUS RESTAURANTS

KEY: ○ Closed ● Open

1. Acme Oyster House
2. Antoine's
3. Arnaud's
4. Brennan's
5. Broussard's
6. Cafe Du Monde
7. Commander's Palace
8. Dominique's
9. Emeril's
10. Galatoire's
11. Gumbo Shop
12. K-Paul's Louisiana Kitchen
13. Louis XVI
14. Mr. B's Bistro
15. Mulate's
16. Peristyle
17. Remoulade
18. Restaurant August

NEW ORLEANS HOTEL ROOMS *(Rooms available)*

38,000	22,000	26,000
Pre-Katrina	*Currently*	*For Mardi Gras (estimate)*

Sources: NewOrleansNet, New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corp., Greater New Orleans Hotel & Lodging Assoc., Dartmouth Flood Observatory

Chicago Tribune

Photo for the Tribune by Erik S. Lesser

Surrounded by flood-damaged case files in Georgia, New Orleans attorney and evacuee David Belfield wants no part of Mardi Gras this year. Belfield was "king" of the 1994 Zulu parade.

About this series

The struggle of Antoine's Restaurant to rebound from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina mirrors the larger story of New Orleans' fight for revival, and the Tribune is following the French Quarter landmark's progress.

Earlier stories in the series, and additional multimedia material, can be found at **chicagotribune.com/antoines**

Restaurant, city struggle on

Katrina nearly killed Antoine's. The storm blew out a wall of the 166-year-old haute cuisine icon, forced most of the 131 employees from their homes and compelled the two families that have run the restaurant since its founding to close their doors for four months.

Ever since Antoine's managed to reopen in late December, with a skeleton crew and only a third of its normal capacity of more than 1,000 diners, the restaurant has struggled most nights to fill even half its tables. Reservations, which used to be required for entry, have been replaced by waiters standing on the sidewalk beckoning passers-by to come in—jackets and ties no longer required.

"The idea of New Orleans being a destination city is a huge part of our business, maybe as high as 80 percent," said Rick Blount, Antoine's chief executive officer and a great-great-grandson of the founder, Antoine Alciatore. The other 20 percent came from loyal local customers, whose ritual Mardi Gras banquets and standing reservations, passed down in their wills, used to sustain the restaurant when the tourist season ebbed.

"I don't have the bottom line yet for January, but my gut feeling is that it doesn't look so good," Blount said. "Every single thing that touches our operation has increased in cost by significant amounts—food, fuel, labor. And the whole start-up cost will skew everything to the bad side."

Still, Blount is sanguine. Just being open and ready to receive customers, at a time when more than two-thirds of the city's restaurants remain closed as a result of the hurricane, is a mark of success, he said.

"I'm very optimistic that we are making the right moves," Blount said, "and that we are doing, as a city and as a business, what we should be doing to get out of this natural disaster."

The rest of America may know Mardi Gras as a "girls gone wild"-style bacchanal featuring overserved crowds and general debauchery spilling out of the narrow streets of the historic French Quarter.

But for Antoine's, and for New Orleans, Mardi Gras is like the Super Bowl, the World Series and the Olympics, with a few national political conventions thrown in. In a normal year, the two-week celebration kick-starts a $5.5 billion local tourism industry, fills the city's 38,000 hotel rooms and helps guarantee full employment for more than 80,000 hospitality industry workers throughout the rest of the year.

Every day without tourism costs the city's economy an estimated $15.2 million in lost revenues, tourism industry officials say. That's why they desperately want to displace the images of New Orleans lodged in the national consciousness in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina: the flooded neighborhoods, the terrified victims stranded on rooftops, the tiny children clinging to exhausted mothers outside the Superdome and the convention center, waiting for days to be rescued.

"So many people think the entire city is devastated and still under water," said Sandra Shilstone, chief executive of the New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corp. "They do not realize the old city—the places that visitors loved—has been spared and rebounded much quicker. This is the authentic part of New Orleans, the historic 18th and 19th Century buildings."

Tourism officials know that beyond the high-ground areas most familiar to tourists, 80 percent of the city's land area was flooded, resulting in the ruin of more than 110,000 homes.

"But you know what?" said Anding of the convention and visitors bureau. "That's a part of the city that you never would have gone to before the hurricane anyway."

Carnival's 2 faces reflect city's divide

There are really two Mardi Gras celebrations every year, although most visitors to New Orleans never perceive it.

The public Mardi Gras, with its parades, floats, high school bands and costumed "krewes," or parading clubs, tossing beads and trinkets to frenzied crowds, is the Mardi Gras recognized around the world and heavily promoted by the tourism industry. It is an all-inclusive festival featuring dozens of multicultural krewes celebrating everything from gay pride to doctors to Elvis to dogs.

But there is another, private Mardi Gras that is the province of New Orleans' white upper classes—a season of exclusive dinners, masked balls and debutante cotillions to which outsiders are not invited.

This Mardi Gras, presided over by half a dozen old-line krewes with names such as Proteus, Comus and Momus drawn from Greek mythology, has its roots in white supremacy, the Confederacy and resistance to post-Civil War Reconstruction. And it is part of the reason that some local black leaders perceive racial friction in an event that, to the rest of the nation, just looks like a giant party.

"Zulu is being used by the white krewes," asserted Belfield, the lawyer who opposes his own black krewe's decision to participate in Mardi Gras this year. "They decided they wanted to have this Mardi Gras, and they said they wanted Zulu to participate because it wouldn't look like a real Mardi Gras without them."

Zulu was incorporated in 1916 as a protest against the racism of the old white krewes; its members still parade in exaggerated blackface and grass skirts to mock the stereotyped ways blacks were depicted in minstrel shows. Though still predominantly black, Zulu's 500 members represent a cross-section of modern New Orleans, and the group's parades and public parties have long since overtaken the old-line krewes in popularity. Zulu now symbolizes Mardi Gras for many locals and visitors alike.

Most of the secretive old krewes, though, still cling to their exclusive ways. Some do not admit blacks or Jews or anyone whose wealth might have been earned rather than inherited, according to local historians and some of the krewe members themselves. When the New Orleans City Council passed an ordinance in 1991 requiring any krewe that wanted to use public streets for its processions to certify that it did not discriminate in its membership, several groups quit parading rather than comply.

"The position of the krewes was that we don't discriminate, but we shouldn't be told as a private organization what we can and cannot do," said Robert Monsted, the leader of Comus, one of the krewes that balked at the desegregation ordinance. "But that was back then and it's old history now. We will not reveal the composition of our membership."

There is a way to glimpse the membership of some of those krewes, however: by visiting Antoine's Restaurant. Four of the oldest krewes—Rex, Proteus, Hermes and the 12th Night Revelers—have special dining rooms dedicated in their honor, filled with Mardi Gras souvenirs, costumes and memorabilia displayed in glass cases. Hundreds of photos line the walls, showing the krewes' members, their honorary "kings" and their debutante daughters—every one of them white.

Those krewes, and several others, also hold their private Mardi Gras banquets at Antoine's, where they are served by cooks, waiters, bartenders and managers who, by virtue of their skin color or their working-class station, could scarcely hope to become members. In New Orleans, social rank is strictly enforced and class lines are kept rigid.

Even though Blount, Antoine's CEO, has New Orleans roots stretching back five generations, "I grew up on the wrong side of the tracks," he said. "My mom explained to us as very young children that there were bluebloods and there were not bluebloods. And we weren't blue. It was well understood by the time I was 10 years old that there were places in life I just could not go."

So while Blount's restaurant is a renowned city landmark central to the traditional Mardi Gras celebrations, he never has been invited to join any of the high-society krewes he serves.

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SPORTS

Contreras struggles as Sox fall 6½ back

HEALTH BEAT IN TEMPO

Crucial heads up for tummy time

Chicago Tribune

FINAL

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Britain charges 11 in plot

Scotland Yard accuses suspects of 'immense' terror conspiracy

By Tom Hundley
Tribune foreign correspondent

LONDON — Laying out preliminary evidence in what they called an "immense" conspiracy, British prosecutors announced terrorism-related charges Monday against 11 of the 23 people held in connection with an alleged plot to blow up trans-Atlantic flights to the United States.

Eight of the 11 were charged with conspiracy to commit murder and preparing to commit acts of terrorism. Among those named was Abdullah Ali Ahmed Khan, 25, also known as Ahmed Abdullah Ali, who was named by a U.S. intelligence source as the chief "facilitator" of the plot.

Two others have been charged with failing to disclose information, and a 17-year-old male—the youngest suspect—has been charged under Britain's new anti-terrorism laws with being in possession of a book on bombmaking and the suicide notes and wills of those who were prepared to blow themselves up.

One female suspect was released without being charged.

Peter Clarke, head of Scotland Yard's anti-terrorism branch, confirmed that investigators have recovered bombmaking equipment and manuals, chemical components and several "martyrdom" videos, which militants have been known to record before suicide attacks.

Clarke said that evidence had been obtained in 69 searches that yielded more than 400 computers, 200 cell phones and 8,000 items of removable storage media such as memory sticks and DVDs. He said a large amount of evidence also had been compiled from wiretaps and video surveillance of the

PLEASE SEE **CHARGES,** PAGE 10

MORE INSIDE

■ U.S. judge throws out a charge against Jose Padilla and two other defendants. **PAGE 3**

AP photo for the Tribune by Noah Berger

United Airlines Capt. Rich Hinnenkamp can't fly in the U.S. after he turns 60 on Friday.

Great record. Tip-top health. Too old.

Older pilots question mandatory retirement age of 60, but younger brethren want FAA rule to stay in place

By Jon Hilkevitch and John Schmeltzer
Tribune staff reporters

Richard Hinnenkamp, a United Airlines pilot for 37 years, recently aced the medical exam required of an airline captain every six months, bench-presses his body weight and outruns his son-in-law.

But because he turns 60 on Friday, he'll be forced to end his career at United due to a government-mandated precaution against taking a chance on his fitness.

That doesn't mean Hinnenkamp will turn in his wings. He plans to change uniforms, joining a foreign carrier as a pilot.

At a time when security concerns make it is easy to argue passengers would like to see the most experienced pilots at the controls, thousands are being forced out by what critics see as an arbitrary federal retirement rule not backed by any clear scientific data or accidents studies.

Hinnenkamp, who weighed offers from at least two carriers, is among a growing number of some of the nation's best-trained fliers joining such foreign carriers as Britain's Virgin Atlantic and Air India. Those airlines and many others are recruiting heavily in the United States in advance of a significant change in international regulations.

Starting in November, pilots

PLEASE SEE **PILOTS**, BACK PAGE

FIRST DAY AT CHARTER SCHOOLS

Tribune photos by Nancy Stone

Teacher Sabrina Stutts works on a lesson with kindergartners Salisha Mohammed-Ali (from left), Lauren Wince and Kieanna Jackson on the first day of classes at the newly opened Providence Englewood Charter School.

Right from the get-go, it's work

Summer studies just a warm-up

By Stephanie Banchero and Lori Olszewski
Tribune staff reporters

It's the opening hour on the first day of school at Rauner College Prep, but Principal Eric Thomas already is warning students that some of them might have to stay after school to complete their homework.

"If you did not finish your summer reading assignment, I'll see you between 4 and 5 tonight," Thomas said Monday to the 150 freshmen sitting in the cafeteria. "We were serious when we said we expect you to do all your homework."

Rauner charter school in West Town is one of 15 new schools slated to open this year as part of Renaissance 2010, the radical experiment to reform Chicago's public schools by shuttering the worst campuses and opening 100 charter and other types of schools that are innovative and free of most bureaucratic controls.

The idea is to provide parents more educational choices and offer students a shot at a better school. Rauner, for example, has a longer school day and year, mandates a college core curriculum, and requires students to complete summer assignments.

Since it was launched two years ago, Renaissance 2010 has had its share of problems and it is still too early to judge whether the reform will live up to its promise. But despite the unknowns and the inevitable struggles and glitches that come with launching a new school, parents and students are flocking to the schools.

PLEASE SEE **CHARTERS,** PAGE 9

Kindergartner Kennedy Causby, 5, waits to be called on.

State fills up prisons with drug criminals

Study: Possession tops sales as a charge; big racial disparity

By John Keilman and Liam Ford
Tribune staff reporters

After two decades of steadily toughening laws, Illinois now puts more people in prison for drug crimes than any state except California, according to a study released Tuesday by Roosevelt University.

The report also found that more people are being incarcerated for possessing narcotics than for selling them and that the state's prisons hold about five black inmates convicted of drug offenses for every white inmate—one of the largest racial disparities in the country.

The findings cast doubt on the fairness and effectiveness of Illinois' long campaign against illegal drugs, said Kathleen Kane-Willis, a researcher at Roosevelt's Institute for Metropolitan Affairs.

"Just locking folks up is not reducing our drug problems, but it's sure costing us a lot of money," she said. "I think we need to take a different tactic and start funding treatment at higher levels so people don't have to go to prison."

The raw numbers, experts say, underscore the scope of the issue. In 1983, 456 people convicted of possessing or selling drugs were behind bars in Illinois, making up 5 percent of the total

PLEASE SEE **PRISON,** PAGE 10

THE WAR ON DRUGS

5
Percent of 1983 Illinois prison population convicted on drug charges

38
Percent in prison on drug charges in 2002

OBITUARY

Photographer took famous WW II image

Joe Rosenthal was atop Iwo Jima's Mt. Suribachi when the flag was raised. "No photographer could have ever asked for a better break," he said.

METRO, PAGE 5

■ Why the famous photo "recorded the soul of a nation."

EDITORIAL, PAGE 12

REVIVING ANTOINE'S | LOSS AND RECOVERY IN NEW ORLEANS

New uneasiness settles on broken city

Slow pace of progress haunts restaurant

By Howard Witt
Tribune senior correspondent

NEW ORLEANS—The food, a timeless presentation of French gourmet classics, is as savory as ever. The service is attentive and flawless. The dining rooms, freshly polished and filled with historical artifacts, promise a luxuriant meal. The veteran waiters are hard at work, as are many of the long-time cooks and kitchen workers.

Nearly everything at Antoine's Restaurant, one of the oldest and most renowned institutions in New Orleans, looks just the same as it did on Aug. 28, 2005, the day before Hurricane Katrina slammed into the Crescent City.

That is, as long as you don't look too hard.

The restaurant, it turns out, is hemorrhaging cash, losing nearly $5,000 every night that it swings open its heavy wooden front door. That puts the historic 166-year-old French Quarter icon, whose fortunes the Tribune has been following for much of the last year, on track to lose more than $1 million by the end of December if things don't soon improve.

Most of the restaurant's employees, behind the warm smi-

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Weather: Partly sunny with slight chance of showers; high 85, low 63
Complete index, **Page 2**
24 hours a day online at **chicagotribune.com**

FROM PAGE ONE

ANTOINE'S: Smiles hide concern about blight, homes

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Tribune photos by Chris Walker

Stacie Hollis shows off fiance Benjamin Jacobs during a prewedding party at Antoine's. The Nashville couple are a relative rarity at the restaurant: out-of-towners.

les they offer their customers, are worried about finding a permanent place to live, staying for the moment in camping trailers, temporary apartments or the carcasses of flooded homes they are struggling to repair.

And many of the tourists and conventioneers who have long accounted for more than 80 percent of Antoine's business are nowhere to be found.

One year after Katrina burst New Orleans' decrepit levees and flooded four-fifths of the city, driving its residents into exile across the rest of the United States, this place long known as the Big Easy is anything but.

The murder rate is rising, blight is spreading, rebuilding is stalled and suicides are on the increase.

Rot, weeds and tangled brush, no longer kept at bay by diligent homeowners, have colonized entire blocks.

In some ruined neighborhoods, the only humans in sight are the demolition crews, clad in white biohazard suits to protect them from the toxic houses they are tearing down.

Repair work on the 150 miles of levees and floodwalls that are supposed to protect the below-sea-level city from hurricanes won't be completed until 2010. Even then, the walls will not be high enough to protect against the worst Category 5 storms.

Just half of the 485,000 people who lived in New Orleans before the hurricane are estimated to have returned. And it often seems as if all of them, like the owners of Antoine's, are holding their breath, eagerly awaiting any sign that their wounded city can recover from one of the worst natural disasters to hit the U.S. in modern times.

"A year has gone by and most of New Orleans has been reclaimed by the jungle and it looks horrible," lamented Rick Blount, Antoine's CEO and the great-great grandson of the restaurant's founder. "If New Orleans does not grow, if there is no rosier future for this city, then I've made some very bad decisions in reopening this restaurant."

A year later, a little hope

Certainly not all the news in New Orleans is bleak.

The French Quarter, the Garden District and downtown New Orleans—the areas most familiar to tourists and visitors—were not heavily damaged by the hurricane and are largely back to normal. Repairs to the Superdome and the convention center, sites of some of the most wrenching post-Katrina misery where tens of thousands of flood victims huddled for days awaiting rescue, are nearly complete.

And the city's crucial convention business is looking up: After being forced to cancel all conventions from last September through March, convention center officials say 70 percent of traditional bookings will return in 2007 and 93 percent in 2008.

Meanwhile, water, gas and electric service have been restored to most of the city's neighborhoods, although outages and interruptions are frequent.

About half of the city's schools managed to reopen for the fall. And owners of flooded homes will soon start receiving checks for up to $150,000 to help them cover uninsured losses under a $4.6 billion federal reconstruction program that city and state officials hope will kickstart rebuilding efforts.

There's positive news at Antoine's as well.

Half of the restaurant's pre-Katrina staff of 132 employees are back at work, including nearly all of the veteran waiters, cooks and managers whose experience and institutional knowledge Blount deemed critical. Another 32 new employees have been hired.

Sales revenue in July, traditionally one of the restaurant's slowest months, was more than double what managers had projected, and most waiters report that their monthly income, from salaries and tips, is back to what it was before Katrina hit.

But the problem, for both the restaurant and the city, is how much further there is to go.

Dependence on local diners

Before Katrina, Antoine's was a behemoth, featuring 15 dining rooms that could seat more than 850 diners every night. But wind and rain from the hurricane caused more than $14 million in structural damage to the restaurant's historic buildings, forcing the closing of the main dining room and leaving only 400 available seats.

Just to break even, Antoine's needs to fill 260 of those chairs each evening. But the average daily customer count for the first seven months of the year was 186.

What's more, nearly all of those diners have been local customers, many of them well-heeled long-time patrons who come as much for the tradition as the food. But bluebloods are not a growth market in New Orleans at the moment, and while awaiting the return of the usual out-of-town expense-account clientele, Blount is marketing Antoine's to local doctors, lawyers and accountants—the kind of customers who won't balk at the restaurant's average $65-per-person tab.

That puts Antoine's into unaccustomed competition, however, against a host of trendier restaurants in an epicurean city still renowned, even after Katrina, for its food.

Before heading home, Rick Blount (left), the CEO of Antoine's, checks on construction workers after another day of repairs.

"We're just never going to be the venue where people will just stop by on their way home for a quick boiled chicken," said Blount. "You have to want to come to Antoine's."

Among the most worrisome developments in New Orleans for Blount and others in the tourism industry is the alarming resurgence of the city's notorious crime problems, fueled by a growing drug trade.

Despite having only half its previous population, the city suffered more than 80 murders through the end of the July, which translates to a murder rate of more than 60 per 100,000 residents, according to Peter Scharf, a sociologist and crime expert at the University of New Orleans.

That rate, if it holds through the end of the year, would rank New Orleans right back where it was before Katrina: as the nation's murder capital.

Although few of those crimes have occurred in the areas most frequented by visitors, tourism officials fear the negative perceptions—perceptions that were only reinforced when, earlier in the summer, Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco heeded a plea for help from New Orleans Mayor C. Ray Nagin and sent National Guard troops into the city to help patrol the streets.

'All you see is blight and ruin'

For Charles Daroca, who is rebuilding his 4,400-square-foot home in the middle-class Lakeview neighborhood where floodwaters rose 10 feet high, the concern about crime is overshadowed by another post-Katrina menace: blight.

When Daroca, the chief financial officer at Antoine's, started gutting and reconstructing the entire first floor of his house in January, he knew of 10 neighbors in a two-block area who were also planning to rebuild.

Now, the Darocas are living on their second floor while they work on their renovation, which is about three-quarters complete. But only one additional neighbor beyond the 10 has shown any signs of moving back in. In the absence of any comprehensive planning effort by the city, Daroca's once-attractive block, like hundreds of others across the city, now suffers what urban planners call the "jack o'lantern effect": rows of rotting, abandoned houses interrupted by occasional inhabited homes, resembling the ragged teeth of a hollowed-out Halloween pumpkin.

"You stand here with your coffee in the morning and look out the window and all you see is blight and ruin," said Jodee Daroca, Charles' wife, a lifelong resident of the neighborhood. "It's going to take a lot longer than we thought for the neighborhood to come back. But it will. It has to."

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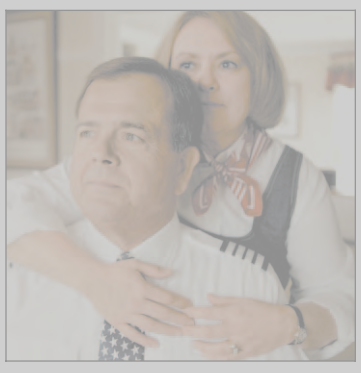
> ***'If there is no rosier future for this city, then I've made some very bad decisions in reopening this restaurant.'***
>
> —Rick Blount, Antoine's CEO

On the Web

The struggle of Antoine's Restaurant to rebound from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina mirrors the larger story of New Orleans' fight for revival, and the Tribune has been following the French Quarter landmark's progress. The series can be found at **chicagotribune.com/antoines**

PILOTS: U.S., China France have age-60 limit

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Tribune photo by Terry Harris

Southwest Airlines pilot Bill Siegert and his wife, Gayle, may move overseas in two years so he can keep flying.

up to age 65 working for foreign airlines will be allowed to command flights into the United States under an agreement the government fought to block. It was adopted this year by the International Civil Aviation Organization, which regulates international air travel and is relaxing its retirement rule to allow pilots to command an aircraft until age 65, as long as the co-pilot is no older than 59.

Despite more than 22,000 flight hours logged on aircraft ranging from warplanes over Southeast Asia to 747s doing the so-called Riesling run (a reference to the German wine) to Frankfurt, Hinnenkamp said he is about to suddenly become an unacceptable safety risk to the flying public, but only if he is at the controls of an American plane, according to FAA rules.

"The kid who replaces me on the seniority list at United will not have been born when I dropped bombs on Vietnam," the U.S. Navy veteran said.

"I am an American and I cannot land an American plane in my country," he added. "But [as of November] I can change uniforms and land a 747 here in the U.S. for Air India, El Al or another foreign carrier."

Experts say relaxing the retirement age in the U.S. would save the nation's cash-strapped airlines hundreds of millions of dollars in training costs while also saving the government that much more in lost income taxes, Social Security payments and early payouts by the Pension Benefit Guaranty Board, which is taking over the failed pension plans of airlines.

The United States is one of the few countries in the world opposed to raising the retirement age of commercial pilots. The other notable exceptions are France and China, which also require pilots to step down at 60.

Eighty-three percent of the countries called for raising the retirement age in a 2003 survey conducted by the Montreal-based International Civil Aviation Organization.

U.S. aviation officials consistently have refused to reconsider the decision made in 1959 at the behest of American Airlines to force older pilots from the cockpit. It was not based on any scientific studies.

Marion Blakey, administrator or the Federal Aviation Administration, maintains the available safety data and latest medical research are insufficient for the agency to begin the steps necessary to change the age 60 rule. But Blakey said the FAA position on the issue has changed to "neutral."

"There is a lot of common sense, a lot of data showing that Americans are healthier, they are living longer," Blakey told pilots attending an air show in Oshkosh, Wis., last month.

The outcome may depend on what Congress does, she said.

Legislation is under review in Congress to increase the age limit in the United States to create a uniform worldwide standard. Similar bills have been introduced regularly since 1999.

Dr. Anthony Evans, chief of the aviation medicine section of the international aviation group, said the organization decided to increase the retirement age after a study group in 2003 determined older pilots could safely continue operating passenger planes.

"The flight safety risk of aging pilots has been reduced. People are living longer, and the ability of aviation medicine and medical science to make an assessment has improved," he said, noting incapacitation training is now mandatory.

In response to questions by a group called Airline Pilots Against Age Discrimination, FAA officials said age alone is not the best indicator of a pilot's proficiency.

"However, everyone would agree there comes a time when every pilot should stop flying," David Balloff, FAA assistant administrator for government and industry affairs, told the group.

Although no accidents have occurred during the many years foreign airlines have been allowed to enter the United States with co-pilots older than 60, more data is needed to determine if the risks increase due to the older pilots, Balloff said.

Some airlines, including El Al, Virgin Atlantic and a number of European carriers, employ pilots older than 60. But under U.S. rules they must turn over controls to the younger pilot before entering U.S. airspace. France refuses to allow flights over its territory by those carriers.

Younger pilots eager to move into the captain's seat, and obtain the higher pay, say the current retirement age is the way things should remain.

They say the generation of pilots soon to retire was helped by the age-60 rule when their careers advanced. These same older pilots want the retirement age extended so they can benefit again, say the younger pilots.

"It's not about bashing 60-year-old pilots so we can benefit," said Ben Armen, 36, a first officer who has been flying 11 years for a major U.S. airline after starting with a regional commuter carrier. "But the group seeking to raise the age limit overnight is trying to make a political change to prolong their earning capabilities."

Keeping the pilot retirement age is supported by the Air Line Pilots Association, the nation's largest pilots union.

Supporters of raising the retirement limit say the pilots group is courting entry-level pilots working for regional airlines, warning that the FAA might impose additional training and qualification standards on all pilots. Supporters also say that the union is ignoring the fact that airlines might not even be around without the financial sacrifices senior pilots have made.

E. Allan Englehardt, a 37-year United veteran, said the existing rule is "gross age discrimination" and would force him to become a burden on society.

"My big problem if I am forced to retire on Jan. 29 is how am I going to support my wife and 15-year-old son," said Englehardt of Lake Bluff. "I want to send my son to college and help him reach his goals in life. Isn't that what every parent wants?"

Bill Siegert, a Boeing 737 captain with Southwest Airlines, which is fighting the government's refusal to raise the retirement age, said the deciding factor comes down to who is best served by the FAA's intransigence.

In addition to Southwest and its pilots union, JetBlue Airways and ATA Airlines also support raising the retirement age. Major carriers are on the sidelines.

"Our flying public deserves the best pilot, the most experienced and the most qualified," said Siegert, who turns 58 this year. "The age-60 rule does cause a brain drain."

Siegert said he and his wife, Gayle, are prepared to pack up and move overseas from their home in Kane County if that is what it takes for him to continue flying.

Without a change in the age rule, many pilots turning 60 will wait for Social Security to kick in and live on retirement checks substantially smaller than what they planned for because their financially struggling airlines reduced or terminated pilot pensions.

Other veteran pilots will begin second careers as expatriate Americans flying under foreign flags.

Pilots like Hinnenkamp say they anticipated a comfortable retirement and saw no need to keep flying beyond age 60 until they lost most of their pension and all of their medical and dental benefits in retirement.

"Now I will have to live on less than one quarter of what I planned to live on," said Hinnenkamp, who lives with his wife in Morgan Hill, Calif., about an hour's drive from San Francisco International Airport, his base for United.

He worries about the future.

"My father died at age 96, and his older brother is now 102," Hinnenkamp said. "I may be retired longer than I flew."

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