

BOH PICTURE



KATRINA + 10

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1

Six Decades Later,
It's Still About
the People

4

I-10 TWIN SPANS
Historic Projects
Helped Recovery

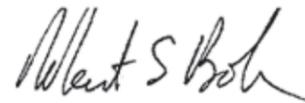
8

Katrina + 10:
Employee Stories

A “defining moment” is a life changing event, a milestone, possibly a crisis, or even an opportunity. Defining moments usually happen very quickly, often without warning, and can set in motion a series of subsequent events that might not have happened otherwise. For many of us in Southeast Louisiana, and especially for those of us at Boh Bros., Hurricane Katrina was a defining moment. As we mark the tenth anniversary of the storm, we dedicate this issue of the Boh Picture to all of our people, many of whom overcame great personal adversity to help restore our community to normal. We expand our usual employee section to present a sampling of the stories of some Boh people who were part of our team ten years ago.

Of all of the memories I have from that period of our company's history, the one most meaningful for me occurred at our Baton Rouge office just three days after evacuating New Orleans ahead of the storm. Hundreds of Boh people, many of whom had lost their homes and possessions in the flood, and on their own without being asked, simply began showing up in force, ready to go to work. As with other emergencies in the past, they knew that in this time of great need, Boh Bros. would be called upon to help. This experience reinforced for me a lesson I have learned over the years: it's not so much what happens to us in life; it is how we handle it. I am so proud to work with people that responded to the widespread adversity of Katrina by playing a significant and meaningful role in our recovery from it.

It has been said that defining moments bring us closer to discovering our purpose in life. For over one hundred years, our company's core purpose of honorably serving our communities has been the reason why we exist. In the days and weeks after Katrina, our people lived that purpose as never before. We are a better company for the experience.



Robert S. Boh, President



President
Robert S. Boh

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published for employees
and friends of Boh Bros.
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Address all correspondence to:
BohPictureEditor@bohbro.com



www.bohbros.com

Six Decades Later, It's Still About the People



When Robert H. Boh joined the family firm as a young engineer in 1955, he was impressed with the great people who comprised the company and the hard work they did.

Today, it's still the people who continue to amaze him.

Their constant ability to work together to surmount seemingly impossible tasks has resulted in the successful construction of much of the region's infrastructure. From the first of the two Greater New Orleans Bridges, which was one of the first projects Boh personally worked on, to the new Interstate 10 Twin Span Bridge built in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and other projects since, Boh Bros.' work has consistently inspired hope and economic vitality in the south Louisiana area.

“I feel good about the role of Boh Bros. in the community,” Boh said. “If there is to be a legacy, I hope it's that we've been good citizens.”

Drawn to Construction

Robert H. Boh is the son of Henry Boh, one of the company's founders. His father never pressured him to join the company, but rather encouraged him to pursue his own path.

“My father was the industry's chief labor negotiator in the city, and he taught me to always be honest with people,” Boh recalled. “He always said you have to say what you mean and mean what you say, but you have to be honest with them. I think that's a great life lesson to tell the truth and treat people you meet with integrity and respect.”

After graduating from high school in 1947, the young Boh worked for the company in the field during summers. Using surveying instruments, he discovered he had a knack for math and physics.

After earning his civil engineering degree from Tulane University in 1951, Boh decided to pursue a Master's degree.

He was offered a faculty position at Tulane and taught there in 1953 and 1954.

Boh saw that, although he enjoyed teaching, covering the same material year in and year out simply wouldn't be challenging enough for him.

He decided to join the family company because it offered the promise of constant variety and opportunity.

Boh honed his engineering skills while the company was building the first of the two GNO Bridges.

“I was mainly learning how to be a real engineer, not a school engineer,” he said. “I was learning how to be an engineer in practice, as opposed to the theoretical end of it.”

**“Katrina really showed what
our people are made of and how
we are really like a family.”**

He described Boh Bros. as “a going concern” at the time, growing rapidly in the post-World War II boom by performing underground utility work, paving, pile driving and marine work, and all manner of public infrastructure construction.

“The company was very involved in building the interstate system, and most of its major structures in New Orleans, Baton Rouge and on the Mississippi River,” Boh said.

Evolving Industry

Throughout his 60 years with the company, Boh has seen many changes in the industry.

“Equipment is so different now than it was in the 1950s,” he said. “The capabilities of machines have increased tremendously, providing the ability to lift huge loads and excavate so much more effectively.”

Government oversight and regulation have grown exponentially since the 1950s, he added. “The regulations regarding safety rules, hiring laws, environmental requirements and more have increased the complexity and cost of doing business.”

What has remained constant over the years is the quality of people who make Boh Bros. the company it is.

“One of the great things about this business, that makes it unique from any other line of work, is how it attracts people

Boh recalls how he and his wife evacuated to Dallas. As he watched the news unfold from a hotel, Boh felt that the damage from the storm wasn’t catastrophic.

“Then I saw somewhere there was water in the streets around the Times-Picayune building, which is near Boh’s main office,” he recalled. “That’s when I said, ‘Oh, my God. The levee broke, and it will be 10 years before the city is rebuilt.’”

Like everyone else, he was worried about where his family members were and if they were okay, because they were all scattered. He was worried if he would have a home to return to. He was worried about the company’s equipment fleet, but he wasn’t worried that the company wouldn’t survive.

“The work we did in helping to put the city back together right after the storm with our people all over the place, scattered, living in different cities... I would say that entire time was our finest hour.”

from all walks of life,” Boh said. “Being involved with such a variety of people, many who have been with the company 20, 30 or more years, is very rewarding.”

Passing the Boh Baton

By the time Boh was named company president in 1967, his father had a role in which he still worked every day, but was not active in the day-to-day operations.

“When he decided I should be the president, he made me the president and didn’t ever interfere with me,” Boh said. “I have done the same thing.”

Today, his son Robert S. Boh is company president and son Stephen Boh is vice president. Robert H. Boh serves as a senior advisor.

“An advisor sometimes gets questions he can help with, but most of the time they don’t need me,” he said. “I have seen many companies wrecked by the outgoing president not letting go of the reins and second-guessing every decision. Everyone has to make his own mistakes.”

He is grateful that he’d already passed the baton on to the next generation before Hurricane Katrina made landfall in 2005 because dealing with the aftermath was the biggest challenge the company has ever faced.

The pride is clearly evident in his voice and on his face when Boh recounts how the company and its people rallied to rebuild Boh Bros. and the greater New Orleans area in the aftermath of the hurricane.

“Katrina really showed what our people are made of and how we are like a family,” he said.

“I knew it would be long and messy, but that we had the resources to deal with it,” Boh said. “I also knew that our ability to recover was based on the people who would make it happen, and they all had these same problems — families scattered, worried about where kids would go to school, their homes.”

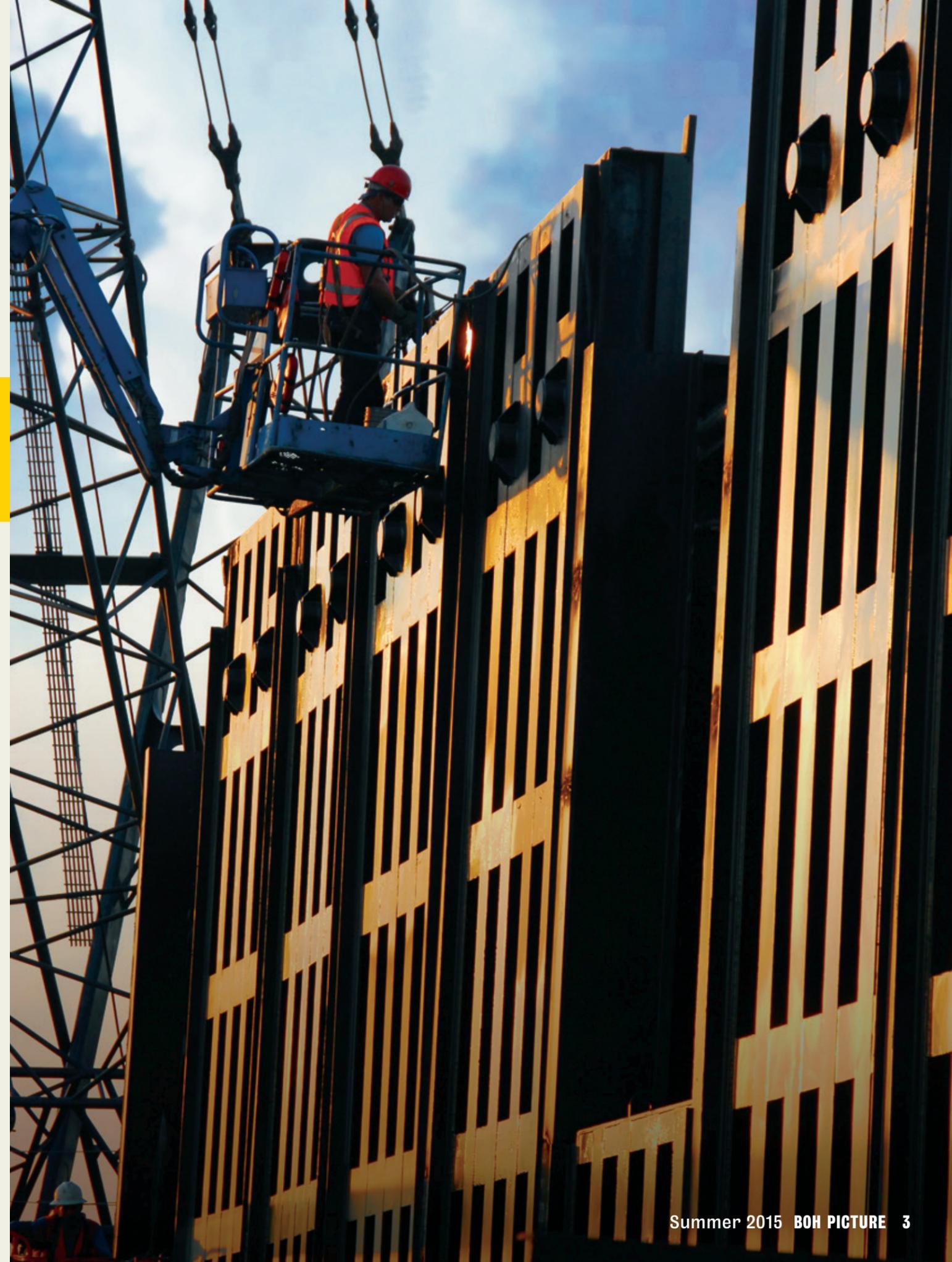
The company established a base of operations in Baton Rouge and was quickly hired to seal the breach at the 17th Street Canal, perform other emergency operations as ordered by Governor Kathleen Blanco and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and organize the company’s recovery.

In the face of such enormous tragedy, Boh Bros. was able to perform emergency repairs to the I-10 Twin Spans after that primary east-west artery into New Orleans was broken apart by the storm’s surge on Lake Pontchartrain.

“If I were to be poetic about it, I would have to say that was our finest hour,” Boh said. “Our workers were scattered all over the state, and we were still able to put together a team to patch it and get traffic on it in a couple months, 17 days ahead of schedule.”

Later on, the company won a \$420 million contract to build the low-rise portion of a new, \$803 million, more resilient I-10 Twin Span Bridge.

“That \$420 million contract was by far our biggest project ever, and we finished that ahead of schedule,” Boh said. “The work we did in helping to put the city back together right after the storm with our people all over the place, scattered, living in different cities... That work was all done under such circumstances and with such urgency to restore, that I would say that entire time was our finest hour.” 🌞



I-10 TWIN SPANS



Historic Projects Helped Recovery

Within the construction industry, the name Boh Bros. has been synonymous with construction excellence for more than 100 years. However, it took the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the devastation of the Interstate 10 Twin Span Bridge to place the company in the public limelight.



More than any other projects in the company's history, the emergency repair of the damaged, old bridge and construction of its \$803 million more-resilient replacement have forever forged Boh Bros.' reputation for ingenuity, fortitude, and commitment to community.

"The Twin Spans put Boh Bros. on the map for a lot of people," said G.J. Schexnayder, Boh's project manager for both historic jobs. "The company didn't change, but those projects changed the way people saw us. There were all these stories in the news about how our people had lost their homes and still showed up to fix the levee breaches when Boh Bros. didn't even have a contract. When we completed the Twin Spans emergency repairs and the new bridge ahead of schedule, everyone saw how

Boh Bros. lives up to its promises and gets the job done."

Sherri H. LeBas, Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, said that Boh's early completion of both projects was integral to the region's recovery and helped the general public gain greater appreciation for transportation infrastructure.

"I think not only did people see the importance of this vital artery for both transportation and economic development, I believe they also gained an appreciation of the hard work, effort and time it takes to build that infrastructure," LeBas said. "The Twin Spans projects were and remain symbols of recovery and hope for New Orleans and the entire region."

When Hurricane Katrina made landfall in south Louisiana

Aug. 29, 2005, the storm delivered a 30-ft. surge across Lake Pontchartrain that tore apart the 1960s-constructed bridge. The uplift knocked the decks off 58 spans and misaligned 438 others.

The damage brought east/west commerce in and out of New Orleans to a screeching halt and hindered recovery efforts there. Average daily traffic at the time was more than 55,000 vehicles, and roughly 25 percent of those were trucks.

Not having the bridge operational posed a public safety hazard, as it removed a key evacuation route in the event of other storms.

The broken and battered I-10 Twin Spans also had a huge, negative psychological effect on the people in Katrina's path of destruction, as concrete and steel icons of the local built environment seemed to be failing everywhere.

Putting it Back Together

On September 12, Boh Bros. won a \$30.9 million contract from the DOTD to perform emergency repairs on the Twin Spans. Boh worked around the clock with DOTD bridge designers, subcontractors, and Volkert, Inc., which performed construction engineering and inspection services for the DOTD. The team managed to open the eastbound span to two-way traffic in only 28 days, 17 days ahead of schedule.

"We opened the eastbound span by cannibalizing 64 spans from the westbound bridge and realigning 172 segments," Schexnayder recalled.

By January 6, 2006, Boh had realigned 265 decks on the westbound span, and filled in 26 gaps with prefabricated Acrow bridge sections, allowing the DOTD to open that span to traffic eight days earlier than scheduled.

"Despite dealing with personal tragedies related to the storm, every Boh employee delivered on this project," said Ed Scheuermann, Boh Senior Vice President. "We are extremely proud of our dedicated employees. They are our company."

The New Twin Spans

To replace the important I-10 artery, the Federal Highway Administration funded construction of a 100-year, more hurricane-resilient bridge.

At 30-ft.-high, the deck of the new bridge is 21 ft. higher than the original. Each of the new spans is 60 ft. wide, allowing for three lanes of traffic with a shoulder on either side. The old spans were 28 ft. wide. The new bridge meets AASHTO's ship impact standards by incorporating larger foundations, more redundant members (pilings), and more reinforcement to engage the piles with the caps, and make them more resilient to lateral impact. The bridge was built with high-performance, high-strength concrete that is more resistant to saltwater corrosion than conventional concrete. Lower-level connections between super- and sub-structure are designed to resist uplift forces caused by waves. Slab span decks are connected by means of dowels that were placed at angles to the cap and cast into both the cap and the deck. Concrete diaphragms are tied into the caps with reinforcing steel to secure the Type III girders against uplift. Shear keys were added to restrain the girders against lateral displacement.

Almost a year after Hurricane Katrina had damaged the old bridges, Boh received the notice to proceed on a \$379 million contract to construct the 4.5-mile long, low-level portion of the new Twin Spans. The contract was the largest in the company's

"I think not only did people see the importance of the transportation project, but I believe they also gained an appreciation of the hard work, effort and time it takes to build that infrastructure."

Sherri LeBas, Secretary,
Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development

history. At the time, it was also the largest letting ever made by the LA DOTD.

In construction of the new Twin Spans, Boh managed to beat every deadline, just as the company did on the emergency repairs of the old bridge. The first new span opened to eastbound traffic July 9, 2009, three months ahead of schedule. The DOTD heralded completion of the westbound span and approaches with a ribbon cutting ceremony September 8, 2011. At the ceremony, Secretary LeBas said, "Today we're celebrating the on-time and on-budget completion of the new Twin Span Bridge. It will improve the quality of life for Louisianans by reducing traffic congestion, improving safety, enhancing mobility and facilitating economic development opportunities."

Within a week of the ceremony, all six lanes of the bridge were opened to traffic, six months earlier than Boh's June 2, 2012 scheduled contract completion date.

Delivering quality transportation infrastructure like the new Twin Spans required an unprecedented amount of collaboration between the department, the consulting community, contractors and suppliers, LeBas added.

"We were grateful to know we were working with a great construction team led by Boh Bros.," she said. "We had

confidence that they would get the job done, and they did. It was a very large project, but a very smooth pathway to getting it finished, thanks to Boh Bros. We appreciate it."

More than the ingenuity and enterprise of the Boh team, the quality of people working on the project from top to bottom ensured production efficiency.

"This project is a model for how successful a project can be when the owner, engineers, and contractors come together for a common goal," Scheuermann said. "Many times partnering is discussed among project teams, but on this one, everyone LIVED it. No one ever lost sight of what we were all there to do. The hard work and commitment of all involved guaranteed its success."

Boh Bros. was tried in the fire of the disaster and has definitely grown from the experience.

The community's need and the urgency for physical evidence that New Orleans could recover from Hurricane Katrina compelled the entire company to pull together in a way like never before with a heightened sense of purpose.

"The experience showed us what amazing things we can accomplish when we all pull in the same direction," Schexnayder said. "What I've seen after the hurricane is increased synergy and the confidence that we can do phenomenal things." 🌟

G.J. Schexnayder

Then: Project Manager, I-10 Twin Spans
Now: Director of Project Management



G.J. Schexnayder had moved to River Ridge, a New Orleans suburb, only a few months before the fateful day that Hurricane Katrina made landfall in south Louisiana August 29, 2005. Having worked in Boh Bros.' Baton Rouge division since 1999, he was relocating to take a position with the company's bridge division, which operates out of the New Orleans office.

"I think I was always interested in bridges more so than any other aspect of heavy construction," said Schexnayder, who holds a professional engineering license in civil engineering. "Pipe racks in industrial settings are just as important, but I always felt an attachment to bridges. I like to build something that can get you from point A to point B and I can tell people I was part of the team that did that. To me, that's really rewarding."

When he moved to the New Orleans area, little did he know that he would soon embark on two of the most rewarding projects of his career—the emergency repair of the Interstate 10 Twin Span Bridge and construction of its \$803 million sturdier replacement.

Schexnayder began working for Boh Bros. right out of high school and refers to himself as a lifer.

"I graduated from high school on a Friday and was working for Boh Bros. on Monday," he said. "I had met Craig Sanchez, the general superintendent in Baton Rouge, and he was good enough to give me a job as a laborer."

Schexnayder is still very proud of the fact that by the end of that first summer he had moved up to the position of lead laborer.

"I was 18 years old and feeling pretty good," he said. "I enjoyed being a laborer."

Eager to gain hands-on practical knowledge to supplement the academics he had mastered at Louisiana State University, Schexnayder worked as a carpenter's apprentice and layout man during the summers of 2000 and 2001, before becoming an intern in the office in the fall of 2001.

"I worked in the office 30 to 35 hours a week while I was still finishing up my degree," he said.

Eventually, Schexnayder became a project manager, working on all manner of heavy civil projects, including the US 190 Bridges in Krotz Springs and the North Boulevard Bridge project in Baton Rouge.

For the first couple weeks after Hurricane Katrina made landfall, like many Boh employees, he was living and working out of the Baton Rouge office. He stayed with friends and family until he eventually found an apartment in Covington.

Once Boh Bros. won the contract for emergency repairs of the Twin Spans, he commuted daily to the project amid the heavy traffic that resulted from so many evacuees moving to Baton Rouge.

"I would drive the 85 or 90 miles from Baton Rouge to Slidell every day, which was typically a four-to-five-hour commute because of all of the traffic, work 10-14 hours, get back to the house at 10 p.m., sleep a few hours, wake up, and do it all over again," Schexnayder recalled.

He didn't want to occupy a trailer near the project because other Boh employees who had lost their homes needed them more.

Despite the long hours and pressure to get the job done, he felt a heightened sense of purpose.

"I got up every morning and wanted to go to work," Schexnayder said. "The only thing any of us were thinking

about was what we had to do today to make it happen. That was the priority."

Of course, the project included routine things such as keeping track of paperwork and costs, but the entire team—owner, designers, engineers, and subcontractors—seemed to work more as a team than on any project Schexnayder had ever been on before.

"Being part of the team that figured out that problem was invigorating," he said. "Personally, it gave me a lot of faith in myself that I could do the job, any job. The size and magnitude of a project is kind of irrelevant when you put your nose down and do the job."

Schexnayder said he feels uncomfortable sometimes because, as project manager, he's become the default spokesperson and public face of the project.

"The other guys on the team kind of remain in the shadows because they aren't talking to people about it, but none of it would have been possible without the entire Boh Bros. team," he said. "We were able to complete the project because everyone on the job had a common goal. From the craftsmen, to field supervision, to office support personnel, everyone contributed to the success of the project. I know that anyone who worked on the project will remember it for a lifetime."



KATRINA + 10

Hurricane Katrina made landfall in southeast Louisiana August 29, 2005, and New Orleans' levee system catastrophically failed, flooding 80 percent of the city and large portions of surrounding parishes.



Katrina would eventually be recognized as one of the top five deadliest hurricanes in U.S. history in terms of lives lost, and the nation's costliest natural disaster.

The toll it took on humans who survived may not be fully realized for generations.

Despite losing their homes, connections with loved ones and suffering unimaginable hardships, Boh Bros. employees bonded together for the arduous task of, first rescuing, and then rebuilding the City.

Boh people helped to seal the breach at the 17th Street Canal, stopping the water from rushing into New Orleans, and worked with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in pinpointing, evaluating and repairing other failed areas in the levee system.

It was Boh people who made emergency repairs to the battered I-10 Twin Spans, restoring east/west commerce to the region in only 28 days and providing the community a symbol of hope that recovery was possible.

Boh people helped to dewater flooded areas and supported efforts to build stronger, more-resilient levees.

Boh people flocked to the disaster, asking only, "What can I do to help?"

They became first responders, rolling up their sleeves and diving in with gusto to do whatever it took to bring New Orleans back.

They did so because there was no one else to stand in the void, and say "I can make a way for others."

That they did so under extreme duress, with no thought of personal sacrifice or compensation, elevates these regular, everyday working people to heroic status.

In this issue, Boh Bros. wants to take a look back at that time. It was a time filled with horrible events that forever changed our lives, but one that also demonstrated to the rest of the world what the people of Boh Bros. already knew.

We treat our people like family. We believe in honorably serving our community, and we always strive to do the right thing.

We are Boh people, and following are some of our stories of tribulations and triumph in the face of disaster.





Jimmie Ceaser
foreman,
pile driving leads

Jimmie Ceaser has been foreman over the pile driving leads in Boh's Almonaster Yard for 18 years, so he is well versed in hurricane preparedness procedures.

"When a storm is coming, we go through a shut-down, tying everything down that could fly away, and moving all the equipment to higher ground," he said.

On Friday, August 26, while performing those preparations, Ceaser and others working in the yard could see the water level rising in the nearby Industrial Canal, but none of them had any idea how bad things were going to be.

Ceaser evacuated with his wife, Essie, and "her" five Schnauzers to his hometown, Monroe, La.

"I didn't want to take a chance," he said. "You can always come back to what's left and fix what is destroyed or rebuild."

Ceaser was enjoying visiting with relatives when he saw a news flash on television about the breached levees in New Orleans.

"We had left my son and didn't know what happened to him," he said. "We were thinking the worst."

He couldn't get through on the telephone to his son, friends, or anyone from Boh Bros.

"We started hearing all kinds of stories on the television about the city, the devastation, the roof collapsing on the Superdome, people injured and the looting," Ceaser said. "We didn't know what was true, but it kind of took its toll. You have people you care about, and you wonder if they're all right, what happened to them. You hope for the best, but always think the worst. It was devastating really."

He tried to get back into the city about a week and a half later, but was turned away at a roadblock. After driving all the way back to Monroe, he was finally able to get a call through to Henry Landry, general superintendent over Boh's pile driving and marine department.

"He said he could get me a pass and get me back in," Ceaser said. His home in Harvey fared the storm with only minor damage.

"I didn't get any flooding at my house, so I was fortunate," Ceaser said. "It came about 20 feet from my door, and that's as far as it got. I did have a tree limb go through my roof like somebody just stabbed a hole through it. I left it there for about two weeks until one Saturday, when we didn't have to work, and I got up there and fixed it."

Driving into the Almonaster Yard early one morning, Ceaser had an eerie feeling.

"There was no traffic on the roads all the way in, no power,

"Everything was planned out. Boh Bros. people know that, if you wait on someone else to do it, it won't get done."

no streetlights working, and boats on the side of the road," he said. "There was debris everywhere."

By the time he arrived, others had already built a limestone road over the layers of muck and mud to create access to the site.

"There was mud everywhere," Ceaser said. "The first thing I did was to clean out the shack where I keep all my personal tools. Boards and debris had floated up on top of the leads. We had put some welding machines up, and they were the only things that weren't flooded."

As most of the heavy equipment had been moved to the highest point in the yard, atop what everyone now calls Katrina hill, he focused on moving that equipment back in place and readying it for service.

The situation would have been overwhelming, were it not for the Boh team's critical planning and quick action.

"There are some brilliant people who work for this company," he said. "Everything was planned out. Boh Bros. people know that, if you wait on someone else to do it, it won't

get done. Or it will take a very long time."

Boh Bros. provided fuel and generators to power things. "There were no stores open, so no place to buy any food," Ceaser explained. "If you had a trailer or no power, it was very difficult to fix something to bring to lunch, so Boh Bros. had people on a barge cooking lunch for us, or trucks coming in with food. They assisted us in ways that I have never experienced before."

Since phone service was spotty for some time, worrying and wondering about loved ones sometimes dampened people's spirits.

"Gradually, as the phone lines came up, and you talked to people, you started feeling better," Ceaser said.

He was greatly inspired by the way all of the Boh Bros. people came together after the disaster.

"I'm telling you, I was probably Boh Bros.' biggest fan," Ceaser said, shaking his head. "When that Twin Spans was down, I figured it would be down for two years. When the engineers put together a plan and did it in a matter of months, it motivated me about work and planning your work."

He's also inspired by how the company's grown from the Katrina experience.

"Boh Bros. always took safety seriously, but there is even greater emphasis on safety first and a whole lot of planning," Ceaser said. "As corny as this might sound, Boh Bros. is constantly evolving, always trying to be better, and never satisfied." 🌟



Johnny Clements
supervisor,
Almonaster yard
truck shop

For years it was Johnny Clements' dream to have a karate studio, and he worked hard to make that dream come true. He loved teaching the kids martial arts four hours each night after he knocked off from his job as a sand blaster at Boh Bros.' Japonica Street mechanic shop.

"I started the karate school the same year I joined Boh Bros., 22 years ago," Clements said. "I was hoping that would be my only job one day."

It wasn't until Hurricane Katrina flooded his Chalmette studio with four feet of water, literally washing away that dream,

that Clements realized his true passion. What he thought was the end of everything turned out to be his entrée into an entirely new and fulfilling career as a mechanic in Boh's truck shop.

"I was in Houma with my girlfriend, Emily, who is now my wife," Clements said. "I knew Japonica was flooded, so I was worried that I may not have a job. I was checking around for jobs in Houma when I got a call from Chet Mathe at the truck shop, asking if I wanted to come work for him. My father had worked for him for nine years before he retired, and after watching and learning from him, I had a knack for mechanical things."

Clements enjoys the new career, but the sadness surrounding Hurricane Katrina still weighs heavily on him sometimes. Although he'd safely evacuated to a hotel when Katrina made landfall, there were days of anxiety wondering if other loved ones were safe.

"I was filled with the terror of not knowing if anything would be left from where we lived or if all of our friends had gotten out," he said.

And losing the karate studio was really hard.

"We came out with only a few things that were hanging on the walls above the water line, some photos of students in competitions," Clements said.

In the first year after the hurricane, Clements worked seven days a week at the Almonaster Yard and commuted back and forth to Houma. He came to work before daylight and stayed until 8 p.m. each night to meet the National Guardsmen who were keeping watch over the yard.

"It was pitch black, and I had to go through checkpoints," Clements said. "My wife was terrified for me. During the day, we would hear gunshots and see fires."

The constant sound of helicopters flying around was really unnerving, Clements added. "We would see them grabbing water from the canal near us to try and douse the fires. It was surreal."

Random dogs showed up, and the men would feed them Vienna sausages and potted meat.

"People would bring in stuff to eat, and that's all they could find. That's probably the last time I had Vienna sausages and potted meat," he said, laughing. "The only other food we had

was the MREs. We would eat them, but learned not to eat the gum. It was a laxative."

Later on, Boh Bros. brought in a food truck to feed employees breakfast and lunch.

Eventually, work was only six days a week, but Clements was asked to come in on Sundays to watch the shop, until the National Guard showed up at 8 p.m.

"It was scary because we didn't know what was going on when we were out here," he said. "We had no TV or radio because we couldn't get any signal, and the phones often didn't work. We knew about some of the jobs going on, like at the 17th Street Canal and our guys trying to plug that hole because we would hear things from the drivers coming in."

Clements and the rest of the crew at the machine shop had their work cut out for them servicing all of the trucks that had been flooded.

"We were filling engines with diesel to clean them out because they were full of water," he said. "We had to do what we could to get them running so our guys in the field would have something to work with."

He remembers going to the old shop on Japonica Street to salvage some parts.

"I went down Claiborne Avenue, and it looked like a bomb went off, with electric poles down, houses moved off of their foundations, just everything destroyed," he recalled. "I didn't realize how bad the city was until I went there. It was sad. You didn't really think it would recover. I remember thinking, 'They are just going to bulldoze this place.'"

Amazingly, life goes on. Clements moved to Slidell to be



closer to work. He and Emily married in 2007.

"I decided to give up the martial arts because it took too much time out of my life," he said. "I miss it sometimes, but I like having my nights free to do other things."

Despite all of the bad things that resulted from the hurricane, Clements realizes that a lot of good came from the experience, too.

"Before Katrina, I wasn't really going anywhere in the company," he said. "After Katrina, I realized how much the company cared for us, and I felt more a part of it. Now I feel more involved in the day-to-day operations of my department, and I have a lot more responsibilities than I did before." 🌟





Walter Dauterive
welder shop foreman,
Hammond equipment
facility

This December will mark 39 years that Walter Dauterive has been with Boh Bros.

"It seems like I was born here," said Dauterive, welder shop foreman at the Hammond equipment facility. "You know what they say about us guys bleeding Boh Bros. yellow. That's me."

Dauterive has been supervisor over Boh's welding shop since 1993. However, he's only been in Hammond since after Hurricane Katrina flooded the former shop that was located in New Orleans' Ninth Ward on Japonica Street, adjacent to the Industrial Canal.

"Water came over the Industrial Canal levee and completely

inundated that neighborhood," Dauterive said.

The storm also flooded his home in St. Bernard Parish.

"We were kind of far down, near the Kenilworth Plantation House, where it's real rural," Dauterive said. "We loved it down there because there wasn't too much hustle and bustle."

He had lived in St. Bernard Parish for his entire life and the same house for 23 years.

"We bought it about three years after we got married,"

Dauterive said. "It's the house where my kids grew up. I had just finished remodeling it when the storm hit."

The Friday before the hurricane made landfall in Louisiana, Dauterive was at work at the Japonica Street shop. At that time, it looked as though Katrina was heading for the Florida panhandle. By noon Saturday, the storm had shifted her path toward Mississippi and Louisiana, and Dauterive made plans to evacuate his family.

"I had never left for a hurricane, but when (former Mayor Ray) Nagin got on the TV and called for a mandatory evacuation, that put a shock in me," he said. "Everybody said to go west, but we went east because we heard horror stories about the traffic in Texas."

Three days later, while sitting poolside at a hotel in Defuniak Springs, Fla., Dauterive received a call from his son saying that all of St. Bernard Parish was under water.

"I remember my wife asked, 'What about my house?' That's how in denial she was," he said.

Dauterive's mother-in-law and one of his sons had evacuated with them, and the other son was safe with relatives in Atlanta. Having been through Hurricane Betsy in 1965, Dauterive's wife made a point of grabbing all of their photos when they evacuated for Katrina. They had planned and prepared, but not for that level of devastation.

Dauterive regrets not taking the classic car he had recently refurbished, a 1930 Ford 5 Window Coupe.

"My son told me to take it on the trailer, but I wasn't about to drag it all over," he said. "I didn't even know where I was going when I left."

Dauterive rented a condo in Destin, where they stayed for another 10 days, until he received a call from Boh Bros. to come

to work at the Baton Rouge headquarters.

A friend of his son's put them up for a week or so, until Dauterive bought a trailer from Berryland Campers in Hammond.

"They were selling like hotcakes, and I had to pull the trigger quick because I didn't have anywhere to live," he said. "My plan was to live in my trailer and go back to St. Bernard and rebuild my house."

Boh Bros. leased some property in Hammond and allowed Dauterive and others with trailers to make their home there.

"Joe Freeman was next to me, Paul Marino next to him, and Bobby Indorf next to him," he said. "We were all living and working together. Later on, they brought in a big trailer for some of the single guys who were displaced."

He eventually retrieved from his St. Bernard home a Jenn-Air BBQ grill, which they refurbished. It became the community grill that everyone in their little camp could use.

Dauterive and Indorf, who passed away February 2015, were the first ones to make an exploratory excursion to the Japonica Street shop.

"There was nobody in New Orleans at the time when we went there, and the destruction was pretty incredible," Dauterive said. "We got all the computers from upstairs, but all the equipment downstairs was lost."

Having been with Boh Bros. for so many years, it never entered Dauterive's mind that the company wouldn't come back, or that he wouldn't have a job.

"With all the work that needed to be done at the canals and the Twin Spans, we knew we were good," he said. "We were all



just raring to get back to work."

When the company decided to relocate the shop to Hammond permanently, Dauterive and his wife decided to move there as well.

"I'm way better off now than I was in St. Bernard," he said. "I work less than 10 minutes from my house, and I have three acres of land. I love it up here."

His wife got a job working in a doctor's office right across the street from the shop. The couple has get-togethers with their new neighbors, many of whom are also Boh Bros. employees and transplants from St. Bernard Parish.

"This is a much nicer place to work because of the neighborhood and the new building," Dauterive added. "Japonica Street was really old, cold and drafty. This one is all nice and new and insulated. I'm happy here." 🌞



Durell Green
equipment operator

Were it not for Hurricane Katrina, Durell Green is certain he would have turned out just like most of the young men in the Lower Ninth Ward neighborhood where he grew up—in jail or dead.

"People were carrying guns and selling drugs. It was just all-around bad," he said. "When you're surrounded by an environment like that, you tend to get like that. I couldn't see the bigger picture of life being in that neighborhood."

Today Green has a wife, two children, a good job as an equipment operator with Boh Bros., and a future filled with hope and promise.

"Before Katrina, I couldn't think outside of the box. It was rough growing up in a rough environment," he said, shaking his head.

As the storm bore down on the city, Green had no idea that it would be just the game changer he needed to yank him free of the old neighborhood's grip and put him on a better path.

"I was living with my mama at the time, in the Lower

Ninth Ward right where the barge hit the levee," he said. "I lived there all my life."

His mother had a bad feeling about the hurricane and evacuated early to beat the traffic.

By the time Green decided to leave the Friday before the storm made landfall, traffic was horrendous. It took him 10 hours to get to Baton Rouge, where his mother had rented an apartment.

"Eventually, there were 12 of us in that two-bedroom apartment—cousins, aunties, little cousins," Green said, laughing. "It was tight."

Green's mother sat glued to the television.

"When we saw all that water and they said the levee broke, my mom just started crying," he recalled. "We lost everything. The only things I left with were the clothes I had on my back, a toothbrush and an extra set of clothes."

Even after people were allowed back into New Orleans, Green and his family couldn't get to their house in the Lower Ninth.

"When we did go back, we had to take a shuttle bus there," he said. "You didn't even know where you were because there was so much slop in the street. My mama didn't own the house at the time, so we lost everything. We didn't save a picture."

He was living in LaPlace when a friend, who had started working with Boh Bros. before the storm, suggested that Green try to get on with the company.

Green, who had never before held a job, was hired as a

"I love the work, but what I like most about Boh Bros. are the people. "When you are surrounded by positive people, that gives you energy."

laborer with the asphalt department.

"At first I thought I wouldn't keep the job because it was too hard," Green said. "As the years went on, I am still here. If you do it often enough, you get used to it. Now I know I have to get up in the morning and go to work to feed those two mouths. It's just what I have to do."

The two mouths he's referring to are his five-year-old son, Durell, Jr., and his two-year-old daughter, Katelyn.

Green said that, were he still in the Lower Ninth, he doubts he would have met his wife, Kiola, nor would she have liked the person he used to be. "Hurricane Katrina turned my life around, period."

Two years after the storm, Green decided to move to Baton Rouge. He wanted to move up in the company, and he wanted to stay away from the old neighborhood.

"I'm not saying New Orleans is bad because I love New Orleans," Green said. "I just wanted something different, more

opportunity, and a better life."

After attending training school and participating in on-the-job training, Green became an equipment operator. February will mark his 10-year anniversary with Boh Bros., the company he's grown to love, the company that helped to mold him into the man he is today.

"When you are in the streets...my mom would always hope I would come home and worry that I wouldn't," Green said. "Working at Boh Bros. makes me feel good—being able to bring home a check and take care of my family."

He enjoys the satisfaction of seeing a job well done and the knowledge that, perhaps 30 years from now, he can show his children what he helped to build.

"I love the work, but what I like most about Boh Bros. are the people," Green said. "When you are surrounded by positive people, that gives you energy. I've gained relationships with a lot of people at Boh Bros., and we all treat each other like family."

He added that Hurricane Katrina changed every life she touched—some for the better and some for the worse.

For Green, the storm opened up a world that he never would have imagined before, and he cherishes that new life every day.

"Now I know that I'm going to make a way wherever I go," he said. "As long as I've got my health and the strength to come to work everyday, nothing else matters." 🌞





Robert Jenkins
superintendent

When Hurricane Katrina hit south Louisiana in August 2005, the power went out at Robert Jenkins' home in Central, La., but the lights were back on within an hour.

"I was blessed because I didn't lose anything, and I had no damage at all," said the 28-year Boh employee, who is a superintendent with Boh's Baton Rouge division.

He reported to work as usual the following Monday morning and was met by Joe Searcy, general superintendent (now retired).

"Mr. Joe asked me if I could get some equipment operators and go to the 17th Street Canal because the

levee had breached," Jenkins recalled. "He wanted me to assess the situation and see what we could do to stop it."

Jenkins picked up Larry Courtney, a crane operator who's since retired, and the two headed toward disaster to see how they could help.

With a hand-written pass from Governor Kathleen Blanco, the men went through armed guard checkpoints, zigzagged across the damaged Causeway Bridge, and made their way to the Jefferson Parish side of the 17th Street Canal at Old Hammond

Highway on the south shore of Lake Pontchartrain.

"I knew I was going into chaos because the city had been closed off and the National Guard had taken over," Jenkins recalled. "The governor had called Boh Bros. to see what we could do. I knew we were going to start sending some cranes to drive sheet piling across the canal to stop the storm surge."

Once he arrived on the scene, it was as he expected—utter chaos.

"The few police who were there were trying to hold back the looters, the hordes of people going house-to-house and stealing stuff," Jenkins said.

A colonel had taken charge, and he ordered Jenkins to commandeer a backhoe that was on the side of the road.

"We didn't know who it belonged to, but I busted out the windows and hot-wired it," Jenkins said. "I used it to pull telephone poles and houses out of the way so we could get to the bridge."

Another Boh employee had rescued a truck from Boh's Almonaster yard before it flooded, and someone sent him to retrieve a crane from a Boh project.

"He made his way back from where he had fled to North Mississippi, brought it to the 17th Street Canal, and we put it together," Jenkins said.

Although Jenkins had brought provisions so he could sleep in his truck on site, he had to return to Baton Rouge to get supplies such as shackles, rigging and tools.

"There was no communication whatsoever, so I couldn't call someone to bring them," he said.

The men worked 15 or 16 hours each day, and activities moved at a crazy pace.

"I remember the pile drivers came in that night, finished putting the crane together and started unloading sheet piling," he said. "We drove piling across the face of the lakeside of the bridge, below the breach, to seal off the water rushing in from the lake. They did it in two days."

The Boh team used another crane equipped with a clamshell bucket to begin casting away the mountain of debris that had accumulated in the canal.

"We were pulling out shrimp boats, cars, trucks, wood - you name it," Jenkins said. "I don't know why, but there were hundreds of thousands of jars of olives floating in that debris. There must have been a warehouse nearby because I have never seen that many jars of olives."

And there were bodies floating everywhere.

"We didn't pick up any bodies with the clamshell, but I saw them floating by," he said. "There were boats constantly coming and going, with people in the boats removing bodies."

Eventually, trucks started coming in with dirt and all sorts of other material that was dumped in an effort to seal the breach. Helicopters flew overhead, dropping sand bags. Politicians and military personnel were running around arguing about how to handle the situation.

"We did so many different things for so many different purposes," Jenkins said. "We'd start one job, and the colonel

"I've worked for Boh Bros. almost my whole adult life on pumping stations, sheet pile and levee work."

would come up and tell us to stop what we were doing and do something else instead."

He added, "No politician could've been prepared for that amount of devastation. I heard a lot of people saying bad things about Governor Blanco, but all I saw on her face was deep concern."

President George W. Bush arrived on the scene three or four days later.

"A helicopter would land. Green Berets were hiding everywhere, and that's when you knew the president was coming," Jenkins said. "I met George Bush three times. On the third time, he called me by my name. He shook my hand and looked me in my eyes and said, 'Robert, the federal government will do everything in its power and get it back up and running again.'"

Everyone working at the canal realized the gravity of the situation.

"We've lived here our whole lives and knew that one day that would happen," Jenkins said. "I've worked for Boh Bros. almost my whole adult life on pumping stations, sheet pile and levee work, and that really opens up your mind to the kind of things that could happen." 🌞



Henry Landry
general superintendent

As Henry Landry recounts the horrors he witnessed after Hurricane Katrina, the occasional catch in his voice and the tears that well up in his eyes offer a brief, horrible glimpse into the pain he felt at the time, a sickening of the soul that will likely remain with him for the rest of his life.

The grisly images of dead human beings and every kind of animal imaginable floating in the water—the water that seemed to clutch at every speck of the reality that once was, and the desperate pleas of

people trapped on rooftops, their arms reaching out longingly to him as he flew safely overhead—seem as present today as they were 10 years ago.

"It was unbelievable," said Landry, general superintendent over Boh's pile driving and marine department.

Tucked safely in his home in Donaldsonville, Landry had no idea of the amount of devastation that had been visited on New Orleans and surrounding parishes until Craig Sanchez collected him to meet with Boh's top supervision in Baton Rouge.

"We'd lost communication with everyone, and I was out

cleaning up my yard," said Landry, who eventually hitched a ride from Baton Rouge on an Army helicopter to assess the damage to Boh Bros.' Almonaster Yard.

"When we hit Kenner, it was unbelievable, like something I had never seen before," he said, fighting for composure. "I was so concerned to see the people standing on tops of roofs, begging to be rescued. When we passed the Superdome, we could see people all around there, because it was high ground. Some people were standing on top of overpasses because the water was all over the place."

As the helicopter passed over Boh's main office, it was evident that the building was surrounded by water, but not inundated.

Boh's Almonaster Yard, which sits on the Industrial Canal, didn't fare so well.

"Some of the nearby levees broke, sending a big wave that came in just east of the yard by the Chalmette Bridge," Landry recalled. "We could see boats and houses on top of the bank, and one of our cranes lodged on the batture."

The old office building, which was 12 feet off the ground, was completely flooded. Debris trapped in the fence atop the levee clearly indicated the height of the surge.

"We saw so many dead animals, but nobody discussed that much," he said, the tears coming again. "We saw things that day that nobody talks about too much because it was bad. It was heartbreaking the things we saw."

What inspired Landry and helped him endure was the way that Boh people united to do anything and everything possible to help the city recover.

"It was all of Boh Bros., all the men and women. Everybody was working together and always asking, 'What can I do to help?'"

"It was all of Boh Bros., all the men and women," Landry said with obvious pride. "Everybody was working together and always asking, 'What can I do to help?' That was the most united I've ever seen people."

Initially, Boh employees working to seal the levee breaches in New Orleans were at it round-the-clock and sleeping on site in their vehicles. Boh Bros. quickly established temporary housing in Baton Rouge and at the Almonaster Yard, and employees who had lost their homes and whose families were scattered all over the country returned to New Orleans to help in recovery efforts.

"It was about a week after the storm before we could even get into the yard, and we had to be escorted by the National Guard," Landry said.

He described working at the Almonaster Yard in the early days following Hurricane Katrina as "almost like being in the Twilight Zone. When I drove in from Donaldsonville, there were no lights at all, so it was very dark. Since we were one of the few allowed to come into the city, it was eerie, scary. There was so much debris everywhere that you would have a hard time getting through on the roads."

But the need to restore normalcy and the incredible

amount of work to be done drove Boh employees to perform above and beyond.

"We were so busy that everyone was just going in every direction, pulling barges and ferry boats off the top of levees, dewatering, then getting sheet pile out," Landry said. "Robert Boh had offered our services to the Corps of Engineers, and we did whatever the Corps called us to do. It was no eight-hour days, but 14-, 16- and 18-hour days, and just every day, keep going. It was hard."

Since very few businesses were open, and there was nowhere to buy food, Boh Bros. sent a truck in from Baton Rouge to provide meals for employees.

Because most of the cell towers had been knocked down by the storm, phone reception was spotty and erratic at best.

"I had four cell phones, and when one wouldn't work, you would grab the other," Landry said. "We had one spot on the levee we had to go to stand to use the cell phone when somebody would call us. When a phone rang, you grabbed ahold of it to see who was calling so you could try to call them back."

Restoring Boh's fleet of flooded equipment at the Almonaster Yard was a simple matter compared to the job of restoring people's lives, Landry added.

However, the work helped to get everyone through.

"It was hard, but we were very united," Landry said. "I knew we were going to come back, and everybody got together to make it happen."

He added, with tears again coming to his eyes, "Boh Bros. is a great company. I'm very proud of all the people. They are like family. We all stuck together." 🌞





Buck McCalla
welder,
Hammond Mechanics/
Equipment Group

An avid fisherman, Buck McCalla had first-hand knowledge of how much Louisiana's coastal marshes have deteriorated in recent years. Consequently, he was mostly packed and ready to evacuate when he woke up on Sunday, August 28 and saw on the weather radar that Hurricane Katrina had increased in strength and was headed straight for south Louisiana as a Category 5 storm.

"I'd been living in Chalmette since 1972 and fishing my whole life, so I'd seen a lot of changes with erosion," McCalla said. "I knew the Gulf wasn't far away, but right back there. When she was coming, I knew it was going to be bad."

His neighbors had picked on him the day before for being overly cautious as he boarded up his windows and made preparations to leave his home. Of course, he didn't realize at the time that he would be leaving forever.

"I had just finished remodeling that house, so all that money just went," he said, throwing his hand up in the air. "I had made kitchen cabinets from 150-year-old long leaf pine."

McCalla evacuated with his wife and son to a relative's home in Brookhaven, Miss.

He was receiving updates on conditions back home from

some friends who worked for the water board and with St. Bernard Parish, until the phones went dead.

"I already knew it was bad before they showed it on TV," he said. "I just felt devastated. It was terrible knowing that all my neighbors and remaining family I had down there, that everything was destroyed, and of course, not knowing my future, if I was going to have a job or a place to live. I had no idea what I was going to do."

The family traveled from Mississippi to McCalla's mother's home in Crossville, Tenn. where they enrolled their 7-year-old son in school.

"I had to bring him to school to enroll him with all new kids and leave him there," he said, tears coming to his eyes. "I had to get him started there because I didn't know what was going on here and where we were going to live."

Leaving his family in Tennessee was difficult, but McCalla knew he had to return to Louisiana to try and patch together what remained of their lives.

"I figured Boh Bros. would survive but I didn't know in what capacity," he said. "I got ahold of Walter (Dauterive, welder shop foreman), and he told me that they were setting up shop in the old Louisiana Machinery building in Hammond. I packed up my Goodwill clothes and came on down."

McCalla lived in an office in that building for a few months, and he worked on equipment that he knew guys in the field were using on important projects that were helping to restore people's way of life.

"Work helped me get through it," he said. "Working seven days a week, I didn't have time to think about the bad things."

When Boh Bros. made the decision to relocate the former Japonica Street mechanics/equipment shop to Hammond, McCalla bought a house in Loranger.

"I didn't want to make that long commute to Chalmette, and Loranger is only about 22 miles from the Hammond shop," he said.

The only family McCalla had left in Louisiana, his brother and sister, moved to Texas after the hurricane. Many of his close friends returned to the old neighborhood because of their jobs in nearby oil refineries. McCalla still misses them.

"It's tough when you're used to seeing those people everyday," he said. "They can't just up and leave, and it's an hour and a half ride to Chalmette from here."

McCalla also misses the way of life he enjoyed in the close-knit, Chalmette community.

"It was a good life, with low crime and close fishing," he said. "I could get up on a Saturday morning, leave the house at 6 a.m. and be fishing for 6:30 a.m. Now, I have to get up at 3 or 4 a.m. to get to saltwater fishing where I can catch speckled trout and redfish."

However, McCalla admits that the neighborhood has changed. Many of the old familiar faces and places are only shadows that haunt remnants of the devastation that seem to be everywhere, even 10 years later.

Besides, he's put down new roots—both at Boh's mechanics/equipment shop in Hammond, and in his new home.

"When I moved into my new house, I learned that the guy across the street is from Chalmette," McCalla said. "Maybe a year goes by, and a couple from Chalmette moves in down the block."

He added that it makes sense for Boh Bros. to have its



equipment facility in Hammond because it's centrally located to serve projects in both New Orleans and Baton Rouge.

"I hope Boh Bros. doesn't decide any time soon to move it," McCalla said. "I'm kind of partial to the area now that I live here." 🌞



Dawn Pomes
systems analyst

Dawn Pomes still remembers how helpless she felt seeing her 4-year-old son Cody's toys tossed so carelessly among the debris of mud and marsh grass that filled her recently built home.

For some reason, that was the boldest demonstration of the vulnerability she felt after Hurricane Katrina. The toys underscored the seemingly random devastation of their entire way of life.

"I know a lot of people who lost their homes, and everybody is scattered now," she said. "It will never be the same."

Pomes grew up in Chalmette, and had moved to her new home in Slidell five months before evacuating for the storm. Located on a quiet, oak tree-lined dead end road, her home is secluded but convenient to Slidell.

"We had bought that 35-acre property when my son was a year old, and I wanted to be in that house before he started

kindergarten," she said. "We had picked out the plans and made the exact changes we wanted. It was our dream house, a place we thought we would never move from."

Long-time residents said they'd never flooded, and Pomes and her husband, Chris, purposely built up their lot an additional 12 feet.

"We got 5 1/2 feet in the house, so it had to be a huge tidal wave," she said. "We thought we had built high enough. I was actually more worried about wind damage from the storm, but that was minimal."

They had evacuated, so Cody wouldn't be traumatized by the storm. Initially, they evacuated to Vicksburg, MS then they went to Marksville, LA to stay with a family friend until it was safe to return to Slidell.

"After the storm, we lived with my mom at her house in Slidell until we got a FEMA trailer that following January, and Cody loved spending so much time with her," Pomes said. "He seemed to take it all in stride. I guess he was too young to understand the impact of the storm."

But Pomes was devastated.

"The marsh grass was the worst," she said. "It was piled up against the front of the house and the back of the house. There was mud all over the house, and everything was tossed about everywhere. We eventually had to get a bobcat to move the marsh grass from the front of the house."

And snakes were everywhere—in the cabinets, in the drawers.

"Chris and his dad fought with the snakes," she said. "They were leaving the doors open because there was no power, and an alligator wandered into my bedroom one night."

Her husband's crab shipping business on the Rigolets was also destroyed. Pomes was grateful that Boh Bros. managed to set up a base of operations in Baton Rouge, so at least she had a job.

With so much uncertainty, everyone, including Pomes, was happy to be earning a paycheck.

"Boh Bros. was involved in many emergency repairs, so it was important that they get back up and running. It was also a priority for them to make sure their employees were paid which is a testament to how much they value their employees."

Pomes celebrated her 25th anniversary with Boh Bros. in August. Her husband, Chris, rebuilt his business.

They are back in their house, but the quality of the contractor's work in the post-hurricane scurry to complete everyone's home was a bit shoddy. Many of the oaks along the drive to the house have since died from Katrina's saltwater storm surge.

They have considered moving because there will always be that fear of it happening again. hey had a scare with Hurricane Isaac where the water rose pretty high but luckily didn't get into the house.

"I love our house and property and would hate to move, but hurricane season is always a stressful time of the year." 🌞





Nathaniel Sherman
crane yard foreman

Nathaniel Sherman had seen a PBS special about how a Category 2 or 3 hurricane had tested the limits of New Orleans' levee system, so there was no way he was going to stick around when Katrina was heading for New Orleans as a Cat 5.

"We stayed for Betsy in 1965 and had to sit in the house for two weeks with two feet of water," he recalled. "Everybody said Betsy was a once in a lifetime event, that it would never happen again. Nobody goes through that twice in a lifetime."

So, for the first time in his life, Sherman evacuated to Houston,

bringing his wife and three of his daughters to the safety of a hotel.

Three other of his daughters are police officers and had to stay behind.

"Leaving three of my daughters behind was the hardest thing I did in my life," he said. "I couldn't get in touch with them for days, only seeing news reports of what they were going through. I was a worried soul."

Even after he learned that the levees had breached, he didn't imagine that his home on Bundy Road in eastern New Orleans would be flooded.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I think my house would flood because I live in an area that never floods," Sherman said. "I even left my 2000 Yukon Denali gassed up and ready to go. I told my daughter that, if the city got water, she could use my Denali because it was higher up than her car."

When he finally made it back into the city and to his house on Bundy Road, Sherman realized that he had lost everything.

"I don't want to say lost, because we replaced it," he added. "The only thing, really, was my mom's house. She was 89, and she lost everything. I think that's what killed her. It grieved her that she couldn't get back to her house."

At the time, Sherman had been Boh Bros.' crane yard foreman for eight years. He knew that, if anyone were to fix the breaches at New Orleans' three outfall canals, it would be Boh Bros.

"I called everybody I could think of, trying to find out what the work situation would be," he said. "I managed to get in touch with Harold Douvillier, my immediate supervisor. He said, 'If you could get back, we will give you a place to live and we can save the city.' That was important to me, to save the city. This is my city. My family and my life are here."

Sherman and his son, Oran Perrier, who is a pile-driving foreman for Boh, rolled up their sleeves and went to work at the London Avenue Canal. Initially, Sherman worked as a pile driver, driving sheet piling to close the breaches there.

"It didn't seem real to me; it really didn't," Sherman said. "It was almost like a dream, a nightmare, really. I saw this guy bringing in these bodies, and someone said, 'It's their parents, and they don't want you gawking because they are dead.' I couldn't believe it. I would never do something like that."

He focused on doing the job at hand, and in between, helped to search the water for people living or dead.

"For lunch one day, I went with state troopers to search a house for dead bodies," Sherman said. "Thank God the house was empty that we went to search."

Once the initial emergency repairs were made to the breaches, Sherman moved on to be part of the team that built the interim pumps and closure structures at the canal.

"We would meet at the 17th Street Canal and then convoy out to the London Avenue Canal on that road we built," he recalled.

An earlier Boh crew had built a limestone road to bypass the floodwaters that remained on the Orleans Parish side of the 17th



Street Canal, via the Lakefront Marina, to access the London Avenue Canal.

"I felt like it was all over for New Orleans," Sherman said. "I just thought the city would disappear. I came because I cared. When Harold Douvillier said, 'We are trying to save the city,' that is all I needed to hear."

Eventually, Sherman returned to working where he usually does, at Boh's Almonaster Yard, but things there were most definitely not as usual.

With no traffic or lights anywhere, the silence and darkness were almost overwhelming.

"I used to get down off the interstate at the Chef Highway exit, see total darkness and scream, and nobody would hear me," Sherman said. "I would just scream. It was like living on a

different planet."

Looking into the distance at a memory, he added, "It's amazing the little things that people focus on. I would look around the yard, and the trees had no leaves. There were no birds. We used to see rabbits in the yard and hogs running down the highway. There were so many dead animals, and birds that didn't have trees to live in. That bothered me."

Sherman would work 12-hour days at the yard and then do whatever he could do to clean up at his house.

"One day, while I was scraping up the floors, I looked out the window, and the streetlight was on," he said. "That's when I knew we were coming back. Hey, we bounced back. That's what matters. It's not how many times you get knocked down, but how many times you get back up." 🟡



Anthony Spera
training director

From his sister-in-law's home in Austin, Texas, Anthony Spera watched television footage of water pouring through the breached levees and realized his Meraux home had flooded. He turned to his wife and asked her one question.

"You did not listen to me about dropping the flood insurance, did you?"

She replied with one glorious syllable. "No."

About a month earlier, Spera and his wife had one of those

heated discussions about bills. He wanted to decrease expenses by dropping some of their insurance coverage, but she countered

that the flood insurance was the cheapest of them all.

"I told her that we would never need it because our homeowner's would pay," Spera recalled. "Fortunately, when we evacuated, my wife took all of the pictures and important papers. She was real proficient about that."

They lost most everything else when 12ft. of flood waters inundated their home.

A friend offered them a place to stay in Hammond for a while, and then they moved into a trailer while working on their damaged home. The couple eventually received enough flood insurance and Louisiana Road Home money to purchase another home.

Initially, Spera, who was a labor foreman at the time, didn't know if he would have a job or not because he assumed all of Boh's equipment had flooded.

"I had no contact with anyone at the company until about a week later when I spoke to the general superintendent of heavy construction," he recalled. "He told me that he needed me to come back as soon as I could to work on the emergency repair of the Twin Spans, but not as a foreman, as an equipment operator." One week later, with a camper in tow, he reported for work.

"That was a relief to me to come back and be on a piece of equipment and do what I knew best."

Spera, who had spent most of his 33 years with Boh as an operator, was happy to be doing something so familiar amid the tumult of the disaster.

"That was a relief to me to come back and be on a piece of equipment and do what I knew best," said Spera, who is a second-generation Boh operator. "My father, Joe Spera, was here for 38 years. That's what I've done all my life. That's who I am, what I am."

By the time Boh had won the contract for construction of the new Twin Spans, most of the company's employees had returned, allowing Spera to resume his role as foreman.

When Emile Rome, Boh's former training director, announced he was retiring in 2013, he recommended Spera for the position. Thirty years of field experience, combined with OSHA 500 outreach instructor credentials, made Spera a perfect

fit for the job.

Hurricane Katrina's impact has been far-reaching and lasting, Spera added.

"I lost two friends to suicide," he said. "When I think about what brought them to make that decision, I realize that, ultimately, Katrina was the cause of it."

The friends didn't have insurance or jobs to come back to, so they were left homeless.

"That's what caused them to get divorced, and ultimately, it caused them to take their lives," Spera said. "The storm took them. It makes you realize how fortunate you are to have a family and a company to support you."

Humor always helped to relieve the pain; he often talks about the level of flood water stating, "I only had about 12 inches of water in my home, that's 12 inches on the second floor!"

Spera's father and father-in-law built their home in Meraux, so it was difficult for his wife to leave it. However, their new home in Poydras (which is seven feet higher) is close to the river levee and on a much larger property that allows room for their quarter horses to roam. 🟡





Ricky Tamor
superintendent,
steel fabrication

Probably what helped Ricky Tamor survive the horrors he witnessed after Hurricane Katrina were an abiding sense of decency, a healthy sense of humor, and his strong ties to Boh Bros.

“My wife says, ‘When you die, all I’ll be able to say is he worked at Boh Bros. because you live, eat and sleep that company,’” Tamor said, shaking his head and chuckling. He’s been with the company for 40 years, so it’s sort of in his blood.

While Hurricane Katrina was on her way to destroy his lower St. Bernard Parish neighborhood, Tamor and his wife were preparing

to celebrate the birthday of his 81-year-old father, who lives next door.

“We had a birthday cake sitting on the counter that day, and we didn’t ever eat it because it flooded,” Tamor said.

He and his father had never before evacuated for hurricanes. Hurricane Betsy brought 18 inches of water in 1965, so when Tamor built his home in 1987, he built it 24 inches off the ground.

“Then they built that levee, so everybody thought we would never flood,” Tamor said. “I didn’t even want flood insurance, but we had it, thanks to my wife.”

The morning after Katrina made landfall, he was awakened by severe winds.

“The palm trees were bent over like that,” he said, making a motion with his hand flattened out.

When the eye of the storm passed, Tamor went outside to assess the damage.

“I walked up the road, and it looked like a lawn mower had cut the top of the trees off,” he said. “Then I looked up St. Bernard Highway and saw that the road was shining. I realized it was a wall of water coming towards me.”

Within 30 to 45 minutes, the water had risen to 4 feet in Tamor’s house.

“Luckily, we had an upstairs,” he said.

Tamor waded through his flooded kitchen, busted out a window screen, and managed to untie his boat.

“I could hear people screaming,” he said. “I told my wife, ‘I got to go.’”

Over the next few hours, Tamor rescued dozens of people and transported them to the shelter of the Old St. Bernard Courthouse. One man stayed with him to help.

“We would fill the boat up with dogs and people,” Tamor said. “We’d pull up to a roof and grab on and they would swim out of a window and get in.”

He was amazed at how well the dogs behaved, sitting quietly in the boat as though they were grateful to be rescued. Most of the people, on the other hand, were hysterical.

“Everything they had was gone,” Tamor said. “I was numb.” After the chaos of that first day, things became eerily quiet.

“I had confidence that Boh Bros. would survive. I didn’t have any doubt because I know how we are.”

Tamor’s household had a supply of bottled water and some canned goods in the flooded kitchen cabinet.

“My wife found a loaf of bread and peanut butter. We ate so many peanut butter sandwiches that I was about to gag,” he said. “She wasn’t going to eat anything that was in the water, but I got a bottle of rubbing alcohol, cleaned off the can opener, and opened a can of tuna.”

Although conditions were harsh, Tamor still found humor and joy in many things. One day, while on an exploratory trip in his pirogue, he saw a bull trapped in the branches of a tree. He was relieved a few days later to see the bull had freed himself somehow and was happily grazing in front of a nearby school.

Once the water went down on St. Bernard Highway, they would walk to visit relatives who lived nearby.

“My daddy found a bag of crackers, and all the dogs we had rescued, maybe 15 of them, were following us down the road for those crackers,” Tamor said, smiling.

Eventually, they hitched a ride with some emergency responders in a wrecker.

“I had talked to Harold Douvillier (truck dispatcher for pile driving) and Henry Landry (general superintendent), and

they wanted me to go to Baton Rouge,” Tamor said. “I had confidence that Boh Bros. would survive. I didn’t have any doubt because I know how we are.”

When he arrived in Baton Rouge, Tamor was met with tears of relief and hugs from everyone.

“They thought I was dead,” he said. “I learned that Boh Bros. had sent a helicopter for me because there were reports that I was on my roof, but I had already left on the wrecker.”

Landry equipped Tamor with a telephone and a rental truck and sent him off to the Almonaster Yard to work.

“When I pulled in the yard, it was the same thing,” he said. “When I walked up we were all crying and hugging.”

The next few weeks were a blur of working long hours and hosting an array of visitors from all over the world who were involved in some aspect of the recovery efforts.

“There would be TV crews here constantly at the yard because we were building the 17th Street Canal flood gates,” Tamor said, beaming with pride. “College engineering students were coming here, congressmen, the mayor, and generals. The hurricane was a bad time, but I would never have met all those people had it not happened.”

He managed to make friends with the bull as well.

“When I was working on my house afterward, that bull would stick his head in the window and watch me,” Tamor said, eyes twinkling mischievously. “I fed him two-liter soft drinks by dumping them into my wife’s mop bucket. He really liked root beer. Some animal rescue people came and got him. I miss him.” 🍌



Alton Williams
superintendent,
main office building

In hindsight, the decision not to evacuate for Hurricane Katrina was not Alton Williams’ best, but he loathed the idea of sitting in traffic and spending money he didn’t have on hotels.

Williams had recently taken a job as the maintenance man at Boh Bros.’ main office in downtown New Orleans, a move that marked a turn for the better in his life.

“I had a long-time job with a company manufacturing products for the railroads and they pulled

up and moved to Salt Lake City,” Williams said. “They told me that, if I wanted to keep my job, I had to move there. But they don’t have any redfish or speckled trout in Salt Lake City.”

So Williams secured his beloved, 19-foot boat (a 2002 Logic 186), stocked up fuel for his generator, and hunkered down for what he thought would be only a few days of stormy weather.

“It was just me and my little Shih Tzu, Peaches, who was only six or eight months old at the time,” he said.

Williams had lived for eight years in his home in Pines

Village, in eastern New Orleans. Neighbors who lived there much longer said it had never flooded. The neighborhood was in a zone that didn’t even require flood insurance.

The night Hurricane Katrina made landfall, Williams couldn’t sleep for the howling of the wind and rain.

“I was trying to peak outside and see if it was flooding, but it was raining so hard you couldn’t see for the debris,” he said. “I didn’t know the levee had breached.”

Once the flooding started, Williams raced to move things into the attic.

“Within another 10 or 15 minutes, it was in my house,” Williams recalled. “It happened so fast. It was like whitewater rapids coming into the house.”

His car and truck were already under water. Williams had strapped his beloved boat to the fence posts, and he couldn’t free it before the prop and motor went under water.

He heard cries for help. Williams realized that two men were trapped against his fence by the rushing water, and that he would have to rescue them.

“I told them to grab the rope and pull themselves into the boat,” Williams said. “I had to get a life preserver to put on their Rottweiler, Minnie, because she was over 160 pounds and scared.”

The water was rushing in so fast from the west, from the direction of the Industrial Canal, that Williams was afraid his house would come off its pillars. He figured the boat would be the safest place.

“We couldn’t get the top up on the boat because of all of the rain and wind, so we held a tarp over our heads,” Williams said. “It was scary.”

Mercifully, the storm ceased its raging for a time. The men took the dogs and made their way into the shelter of Williams’ house.

Once the danger of the storm had passed, the human chaos began, with “gangs” of people walking around all hours of the day and night in search of food and shelter, Williams said. “It was nerve racking. I didn’t know who might try anything.”

Williams had water and a freezer full of enough red fish and speckled trout to sustain him for a while.

“I would alternate the generator between the freezer, the refrigerator, the fan and the radio,” he said. “I heard about the Superdome and the Convention Center and realized I wasn’t going there.”

When he ran out of gas for the generator, he siphoned fuel out of the boat’s motor. Still, his supplies were almost entirely depleted after about 10 days, so the men tried to make their way toward high ground, wading through the water with the dogs.

“It was frustrating, so we decided to go back to my house,” Williams said. “We found a little flat boat that we paddled to the highway now and then.”

Eventually, the National Guard came and ordered them to leave, establishing a pick up point on the highway.

“They told me I couldn’t take my dog with me,” said Williams, his voice breaking for the first time. “That was pretty

hurtful. I opened a bunch of tuna, poured water in the bowl, cracked the door open, and I had to leave her. I was just hoping she would make it.”

The National Guard deposited the men on the Interstate 610 overpass, where they awaited helicopters to transport them to the Louis Armstrong International Airport.

“When I got there, that really got to me because I saw everybody holding their dogs,” Williams said, tears coming to his eyes.

Williams didn’t want to be flown off to some unknown, un-chosen destination, so he borrowed a phone, got in touch with his brother-in-law, and found out his wife was at Jimmy Swaggart Ministries in Baton Rouge.

“I walked outside, ran across a guy who had a bus, and gave him \$75 to take us to Baton Rouge,” he said.

It was weeks before Williams could get permission to return to the city and make his way back to his home in Pines Village.

A big Rottweiler had taken up residence there, but there was no sign of Peaches.

“I kept calling her name. ‘Peaches, Peaches, Peaches,’” Williams said. “I thought I saw a dog down the street and, all of sudden, she was by my feet with about 300 stickers on her.”

The dog was traumatized and wouldn’t come close to him for some time.

“Every time it rains, she hears the thunder before I do, and she gets scared,” Williams said. “I just hold her and make her feel better. She is scarred, but she’s still living.” 🍌

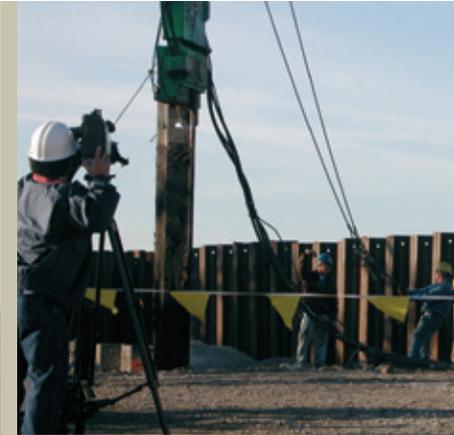




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