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ROSE SURVIVORS OF THE STORM

by Maureen Reed Detweiler

In late September, 2005, when the flood waters receded from uptown New Orleans, my husband and I were allowed, by special permit, to pass through the military check points which guarded the city following hurricane Katrina. We had seen a satellite map on the Internet which showed our block under 5 feet of flood water. But since many homes had exploded and burned, due to gas leaks, we were most anxious to see if ours was still intact. As we approached our home, which is adjacent to the campus of Tulane University, my heart raced as the house came into view.

The house and grounds were inundated with 5 feet of water for two weeks. The flood water was a toxic mix of salt water, sewage, and other waste water. All vegetation in our neighborhood appeared to be dead, including my 78 rose bushes.

On October 28th we left Natchez, Mississippi, where we had been in exile since August 28th, and moved to our son's home in Metairie, a suburb of New Orleans. We immediately visited our home, to monitor the progress of the contractors we had hired to tear out walls, clear, and sanitize. This time I saw bits of green vegetation in my garden. Upon inspection, I found nine roses, in different areas of my property, that had sprouted new leaves and appeared to have survived.

Today these nine roses are alive, and some even have blooms:

'*R. roxburghii*' (Chestnut Rose)

'*R. palustris scandens*' (Swamp Rose)

"Darlow's Enigma"

"Crimson Gallica"

'Napoleon'

'Fun Jwan Lo'

'Cecile Brunner' (spray - AKA 'Bloomfield Abundance')

'Louis Philippe'

'Allister Stella Gray'

Only one rose that perished in my garden was a rare one, that was not in commerce. It was a very fragrant, pink bourbon which I found in a New Orleans cemetery. I hoped that the mother plant in the cemetery was still alive. On All Saints Day (November 1st) when I visited our families' tombs, I found the pink bourbon in an area of the cemetery that was high and dry. It is alive and healthy. I will propagate it and pass it on to others as soon as I can so that it won't be lost.

We returned to live in our home in mid-November. My husband and I are both natives of New Orleans and have never been forced from our city before. It is so good to be home. This year Thanksgiving Day will have special meaning as never before.

