



MARKETPLACE



Homes Jobs Autos News

SEARCH



80° Forecast , Radar & CLOSINGS

Site Navigation

Home > Local News

COMMUNITY

Saturday, September 10, 2005

York's Crescent City connection

Katrina victim, Miss Shirley, relieved to be in York

By Marcia Schlegelmilch

staff writer



YORK -- Miss Shirley DeBlanc has a genteel southern way, soft grey hair, and understandably feels like she is in a bad dream. Born and raised in New Orleans, Shirley has been a dear friend of the Seim family from York for as long as Kathy Seim can remember.

Kathy's mom and Miss Shirley, as Kathy calls her, were best friends. Kathy's mom lived with Shirley's family for a time.

Eventually, Kathy's family moved to Ohio. College brought Kathy back "home" to New Orleans where she met her husband John Seim and the couple's three daughters were born. Abbie, Martha and Naomi all have New Orleans on their birth certificates. The southern connection runs deep.

When it came time for high school the Seims looked again to the Midwest. Drawing on their years in Ohio, York became the perfect place to put down a new set of roots. High school here was excellent; in New Orleans the girls would have had to go to a very expensive private school.

Again, they are glad to be in York, glad to be able to give refuge to their dear friend Miss Shirley.

The special relationship between Kathy and her mother's best friend has meant lots of telephone time over the years.

"We have talked every Wednesday and Saturday since we moved here," Kathy states.

Miss Shirley's trip to York began with New Orleans' alarmist weathermen.

"This is always going to be the 'big one', and there never is. We get so tired of hearing them," she declares.

After leaving home twice in the not-to-distant past she questioned evacuating this time.

Her home is only a few blocks from Lake Ponchatrain in the Lake Vista subdivision. This time her good neighbors, Charlie and Lynn Mumphreys, asked her to go with them as they fled inland.

"I thought I had better go or next time they may not ask me," admits Shirley, so she went. Leaving on Sunday just before the storm hit she tells, "I have my purse, check book, two pair of pants and three tops."

The journey took her to Arkadelphia, La. and on to Chicago. After a few days in Chicago, arrangements were made for her flight to Nebraska.

"I was finished with plane rides, I didn't want to get on one again. So what happens? I eat my words," tells the reluctant traveler.

"The disturbing part is not knowing the condition of the house ... where friends are scattered. I am a displaced person."

John and Kathy are glad to have her placed here. Reports of five feet of water in her ranch style home are not confirmed. If true, she will miss her piano and grandmother's china the most.

"It is all so massive," she said of the disaster.

Married for 20 years to Mr. Paul DeBlanc, New Orleans banker and founder of the Sugar Bowl, she has been widowed since the age of 66. With no children, the Seims are family. On Sept. 21, Miss Shirley will celebrate her 84th birthday in York. She considers herself lucky; she has flood insurance, many do not.

York is pretty and quiet, the humidity is about half that back in New Orleans, she and Kathy have been watching the humming birds feed outside the living room window as she tries to absorb all that has happened.

"How is the government going to pay for this? When will I be able to contact my friends?" So many questions. "This is not what you expect at 84 years old."

Waiting now, to find out the fate of her home, Shirley says she will likely relocate to York if it is severely damaged. York is here to welcome its Crescent City connection.

So nice to meet you Miss Shirley.



[Subscribe to the paper.](#)