

Here is another example of what I see as ethical actions by persons such as the Gulpport Mayer, Brent Warr; of course, others might attribute such actions to the saying: necessity is the mother of invention – a saying I particularly like because “mothers” by nature intuitively act when facing a problem.

In about 1972, a newspaper article relayed the story of a situation when a husband arrived home, pulled up into the driveway, got out of the car and entered the home. Unknown to him, his youngest, a three year old had been waiting for him in the side yard, heard the car pull up into the driveway, ran out behind the car to greet his father and at that instant, the hand-break on the car slipped; the car rolled back, pushed the three year old back and rolled over the fallen child, the front wheel resting on the child's chest. The child screamed; both the father and the mother ran out, saw the child and the father ran into the house to call 911. The mother grabbed the front driver's side bumper, lifted the 3,200 pound van up and kicked the child from under the front tire. She then picked up the child and ran back into the house to check the child and wait for the ambulance. The police and the paramedics arrived; the paramedics checked the child and he only had a bruise on his buttock where the tire had sat, but took the child to the hospital for x rays. The police interviewed the father and mother and merely shook their heads at the fact, when the father told them she had lifted the van off the child while he was calling 911. The mother subsequently went to the hospital, underwent x rays to determine whether or not she had injured herself and then returned home with the father and the child when both sets of x rays determined neither had been injured.

Needless to say, I would classify the father's action of calling 911 a moral action whereas the mother's action was an ethical one!

The fact remains that this Katrina emergency required quick, practical action as the mayor confronted unique, practical problems, problems which no one could plan for or wait to attend to “by the book” because no “book” provides responses to unique, practical problems.

As the journalist observes:

But the effectiveness of the response to Katrina appears to diminish the higher you move up the chain of command.

Of course, this is understandable because of the inertia which grips any group, or “government”, indeed, any family – mom or dad frequently face “child” problems which no amount of planning can predict and any “we'll wait for mom (or dad) to come home” is insufficient to remedy.

An ethical person acts when confronted with a unique and unplanned problem and acts with the intention to do the right thing; not to do some “canned” and approved of action. Frequently therefore, as in Mayer Warr's case such actions are “properly” illegal, yet, profoundly ethical!

Washington Post

By Hook or by Crook, Surviving Storm

Miss. Officials Used Ingenuity -- and the Occasional Misdeed -- to Get Job Done

By Sally Jenkins

Washington Post Staff Writer Monday, September 19, 2005; Page A01

GULFPORT, Miss. -- Hurricane Katrina has transformed Mississippi's mayors into car thieves, and senators into blockade runners. Isolated by the initial hit of the storm and failed by the slow federal response, citizens have fended for themselves in some original and not entirely legal ways. Brent Warr, the Republican mayor of Gulfport, even ordered his police chief to hot-wire a truck. "When you send your law enforcement out to steal things, that's when you know you're in a different situation," Warr says.

In Gulfport, Warr did everything by the book, right up until he started stealing. His force of 225 police officers and 190 firefighters stayed on the job in 24-hour shifts. Fire Chief Pat Sullivan went into the storm to cut away felled trees from the roads leading to the hospitals. In the city's sea-blue antebellum City Hall, Warr worked without power. But Gulfport was still without help three days after the storm, and Warr's control over the situation was slipping. Looting broke out downtown. When Warr drove a utility vehicle down U.S. 90, he watched as his longtime family business, Warr's Men's Clothing, was ransacked.

Worst of all, the city was running out of fuel. Generators were about to fail, rescue vehicles were running out of gas. One local hospital radioed that it was on backup power and had no water, and that looters were circling. Warr turned to his chief of police, Stephen T. Barnes. There was a private fuel transport vehicle -- Warr doesn't remember whose -- parked in a lot behind a chain-link fence. Warr had the lock cut. "Can we hot-wire it?" he asked. Barnes said, "I wasn't cut out to be a crook; that's why I went into law enforcement." "Well, can we get someone from the jail to do it?" Warr asked. Thirty minutes later, the truck was sitting in the City Hall parking lot. That was just one episode in Warr's life of petty crime over the past three weeks.

When the mayor needed to feed the 500 or so exhausted first responders, he stole a stove. The nearby Blowfly Inn, a restaurant and catering company, had a portable kitchen parked in a storage lot. Warr ordered the locks cut and installed the kitchen next to City Hall, where it has been in service ever since, with the owner's permission. "We were literally fending for ourselves," Warr says. "Sitting in a well complaining because no one will throw you a rope is not going to get you anywhere. Instead, you climb out. You hope someone gives you a hand and pulls you. But either way, we're getting out of the well."

## **FEMA Slow to Help**

In the three weeks since the storm, Mississippians have in some ways felt as cut off as they did on the day it struck. Sen. Trent Lott (R) says Mississippians "are disenchanted" with the federal response in their state. Strange storm detritus remains everywhere: houses blown into matchsticks, clothes wrapped around treetops, and pine needles impaled in broken glass panes. The region now has enough food (mostly meals-ready-to-eat) and water, thanks in part to the Federal Emergency Management Agency. But residents are still struggling to acquire and distribute other basic supplies: baby food, diapers, paper products, cleaning supplies, shovels, rakes, bleach. Most important, they need temporary housing, which has been slow in coming.

"And if help doesn't come soon, we're going to have a major health issue," says Marsha D. Mississippi's first lady, along with her two children, Reeves, 26, and Jackye, 24, has been running supplies into storm-blighted communities by pickup truck. After sitting out the storm in Hattiesburg, Marsha Barbour was in an initial convoy into Gulfport, with transportation workers and National Guard members cutting trees ahead of her. That night, she went out on a looting patrol with Gulfport police. "I take my hat off to her," says Ocean

Springs Mayor Connie Moran. "She's not sitting around sipping tea and serving tomato aspic."

But the effectiveness of the response to Katrina appears to diminish the higher you move up the chain of command. By Sept. 7, Lott concluded that FEMA and its Mississippi arm were overwhelmed and understaffed, and he went straight to circumvention mode. "We're just going around them," Lott says. "We talk to people on the ground, and they tell us what they need."

Lott has used his office to run his own supply line, funneling in aid donated by fellow senators. He worked with Sen. Mike DeWine (R-Ohio) to get two 18-wheelers full of baby supplies, disinfectant and basic medical goods from Ohio to the United Methodist Church center in Jackson.

According to FEMA, the agency is doing a good job in Mississippi under trying circumstances. Spokeswoman Mary Hudak, who is working in Jackson, said FEMA had supplied 99 million bags of ice, 37.5 million liters of water and 7.8 million meals to the state as of Saturday. The Red Cross and Salvation Army have served an additional 3.8 million meals. FEMA has also provided 12 search-and-rescue teams and 15 medical strike teams, and 21 Disaster Medical Assistance teams have treated 16,331 patients. There are five FEMA Disaster Recovery Centers, and 318,000 households have registered, while approved aid payments total \$250 million.

"I think we're working well with the state of Mississippi," Hudak says. "Quite frankly, there have been challenges. The scope, the damage to infrastructure, the debris, the lack of fuel. Just because we're the federal and state government doesn't mean the debris and fuel problems don't challenge us, as well as individuals."

But officials say that although FEMA is well-intentioned and helpful, it has also been plagued by disorganization and agonizing slowness. At times, it has even been a hindrance. A local FEMA liaison has answered the Ocean Springs mayor's questions by telling her to call an 800 number.

On one occasion, Warr, the Gulfport mayor, arranged for trucks of ice and water to be sent to local shelters, where evacuees had gone 36 hours with nothing to drink. He discovered that FEMA had ordered the trucks held at a distribution point at the Stennis Space Center in Hancock County. "The trucks were sitting for a day and half out there, idling, waiting to be told to come on in to town," he says.

Gulfport is badly in need of generators to keep its pumping stations working; sewage was beginning to come out of manhole covers, and Warr feared an outbreak of disease. He put in an order for 157 generators with FEMA and did the paperwork. Then he got a call from Washington. The voice on the other end of the line told him that the generators couldn't be sent without a specific address.

"Send them to City Hall," Warr said he replied. "I've got 157 places they need to go." He never got the generators.

Pascagoula, where Lott lost his beachfront home, was hammered with a 22-foot wall of water and 160-mph winds, and yet, Lott says, "It's been hard to get attention." He did help to get the USS Comfort hospital ship sent to Pascagoula to provide emergency beds and food

or the town's first responders, 400 of whom lost their homes.

But when Lott asked a Harrison County sheriff how they were faring, the sheriff reported that he was worried about FEMA diverting supplies.

Lott told him, "If anyone from FEMA tries to confiscate anything, arrest them."

Sometimes, when coordinated federal aid has broken down or failed to appear, corporate ingenuity has filled the gap. Diageo, an international beverage company, sent two large generators to Gulfport 29 hours after the storm.

Lott said he asked a Diageo executive, "If you can get there that quickly, how come the federal government can't?"

The executive replied, "I refuse to answer that, on grounds it might incriminate me."

### **Helping Each Other**

In Gulfport's Turkey Creek neighborhood, residents expect to fend for themselves, because that's what they have always done, ever since emancipated slaves established the inland community along a winding canal during Reconstruction. When flooding from Katrina reached the attics of the shotgun houses, some of which dated to the 1880s, the residents rescued each other. Two men filled air mattresses, threw them in a boat and began plucking the elderly from their roofs and floating them to safety.

Among those rescued was the Rev. Lettie Evans-Caldwell, 70, a sixth-generation Turkey Creek resident. By way of thanks, her son, Derrick Evans, 38, has set up one of the more effective ad hoc relief efforts in the area.

Evans was driving frantically to Gulfport from Boston, where he teaches civil rights history at Boston College, when he heard that his mother had survived. Evans, who spends vacations in Turkey Creek and spearheads a local group dedicated to preserving the area and promoting its economic development, immediately began thinking about what his neighbors would need.

By cell phone, he reached a county supervisor, William Martin. The area, Martin reported, was desperate for supplies and he hadn't seen a trace of FEMA or the Red Cross. "What do you got, and what can you get?" he asked Evans.

In every town, Evans stopped for supplies. By the time he reached Tuscaloosa, Ala., he had rented three trucks and nearly maxed out his credit cards to the tune of \$20,000. He was towing six generators, a 28-inch chain saw, pallets of food and water, and tarps to cover roofs. In Tuscaloosa, he and a friend stayed up all night outfitting a trailer to carry gas. When they arrived in Gulfport, they had 600 gallons. Along the way, he says, "We were passing FEMA trucks along the side of the road."

Once Evans had provisioned Turkey Creek, he linked up with the Good Deeds Community Center in North Gulfport, an informal distribution center where volunteer Rose Johnson has been serving meals and doling out supplies daily. They began shuttling supplies to neighboring towns. They sent food to Long Beach and lent a chain saw to firefighters, who

used it to cut a man out of his house.

"Poor people know how to survive," Evans says. "These are low-income African Americans. We certainly weren't a jackpot tax base. But we've been here for 139 years, and been through one Reconstruction. This community is about as up-on-our-feet as anyone. We're not running around looking around for something to eat and drink."

### **Prepared for Storm**

In Ocean Springs, Mayor Moran slept on the floor of City Hall for 12 days.

A charming oceanfront bedroom community of 17,500, Ocean Springs was cut off from Biloxi by a knocked-out bridge and was virtually incommunicado for the better part of a week. Apart from a brief assessment visit by a FEMA medical strike team, Moran and her 40 police officers, 25 firefighters and 40 public works employees were alone for five days before they received any response from outside.

"We knew we would be on our own for 72 hours, but after five days, totally exhausted, we were just left saying, 'Where's the relief? Where's the cavalry?' " she says.

Finally, help came in the form of two tractor-trailers of supplies -- from New Life Community Church in Chicago. An interfaith alliance of 15 churches in Ocean Springs had arranged for the delivery. The trucks carried water, diapers, cleaning supplies, dry food and used clothes. When the drivers said they couldn't unload without a secure place to put the supplies, Moran ordered the locks cut on a county warehouse.

Next, she broke into her own public works building "to hijack a forklift." She also had staff members break into a fish-and-tackle shop to get waders. They left an invoice.

Moran, 49, felt Ocean Springs had done all it could to prepare for Katrina. She is an experienced public official with a master's degree in economic development from Georgetown University. She interned for Lott and served as Mississippi's economic development representative in Europe for several years, before returning home to Ocean Springs to run for mayor as a Democrat. She took office July 4.

"We tried," Moran says. "We had our radios. We know how to fill out the FEMA reimbursement forms. We know what we're supposed to do. We were as well-organized as we could be for a small town facing something of this magnitude."

Moran was so organized that before the storm came, she notified FEMA that she had readied a building, a former Kmart, for its workers to occupy. But apart from a brief visit from a medical strike team, she didn't hear from FEMA until a week after the storm.

Moran has improvised. She enlisted the City Council to form an emergency operations center. She established phone lines and staffed them 24 hours a day -- with workers from the water and sewer departments. The planning director has been unloading trucks, and the parks director brought a casket that had floated out of a graveyard breached by the tides to his office for safekeeping. "There is no doubt we should have had, and could have had, more [help] quicker," Moran says. "It's my perception that not all of the FEMA divisions communicate very well."

When Moran finally fielded the long-awaited call from FEMA, the official had a question.

"Can you get us a building?" he said.

Moran says it was another two days before FEMA got fully up and running.

### **Shortage of Homes**

On Friday, a dozen mayors gathered in the Gulfport City Hall to brainstorm about how to speed aid to the affected cities. They called it Mayors on a Mission.

They sat around a conference table, swapping stories and potential solutions. In Biloxi, Mayor A.J. Holloway has lost 75 percent of his tax base. Warr is facing 4 million cubic yards of debris. In Ocean Springs, Moran is putting up church volunteers in her damaged house.

Among their listeners was Marsha Barbour. She stood at the front of the room and thanked them for their tireless efforts. "I know there are frustrations," she said. "None of ya'll have had a break." She waved a sheaf of papers. "I will facilitate anything I can. I only see Haley late at night. But I do get the last word."

Afterward, she remarked that the mayors seem determined to solve their own problems. "There was no whining from these people." But she was also concerned about the overwork and exhaustion she sensed. "I'm worried about breakdowns," she said.

After three weeks, the worst problem confronting Mississippi is homelessness. Officials at every level are clamoring for trailers. In Jackson County alone, the Red Cross estimates 105,000 people are homeless. Many residents are living in wrecked shells of houses, and concerns for their well-being are mounting.

By last week, when Mississippi had received only 20 trailers from FEMA, Lott was calling the delay "an unmitigated disaster." But by late Friday, there finally appeared to be a breakthrough -- FEMA assured local officials that housing was on the way. FEMA now says 2,949 trailers and mobile homes are in the state, with more coming.

"I try to be positive. This is an overwhelming event," Lott says.

Meanwhile, federal officials have been streaming into Mississippi. Between Friday and Saturday, Warr met with President Bush, as well as Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt and Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff.

On Friday, Chertoff attended a prayer service on the steps of the Gulfport City Hall. He was late. By way of apology, he told Warr he had been on the phone, trying to get movement on those trailers. "He reassured me he's cutting through bureaucracy," Warr says.

All the federal officials have asked Warr what he needs.

"I can't tell you what we need," Warr replies, "because we need everything."

