

New Orleans Mission Trip Summary:
December 27, 2008 – January 3, 2009

This trip has to be the best trip that I have ever been on and I like to travel. I was pretty apprehensive when we first started out because I was unsure of how 13 very different individuals would get along in a van and truck for a solid week..Boy was I ever surprised. The drive down and back were ranked up there in the top 10% of the experiences I had. I guess that I should have been more faithful and trusted that God knew what he was doing by putting us all together. So, when we arrived at Carpenter's House II on Sunday and saw how everything was in such disarray, I was a tad worried again. I thought to myself, "How in the world could they let this place get like then and how are WE going to make any significant changes." Again, I should have put my trust in Him because by the end of the week, the place looked fabulous.

Monday morning we rolled out of bed, ate our breakfasts and ended up at Carpenter's House II to start our week long journey of giving of ourselves to God, each other, Judy & Charles, the homeless, the downtrodden and the other volunteers that came in and out. I'm not really sure just how I ended up in the front sorting through clothes, bagging up items for the people who came in and fellowshipping with anyone and everyone that came through the doors, but I figure that it's because I was being lazy and didn't want to do manual labor. .. HEHEHE Anyway, it's hard to describe my feelings because at first, I was in shock at just how different a world it was down there and how different the people that came through the doors were from me. I said to Sabrina, my little Alligator lover, "Wow, this is a complete different world and I'm not sure about it", she agreed. Then, as we got to actually witness just how much Carpenter's House II meant to so many of the locals, my views started changing and my world started to not revolve around ME so much anymore. I realized that not only was I there to help others, I was there to allow others to help me. By opening up my eyes, I was able to realize what a selfish, spoiled brat I have become. I try hard to have a good heart and follow the path the God wants me to walk, but I often stray and my thoughts and my intentions are not always good ones. I still wondered why these dirty people coming in to get clothes, toys, towels, household items and more didn't take their lives into their own hands and try to better themselves. See me being mean.... I mean, I have two jobs and take care of myself, why can't they. It just didn't make sense to me, but then again, it's not supposed to make sense to me and I am not supposed to judge, but since I am human, I err in that direction.

It was on New Year's Eve when this shy, youngish, black man with small dreads came in and selected some items for the day. They are allowed five items a day and they can come in everyday that Carpenter's House II is open. I was sitting there in my own world, sorting through the thousands of items that had been donated when I looked up and realized that he was ready to have his items bagged up and leave. So I said, "Are you finished? Would you like a bag?" He said, "Yes" and I got up and got a bag to help him. He had a pair of tennis shoes, old nasty slippers, a gray home made suit, which had to be made in the 50's or 60's, and two pretty new looking dress shirts. I said, "So, are you going out on the town tonight in this suit? and he shyly smiled at me and said, "Well, I'm going to go to church and needed something to wear." I said, "This will be great with one of these shirts. You will look handsome." He shyly smiled at me and said, "Thanks" then took his stuff and walked out the door. I couldn't contain myself and had to walk into the kitchen so that everyone wouldn't see me crying like a baby. It was then that I realized just how much I take my WONDERFULLY BLESSED life for granted. I take for granted that every morning I will arise and shower in the shower that is connected to my bedroom - the same bedroom where I am kept warm and safe every night during my sleep - in the house that shelters me

from all of the elements - the same house that has electricity, heat, air conditioning, running water, my closet - the closet that holds WAY too many clothes that I DO NOT wear - the clothes that I often complain about because they are old or that I am tired of wearing the same thing every week/month - the clothes that are clean because I can wash them in my house, and I can do as many loads of laundry a day that I want - using the water that washes my body, rinses my just brushed teeth, boils the food that I cook, washes the dishes that I use to eat on sometimes three times a day, water that I waste by taking a bath and a shower in the same day - in the house that is in a great community that I feel safe in... I take for granted that I can drive my car to and from wherever my little heart desires to go... When I looked into that young mans eyes, it was then that I realized that I had made the right decision to give up a week of my life (the one that included my birthday): my mundane, selfish, wonderfully blessed life, so that I could hopefully bless another's life with just a smile, a hug, a prayer or small talk.

Working in front at Carpenter's House II is where I was supposed to be during our week in New Orleans. I was blessed to be able to pray with Robin who came back in for some shampoo, but who really needed prayer to find a job. She had been in there another time and I guess that everything that Charles and Judy had prayed over her for had happened and she was desperately needing that again. I was blessed to be able to help feed the hungry men and women who came to eat. Even Ug (Jose), who ate two plates a day and came back every day and allowed me to harass him. Then there was Crazy Larry - he didn't go by that name, that's just what I named him, I know, not very nice, but his sister Leila laughed - he would come in and make us all laugh even when we didn't understand a word he said. One thing we did understand was that his sister Leila's cooking was the best around and she told us that he would invite everyone in the neighborhood over to her house when she was cooking because she was such a GREAT cook.

Scott, I have so many thoughts going through my head right now. I'm sorry this is so long. Please feel free to use as little of it as you want. Thanks again for being our "leader" and taking GREAT care of us and worrying about us if we strayed to far from the pack. I had the time of my life and I would do it again in a heartbeat, with the exact same people. Blessed, that's what I am.

Princess :o)~