



COURTESY PHOTOS

Seven Cannon Airmen drove to New Orleans April 26 clean out homes devastated by Hurricane Katrina. From left to right are: Chaplain (Maj.) Tom Kadera, 27th Fighter Wing, Staff Sgt. Matt Teets, 27th Equipment Maintenance Squadron, Senior Airman Joshua Jordan, 27th Component Maintenance Squadron, holding the sign is Master Sgt. Mark Baughman, 27th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Capt. Tim Jeffries, 27th Medical Support Squadron, Master Sgt. Mark Croke, 27th AMXS, and in the rear Staff Sgt. Eric Liebert, 27th CMS.

## Cannon Airmen trek to New Orleans with a desire to make a difference

*Editor's note: A team of seven Airmen from Cannon spent a weekend cleaning up several homes ruined by Hurricane Katrina. The following are the afterthoughts of one Airman about the experience.*

**By Master Sgt. Mark Croke**  
27th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron

Aug. 29, 2005 is a day most Americans will never forget, at least those who lived in and around New Orleans.

Hurricane Katrina hit with such force that the levees protecting the city from flood waters could no longer protect "The Big Easy."

We all saw the stories unfold on the news. The looting, the shootings, the death and the devastation of the power behind those dreadful flood waters was on the news for what seemed like months.

In reality, these stories only lasted a few weeks and the rest of America pressed on with their own lives, me included.

In April, seven Airmen from Cannon Air Force Base chapel set forth to do what could be done to help where needed in New Orleans.

It had been eight months since the disaster, and little of what we were about to get into was known.

What was expected was some damage to houses and that we would be staying in tents, sleeping on cots, only getting one hot meal a day, while working hard from sunup to sundown in high temperatures and high humidity.

But once in New Orleans, our expectations were

overshadowed and made pointless by what any pictures on the news could ever begin to show.

Houses that once stood strong in hurricane winds for decades, that had generations of childhood memories, were turned into rubble. The streets where you might see an occasional parade with jazz or blues bands with their music reflecting off the buildings were lifeless and quiet.

In the distance, the view of the levees that were once obstructed by trees and houses now looks like a field with steps leading to nowhere

As we drove down street after street in the Ninth Ward, rubble that once was a neighborhood remains untouched. Boats on top of houses, houses on top of cars, people's houses shaken off their foundations as if a toy with the contents spread out over their yards. The markings on each and every house by the recovery crews, indicating the direction the crews were traveling, how many human and animal bodies were found, along with the date and time were just more tragic reminders imprinted on our minds of what happened. Street after street, block after block, this city was devastated.

This trip was an eye opener to what devastation is. I believe it touched each of us to truly appreciate all the blessings the Lord gives, even when we might forget the pain and suffering occurring in the distance.

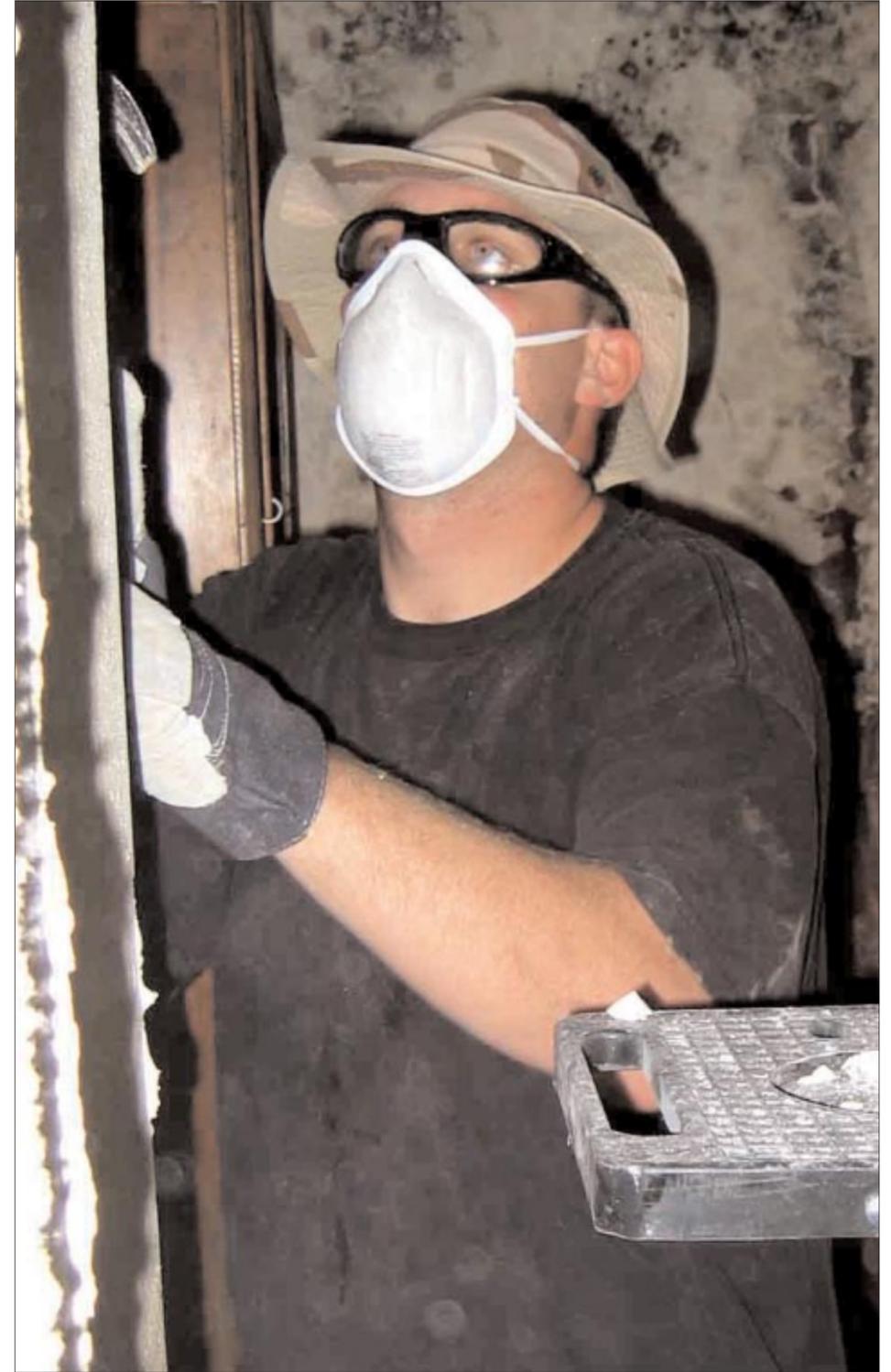
It is a subtle reminder that the material things on this earth can be taken away in the blink of an eye.



With the water line clearly present on the wall, Capt. Tim Jeffries, 27th Medical Support Squadron, gets ready to take out the water-soaked sheetrock during a mission to New Orleans sponsored by the Cannon base chapel. Seven Airmen worked two days, removing all walls and fixtures from two homes. Cannon's Chaplain (Maj.) Tom Kadera coordinated the trip with the Catholic Charities of New



Staff Sgt. Eric Liebert, 27th Component Maintenance Squadron, wields a crowbar to remove the damaged interior of a New Orleans home. A team of seven Cannon Airmen spent two days clearing homes damaged by water and mildew from Hurricane Katrina.



Senior Airman Joshua Jordan, 27th Component Maintenance Squadron, pries mildewed sheetrock from a home in New Orleans. Private contractors charge 90 cents per square foot to clear out homes damaged by Hurricane Katrina. Chaplain (Maj.) Tom Kadera, 27th Fighter Wing, coordinated the seven-man team with the Catholic Charities and helped two financially needy homeowners by providing the same service for free.