

Suzanne and I just returned from a short vacation/business trip to Baton Rouge and New Orleans. We had a great time visiting with our friends, Karla and L.R. Hughes, in Baton Rouge. Karla is a graduate of K-State and Suzanne was making the trip partly to update Karla on what's going on at KSU, visit with another donor to the University, and to help her dean, John Buckwalter, share information about successes and new programs in the College of Human Ecology. John's wife, Amalia, came along on the trip and we had a wonderful dinner with Karla, L.R., and their good friend, Amelia (also a K-State alum), on Wednesday night.

We've known Karla and L.R. for a long time, but we haven't seen them in years. Karla just wound up a stint as provost of the University of Louisiana System and is moving in January to begin her new job as chancellor of the University of Arkansas at Monticello. L.R. was my best man when Suzanne and I got married almost 25 years ago. We had a wonderful time catching up with them and having Karla show us the sights in Baton Rouge, including Tony's Seafood Market. Tony is the Tony of the Louisiana Fish Fry products you've probably seen on your supermarket shelves. The Market is quite an experience. Too bad we were there between lunch and dinner; the menu looked amazing.



We said goodbye to Karla and L.R. and drove to New Orleans on Thursday to begin our mini-vacation. John and Amalia were planning on staying in New Orleans for a few days, also, so we dropped them at their hotel, checked into our room at the Marriott Convention Center Hotel, and took the rental car back to Enterprise. We decided to walk the few blocks back to the hotel and along the way we had a bite to eat at 2 Chicks Cafe, passed Howlin' Wolfe's bar and some fun public art. Now I want to be sure that everyone understands that we had a



GREAT time in NOLA, but after the walk to our hotel, it was two and a half days of losses, about which we are mostly laughing now that we are back in Manhattan. Here's what happened:

### Lost peace and quiet

When we got back to the hotel, Suzanne did some quick donor-related paperwork on the Mezzanine and I stayed in the room to unpack. I had just finished taking everything out of our suitcases when the guy next door, who earlier had tried to open the door

between our adjoining rooms, decided to watch TV. He must have been in the bathroom taking a shower simultaneously because the volume on the TV was turned up to 11 (all you Spinal Tap fans understand what that means). Now that might not have continued all afternoon and evening, but I decided not to take a chance and called the front desk to see if we could switch rooms. No problem. They put us on another floor in a room with a better view, in fact, and peace and quiet was restored. When Suzanne finished her work, we took the streetcar down to the French Quarter, walked around for a bit, and ended up at the Hotel Monteleone. We had heard from several people that we needed to visit the Carousel Bar in the hotel, a revolving platform that is a replica of an amusement park carousel. The bar makes one revolution every 15 minutes, so it moves pretty slowly (probably so it doesn't throw the drunks off into the rest of the crowd). There were no seats at the bar, but we found a nice table by the window in the adjoining room. There was a terrific jazz combo playing standards (Gershwin, Cole Porter, etc) and a few Christmas songs. The singer, Antoine Diel, had a great voice and the bass player, Chris Severin, was phenomenal. I didn't get the names of the drummer or guitarist, but they were also terrific. After intermission, they were joined by a trumpeter who looked like he might have been a senior in high school. I chatted with the bassist for a bit and learned that he teaches at a local high school for performing arts. He's also played with Allan Toussaint, Diana Reeves, and Aaron Neville, who was just in Manhattan.



After a bit, John and Amalia, came by and after another drink, we thought we should go find a place to have a bite to eat or dessert. We started back towards our hotel and decided to take advantage of the free dessert being offered in the Concierge Lounge. Suzanne stays at Marriotts a lot when she's traveling so she got "upgraded" when we checked in, which included access to the food and drinks in the lounge. Unfortunately, by the time we got there, most of the dessert was gone, but we did get some cheese cake bites and nuts. Ah, well, it was late anyway.



### Lost time

Our plans for Friday were to walk across the street to the Riverwalk Outlet shops and poke around a bit, then head down to the French Quarter again to wander around, take the streetcar up St. Charles to the Garden District and end up at back in the French Quarter at the Cafe DuMonde for an afternoon beignet. As they say, the best laid plans... So, we are

browsing in the shops in the Riverwalk when Suzanne was stopped at one of those mid-aisle kiosks selling facial products. Fabio, the sales person, was very skilled at pulling in suckers, er... I mean potential customers. And despite Suzanne's resistance (and mine; part of the pitch is to get the spouse/partner involved in the presentation), he ended up taking a half hour of our time. Suzanne was very good at deflecting all his attempts to sell his products (a miracle skin-care regimen that promised to make you look twenty years younger if you use it every week for two years; the price started out at \$750 for a syringe-like tube, then he threw in an extra tube of the stuff for me, then added skin cleanser and some other things and finally the price was down to \$149 for the whole kit) and we finally were able to disengage and head to the real destination of the morning, the Coach Outlet store. Along the way, we ran into John and Amalia, I bought some socks, Suzanne bought a new pair of purple pumps (K-State's school color is purple, and a sweater, and finally, she found just the right purse at the Coach store.

By this time, it was about 1:30 and since we hadn't eaten, we stopped at Mulate's for lunch before heading back to the hotel to drop off our purchases before the next leg of our adventure.

### **Lost streetcar**

The afternoon zipped past and we headed towards St. Charles to catch the streetcar to the Garden District. Just before we got to the streetcar stop, we saw one pull away, but another one was right behind it. OK, good, no problem. But the one that pulled up was out of service and the conductor said that the next one would be along in eight minutes. As that one pulled away, two couples walked across the street and were distressed to see it leaving. We explained that another one would be along shortly and we got into a conversation with the two women while the men were busy trying to figure out where they were and where they were going. It turns out that they were all from San Francisco, were retired teachers, loved coming to New Orleans, and had just had lunch with at least two bottles of wine, the last part of which "Patty" was carrying. After about ten minutes, we all started wondering where the streetcar was and by the time twenty minutes had passed, Suzanne and I decided that we weren't going to have time to go to the Garden District after all and headed back to the hotel. As we were walking along St. Charles, we saw the streetcar coming and it was packed with tourists and it looked like locals who used it to get to work and back home. Along the way back to the Marriott, we happened up a hotel bar serving beignets and coffee and even though it was not the Cafe DuMond, it was a pleasant place to have a late afternoon snack.





## Lost shrimp cocktail

Almost 25 years ago, my friends and colleagues, Terry Hackney and the late Gene Speichinger, attended a community development conference in Louisiana. We spent a couple of days in Lafayette, in the heart of Cajun country, and then a couple more days in New Orleans. One night in NOLA, we went to a restaurant called Dooky Chase's that had been recommended to us by one of our hosts in Lafayette. He said that it was the most authentic Creole food in New Orleans, so we decided to check it out. Now, at the time, the restaurant was located in a pretty rough part of town and when we got there, the security guard walked us from our car inside a chainlink-fenced lot to the front door. Inside we found a beautiful dining room filled with people who looked like they had just come from a fancy-dress ball, the men in tuxes and the women in formal dresses. We inquired of our waiter what the occasion was and he said that they people dressed like this all the time to come to the restaurant. We were in sport coats and ties and felt under-dressed. We had one of the best meals I've ever had and so I thought that Suzanne and I should go back during our visit to New Orleans.

Now, Dooky Chase's has a long and storied history as a restaurant and meeting place for early civil rights pioneers. I highly recommend that you read about it here <http://www.dookychaserestaurant.com/about>. Anyway, we got to the restaurant about 7:00 and were seated at a very nice table (as it turns out, it was right next to one that President Obama had been seated at on an earlier visit; he seemed to enjoy his meal as much as we did; this is a photo of a photo hanging in the lobby of the restaurant). Our server, Jerelyn, was a bubbly, friendly young lady who helped us choose just the right things for dinner. Dooky's is open for dinner on Friday nights and has a limited menu, which is refreshing, seeing as how most menus these days are six pages long, making it nearly impossible to really choose what you want (a conundrum, I know). We decided to start with a shrimp cocktail with fried green tomatoes and house salads with Leah's special vinaigrette dressing. Suzanne ordered the catfish with onion rings and mac and cheese, and I chose the seafood platter which had shrimp, broiled redfish, and stuffed crab. For a side, I ordered candied yams and peach cobbler for dessert. In a few minutes, Jerelyn brought out our salads and said that our dinners would be out shortly. Apparently,



the shrimp cocktail got lost along the way, but no worries; I had plenty of shrimp with my dinner, though I did regret not having the fried green tomatoes. Dinner was as good as I had remembered from 25 years ago and the peach cobbler was excellent.





When we finished our meal and paid the check (for one of the least expensive meals we had in New Orleans, or Baton Rouge, I asked the hostess the best way to get a taxi. She gave me the number of what she called a “reliable company” and I went into the lounge to call. While I was doing that, Suzanne chatted with the hostess and in a minute came out to the lounge and asked me if I wanted to meet Mrs. Chase. Wow, how could I turn that down? So, we were escorted back to the kitchen where Leah Chase, the owner and matriarch of the restaurant was seated at a small table with her great granddaughter. I told her that I had been to her restaurant years before and just had to bring Suzanne back to experience it. She said she hoped that we had enjoyed our meal and introduced us to her five year-old great-granddaughter, who, she explained was writing a menu for Christmas dinner. “All my grandkids love to write menus,” Mrs. Chase explained. It must be in their DNA. Well, we had a nice chat and then it was time to leave. She wished us a Merry Christmas, as we did her and caught our cab back to the hotel.

Now, I haven’t met many celebrities in my life, besides Lidia Bastianich and Stan Musial, who was my childhood hero, but I can say in all honesty that I’ll never meet one as gracious as Mrs. Chase. In the lobby of the restaurant, in addition to the photo of President Obama, is a display of pictures and memorabilia from Popes Benedict and Francis, both of whom has sent her birthday greetings and thanks for her work in the parishes of New Orleans. It’s easy to see why she is so revered locally and internationally.

### **Lost notebook**

We were scheduled to leave New Orleans on Saturday morning and so we got up, packed, and headed to the airport for our 11:15 flight back to Manhattan. When we got to the airport, I realized that I had left my moleskin notebook on the desk in the hotel room. Rats! That is the notebook I use to record observations about places we have been, people and incidents we’ve encountered, my to-do lists, and in the pocket in the back, clippings from the New Yorker or books I want to read. It’s not something that I lose lightly. So, while we were standing in line waiting to go through security, I called the hotel and talked to Kimberly Johnson, who assured me that they would look for the notebook and give me a call when they found it. A few minutes later, she called and sure enough, they had the notebook and would FedEx it to me. Now, I had to pay for the shipping, but that was not in question. So, sometime today (Tuesday, December 22), the FedEx truck will pull up and hand me my notebook (I’ve already tracked it and know that it is “out for delivery”). What a relief. Digital media is useful and the Cloud is a great place to store things, but some of us still cherish what we record with paper and pen/pencil.

### **Lost lunch order**

So, there we were at the NOLA airport, having missed breakfast because we slept in a bit more than we planned, hungry and looking for some place to get a quick bite. There it was: Copeland’s of New Orleans. A limited airport menu, to be sure, but the breakfast biscuits looked good, so we ordered a couple along with a cup of coffee and while I

made a quick stop in the facilities, Suzanne waited for our order. And waited. And waited. Finally, after about fifteen minutes, during which people with order numbers 35, 36, 93, 97, 406, and 7,086 got their orders, the counter person discovered that our order had been lost somehow (apparently their computer system had been hacked resulting in our order being sent to a corner food truck in Baltimore or Berlin; I mean, that's the only logical explanation). OK, so we got our food, which was, I'll admit, a couple of steps up from a McDonald's egg, bacon and cheese biscuit, and had a leisurely five-minute meal before our plane started boarding.

### **Lost luggage**

I probably don't have to give the details of this. Suffice it to say that our suitcase with all of Suzanne's purchases, shoes, make-up and medicine, along with my sport coat, pants, raincoat, umbrella and jacket weren't on the plane when we got back to Manhattan. Thank goodness for bar codes and computer tracking. Our bag was delivered on Sunday afternoon, safe and sound and joyously welcomed home. The prodigal had returned. Praise be American Airlines.

Well, it was a wonderful trip. We thoroughly enjoyed our time with our friends, and what can you say about New Orleans except that it is a truly unique, fun, tasty city? For me, I'd be happy to live there... from November 1st to the end of March, perhaps. Just a little loft apartment in the Warehouse Arts District, where we could see palm trees and Christmas decoration and have a beignet and cafe au lait whenever we wanted. We might even get to ride the St.Charles Avenue streetcar every now and then.

