

Name: Hannah Babcock

Block: 2

Date: 11/8

The destruction of Hurricane Katrina cost about \$160 billion, making it the costliest natural disaster in United States history. Hurricane Katrina was a tropical cyclone that struck the southeastern United States in late August of 2005. The hurricane and aftermath killed about 1800 people. Due to the severity of the storm, 204,000 homes were damaged or destroyed, and more than 800,000 citizens were displaced. The reason that it caused so much destruction is because the levee system gave out and caused flooding to 80 percent of New Orleans. Due to the damage to the city, New Orleans lost about 29 percent of its population. The damage was so severe that it took about 18 months for people to recover from the storm. And, because the city was so flooded, the final flood waters were pumped out on October 11, almost 2 months after the hurricane hit. Around 250,000 volunteers helped restore New Orleans.

My Grandma was one of those volunteers. She remembers when it first happened, and it dawned on her that the company she worked for – The American Library Association – had a major meeting coming up in New Orleans the following spring.

She remembers panicking and thinking, “This is a huge situation. This is a massive meeting and now it may not happen.”

The meeting not happening would be a huge blow to the company.

Since she was the conference services director, she had some of the biggest influence on whether they had the conference there or not.

The city of New Orleans reached out to them and told them to come down and see the city because they believed it would be possible to host the conference. After seeing the city, my Grandmother decided to recommend to the board to host the conference there. She talked about how New Orleans was a conference city and how the people of New Orleans knew how to run a conference. The only problem was that because of the destruction, many of the people that could help run the conference had left.

The American Library Association’s annual conference usually has about 20,000 people attending. They figured due to the circumstances that not as many people would come so it would be okay if there weren’t as many workers. New Orleans also made plans to get people to come back by giving them free hotel rooms until their houses were rebuilt. All the other conferences canceled except for them so all the focus was on their event. Along with that, the librarians of New Orleans needed help. During the hurricane there was a children's library that got flooded. So many librarians got together and did a two-day makeover. The makeover ended up making the library better than it was prior to the destruction. It was one of the big things her company did to help restore the city. The

whole city worked together to make sure that the city was in good enough condition to host the conference by rebuilding hotels and restaurants. Instead of 20,000 people, there were 17,000. Many people wanted to speak at the conference including the First Lady. The meeting ended up being a success.

When she was there at the time, the city was in disrepair, but three years later when she went back the city was bustling, like it was before the hurricane. It was as if her actions helped New Orleans become reborn again. Everyone was very grateful for the conference. Due to her role in the restoration of the city, she received many awards, including from the mayor and the governor. She also was invited to participate in the Mardi Gras parade, The Academy Awards and The Emmy Awards.

Prior to the disaster, my Grandma never really thought about hurricanes or any natural disasters. But, after her experience with the hurricane, her view changed completely. She learned the severity of the disasters and the impact they have on civilians. She also learned the importance of teamwork and how when people work together there are so many more possibilities. As she reflects on that time, she thinks about the stories of teamwork that she experienced and teaches them to her grandchildren so they also truly know the meaning of teamwork.