

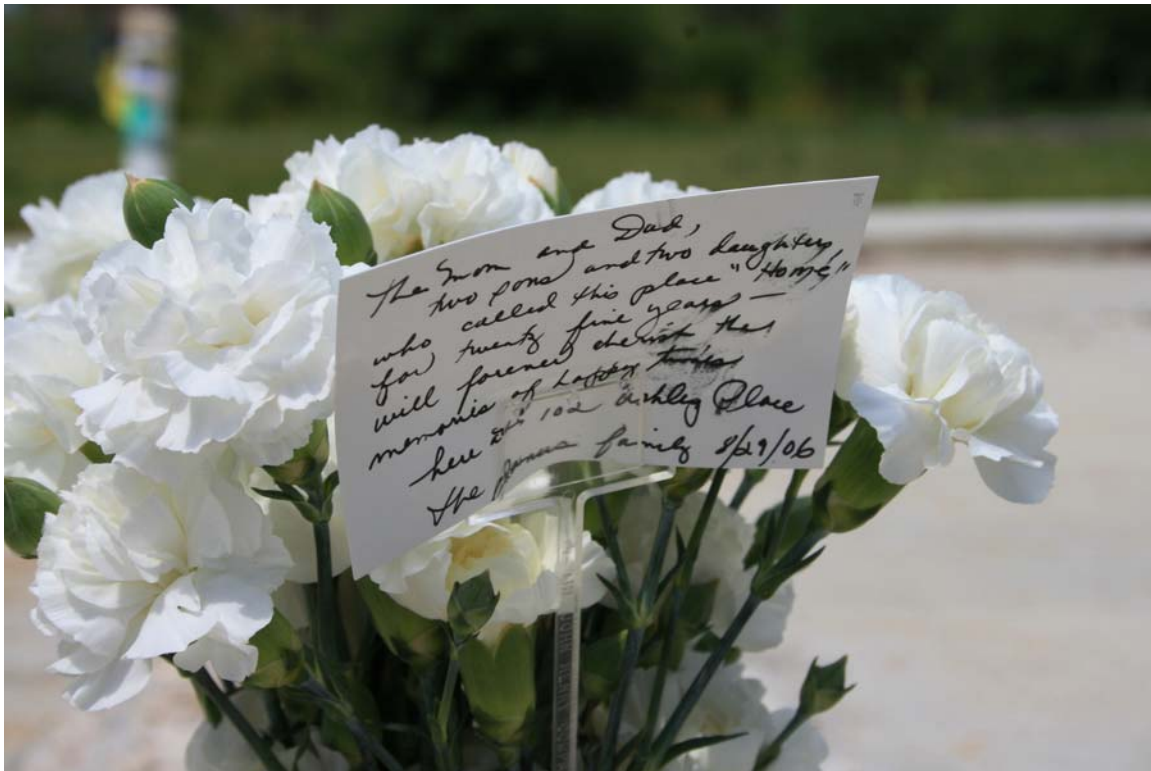
Anniversary Flowers

They're not the world's most beautiful or iconic images and they most certainly wouldn't be chosen for awards, but to me these few images are about the story behind the image and not the image itself. I arrived in Mississippi late Monday night and have been wandering around photographing what remains, one year after Katrina hit. I didn't know what to expect or even what kind of story I might put together about it before I left. Upon arriving in Biloxi, I first explored a small stretch of shore along highway 90. Houses, restaurants and shops all ripped from their foundations, empty beaches, tattered buildings and signs that stood where businesses were once. Of the few houses that were still standing, there was nothing left but the cement foundations they were built upon and maybe, if you were lucky, a few nick-knacks strewn along the ground next to the overturned trees.

As I explored that stretch of the coast I went from photographing the damaged structures to capturing the few possessions left behind by the storm. I saw jars of fruit that had been preserved and were still perfectly intact. What appeared to be simple jars of spoiled fruit are now the only physical thing left from someone's life and couldn't bear to be thrown away.



Then there was the vase of fresh flowers I came upon. It was sitting upon an empty foundation to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the disaster. It was from the Janus family stating that though even though the house is gone, their good memories of the times they shared there were not.



Card on Flowers reads: The Mom and Dad, two sons and two daughters who called this place "Home" for twenty-five years will forever cherish the memories of happy times at 102 Ashley Place, The Janus Family 8/29/06.

The Bissenet family had a bit more luck, if you dare to even call it that. One year after Katrina hit, the family is still together and living in their home, but not after first arriving home to find that the entire house was flooded with raw sewage. One year later the family celebrates what they have and what they worked hard for. They also remember those who helped them in their time of need. Mike, father of 6, recalled receiving a phone call on Christmas Eve from an unidentified person who simply asked if he was home. A few minutes after he hung up the phone there was a knock at the door. Upon opening it there was no one there, but his front porch was covered in Christmas presents for the whole family. Mike took a breath to recall how moved he was and still is and stated that he was so thankful that his family could have Christmas even in this time of uncertainty and that

he does believe in Santa Clause. When asked what he thought his children would remember most about Hurricane Katrina, he hopes, if they remember nothing else, the one thing they remember would be that their father kept them together and stuck it out and rebuilt the house so the family would always have each other and a place to be. Katrina may have come and wiped out a families home or left behind only unimportant nick-knacks or flooded a house with sewage, but it didn't change the foundation of "home" and "family" and what is most important in life.



Tia Brooks grew up in the Chicagoland area and is currently attending The University of the Arts London where she is working towards her Masters Degree in Photojournalism. She can be contacted via email at postmoderntourist@mac.com