

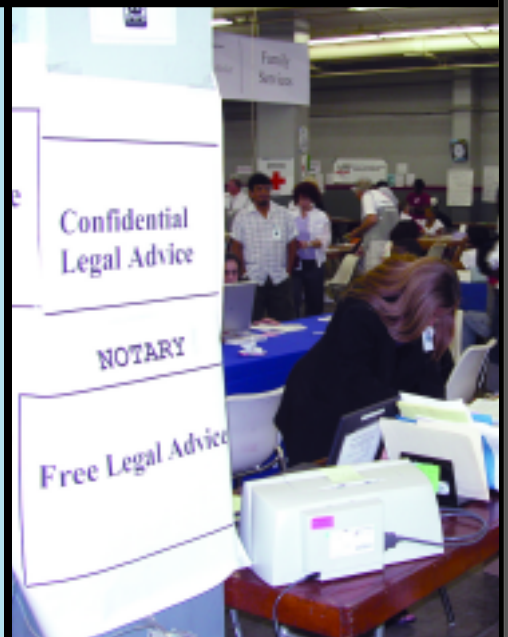
Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Phoenix and lawyers providing help (at right) inside.



IN THE WAKE OF THE STORM



LAWYERS LEND A HAND



Left: Phoenix training session for attorneys who offered to help.

Hurricane Katrina made landfall on August 29 with a tremendous force. By the time it passed, it had destroyed lives and livelihood. It also uprooted thousands of people, many of whom had to become evacuees. Those people had to travel across state lines to find temporary shelter.

Phoenix and Tucson became such a temporary home for many people fleeing with their scant possessions. Among their many needs were legal dilemmas, some that no one would have foreseen.

Soon after the Gulf evacuation began, the governor's office contacted the State Bar of Arizona. The Governor asked that the State Bar coordinate a statewide effort to meet the legal needs of whatever evacuees were to come our way. That request started a whirlwind of activity at the Bar and throughout the state.

Ultimately, the Bar and affiliated lawyers groups prepared and fielded teams of lawyers who volunteered to assist the refugees in their temporary homes. State Bar staff members also volunteered; for example, the notaries on the Bar staff provided their services. That commitment led to lawyers and others assisting evacuees in the Phoenix Coliseum and the Tucson Convention Center.

Helen Perry Grimwood, the State Bar President, writes on page 6 about the logistical efforts that were needed to help the evacuees; that story is one of coordination and compassion.

On these pages, we asked a few of the lawyers who assisted in both Phoenix and Tucson to write a few words about what they saw and what they heard in those first traumatic weeks.

Good Deeds and Good Spirits

BY SALLY SIMMONS

As I have thought about our experience, I was most impressed by two things:

A. First, the rapid response of Southern Arizona lawyers. I think it's important for lawyers to be reminded from time to time that we do good work and we do good deeds. In this instance, we announced the need for lawyer participation on a Monday or Tuesday. By Thursday afternoon, there were 30 lawyers sitting in a conference room planning how to get this done. Every spot in the schedule for providing legal services was immediately filled by volunteers. When we got to the scene, others simply had showed up to work. These folks have stayed committed and are willing and able to help in any way they can. The majority of lawyers, I am convinced, want to help others. This was a prime example of that spirit being converted to action.

B. Second, I was struck by the good nature and good spirits of all who were at the Tucson Convention Center, both evacuees and volunteers. Our first "case" came because a police captain asked us to talk to a minister who was trying to help an evacuee who had been arrested the night before. The captain knew he had to do his job, but he wanted to be sure that the evacuee didn't get lost in the crowd. The minister was making the same sorts of efforts and was so appreciative of the efforts we'd made to make sure this person got help.

(The state and federal public defenders' offices were absolutely great—see point A above.) Every person we talked to had a thank-you, a word of appreciation and remarkable patience in light of difficult circumstances. I have received an e-mail in the last few days that painted a different picture of the evacuees and which, frankly, upset me. I think it's important to give folks the message that at least in Tucson we had folks who were kind to each other, grateful for our efforts and genuinely making the best of what they had.

Sally Simmons is a partner with Lewis and Roca LLP in Tucson.

Reeling From the Disaster

BY SUSAN STONE ROSENFELD

I was glad to have the opportunity to personally help just a few individuals relocated to Arizona who were reeling from the disaster of Katrina and the following flood. What struck me most was that the legal issues faced by the survivors were the kind of day-to-day issues that many people face, but they were brought about by the overwhelming nature of the disaster.

For example, at the Coliseum in Phoenix, a very nice man from New Orleans, probably in his 30s, needed help in his efforts to reunite with his young daughter, who has been living for many years in Phoenix with her mother. He showed us a small photo album of pictures he had

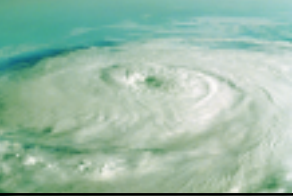
brought. There were photos of his New Orleans neighborhood, of the raft he and others had fashioned to ferry nonswimmers, children and the elderly from rooftops to the Superdome. There also were images of bodies wrapped in tarps and people sleeping on the floor of the sports stadium.

It seemed to me that by sharing these pictures with us, he was bearing witness to the tragedy he had experienced. I was glad to do the small amount I could to assist him in his efforts to reunite with his daughter.

We met another man in his late 30s who had lost everything, but he had such an optimistic outlook. He was excited to have been offered two promising jobs in Phoenix, and to have found housing assistance from a private individual in town. He and his wife were looking forward to staying in Phoenix, but he needed help getting a credit card company to agree to defer payment requirements until they were on their feet. He spend quite a long time speaking with us, I think as a way, again, to bear witness.

Finally, a 19-year-old who had last slept four days earlier came to us because he needed help with bail bond documents; he had had an altercation with an acquaintance with whom he escaped Katrina's devastation. My sense was that had he and his friend not been reeling from the effects of Katrina, he might never have needed our assistance.

Susan Stone Rosenfeld is Of Counsel at Fennemore Craig in Phoenix.



Hope Helps a Flood Victim

BY TODD HALE

On September 8, my associate Abbe Goncharsky asked me to attend a meeting of lawyers gathering to discuss legal aid for Hurricane Katrina evacuees. About 80 evacuees had arrived the evening before at

or otherwise help for as long as necessary. By luck of the sign-up sheet, I helped staff the legal aid desk the next day. I met many fine people, both evacuees and volunteers. We did our best to help evacuees address problems that included: temporary guardianship in Arizona for an evacuated child; whether an employee could expect to be paid by her now washed-away

could just get the form notarized and express mailed, he hoped to use the insurance money to stake a new life in Tucson.

From his jovial demeanor and chatty personality, you would have thought that Mickey had just won the lottery, not lost essentially all his worldly possessions. He appeared to be pushing 30. He'd previously worked as an electrician in the military and had recently completed an engineering degree. He was having no luck finding an engineering job in New Orleans when Katrina forced him and his relatives to evacuate their New Orleans homes, leaving in a caravan of pickups and hunting trailers.

Like many, they left on short notice with almost nothing, having underestimated, or "overhoped" about, Katrina's severity. Mickey got tired of living in Florida roadside motels in the days after Katrina. He spent a lot more than he thought he'd have to for a plane ticket to Tucson, where he'd been once before, where he knew it was dry, and

where he hoped the job market was better.

It was impossible not to enjoy chatting with Mickey, so I agreed to walk him back to my office, where my secretary, Ruby, notarized and helped him mail his insurance form. He also had a floppy disk and wondered if we could help him print his resume so he could start job hunting. I thought that would be simple, but the disk was "corrupted." Using tricks that I still do not understand, our Phoenix-based information systems staff was able remotely to recover Mickey's resume, print it, and save it to a compact disk so Mickey could



the Red Cross emergency shelter, which the Tucson community, in a whirlwind of activity appropriate for a hurricane, had set up inside the Tucson Convention Center.

As a Board member of the Red Cross's Southern Arizona Chapter, I expected to say a few words to a few lawyers about the evacuees and the Red Cross's relief efforts. Instead, I found our conference room overflowing with a cross-section of the Bar: sole practitioners, partners and associates from firms of every size; prosecutors and defense lawyers, the fine people from the Volunteer Lawyers Project, and of course

Professor Andy Silverman and law students from the U of A College of Law. All were there on short notice, and all immediately volunteered to staff a legal aid desk at the Convention Center

employer for pre-hurricane work; and how a parent could make a child support payment at a New Orleans parish office that also was washed away.

Although not really a legal issue, one story stands out and bears repeating.

Mickey N. said that he didn't mean to bother us all (he of course said "y'all," in a thick, quintessentially Louisiana accent), but he wondered if we could help him notarize an insurance claim form. It was for his new Jeep, which he last heard was under or adrift in nine feet of flood waters outside his east New Orleans home. If he

More Information Available

As this issue goes to press, most all of the evacuees have left the Coliseum and the Convention Center. Some have returned to the Gulf region, and others have decided to remain in Arizona, at least for the near future.

Even with those two venues emptied of refugees, their legal and other needs will continue in the coming months.

For more information, or to see how you can help, go to the State Bar's Web site:

www.myazbar.org/AZBarInfo/katrina_relief.cfm

update it. While the IS people did whatever they do, Mickey regaled me and my office staff with upbeat stories about his intent to find a job in Tucson and begin anew. I then walked Mickey back to the TCC and told him to call if he ever needed anything else.

Eight days later I picked up my office phone and was surprised to hear Mickey's still-exuberant Southern drawl. He wanted to thank the nice lady in my office who helped him get his dream job. Unbeknownst to me, a secretary in my office had overheard Mickey talking about hoping to find an engineering job. As we left my office, she handed Mickey a note with the names and numbers of several Tucson construction firms, suggesting that he begin his job search with them.

Mickey wanted us to know that the following Monday would be his first day on the job in Arizona, working as an engineer for The Ashton Company. And as if that weren't enough, he wanted me to know, and could I believe it, that he was even going to get a company car.

At the risk of being trite, I would be remiss if I did not point out that the secretary who handed the note to Mickey is named Hope.

Todd Hale is a litigation partner with Lewis and Roca LLP in Tucson.

Disaster and Relief

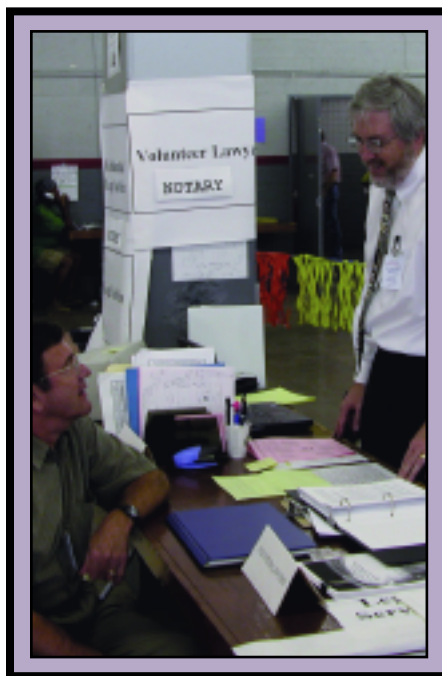
BY PENNY L. WILLRICH

It was not a disaster when I walked into Veterans Memorial Coliseum with the Arizona Volunteer Lawyers Assessment Team. We were met with a sea of smiling faces and the hustle and bustle of folks trying to return their lives to normalcy. The efforts of the Governor and her staff brought a sigh of relief for me, when I saw all of the community and governmental agencies represented to provide assistance to the citizens of Louisiana.

In the wake of the hurricane and its aftermath, I had sat at home wondering



how I could help. As a former legal services lawyer, I knew that there must be some effort going on to help the citizens with their legal needs. My call to Lillian Johnson, Executive Director of Community Legal Services, led me to Pat Gerrich, Director of the Volunteer Lawyers Program. Through those connections, I became one of the volunteers to provide much-needed legal assistance at the Coliseum. The Governor's request to State Bar President Helen Perry Grimwood resulted in more than 125 lawyers volunteering to provide free legal assistance to evacuees.



There were myriad legal problems on which we provided counsel and advice, including: family (custody, visitation and child support), criminal (pending court dates and probation/parole), employment (notifying employers where to send the last paycheck), social security (identification problems and reinstatement), housing (reviewing lease agreements), banking (closing bank accounts), retirement (access to 401k), small business (loan forgiveness), education (enrolling in school and student loans). And we directed other people to other agencies that could provide services.

We had word processing, Internet and

telephone services available, which allowed us to locate addresses of businesses, make telephone calls on behalf of the citizens and prepare documents. We had volunteer notaries who assisted us in notarizing affidavits, bail bonds and other documents. We had volunteers from the Arizona Legal Education Foundation who assisted in answering questions, Internet searches and preparing documents. Because of the location of our station, we also served as the traffic directors, ensuring that those in need found the right agency.

Sometimes just our listening ears were important. A 75-year-old woman, who could not have been more than five feet tall, explained how she stood in water up to her chin in her home for five days before being rescued through her roof. Throughout the ordeal, she just prayed to be able to see her grandchildren. The day that I was speaking to her, she had just received an airline ticket to Indiana, where she was permanently relocating.

Another couple, who have decided to remain in Phoenix, was waiting to reunite with their 15-day-old baby. As I talked to them, they each cried not because of the disaster, but because they were grateful to be alive. They said that they were going to take this opportunity just to start all over, and they had hope of great things to come. And, hope of things to come seems to be the key.

Though they had just lived through perhaps the worst circumstance of their lives, all of the clients whom I assisted had hope. They had hope of a new beginning. They had hope for stability. They had hope for better relations between our diverse communities. They had hope for improvement in our system of government. Many had decided to make Arizona their home, and others were hoping to reunite with their families in other parts of the country. They were all thankful for the outpouring of support shown by the citizens of Arizona.

I am humbled and appreciative for the opportunity to serve the underserved community again and to offer a ray of hope. ❏

Penny L. Willrich, Judge (Retired), is a professor of law at Phoenix International School of Law.