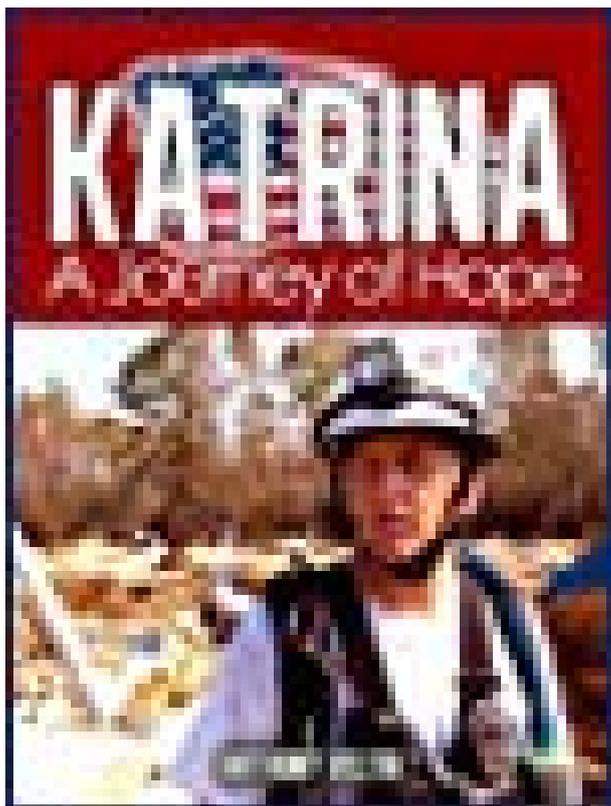


Hurricane Katrina: A Journey of Hope



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Imagine that when you wake up tomorrow, the clothes on your back will be everything you own. For so many of my fellow countrymen, this nightmare scenario quickly became their reality following the landfall of Hurricane Katrina. If I had just one on to share as a result of my experience post-Hurricane Katrina, it would be this: When disaster strikes, there will be those who require the aid of their fellow man, and there will be those who are fortunate enough to escape serious harm. Those in the second group have the option of retreating to safety; if the situation warrants, they can return to help those in need who were unable to help themselves. Do everything in your power to make sure that you and those who rely on you are part on the second group. In a crisis, having multiple options and the willingness to use those options is price. Here's the bottom line: if nothing else, this book will make you more aware of the wrath of nature. Hopefully, it will also make you start to think about what steps you would take to protect your family BEFORE something like this happens again. If you make it a priority, it will make itself so. It costs nothing to start planning in your head what you would do the time the next big one hits. And I'm not just talking about hurricanes here. Start thinking about what action you would take and talk it over with your family. Planning is a great first step that costs nothing and can save your life. Many disciplines were involved in the FEMA-coordinated rescue and recovery efforts following the landfall of Hurricane Katrina. Urban Search and Rescue, or USAR for short, is a discipline that came into the forefront of public awareness after the events of 9-11 exposed the need for specialized crews that could effectively rescue those trapped in collapsed structures made of reinforced concrete. Following those tragic events, many states received funding from the Department of Homeland Security to develop USAR capabilities. The work is dangerous, unglamorous, and demanding, both physically

and mentally. USAR crews must train to operate in a variety of disciplines and be prepared to operate in all-hazard environments ranging from natural disasters to terrorist events. Rhode Island deployed its trained but untested USAR Task Force 1 (RITF1) to Mississippi in the aftermath of the disaster. No amount of training could prepare anyone for the destruction that was unleashed by the storm surge that swept inland as Katrina made landfall. This book serves to document some of the challenges that RITF1 faced and overcame along the way. This book is intended for readers who want to learn more about Hurricane Katrina, or USAR in general. It would also engage readers interested in photography, as the book has large, high quality photos to help tell the story. Lastly, readers in technology, specifically geographic information systems (GIS), would benefit from this book. The primary technical skill set I utilized while deployed was manipulation of geospatial data to produce maps for responders. Much has changed since September, 2005. A laptop or tablet device can now perform many of the same geospatial analyses that would have required a small team of GIS professionals in 2005. While there is comfort in relying in technology when times are good, we must remember that ultimately, we rely on ourselves and each other when things go bad.