

THE ROCKS IN OUR HEADS

Interlude II *50th New Orleans*

New Orleans
Spring, 2001



Flagstaff, AZ •

• Farmington, NM

New Orleans

Stockbridge •

Bar Harbor •

Map Legend

- Lodging for a previous trip
- Lodging for this trip

A Word on the Trip Diaries and Their Odd Titles

Loie has always taken notes on our trips; I used to struggle with a lot of gear and took pictures. At some point she got a small camera and took over the photography. Before digital photography and personal computers, Loie and I used to make picture albums for our trips. Now we've gone digital!

As you may have read in the Introduction document and the diary for *Driving Yo*, we've been taking trips we call Driving the Stone Age. That's a long story, but we've both been interested in old stuff for a long time, so we took one trip in 1999, to the Scottish Highlands and out islands, looking for what we thought would be a good introduction to the beginnings of Western Civilization in the Neolithic monuments so prevalent there. We decided we weren't seeing the *beginning*, but that it was fun nonetheless. (See *The Rocks in our Heads, Driving the Stone Age I: Highlands and Islands*.) And we got the Europe bug, so went to Italy and France, sometimes on trips that were mainly Driving the Stone Age, sometimes not.

So as the trip diaries and albums accumulated, and when we created a Life List of prehistoric sites, I started to name the trips. We had *DtSAs*, and *Interludes*: trips with few or no prehistoric sites.

Then, I started to write an essay based on our thoughts garnered driving the Stone Age, and a whole lot of reading. Loie didn't like the working title, so I changed it to *The Rocks in Our Heads*. When the Trip Diaries went digital, I decided to munge the two projects by including a serial version of the essay at the ends of the diaries.

So now we have *The Rocks in Our Heads: DtSAs* and *The Rocks in Our Heads: Interludes*, both of which may end with an essay installment.

Documentation Notes

In the beginning, Loie wrote out her Trip Diaries in longhand in notebooks. For our trip "Driving the Stone Age X, *The Oldest Stones*" she bought a netbook computer and began to write her diaries with it. That made formatting the diaries a lot easier!

But there were a few trips since that one where lugging the netbook was less than congenial, and she went back to hand-written notes.

Her handwriting is beautiful, and I wanted to preserve some aspects of it. In the Trip Diaries it has a few short-hand style shortcuts. So, when you see $\&$ meaning "and," or @ meaning "at," or "w/" meaning "with" you will know that I have transcribed a hand-written diary.

Navigation Tips

These interactive PDFs include...

- a Bookmarks List for Days and their individual events, use the Bookmarks; we hope your device will make that easy;
- a clickable/tappable Table of Contents, and;
- various hyperlinks.

You may also just page through by...

- scrolling, clicking Page Down buttons, or;
- right side tapping/right left swiping;
- depending on your viewing device.

▶ Zoom the pictures to examine details.

Table of Contents

Preparation

Day 1: Thursday, April 5, 2001—Departure

Day 2: Friday, April 6, 2001—Vieux Carré
Walking Tour

Day 3: Saturday, April 7, 2001—Plantation
Drive

Day 4: Sunday, April 8, 2001—Royal Sonesta
Brunch; Mardi Gras World, Algiers
Point

Day 5: Monday, April 9, 2001—Return

Afterword

Meals in New Orleans 2001 (Yum!)

Preparation

Loie asked me what I wanted to do for my 50th birthday.

“Lets go to New orleans,” I said.

Probably I was remembering our first trip to New Orleans when we stayed on Ursuline Street. Loie agreed, and so, we started thinking about New Orleans.

We planned a few things, including renting a car to take a Plantation Drive up the river. The Maison de Ville hotel had parking available, so that seemed easy enough.

I also wanted to expand our Creole cuisine experience and noted a bunch of restaurants, sandwich places and dishes to look for.

We were ready to go!

Day 1: Thursday, April 5, 2001—Departure and Arrival

10³⁰_A Thursday @ BWI waiting to board US Airways flight 2611 to New Orleans.

I developed a schedule to get us to the airport on time—worked great!* We arrived @ the airport on schedule. This allowed us enough time without a long wait in the airport—sat for a while in a cocktail lounge for coffee + cigarettes.

8¹⁰_A Friday in courtyard of the [Hotel Maison de Ville](#). Pleasant, light breeze, humid, sunny.

We checked in to our hotel at about 3 PM—our room—7—is small but pleasant, a high comfortable bed, marble bathroom/shower. We are the middle room on the second floor balcony, looking over the courtyard + across to the Court of Two Sisters. It's lovely + despite the proximity to Bourbon St, not noisy—so far! We'll see what the weekend brings. (Valet parking)

Off of the back part of the main house as a kind of wing is a “garconniere”—the hotel booklet says a separate annex for the young men of the family—when this was a family house. Why they needed such is intriguing and disturbing!

Having had no lunch, we walked around the corner to Poppa Joe's for lunch—B wanted red beans + rice with andouille sausage, + I had crawfish etouffé. We strolled around—I bought sandals @ Aerosol's on Jackson Square + then we came back to the hotel for a nap before supper. [Galatoire's](#) —w/ tile floor, cook hooks and mirrored walls—was funny—our waiter, Reynard, was big, black, handsome, + from Barbados. He was like a boxer—graceful on his feet but (to me) with a subtle hint of danger. He put on a show, acting genial + overwhelmingly friendly.

And our supper was delicious (appetizer: crab salad, shrimp

remoulade, crawfish salad + oysters + bacon encrusted + deep-fried; B—lamb chops; me—trout encrusted + fried—not my/our favorite; salads, potatoes + a rich, chocolatey but not sweet cake in raspberry sauce; 2 bottles of wine) AND the most divine coffee ever—maybe on a par with the 1st cup of Kona coffee.

Two happy birthdays were sung, + everyone in Galatoire's seemed to be having a great time. We sat in the downstairs “locals—no reservations” room without having to wait for a table.

B walked me back to our hotel @ 11 PM and I promptly fell asleep while he went out for a Bourbon Street stroll. When I expressed guilt at “deserting” him, he replied, “Oh brother! You just don't understand guys! This is a guy's fantasy, to go out to dinner with a beautiful woman and then put her to bed while he goes out alone!”

* From an “Oh Be Joyful” List Loie saved and pasted in her diary...

Get up 5⁴⁵

Pack car @ 6³⁰

Suitcases, Gunther food, bowls, combs
sparkle basket, scratching post litter box

Leave by 7¹⁵

Arr Yo's @ 8AM

Arr parents house @ 9¹⁵

Leave " " @ 9³⁰

Arr airport 9⁴⁵

Depart 10⁴⁴

ERRANDS

Library

ATM









Day 2: Friday, April 6, 2001—Vieux Carré Walking Tour

We have had a relaxing vacation day. I woke up early—6-ish + got up + went out @ 7 while B slept. It was my intention to walk a bit, but my first stop was the hotel pool, where I met Justine Sanchez. She + her husband are staying in one of the Audubon Cottages. She turned out to be quite the chatty Cathy + I spent half an hour there. With little time remaining, I decided to look for the starting location for today's tour. By the time I got back at 8 AM to look for B for morning OJ he was already awake.

We had continental breakfast in the courtyard at 8³⁰, then strolled to [Café du Monde](#). For beignets—wonderful, as anticipated. We met our tour companions at the NO Coffee Exchange. One of them asked if B was the tour guide!

*Our walking tour of the French Quarter was led by the very knowledgeable Michael. The two hour tour lasted two and a half hours—given financial encouragement, we're sure he would have gone on longer!**

Michael was a heavysset, 50-something light skinned African American who obviously could talk for hours about New Orleans. His tour lasted 2½ hours + covered many subjects, historical + more modern, such as the 4 lines of defense against “river intrusion.” He showed us the metal plates in the ground for checking on termites + told us that what Hawaii + New Orleans have in common is the Formosa termite.

He showed us various architectural styles, told us the difference between balconies + Galleries (3 vs 6 feet) + cemented the high points of political history. Most of the FQ

was burned down in two great fires, both under the Spanish administration. After the second fire, of 1794, the governor instituted the “Spanish Building and Fire Code,” which dictated the architectural forms, street widths, etc. we see now.

We learned about the history, but also about political squabbles about where the Mississippi flood waters should go, and how the Formosa termites are consuming the French Quarter—they even eat tires and metal.

Michael also offered numerous restaurant recommendations, but judging by his proportions, I suspect he goes more for quantity than anything else!

Michael took our picture in front of Jackson Square, and I snapped a shot of one of the pieces of art that are all over the FQ.

We were too late to catch the cemetery tour, so we got a muffaletta for B + a salad for me + lunched on Jackson Square. While B rested + digested, I cruised the flea market, buying a couple of small things. Then, we decided to come home for a nap!

And a very pleasant one it was—now I'm drinking Sandeman's Sherry in the courtyard while I catch up on my travel diary writing. B is still napping, I presume. We have a supper reservation for 8³⁰ PM @ [Clancy's](#), + then I'll find out if I've had enough of a nap to go out after! Tomorrow is our plantation driving day.

Written Sunday, April 18

6³⁰PM Phewph! I haven't been keeping up with the trip diary! And B says he'll never remember what he ate on this trip unless I write it down—that to be done when he joins me

* I am adding in the text Loie typed for a small picture album.

here in the courtyard.

Clancy's wasn't Creole, but it was quite delicious—out in the middle of a nowhere neighborhood—near the Audubon Park and Tulane University. Our server was also a piano player, transplanted in the mid-'70s from Denton (!) to NO. I tried a martini—my first—YUCK!

He bought a shotgun house when the market was down. After Clancy's, we tried the [Maple Leaf Club](#) (a dump), but the advertised zydeco band turned out to be funk music, so we left. B had another night on Bourbon Street.







Day 3: Saturday, April 7, 2001—Plantation Drive

Written Sunday, April 18

Saturday was our plantation day, + after a courtyard breakfast + a couple of things from [Café Beignet](#), we started out (10 AM here, 11 AM @ home!) We talk I-10, following the printed directions from [Laura plantation](#).

*Once we decided to include a plantation visit on this trip, choosing the Laura Plantation was obvious. All we were missing was our own dear Laura for a Lucky/Laura Wonder Tour.**

We've come to realize that in Louisiana or at least NO, they don't waste time or money on signs. This presents an interesting challenge to the tourist. After a missed turn + w/ the help of our maps, we found Laura.

Laura is a Creole cottage, with a few slave cabins still standing, and granny's separate residence nearby, tumbling down.

"This Creole habitation began as a Colapissa Indian village. In 1804, Guillaume DuParc, a French veteran of the American Revolution, set up his plantation in sugarcane + it remained in his family until 1891 when his great-granddaughter, Laura Locoul, sold it to the Florian Waguespack family. Today, 12 original buildings, including slave cabins, still stand on this National Register site.

"In the slave quarters at Laura + neighboring plantations were recorded for the 1st time in the US the West African folk stories of "Compair Lapin," better known today as the tales of

* Except that, Luckily, this turned out not to be a Wonder Tour. The day went very well. tricky navigation not withstanding.

"Br'er Rabbit."**

—From a postcard pasted in the trip diary

Our tour guide was informative, telling us about the family fights that resulted in the house literally being chopped up + part of it moved away from the other half, + Nanette dying at age 94 as a result of cannon fire.

These people were nuts! Originally, the house was a U-shape. When Nanan sold to the kids, the three of them couldn't get along, so they decided one had to go, but he wanted his share of the house. The problem was solved when he chopped off his third and had it moved a few hundred yards away!

The family didn't use the front door (modernish addition)—used once when 4 family members were killed by a tornado while in church. They locked the door after + never unlocked it again!

The house is not completely renovated, but that makes it even more interesting. Our guide told us she'd had a tourist who was a descendent of the branch that moved part of the house. She'd visited many times, but had never been in the Laura house!

From Laura we drove on to [Nottoway](#). Drove a combination of River Road and Route 1 from Laura—slow going + several wrong turns!

Nottoway Plantation—50,000+ sq. feet, and one of the grandest houses open to the public. You could die in here and

** Kind of. The *Br'er Rabbit* of Joel Chandler Harris was collected in Georgia, and published in English. A few years before Harris, Alcée Fortier collected *Compair Lapin* and published it in French. The 2 are similar, but not the same books.

http://www.lauraplantation.com/gen_w_nav.asp?cID=33&grp=4

nobody might find you for years!

Stopped for lunch in a grand room in a refurbished—or modern addition?—outbuilding on the property. Everything about Nottoway is on a grand scale—the man who had it built chose the finest architect (Henry Howard) + told him to build a house grander than anyone else's.

We had lunch at the plantation, and I orderd a mint julep—no mint! The room was elegant, sunlit, with a grand piano and a pianist. With a biker group yucking it up next to us and tourists dining in shorts and tee shirts, our server was much more stylish than his clientele.

Our guide was a tiny, elderly southern lady who said she was born + raised in the area—probably a descendent herself. She knew a lot about those old planters! Nottoway mansion is over 50,000 ft., has loads of bedrooms, + 15 foot ceilings. We decided to skip going to Prejean's—too long a return drive, + ended up at Arnaud's for supper—lovely! The food was excellent, the servers congenial. But everybody dresses too casually.

B out on Bourbon Street again.

Laura Plantation, where they chopped the house in half.







Cajun = Acadian.



Nottaway.

















Day 4: Sunday, April 8, 2001—Royal Sonesta Brunch; Mardi Gras World, Algiers Point

I got up + out by about 8¹⁵, over to Croissant D'or (YUM! coffee) + to check out hotels. Ours is the best overall + none of the others looked good for ALA, for various reasons. When we woke up, we meandered to Begue's* at the Royal Sonesta Hotel for brunch—very nice. We got a special curved banquette seat—like in the old I love Lucy *Brown Derby* episode. At 7 PM, 8 hours later, I'm still full! The Royal Sonesta seems to be a very nice hotel.

Then, to the ferry + across to Algiers Point to visit [Mardi Gras World](#)—one of the neatest places I've ever seen!**

The ferry is fun, and free. It goes back and forth, straight across the river. Nice cool breeze on the water. Good view of the SQ, and River walk. A Carnival cruise ship was docked at Riverwalk, and lots of ships and barges traveled the river.

Somebody has to make those fabulous floats! We're 100% certain that if you could work for Mardi Gras World, you'd be a very strange person. Gigantic metal sheds are crammed with huge heads and fantasy figures. The smallest, wearable "head" masks cost \$2,000–\$5,000.

New Orleanians love parades, and Krewes (civic organizations) provide them. You pay buckets of money to be a member, and that entitles you to ride on a float in a parade and pitch out necklaces and doodads to spectators.

the biggest ones, the Super Krewes, spend mega bucks on their floats, and even have their own special hangars/sheds (called "dens") at Mardi Gras World.

This is one of the companies that makes floats for the

* Closed as of about 2013.

** No longer in Algiers Point. Now on the left bank of the river.

cruise. Big heads, figures, floats—all giant size + wild colors. It was great! I took lots of pictures + I hope they look the way I hope they do. There are huge sheds (dens) belonging to different crews, and the floats for Mardi Gras 2002 are already being built. An elderly couple with whom we chatted in Algiers said the company makes 20 million a year. B wants one of the heads—2-5K!

Our tour was conducted by a young man with a plastic toy microphone and loudspeaker.*** At the end we all got to have a piece of [King's cake](#), but I don't remember if anyone found the prize.

“Blaine Kern's Mardi Gras world—come see where Mardi Gras is made!!

Carnival time happens all the time here. Goal behind the scenes of New Orleans Mardi Gras. See the worlds largest fleet of Carnival floats—and of the artists who create them!”

—From a postcard pasted into the diary

Then B led us on a walking tour of Algiers Point—lots of pretty Creole cottages + definitely a neighborhood that has been discovered. One Creole cottage, built in 1849 as a convent, is for sale for \$289,000—it has no yard + is 2,222 ft.!! But, cute.

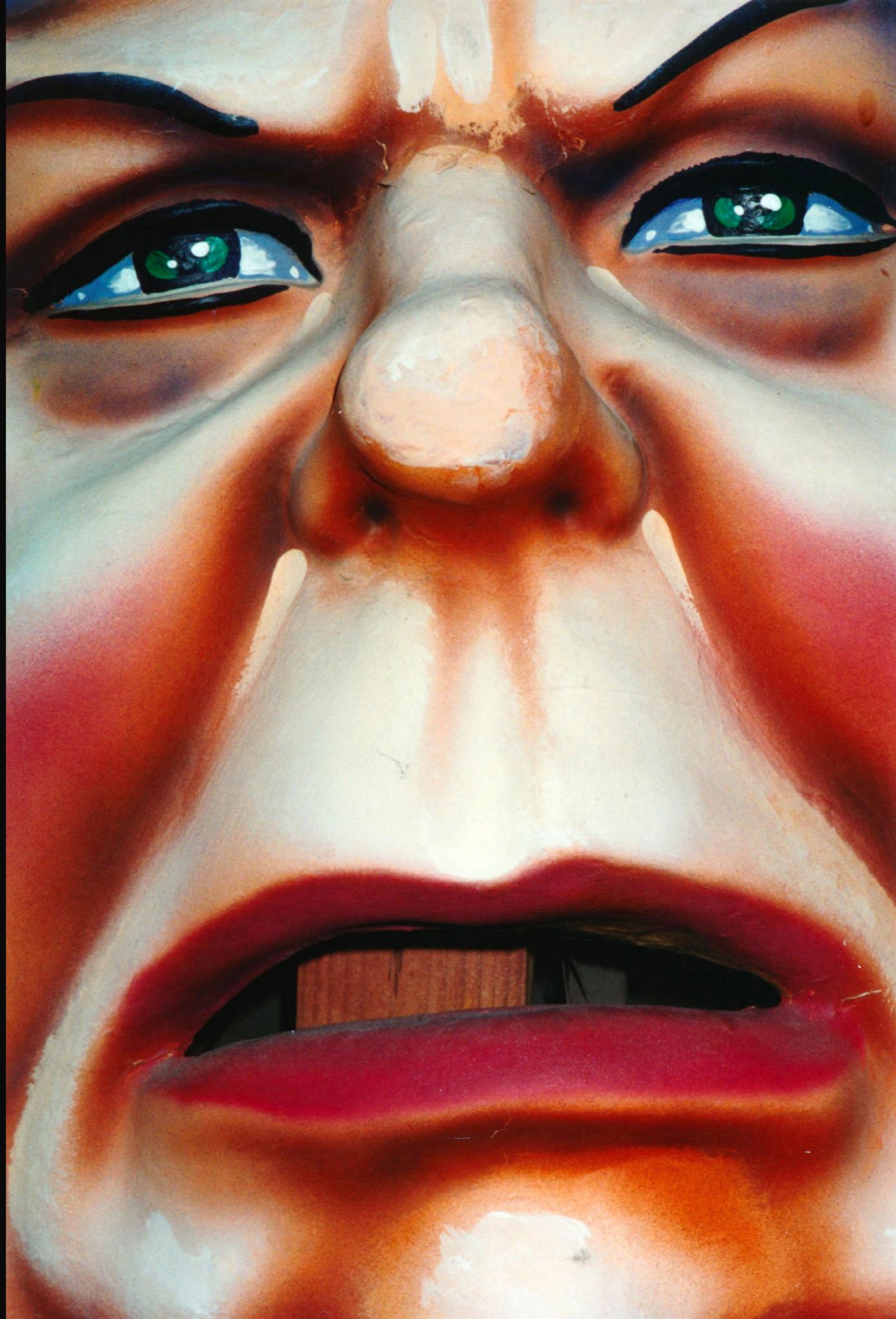
New Orleans has a rich mix of cultures—French, Spanish, African and Caribbean. I didn't know that it is considered to be the northernmost part of the Caribbean. There are a lot of interesting voices in the “Voo Carré, and I don't just mean from the tourists!”

Now, shower, more (!!) food, + packing. Sigh.

*** A Playskool Childrens Cassette Player with Microphone Toy, perhaps?

I bought a shirt at Chico—very nice. Oh, and on Thursday,
pink shoes.































rewes," such as Bacchus
and 70's, with celebrities a
popularity to breathtaking
and marvelous costumes
Gras will grow and prosp
di Gras World • New

1894 saw the creation of the first black carnival club in New Orleans, The Original Illinois Club, but it was Zulu that paraded first in 1909 that poked fun at the pomp and circumstance of the old Mardi Gras krewes. The unique Zulu coconut is a post-entertainment-after carnival treasure. Louis Armstrong was honored in New Orleans as King Zulu in 1949.













NO
UNAUTHORIZED
PERSONNEL



Day 5: Monday, April 9, 2001—Return

Our flight is delayed—we're in the Big Easy Lounge, drinking beer + margaritas. This morning we walked to the Croissant D'Or for breakfast—grumpy counter help. B's cold is moving down, + he's not feeling too perky.

Getting to the airport was easy—left the hotel @ about 10⁴⁵ + were here in the lounge by 11²⁵. Now we wait—the lady at US Air said to be at the gate at 1³⁰—sounds to me as if it might be even later than she implied.

Our server here @ the lounge lives 30 miles west, next to the San Francisco Plantation. She's been working in this lounge for 15 years + she says her town is like Mayberry—small, quiet, slow, no traffic lights + hot and humid. Everyone here says “Come back in August!”

On Mardi Gras World: The mask heads are very expensive (2-5K) and “I want one of those.” Maybe if I win the Louisiana lottery I can buy one for Bucky!

B's looking very sleepy + relaxed—leaning up against the window counter behind him.

We accomplished our New Orleans objectives. We ate at 3 of the oldest restaurants in the FQ—Galatoire's, Arnaud's and Tujaque's, plus a swanky new one out of the Quarter—Clancy's. We sampled shrimp remoulade at all four, and I tried my first ever (and last)* martini.

We ate loads of fine Creole food, drank wine, beer, Sazeracs and mint juleps. We had café au lait and beignets at the Café du Monde, a muffaletta from the Central Grocery, browsed the French Market; B cruised the topless bars; and we got the inside story on the Vieux Carré.

* Famous last words!

Finally, we said goodbye to New Orleans—for now. We have always known how to have a good time wherever we go, but now we can say it in French:

Laissez les Bons Temps Rouler!





Meals in New Orleans 2001 (Yum!)

Thurs 4/5/01

Lunch: Original Papa Joe's (Bourbon Street, now closed)
 B: red beans & rice w/ andouille sausage & Abeta Amber
 L: crawfish etouffé & ditto

Supper: Galatoire's—didn't wait in line—seated immed, downstairs (2 bottles of wine)
 appetizer: Galatoire's Gouté → Shrimp remoulade, crab & oysters en brochette, shrimp meuniere
 B: lamb chops in red wine reduction & house salad
 L: trout meuniere almondine & Brabant pot & garlic salad
 dessert: Choclate decadence & the best coffee in NO.

Friday

Breakfast: beignets & coffee @ Café du Monde

Lunch: Central Grocery carry-out (on the grass @ Jackson Square)
 B: ½ muffaletta & Abeta beer
 L: Chicken Caesar salad

Supper: Clancy's
 L: martini straight up
 app: shrimp remoulade
 B: Ribeye steak & fried oysters in red wine (merlot) reduction & glass of merlot & mashed potatoes & red cabbage & mustard/

collard greens

L: grouper w/ tomatoes, basil, black olives, olive oil; red beets; mashed sweet potato; snap peas & good coffee

Saturday

Breakfast: Courtyard breakfast & car breakfast from Café Beignet

Lunch: @ Nottoway
 B: turkey & andouille sausage gumbo; Blackened Voodoo & Crimson Voodoo beers
 L: Blackened crabcake salad & mint juleps

Supper: Arnaud's
 Shrimp Arnaud w/ remoulade sauce
 Oysters Arnaud = 1 each of 6 baked oysters
 L: Red snapper w/ tomato & basil
 B: Quail Elyse; wrapped in bacon, stuffed w/ mushrooms & hint of truffles; thin sliced/angel hair sweet potatoes
 L: salad
 Bread pudding & Café Brulot for 2

Sunday

Brunch: @ Begue's in Royal Sonesta Hotel
 All the usual suspects & rack of lamb; pickled fish; lots of shrimp & crawfish; crab & brie soup; chicken stuffed w/ oysters & chestnut

Supper: @ Tujaque's
Sazeracs
Fixed price meal:
—shrimp remoulade
—cream of artichoke soup
—beef brisket w/ creole sauce
L: bonne femme chicken: ½ fried chicken w/
garlic under skins & buried under parsley &
fresh garlic
B: shrimp & tasso in mustard sauce over
fettucine
Dessert: banana bread pudding (Bananas
DuPuy)