

Home Again
Surviving the Winds of Time
By Sue Mayfield Geiger



Two years ago, I was homeless.

Not “on the streets” homeless, but homeless, no less, in that my little bungalow along Galveston Bay had been swallowed up by Hurricane Ike. I was living in an apartment with three cats and a restless husband, along with donated furniture and noisy upstairs neighbors. But I was not alone. Thousands of other families were homeless too.

The agony of loss is simply that—loss. It doesn’t matter what you lost or how you lost it, the pain is there. Surviving loss and getting over it is a healing process—one that takes time. My healing process came in the usual forms of sadness, anger, resentment, grief, and finally, acceptance. Accepting the fact that life goes on and we move forward.

Catastrophic events are going to happen in life, and when they do, we have two choices: deal with them or flee. But where does one go if they want to flee and how do they get there? If I knew the answer to that, I would be in Nova Scotia or Rome or Buenos Aires. It may seem idealistic to just drive off into your new life, leaving the old one behind, ending up in a picture-perfect utopia where happiness is constant and rainbows fill the skies. But those places aren’t home. There is something about having roots that keep us dealing with the obstacles that come our way.

Home is not just a residence, it is our personal sanctuary—a place where you can

literally escape the world. The recollection of my first home was the tiny room I shared with my brother when I was about five. The house was typical of the 1950s two-bedroom, one bath tract houses that many took advantage of with a GI loan after WWII. We had an attic fan and single gas heater, but the place was cozy and always smelled of bacon frying or spaghetti sauce simmering on the stove. I played a lot of hopscotch on the sidewalk with my best friend, and we roller skated from sunup to sundown.

After I grew up and left the security of that home, there would be a hodgepodge of apartments and rent houses until after I was married and we purchased a wonderful brick house on $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre with oodles of tall pine trees. I grew extremely attached to that house (my children's birthday parties and Christmas celebrations are still memorable behind my eyelids), and when we moved, the sadness was overwhelming.

A move to another city, then another transpired over the years until I reclaimed my southern roots. Two garage apartments later, I found my bliss in that little 1941 bungalow along Galveston Bay and knew this would probably be my final home. It spoke to me and attached itself to my heart. Barely 1,000 square feet, it had the original hardwood floors and tons of windows. Oh, it had its problems and was pretty cranky when we first arrived. But after a while, it settled down as we filled the place with our essence and wrapped our arms around its soul.

Ten years later, Mother Nature let us know the wrath of her strength and our home was no more. All of us who live coastal live with the knowledge that hurricanes are a part of life along the Gulf of Mexico. We also live in denial every hurricane season by saying, "Oh, it won't hit here," or "Maybe it will die

out in the Gulf and lose strength." Most of our major storms have occurred between late August and mid-September, but the official season is from June 1 until November 30—six long months to live with uncertainty.

When we surveyed the damage of our beloved bungalow, we immediately said, "No more." We vowed to find some property far away from the water and give up coastal living. Yet, the little house called us back. Oh, it was gone alright, but not really. Although it was torn down and replaced with a new house 10 ft. off the ground, it still calls to me. When the wind blows a certain way, it says to me: "You're home."