

are a function both of factors that can be identified, like the amount of solar radiation reaching the earth and the greenhouse-gas concentrations in the atmosphere, and of factors that are stochastic, or purely random. In response to the many confused claims that were being made about the hurricane, a group of prominent climatologists posted an essay on the Web site RealClimate that asked, "Could New Orleans be the first major U.S. city ravaged by human-caused climate change?" The correct answer, they pointed out, is that this is the wrong question. The science of global warming has nothing to say about any particular hurricane (or drought or heat wave or flood), only about the larger statistical pattern.

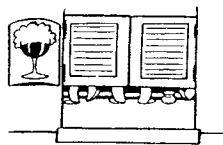
For obvious reasons, this larger pattern is also of deep interest to the insurance industry. In June, the Association of British Insurers issued a report forecasting that, owing to climate change, losses from hurricanes in the U.S., typhoons in Japan, and windstorms in Europe were likely to increase by more than sixty per cent in the coming decades. (The report calculated that insured losses from extreme storms—those expected to occur only once every hundred to two hundred and fifty years—could rise to as much as a hundred and fifty billion dollars.) The figures did not take into account the expected increase in the number and wealth of people living in storm-prone areas; correcting for such increases, the losses are likely to be several hundred per cent higher. A report issued last week, which was supposed to have been presented at the National Association of Insurance Commissioners' meeting in New Orleans, noted that, even before Katrina, catastrophic weather-related losses in the U.S. had been rising "significantly faster than premiums, population, or economic growth."

Since President Bush announced that the country was withdrawing from the Kyoto Protocol, in March, 2001, the Administration has offered a variety of excuses for why the U.S., which produces nearly a quarter of the world's greenhouse-gas emissions, can't be expected to cut back. On the one hand, Administration officials have insisted that the science of global warming is inconclusive; on the other, they've cited this same science to argue that the steps demanded by Kyoto are not rigorously enough thought

out. As the rest of the world has adopted Kyoto—earlier this year, the treaty became binding on the hundred and forty nations that had ratified it—these arguments have become increasingly indefensible, and the President has fallen back on what one suspects was his real objection all along: complying with the agreement would be expensive. "The Kyoto treaty didn't suit our needs," Bush blurted out during a British-television interview a couple of months ago. As Katrina indicates, this argument, too, is empty. It's not acting to curb greenhouse-gas emissions that's likely to prove too costly; it's doing nothing.

—Elizabeth Kolbert

THE REGULARS KAJUN'S



Joann Guidos, of New Orleans's Faubourg Marigny neighborhood, is a big woman with a piercing stare, the bark of a football coach, and a way of hugging people as though she intended to keep them physically anchored to the earth. She held her family of neighborhood drinkers together all through Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, keeping her murky, stifling bar, Kajun's Pub, open so that the lonely and the broke would not endure the ordeal alone. All last week, a can of Pabst still cost a dollar at Kajun's, even after the power and water went off and keeping the beer cold meant scrounging for gasoline to feed a noisy generator out back. "These people got no place else to go," she said, in the meaty New Orleans accent that is more "Sopranos" than "Gone with the Wind." "I'm not leavin' 'em."

At noon a week ago Sunday, eight New Orleans police officers bearing riot guns walked into the bar, ordered the music turned off and the customers out, and told Joann that she had to close. "They said, 'If you don't leave, you'll be shot,'" she said. "Never in this country."

The regulars at Kajun's are among those willing to believe the worst about the New Orleans Police Department. "Tuesday night, I'm in the Quarter with fifty bucks to buy gas—I'm not looting," said Kenny Dobbs, naked to the waist,

slick with sweat, and squinting through the smoke of his cigarette. "They pull me over at gunpoint, siphon half my gas, take the fifty bucks and a fifth of Crown. N.O.P.D." His girlfriend, who wore a Confederate-flag head scarf and Mardi Gras beads, held out a hand to be kissed. "Renée de Ponthieux," she said. "When Daddy dies, I'll be the Comtesse de Ponthieux." She threw back her head and laughed. A brown dog lying on the pool table sat up and howled. Joann, meanwhile, planted herself on a barstool by the front door with a plastic tumbler of Southern Comfort in one hand and a semi-automatic shotgun in the other. On the floor whirred a gigantic unshielded fan that seemed designed to cool an airplane hangar. The best seat in the house was close enough to the fan to keep cool but not so close that one risked falling in and being chopped to bits.

"I never seen her cry—she's really upset," said Chris Jungles, Joann's boyfriend, a tall man who wears a long braid. Jungles grew up in rural Minnesota; in 1987 his three-year-old daughter was killed by a truck and his marriage fell apart. He cooked methamphetamine for a while and indulged in "mucho" pointless violence as a biker, then served two and a half years in San Quentin. "I've been clean ever since," he said, and cast a loving eye at Joann. "She keeps me straight. She's holding everybody together." He tossed his braid and downed a yellow Jell-O shot of vodka and tequila. "Sweet Home Alabama" played on the stereo for the third time in half an hour, almost loud enough to drown out the generator and the roar of helicopters.

Up walked Mitch, a bearded man of fifty-eight whose belly showed through a tear in his T-shirt. "You know who did the voice of Yogi Bear?" he asked. "Art Carney."

Joann started shouting through the door at somebody, or nobody, in the street. "It's my God-given right according to the U.S. Constitution to bear arms and protect my private property!" she bellowed, while another regular, Larry Stann, an elegantly mannered, if raggedly dressed, black man of sixty-three, whispered in her ear, "Of course, honey, but put the gun right inside the door here."

"I don't know where I'd go," Mitch said. "I never thought about it." Asked if he has friends or family, he thought a moment, then twirled a finger to take in the room. "Just here." He shrugged. "If they shoot me, they shoot me."

"Clint Eastwood's father?" Mitch said. "Stan Laurel."

Finally, Chris's black dog, Louis, bit Renée on the leg, and everybody decided to call it a night. Chris topped up the generator with gas, spilling it on the hot metal. Then he urinated on some paint cans in the alley and locked the door.

The drinking started again the next morning at eight and went on for three more days. The shadow of mandatory evacuation weighed heavily on the regulars at Kajun's, because most of them didn't know a thing about the world outside New Orleans. Finally, on Wednesday, the law came back, this time with bunches of plastic wrist ties protruding from their vests. "You go out today on your own, or tomorrow we take you out," one exhausted officer said. By this time, the fight had gone out of Joann and her extended family. Chris built a plywood box on the top of



Joann Guidos

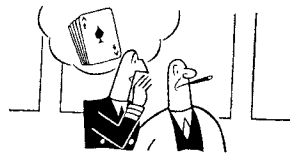
Joann's dark-blue van. Kenny loaded his 1979 Cadillac with Renée's bead collection and enough whiskey to get them to Carriere, Mississippi. The regulars who had been manning the bar since the storm began—ten people in all—were packing. "We stick together," Joann said, gathering them to her like

a den mother. "And we'll all be back, right? Right?"

Wednesday night, Chris sat at the bar, inconsolable. "I flagged down the Humane Society and gave them Louis," he said. "I signed the papers to put him to sleep. I love that dog. He was like my child, but I had to do it." He drained his beer and a sad smile crept across his face. "He was one mean motherfucker," he said proudly. "Give me a hug."

—Dan Baum

WIND ON CAPITOL HILL HIGH STAKES



Among the blown-off rooftops, up-ended pine trees, and other detritus that Katrina scattered along the Gulf Coast were a good number of twisted and bashed-in slot machines. The storm had hurled them ashore as it ripped casino barges from their moorings in Bixoxi, Gulfport, and Bay St. Louis.

Carol Browner was the head of the Environmental Protection Agency during the Clinton Administration, when many casinos in Mississippi were constructed. Last week, speaking from her office at the Washington consulting firm where she now works, she recalled the difficulties that her department experienced years ago when they tried to persuade legislators, including Mississippi Senator Trent Lott, that building on wetlands was environmentally risky. Developers, and the politicians who supported them, argued that gambling would attract commerce to the state.

The proposed casinos, Browner said, "were supposed to be in the water because the state didn't want them on the solid land." (To accommodate the moral qualms of conservative locals, the legislature relegated gambling to "navigable waters.") She went on, "But they were huge, and they were right up against the shore. If you put structures this big into an estuary, you're disrupting the aquatic life and changing the habitat and eradicating the wetlands, which has a huge effect on drainage. The wetlands act like a sponge in a storm. They're an incredibly smart and helpful part of nature.

But they have to be kept moist, like a sponge on your kitchen counter. If they're dried out, and developed, they don't work. The shoreline's a very important buffer in a storm."

Browner said that Lott was not alone among politicians in his disregard for the environment. "For fifty years," she pointed out, "there's been significant inattention to the environmental consequences of developing the wetlands." But Lott was particularly single-minded in his support of casino development. "I had barely taken office," Browner said, "when I discovered there was a 'hold' on a department nominee." (Placing a hold, which is a common maneuver in the Senate, can keep a nominee's name from moving forward to a vote.) "I didn't have a clue who put the hold on the nominee. Then Trent Lott called me up and said that he had done it. He told me, 'I figured I'd have a problem with the E.P.A. I don't have one yet. But this is a warning to you.' Then he lifted the hold. But the message was clear.

"A few years later, in 1997, Clinton nominated someone else to a job in the E.P.A. that needed Senate confirmation," she recalled. Browner learned that a hold had been placed on this person, too. "It was a person who was perfectly qualified," she said. "So the hold seemed odd.

"We called around to see what was the matter," she went on. "And I found out that Lott had put a hold on this person. I then spoke with him about it, and he said, 'It's not about the nominee.' He said, 'It's because I want you to fire another employee, because he's standing in the way of wetlands permits needed for casinos.'

"He wanted me to fire this guy who was handling the wetlands permits down in our regional office in Atlanta," she said. "I couldn't have done it if I'd wanted to. I told him I wasn't going to. It's the job of the E.P.A. to enforce Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, which covers all wetlands permits, and this guy was doing his job." Browner said that she did not tell the employee in Atlanta, because she didn't want him to feel pressured. "Lott thought the guy was working with the Army Corps of Engineers to hold up the casino permits, and he was determined to get rid of him."

Browner said that Lott kept the hold