

# RETURNING HOME TO THE WRECKAGE

Irma Stiegler examines a Meal Ready to Eat on the sunporch of her home on Broadway Avenue, where she has lived since she was 2 years old. Stiegler lost her entire basement in the flood and said her most painful loss was her grandmother's piano, which had been in her family since 1867. In the days following Hurricane Katrina, the military distributed thousands of MREs, three-course meals that contain their own heating element.

PHOTOS BY KELLY BROWN



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## KEY

- 1. Tubes attached to dehumidifiers snake out of Joseph Merrick Jones Hall on Tulane University campus. In some areas, the university had three feet of standing water.
- 2. Even though some didn't have water or mold, everyone's refrigerator was destroyed by seven weeks of heat and humidity. Throughout the city, fridges sit at curbs, their scent stretching for blocks. In Uptown, "fridge wars" have begun when irate neighbors have purposefully left fridges on curbs in retribution. Many of the fridges have spray-painted messages such as "Smells like FEMA" or "To the White House, care of President Bush."
- 3. Maria Esperanza Fingerman's living room and entire first floor were destroyed during Hurricane Katrina by two feet of standing water. Mold covers all the walls, in some places almost to the ceiling. Even three inches of water was enough to destroy homes.
- 4. Mardi Gras beads intermingle with a broken french door on Adams Street. The Mardi Gras beads can be seen in most if not all piles, a painful reminder of happier times.
- 5. Spray-painted X's mark almost all the houses in New Orleans, indicating when the home was searched for survivors or bodies. This garden gate on Adams Street noted that the house was uninhabited, neither by corpses nor the living.
- 6. An Army Humvee rolls down Freret Street in front of Tulane University. Assigned to maintain security in the city, the military has become a constant presence in New Orleans since the hurricane.
- 7. Piles of debris are all that remains of most homes. This picture was sitting on the median of Claiborne Avenue.
- 8. A grand house on Broadway stands empty and gutted. In the days before Katrina, this house had a beautiful garden, none of which remains.