

Colby



Colby Magazine

Volume 97
Issue 1 *Spring 2008*

Article 4

April 2008

From the Editor

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Colby College

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Recommended Citation

Boyle, Gerry (2008) "From the Editor," *Colby Magazine*: Vol. 97 : Iss. 1 , Article 4.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/colbymagazine/vol97/iss1/4>

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volume 97 • number 1

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Colby is published four times yearly.

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heard enough about New Orleans.”

Not nearly, Porot says.

An engaging guy with an easy laugh, he was, to put it mildly, blown away by New Orleans. The culture, the destruction, the people. FEMA trailers everywhere. Houses caved in, sitting at crazy angles. “The area we were living in, there was just not a whole lot of human activity there,” he said. “You’d see written on storefronts in spray paint, ‘We will be back.’ But they weren’t.”

Some were back, of course, and every one of them had a story, he said. One woman spent three days in her attic, only her head and neck above the floodwaters. Now she has a panic attack every time it rains. Another woman drove 17 hours to Mississippi to escape the flood, driving with eight family members crammed in the cab of a pickup truck.

“And this is the best story,” Porot said, leaning closer and smiling in anticipation. “This woman we were working with, Miss Cathy, her mom was in the hospital with cancer when the storm hit. I don’t know if you know, but there were a lot of hospitals that weren’t able to evacuate right away. Her mom said, ‘I’m old enough, you guys just go without me. Take care of yourselves and I’ll be okay.’ Miss Cathy was saying, ‘I didn’t see my mom for three weeks. I didn’t hear anything. I was worried. And then I get a call from my neighbor. Turn on CNN!’ She turns on CNN and she sees her mom in a hospital bed in Arkansas next to Bill Clinton.”

Porot laughed, then turned more serious. He said he figures his labors put a few people back in their homes, and he might lead a Colby trip to New Orleans next year. But his most important contribution, he said, will probably be to just keep talking about all of this. The story may have fallen off the front page, but it continues to unfold in amazing ways.

I’ve posted more in my blog (www.colby.edu/blogs): some photos Porot brought back, the paper he wrote upon his return, a guide to post-Katrina New Orleans. “I felt like I needed to bring that story back to Colby,” he said.

And I felt I needed to bring this story to you: a transforming experience. Which is, after all, what this place is all about.

Gerry Boyle '78, P'06
Managing Editor

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ALEXIS GRANT '03 (“Different Prescriptions,” P. 19) is a reporter for the *Houston Chronicle*,

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