



## An American City

*New Orleans, Helen Hill and Me*

By Phil Nugent

I.

I was sitting at home on a Friday night when my brother-in-law called to tell me that my old boss at the bookstore was looking for me, that she had some important message for me. I hadn't spoken to my ex-boss since I'd left New Orleans, a month after she'd fired me and, since I was living above the bookstore, effectively evicted me in the same breath. That was five and a half years ago, and I hadn't expected to ever see or speak to the woman again, though I'd been having a lot of fun during that time telling nasty stories about her.

According to my brother-in-law, she'd called his brother, though I have no idea how she got the man's number; I don't have it. My brother-in-law told me that some people I'd known back in New Orleans had been killed "in a drive-by shooting," and to be honest, that didn't faze me in the slightest. Several of the people I'd known in New Orleans had been well on their way to getting killed in drive-by shootings; some of them had it coming to them.

So I called my ex-boss, thinking that if she was going to the trouble of harassing in-laws I hadn't seen in the fifteen years since the wedding, then the least I could do was humor the woman, and at the sound of her voice I immediately felt that little rankle I get when I'm dealing with people I thought I was well rid of, and without doing much to conceal my sarcasm I told her that I'd heard she wanted to tell me that some people I knew had been killed in a "drive-by shooting" and she told me that, no, it wasn't a drive-by, but that Helen had been murdered. That's when all the wind went out of my body.

Helen was shot once in the neck in the front room of her house. It was 5:30 in the morning; her husband, Paul, was coming into the room, holding their two-year-old son, but he was just out of bed and didn't have his glasses on, so he didn't get a good look at the features of the strange man standing in the doorway to his home. He just got to see this vague outline of a man killing his wife. The gunman shot Paul three times before Paul, still holding the baby, escaped into the

bathroom. Then the gunman decided to leave. He may have been the same man who had just tried to storm a bed and breakfast a few blocks away, but there his master plan was thwarted by the decision of the people inside the building to refuse to let him in. Someone announced that they were calling the police, and he took off on foot and, as a friend of mine later put, "probably pulled a Clockwork Orange," banging on Helen and Paul's door shouting that he needed help, could they please let him in? I cannot imagine the circumstances under which Helen would have hesitated to have opened that door.

When the police arrived at the house, according to the newspaper reports, Paul was kneeling in the open doorway, bleeding on the floor and with his son in his arms. Nobody had to call the police; they were just arriving at the bed and breakfast in response to their call and heard the gunshots from there. If my ex-boss hadn't called me, I would have found out that Helen was dead by switching on my computer as I was waking up the next morning and reading those newspaper accounts, one of which appeared in The New York Times. I'm very glad that I didn't find out that way.

Saturday morning, I read about Helen on-line for about half an hour, and then I started telephoning people I knew who were still in New Orleans. I didn't have any of those numbers handy; luckily for me, the kind of people I knew in New Orleans, whatever else they didn't have in common, seemed to be united by a common urge to not have their phone numbers unlisted. The people I talked to are a lot more stable than I am and live much fuller, more productive lives. So I was a little surprised at how shaken and broken-up they all sounded, to say nothing of the degree to which "Oh, God, it should have been me instead" was a common theme. In retrospect, I'm kind of shocked at myself; I don't know what I was expecting.

After Paul was patched up, they took Helen home to South Carolina for the funeral. Helen was a graduate of Harvard and Cal Arts, and she and Paul had spent some years after they were married living in Nova Scotia, so they had friends all over; gatherings were organized in New York, Los Angeles, and Halifax so that people wouldn't have to grieve alone, but a lot of people still made the trek to the funeral. Enough people, in fact, that the modest sized funeral home where Helen was lying in state had people lined up circling the block, waiting to pay their respects.

There were gawkers on the sidelines wondering what could be going on, and there was also another memorial service going on that had a much smaller group of mourners gathered. Talking to people who were grieving for Helen, I got a sense that many of us were trying to go out of our way to do what Helen would do in such a situation — which meant, basically, being kinder, more patient, more thoughtful towards other people than we would under normal circumstances. Maybe the most Helen thing about the whole affair was that some people, after having passed in front of her body, started breaking off and going to stand in line at the other service, so that it would look as if the two groups of mourners was closer to being equal in size.

## II.

I moved to New Orleans in the late spring of 1988. It wasn't supposed to be a long-term thing. I was taking some time off from college, and the Republican National Convention was coming to town that summer to anoint the first President George Bush. I was messing around with film and theater at the time, and it seemed like an interesting backdrop to work against, maybe shoot a movie. Not much came of it. Then fall rolled around, the Republicans got on with their national campaign, and I forgot to leave. I had been having a good time. I had grown up in the sticks in Mississippi, and my first couple of years at college were in Hammond, Louisiana, which was a step up from home in that I was no longer surrounded by Mississippians.

Not having had much to compare it to, I was pretty drunk on the city for a spell there. It was full of bookstores and news stands and live music and the kind of people who liked hanging out in bookstores or at news stands or listening to live music. I lived within walking distance of the Prytania, which at the time was the only movie theater in the city that showed independent and foreign films. Because the Prytania had only one screen and tried to fit in all the new releases that its clientele might be interested in, pictures were often booked for three or four days, then shoved out of the way to make up for the next attraction. Once every three months, a stack of poster-sized, illustrated calendars would appear in front of the theater, telling you what would be playing for the next fifteen, sixteen weeks, and how long you'd have to fit it into your schedule; you'd take it home, pin it to your wall, and count down. For a couple of years there, I saw everything that played at that theater. The fact that this sometimes necessitated going to the theater three times in a week did not exactly deter me. On those rare occasions when the Prytania had a picture — such as *Wings of Desire* or *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* (or *The Last Temptation of Christ*, which it picked up when the local octoplexes got cold feet) — that it felt obligated to keep playing for three weeks or so, I came to regard the movie in question as a spoilsport.

The city had a quiet, relaxed vibe in those days. That suited me fine. On a typical day, I'd get up around dawn, run to Audubon Park, spend a few hours lolling there or hanging out on the Tulane University campus or in the library while waiting for the stores to open, then idle around killing time until a movie was playing or someone took the stage at Tipitina's or the Maple Leaf. I might stop in at George Herget's used bookstore to see if the barber chair that the store had been built around was vacant; if someone was already sitting in it, I'd just stroll back up to Video Alternatives to see if there was room on the couch set across from the main desk. I don't recall being steadily employed, but I also don't recall money being a pressing concern. Summer can get pretty intense in New Orleans, and sometimes "summer" hangs around until around Halloween, but most of the year the weather was mild and often enough it was gorgeous, and it was an excellent city in which to be broke, one of the few remaining major American cities about which that could be said by the end of the 1980s.

I was in my early twenties and, like the narrator of *Brideshead Revisited*, enjoying the happy childhood that I'd fantasized about all through my childhood. If certain adjustments had to be made, I made them. For instance, before I'd come to the city, I was passionately devoted to theater as both a participant and an audience member, but New Orleans simply had no serious theater scene and not much of an unserious one, so I gradually accepted the loss of something that I'd been regarding as the first thing ever to have given my life any worthwhile meaning and that had produced the first stirrings of pride in my abilities that I had ever felt. I did act in a couple of student productions at Tulane; the school was way outside my price range, but I managed to scrape together enough to cover one night class, just so that I could legitimately qualify as a "student." However, my slacker's paradise of an existence seemed to repel any time spent on classwork, so, naturally, I wound up flunking my one class.

In a way, I was doing my best to embody the spirit of the city. New Orleans was a self-intoxicated little city that prided itself on moving at its own lazy pace. The journalist and historian Nicholas Lemann, a onetime local whose sister Nancy wrote the 1985 N'orleans novel *Lives of the Saints*, has written about what it was like to be an ambitious young writer in the city in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when other Southern cities such as Atlanta were remaking themselves in the post-segregation era and gearing up to become new business centers and economic powerhouses. New Orleans had less racial baggage and more openness to the new than most big Southern cities, and it seemed like a natural for that kind of redefinition, but it didn't happen,

and Lemann began to realize how deeply committed New Orleans was to “endless sifting through the past” and a sentimental self-image as Weird City. One of the biggest local business boosters, Jim Bob Moffett, the self-promoting CEO of local corporate behemoth Freeport-McMoran — who, tellingly, had moved to New Orleans from Texas, and was not of the landed gentry — declared that “We got to make this an American city,” a line that Lemann confessed made him shudder reflexively even as he knew what the man was talking about.

New Orleans had earned its title as a major city through its seaport and oil revenues, but both the port and the oil business were drying up, and the city had no idea how to grow something new to replace the dwindling sources of revenue. So New Orleans, more than any American city, began repositioning itself as a tourist attraction, a Disneyland with an adult rating and real people actually living on Main Street, USA. It was the move of a city that wasn’t going anywhere. I did pick up on that, but in the small Southern towns where I’d grown up, nobody was going anywhere either. If you had no expectations of doing anything but kill time, it definitely seemed better to while away the hours in a place where cultural interests and a certain eccentricity were allowed.

Back in Tylertown, Mississippi, where I went to school as a kid, I was once singled out as the local mutant because I’d made it to the eighth grade without learning to chew tobacco; a few days after arriving in New Orleans, I stood in line at the outdoor ATM at my bank, behind a woman who was out walking her llama. That was pretty cute, but the downsides at my bank T31, but ew

and filed for bankruptcy in a different state, leaving an unfinished shell of a building that would sit there for months until the city agreed to cut them a sweeter deal if they'd just finish the thing. (The New Orleans government had already factored in projected revenue from its not-yet-built casino into its projected budget for 1996.) The casino did finally get finished, and turned out to be almost as reliable a generator of massive revenues as a world's fair.

That same year, 1995, New Orleans got a sneak preview of how well its outmoded pumping system might work in case of an emergency when unexpectedly heavy rains came down fast and hard and flooded parts of the city. In my uptown area, the streets were suddenly filled with water up to my waist, which seemed like a lark at the time — my apartment was pretty high above water. I remember wading up the streets to St. Charles Avenue with a neighbor of mine. The waters were too high for cars to drive through or for the streetcars to run. We played in the water for a while, unmooring newspaper boxes and setting them off floating in the direction of the business district.

### III.

I met Helen late in the summer of 1992, after she moved to New Orleans to kill a year off from college. I was working for the New Orleans Film Festival, running interference for Dean Paschal, a doctor who had joined the board of directors on a lark, been horrified at how little thought and hard work was being put into the section devoted to undistributed and short films, and started spending the bulk of his free time (and going into his own pocket) to shore things up out of a sense that somebody ought to do it.

To have something to show, we used to put ads in the trades soliciting submissions; send us a videotape of your masterpiece, throw in fifteen bucks to cover the cost of sending it back plus general aggravation, and we will run it past our deluxe screening committee and include the keepers in our festival. The deluxe screening committee consisted of people I knew who'd watch anything on a Sunday afternoon if there was beer in the fridge. (One of the most prized members once asked me if I'd ever thought about putting more ads in more trades, upping the submission fee, not sending the tapes back, and pocketing the money. When you think about it, he said, you could do this and not bother to hold a festival. I'll confess that I did think about it.)

Helen was introduced to me at a screening by someone, who explained that she has a film she'd done at school that she'd like to submit, and that she would also be invaluable for any volunteer work I had that needed doing. Going on their body language and how comfortable they seemed together, I assumed that this person must have known Helen for most of her life and probably owed her life to her based on a timely organ donation. I later found out that they'd known each other for about an hour. That should have been my first clue.

At the time, Helen seemed to be with Elijah, another Harvard alum who had metallic blue hair and more quiet gravity than I thought Louisiana's atmosphere could support. They both did a hitch together on the screening committee; one night the more cruel and drunken among us were having a good time guffawing at some turgid nightmare that some regional Tarkovsky had

It was a month or two before Helen's friend Paul showed up, taking his own year off before finishing his medical studies, waved goodbye to Elijah, and moved in with Helen. I'm not sure that I'd actually bought into the idea of soul mates before I saw the two of them together. The first time could be a little unsettling. It was as if God had made the first one and said, "Hey, let's re-use this mold just once before we break it. Make the second one a different gender, though. Who knows, maybe something'll happen." They didn't look alike, precisely, though they were both bantam weights, built to the same scale, as if to provide for maximum convenience when hugging. I knew them for a couple of months before they noticed that they were in love, and they were definitely the last people to notice it. That's the time I'd really love to live through again. Part of the fun of it was just seeing the expressions on people's faces when Helen and Paul would patiently explain, once again, that no, they were just friends. You could see people wondering if they should break the news to them or if that would amount to spoiling it.

The major difference I can think of between Helen and Paul is that I can visualize Paul not smiling. I know there were times when I saw Helen not smiling, but those times are hazy in the memory and seem kind of irrelevant, like the memory of having seen Fred Astaire not dancing. She was simply the best person I've ever known, and I knew Paul, and Dean, and my maternal grandmother, any of whom would normally amount to fierce competition in that particular sweepstakes. (They'd have made a heck of a superhero team, if I could picture my grandmother in spandex.)

They were politically active, socially concerned, creative and playful, and, in perhaps their most astounding feat of generosity and kindness, they were exceedingly tolerant of me. That was a lucky break for me, because I needed them in my life, badly, and I imagine that there were times when my lazy slacker's attitude and fondness for lapsing into despair must have been personally offensive to them at times. They never let on, though. I always knew how to talk myself out of things; that's part of what made me the perfect New Orleans smart bum. They were incapable of seeing some unhappiness on the TV news without snapping to attention and trying to find out what they could do about it.

At the New York memorial gathering for Helen, with more people than I could count crammed into a home that must have seemed pretty roomy under most circumstances, I heard one of Helen's friends, Jenny Davidson, say that "Helen chose to be good!" She said it in a hard-edged way that made it sound as if it were a challenge; that may just have been Jenny trying to hold herself together when she wanted to cry, but Helen's goodness was a challenge, and the observation that it was a choice is one that needs to be made. It was one that I was willfully blind to for a long time. I thought that Helen and Paul were wonderful people from the time that I first spoke with them, but I also thought that they, you know, didn't know the score, that they were missing something. That's how attached I was at the time to my own moodiness and how badly I wanted to believe that there was a higher wisdom in not trying. (Sometimes when we were out together, it must have looked as if Herman Melville's *Bartleby* had been adopted by Up with People.) I was actually able to persuade myself that people might be graduating from Harvard without knowing the score.

Of course Helen knew that cynicism would be easier and, sometimes, seem more emotionally and intellectually satisfying than keeping her chin up and hoping for the best while trying to make it a reality, one reversible little bit at a time. She even knew that, to some people, her goodness made her look silly, even ridiculous. Whoever killed her probably thinks that she died for being a chump. Helen didn't care. She wasn't dumb or innocent or unhip; she was simply too strong to let the world bend her into something different from the person she preferred to be. I suspect that there must have times when that was very hard for her, and that she suf-

ferred for being the person so many of us loved her for being. I'm not sure I really want to know. But if she was ever vain enough to imagine that there were hundreds of people who would have thought the world a much worse place if she'd been any different — well, I hope she was vain enough to think that, because it was the truth.

IV.

I got fired from the bookstore the day after St. Patrick's Day, in 2001. My boss had always been a moody freak, with something unreadable nagging at her under the surface. I had a new girlfriend at the time; we had met on-line and she had flown in to stay with me for a week, and my boss, knowing that, had volunteered to me that maybe I'd like to take a couple of days off to enjoy the visit. I said sure. The first day I came back to work — work I needed now, since I'd run through what money I had pretty fast showing my girlfriend the town, which is something my boss must have expected — I was at my desk for about an hour when my boss came down from her upstairs apartment, blearily informed me that, "as we both know," things "just aren't working out between us" and so I was terminated, immediately. I'd been there for five years and she had "fired" me maybe three or four times before, always as abruptly and never for any stated reason more solid than that, but somehow it was clear that this time, she meant it to take.

I still don't know what the problem was supposed to be, but I went back upstairs to my apartment, told my girlfriend that I'd lost my job and my home, she mentioned that she wouldn't mind having a roommate, and six months later I was living in the Bronx. Now, five years later, I'm still here and my ex-girlfriend is living in Kosovo. If my ex-boss had not fired me, I'd almost certainly have never left New Orleans — which means, among other things, that I probably would have been squatting in the Super Dome after Katrina hit. So, as crazy and unpleasant as my ex-boss was, I owe her one. Or two.

The person who was probably most upset about my leaving New Orleans was Helen. She and Paul spent a lot of time driving me around to prospective new apartments, checking out whatever options might be left to me in the city, long after I'd already made the move to New York in my head. Once that was clear, they spent a lot of time helping me move my stuff into storage and setting me up for the move. After returning to school in 1994, Helen and Paul had moved around a lot but they kept in constant contact and often talked about moving back to New Orleans for good, and it finally happened — in January of 2001, just a couple of months before I got my walking papers.

Helen was actually peeved that I was leaving just when we were neighbors again, and kept urging me to visit them in their new family home, but the last couple of times I saw them, the last time being just before Christmas in 2005, it was when they were in New York. The closest I came to ever visiting the place where they were planning to raise their son was when they e-mailed me some video they'd taken of what was left of the house after Katrina had trashed it. When I spoke to them in the immediate aftermath of Katrina, Paul kept saying that he wasn't sure they'd be moving back to the city, but apparently Helen was deeply committed to the idea. It makes perfect sense. They had a kid and needed to get on with rebuilding their lives together, but I suspect that all that mattered to Helen was that there would never be a time when the city needed them more. How could they spurn it at a time like this? People there needed a doctor who, like Paul, was willing to help people, with or without insurance, for little or no money, and Helen had to do whatever she could do to help. If nothing else, as a filmmaker and an artist she could record something of what was left of the city at a historic moment in its history. So Helen nudged Paul, and she organized a sort of letter-writing campaign, asking all their New Orleans friends to deluge Paul with postcards, begging him to come back.

"And thank God it was her that did that," a friend was telling me after the funeral. "Because can you imagine how Paul would feel now if she hadn't had to drag him back here kicking and screaming? Because you know that if he had any grounds at all for telling himself that this was in any way his fault, he'd jump at it; any of us would. But that was the place where she wanted to be."

V.

Helen's murder set off shock waves throughout New Orleans, and not just among the people who knew her, though she knew plenty of people, all of who wanted to raise holy hell about it. Hers was the seventh murder in the city before the new year was a week old, and it came on the heels of a preposterous statement from the city fathers to the effect that the city's crime rate was way down. This was based on figures they had arrived at that failed to take into account the fact that the city's post-Katrina population was about half what it had been before the hurricane. Thousands of people took to the streets in a march to demand that something be done, despite warnings from the NOPD warning that they were ill-equipped to protect the marchers and that if the local Capones objected to being marched against and decided to open fire from the rooftops, the marchers would just have to fend for themselves. The police were publicly imploring people to come forward with information regarding violent criminals, explaining that one reason crime was out of control was that nobody wanted to be a witness; if they really wanted to encourage the giving of eyewitness information, publicly declaring their inability to protect people on public streets in broad daylight can hardly be called a genius move.

The fact that Helen was white, educated, definitely not involved in the drug trade, and gunned down in her own home all made it harder for people to ignore the crime or tell themselves that it had no bearing on their lives. But you had to know who Helen Hill was and what her life was about to perceive its full awfulness. In its maimed state, New Orleans could have used a platoon of Helen Hills; it was lucky to have one. The fact that it lost her in the way it did was one of those rare, too-perfect-in-the-wrong-way events that can make a devoted realist conclude that there is indeed a God, and He's a sick fuck.

New Orleans had always been a violent city, and about a month before Katrina, news stories began appearing pointing out that the crime rate, which had declined in the late 1990s after a major shake-up of the police department, was inching back up towards the levels it hit in 1994, when New Orleans was the homicide capitol of the United States. That was around the time that federal agents, running an undercover sting operation on corrupt cops, hired one policeman to hire other cops to keep an eye on a warehouse where the feds claimed to be storing a huge load of cocaine. The feds supplied their man with a cell phone that was recording his conversations, which is how they wound up with a tape of the master criminal literally directing a young crack-head of his acquaintance to commit a hit on a woman who had filed a brutality complaint against him. (The feds would later claim that they felt they'd only scratched the surface on corruption in the department but decided to shut the investigation down early after picking up word that the New Orleans cops were discussing whether to murder the "dealers" who were employing them and steal their coke.)

Even after things settled down after that, there would still be one ripe tabloid news horror show once a year or so; another bad cop would murder everyone she saw in a family-owned restaurant — including her police partner, who was moonlighting there as a security guard — just to rob the till, or some lunatic would abduct a woman as she was leaving her workplace and make her drive him across the state line to murder her. But at least those jokers always got caught,

though that sometimes seemed to have less to do with anything the cops did than with the fact that the city had some of the stupidest criminals on record.

(One of my neighbors in an apartment building where I used to live once decided to stroll in through my back door and steal my TV set while I was at work. The next day, a friend who he was allowing to sleep on his floor, and who had helped him carry the set up the stairs to his room, ratted him out to the cops, who found him sitting there watching the TV when they knocked on his door. Then the guy who he'd been putting up asked my landlord if he could take over the lease.)

And every once in a great while a tourist would get hurt — which, given the importance of tourism to the city, was actually worse in New Orleans than killing a cop. But mostly, the real crime stayed in the projects and the Ninth Ward. It was black on black crime, predators casually making life worse for the poor and disenfranchised, and gangsters killing each other in drug warfare. It was an uneasy, unpleasant vibe at the back of the city's consciousness, but nothing that led the local news or made the middle class or the better-off look over their shoulder at dusk. But Katrina has emptied out the areas where the poor used to cluster, and the few people still there have less now than they had before. There's no one there to rob, so increasingly desperate people who never dreamed they'd have to find a way of supporting themselves that didn't involve taking something from someone who couldn't fight back are being forced to venture out into unfamiliar areas, where their actions get noticed.

New Orleans is a place that's gone through a lot of nicknames. When I was a kid, the most popular one was "the city that care forgot," which I misunderstood for years; I thought it meant that it was a city rampant with blatant disregard for the important things, which seemed a peculiar claim around which to build a promotional campaign. What was shocking about the Bush administration's response, or rather its initial lack of any response, to Katrina was the discovery that the president and the people around him didn't care, and this was a scary and horrifying thing to learn about the people who were supposed to be running the country.

There was plenty of evidence of that already, but people seemed willing to give them the benefit of the doubt on things like Iraq, maybe because that does seem complicated and remote. But when a major American city is washed away and the people there are left begging for help, and the president takes no notice of it for three days and then is convinced that he should at least interrupt his vacation long enough to pretend to be concerned for the TV cameras only after his nervous advisors convince him to watch a few minutes of TV news clips so he can have some small sense of what the rest of the country has been goggling at in horror for seventy-two hours — well, no amount of making me-sad faces on TV can really repair the damage, especially when your idea of showing that you're on top of the situation is to say that nobody knew that levees can fail.

This is not to let the local muck-a-mucks off the hook; there's no doubt that they, unlike the president, care about New Orleans and its people. But as major players in a city that for decades has reserved its highest offices for those who pander the most aggressively and whose corruption seems the most entertaining, it should come as no surprise that they don't know how to do anything about their concerns. The mayor, Ray Nagin, had no idea what to do in the face of Katrina and has now given ample evidence of having no idea what to do in its aftermath. In between they held an election, and maybe the worst thing one can realistically fault Nagin for is that he ran for a second term, and won. Based on what he's done since re-election, it seems likely that he wanted the second term mainly because he didn't want to be remembered as the guy who lost his job over Katrina. Instead, he'll be remembered as the guy who had a pretty good

idea that he was in over his head and chose to stay there instead of making way for someone who might have had a clue.

In the wake of the march against violence, I've heard a few people say that maybe Helen's death will help inspire people to save the city. I'd like to believe there's something to that, but the truth is that I can't imagine where New Orleans goes from here, and I'm not sure that there really is a New Orleans anymore. When the story was fresh, a lot of promises got made — promises of money and other forms of assistance from the federal government — and they haven't been followed through on, and they won't be. People were genuinely upset about it in the fall of 2005, and now they've moved on; you can tear your hair out about that if it makes you feel better, but it seems a lot to ask that people stay upset about it forever, when it doesn't impact their lives directly and every day brings new things to get upset about.

People who do care about such things are getting used to the idea that the city's population is going to remain at about half of what it was. Some kind of rebuilding will occur, but the thing is that what made New Orleans what it uniquely was — a place where people low on money and ambition could live comfortably and happily, savoring a regional culture that was all its own, and co-existing with other people of different ethnic backgrounds and income status in an interlocking assortment of checkerboard neighborhoods — wasn't something that was planned and wasn't anything that anyone would have planned. It just evolved over the course of a century or more, and it's never going to come back, any more than all the hundreds of people who've been scattered across the country and who are now back to living paycheck to paycheck at their new jobs are going to come back. Either New Orleans will be resuscitated under the deliberate work of the new city planners, becoming something a little closer to Jim Bob Moffett's dreams, or it'll remain a broken wreck. Either way it won't be what it was. My city is gone.