

# Reflections of Harvey: Nature at its worst, humanity at its best

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**H**urricane Harvey is fresh in the national conscience and viscerally real for those affected in Texas and Louisiana. As I write this, friends in Galveston, family in Dickinson, and colleagues in Houston are still struggling to survive and recover. I have been truly blessed and fortunate. My family is safe, my home is dry, I have food and water, and I have the conveniences of modern life—tens of thousands of my fellow Texans do not.

I have done nothing heroic. I watched, waited, worried. I connected with all of my neighbors and offered help. I told the young couple across the street whose property was within inches of disaster that my home would be a shelter for them at any time. We measured the rain (35 inches in our yard) and hoped that the bayous that had engulfed both of the bridges in and out of our neighborhood would stay away from us. We tried to create normalcy for the next-door neighbor's children by discussing how our male dogs were not pregnant, they just like to eat.

My hospital was an island surrounded by flooded streets. Our staff struggled to keep the waters from taking the lobby on the first floor. The staff, nurses, pharmacists, PAs, technicians, facilities personnel, and physicians on our ride-out team are the heroes. They inspire me. Five days with little rest and none of the comforts that I have enjoyed. Yet, they persisted and provided stellar care for those in our hospital struck with cancer.

My city was/is covered by flood waters and waters released by two reservoirs designed to keep downtown from flooding. How incredibly horrific is it to know that you must flood entire neighborhoods, destroying homes in the process, to save a city from additional disaster? A PA colleague flew home early from a conference in San Diego to be with his wife and children. His home was in one of the neighborhoods affected by the reservoirs. He was able to move his family to a safe location. He is a hero.

Houston has experienced two floods—Harvey and the outpouring of human kindness. PA colleagues have been volunteering at shelters, food banks, and in hospitals. The Cajun Navy (people with boats who volunteer to help) have completed hundreds of water rescues. Our city and state officials, police, firefighters, Coast Guard, and first responders have worked tirelessly without complaint. A friend who works for the local power company has been working with her team to ensure that power keeps flowing. People, strangers, colleagues, and families all working



**FIGURE 1.** The author's two dogs and the nearest bayou that is over the top of its banks by 15 to 20 ft.

together no matter the color, creed, politics, religion, or social status to save lives and be kind to each other. A colleague from work took complete strangers into her home to share her fortune with those in need. These are the true heroes. This is what we are all called to be.

There are many ways to help. If you have the ability to volunteer your time in a shelter, hospital, or community center, do so. If you can share your fortune, donate to the charity of your choice. If you are healthy, give blood. **JAAPA**

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