



Rock star cuts a single for Katrina relief.

Wednesday in Living

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a Katrina kind of love

If not for the hurricane that ravaged her hometown, Rachel Kaufmann might never have met the man of her dreams

By Barri Bronston
Staff writer

They didn't know each other, but as they soon would discover, Rachel Kaufmann and Mendy Traxler have more in common than even they could imagine.

Both are 22. Both come from families with four girls and three boys. Their mothers attended the University of Buffalo at the same time, having grown up an hour away from each other in upstate New York.

When Hurricane Katrina struck on Aug. 29, both were finishing stints at separate summer camps in New York's Catskill Mountains — he as a camp manager, she as a counselor whose campers included his sister.

Instead of flying home to New Orleans, Kaufmann waited a few days and headed straight to Houston, where her family — like thousands of other New Orleans area Jews — had sought refuge from the flood.

Traxler, a rabbinical student whose father is an ultra-Orthodox rabbi in Houston, traveled to Baton Rouge to help with relief efforts.

"I did everything from visiting the sick to bringing food to firefighters and FEMA workers," said Traxler, an emergency medical technician who also helped out at the Red Cross shelter. "I helped with Rosh Hoshana services. I was there for a month before I went back to Houston."

It was in Houston that Traxler's mother, Shoshana, mentioned to Bluma Rivkin, a Jewish evacuee whose husband, Rabbi Zelig Rivkin, is a director of Chabad-Lubavitch of Louisiana, that she was searching for a partner for Mendy.

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STAFF PHOTOS BY KATHY ANDERSON



Rachel Kaufmann celebrates her marriage to Mendy Traxler at Touro Synagogue in New Orleans. The two met in Houston, where Kaufmann's family evacuated after Katrina.

LEFT: From left: Nechama Kaufmann, Rachel Kaufmann — her face hidden behind a veil — Mendy Traxler, Rabbi Moishe Traxler and David Kaufmann take part in the wedding ceremony.



CHRIS ROSE

Our four-letter world

If you're easily offended, don't read this @&%#!& column*

Along with upper respiratory disease and psychiatry, another field of study that will reverberate in academic journals for the next several decades as a result of what has happened around here is linguistics.

We have always been a let-it-all-hang-out community. Who hasn't stood in the grocery line and been filled in on the very intimate details of the thyroid surgery endured by the woman behind you in line, or been in the back of a cab and met with the portfolio of lamentations the driver has about the city, or simply ordered a cup of coffee somewhere and found yourself locked in a conversation with the cashier on the meaning of life?

In our post-Katrina society, the details of these exchanges have become much more raw. More animated. More vigorous. More tonic and visceral.

I guess what I'm trying to say is: Have you noticed how much everybody around here cusses now? How you can be talking to a perfect stranger and the conversation takes the tone of a Dave Chappelle stand-up routine?

The examples of social intercourse cited above — the grocery shop — have now turned into: "my f*&%#! thyroid" and "this f@%*#! city" and "here's your f*#@%&! latte; do you need a lid?"

At least three or four times a day, I'll be talking to someone and the F-bombs start flying and other creative and colorful adjectival references arise and, inevitably, the awareness of the sudden intimacy of discourse prompts the speaker of such expletives to raise a hand to the lips and utter: "Pardon my French."

In this fashion, we are following the example of our shiny-headed mayor who, after letting loose a blue streak on national radio, blurted: "Excuse my French, everybody in America." Then adding, of course: "But I am PISSED!"

Alrighty then. Who says the mayor is not providing leadership? In this regard, he is the very vanguard of

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FULL STOP

No valentines will be delivered today via Western Union

I wish I had known it was ending. And I wish they could have hung on until Valentine's Day. I would have sent one more to someone just to stir the pot.

"BAD NEWS STOP TAX ON SEX STOP GOOD NEWS STOP YOU'RE GETTING MONEY BACK THIS YEAR STOP HAPPY VALENTINES DAY STOP"

Of course, no one in years has sent real telegrams, delivered by Western Union on those pale yellow 8½-inch-wide by 6½-inch-long sheets of paper inside a yellow envelope, the message typed in all capital letters.

Once hand-delivered by uniformed

Western Union messengers — also referred to as runners or couriers — on bicycles, in cars and on foot, they brought both glad and sad tidings for occasions ranging from births to deaths, birthdays to promotions, as well as news from battlefronts and . . . notes of endearment.

Telegrams spread the news of such events as the Wright brothers' first flight at Kitty Hawk, N.C., and the start of World War I; they also carried coded dispatches between British and U.S. military leaders during World War II.

Without any fanfare, Western Union telegrams faded into the sunset at the end



ANGUS LIND

See LIND, C-2

MASK APPEAL

What are your costume plans this Mardi Gras?

Planning to mask this Mardi Gras? Show your costume to the entire city by giving a sneak peek to The Times-Picayune. Tell us about your post-K Carnival creations and we'll share them with readers in the Feb. 24 edition of Lagniappe.

Here's what we need you to tell us:

- ▶ Your name, address and daytime phone number (not for publication).
- ▶ A description of your costume.
- ▶ How you came up with the idea.
- ▶ Who will wear the costume (just you? a gang of friends? the whole family?) and where on Fat Tuesday you plan to wear it.
- ▶ Whether we can photograph you in your costume by Feb. 20. (If the costume's already finished and you can send us a picture, please do.)

Due to delays in snail-mail delivery, please e-mail the information to costumes@timespicayune.com or deliver by hand to The Times-Picayune at 3800 Howard Avenue or any suburban bureau, to the attention of Mardi Gras Costumes, c/o Lagniappe Editor Ann Maloney.