

AFTER AND NOW



JAMES EDWARD BATES/SUN HERALD

Hugh and Polly Smith have made their new manufactured house in Diamondhead a home.

A new home in Diamondhead

Retired radio broadcaster Hugh Smith and his wife, Polly, had lived in their home at 5210 Bordage St. in Clermont Harbor for 9½ years. They had remodeled the small, wood-frame home and planned to live out their retirement years there.

The area, just blocks from the beach in Waveland, was devastated by Katrina, and the Smiths lost everything. Luckily, when they evacuated, they brought along their two beloved dogs.

After weeks of living in a hotel in Alabama, FEMA notified them they would receive a trailer. For another five weeks, they lived in the trailer in a state park in Alabama, but due to medical reasons, the couple wanted to relocate to be closer to their doctors in Slidell.

FEMA found a trailer for them in Picaune, but their happiness soon turned to despair as they said they found themselves living among regular instances of

crime.

The Smiths decided to leave, and they began to look for a new place to live. In the meantime, their insurance company partially reimbursed them for their losses, so they could begin to rebuild their lives.

"Perseverance and never giving up is what kept us going," Hugh said.

In May, the couple moved into a new, spacious, manufactured home on a lot they found in Diamondhead. First, they had to hire workers to clear away debris and several trees.

Once in the house, however, the furnishings came along slowly. Polly said she frequented yard sales and thrift stores to make her new home cozy.

The Smiths, who have been married for 55 years, said they will no longer be attached to material things. "Nothing," Polly said, "is more important to us than being together and having stability."

— NANCY MARCHBANKS



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Gary Smith steps around what remained of his parents' home in Clermont Harbor after Hurricane Katrina.



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The Smiths moved into their new home in Diamondhead in May, after debris and trees were cleared from the lot.

We welcome stories of recovery

The Sun Herald has profiled many South Mississippi structures significantly damaged or destroyed in Hurricane Katrina, and as many of you move toward rebuilding and recovering, we want to highlight those forward steps.

Please send your story information, photos and a daytime phone number to Sun Herald, "Stories of Recovery," P.O. Box 4567, Biloxi, MS 39535-4567. E-mail is preferred to mynews@sunherald.com, with "Stories of Recovery" in the subject line.