

## Welcome to Galveston

On behalf of my colleagues at UTMB, I would like to welcome members of the Southern Demographic Association who are attending the annual meeting in Galveston, October 22-24. Below is some information about Galveston which I hope is helpful and interesting to you.

Galveston was incorporated in 1839 and reached its peak in the 1880's. At that time, it was one of the richest cities in the country owing to the development and growth of the Southwest. It was a major port of entry and major financial center. The Strand downtown was often referred to as the Wall Street of the Southwest.

The famous 1900 Storm leveled the city and resulted in 6,000 to 8,000 deaths. Galveston's population at that time was around 35,000 so this was a major loss of life, still the biggest natural disaster in U.S. History. Galveston rebuilt slowly and beginning in 1904 a seawall was erected which is approximately 14 feet tall. Much of the city was raised by four to eight feet. While many buildings were destroyed by the storm many survived, including a large number of 19<sup>th</sup> Century commercial buildings downtown and many Victorian homes in the East End Historical District between 19<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> streets, north of Broadway, and the Silk Stocking District on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Streets south of Broadway toward the Seawall and the beach. Other historical homes survived further west.

As you can imagine, the 1900 Storm was a major defining event for Galveston. It has often been claimed that Galveston's tolerance of diversity can be traced to the rebuilding of the city with all working together to do so. The storm also led to Galveston's economic decline with Houston becoming the big city Galveston was meant to be. The opening of the ship channel to Houston gave Houston a major port and caused a further economic decline for Galveston. Much of the downtown and eastern third of the Island is a 19<sup>th</sup> Century city thanks to the economic decline brought about by the 1900 Storm.

By the 1930's, Galveston was "sin city" with wide open gambling and prostitution both of which were tolerated until the 1950's. The Balinese Room on the Seawall had big time entertainers like Frank Sinatra in the 1940's. Unfortunately Ike destroyed it last year.

The crackdown of the gambling and prostitution caused another economic decline that lasted until the early 1970's when the Galveston Historical Society spearheaded renovation of historical buildings and homes. Things kept on improving in most areas until Ike hit on September 13, 2008. This was our Katrina. The Seawall did its job in protecting the Island but the surge came from the bay side flooding downtown, the medical center, and much of the town. Approximately 70 percent of the homes on the Island were flooded but very few were totally destroyed. Unlike some areas of New Orleans after Katrina the water receded quickly and the recovery began almost immediately and is going rather well considering that downtown had 10-12 feet of water. All of UTMB's 100+ buildings were flooded and we had to lay off around 2,500

employees, approximately 20-25%. We also laid off 127 faculty including tenured and in some cases productive faculty. Fortunately, UTMB is bouncing back and we are starting to hire employees including faculty.

The main conference hotel is the Tremont House on Mechanic Street between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Streets. It opened in 1986 in a beautiful 19<sup>th</sup> Century Building. If you are driving, you will be crossing the Causeway on I-45 which becomes Broadway when you get on the Island. Keep going 3-4 miles and make a left on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. The hotel is six blocks on the left and is only a block from the Strand Street which is the heart of our tourist area.

The other hotel is the Harborhouse about three blocks away on the waterfront. Make a left on 21<sup>st</sup> from Broadway and you will dead end into it. There is a wonderful new Greek restaurant at the Harborhouse, the Olympia Grill. You can dine outside on the water and the weather in October is typically wonderful. Willie G's and Fisherman's Wharf nearby are nice seafood restaurants.

I also highly recommend a visit to Postoffice Street, two blocks south of Mechanic Street and four blocks from the waterfront, where the Harborside Hotel is. Between 20<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Streets on Postoffice is our local entertainment district with a number of good restaurants and bars as well as antique shops and art galleries. For a wonderful upscale place, try Rudy and Paco's on the corner of Postoffice and 21<sup>st</sup> Street. Great seafood with a Central American flavor. Nearby, you will find the Saltwater Grill and the Gumbo Bar, both moderately priced seafood places. Next to the Gumbo Bar is the Sky Bar which has an upscale bar and a Sushi restaurant. On the corner is the Stork Club with pretty decent bar food. Next to Rudy and Paco's is O'Malley's Stage Door which is a pretty cool local bar that serves decent deli sandwiches. Next to it is the 1894 Opera House which is a fabulous venue for plays and concerts. Definitely worth the \$2 self-guided tour.

Probably the most famous restaurant in Galveston is Gaido's on Seawall Boulevard at 39<sup>th</sup> Street. Expensive but great seafood Gulf Coast style. Landry's nearby is also a great place. For Mexican breakfast, I recommend Gorditas Mexico on the Seawall at 7<sup>th</sup> Street. This is not Tex-Mex. It is real authentic interior Mexican food, a great bargain. The waitresses wear Mexican soccer shirts and do not speak very much English. Closer to the hotels is the Apache on 20<sup>th</sup> just south of Postoffice. Good Tex-Mex breakfast and lunch.

We plan to host the Friday night dinner at our house at 2416 Avenue L, two blocks south of Broadway off of 24<sup>th</sup> Street. From the Tremont, walk six blocks south to Broadway. Cross Broadway and take the second right on L. Our house is the third one on the right. It is a two-story 19<sup>th</sup> Century Victorian House. Go down the driveway to the back deck. We will be serving a Texas barbecue beginning at 7:00 pm. We are also looking into getting some music.

If you are driving from the east, you can take 124 South off of I-10 at Winnie and Hwy 87 to the ferry landing about 50 miles. The ferry ride to Galveston takes 15 minutes. From there it is around a mile or so to downtown. From the ferry, go half a mile to Harborside Drive and make a right. The UTMB campus will be to your left. Go to Pier

21 (21<sup>st</sup> Street ends on your left) and make a right into the Harborhouse. For the Tremont go to 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, make a left, go two blocks to Mechanic and make a right. The Tremont is right there.

If you are flying, Houston Intercontinental is around 65 miles North of Galveston and Houston Hobby is around 40 miles North. You can take the Galveston Limousine for around \$40 from IAH and around \$30 from Hobby. Or you might want to rent a car so that you can get around and see the Island. Another option is to rent a car one-way to Galveston from Enterprise which has no drop-off fee. Drop the car off at the office on Broadway at 59<sup>th</sup> Street. They will give you a ride to the hotel. On the way back, they will pick you up at the hotel and take you to their office where you can pick up a car one-way to the airport. They close Saturday at noon. Renting one-way both ways is cheap and you do not have to pay hotel parking.

We are all looking forward to having you around Galveston and also at our home on Friday. Feel free to give me a call on my office number or on my cell phone, (409)392-0595 if you have any questions.

Kyriakos (Kokos) Markides