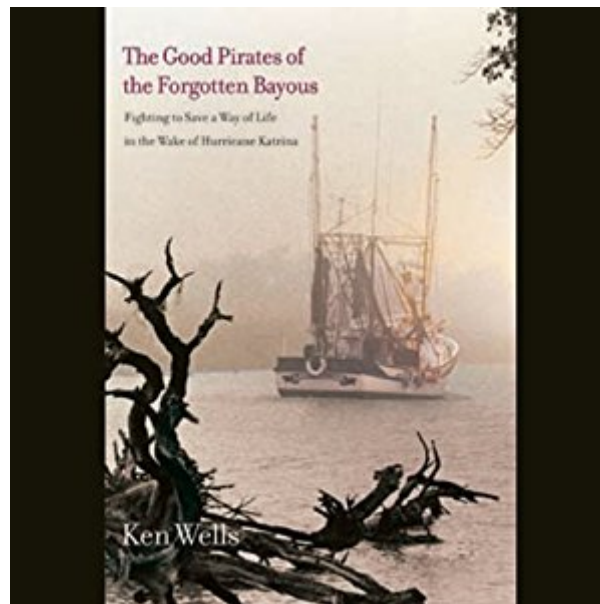


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# Good Pirates Of The Forgotten Bayous: Fighting To Save A Way Of Life In The Wake Of Hurricane Katrina



## Synopsis

With a long and colorful family history of defying storms, the seafaring Robin cousins of St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana, make a fateful decision to ride out Hurricane Katrina on their hand-built fishing boats in a sheltered Civil War-era harbor called Violet Canal. But when Violet is overrun by killer surges, the Robins must summon all their courage, seamanship, and cunning to save themselves and the scores of others suddenly cast into their care. In this gripping saga, Louisiana native Ken Wells provides a close-up look at the harrowing experiences in the backwaters of New Orleans during and after Katrina. Focusing on the plight of the intrepid Robin family, whose members trace their local roots to before the American Revolution, Wells recounts the landfall of the storm and the tumultuous seventy-two hours afterward, when the Robins' beloved bayou country lay catastrophically flooded and all but forgotten by outside authorities as the world focused its attention on New Orleans. Wells follows his characters for more than two years as they strive, amid mind-boggling wreckage and governmental fecklessness, to rebuild their shattered lives. This is a story about the deep longing for home and a proud bayou people's love of the fertile but imperiled low country that has nourished them. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I've rarely read as gripping, horrifying, and inspiring a book as Ken Wells' story of what happened when The Storm hit the low-lying bayou parishes of St. Bernard and Plaquemines. As a reporter for

the "Wall Street Journal," Wells, himself a Louisiana native, saw the devastation in the two parishes immediately after Katrina. His *The Good Pirates of the Forgotten Bayous* is an oral history of sorts of what happened to them, a story that got "forgotten" by a nation focused on New Orleans proper, and how the folks in the parish have fared since. St Bernard and Plaquemines are shrimping parishes, and Wells' story focuses on the Robin clan, a shrimping family that's lived and worked in the area for over 200 years. Ricky Robin, captain of a 70 ton trawler called the "Lil Rick"--a ship built by hand--sails up the Violet Canal hoping to weather out the hurricane. But surges whipped up by the 140+ mph winds get him in trouble almost at once. In one of the book's most harrowing passages, Ricky remembers seeing a 20 foot skiff blowing through the air and then skidding across the roiling waves like a thrown stone. In the three days following the worst of the storm, Ricky gives shelter on the "Lil Rick" to hundreds of homeless survivors, sometimes hammering out dixieland tunes on his trumpet to keep up their spirits. Disasters can bring out the worst in frightened and desperate people. But it brought out the very best in Ricky Robin. Although Robin is the star of the book, Wells also introduces us to others who weathered the story-- such as Ricky's cousin Ronald Robin. Ronald, a veteran hurricane survivor, also tried to weather the storm in Violet Canal. But like so many others, he was stunned by Katrina's ferocity and swiftness.

Ken Wells can write. Let me repeat this fact. Ken Wells can write. If you like the grittiness of Rick Bragg or the majesty of Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, you will like this book. I am a reader, presumably readers of these reviews share this avocation. My greatest joy is what I call being "stopped" while reading a book. By this I mean reading a line so beautiful or thoughtful that I am actually stopped. I am forced to put down the book and let the words pour over me. Again and again Mr. Wells' prose stopped me. *Good Pirates* is the story of courageous men and women fighting not only Hurricane Katrina, but for a way of life and a piece of America that most of their fellow countrymen do not even know exists. Wells, born and bred very near these bayous, knows these folks and their land in his soul --- and it shows. The courage of good pirates like Ricky Robin and the drama of their fight against Hurricane Katrina and what is called modern progress is inspiring. The site of the battleground, essentially the same land where the Battle of New Orleans was fought in 1812, is the swampy end of America where Louisiana and the Gulf of Mexico occupy the same space. The land is described by Mr. Wells so beautifully that it is as breathtaking as the book's narrative of the struggle of man versus nature. The following excerpt is an example: "Uplanders might find the greater landscape monotonous, the way a driver across Kansas might finally declare the endless canvas of golden wheat fields monochromatic. But bayou folk

never tire of it., for they divine, in observations steeped in time, how these landscapes shift with the light and the tides and the seasons; how routinely they give up their wonders and their mysteries.

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