

## Final victory: Disabled evacuee gets new start in Victory Park

By Ernest Herndon | [Enterprise-Journal](#)

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More than three years after Hurricane Katrina demolished his trailer at Pearlington, Michael Ferbosses is moving into a permanent home.

Ferbosses signed papers Tuesday to purchase a house at 908 10th St. in McComb's Victory Park subdivision, which was built for people affected by the Aug. 29, 2005, storm. His will be the last in the 16-house subdivision to be occupied.

"I feel like I've been in a submarine," said Ferbosses, who has been staying at Days Inn in McComb and gets around with walking stick, wheelchair or scooter. "I'm used to doing a little here, a little there, for myself."

Ferbosses, 51, was living in a mobile home on Highway 90 at Pearlington just east of Slidell, La., when Katrina approached.

Trailer park maintenance man Fred Holder, a former Marine in his 70s, rousted Ferbosses from his home, loaded his wheelchair and other necessities into a pickup and headed east to Mobile, Ala.

When the storm hit, "we were in a pickup truck behind a cinder block building," Ferbosses recalled.

"When the storm passed, we started to head back and couldn't believe the devastation," Ferbosses said.

Pearlington, located on the east bank of the lower Pearl River where cypress swamp turns to marsh, was bulls-eye for the massive storm. A tidal wave estimated at up to 35 feet in height roared up the Pearl, virtually erasing the little village.

"Somebody stole our post office and fire station," Ferbosses quipped.

As for his trailer, "it was all out to sea."

He and Holder camped out beside a Holiday Inn in Gulfport for a month, brewing coffee by a campfire for all comers. "We were kind of the coffee crew," Ferbosses said.

By October of that year they wound up in Pike County, later moving into a FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) trailer. Holder returned to the Coast in January 2008.

Ferbosses also received assistance from the University of Southern Mississippi Department of Disabilities Studies, Southwest Mississippi Opportunity Inc. and St. Andrew's Mission.

In 2006, Voice of Calvary Ministries and several other charitable organizations teamed up to build Victory Park to provide moderately priced housing for people affected by Katrina.

When Ferbosses heard about the subdivision, he applied for a U.S. Department of Agriculture home loan to buy a house, but has had to battle lots of red tape before it came to pass. "I've had a lot of help," he said. "I'm very blessed with people helping me."

"This is a collaborative effort between USDA, USM Department of Disabilities Studies, Voice of Calvary Ministries, City of McComb and ... AJFC Community Action Agency," said Erma Driver, president and CEO of Voice of Calvary Ministries.

Originally from New Orleans, Ferbosses suffers spinal arthritis from an injury he sustained in the Navy. When he got out of the Navy, he worked with the Orleans Parish Sheriff's Department's criminal medical staff and later lived in Colorado before returning to the South in February 2005 to live in Pearlinton.

He's been living at Days Inn since this past October, courtesy of FEMA.

"The staff here has been absolutely fantastic, and the management," Ferbosses said of Days Inn.

But he's more than ready to get into a home of his own. He likes to do his own chores, albeit slowly.

"I'll go out and gnaw the grass if I have to," he said. "I'm not used to sitting around. I'm used to an active lifestyle."