

New Orleans Nostalgia

Ned Hemard's Weekly Column Remembering New Orleans History, Culture And Traditions

Rudyard Kipling, born in Bombay, India, is famous for his works "The Jungle Book", "Kim", "Gunga Din" and "Just So Stories". In 1909, his inspirational poem "If" was published. Like Polonius' advice to Laertes, it too is advice to a son. What follows is a New Orleans slant to the poem, addressed to both men and women (young and old):

If, New Orleans Style

If you can chill when leaders try to fool us
And you love still this Crescent we call home;
If you enjoy pronouncing Tchoupitoulas
Or cheering when the Saints are in the Dome;
If you eat crawfish drenched in Creole seas'nin'
While listenin' to a soulful Toussaint tune;
If dieting has made you lose all reas'nin'
So you have to live on sno-balls every June;

If you can down a king-sized muffaletta
At Central Grocery one fine afternoon;
If you believe Maurice was simply not a
Winning name for mayor compared to Moon;
If Rock 'n' Bowl is where you rock and bowl in
And Lenfant's was the place you went to pet;
If K-Doe used to get you rock and rollin'
And the Fairgrounds always was a lucky bet;

If it's alligator pear, not avocado;
If it's Parasol's without a drop of a rain;
If it's NOMA now when once it was Delgado;
If we once belonged to France and then to Spain;
If Camellia Grill is where you've done some waiting
For omelets, burgers or a chocolate freeze,
And Bali Hai was just the spot for dating
(On that point almost everyone agrees);

If your Coliseum's void of gladiators;
If you've weathered a few Port O' Call Monsoons;
If you've been to Tip's to hear the Radiators;
If you've made a dive for Mardi Gras doubloons;
If your channel surfing's in the Irish Channel,
And your Green Wave's rolling down the field;
If you've heard the words of every expert panel,
That our levee system's never going to yield;

If you can love a city so ironic
Where the West Bank isn't always to the west;
If you delight in songs by Harry Connick
When it's April and he's playing at the Fest;

If you can hear the words they say about us
Twisted and spun to make the nightly news,
Or hear our nation say they truly doubt us
When we work so hard to win and not to lose;

If you care for a place that "care forgot" to;
If you dream of its many "dreamy scenes";
If you still love whatever hold has got you
In this mystic land of jesters, kings and queens;
If you returned when flooding brought disaster
To bring your city back from disrepair;
If you refuse to make defeat your master,
Then New Orleans is your home, mon chère!

NED HÉMARD

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"If, New Orleans Style"
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