

'Is a transcendently beautiful...' commentary, by its author Mary Gilliland

My experience of hurricanes is virtual -- Bacall and Bogart hunkering behind closed shutters in *Key Largo* -- but I am deeply touched both by the notion of summer vacation by the sea and by the willfully false but common belief that humans are entitled to do anything we can.

Superstorm Sandy of 2012 is a fairly recent reminder that we build at our peril on vulnerable coastlines, where so many major cities are located and are increasingly costly to maintain. Shortly before that hurricane arrived, I learned of one that devastated the New Orleans area 150 years earlier.

Coastal geologist Asbury Sallenger's *Island In A Storm* (2009) narrates the stories of both a 19th century survivor of a category 4 hurricane and of the Louisiana barrier island where her family summered -- an island that never recovered from that storm.

The waters of the Gulf of Mexico took her out to sea then swept Emma Mille back to shore, but they have continued to erode Isle Dernière, which at the time Sallenger was writing his book retained just 25% of its land mass.

Isle Dernière -- Last Island -- is one of countless places on our planet where our longing for leisure can no longer be sustained.