

# Stories OF THE STORM

## 'Worst flooding I've ever seen'

By GARETH McGRATH

Staff Writer

BURGAW — Friday, Donald Lanier celebrated his 76th birthday at his Old Maple Hill Road residence with his 25 hunting dogs.

It also was the day he evacuated, chased out by the surging floodwaters.

"Lived there all my life," Mr. Lanier said of the brick home sandwiched between the Shaker and Shelter creeks in eastern Pender County, "but this is by far the worst flooding I've ever seen."

Monday afternoon he, his wife and friends were preparing to go back and see what they could salvage.

Although N.C. Army National Guardsmen had prevented them

from launching on N.C. 53 near the Cape Fear River, the Laniers and others were launching from Croomsbridge Road, which was almost flooded to U.S. 117.

"I have no idea" what to expect, said Carolyn Lanier, Donald's wife, as she prepared to board one of the skiffs, "but I should probably take a doctor with me."

"I put the dogs and some food in an old house which I don't think would flood, but we'll see," Mr. Lanier said.

Saturday will be the Laniers' 29th wedding anniversary.

"We're too old to start over, move somewhere else," Mrs. Lanier said.

Standing nearby, Deborah Cramer, who lived near the Laniers, nervously smoked a cigarette as her grandson played near the edge of the brackish water.

She was waiting for her husband and daughter to come back from a trip to their mobile home.

Mrs. Cramer had evacuated from her mobile home Friday, leaving behind nine dogs, a pet pig and dozens of birds.

"I know the house is gone, so my main concern is the animals so at least I know I have some-

Please see STORIES on page 4A



Staff photo - KEN BLEVINS

Jennifer Shively helps her 3-year-old son, Patrick Matthews, find clothes at Burgaw Middle School on Monday. The family has been staying at the shelter for several days since their home was flooded.

## HURRICANE FLOYD: THE AFTERMATH

# Stories

Continued from page 1A

thing," she said as she began to sob.

As another boat launched, Mrs. Cramers looked glumly up as it began to rain.

"It's really hard to just not start swimming to get to my house," she said.

## Animals float by

Outside the Pender County Sheriff's Department in Burgaw stood Doug and Cindi Milburn.

It had taken over an hour for them to reach dry land after being evacuated from their Whitestocking Road home Monday afternoon.

"We didn't see a place that wasn't flooded," Mr. Milburn said.

He said animals, both dead and alive, had been floating by their home since Friday.

On his way out Mr. Milburn said he saw cows, pigs and a horse fighting for space on the front porch of a home on N.C. 53, one of the few areas that wasn't underwater.

"I've lived around here all my life and I've never seen anything like it," Mr. Milburn said. "And the contamination that's out there."

## 'Never dreamt they would see water'

Eddie King, Pender County's assistant emergency management director, said the floodwaters had turned the usual 10-mile trip from Burgaw to Maple Hill into an 85-mile journey one-way through three counties.

"We've got water places we never saw in Fran, people flooded out that never dreamt they would see water," he said.

## Guard pitches in

Faced with serious erosion problems after Hurricane Floyd, Sunset Beach got its Guard up.

Elements from Company B of the 505th Engineers, a Charlotte-area National Guard unit, were on the beach over the weekend, helping clean up debris and rebuild the town's dune line, much of



Staff photo - KEN BLEVINS

Kamrie Blakeslee, 2, of Currie naps at Burgaw Middle School on Monday afternoon. Shelters in Pender County were filling up as floodwaters rose. Some relief was possible today as rivers were expected to crest.

which was swept away by Floyd.

Dan Holtel, a Sunset Beach police officer who also is a senior engineer for the National Guard's 30th Infantry Brigade, spent part of the morning directing two Guard bulldozers to town. The bulldozers were to be used to make new dunes.

Officer Holtel said about 75 percent of the town's 2.4-mile dune line was washed away or reduced to speed bumps. The average height had been about 12 feet, he said.

A 1998 beach renourishment project prevented worse damage, he said.

"It saved the houses," he said.

The town's fishing pier wasn't as fortunate. Part of the end of the pier was washed away and 150-200 feet will have to be rebuilt, said co-owner Becky Kaplan.

Four National Guard trucks had been dispatched to help haul debris, mostly washed out walkways.

The presence of heavy equipment on the beach forced the relocation of a previously scheduled cleanup. Volunteers for Big Sweep moved their efforts to Main Street and the town's side streets.

About 35 volunteers, including a contingent of Boy Scouts and members of the Seaside United Methodist Church youth group, took part, in the cleanup, filling bags with litter and shingles blown.

## Looters on prowl

At the end of Croomsbridge Road in Pender County, a cardboard sign read, "Please motor by homes very slowly. Will help cause less damage."

James Blackman, who was flooded out of his Lake Drive home Friday and had been making boat trips back all weekend, said he had seen several people sitting on top of their roofs with guns, threatening to shoot anyone who caused a wake.

"It's bad enough what's happened without somebody with a gun shooting at people," said Deborah Cramer, another evacuee.

Mr. Blackman said he also had seen looters taking items off people's front porches.

"Just motoring right up and taking them," he said.

Doug and Cindi Milburn, who were evacuated by boat from their Whitestocking Road residence Monday afternoon, said they also had seen looters in action.

"People motoring up and down the streets that I've never seen before in my life," Mr. Milburn said.

"We weren't able to salvage much, but I don't want looters to take what we have

left," Mrs. Milburn said.

Pender County Sheriff Mike Harvell said his department was aware of the looting reports and was doing its best to help patrol the flooded areas.

"We're trying, but it's hard to control because we don't know who owns what and who lives where," he said.

## Watch that wake

In Duplin County, officials set up a boat permit system to curb looting and stop vessels from kicking up wakes that can knock out windows.

The county had scattered reports of looting following Floyd. Though sheriff's deputies have not been able to investigate individual cases yet, only law enforcement officials and farmers that need to feed livestock can get permits at the emergency services center at 213 Duplin St. in Kenansville.

Staff writers Brian Feagans and Tommy Perkins, and Brunswick UpClose editor Joe Stalvey contributed to this report.



Staff photo - KEN BLEVINS

Geneva Burgess, 84, talks to a neighbor at the shelter at Burgaw Middle School on Monday. The neighbor was calling to let her know how her home off N.C. 53 was faring.