

AFTER HURRICANE FRAN

RIDING IT OUT

'I'm looking at the sound ... it looks like the ocean'

By CHRIS DAVIS

Staff Writer

Four pairs of eyes were pressed against a window Thursday night watching Fran take out her fury on Carolina Beach.

As boats discarded their moorings, and roofs began losing their shingles, Granger Soward narrated the scene at 519 Canal Drive.

"The water is at least 45 inches above the street," Mr. Soward said at 6:30 p.m. "I'm looking at the sound right now, and it looks like the ocean."

Mr. Soward, who chose to ride out the storm with four of his friends and neighbors, watched Thursday night as water from the sound rolled into his yard and covered his mailbox.

Mr. Soward and his friends lost power and cable at about 1 p.m., long before Fran's worst winds moved into New Hanover County.

As the water rose, a black Pontiac was swept up by the current and pushed into a house, Mr. Soward said. Boats drifted along Canal Street, brushing by houses and into them.

At about 9:30 p.m., Fran was quiet.

The lull gave Mr. Soward a chance to survey the damage. A look outside revealed a 32-foot boat resting squarely on his dock, Mr. Soward said.

Why did they stay?
"Idiots I guess," Mr. Soward joked.

In the midst of Fran's fury, Mr. Soward watched a manatee appear from the swirling flood waters at the base of his Carolina Beach home.

"As God is my witness, we have had a manatee right here at the back door," Mr. Soward said. "It was like he was disoriented."

Mr. Soward and his friends watched the manatee for about an hour before it turned and headed for deeper waters.

"I knew nobody would believe us," he said. "And we're sitting here without a camera."

On South Lake Park Boulevard, Steve Labanec was determined to stay with his business, Seagull Bait and Tackle, until flooding forced him to retreat to his Carolina Beach home. By about 9 p.m. he was forced to go home because five feet of water had flooded his store.

"It looks like somebody dropped a bomb," Mr. Labanec said as storm winds quieted some at about 9:30 p.m. "It hasn't been no picnic, but it's over."

John Carty was protected in his Atlanta Drive home near Carolina

Beach Elementary. When day broke, he realized how lucky he'd been.

"It's breathtaking," he said soon after surveying the island. "When you see a whole hotel washed in the ocean, that gives you a whole new perspective."

Mr. Carty and his family sat quietly through most of the storm because the winds were so loud it was impossible to concentrate on anything. During the height of the storm, they had to shout just to hear each other.

"It sounds like a big ol' locomotive," Mr. Carty said. "We were just hoping it wouldn't get any worse."

Lee Roach brought his 80-foot Hatteras yacht *Utopia* 60 miles from Myrtle Beach to Wrightsville Beach, expecting Fran to hit far their south.

Instead, he got caught in the thick of the storm.

He anchored the yacht in Banks Channel, away from docks. Mr. Roach and the yacht's pilot, Richard Matthews, slept little Friday morning as they kept an eye on their ties.

Three lines snapped in the wind. That was a first for *Utopia*, which has weathered 60-mph winds in the Caribbean without problems.

"We just had a rough night," said Mr. Roach, who is buying Walls' restaurant. He was busy Friday morning trying to find out what happened to his house on Wrightsville.

Mr. Matthews, a native South African, said it was the second worst storm he's experienced at sea. The worst: a vicious storm in the Indian Ocean which caused 40-foot seas.

"It was just like a dog shaking a rag doll," he said of the Fran's effects on *Utopia*. "We were just whipping at the end of a chain."

The ride on some Brunswick County beaches wasn't quite as exciting.

Heavy winds and rain came, but Long Beach resident Jim Forsyth reported little damage in his neighborhood, which lies nearly at the center of the island.

Mr. Forsyth, who had a wind gauge, said the heaviest gust he'd seen as of 7 p.m. was 109 mph.

Mr. Forsyth passed the time sitting on his front porch with his cat, Attitude.

"I'm sitting here in the dark," he said at about 7 p.m. "But it's not too bad."

Staff Writer Philip Hervey contributed to this report.



Staff photo by KEN BREVINS

Boats are piled against the shore at Masonboro Boat Yard, one of many marinas in the area to suffer heavily from Fran.

Rising water, winds batter boats

By PHILIP HERVEY

Staff Writer

The high seas whipped up by Hurricane Fran flung recreational boats about like a child playing with toys in a bathtub.

Numerous docks in the area were twisted and ripped apart by the combination of high winds and high water. The fate of boats in those slips rested on the strength of their lines and the sturdiness of the docks.

The damage was so extensive on the Intracoastal Waterway by Wrightsville Beach that marina owners discovered strange boats, pilings and dock planks when they checked their property Friday morning.

"Those boats out there, they don't belong there. They belong somewhere else," said Johnnie Baker, owner of the Bridge Tender marina and restaurant and the Fish House Grill on Airlie Road. He had all the boats in his marina, except one that wouldn't start, taken inland before Fran arrived.

People with property on or near the water also woke up Friday with boats parked in their yard or in the woods.

BOAT/U.S., a national organization that's the boating equivalent of AAA for cars, has estimated damage to recreation boats in the coastal areas at \$40 million to \$50 million from Cape Fear to Sneads Ferry, said spokesman David Pillelait.

"Several thousand boats were destroyed or damaged by the tidal surge and wind gusts," he said.

The group planned to dispatch "boat catastrophe teams" begin-



Staff photo - THE N. PHAM

Cheryl Canady describes how her boat was hurled on a parking lot at The Tides marina off Myrtle Grove Road.

ning Friday night with cranes and salvage crews.

Damage to most docks and marinas near the Brunswick County coast appeared minor.

Carolina Beach and areas farther north were less fortunate. From the air, it appeared most marinas along the Intracoastal Waterway were damaged.

Boats docked along the waterway either sank or landed in the marshes hundreds of yards away. One sailboat still attached to a dock landed in the marshes off Airlie Road.

Boats that were parked in driveways at Carolina Beach ended up in nearby yards. The roof at the Carolina Inlet Marina was torn off, and a half dozen boats were piled on top of each other next to the storage area.

At a subdivision off Myrtle Grove Road, nearly a dozen boats from the Tides marina—some still tied tightly to their docks—lay in yards and in cul-de-sacs throughout the neighborhood.

"Mine's *The Trophy* sitting over there," said Cheryl Canady, president of the homeowners association. "It's only a month old. We just

got it July 20."

"Everything just floated," said Faye Smith. "It was so pretty before. It was manicured and the lawns were so pretty. It's going to be a while before we get it back in shape."

At Bradley Creek, about a half-dozen sailboats were pressed against the Oleander Drive bridge. The spectacle caused several dozen curious motorists to stop Friday and get a look from the bridge.

Outside Wrightsville Beach near the Intracoastal Waterway drawbridge, Jeff Ray didn't have much to say as he removed debris from his 41-foot sailboat, pummeled by Fran's winds and thrown about a half mile from its dock on Summer Rest Road.

The dock itself was nowhere in sight, its location marked by a few splintered pilings.

"I've been depressed before, but ..." he muttered to a speechless friend.

The bits and pieces of docks left people wondering whose was whose.

"It looks like ours," said Tony High as he stood on the back porch

of the Fish House Grill restaurant on Airlie Road. He was looking above his head at the underside of a dock resting on the railing.

"Of course, there's so many on shore now it's hard to tell," Mr. High said. He was worried about his home on the waterway, where he has a floating dock and several large boats.

The storm was powerful enough to send a pontoon boat a half mile down the Intracoastal, past the draw bridge to Airlie Marina, where it washed ashore and nestled neatly on the parking lot. The owners found it by late Friday morning.

Boats were tilted at odd angles in their slips at the marina. At least one small sailboat had sunk, its mast poking out of the water from its boat slip.

Janice and Tom Dickey, the marina's owners, had to nail wood to block the entrance to the docks to prevent people from risking injury by trying to get to their boats. Some had even tried to walk across a floating dock that had been raised above the water and twisted in the wind.

Farther down Airlie, an old Hatteras boat called *Monitor* and another small fishing boat called *Hurricane Rock* were blown out of the Intracoastal across the road to the edge of a yard.

Someone made light of the predicament: A "Mid Atlantic Yacht Sales" sign blown off in the wind was placed below the hull of the *Monitor*.

Staff Writers Celia Rivenbark, Jeff Selingo and Kristina Bartlett and correspondent Annie Minard contributed to this report.