

to assess the damage.

Cape fear starts to clean up

By STACEY HIRSH
Staff Writer

Tony Spataro and his son, Nick, spent Friday morning organizing the shelves of their shop at The Cotton Exchange.

"We're just using the day to rearrange the shelves," said the elder Mr. Spataro, owner of The Zoo, a shop that sells stuffed animals and other toys.

With dampness on one patch of carpet and a small leak in the front window, the Spataros had minimal damage to their store.

They were among the lucky ones.

Other businesses in the complex had been flooded, and in some cases demolished, when Hurricane Floyd ripped the roof off part of the historic building in downtown Wilmington.

Liz Kirby, owner of The Candy Barrel, spent Thursday mopping 2 to 3 inches of water from the front room of her store. By Friday, she was taking care of the final details and serving coffee and candy to hungry store owners.

"At least I have a business," Ms. Kirby said. "For that I feel grateful."

Business owners and residents spent the days after Hurricane Floyd soaking up water, picking up branch-



Staff photo: NICK APPEL LAJ

Kevin Braswell of Dependable Tree Service works on removing a tree from the roof of a house in the 300 block of Forest Hills Drive on Friday.

es and cleaning debris.

At the Wilmington Fire Department, a firefighter raked debris from in front of the station. At Coastal Camera and Photo on Front Street, it was business as usual - except for the broken Kodak sign that dangled from a wire in front of the store.

"I'm going to replace the sign, of

course," owner Jim Strawbridge said. "It's 90 degrees from where it usually is."

In the 100 block of Forest Hills Drive in Wilmington, the scent of Christmas lingered in the air as Scott Gilbert cleaned debris from a pine tree that fell from his neighbor's yard

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into his during the storm.

"We had to pump out our basement and clean up debris," Mr. Gilbert said of his cleanup effort.

Just down the road, in the 300 block of Forest Hills Drive, a crew of workers from Tennessee sawed an uprooted tree that had toppled over and poked a hole through the roof.

"My dad was in one of the rooms

when the limb came through, and it scared the heck out of him," said Grant Hatch.

At the Hatch home, cleanup started Thursday and continued Friday. But the Hatches were somewhat spared from an even bigger cleanup: the tree they were cutting had fallen into a brick chimney, preventing it from going through the entire house.

"That chimney basically stopped it from falling all the way," Mr. Hatch said. "That's what saved the day."