Aftermath mixes emotions

Carolina Beach residents relieved

By CORY REISS

CAROLINA BEACH — With moods that might be described as cheery under other circumstances, property owners and residents of Carolina Beach and Kure Beach returned home Friday morning to begin cleaning up after Hurricane Floyd rumbled through.

"All in all, I think we're pretty lucky," said David Pfaff before he paddled away in a john boat using a broom to navigate floodwaters around the Carolina Beach lake.

On Friday morning, the Snow's Cut bridge opened at 10 a.m. for residents who grunted in the face of lost shingles, porches, beach walkways, and windows, because damage wasn't close to expectations. The bridge opens at 6 a.m. today to the general public.

On Carolina Beach Avenue North, the road closest to the ocean at the north end of the island, Regan Arthurs had lost the companion to her washing machine, which lay face down in a first-floor room.

"We haven't found the dryer yet," she said, while looking outside through an open door. The room was demolished and full of sand, but she figured storm surge damage could have been much worse.

Across the street, Stewart Bruner was strangely uplifted for someone who dug 3 feet of sand out from beneath his house.

Carolina Beach Avenue North, where damage was worst, was buried under about 4 feet of sand.

"Watching the bulldozer work, Mr. Bruner said, and he was 'ecstatic.' After Hurricane Fran, he found the house ripped from its pilings and thrown across the street. The damage from Hurricane Floyd couldn't compare.

"We were pretty nauseous driving onto the island this morning," said his wife, Paula, also all smiles. But down the street three blocks, Richard Berg, 26, shook his head. He was in the process of boarding up a neighbor's beachfront vacation and rental home to protect it from further damage.

Inside, two feet of sand covered the first floor. The storm surge had shoved all the furniture into a pile of wreckage against the street-side wall — just as with Hurricane Fran, he said.

The Carolina Beach lake flooded surrounding neighborhoods with 4 to 5 feet of water, which in most cases did not reach the first floors of the raised homes. Lake Shore Drive was submerged under more than a foot of water.

Town Council member Dennis Barbour said the flooding would linger in that area for at least three days as pumps continued to work.

Storm damage was estimated to be at least $25 million, Mr. Barbour said. He called the damage minimal to moderate.

"Frontloaders would have Carolina Beach Avenue North clear by Monday," he said.

Farther south, Kure Beach Mayor Betty Mclenn said damage was minimal.

Please see BEACH on page 6B