Tough choices made as folks flee drowning Pender homes

By CECE von KOLNITZ
Staff Writer

BURGAW — Facing a swiftly rising Northeast Cape Fear River, Jim Connor chose to shoot 35 goats on his farm rather than give them up to the water.

"Even if they could swim, there isn’t anywhere for them to get to land," Mr. Connor said.

Mr. Connor, families and neighbors gathered on a bridge over the river on Sunday. It was one of the only dry spots on N.C. 53 between Burgaw and Maple Hill, in a county where flood waters continued to creep up roads, houses, cars and street signs.

Those who stayed in their homes during Hurricane Floyd began leaving Sunday, piling suitcases and dated bags filled with clothes onto neighbors’ boats. Two boats carried 16 people away from houses where water began to seep into first-floor windows.

Joyce Reed and her mother were ferried to a dry spot in the road, where they could be picked up and driven to Atkinson.

"We’re just grateful to get out," said Ms. Reed, a nurse at New Hanover Regional Medical Center, who lives off N.C. 13.

Some people were unable to escape the flood, at least lost 90s, in time.

The number of North Carolina deaths attributed to Hurricane Floyd climbed to at least 26.

Pender

Continued from page 1A

over the river for dog food, ice and milk for the baby goats. He’s been staying on the second floor of his flooded home, guarding his property.

"I get off on the road and go through my office window," he said.

After losing three cows, Debbie Shackelford and her husband put three cow, three calves and a horse on the porch at their house. Ms. Shackelford waited with her daughter.

"It’s like having to start all over again," she said. "I don’t know about Jim, but I’m too old to start all over again.

Her husband lost all of his concrete-sealing machinery. She said it will be hard for many people in the area to rebuild their lives.

"He can’t go back to work for another 10 years," Ms. Shackelford said. "We’ve got homeowner’s insurance but no flood insurance.

Mr. Steimark spent Saturday cutting people away from their flooded houses in his boat.

George Steimark, Mr. Dodgens’ neighbor, helped her cross ditches with a wooden board and by lifting hauled wire.

"I could have stayed here, but if the waters continue to rise, somebody would have to risk their life to save me," said Mr. Dodgens, an art teacher at Rocky Point Elementary School.

When the flooding ceased, Mr. Dodgens gave photography lessons in healing in her art classroom. She said she will ask her students to talk about and draw pictures of what they saw at their houses in the soggy aftermath of Hurricane Floyd.

"It’s tough on the children. Adults can see and understand more," she said. "All the children know is that their lives have been turned upside

WILMINGTON MORNING STAR — MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 1999

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