AFTER HURRICANE FRAN

Staff photo: TIM B. FRANK

Heather Smith and her child stand outside a Wilmington trailer park. She says the landlord has refused to help with cleanup. **Page 6B.**

Staff photo: TODD SUMLIN

State Sen. Charlie Albertson surveys the damage at Shell Island Resort during a flight for legislators on Tuesday.

Staff photo: JAMIE [illegible]

Jason Mills of Harris Teeter hauls ice out to an elderly woman's car on Gordon Road on Monday. The store gave away 6,300 bags of ice.

Floodwaters creep up in Pender

Staff photo: TODD SUMLIN

Surf City, seen from the air on Tuesday, is a scene of devastation. Georgia Greene was swept from her Surf City trailer, survived the storm on a mattress but died days later.

Rain-soaked grounds hold little chance for relief

By ANNE MINARD
Star-News Correspondent

BURGAW — The Northeast Cape Fear River continued to rise in Pender County on Tuesday, and officials aren't making any promises about when floodwaters will subside.

Rick Gravitt, a spokesman for the National Weather Service, said the Northeast Cape Fear should have already crested from Hurricane Fran runoff. But continuing rains may mean that lawns, homes and streets swamped since Saturday will stay submerged longer.

Topsail Middle School remains open as a shelter for flood victims, but officials report that most residents who will evacuate have already done so. Some, who say they are used to the river's occasional floods, are using boats to ferry between their homes and dry land.

The Pender County Sheriff's Department rescued several families Saturday and sent them to the shelter. Two rescue boats stay on the river in case of emergencies.

The Cape Fear River at Lock and Dam 2 in Elizabethtown was almost 7 feet over the flood stage Tuesday. At Lock and Dam 3 in northeast Bladen County, the water held steady at 14 feet above the flood stage. The Cape Fear is expected to fall below flood stage by Monday.

Until the Cape Fear's flood waters recede, there will be little relief for Pender County — there is nowhere for high water in the Northeast Cape Fear to go. And daily rains that have pelted the region are offering little optimism for residents. Some received an inch rise in the water at their homes from Monday to Tuesday. Floodwaters are now 8 inches higher than in the August 1992 flood.

Eugene Parker, who lives west to N.C. 53 east of Burgaw, said he had a foot to spare before water entered his home. Many homes in the area are already vacant, with brown water seeping inside. Some areas, like Holland's Shelter Creek, were inaccessible Monday.

The Northeast Cape Fear begins east of Wallace in Duplin County and joins the Cape Fear near Wilmington. People living near the mouth of the Cape Fear need not worry, said the National Weather Service. By the time floodwaters reach Wilmington, the level will seem like a high river tide.

The list of Pender County roads made impassable by the flood continues to expand: N.C. 53 east of Burgaw, N.C. 50 near the Onslow County line, N.C. 210 between Shaw Highway and Hampstead, Old Maple Hill Road, Bland Road, Croomsbridge Road, Little Oak Trail, Whitestocking Road and State Park Road were closed Tuesday.

FROM THE STORM: STORIES

Fran might be consigned to history

They can't prevent future hurricanes, but they can assure that a Hurricane Fran won't strike again.

Fran is "a likely candidate" to join Andrew and Hugo on the list of retired hurricane names, say officials at the National Hurricane Center in Miami. The decision will come this winter when a United Nations committee from the Caribbean, Central America, South America and North America meets to select storm names for the 1997 hurricane season.

Hurricane names are retired when they cause many deaths or widespread destruction, said Mike Hopkins, a Hurricane Center forecaster.

— JEFF SELINGO

Off-color water still safe

Yellow water begun flowing from Wilmington faucets on Monday, but city officials say it is safe to drink.

The water contains manganese, deposited in the water by decaying vegetation, said Billy Gurganious, supervisor at the Sweeney Water Plant.

Mr. Gurganious thinks the manganese was in water released into the Cape Fear River from Jordan Lake near Raleigh. The city gets its water from the river.

"It came in yesterday, and we

Please see **STORIES** *on page 2B*

Staff photo: KEN BLEVINS

Gina Simmons examines the remains of a 200-year-old oak that stood in her family's Hampstead yard. She had planned to be married under it. Power began coming back on along the U.S. 17 corridor late Tuesday, said Carson Smith, Pender County's Emergency Management Coordinator. Mr. Smith said about 80 homes and businesses in the unincorporated part of the county have been destroyed.

16-hour days and pat on back reward enough for volunteers

By JEFF SELINGO
Staff Writer

Keith Coleman is working 16-hour days in a strange town and sometimes doesn't know where he's going to sleep.

And this is his vacation.

Last Friday, Mr. Coleman and his wife, Gloria, left their Lyman, S.C., home near Spartanburg to spend five days in Wilmington helping the recovery effort from Hurricane Fran, joining hundreds of other out-of-state volunteers who have come here since Fran hit Thursday.

"I don't do it for any other reason than this is what I got to do," said Mr. Coleman, who took vacation time from his job with the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control.

"You couldn't pay me enough money to do this work."

The Colemans are part of the volunteer effort from the South Carolina chapter of the Southern Baptist Convention. The chapter, formed after Hurricane Hugo hit Charleston in 1989, plans to send 300 volunteers through the area by the end of next week.

Many out-of-state volunteers say they're returning the favor for disasters that hit close to their homes. The South Carolina ones remember Hugo, the Florida ones remember Andrew, the Georgia ones remember floods last year and

Please see **VOLUNTEERS** *on page 4B*

Elderly victim was left behind by her nurses

By CHRIS DAVIS
Staff Writer

Georgia Greene's experience with Hurricane Fran must have been something like her life — lonely.

At 75, the Surf City woman was bedridden and depended on round-the-clock nurses who tended to her needs. She lost her husband in 1993, had no children and had lost touch with most other relatives.

During Fran, she had nobody to ensure her safety.

Home care nurses were gone when rescue workers found Ms. Greene Friday on a mattress in the marsh across the street from her demolished mobile home.

Family members don't know why the nurses left her alone.

But some say she told people she didn't want to leave. When Hurricane Bertha hit weeks earlier, she stuck it out. During the storm, she called the rescue squad because she thought a tree had fallen on her house, said Surf City Mayor Vance Kee.

Rescue workers believe Ms. Greene was out most of the night in the churning waters pushed up by Fran. The same waters destroyed her mobile home, leaving her without shelter for hours in hurricane-force winds and torrential rain.

After rescuers dragged weeds that had piled up on top of her, she was rushed to Columbia Cape Fear Hospital.

A day later, she was dead.

Although she lived next to a sister, who evacuated safely, Ms. Greene had lost touch with much of her family.

A brother in Franklin and a sister in Hendersonville said they knew little about their sibling. Neither called to check on her before the storm.

Ms. Greene grew up in Gastonia — then a small town not yet subjected to Charlotte's growth scrum.

Please see **VICTIMS** *on page 4B*

Staff photo: ANNE MINARD

Eugene Parker stands in a boat to talk to a neighbor about flooding around his home on N.C. 53 in Pender County on Tuesday.

Volunteers

Continued from page 1B

the California ones remember earthquakes.

"We were on the other side," said Choice Watson, also of Lyman, S.C.

Area relief agencies report no shortage of people willing to volunteer time, even those who were affected by the storm.

Carolina Power & Light Co. officials said they were overwhelmed with calls from people offering rooms for workers coming here to help restore power.

"We're in pretty good shape right now," said John Glasgow with CP&L. He didn't know how many calls he got, but he had answered more than 200 before lunch. That amounts to about 400 beds, Mr. Glasgow said.

On Monday, CP&L asked residents with electricity and a spare room if they would house workers.

"It has been a groundswell of response," Mr. Glasgow said. He plans to keep names and telephone numbers of those who responded in case the rooms are needed later.

CP&L is renting rooms as far away as Myrtle Beach, S.C., to keep out-of-town crews together, but the power company needed individual rooms to house CP&L volunteers from other parts of the state who are washing laundry at night for the linemen, making up beds, providing security for equipment, hauling meals and other chores to keep the crews going.

The Southern Baptist Convention is serving between 10,000 and 12,000 meals a day in North Carolina, including about 4,000 at one of its feeding sites at the Wrightsboro Baptist Church.

"We'll stay as long as we're needed," said Thomas Smith of Edmund, S.C.

About 1,000 Southern Baptists in South Carolina are trained as disaster volunteers and spend five days in a disaster area. Some are retired, others are ministers, but most work full-time or own businesses.

"We're called to do this work," said Mrs. Coleman, a teacher.

It's not easy work. Volunteers typically work 16- to 18-hour days of hard labor with people they never met.

But the thanks are great, volunteers say.

"Of all the areas we worked in people here are most appreciative," Mrs. Coleman said.

Victims

Continued from page 1B

She later became a seamstress in Fayetteville where she worked with upholstery, said her 72-year-old brother, Billy Wood.

Mr. Wood said he did not know what company she worked for, but said she sewed "car seats and stuff like that."

He lost track of most of his family when he joined the service in 1942. But this spring, he saw his sisters in Surf City for the first time in years.

"I was there about an hour," Mr. Wood said. "I was just passing through."

When he visited, Ms. Greene was bedridden, he said.

"She said she knew him, but I don't know," said Mr. Wood's wife, Lorean. "She was real sick."

The Woods did not know why Ms. Greene was bed-ridden, but said she had to go to the hospital about six months before they visited.

Emergency medical workers have transported Ms. Greene to the hospital several times in recent years, said Dickie Helms, a magistrate and rescue worker in Surf City.

Ms. Greene's death is among 18 attributed to Fran, most caused indirectly by her winds and rain.

The dreaded storm surge that ruined so many millions in property is the known cause of only one death, though it likely caused two others.

During the storm, three Marines in a Ford Mustang were swept off N.C. 210 by rising water at North Topsail Beach. The three men formed a human chain, but it didn't last.

Two of the Marines were swept away — one to his death. The other clung to a tree for about nine hours until rescuers found him the next day.

Onslow and Pender, the only coastal counties to report deaths from Fran, had two deaths each. An 18-year-old woman was killed in a trailer in Onslow County, and a man drowned in the Intracoastal Waterway in Scotts Hill.

The remaining 14 deaths are from counties as far inland as Alamance.

Technology has helped shift the heaviest death toll from the coast inland. With advance warnings, coastal cities can evacuate long before a storm hits.

But people feel safer inland and may take more risks, said Frank Lepore, spokesman for the National Hurricane Center in Miami.

"Intuitively, you know that in areas with mandatory evacuations there are fewer people at risk," Mr. Lepore said. "But nothing says a tree limb can't fall on your trailer and crush you to death, even inland."

Four of Fran's casualties happened that way.

Seven people died in traffic accidents, some caused by fallen trees, others by failed stop lights.

A Bladen County man who died of a heart attack was considered a Fran victim because investigators believe he was scared by the storm.

In Duplin County, a chimney fell through the roof of an elderly woman's home and crushed her.

During hurricanes, folks living inland have other concerns, such as flash flooding and tornadoes.

In Durham County, where three deaths are blamed on Fran, truck drivers were still on the road when the storm struck.

As Fran dug in, drivers began pulling over until there were hundreds of tractor trailers parked along the highways, said Maj. C.W. Crabtree with the Durham County Sheriff's Department.

"Up here, we have people who just aren't used to these types of storms," Maj. Crabtree said. "People just weren't prepared for it."