

Hurricane Isabel socks coast

Category 2 storm costs state \$55M

BY CLEVE R. WOOTSON JR.
STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR

SEPT. 18, MOREHEAD CITY — Hurricane Isabel hit this city hard, dropping several inches of precipitation in less than 24 hours and displacing hundreds of families.

Some streets and parking lots lay submerged underwater while siding, shingles and other debris were blown across the roadway.

Across the state, Progress Energy reported more than 285,000 power outages as of 6 p.m. Thursday. There were an estimated 190,000 homes without electricity in inland N.C. counties, including about 80,000 in Wake County.

In coastal areas there were about 58,500 reported outages. There would have been more, Progress said, but most people weren't at home to report them.

More than 300 people congregated at the Red Cross Shelter at Carteret High School — which is in a high-lying area of Morehead City.

Lying on cots, inflatable mattresses and mounds of blankets, they tried to sleep through the night as the wind and rain beat on the windows and doors.

In the shelter blacks, whites and Hispanics huddled in family groups, all snoring together. The hallways echoed with the multilingual whispers of people talking late into the night.

A man had a seizure early

Thursday morning. When the ambulance came to take him to a nearby hospital, a woman reported that she was having labor pains. They rode in the same ambulance.

One family's problems instantly became the problems others huddled inside the cinder block walls.

A baby's crying, a loud man's snoring, even a restless child's tossing and turning kept people up well past midnight.

But no noise, it seems, could drown out the sound of the weather outside. The people inside have heard these sounds many times before, but ears still prick up and one eye opens when the wind gusts or the rain falls a little bit harder.

Some sleep soundly, cocooned in layers of blankets and sleeping children. Others are more wary, staying up into the wee hours of the morning.

People come here because they have no place else to go. For now, this is home and will remain so until the worst is over.

As the night drags on, some stand outside as the rhythm of the rain increases, talking below an overhang that provides shelter from the elements. They swap stories, some of women, others of school. Every so often, the conversation will turn to the weather.

Someone always changes the subject. One person asks if the rain outside is the worst of Isabel.

"When it comes, you'll know," a man smoking a cigar replies, motioning to the sky. "This here is nothing. This is everyday rain."

Most people at the shelter are

"We don't know what to expect right now. You look for the worst and you hope for the best."

BETTIE D. LEWIS, NEWPORT RESIDENT

hurricane-hardened.

Some can count and name the storms they've been through — the times they've run for shelter. Others, like Bettie D. Lewis, of Newport, lost count long ago.

Lewis' husband has diabetes and both of his legs have been amputated. He's confined to a wheelchair and has to have dialysis once a day. The Red Cross shelter is the only guarantee that he'll get the treatment he needs, Lewis says. That's why they came.

"We don't know what to expect right now," she said, looking out the window at the trees bending in the wind. "You look for the worst and you hope for the best. When they say, 'Come to a shelter, you keep your mind on the Lord and pray,'"

Lewis and her friend, Kay Sutton, of Morehead City, say the hardest part about being in the shelter is the waiting. Some read to keep their minds off the swirling winds outside, others talk to their shelter mates. Sutton says she tries to help people out in any way she can.

"I just look around," she said. "There was a three year old — he turned three today. We tried to make him a cake. There's a need that somebody has, if you just keep your eye open."

Sutton remembers when she

experienced her first hurricane on Oct. 5, 1954. She was three years old and horrified. She says despite her efforts, she still feels that same fear every time a storm approaches.

"It depends on the category," she said. "But for that split second, you feel that fear."

John Reyes says he feels the fear. The 33-year-old came to the United States from El Salvador in 1991 and has endured about a half dozen serious storms.

He says he came to the shelter because he has a lot of friends whose homes aren't trustworthy in severe weather. He'd rather them all be together at the shelter.

"It was supposed to be the hardest storm since seven years ago," he said. "It's going to be bad."

Reyes said he thinks the shelter will hold out, and eventually, everyone will pack up and leave. But that's only the beginning, he said. Morehead City residents still have to go home and pick up the pieces that Hurricane Isabel will leave behind.

"I believe we're going to have the flooding this time," he said. "Plus all the trees will be down. We'll see how it is tonight."

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

Conservative group opposes summer book

'Nickel and Dime' called too liberal

BY EMILY STEEL
ASSISTANT UNIVERSITY EDITOR

AUG. 25 — UNC long has considered itself a guardian of academic independence and freedom of expression.

Yet many conservative North Carolinians worry that first-year students will begin a four-year journey of liberal indoctrination today.

"There is no attempt to be balanced," said N.C. Sen. Ham Horton, R-Forsyth, a frequent critic of UNC's intellectual climate. "As it stands now, I think any conservative would feel so uncomfortable (at UNC)."

During the past two years, conservatives have pointed to UNC's Summer Reading Program as the manifestation of what they perceive to be the University's liberal bias.

This year's selection, Barbara Ehrenreich's "Nickel and Dime: On (Not) Getting By in America," first caught the attention of the newly formed Committee for a Better Carolina, a conservative student group. Debate about the choice eventually made its way to the N.C. General Assembly and even onto Fox News' "Hannity & Colmes."

Last year's reading, Michael Sells' "Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations," sparked an intense national controversy. Academic freedom at the University was questioned when a conservative group filed a lawsuit alleging that UNC's book choice violated the constitutional requirement of separation of church and state.

"Chapel Hill has always been a lightning rod for the state," Horton said.

The debate on "Nickel and Dime" has placed the University's supposed political bias, the content of the Summer Reading Program and the treatment of low-wage campus workers under scrutiny.

Initiating such debate is precisely the book's purpose, UNC administrators say. "The point of the reading is to provoke and incite discussion, and that is what we as a university are all about," Chancellor James Moeser said.

Today, freshmen will discuss the 221-page "Nickel and Dime," in which Ehrenreich recounts her three-month experience working as a waitress, housekeeper, dietary aide and Wal-Mart employee.

Ehrenreich, who holds a doctorate and is the author of 12 books, emphasizes the struggle — the near impossibility — of surviving on a low-wage income.

"Something is wrong, very wrong, when a single person in good health, a person who in addition possesses a working car, can barely support herself by the sweat of her brow," she writes.

Initiating discussion about the condition of low-wage workers on campus was partially why the selection committee chose the book. "It is a useful window into

the hardships and the reality of people who have that kind of job," Moeser said.

But critics say the book is too sympathetic to members of the working poor and presents a liberal view of working-class conditions. "What type of perspective is being played out if you are putting out a book by a card-carrying socialist?" asked Jim Eltringham, a conservative advocate with ties to the Committee for a Better Carolina.

When officials selected "Nickel and Dime" in April, they didn't expect the assignment to amount to last year's national controversy.

The choice largely went unnoticed until UNC senior Michael McKnight, founder of the Committee for a Better Carolina, read the book. "I was appalled by what was in it and the resources the University was using to discuss it."

With help from the state's conservative leaders, the chairman of the N.C. College Republicans knew exactly where to turn.

He called on the Raleigh-based John William Pope Foundation to provide \$8,000 for full-page ads in The (Raleigh) News & Observer and The Daily Tar Heel, accusing UNC of assaulting academic fairness and intellectual honesty.

Soon after, some Republican members of the N.C. General Assembly said the book is unworthy of students at UNC, while others accused UNC of holding a bias against a conservative perspective.

Sen. Virginia Foxx, R-Watauga, said the book is fluff. "If the University wants to be thought of as the number one university in the country, then they ought to give books with more substance."

Sen. Hugh Webster, R-Alamance, also discredited "Nickel and Dime," calling it "intellectual pornography." "The motivation behind the choice of this particular book was not to educate or stimulate; it was to direct," he said.

McKnight said he thinks it's shameful that outside sources were necessary to provide UNC students with a perspective countering that in Ehrenreich's book.

But Moeser said there are more than two sides to any issue. "It is utterly simplistic if we reduce everything in this country to liberal and conservative," he said.

UNC is the only school to have experienced such widespread controversy despite the fact that students from more than 15 schools across the nation are discussing "Nickel and Dime" as part of a summer reading program.

"The book would have slipped under the radar if the University hadn't used 'Approaching the Qur'an' last year," said Janet Arnett, associate dean of students at Indiana State University, which also requested that its students read Ehrenreich's book this summer.

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

N.C. legislature redraws district lines

BY LAURA YOUNGS
ASSISTANT STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR

NOV. 25, RALEIGH — After more than two years of debate, multiple court cases and mounting frustration, the N.C. General Assembly approved new redistricting maps Tuesday in time to enjoy the Thanksgiving holiday.

The Senate voted 25-23 in favor of the legislative redistricting bill in the 2003 extra session. The House approved it 63-52.

"We can now present to you a map that leaves 88 counties undivided, which is four more than the interim maps," said Sen. Dan

Clodfelter, D-Mecklenburg, chairman of the redistricting committee. "This was not done without some difficulty."

The new Senate districts are more compact than past ones, with 12 districts containing two-county clusters, three more than the previous maps, and with fewer split counties. "This more faithfully adheres to the (state) constitution," Clodfelter said.

Clusters occur when a county of more than 67,000 people, which constitutes a district, is divided into more than one district. The divisions are kept within the coun-

ty or are paired with neighboring counties to keep districts compact.

"Nobody can show fewer counties that aren't split that I've seen," said Sen. Tony Rand, D-Cumberland.

The bill now goes to Gov. Mike Easley. If he signs it, the new district lines will be in place until 2010. "The maps are not that terrible," said Sen. Virginia Foxx, R-Watauga, in an interview after the Senate meeting, although she added that they should have been taken care of earlier in the year.

Both sides of the political spectrum seem to agree that the maps

are a reasonable outcome and are in compliance with the state constitution and the federal Voting Rights Act, which was designed to protect minority voices in elections.

In 2001, Republican legislators took Democrats to court arguing that the district lines drawn at that time were unconstitutional. N.C. Superior Court Judge Knox Jenkins ultimately redrew the lines for the 2002 elections but said legislators had to redraw them again when the new session began in January.


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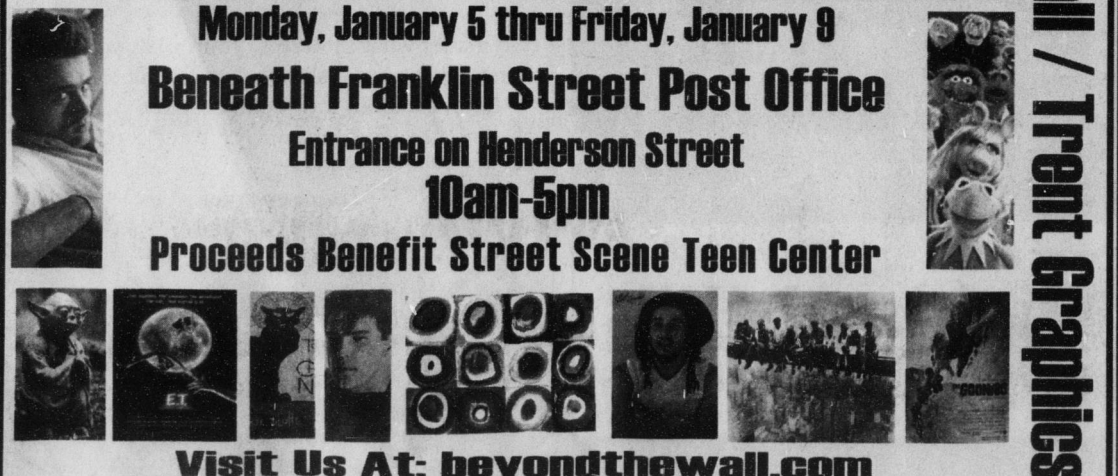


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