

OPHELIA

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untary evacuations in several others. No deaths or injuries had been reported as of Thursday afternoon. "All in all, it's gone really quite smoothly," said Stephen Barnett, executive director of the N.C. Red Cross's Cape Fear chapter, which covers Brunswick, New Hanover and Pender counties. The Red Cross opened eight shelters in those counties, taking in 678 people Wednesday night and 744 the evening before. Barnett stressed that the recovery from Hurricane Katrina is a higher priority, noting that the N.C. Red Cross is working with evacuees from that storm.

A mandatory evacuation order of Hatteras Island was expected to remain in place into Friday, said Dee Johnson, an administrative assistant for the Dare County Emergency Management office. She said teams were in place to restore power to 3,000 homes. The storm is expected to continue its northeasterly course Friday. Hurricane Ophelia was the seventh named hurricane of the season, which ends Nov. 30. "Saying it has been a very active hurricane season is a huge understatement," Barnett said. "We are just barely beyond the halfway point."

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



WILMINGTON STAR-NEWS/MARK COURTNEY
Jim Cerniglia struggles against high winds Wednesday as Hurricane Ophelia made its approach. Winds reached 66 mph in some areas.

Roberts hearings continue in Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Chief Justice nominee John Roberts wound up three days of sometimes-contentious Senate testimony Thursday by telling wary Democrats that ideologues don't belong on the Supreme Court. He said his record shows he will rely on the law, not on personal views.

Persistent grilling by Democrats on the Judiciary Committee made no apparent inroads in Roberts' support among the Senate's majority Republicans, who plan to vote the week after next to make him the nation's 17th chief justice.

Roberts tried to reassure Democrats that he would use the "rule of law," not his personal beliefs, to judge cases that come before the high court.

"I think if you've looked at what I've done since I took the judicial oath, that should convince you that I'm not an ideologue," Roberts said after an impassioned plea by Democratic Sens. Dianne Feinstein of California and Charles Schumer of New York for him to explain what kind of chief justice he would be.

Roberts, who was a government and private lawyer before being appointed a federal appeals court judge in Washington, said, "I would hope you would look at my briefs and my arguments before the Supreme Court and conclude that that's a person who respects the law, respects the court before whom he is arguing and will approach the law in a similar way as a judge."

Roberts cleared one of his last hurdles when committee chairman Arlen Specter, R-Pa., and top Democrat Patrick Leahy of Vermont announced that an FBI background check had found nothing that

would disqualify. The American Bar Association also confirmed its "well-qualified" rating.

Republicans were confident that Roberts would win the committee's majority approval next week and then Senate confirmation, with the backing of some moderate Democrats, before the Supreme Court term begins Oct. 3.

Committee Democrats have yet to commit to vote for Roberts, but they know that they cannot stop him and that President Bush will soon follow with yet another nomination to the court.

"It's going to take some time of real careful thinking about what to do" on the vote, Schumer said after the hearing.

Bush selected Roberts to succeed the late Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist as chief justice. The conservative judge could, at age 50, shape the high court for at least a generation.

The vote to confirm him "isn't just rolling the dice, it's betting the whole house," Schumer said.

"I don't know what I'm going to do," said Feinstein, who said his testimony showed "this very cautious, very precise man, young, obviously with staying power.... I'm convinced you will be there, God willing, for 40 years. And that even concerns me more because it means that my vote means more."

Feinstein voted to confirm Roberts for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit; Schumer voted against him.

Frustrated Democrats tried to elicit a sense of Roberts the man rather than the judge who was a political appointee in the Reagan and first Bush administrations and a multimillion-dollar lawyer.

Sen. Richard Durbin, D-Ill., wondered whether Roberts would treat society's less fortunate the same way he would deal with the wealthy who often have better lawyers, better legal briefs and an advantage in the court system.

"If the Constitution says that the little guy should win, then the little guy's going to win in the court before me," Roberts said. "But if the Constitution says that the big guy should win, well then the big guy's going to win because my obligation is to the Constitution."

CONTROVERSY

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After contacting the sources, the DTH leadership found that none of them had come close to stating such a belief. Seeing as how a reasonable person could make the aforementioned inferences, Jillian's column not only misrepresented these sources, but it also put them in a false light. It's true that DTH leaders fired

Jillian to protect certain interests of their own. But not included was the interest that coincided with any involved party's political beliefs or the one that coincided with anyone's desire to quell the anger that had arisen among many readers.

It's in their interest to maintain an operable relationship with current and future sources — one in which those sources aren't concerned that the meaning of their words will be altered and that they

will be misrepresented in articles read by thousands of people.

It's in their interest to ensure that the staff members who give up significant portions of their lives are working in an environment allowing them to report the news as best they can. Such an environment is one in which their sources aren't questioning their purposes, motives and abilities.

It's in their interest to print the truth. Pure opinion exists outside the truth-falsity spectrum, but the column didn't consist entirely of opinion. Keeping Jillian on staff would have sent a highly problematic message that her conduct was at least somewhat acceptable.

I'll echo what Coletta wrote in his blog, "The Bullhorn," in emphasizing that this entire situation is unfortunate. As I stated in a recent DTH blog post, I hold intense opposition to elements of Tuesday's piece. But I liked Jillian's column from last week, "When your trunk

is filled with the weight of the world." Some of it was funny, and some of it was insightful.

A part of me resents the fact that I won't be able to read columns like this from her in the future, even if they would have come packaged with excerpts that would have made me shake my head in shock.

But a larger part of me knows that she had to go. It happened not because of a particular viewpoint or because of outraged readers. It happened because the newspaper's mission and staff members' journalistic ideals were at stake.

The truth of the matter is that there aren't many readers who are going to be left satisfied. Many will continue to be incensed that the DTH printed Jillian's now-final column in the first place. Many others were enraged by news of Jillian's dismissal so soon after the column had been published.

I will continue to be open to people's input regarding the column, the DTH leadership's initial reaction, the rationale for the firing and any of my commentary related to the whole affair.

Contact Elliott Dube at dube@email.unc.edu.

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