

Quick thinking preserved old records

WINDSOR - When quick-thinking members of flooded St. Thomas' Episcopal Church wrapped their waterlogged church records in freezer paper and put them in a home freezer, they thereby saved parish registers and prayer books going back to the 1840s.

Elizabeth Smith, director of Preservation and Conservation Services of Joyner Library at East Carolina University, told the rescue story to a group of about 40 ECU alumni and friends at a February 29 event held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. H. Mack Bell.

As soon as members and friends of St. Thomas' could get into the parish house after Floyd's floodwaters subsided and were able to start cleaning up, they got advice on how to save the old books.

They were told to wrap them in freezer paper and put them in a home freezer. This Marty Tyler of Batchelor's Bay did.

A few days later, Clara and Mack Bell carried the record books and prayer books to Joyner Library.

There, Ms. Smith, Linda Daniels and Gloria Bradshaw, Preservation and Conservation Services staff members, Jeremy Street and Robert Hooker, student employees, finished the job.

They used Reemay paper which wicks moisture out of books. First it was put on top of books, then large, thick sheets of plastic were placed over the Reemay paper, large rubber bands were strapped on the thick plastic sheets and then the books were placed in a Joyner Library freeze dryer to begin treatment.

Reemay is a paper similar to one used on tobacco beds, replacing the old cotton cloth, and in gardens.

As the pages dried, Reemay



Elizabeth Smith, head of the Preservation and Conservation Academic Library Services at Joyner Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, illustrates some of the methods used in restoration as she talks. Many people in the area have been helped by the services available at ECU, some of the best in the country, including St. Thomas's Episcopal Church in Windsor, since the Flood of the Century. (Photo by Laura Harrell)

paper was placed between pages.

After five months Ms. Smith took out a prayer book, the first parish register, and brought them for a show and tell performance at the ECU event in Windsor.

These books were printed with permanent ink on rag paper and were perfectly legible. The other church records are still in the freeze dryer.

Ms. Smith gave several pieces of good advice for the group: Use good acid-free paper, permanent ink and observe the "70-50 Rule."

The 70-50 Rule means keeping the temperature at 70 de-

grees and humidity at 50 per cent.

Checking a digital read-out she bought from Radio Shack, she said, "This room is perfect. Seventy degrees and 50 per cent humidity."

Light can be damaging, Ms. Smith advised the group. So photocopy newspaper articles on acid free paper. Damage done by roaches and mold most times cannot be undone.

And Ms. Smith said they learned a valuable lesson from the St. Thomas' books-the red ribbon marker should have been removed because the color dyed the pages where it was left inside.

Gov. Hunt praises federal government for grants which will fund counseling

RALEIGH — Gov. Jim Hunt applauded the federal government's decision to fund a \$4.9 million grant to help victims of Hurricane Floyd recover from psychological damage left by the 1999 storm.

The funding will be used for counseling services for flood victims dealing with high levels of stress as they rebuild their lives in the wake of historic flooding from the storm.

"We most often talk about damage to things like buildings, crops, and roads when we talk about disasters, but this

storm weighs heavily on the minds of the people it affected," Hunt said, "The only thing that will ultimately relieve the stress victims are feeling is getting back into safe, secure and sanitary housing. In the meantime, these funds will help us support the people of Eastern North Carolina as they go through this difficult healing process."

The grant will be provided through the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The funds are authorized as part of the major disaster declaration made by President Clinton after Hurricane Floyd

struck North Carolina last September. Counseling services will include help in alleviating stress that can lead to such things as domestic violence, substance abuse, and depression.

"People can suffer from the psychological effects of disaster for the rest of their lives," said (Dr. David Bruton, secretary of the NC Department of Health and Human Services. "This grant will help us provide victims with places to turn when they need help dealing with the long-term effects of the flooding."

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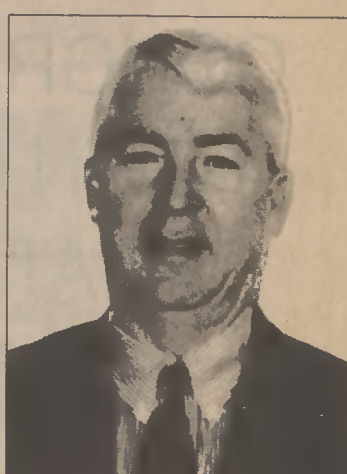
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