

Owners of flooded restaurant want it to remind old and new customers of sunshine

By JEANETTE WHITE

WINDSOR - Perhaps no flooded business in Windsor has been missed more than Heritage House Restaurant on U.S. 17's northern approach to town.

The cafe is one of the places where home folks meet to settle local issues and drink more coffee than 80 cents really buys.

A cafe of some kind has stood on the site since the first Harrison's Oyster Bar opened about 40 years ago. It was home to Catfish's Barbecue and now is owned by Johnny and Rachel Pierce.

People who live on the northern side of the county find Heritage House handy to pick up dinner or a pint of slaw on the way home on those nights when they don't want to cook.

But conveniences taken for granted ended September 15 when Hurricane Floyd left several feet of water inside the building and destroyed all equipment.

The Pierces tried to operate from a mobile unit after floodwaters receded. But uncertainties associated with operating from a rented mobile unit and outdoor tables made the venture hopeless.

The Pierces were looking for a way to survive until they could either redesign or demolish and rebuild Heritage House.

With help from family and friends, the Pierces tore out and removed the interior of the building down to the bare walls.

When it seemed like things couldn't get much worse, the Pierces applied for a loan

through FEMA and the Small Business Administration and were denied.

The couple looked into other possibilities and he went to work for the Town of Windsor collecting trash through a special hurricane recovery grant, a job which will only last a few months.

But the Pierces never gave up on the hope they could reopen Heritage House. After re-

shine hits you all over," Harrison said.

The new design increases dining capacity and will feature crown molding and beaded-board wainscoting in spice-colored wood with Windsor-back chairs in the same spice color.

All new state-of-the-art kitchen equipment will make cooking facilities compact and efficient. The restaurant will

room, with basil green, yellow and cinnamon colors.

Heritage House has always had one large table where farmers and politicians are able to sit together and philosophically settle world problems. An area of the restaurant has been planned for the same group using a primitive art, country-farm-field look "especially for gentlemen", Harrison said.

One change comes after a suggestion from a regular customer, Bill Pittman of Windsor, who suggested a drive-up service. Now a new door on the side of the building will allow customers to pick up orders with about two steps inside the building.

In the old Heritage House, bills were paid, orders placed and collected at a congested, short counter near the front door. Now the new counter will stretch along the rear of the main dining room, making it nearer the kitchen, longer and convenient for drive-up service.

The front porch will be expanded, flower boxes will be added and hanging light fixtures will be changed.

Another addition will be a small section to feature such local treats as Bertie County peanuts, candy and other specialties.

General contractor for renovations is Buddy Waddell of Elizabeth City. Randy Hughes and Tommy Dunlow have worked with plumbing, wiring and electrical needs.

The Pierces have learned in the past few months that the best laid plans can go awry. But if all goes well, the Heritage House will open in mid-April.

If it's a rainy day, we want you to come in and feel like sunshine hits you all over.

shuffling paperwork and pursuing their application, a loan was approved several weeks ago and work has started to reopen a redesigned and improved dining spot.

With decorating help from Greg Harrison, owner of Ivy Lane Florist and King Street Soda Shop on King Street, the interior of the building will have a completely new look.

Harrison and the Pierces are mixing some of the things customers liked most with new decorations. Dark wood paneling and antiques hanging on the walls are history.

Both walls and new dividers will provide privacy. The open, cafeteria style will be gone and the interior separated into five sections. Primary colors will be yellow and blue.

"If it's a rainy day, we want you to come in and feel like sun-

have all new plumbing, ventilation, wiring, heat and air conditioning. Bathrooms have been expanded, a change Rachel Pierce agrees was desperately needed.

Theme in the men's room will feature cats wearing cowboy hats, tan and blue plaid and a rawhide look.

The women's room will have the Charleston, SC, Rainbow Row look of pastels.

The banquet room on the Windsor side of the building has been expanded by relocating the kitchen. A folding divider in the center of the room means it can be used by two groups simultaneously and a new hallway allows servers to enter either room without having to go through the other.

Wall sconces and a botanical theme with a greenhouse-effect will be used in the banquet

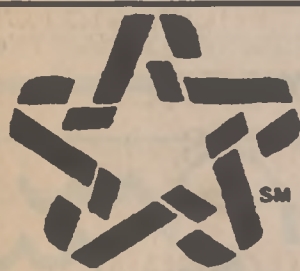


Hauling it away

This scene along King Street was repeated often in the weeks following last September's flooding. Some people were able to get damaged interiors cleared from homes right away and some were not. But as long as trash and goods were placed beside streets, the Town of Windsor continued to haul it away. As soon as help could get into town, extra equipment and trucks were hired to help clear debris. This is one of several mobile home parks which was flooded in the area and many of the homes have been replaced now because they were not habitable. If there is anything good to be said about the flood, it would be of the extraordinary kindness of people and that almost everyone who has rebuilt has come back better. (Photo by Jeanette White)

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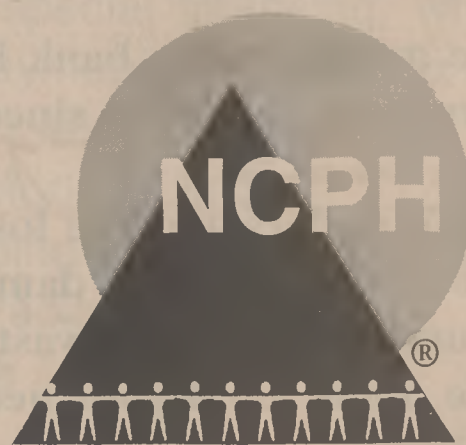
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