

## Opinion

## Florence floods in Kinston...

Like all North Carolinians, I am worrying about the flooding causing heart-rending damage throughout our state, following Hurricane Florence.



D.G. MARTIN

One-on-One

I have a special worry. It is about a puppy in Kinston.

Would the floods from Hurricane Florence put that puppy out of business in the same way that Hurricane Matthew did two years ago?

I fell in love with that puppy a few weeks ago.

I was on my way back from New Bern, where UNC-TV was recording a North Carolina Bookwatch interview with author Nicholas Sparks. In Kinston, I dropped by Kings, a barbecue restaurant that is one of those locally owned places that people across the state bring up when they talk about the favorite home-cooking places they visit while they are traveling. Lots of folks who travel to the beach on U.S. 70 told me they make Kings a regular stop. I wanted to include it in a group of iconic North Carolina eateries in a new book as a follow-up to "North Carolina Roadside Eateries," which UNC Press published two years ago.

Long before Kinston's public TV star Vivian Howard opened the now famous Chef & the Farmer, Kings had earned its special place. It began in 1936 when Frank King built a country store and small gas station in front of his farm. His son Wilbur took over the store in 1938 and passed it on to his son, Wilbur Jr. Tragically, Wilbur's grandson, Wilbur III, died in an accident in 2003, and long-time employee Joe Hargitt became manager. Wilbur Jr. began transferring ownership to him.

That family tradition carries over to the employees. When I walked in to Kings unannounced, Justina Williams greeted me like a family member. "Come look at the buffet. It's only \$10.95, and you can get all you want and go back for more."

When I said I wasn't that hungry, she took me to the other end, sat me down at a table, gave me a menu, and introduced me to the manager, Barbara Gooding. "Mr. King hired me in 1987. Mr. Hargitt came on board about the same time and we worked together until he became the owner. Now he is my boss."

But on the night I was there, Barbara was running the show and bragging to me about her daughters, both Eagles at North Carolina A&T.

Barbara suggested that I try Kings signature dish, the "Pig in a Puppy." I did, and I loved that puppy from the first bite.

I am not by myself.

Saveur Magazine praised the puppy by describing it as "a quarter pound of hand-chopped whole hog laid under a mess of vinegary slaw, the pig...squished into a superabsorbent hoagie of a hush puppy—the sweet cornmeal fritter stretched out, pressed flat, and fried crisp to order."

When I took a bite of the puppy and the barbecue, sweet slaw, and crispy hush puppy, those tastes came to my mouth at the same time and blended into a wonderful treat. That is when I fell in love with the puppy, and its beautiful memory will bring me back to Kings whenever I am close by.

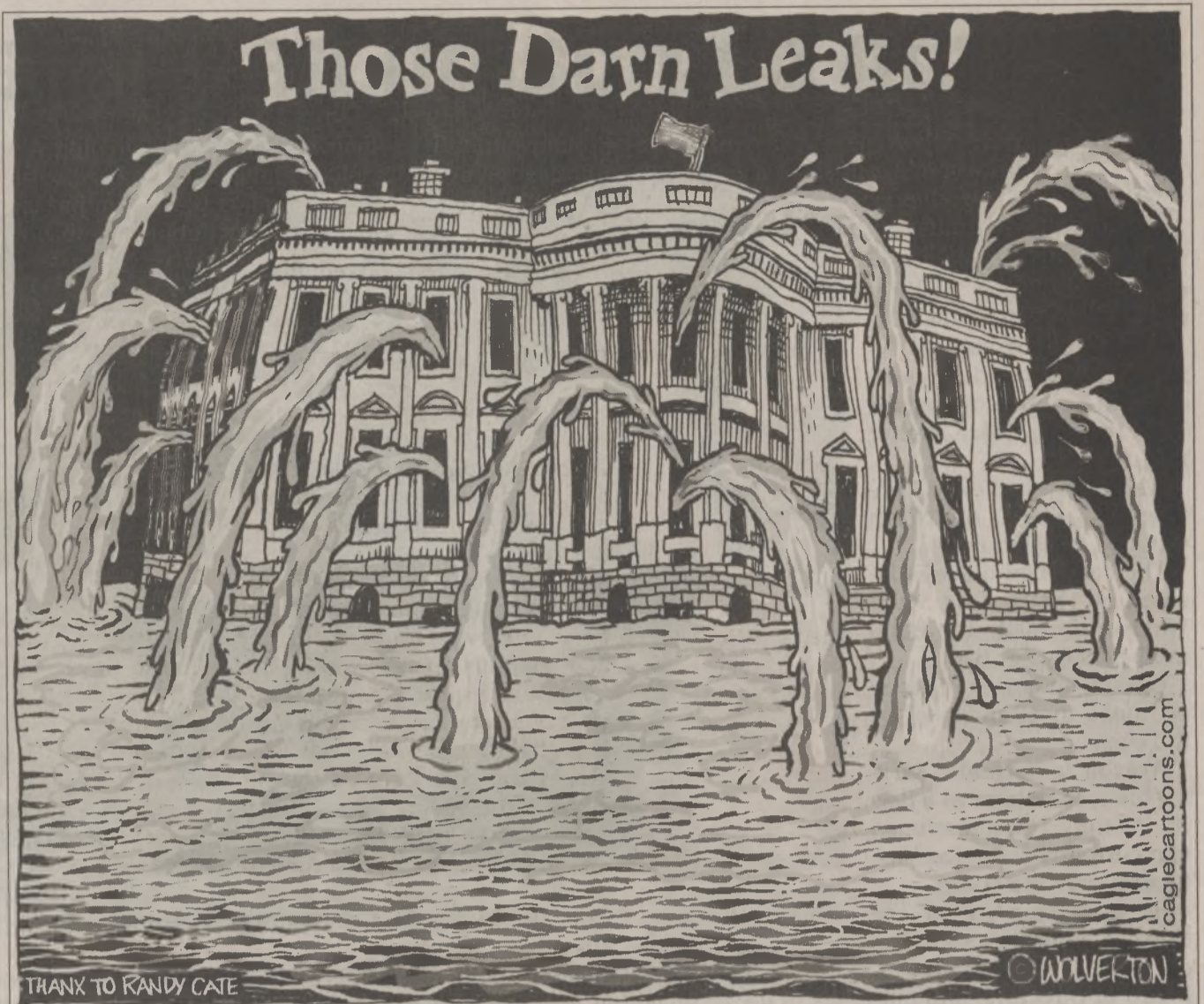
Two years ago the floods following Hurricane Matthew devastated Kings. But Joe Hargitt and his crew had it up and running again in a couple of months. Hargitt held a grand reopening ceremony and announced a continuing two-for-one special on Tuesday nights: buy one dinner and get another free.

If Florence's flood shuts down Kings again for a while, I will be waiting for the signal that it is open again and the puppy I love is ready for me to come visit again.

NOTE: If you have a favorite stopping and eating place like Kings, please share your story about it and your visits there. Send your report to me at [nceateries@yahoo.com](mailto:nceateries@yahoo.com)

D.G. Martin hosts "North Carolina Bookwatch," which airs Thursdays at 5 p.m. and Sundays at 11 a.m. on UNC-TV.

The fabric of Bertie County since 1832



## Counting my blessings...

After being on high alert of the impending storm-of-the-century for several nerve-racking days, we were, miraculously, spared.

Others were not so blessed.

Florence seemed to pay no attention to what she was supposed to do - according to the forecasters.

Instead of hitting us as a category four hurricane, she incredibly slowed to a one, sparing our state from unimaginable, irrecoverable damage.

Not everyone escaped her wrath. But as bad as it was - and still is in some areas - it was forecasted to be worse.

Amazingly, Martin County had only a few trees down. Most never lost power. What a contrast to the freight train headed right for us just a few days ago.

Only by the grace of God was our area kept safe. Seeing the devastation play out across the

media, I imagine what survivor's guilt must feel like.

Because we were spared, we hopefully can help others in the midst of their nightmare, which was forecasted to be ours.

Thank you to all the "powers that be" that set into motion the safety of our citizens.

I cringe when I hear complaints of over-preparedness. With a storm like we just witnessed, there is no such thing as being over-prepared.

I am just thankful that our home will have rations should another tropical wave decide to form off the coast of Africa and set her sights, this time, on our little swath of land between the rivers.

Martin County has so many water sources criss-crossing the map, it looks spider-veined.

How those creeks and rivers did not overflow their banks is flat out mind-blowing.

As I count my blessings, I also need to count what I can do without.

Someone who has lost everything needs to share in my overabundance.

The predictions are that clean-up and recovery will last for days, weeks, months and in some cases, years.

I hope I do not grow weary of hearing about the loss - that so easily could have been my loss.

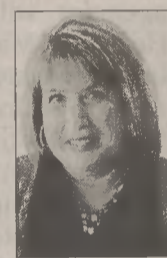
I pray that I do not become jaded to the needs of others that in all reality, could have been my needs.

In the coming months, I hope I do not sit in my safe, roof-intact home and tire of the pleas for help in recovery and forget, that with one measured, wind-blasted turn of Florence, would have been my pleas for help.

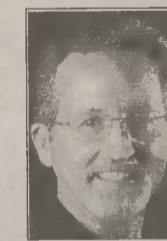
In the Bible I read, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."

Today, more than usual, I'm aware of having been given much.

Deborah Griffin is Staff Writer for the Bertie Ledger-Advance and the Martin County Enterprise & Weekly Herald. She can be reached at [dgriffin@ncweeklies.com](mailto:dgriffin@ncweeklies.com).



DEBORAH GRIFFIN  
Farm Life  
Wife



MARK RUTLEDGE  
Today In  
North Carolina

A convoy of large, four-wheel-drive trucks pulling white trailers passed me on I-81 rolling east on Tuesday. I couldn't make out all of the words on their vehicles, but two of them, "disaster response," made my heart swell.

Twenty years ago, I'm not so sure I would have felt the same lump. But I spent 15 of those years in hurricane-prone Greenville, N.C. So now when I see humanitarian

driving into the belly of the beast to help out, it just about makes my eyeballs sweat.

I saw more convoys on Thursday morning as I was sitting, flashers on, in the emergency lane of I-81. I had driven my daughter's newest used vehicle to make sure it would not overheat like it did the last time she drove it more than 20 miles.

Note to self: Never test out a vehicle on the way to work. My usual 55-minute commute between Gray and Morristown, Tenn., required nearly two hours.

But the multiple stops to rest the overheating engine gave me opportunities to pause and count my blessings. I also counted at least three more convoys of relief workers in the eastbound lanes heading toward the storm.

These workers were easily distinguishable as power crews from other cities and states.

I could not read the trucks from my side of the interstate, but one of the convoys might well have been coming from Athens, Tenn., where my cousin, Wayne Scarborough, helps manage the power utility.

Wayne had shared with me on Wednesday an Athens Utility Board news release about their trucks and linemen heading to Greenville, N.C., of all places. It's part of a mutual aid network of public power utilities and other utility services.

AUC and Greenville Utilities in Greenville both belong to Region IV of the FEMA Mutual Aid Agreement. During my years of working at The Daily Reflector in Greenville, we published countless stories about the power crews there helping out other communities hard hit by disasters.

As I write, Hurricane Florence is just about to make landfall. By all accounts, the storm is an absolute monster that will cause massive flooding, affecting countless homes and lives and costing billions of dollars in recovery.

For those of us living out of harm's way, the concept of recovery crews spending weeks and months away from friends and family is formed mostly from media snapshots.

Inside those hurting communities, the view is more constant.

When I moved to Greenville with my wife and young family in 2001, for instance, the concept of Hurricane Floyd was nearly two years behind us. It would be another eight years before the local population, and relief helpers from other areas, could close the books on Floyd.

The concept of Florence, I'm afraid, could be similarly long-lasting. Help minimize the suffering where you can, and keep the helpers on the ground in your thoughts, also. They might be there for a long time to come.

Contact Mark Rutledge at [mrutledge@reflector.com](mailto:mrutledge@reflector.com).

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