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National Guard Crews Work With County:

Guard Aids Local Teams

BY JODY HIGGINS
In the past three weeks Yancey County has looked more like an occupied war zone than the tranquil, rural

community it was before the November 6 flooding occurred.

The destruction caused by the flooding created one part of this picture. The other was the helicopters, numerous army vehicles, and green uniformed National Guardsmen who became a familiar fixture in the county.

Operations in Yancey County have been carried out by three groups from the North Carolina Army National Guard, Detachment 1, 449th Aviation Company from Salisbury; the 109th MP Battalion from Asheville; and the 540th Transportation Battalion from Lenoir.

The 449th Aviation Company operated helicopters in the county to evacuate medical emergencies, deliver medicine, distribute some 30,000 pounds of food to isolated areas as well as fuel oil, coal, wood stoves, and feed for farm animals.

Twelve medical emergencies were evacuated by the 449th. Four of these were pregnant women. One woman, whose labor pains were two minutes apart, was flown out after the pilot landed the helicopter on a badly damaged bridge surrounded by power lines, rock cliffs and trees.

"It was a choice of landing there or letting her have the baby without the aid of medical people," said one Guardsman. One woman named her baby after the helicopter flight chief who evacuated her to a hospital.

Two National Guard helicopters were here for seven days, and one has been kept in use for the remaining ten days. Captain Sandy Stokes, officer in charge, has been in

Yancey County for over two weeks, and Sgts. Lynn (Deerslayer) Martin, Gary Rash, 1st Lt. Bob Sides, and Captain Bob Youngblood have each been here for one week. Relief crewmen who were here during this time were CWO's Cassels, Campbell, Bonham, Matthews, Dixon, Klutty, and Smith.

According to the pilots,

most of whom received their flight experience in Viet Nam, marginal weather, the terrain and power lines have been the greatest dangers in the areas they have flown in Yancey County.

The hardworking 109th MP Battalion, under Captain Alan Bridgeman, have driven jeeps, fuel trucks and an ambulance throughout Yan-

cey. They have worked with the county to deliver food and clothing, help erect temporary bridges, round up runaway livestock, and contact families in isolated areas to find out their needs. Medics from this Battalion went in to these areas to give tetanus shots.

Sgt. Ronnie Metcalf of the 109th has worked closely with county social workers and community action groups to reach the elderly and others in need of assistance. Sgt. Metcalf said he's "been worked almost to death" by social service workers Kathy Lee, Judy Brown and Susan Crisp.

"I believe they're the three hardest working people here," he said. "They're not afraid to tackle any job." Mrs. Brown, who helped dig out the four-wheel-drive National Guard Ambulance when it mired down along one muddy stretch, was honored with the "Muddy Shovel Award" by Guardsmen in one of the lighter moments since the flood.

The 540th Transportation Battalion braved severely cold weather to distribute water to Burnsville residents for a week while the town's water supply was inoperative. These men doled out water from a 5000 gallon tanker and two smaller tankers stationed around the town square.

Most of these National Guardsmen, who have worked tirelessly and often under dangerous circumstances, are leaving this week. As each group departs, there is a little sadness as goodbyes are exchanged with friends they have made in Yancey County. All let it be known they would

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Corps Of Engineers To Provide Access

Personnel of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began arriving here Wednesday, November 16, to begin the task of providing access where private roads and bridges have been destroyed by recent flooding.

Federal Coordinating Officer Joe D. Winkle said the

Corps has been called into western North Carolina because the state and at least four counties have said they do not have the resources needed to do the job quickly.

The State Department of Transportation tells me its hands are full repairing state

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Flood Book

Due to the limited space in The Yancey Journal to publish more of the dramatic photographs taken during the recent flood, and to fulfill the large number of requests by individuals for photographs, Yancey Graphics Printing in Burnsville is working with award-winning photographer Ann Hawthorne to publish an 80-page book containing over 170 pictures taken in Yancey County. The 8 1/2 x 11 size book will contain statistics about damage in the county, and a section will be included about each of the hardest hit areas.

Copies will be available at Yancey Graphics on Main Street and at The Yancey Journal. The price will be \$3.00. Mail orders should be sent to Yancey Graphics, P.O. Box 443, Burnsville, N.C. 28714 with \$1.00 included for postage and handling.



Guardsman Picks Up Emergency Supplies For Delivery



Judy Brown Gets 'Muddy Shovel Award'

New Centers To Assist With Paperwork Problem

The look in the elderly woman's eyes was familiar to Joe Winkle. Others with less experience would have seen sorrow in those eyes, but Winkle saw bewilderment.

In her hand she clutched a number of government forms the flood workers told her would help. But, they explained, she must first fill them out.

Winkle, a federal disaster worker for 15 years and now director of recovery efforts in western North Carolina, could recognize the frustration that number of papers represented to the old woman.

He'd seen devastation wrought by Hurricanes Agnes and Camille, Celia and Beulah; the crushed homes left in the wake of roaring west Texas tornadoes; flood that had stripped fertile farmland to bedrock.

That's where he'd seen that look. And where he had so often seen the forms.

"I'll be the first to admit that some of the assistance applications can be confusing and difficult," Winkle said. "But the law requires them so all we can do is try to make completing them a little easier."

That's why Winkle directed his staff to open four Follow-Up Assistance Centers Monday in cooperation with state personnel who also are involved in the recovery effort.

The centers, which will

be staffed by people who care, according to Winkle, opened at 1 p.m. Monday in Burnsville, Asheville, Morganton and Boone.

"I've asked the staff to be sensitive, understanding and helpful," he said. "They may not have all the answers, but

they'll be willing to take the time and energy to get them."

By the final closing of the seven assistance centers Saturday following eight days of operation, 4,889 families had applied for some type of aid. They left the centers with a

better understanding of what might be available and the forms they must fill out and return.

Some of the categories of assistance available and the number of families seeking help from one or more agencies give a rough picture of the magnitude of the flood which hit the 16-county area November 4-6.

- 2,000 picked up application forms for Small Business Administration home or business loans.

- 1,450 indicated to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) they need some type of housing assistance.

- 1,275 filed application for grants under the state-administered Individual and Family Grant program.

- 391 indicated to HUD interviewers they had roadway damage which is keeping them from emergency access to their homes.

- 775 applied for food stamps.

- 1,350 told state and federal agriculture agencies they had farm home, crop or land damage that will require attention.

- 1,760 asked the Internal Revenue Service to amend tax forms so they might be eligible for refunds.

"With that volume of paperwork, there are bound to be questions," Winkle said. "The people in the centers

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Thanksgiving



Volunteers Lend A Hand

Sgt. Grady Waycaster is pictured with four members of a group of Duke University students who worked with W.A.M.Y. and the National Guard to sort clothing and cut wood for the elderly and other isolated families in Yancey County. Also helping where they were needed were two crews from the

Knoxville and Winston Salem Menonite Disaster Centers, and one group from the Wesley Foundation in Chapel Hill. The Lion's Club from Brevard brought three truckloads of donated bedding and household items. Photo by Jody Higgins