

Flood of '96 hits home for some PSH students and faculty.

By Chris Fegley
Contributor

Several Penn State Harrisburg students were affected by the area's worst flood in 24 years.

I was one of them. I am a behavioral science major and Harrisburg resident. On Saturday, Jan. 20, I was evacuated from my Second St. apartment.

Harrisburg city police drove by asking all residents to leave their homes. If residents did not have transportation, they were instructed to wait on the nearest corner for Capital Area Transit buses to pick them up. These buses were redirected from their normal routes to aid in the evacuation. Residents were then taken to shelters set up by the American Red Cross. Overall 8,000 Harrisburg residents living from Front St. to Susquehanna St. were asked to leave.

The river was flowing down Front St. all morning. It carried large icebergs with it and was moving very fast. After the police announced the evacuation, water began to flow onto Second St. Cars that tried to drive through the

water floated into the curb like boats.

The River House apartment building which houses nearly 500 residents was also evacuated. Penn State student, Joe Mickey, public policy, was one of those residents evacuated.

"I left my apartment before the flood," Mickey said. "By the time I returned the streets were filled with water, police, ambulances and CAT buses. Water surrounded my building and it was cordoned off. They tell me it may be two weeks to a month before I can move back in."

Water continued to spill onto Second St. until the Walnut St. bridge collapsed. Apparently, snow and ice caused a dam under the bridge, forcing water higher and higher. When two sections of the historical walking bridge gave way on the West Shore Uptown began to recede.

Some residents began to return to their homes that evening, pumping out basements and turning on electric supply boxes. Police threatened to arrest those people unless

they turned their power off for safety reasons.

Some residents are still without some utilities such as heat. Mud that filled many basements has destroyed furnaces.

The water service in the Uptown Harrisburg area is still available, because the pumping station that serves that area was unaffected by the flood. Other municipalities that get water from United Water Supply are still dry because their pumping stations are in the Shipoke section of Harrisburg. Shipoke was submerged under more than six feet of water in places, causing extensive damage to that utility company.

Some of the students affected by the flood are optimistic.

"I didn't have any books with me when I left Saturday morning," Mickey said. "The flood has caused me to fall behind in my classes. But I love living by the river—the inconveniences are only temporary and a small price to pay for a room with a great view."

Julia Tilley, a behavioral science major, and her



photo by Tina Shearer

The road to nowhere left some unlucky people stranded in their cars as the Susquehanna River invaded Front Street and surrounding parking lots in the Fort Hunter area of Dauphin County.

family were evacuated from their Green St. home the day of the flood. She and her family hastily gathered several pets from their home. Tilley maintained a positive outlook.

"I was impressed by how the community came together," she said.

Dr. Michael Barton, associate professor of social science and American studies, was affected as well. A building he owns in the Shipoke area in

south Harrisburg was flooded with three feet of water. Later, the building caught fire. It was one of five homes in the area called "Pancake Row" to burn. Dr. Barton has been spending much of his time salvaging what remains of his property after the flood.

The experiences I take with me from the flood can only enhance the way I view things I am studying in school—so I'm better off in a left-handed way.

PSH Professor counsels flood victims

By Ann E. Mease
Staff Reporter

Dr. Robert W. Coleman, professor of behavioral science, has been working closely with the flood disaster victims, in Harrisburg area communities.

Dr. Coleman is one of the Community Psychology advisers for the American Red Cross and the Crisis Intervention Centers. He is counseling victims and helping to shape a grant proposal that will meet future needs of flood victims.

When the rivers and creeks began to flood, Dr. Coleman worked around the clock at the Red Cross shelter at the William Penn campus of John Harris High School counseling victims of the flood.

"Instead of sitting around waiting for people to approach me," Dr. Coleman said, "I like to use the term aggressive hanging out, which means walking around talking to victims letting them know I am here to help."

Dr. Coleman's approach is to help the victims talk about the positive plans for the future and not dwell on the devastation surrounding them. While staying at the shelters, he recommends people sleep, eat, exercise, and hang out with

friends as much as possible.

The Red Cross played an important role in the flood crisis. When the flood hit, 94 shelters opened statewide, housing 4,000 people at the peak of the disaster, according to Roger Baumgarten, public relations manager for the Red Cross.

The organization has spent \$5 million to aid the Harrisburg area flood victims, he said.

"When there is a disaster of this caliber, 10 to 20 percent of the flood victims will seek shelter, the rest will stay with relatives and friends," Baumgarten said.

Red Cross volunteers were flown in from all over the country to aid the victims. There were over 2,000 Red Cross workers that aided and supported the flood victims, according to Baumgarten.

The Red Cross is still assessing the damage. That is where professionals like Dr. Coleman help by contributing to long range planning, so communities will find the help they need in case a future crisis of this magnitude occurs.

Anyone still needing help may call the American Red Cross Harrisburg Chapter at (717) 234-3101 for further information.

SGA initiates Red Cross flood relief donation drive

By Danielle C. Hollister
Co-editor

The terrifying grasp of the icy floodwaters was felt by many throughout the Harrisburg area.

Residents of Shipoke, the quaint community on the east shore of the Susquehanna river, were forced out of their homes at 4 in the morning, as the raging waters began to invade their streets.

The River House Apartment building on Front St. was evacuated by noon the next day. Over 500 residents had to find a place to stay.

Some of these people and many others found a home at the American Red Cross Shelter in Harrisburg. The William Penn campus of the Harrisburg High School was the site of the first emergency shelter. When classes resumed at the high school, the shelter moved to the Mt. Olivet Presbyterian Church on Derry St. in the city.

One television and old army cots in the church gym became the living room for over 25 flood victims. No Penn State Harrisburg students were living at the shelter when we visited.

But the PSH Student Government Association wants the university to help the community. SGA has started "The Red Cross Flood Relief Donation Drive."

"I had the idea to offer our support that weekend," SGA President, Duane Brooks, said. "But the Red Cross beat me to it. They called us on Monday morning to ask for our help."

The SGA wanted to get volunteers together to help clean houses or provide whatever type of labor was necessary for the Red Cross.

Unfortunately, they were unable to get ten volunteers together, who were available at the same time, Brooks said.

"Because of the schedule conflicts, we decided that the best way we could help was to raise money for them," Brooks said.

The local chapter is in critical need of money and help to aid local families who are victims of the flood. Some of these victims are Penn State faculty, staff, and students.

The SGA sent memos to clubs, faculty and other organizations on campus asking for donations.

"The response has been tremendous," Brooks said. "We've already collected over \$1,100."

The drive was originally scheduled to end on Friday, Feb. 2. Brooks said the SGA has extended the drive by a week to try to raise even more money.

Donations will now be accepted until Friday, Feb. 9. If you are interested in contributing, you can stop by Student Activities in Room 212 with your donation.

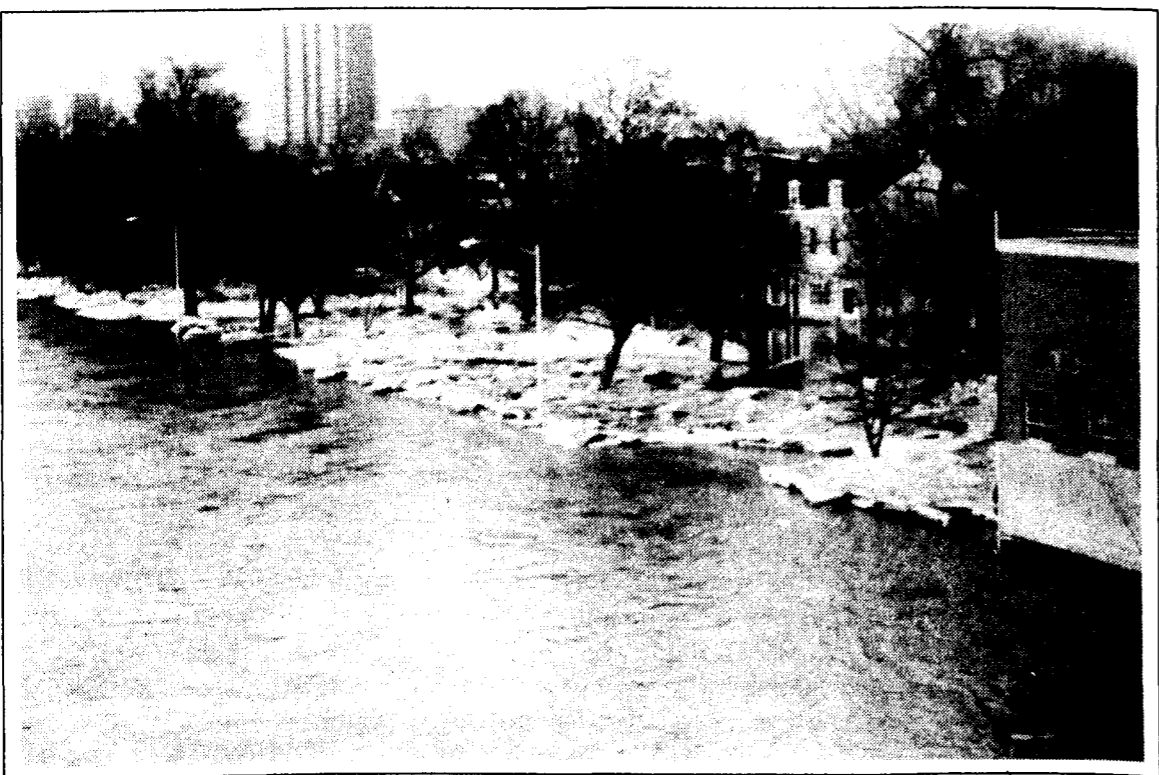
The SGA donation to the Red Cross will be made in the name of Penn State Harrisburg community, SGA and clubs and organizations of PSH.

The Red Cross is still looking for volunteers to help families with damage assessment, applying for financial assistance, cleaning up homes, unloading trucks of supplies, and delivering Mass Care kits and food. There is also a shortage of blood at the PA blood bank.

The local chapter has set up offices in the Harrisburg East Mall. Or if you want more information, you can contact the Student Activities Office or SGA.



Traffic came to a standstill on the South Bridge (Route 83) as sight-seers gathered to get a glimpse of the raging Susquehanna River. State Police later cleared the area and prevented people from stopping to take a look.



When the Susquehanna River crested, it had climbed up the steps and over walkway that lines the East shore. It continued to spill over the embankment that normally protects the quaint community of Shipoke.

photo by Danielle C. Hollister

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