

# *Riding out a killer hurricane –* **Never again!**

BY EDWARD RAMEY

I guess the first question would be, “Why would you want to sit through a hurricane?” Just crazy, if you ask me!

I have been in Florida since 1956 and have gone through all of the hurricanes over the years and did not believe Hurricane Andrew could be worse than any of the previous ones. It was!

The place to start would be about 11 p.m. on Sunday, Aug. 23. We had boarded up the house and were watching the TV updates on the hurricane when it was announced that Andrew would come in at the Turkey Point Power Plant area which was less than six miles from our home. At this point, we felt it was too late to get out, so my family (which consists of wife Jeanne, daughters Robin and Tara, and Robin’s boyfriend, Arnold) got caught in Homestead.

We decided to move the cars to a safer spot and went out and reinforced the house as best we could. Then we settled down for Andrew, who was about to change thousands of lives overnight.

Around 2:30 a.m. on Monday, we lost the power and we went to candles. Then at 3:15, we started to get the first high winds and the house began to shake. A few minutes later, windows blew out in the living room and the front bedroom. At 3:45 a.m., it became very calm and we went outside for a look.

Trees were down all around and trash was piled up all over. In a few minutes the wind and rain started up again so we retreated back inside. This is when all hell started to break loose!

Another window went so we moved into the hallway and sealed all the doors in that area. The entire house felt like it was going any minute, so we all went to the bathroom in the center of the house and locked ourselves in.

Sometime in the next hour, the master bedroom blew out and the roof went. We sat in that bathroom till daylight! The winds had quit, light rain was falling, and all was quiet so we ventured out of the bathroom for a look.

What we saw was beyond words!

Two to three inches of water was throughout

the house; the master bedroom was totally destroyed, all the plywood around the house was gone as well as all our neighbors. No tiles were left on any of the homes around us, and many of the roofs were completely blown off.

I climbed up on the roof for a better view of the area and all I could see was total devastation all around us. Power lines were on homes, cars were turned over, items that had been stored in people’s attics were thrown outside in the streets, small animals were wandering around, birds were so wet they could not fly; and all around, people were crying and screaming, many of them in shock.

For two days we just wandered about the house trying to save what we could. The ceiling in the living room was still there so we moved what we could into that area. The next day, it too fell in. So we pulled all we could out and moved it to the kitchen, the only room with a ceiling left.

My wife went out Tuesday afternoon to check on her co-workers and found a telephone that worked so we were able to call out for help. I got my insurance agent at State Farm and then my brother in Pompano so we would have someplace to go. We siphoned enough gas from our cars to get one full tank so we could attempt to leave.

As we drove, we saw that Florida City was mostly gone, Leisure City was also destroyed and, when we got to the Turnpike, it was evident how far and wide Andrew had gone — all up the Turnpike to Kendall was a complete mess.

Thousands of people were around their homes trying to save what they could. I could not help but feel grateful that I had a way to get out and a place to go.

Since that day, I have returned four times to try and salvage some of the contents of our home. Each time the guilt was worse.

I guess that time heals all wounds but, how long is time? This will be a long-term healing process for everyone.

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** *Ed Ramey, former president of the South Florida GCSA, asked that the customary fee for articles by FGCSA members be donated to the association’s Hurricane Andrew Relief Fund.*

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