

WLRN-Miami Herald News audience submissions about Hurricane Andrew via the [PIN Network](#)

These responses were submitted via a query to our audience about their experiences of Hurricane Andrew. Some spelling has been corrected, but other than that, entries are presented verbatim.

Rick Eyerdam, South Miami FL

I was hired to do the official assessment of the emergency and health care delivery system before, during and after Andrew by the South Florida Regional Health Planning Council. I studied and correlated the facts and offered them to the committee who debated the recommendations and rendition then decided to make it public in a report and a book. Why haven't you contacted me before. I have invested years of effort in www.andrew20th.com/

Jodi Ziskin, Fort Lauderdale FL

It was a storm that felt like it had no end. The wind was so forceful that I could actually hear the walls breathing. After the electricity went out, all I could hear was that sound - the one that so many described as a fast moving train. It went on for hours and hours. After it was over, everyone seemed dazed. I remember driving through downtown Miami where it looked like a bomb went off. There were National Guard troops everywhere - it was eerie. The next two weeks were even stranger - curfews, reports of looting, 24 hours of news on every channel....

This is actually a funny story. At the time, I was the sales manager of a news retrieval service. It was my job to let companies, PR firms and individuals know what news coverage they were getting. Our office was closed due to the storm, so I basically ran everything out of my Aventura apartment. Of course, I had the TV on all of the time. And I kept hearing that song - Somehow We Will Survive - which was written and performed at an Estefan fundraiser. The song was used incessantly on all of the local news coverage. It was making me crazy. I said to myself, "if I ever meet the person who wrote and sang that song, I'm going to smack him." Well, as it turns out, I met him 6 years later. And then I married him. No lie.

Richard McCormick, Miami FL

It was devastation on a scale that I had not seen since serving in Germany during the Korean Conflict. I visited Kassel, a city destroyed by Allied air raids during World War 2 and Andrew's destruction was as bad.

I am a veterinarian and was appointed by the president of the American Animal Hospital to coordinate relief efforts for the animal hospitals and clinics destroyed or damaged by the storm. Approximately 12 facilities in the southern end of the county were badly damaged. Five

clinics including my own never reopened. I was out in the aftermath of the hurricane for 4 months following the hurricane. I will never look on material possessions in the same way. All "gone with the wind" in one hour's time

One irony is that the eye wall was so narrow that, while South Dade incurred horrific damage, the cities of Miami, Coral Gables, and Miami Beach were barely touched.

Cully Waggoner, Miami FL

Andrew was hours of Hell in varying degrees. It slowly got worse and worse. When you thought things could not get any worse, they did. Then it slowly got better as the storm passed. I recall one of my spare rooms. We stored most of our things in it as it had the least amount of furniture in it at the time. At one point I open the door and saw a crack running down the center of the ceiling. The ceiling was bellowing in and out, up and down. A few minutes later I tried to open the door again, but it was jammed shut as the ceiling collapsed into the room.

My most vivid memory is the wind. The sound it made like a Freight Train as the house shook was something that will live with me forever. Every time we get a windstorm I remember Andrew and how it sounded.

I don't think we lost anything that we did not find later out in the yard. As far as other debris it was all over the place. There were front doors wrapped around fire hydrants. There were mattresses floating in the street. There was shingles blocking the storm drains. The two story homes all had at least one second floor wall fall off, like opening a doll house.

As bad as Andrew was it served as a wakeup call. Our Building Code, which was touted as one of the strongest in the nation had been weakened and it has since been built back up. Building materials got better and homes got stronger. Had Andrew not come along when it did our Building Code might have gotten even weaker and we would be worse off if it did.

Paul Beers, Palm Beach Gardens FL

It changed my life in a big way as my business went in a different direction and even today, I still look back as that being the single biggest event in my 30+ year career.

I lived in Palm Beach County, so I was not in the path of the storm. However, my company was (and is) a consulting firm that specialized in the exterior building envelope. I was involved in the recovery and building code changes that are still a big part of today's codes. I made a presentation to the Metro Dade Building Code Evaluation Task Force in October of 1992 where I introduced the "flying 2 x 4 test" for windows and shutters. It was ultimately adopted in the

South Florida Building Code and is part of The Florida Building Code today. After Andrew, I also started a new business - Hurricane Test Laboratory that tests building materials for the new standards.

Addi Casseus, Miami, FL

Hurricane Andrew was a towering, howling monster which ripped through Miami with an indescribable ferocity. His howls were heard for miles. His force winds shook the very foundations of homes. His arms ripped trees and buildings out of the ground, and in his trail, he left broken communities destroyed, trees uprooted, dreams deferred, and a brilliant sunshine.

I learned to respect nature. I learned that even though we celebrate our freedom and modern comforts of television, radio, indoor plumbing and cooking, it can all be gone with simple wind and water. These two elements proved to be more powerful than anything we (man) can create.

I was only 13 at the time of the storm. Nevertheless, my memory of it is quite vivid. I didn't lose anything but trust of nature. Our yard was littered with neighbor's trees and garbage.

It was the exciting weekend before I was set to enter the 9th grade at Miami Jackson Senior High School. Despite newscasts of the upcoming hurricane, my mom wanted to honor a wedding invitation set for that Sunday evening. I recall my father's protest against us going; and I was determined to accompany my mom to this rare occasion. We attended the wedding. Upon our return, we found that my diligent father had boarded up all the windows. He even went shopping and had brought home what we would NEVER purchase-canned foods. I thought I'd starve before I ever ate that...my siblings had the same snobby attitude towards the food, since my mom never purchased canned goods, and frowned upon those who did. With the excitement of the storm which was set to touch land at about 4am, we could not go to sleep. My dad urged us to go to bed. We huddled up in the room my four other siblings and I shared; we pushed our twin beds together to form one huge bed, away from the windows. We cracked jokes, and told stories. But we did not go to sleep. Soon, the wee hours of the morning crept in, and one by one, we dozed off to sleep. I was awakened by a vicious howl. Then, the crack of lightening, and the pounding of thunder brought my heart to my throat. The storm was upon us. The lights flickered, and the house and outside went black. My shock woke my sister awake. "Michaëlle!" I yelled, "It's here!" The howling got louder and I began to cry. I ran to my mom's room. She had been awake-we were the two light sleepers. I saw the fear in her eyes, and knew that we were sure to die. I ran back to my room. I woke my siblings up-shaking them and yelling, "wake-up! Wake-up! We're gonna die!" I ran back to my mom's room with them in trail...my mom stretched her arms for us to come closer, and she said, "Let us pray." As she

prayed, I said my own prayer:" Oh lord, please let me at least see the 9th grade. Please let me make it to High School. Please let me lose my virginity before I die. Please let me get married and graduate from college..." The dreadful noises, the howling winds, the sound of shattering glasses and thunder continued for the next hour. Then, it all stopped. I asked if it was over. We waited. At this point, my mom and dad were recounting stories of past storms experienced in Haiti. My dad even told us of the time he waited a hurricane out in a tree. A tree?! I thought...surely we'll be fine...but the storm started up again, and this time, it was my dad's turn to calm us down with jokes, stories of his childhood, his time in the Haitian army and militia. He told us of the atrocities of Papa Doc Duvalier, and his son, Baby Doc. He told us of his dreams of social justice for Haitians in Miami Dade county, and how he relied upon us to do great things. I said, "Well, I'm gonna be a lawyer! And when I'm a lawyer, I'll help Haitians." He patted my head, and my brother rolled his eyes. We were no longer afraid of the noises. We felt safe. We snuggled in our blankets at the feet of my mom's bed, and one by one, dozed off. In the morning, with no electricity for hot water, the use of the stove, and television, I was grateful for the bread and canned soups of Chef Boyardee.

Andrea Rott , Fargo, ND

I would describe Andrew as something you felt more than saw. My husband and I will never forget being in our "safehouse" Embassy Suites hotel in Boca Raton when the hurricane hit land. Our sliding glass windows shook and sounded like they had a life of their own. The vent in the bathroom made a mad pounding noise for what seemed like 5 straight minutes. Our ears popped and we just stared at each other in utter disbelief!

It changed my life by giving me the opportunity to experience the immense power of nature in relative safety. We had to evacuate from the barrier reef called Delray Beach, but were allowed to go back home the very next morning to see the damage caused by or remnants of Andrew. I was shocked that nothing appeared to be out of place except for an old Norfolk Island Pine which was lying flat out in the courtyard. This was a once in a lifetime experience (or so I thought) for a North Dakota girl who lives in Florida every summer! I also think it conditioned me to not fear hurricanes due to the very fact that we weren't really affected by "the big one!"

We were in a basically untouched area, other than our pine tree that I mentioned previously. The pool furniture was at the bottom of the pool, but it had been put there to weather the storm. Even across A1A at the beach, there was little or no change, except for sand dunes where there had been but a walk space up from the ocean. Our condo was completely unscathed and all the electricity remained on throughout the day and night.

This may sound very odd, but Andrew gave me the opportunity to extend my summer vacation

for a little more than a week. I was supposed to be back in the classroom teaching on August 24th, but that's when life turned upside down. I called my principal and told him I'd be there when he saw the whites of my eyes. Northwest Airlines didn't even attempt to leave Miami for another 5 days, so I lived out of a suitcase and it felt like a camping trip up until the day our plane flew back to Fargo. That gave my summer vacation quite an indelible and unforgettable ending.

Ingrid Chin, Palmetto Bay FL

Hurricane Andrew was a humbling experience, it made you realize how fragile and vulnerable you are against the power of nature. One afternoon we went to the shelter and the next morning everything was totally destroyed. The hurricane itself was terrifying. The glass doors on the shelter wobbled and bowed, then suddenly boom! they crashed in and fell sideways into the shelter. Everyone ran. My husband and I gathered the children, 10, 17 and 18mths and ran to an inner room. The wind continued to rage and whistle and suddenly, what sounded like 3 loud explosions, pow!.pow! Pow! the large skylight in the room lifted off and the rain poured in on us. We gathered everyone again and went to a small classroom, people were crying, everyone was frightened. The room had an exterior door which started to rattle uncontrollably ready to rip off its hinges. My husband and some other men found some rope. They tied it to the door handle and strained to hold it shut. I look up to the roof and saw the cinderblock wall wobble like jelly. It was surreal. Everyone crouched down in corners with their loved ones, some still crying, others quiet. After an eternity the wind died down, we thought it may be the eye and went to find a safer place. We hid in a dark janitors closet in the middle of the building. I thought if this is only half the building is weakened and cannot survive a second onslaught. I prayed to God to keep us safe. Thankfully in about 40 minutes or so the PA system announced the storm was over and we could meet in the cafeteria for breakfast. What a relief. In the cafeteria we had cereal and milk. People from the neighborhood who lost their homes started trickling in, soaking wet, crying and trembling. The staff of the shelter helped them. My husband wanted to go home right away to check on the house. Our van was undamaged, we gathered our stuff. Oh no, someone had taken our comforter, the blue one with Mickey Mouse I brought to comfort the children, I bought it from Burdines, on sale. Who would do such a thing. The drive home was mind boggling. Everywhere was destruction. The landmarks and street signs were gone, everything was unrecognizable. We drove on lawns and sidewalks though flooded and blocked streets. We almost past our road because everything looked unfamiliar. The wind took ALL the leaves off the trees, it looked like winter, nothing was green, it even blew the grass off the ground. All the metal light poles on US1 were bent over like a giant hand had swept across them. We finally got to the house. It was bad. The roof was gone, everything was soaked. The beds were covered with sheetrock and insulation. The wind blew the sheetrock off my living room wall leaving only the cinderblocks. My couch and coffee table

were on my neighbors lawn. So were my double front doors complete with the plywood my husband had nailed to them. We started to laugh. When we left home and got to the shelter, my husband had forgotten if he locked the front doors. He left us there and returned to check and come back. Now the whole door, frame and plywood were on someone else's lawn. This was the most stressful experience of my life. In the weeks ahead I drove to work on the turnpike. Every morning I would cry in my van. I passed children toys, bedrooms without wall, the stuff of people's lives disrespectfully strewn all over. I cried when I saw the long lines of people waiting for food from the army stations. I cried even harder when they stood in the rain, many with babies and children waiting for food. I felt the weight of their despair and hopelessness. I grew to dread the journey I had to make through broken lives and broken people. But we all got through it. Ten years later homes still had blue tarp on the roof. Twenty years later some families have never really recovered. Every hurricane season, I wonder, is this one for South Florida?

It gave me a new perspective. All the material things we want and possess are really not that important and can be gone just like that. Even though we lost our home I was happy we were alive. Really, that was all that mattered. All my neighbors spoke to each other and checked on each other a lot. Everyone was a lot nicer when no one had anything.

I lost my home and most of the contents. I was sad to lose the ceramic baby shoes my obstetrician gave me with my children's birth information. Luckily I saved my photographs. I don't remember finding anything.

Marshal Chaifetz, Miami FL

It changed the way the city looked. The streets were no longer tree lined and the city felt more empty as a result.

It changed my life where materials things don't matter anymore. Like a bomb went off, flattened everything. There is a Face Book page, I survived Hurricane Andrew- South Florida Chapter. There are over 6100 people that most went through Hurricane Andrew, with picas and their stories, You should check it out.

Jim Fell , Destin FL

Unlike most Gulf Coast hurricanes, Andrew came in the middle of the night with Category 4 winds and very little tidal surge or flooding. Winds higher and stronger than anyone could remember interrupted only by gusts that were even stronger and louder.

I spent a year living in Homestead and supervising the design and rebuilding of a large

condominium project around a lake near the last exit on the Turnpike. I shared the lives and struggles of many wonderful people I met as well as the sorrow of those that lost loved ones in the storm.

No one had a list of all the owners that lived in the condominium and in most cases they did not even know who the officers of the association were or how to get hold of them. There was about 20 million dollars of damage and someone had to authorize the restoration work be done. We selected at least one on site owner to represent each association and named them "Ad Hoc" representatives. After all the repair work was complete and the people began to return, I asked the lawyer if the "Ad Hoc" was really legal and said she said probably not, but what else could we do?

After hearing all the harrowing tales about the "Roofers from Hell" living in the woods and killing one another over a six pack of beer, I resisted giving in to the plea to come and help rebuild, but finally gave in after seeing looters in the middle of the day driving fully loaded pickup trucks out the gate and on to the Turnpike and owners trying to do their repairs getting their new front door stolen while they walked over to a neighbor to borrow a tool. When interviewed for the restoration design and construction management, I was asked "what would be the first thing you would do if awarded this project? Without a moment of hesitation, I said "we would man the gates, repair the fences and take back the territory." We got the job and the first day we went to lunch at the only restaurant open in Homestead and had to pay a \$5.00 cover charge just to get inside to order. Once inside I noticed most of the men had a holster with a handgun or a handgun stuck in their belt. A law enforcement officer walked in and in a loud voice demanded that "if you have a permit hold the papers up so I can see them. Apparently used to the drill most held up papers with one hand and continued eating with the other. When the officer got to me, he said "do you have a gun?" My answer was "no, but I am thinking I may be getting one."

Rhonda Victor Sibilia, Miami FL

Four hours of terror followed by weeks of uncertainty and many months of frustration.

It gave me a greater appreciation of what's really important in life. I'm especially pleased my children (5 & 6 at the time) learned how we can overcome adversity and disaster and rebuild.

All of our furnishings were ruined, but the loss that means the most to me was my collection of nearly 800 record albums. I'm fortunate I did not lose photos or other personal mementos.

RICK BENJAMIN III , BOCARATON FL

POWERFUL AND HORRIFIC THIS INCIDENT REMINDED ME OF JUST HOW BLESS ME AND MY WIFE ARE. GOD BLESSED US WE RECEIVED NO DAMAGE.

YES THAT NIGHT SHORTLY BEFORE THE HURRICAN I RECIEVED A VISIT FROM ONE OF THE LARGEST ANGELS I'VE EVER SEEN IN MY LIFE. I WILL NEVER, EVER FORGET THAT AS LONG AS I LIVE. PSALMS 121

Arturo Gomez, Denver CO

The force of nature has no equal, I saw destruction oddities that the best fiction writer could not have dreamt

Not really life altering for me, however it was my first and only hurricane experience, one I'll never forget.

Working for a broadcaster which lost its signal on the old Homestead Tower, it changed my work routine for about 2 years until we returned at a new site at full power after 3 months of silence and 21 months of low power transmission

Jennifer Zambolla, Miami FL

It was like a freight train bearing down towards you at full force. The howling sound of wind for 6 hours with no break. My entire family: Mom, Dad, brother, sister and myself trapped inside a bathtub until it was safe to run to the house next door for shelter. Watching the ceiling crack from one side to the other and then fall to the floor. Holding the bottom of the bathroom door with my dad so that the door would not fly open because all the windows of our house were blown out. I would not wish the experience on my worst enemy!!!!

Now my family is prepared even if a Cat. 1 storm is on its way. Hurricanes are no joke! my entire home, my bedroom, my first car. I remember my porch ceiling (the white aluminum ones) was gone. We looked at the easement behind our house and wrapped around the wires like a twisty tie from a bread bag was the roof of the porch!

Robert Jenkins , Naples FL

Complete devastation. It made me respect the awesome power of nature. A question I asked of many I evacuated. When did you realize you nearly made a fatal error?

Edwin McLean, Homestead FL

Hurricane Andrew was a smallish storm that packed the hardest punch. It arrived in Homestead in the early morning hours and really you were left to wonder if you would live to

see daylight.

Well, when you're in Homestead and don't have electricity for over 100 days you learn to do without. You can survive without electricity. You can deal with cold showers. You learn to keep generators working but understand you have to turn them off too. You learn that things like air conditioning isn't a necessity but that it makes live livable here in the tropics.

We purchased our home in the Redland some 11 days before Hurricane Andrew and most of our possessions were water-damaged. We hated losing many of our photos as those aren't easily restorable.

Unfortunately, Homestead has never recovered from Hurricane Andrew and the folks that run Miami-Dade County have also forgotten about the town that my family settled in the early 1900s. Homestead's charming 'mom-n-pop' business district has never recovered and most of the middle class moved away. Sadly, it's the town that South Florida turned its back on. It's important for people to remember that Homestead is not where the turnpike and the new hospital is. Homestead is KROME AVENUE! I'd be more than willing to take anyone from The Herald on a REAL TOUR of Homestead!

Roy Martinez , Jupiter FL

I was at a friend's wedding in NJ shortly after Hurricane Andrew hit. I had my photo album with me which I showed to some of the guests. They couldn't believe the devastation in the pictures. I told them that seeing it "in person" was much worse.

It didn't really change my or my family's life. This is Florida. Hurricanes are part of the deal when you live here. If anything changed, it was the way we lived for the next nine months. My wife's family came down to Cutler Ridge with a van and loaded up everything they could and took it to a storage facility in Jupiter. No one was at home during the storm. My oldest daughter (who was 4 at the time) was already spending time with my wife's parents in Miami. I was "on duty" as a firefighter/paramedic with City of Miami. My wife evacuated to her parents house, taking our youngest daughter (who was only 4 months old), 3 dogs, 1 cat and a turtle to her parent's house. She rode out the storm in the garage, trying to keep 3 dogs calm.

About a year or so after Hurricane Andrew, the place which developed my film was selling 11" x 14" radar images of the storm. I bought one and framed it. It's been hanging in our homes ever since. I guess it is our "good luck" charm.

Denny Wood, Miami FL

I spent 17 days without business electric, so I volunteered, in Perrine, to run the distribution center in front of old Winn Dixie. The county would not send a pallet remover tool until about the 15th day to unload semi-trailers. We used ropes and a tow motor to pull pallets out of the semi-trailers. The Salvation Army was the greatest, sending full trucks of supplies daily. When the electric came on I went back to my business and made more money than I have ever made. I could not even use the restroom as more customers came in for Hurricane Andrew shirts and custom work. My business survived the Hurricane but not the U. S. Post Office, who ripped off our common roof and the water ruined much stock. The Post Office promised to pay for their damage, but did not. I have expected such a hurricane ever since, which has not come. So big, and so little life lost is what I remember.

Dave Auslander , Miami FL

The first thing, as many have noted, is the sound. We lived west of the Falls, and thought animals were fighting to the death on our roof. We now know that's the sound of shingles and decking being ripped away from their decking. And then when daylight came, to see trees that were well rooted and weighed thousands of pounds cast about like newspaper...the power was awesome.

It reaffirmed that loving material possessions is a fool's errand. It made us understand how blessed we were that our family came through uninjured, and that ruined furniture, knick knacks, and even a house is, in the long run, no big deal.

Our aluminum patio roof was ripped clear off and never found. It must have weighed close to 1000 pounds, but became a huge kite. I "found" 2 neighbor's black olive trees, each about 60 feet tall, horizontal in my back yard. We prepare each year, but if another Cat 3 or above is headed to Miami, my family and I are headed out!

Sebastian Dominguez , Aventura FL

Thinking back it's like a physical end of an era or a dramatic turning or the proverbial page. From one day to the next the entirety of south Florida changed. For the better and worse. In some areas you saw the "neighbors helping neighbors" mentality happening spontaneously. People that live next to each other and never spoke became lifelong friends and some communities became stronger. In other areas it became a literal war zone with profiteers. People had lost everything and defended the little they had to the death and others took advantage of people by selling ice for 20 dollars.

I was 14 at first all I cared about was trying to get a stop light and to go exploring I had lived through hurricane Gloria in NYC and I was ok with the power outages. The changes I

experienced came later whenever I was asked about Andrew and I keep meeting people like me that lived through it. Those of us that were here before Andrew and lived through it. Don't seem as affected by hurricane fear, we're prepared for the next one without panic and we're all ready to help our neighbor without fail. For example during Katrina I lost power for almost a month. And it did not affect me and I was able to help out my friends and neighbors.

My immediately family didn't lose anything and I picked up a street sign or two. Nothing much again after Gloria we knew how to prepare. We did have some family friends that lost everything and we knew of some people that used this to commit fraud later. But at the time it looked like everyone was but it's still disgusting.

I still have the original VHS tape of the storm in near mint condition. Maybe you can see it. I think you guys should have a copy. Also Andrew destroyed everything from Broward to the keys and it took FPL less time to get back up and running back then than it did or them recently. It seemed like lastly the richer areas and mall get power fast when back the. We all got it back at the same times no spots of power

Eduardo de Varona , Miami (unincorporated) FL

Extremely strong winds is what I remember most. I now religiously put up storm shutters whenever there is one in the vicinity.

Just yard damage, lost a tree in the side yard, all of my fences, and it knocked down my trellis. Lost only 12 shingles from my roof. Found a patio umbrella, complete and undamaged (Corona Beer) in my backyard. Never found out where it came from, and I have used until last year, when it finally lost its canvas covering.

The three men in the house that night spend it mostly holding up the front door against the wind. My son, my brother in law, and I spent three to four hours with our backs against the double front doors, which were in imminent danger of busting in. I since then have changed them to stronger, out-swinging doors. We were very afraid that we would get splattered flat when the winds would finally overpower us!

Bruce Lamberto , North Miami Beach FL

Like a loud freight train in your front and back yards at the same time combined with being in the path of a jet engines exhaust at full power.

it did give me a greater appreciation for how much damage a mega-hurricane can do to anything standing in its way. Living in the North Dade area near Aventura/Sunny Isles area, this

area did not suffer the extremely high winds that South Dade experienced. I also benefitted from living in an older concrete block constructed home with a barrel tile roof that withstood the storm damaging winds much better than a home with a fiberglass shingle roof composition. I suffered the loss of numerous landscape trees and spent two full days cleaning up my yard. However, I never minded doing the work after being one of the lucky ones who came out of the storm relatively unscathed and considered myself very lucky after seeing the damage in South Dade. I found pieces of awnings, canvas covers, sheet metal, and a sign from a store 1/2 mile away.

Being a native Miamian, I have experienced many hurricanes in my life time but I was never prepared mentally for the power exhibited by Andrew. I stayed in my home which is located on the water near the beach. Had I known the power Andrew packed, I would never have stayed in my home during the storm. Its only the luck of the draw that I managed to beat the odds on not getting punished by Andrew.

Paul Stein, COOPER CITY FL

A very unplanned devastating storm

In Broward Count it was less intensive than Dade, but the tornado's took their toll.

It damaged part of my roof and my neighbor's directly across the street but did not impact homes on either the left or right side of me. My pool enclosure screen was folded down into the pool and entrance or exit to the pool was blocked. Heavy tree limbs from the Live oak trees fell and blocked the driveway from entrance or exit. They were too heavy to be moved by individuals

Marcia Brownstein, Miami FL

MY SON AND I WERE TOLD TO LEAVE OUR HOME WE WENT TO A SCHOOL SLEPT PN THE FLOOR AND HEARD THE NOISE IT WAS HORRIBLE LIKE A TRAIN CRASHINH

OF CAUSE IT DID I HAD TO FIND A PLACE TP LIVE MY SON WAS A SENIOR IN HS AND ON THE FOOTBALL TEAM

EVERYTHING I LOST PICTURES I FOUND THE BLACK AND WHITE TILES FROM MY SONS ROOMS WERE STILL THERE. I DIDNOT RECONIZE ANY ONE IN THE PICTURES BUT I DO REMEMBER TENT CITY AND WAITING ON LINES FOR FOOD AND ITEMS.

THEY PUT US IN A TRAILER MY SON AND I NO PHONE FOR MONTHS

Geoffrey Philp, Miami FL

I have written a poem, "heirlooms," which was published in my collection of poems, Florida Bound:

heirlooms

through the garbled signals
of a transistor radio
my mother kept for hurricanes like this,
but never like this,
we scan for the next location
of ice, water, food, and catch
the edge of a Caribbean tinged
station, fragments of a Marley tune,
"no woman, nuh cry, everything's
gonna be all right," and my son,
barely nine months, who cut a tooth
while Andrew gnawed through the grove,
dances with his mother
by the glow of a kerosene lamp,
preserved through airport terminals
and garage sales, and, as the window
splintered--the house glittered
for a moment before the walls
fell flat--stood on the mantle
of the fireplace we never used.
in the midst of the rubble
these, our only heirlooms, bind us
against the darkness outside,
all that she could ever give,
all that we could ever pass on
or possess: this light, this music.

I am better prepared for hurricanes

Jason Helmand , Wellington FL

It sounded like a train was speeding by our house. The sky seemed quite bright even though it hit at night and when it was all over, the outside was unrecognizable. What few people seem to remember was the next night after Andrew hit there were some terrible rain storms that made all the damage from the hurricane that much worse. The rain destroyed a lot of homes that weren't that bad from the storm.

After the hurricane hit, my job at Carvel was closed for a week due to a lack of power, my school, Miami-Dade Community College's fall semester was delayed due to damage to the south campus, and our house in west Kendall had some serious damage. The worst part was not having electricity for a few weeks, no cable for months, and no street lights. Eventually, the next year we moved out of Dade County to Broward County.

We lost all of our trees, our patio and the taillight to my car. A coconut flew into the car and smashed the taillight

I remember how we all came together after the storm. Neighbors sat outside in the front yards and ate dinner together since there was no electricity. People volunteered to direct traffic on Kendall drive where all the lights were out for days and days. There was also an influx of outsiders who came to town to prey on people's needs to have trees trimmed or roofs repaired. There were prose gougers and people simply taking advantage of others. But the locals, they took care of one another.

Richard Gotowala, Limestone TN

Devastating. I could not ever imagine in my life time what wind and rain can do. It was awesome. At the time my house stood its ground but the roof was peeled back like you had just opened can of beans. Naturally, that was all dumped in my back yard. As I looked out the window of the now destroyed home, in the street were two young men who rode out the storm in their house which now had NO roof at all and no idea where it had gone. They were in good physical condition, so we let them be. In my backyard I had notice that a marquee had wedged it's self into a telephone pole. This marquee came from a pharmacy across Franjo Rd.. If that pole was not there, it would have destroy my house and possibly hurt whoever in the house. The marquee was twisted like a pretzel, NO man could twist that marquee with today's modern tools the way that was twisted. It was awesome. We were without electricity for approximately 30 days, so naturally we had to run out to wherever to buy a generator for electricity so that we could run our pump well. YEP..our house had well water. One of the few places in Perrine that had well

water. Anyway, I took a stroll down the street and saw kids with scores of bedding, clothing and etc. I stopped them and asked where all that was coming from and they said from Richard's Dept. store. They were looting the store. No one could get to them because the roads were blocked and cars from Perrine Datsun (at that time) were on US 1 upside down and crosswise. To someone who was there? Listen to what the weather station tells you to do . Hurricanes of this magnitude are nothing to party over. Just think what a tornado does and you will find another Andrew.

Hurricane Andrew did change my life. I was tired of fixing up almost every year my house, yard and hoping for the best. I've been thru many Hurricanes in Florida. I don't think I missed one since 1955 to 1997. I've moved to TN where in the Smokey's you only read about hurricanes.

Material items I lost in the storm were all my household goods. I literally emptied the whole house to bare walls. Everything was water soaked, broken or just couldn't be found. After the storm in the yard we found trash barrels, parts of roofs just a lot of small missile items and etc.

After so many years in FL working there as well as living. I would now only visit So. Fl. To each his own. Been there, done that and don't need it.

Steve Gerrish , Homestead FL

I reside in Homestead now, but was an Army National Guardsman based in St. Augustine when we deployed to the remains of the Cutler Ridge Mall. Devastation, widespread devastation, homes splintered, debris everywhere.

Respect for the power of Mother Nature. Reinforced my commitment to help others in need.

I remember seeing homes totally destroyed and rooms of others next door largely untouched. How?

I recently spoke with former Guardsmen about what we experienced and how the area has recovered. Homestead, especially, should be proud.

Robert Pike , Homestead FL

It was like a gigantic tornado; very little rain, intense, powerful, loud wind. I remember vividly going out when the eye passed over us, looking up, and seeing a wall of clouds lit by the moon that was out of a fictional story. There must have been tornadoes within the wall because one of the things we noticed was an intense change in pressure...like the type you notice when you go up or down a fast elevator, or dive in to deep water. Immediately after that I watched our

roof lift upwards, then blow away. We also suffered an entire shed tar and shingle roof crash in to our bedroom, through a double shuttered window, on to the bed where we were laying 15 minutes before it happened. A limb of a tree came in through the bedroom window where my son's bed was, and it too would have impaled him if we didn't get him out of there in to a central part of the house.

I was a single dad who gave shelter to a woman and her two kids who I later married...and then quickly divorced. It turned out to be a marriage of convenience; we had little in common...but it made my son grow closer to his real mother, who took him in while the future "ex" and I worked things out.

The home was nearly totaled; I noticed several cracks in the entire foundation and outside wall from floor to ceiling; but it would have cost too much to level and rebuild - so we patched it up, and recovered fairly well. Unique was that our phone was the only phone working in the neighborhood; we soon had many neighbors coming in to use it (no cell phones back then). We found the roof that blew off about 100 yards away from the house.

We were fortunate to have neighbors that were in the home building field; we got a lot of the repairs taken care of rather quickly.

Jack Hardy , Miami FL

I was living in New Jersey - saw the chaos and destruction via TV.

Rick Scobs , Naples FL

It was a very unique experience but no, it didn't change my life.

I lived in the Penthouse at the Roney Plaza in Miami Beach and not much happened there. The City was concerned with the huge A/C units blowing out of the roof and killing a few people but that never happened

Jim Fell , Destin FL

Most hurricanes in Florida end up as major flood events due to tidal surges. Andrew was different. Andrew was a genuine high wind event with most damage resulting from wind related failures of building components.

As head of an engineering firm, Andrew was my first hurricane, but since then my firm has worked every storm event along the Gulf Coast with damage assessments, design of repairs and management of construction in progress.

I was living in Tampa at the time and personally lost nothing however in the year I spent in Homestead after Andrew, I found the group of over fifty condominiums had lost all records and only one or two owners were left in the area to direct the insurance claims and order the work. Not knowing who the president of the various associations were, we did the next best thing and appointed one of the survivors as the "Ad Hoc" representative for that association. After all the work was complete and owners slowly began to return, I asked an attorney if the "Ad Hoc" thing we did was legal and she probably not, but it worked, what else could we have done?

A month after Andrew all my friends and associates were telling me the harrow stories about the gun toting workman and the "roofers from hell" which convinced me I did not want to be a part of the rebuild. Finally after many emails and phone calls I did agree to go down and take a look at a project near the end of the Turnpike in Homestead. I flew to Miami and drove to Homestead arriving shortly after noon. I heard gun fire and saw pick up trucks loaded with building parts and personal belongings driving through the main gate of the gated community and on to the Turnpike. I then talked to an owner who had just hung a new front door on his condo unit and went inside to get another tool and when he returned the new front door was gone, and here I always thought looting only took place at night. Later on when being interviewed for the job of architect, engineer and construction manager, I was asked what was the first thing I would do if aw added this project. My answer was to take back the territory and secure the borders. With that bold answer, we got the job and then went to the only restaurant open in Homestead to celebrate only to find a long line outside and a five dollar cover charge just to get inside. Once in, I noticed most of the men were wearing blue jeans, white t shirts and a holster with a gun. A deputy sheriff walked in and in a loud voice said "If you have a permit to carry, raise your hand with the papers in it." This must have been a regular procedure because most of the men continued to eat as they held the papers up with their other hand. When the officer got to my table he asked me if I had a gun and I said "no, but I am thinking about getting one."

Mike Kutell, miami beach, FL

Massive damage. I am a Physician and helped in the Everglades Migrant Camp. There were no Military Doctors, but the Army had a platoon of NCO Medics who assisted us. The NCOIC told me that they had arrived one day prior and He did not then believe that people had lived there. ("Sir, I thought it was the County Dump.") The community was maybe 1/2 trailers (that were all transformed to scrap) and 1/2 CBS houses with a CBS Community Center- that we used as a make-shift clinic.

A Poole, miami FL

unbelievable. I'm Terrified of any bad weather. Everything, nothing

H. Eugene Wine, Pinecrest FL

Terrifying. My wife was in Venice FL for the death and burial of her brother. I had friends in both South and North Dade. Fortunately, since the wife in South Dade said that if I came there the dog would have to stay in the garage, I chose North Dade. We were out of our house and living in an apartment for seven months. Fortunately the brother-in-law of one of my good friends was an architect, and he took over restoring our home. However, we still had much to do arranging things. I was crippled with excruciating spinal pain, but since I was retired I could take messages and work the telephone. However, my wife was still working, and she had to take the brunt of organizing things.

We were in the north wall of the storm. The roof covering, but not the roof itself, blew completely off, allowing water to come into the whole house. Naturally a lot of the interior decoration and furniture were destroyed. Amazingly, there was no major structural damage. (The house was built in 1953, of CBS and Dade county pine.)

Danny Janis, Rome GA

Andrew altered the landscape, by downing all trees and street signs. Thus making navigation very difficult. I was at work during the storm and could not find my way home when I was finally able to leave my job.

Hurricane Andrew affected me very deep, at my core.

The home was destroyed, but rebuildable. Many, many things were lost. The thing that impressed me the most was the things that weren't lost. Even though all of the windows in the house were blown either in or out, there was a bookcase in the living room that was intact and all the family photos in that bookcase were intact and not water damaged.

One of the stories I like to tell involves the roof of the home I lived in. There was an area of the roof that was rotting and it worried me a lot. I didn't think I had the money to repair it. Now all of the tarpaper and gravel were blown off the roof in the storm. But, the roof was basically intact. Except right where that rotten spot was. There, the hurricane had deposited a large tree, completely splintering the rotten spot. There could be no question about replacing that part of the roof.

Esperanza Reynolds, Miami Lakes FL

A runaway train approaching, we tried to hide under the bed but panic set by remembering our

parents in the other room, so we moved to the pool bathroom thinking it was the safest place, only to realize we would not make it because of the confined space... ran toward the garage... and prayed God would protect us that night...

Yes, Hurricane Andrew was the reason why the entire neighborhood met during the next few days as we "united" to clean trees, debris, pool screen enclosure, sharing water, food, a chain saw... we were the only home with a phone connection, which many used to contact family and friends and we were the only house on the hospital grid, so our electric returned before it did for neighbors and during the first two nights... many slept in our guest room

We found a pool screen enclosure, water filter were gone or damaged beyond repair; the next door tree was in our backyard, and parts of a small boat...

Living in Miami Lakes, we were NOT priority for Insurance companies, vendors, repair people, etc. so we had a devil of a time dealing with our losses, but understood the imperative need of those in direct contact with the Hurricane. When President George Bush flew into Opal Locke Airport, we saw Air Force 1 fly over our home...

Luis Rivera , Miami FL

It was definitely one of the longest nights of my life. I had my wife and her mom, grandmother, and great aunt in our 2 bedroom apartment because I made them evacuate their house in Homestead. We were all in the dining room/living room area to be away from the windows which were not protected. I had moved an entertainment center against the sliding glass door in the living room in hopes it would keep the door from being pushed in and to act as a barrier to flying glass if something struck it. All night we heard the wind blowing and pea gravel flying off the complex roofs and striking our bedroom windows. The doors to the bedrooms shook as the pressure in the house changed. We spent a lot of time watching Brian Norcross update us on a little black & white battery powered TV.

It's hard to quantify, but I believe that going through such an experience has to change anyone in some ways. I definitely have a greater respect for hurricanes since then and take them more seriously than I did before.

Fortunately I lost very little. Some items that I still had at my parents house were damaged beyond saving, such as tapes, books, pictures and magazines. All in all, nothing extremely important. I don't remember finding anything afterwards. I did rescue a conjure that turned up at Tamaki Airport. Apparently it was from Metro Zoo.

One memorable item from all this. My wife and I were scheduled for the walk through and closing on our new house in Country Walk the morning after the storm. Obviously it was cancelled. It took me 3 days to be able to get in to see the house. Surprisingly, it held up very well. This was a new construction and it was CBS block, not wood frame like the older homes that were destroyed. The builder repaired the home and we moved into it later that November. We were one of the first people to move into a house in Country Walk after the storm. It was quite an adventure. No cable, no street lights, hardly any neighbors. AT night we heard lots of generators running because of the people living in their campers. Possums were a nightly sight.

Robin Graham , Orlando FL

A living nightmare that you cannot seem to wake up from. A slow motion nightmare that seems to consume you in ways you did not think were possible. I still cringe at storms, even the nasty thunderstorms we get from the sea breezes in the afternoons. Seems to send me into panic mode. I leave the state and the mention of a hurricane coming this way.

We lost everything in the hurricane and if there was anything left by the time we were able to get to our home the looters were there and it was a mess, so we lost it all.

Unless you lived it, Andrew, Katrina, or any other big hurricane, you can never understand the pain, the despair, the sheer panic of facing the possibility of dying, of losing everything. It's a feeling of hopelessness, of helplessness, but at the same time there were people who did anything and everything to bring hope and help to those of us who were lost. You become humble, less critical, more compassionate, more understanding, yet we often wondered where was all the help we needed so much. There were so many of us who saw NO help for weeks and weeks. There is much to be learned from these type of catastrophic events.

Cheryl Holmes , Kendall FL

The most frightening ordeal I've ever lived through. I grew up in homestead, but have never experienced anything like that. I vaguely remember Donna, but it wasn't like that. I remember the windows breaking out and the wind blowing extremely hard. My kids and I were barricade in the bathroom. I lived in the cutler ridge area next to south ridge senior. After it was over I saw a semi tractor trailer in a state troopers house. We learned survival skills real fast. It brought neighbors together.

I loss everything, but it was funny the apartment next to me didn't experience a thing not one broken window.

Kathleen Teller-Stamis , Port Charlotte FL

I cannot imagine what it must have been like in the Homestead area (I lived on the last street in Miami-Dade County at the time), where the storm did the most damage, but I can tell you that it was one of the worst experiences of my life.

Saw a water-soaked pigeon on my window sill. Other than that, I was lucky and lost nothing. South Florida is NOT paradise. I don't live there any longer.

Martin Olson , Miami FL

Surreal. I worked in downtown and people in North Dade had minimal power outages and disruptions. Going into work where everything was normal, the power was on, air conditioners worked and life was going on. To go home where intersections had no power and police directing traffic, going through soldiers with M-16s at checkpoints and seeing piles of debris and taking cold showers by candle light. Locking your car doors and realizing it was pointless because every piece of glass on your car was shattered and broken except for the windshield.

My father, a retired Colonel in the U.S. Army, was scheduled to have surgery at Homestead AFB to remove a cancer spot on his face. Andrew destroyed Homestead. My Dad was concerned with dealing with his destroyed house and not worried about the bump. Within days, the bump had gotten very large almost like a golf ball under the skin. A neighbor, who was a dental surgeon saw the bump. He said he was not a cancer specialist but the size of the bump and the fact that it was soft, was not good. My Dad finally went to Gainesville to the VA hospital there. They discovered he had a previously undetected heart attack. They operated on the bump and he suffered a heart attack on the table. He survived but his health spiraled down and we lost him just before Christmas. I often wondered if he had that surgery that Monday and Andrew had not hit us, how much longer would he have had with us.

I was living with my parents. My car was badly damaged, my clothes were rust stained and my CDs and other stuff, but nothing catastrophic. My finance were planning for our April wedding, which we went ahead with despite the loss of my father.

Andrew did a lot of bad things but it did do some wonderful things. Every night our neighbors would gather in the street and discuss what they had heard from their insurance companies and what the news was saying. Only one person had a working phone line. We all knew each other but this was the first time we got together and talked. Really talked. This is what it must have been like in the "good old days". After the power was restored and phone service, we still talked but not as often and not as frequently.

Another thing I remember is my brother Billy came down from Gainesville to help. He was a

small engine mechanic from Sears. He anticipated everyone having trouble with generators so he grabbed a small cache of parts, gas filters and thing and came down to Miami. Every night he would sit on the back of his El Camino with the tail gate down and fixed everyone's generator who need it. Word got around and people were coming from all over the area. My brother refused pay but if they insisted he asked them to pay for the cost of the parts, usually a few dollars. My brother was not making much money but he gave what he could. His skill and talents.

GUSTAVO FERNANDEZ , MIAMI FL

HURRICANE ANDREW WAS A COMBINATION OF A HURRICANE AND TORNADOS. ANDREW DEVASTATED HOMESTEAD. IN CORAL GABLES, OLD TREES WERE UPROOTED. STREETS WERE BLOCKED BY TREES AND DEBRY. CANALS WERE OVERFLOWED AND YOU COULD SEE SNAKES IN STREETS.

IT CHANGED MY FAMILY'S LIFE. BEING IN THE ISURANCE BUSINESS, WE LOST MORE THAN 50% OF OUR BUSINESS. WE SPENT 3 YEARS TRYING TO HELP OUR CUSTOMERS. NEITHER THE STATE OF FLORIDA NOR THE INSURANCE COMPANIES KNEW HOW TO HANDLE SITUATION. ALL THE RULES WE LEARNED IN ORDER TO BECOME AND INSURANCE AGENT WERE OVERTURNED BY THE INSURANCE COMMISSIONERS, TOM GALLAGHER.

OUR ROOF WAS SEVERELY DAMAGED. WE HAD NO ELECTRICAL POWER FOR MORE THAN 21 DAYS.

WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM ANDREW? UNFORTUNATELY NOTHING. WE HAVE POLITICIANS THAT HAVE NO CLUE ON HOW TO CONFRONT ANOTHER DISASTER LIKE ANDREW.

Douglas Clark , Miami FL

For me, the storm wasn't so bad. A refugee from South Beach, I spent it with my grandmother in Coral Gables in a 1926 house that didn't move an inch or suffer any damage. The difficulties of trying to get by were something we weren't used to. My girlfriend at the time referred to ourselves as "utility whores" sleeping around where there was power and water. Funny story about staying with the old people in a section 8 housing on 28th and Collins.

I am more prepared to be self sufficient than ever before. and I know not to rely on public services or city personnel during an emergency. I will also never live in a house built after 1965. Anything built in South Florida in the past 45 years is complete crap.

Sarah Finley , Miami FL

The most terrifying, experience you could probably go through.

Yes! Hurricane Andrew hit South Florida 4 days before my sixth birthday. As of present day, I can still describe in full detail, everything that happened the night before through the following week. Any five year old will be equally terrified. The house to this today is still in weak repair from the extensive damage, and I wouldn't stay in it even through a category 2 storm.

I found boats, generators, toys from friends that lived a dozen blocks away. The only thing my family gained, was an unintentional, skylight window in the roof.

I remember coming outside with the rest of the neighborhood right after Hurricane Andrew passed and seeing the devastation done to everyone's home. Thankfully my families, two-story house faces north and south, between two other second stories, but friends and neighbors homes that face east(front door) were destroyed! I remember walking to my best friend's house and saw the front door blown through to the back yard. and all their belongings in the back yard and neighboring yards. Just thinking about this horrible event has my skin crawling. I have a story to tell, living through this event, and at such a young age. It will always be a memory I am glad to have survived, but a haunting memory at that.

Tanya bh , Miami Beach, FL

I was down from NYC to Hollywood to spend a few days with my grandfather, who was at home dying of congestive heart failure. my mom was there, and a cousin and an aunt cycled through as well. but my mom, nana, the hospice caregiver and I alternately tended to my poppa, who was generally comfortable and occasionally lucid, and prepared to weather the worst storm ever. we weren't about to move him so we stocked up on water and other necessities, pulled closed the hurricane shutters, and battened down the hatches. when my poppa was lucid, he was hilarious, telling his shaggy dog stories, loooooong ribald jokes that really made you work for the punch line. he reminded us of long-forgotten family moments. he was tender and forthcoming. he kissed us all a lot. and then we heard that Hollywood airport was closing down, and my mom insisted I get out of dodge before the poop hit the fan. I was reluctant to go, but she insisted. and so I found myself on the last flight out of Hollywood until Andrew passed.

Michael Gillenwater , coral springs FL

As a turning point in the state's understanding of the treat level and what changes needed to be made to help prepare for events like this. I saw solid concrete buildings torn open, cars tossed through homes, mobile home parks laid flat and scores of people in need of help with no way to communicate it.

I was in the 20th special forces group (national guard) and we were all pulled out of our lives for months to go and help. From there, I became one of the first members of Florida's RIAT (Rapid Impact Assessment Team) and was activated to duty for every hurricane event that hit Florida for the next 5 years. I walked away from all this understanding how fragile our communities are and how events like this bring some people together, lose other and set other still on a path of criminal intent while others already on that path sit in wait for such things to happen and take advantage.

I lost my belief that communities are safe in wake of such events. The looting, attempted criminal acts and break down of civil support left us all feeling isolated and vulnerable. Even as a member of an elite guard unit, there were times I felt threatened. I lost a sense of safety and found that we need to ready on levels no one imagined, that we are all more vulnerable then we realize.

Do you think people who have not experienced such things really understand what it means outside of lost personal possessions or feeling fear during the storm? That it shows us things about society and our ability to handle things that change many people's lives not just from the storm, but from how we then each choose to either help or hurt each other in the aftermath of the storm. That is what has affected me most.

Steven Light , Ft. Lauderdale FL

A healthy respect for mother nature and never any complacency when a storm is approaching.

I rode with a friend in a National Guard medical unit down to Florida City two days after the storm. We were trying to deliver water, food and medical care to outlying areas and migrant camps that had not been contacted yet. Photos and videos cannot convey the oppressive heat and the stench of rotting food and garbage (which was rumored to be from corpses at the time).

Barry Wright , Palmetto Bay FL

A very small but strong storm with winds up to 175 mph within blocks of our house.

Psychologically I think it did (change me). My perspective changed. Fortunately our house survived, Part of another house went through our roof allowing water to get in. Our trees were reduced in size dramatically and being without power or phone for many months changes your perspective. Our luxury item was putting a generator on at night and sitting together in our bedroom with our son and watching TV. We had the light on and we watched TV. At that time we had a TV with rabbit ears.

We did not lose anything, but even to this day we find pieces of roofing shingles in the yard. We got to a point back then that it was like a nightmare constantly finding shingles.

My son was going into his senior year at Palmetto High School. That was not a normal Senior Year and I know it affected him and his friends.

Maria C Regalado , Miami FL

The biggest one since I was born on 1941. I can still remember some of 1944 hurricane through Havana, I was 3 years old and I can remember how the patio walls were down and the trees as well.

It did change my way of thinking about them, any hurricane advisory makes think and get prepare as much as I can. My house suffer minor damage but the fences and the trees were down and the whole south was devastated.

I believe that we should organized through the county or BBB a list of trustable handymen and/or contractors that the victims of hurricane can call after the hurricane without running the many abuses that we have had in the past. All the workers or companies should be authorized and listed by some department in order to avoid the abuses and fraud.

Deborah Gray Mitchell , Miami FL

Frightening. Although we were not in South Dade, we were forced to evacuate our home and spent the night with a family friend in Miami Springs.

It taught me the value of ice. Now, when a storm approaches, I make as much ice as I possibly can. Additionally, it taught me that material possessions are nothing compared to one's life and well being.

Also, I now have hurricane shutters for my home, a generator, and my trees have already had the crowns thinned out. I do not want to be caught unprepared.

We were so very lucky and lost nothing.

Just this week, my significant other and I talked about the difference between then and now as regards to hurricane reporting in the media. Then, it had been so long since Miami had been hit by a big storm that even the media had grown complacent, and that my late husband and I didn't even realize until the night before that a storm was on the way. I told him about Bryan

Norcross and how his work had probably saved a lot of lives that night. Now, of course, our local media goes into overdrive over any storm that could possibly affect our area. Whether all the coverage is good or bad, I'm not sure, but at least everyone knows a storm is on the way.

Evelyn Stahl, Hallandale Beach FL

It changed the face of many areas of South Florida. It was a giant eraser that took away entire communities.

Something flew threw my dining room window and made several gashes in my dining room table. I never fixed it but left it to remember the Hurricane that took so much from others

We evacuated from Hallandale to a Hotel on University then found out the Hurricane was coming down the County Line where we were. I told my husband..."If you hear a freight train sound get under the bed." We were lucky because the Hurricane jogged to the south."

Debbie Wehking, Miami FL

It was an experience of amazing power and devastation. What people across the country, or even in Broward County, couldn't tell from media coverage at the time was how wide spread the devastation was. Another thing that could not easily be conveyed was the misery of living through days and days of rain and heat and humidity, when your roof had two gaping holes in it, and you were still reeling from the shock.

As time passed, we all shared certain experiences. First, the realization that life is important, not possessions. We all knew that in theory before, but afterwards we BELIEVED it. Then, that people are good--neighbors helped neighbors, and people were friendly and supportive. And finally, that recovery took a long time. Instantly, traffic was terrible all the time, due to construction traffic. People lived in trailers in their driveways while reconstruction took place. A year and a half later, I spent a weekend on retreat at the Cenacle Retreat Center in Lantana. I was enthralled by a big, beautiful tree in the front yard. Finally, I realized it was because it was an intact tree--it had not been uprooted, mother were no missing limbs. Even a year and half after the storm, an intact tree was an unusual sight for me. It moved me to tears, for all that my community had suffered.

Did it change my life? Yes. I still have a deep sense that what matters is people, not things. And, the shared experience is a significant part of our family history. Plus, I think everyone who was here has a better understanding of what people who go through other storms or natural disasters experience.

We lost most everything that was in our boys' bedroom and in the family room--toys, furniture. Lots of reconstruction was needed on the house. What I miss is the record albums that dated back twenty years.

We had just returned from a family vacation to Disney World. When my husband saw such a strong storm still making a beeline for us, he woke us all up at 6:30 Saturday morning and said, "Let's go, before the Turnpike backs up." And we did. We called Orlando and reserved a hotel room, put our four children (from third grade to ninth grade), our pets--a great Dane, a mutt, and a kitten into the mini-van and headed north. We stopped in Port St. Lucie and left the animals with some very special relatives, then went on to Orlando. It was a good thing we had called for a reservation. By the time we got there, the hotel rooms were gone, and they were opening a high school as a hurricane shelter. Once we were out of the Miami market, it was frustrating not to be able to get the media coverage we wanted. When it was over, we watched CNN. They said "stay away." We waited a day, but then left the kids with the relatives in Port St. Lucie, and headed for home. As we traveled south we saw more and more damage. By the time we got close to home we weren't even sure we were in the right place. All the landmarks were gone. No street signs. No traffic lights. Streets blocked by downed trees. Huge, tall, concrete light poles snapped in half. Somehow, there were no green leaves anywhere. Only brown branches on trees that were damaged or knocked over or blown away. The whole impression was brown, dreary, sad, different. It's a cliché, yes, but it felt like a war zone. Fences gone, so you could see into yards that had never been visible before. Roofs gone. At the end of our block, a two story house with an entire side wall missing, looking like a doll house. . . But it wasn't. I was so apprehensive as we rounded the corner that would take us to our house. But there it was, standing. All the walls were there. When we opened the front door and went into the living room, there was the Mylar helium balloon from an August birthday we had just celebrated, still tied to the banister. And on the floor next to it. . . The ceiling. Looking up, there was the sky. Going upstairs, we found the roof gone in the bedroom shared by our two middle children. Parts of the ceiling were still on the bunk bed. Thank God they weren't here. Thank God we had taken the children and left.

For ten days we made the two and a half hour trip (one way) back and forth between home in West Kendall (just north of Tamiami Airport in The Hammocks) and port St. Lucie. Every trip down we brought ice and whatever else people in Miami needed. Finally we had done all the cleanup we could, and we had found and rented a townhouse in Pembroke Pines (with power, and air conditioning!). So we gathered our children and moved there until the house was repaired.

Albert Zbik , Miami FL

Life changing; life threatening. We better appreciate what we have and the preciousness of our family.

Massive destruction of the interior of our house. Had to live with relatives in Broward County until things stabilized.

Unlike the pictures already posted, at the time of Andrew, my son videotaped the hurricane from inside our house. Provides a perspective of the storm entering our house. You are welcome to view the video if you wish. A copy was provided to the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

Don Adamson , SW Ranches FL

Not as sudden as a tornado, but just as strong in wind. "Andrew" was a dry storm, not much rain and very fast moving.

I had to install window shutters on a house we had been in for 5 years. No idea; no instructions; very little time. Now I am ready for a storm.

We lost a lot of fencing around our horse ranch, but the house and barn were unaffected. It was not until later, watching the local news that we learned that MOST of the storm's fury was south of Miami and REALLY BAD.

The Saturday before the arrival of Andrew, I was up in Orlando with our 53 foot TV truck doing Little League baseball. We drove home that night with the radio saying the storm would pass "up the coast" and hit Daytona. The drive home was uneventful. Sunday morning I awoke (7 am) to find that "Andrew" was right on track to hit Miami. Next came those shutters...

Jasmine Yacinthe , Miramar FL

Horrible, scary, shocking unbelievable. hard to believe that in the United States and with so many past hurricanes and the lessons learned from these hurricanes, it was very hard to see that in Florida we still did not prepare for Andrew's wrath. I was so afraid.

Yes it made realize that there was a need for much more improvement in the building and construction effort. We need to build stronger structures, we need to better communicate during and after the storms. I was a front desk agent for a 5-star hotel located in Sunny Isles and when news of the hurricane came, my tasks was to inform the hotel guests (mostly foreigners) to find another hotel north or west. I even sent a few to Kendall and Cutler Ridge and what worse help make the reservations for them. Imagine my shock when the eye of the

storm turn westward. My disbelief and thoughts that I just sent people to die. My life also changed when it came to my chosen career path. I always wanted to help developing countries with their environmental and planning issues but Hurricane Andrew made me realize that in the United States and Florida needed help with emergency management and planning. Today I m a certified Urban and Seaport Planner.

Alvaro Muñiz , Coral Gables FL

I was 7 years old when the storm hit. What I remember was being woken up around 4:30 - 5:00 A.M. by the sound of loud winds. My family stayed at a friend's house because we did not have shutters. I remember returning to my house and seeing a palm tree in my pool and roof tiles all over the backyard. I also remember having school postponed until mid-to-late September.

I guess it changed my school life, I believe the school year ended far later than usual. Also, schools began starting the academic year earlier in order to account for potential hurricane days.

I don't remember losing any material items during the storm. All of our neighbor's roof shingles were in our pool.

Sandra Russo , Miami FL

I wrote something shortly after the Hurricane which very effectively and uniquely describes how it was during the storm. Please contact me so that I can get it to you if you are interested.

As a Realtor our business was greatly affected and for quite a long time everything we referenced was "Before Andrew" or "After Andrew". This reference point was also used by most everyone in the SW area where I live and work.

Jared Bistrong , Miami FL

I am one of seven children and my family has a South Florida heritage dating back to the early 1800's. My ancestors were among the first group of "Conchs" to arrive in Key West from the Bahamas during this period. My entire family were here (together) during the storm and all still remain her in Miami (40+ now).

Yes, it changed the life of everyone; but I especially want to talk about my brother Bryan, who at the time was 24 years old and the black sheep of the family. He was a high school dropout, kicked out of the house the day he turned 18 and was doing the only type of work he could get at the time: Tree work. He was a tree trimmer. But when Andrew hit all of that changed. He went from a two man crew to a 15 man crew and employed somewhere between 50-100

different people from our community who we'd grown up with that needed work. This lasted for a few years after the storm. Him and his crew were responsible for cleaning neighborhoods throughout the community. He became an expert on hurricane clean-up and has worked over 15 storms since. Today he is still in the tree business and does wood work with salvaged wood from different hurricanes. It's stories like his that no one gets to hear. . .unfortunately, he's not on-line (at all) and that's why I'm filling this out for him. . .I spent a lot of time working for him after the storm and it changed me forever. . .it made me go back to college and study harder than you can imagine so I would never ever have to drag another tree branch again. It changed my other brother Ben a lot as well. . .he hated so much working for my brother Bryan that it inspired him to start his own Landscaping company. . .today; his company Jungle B's Landscaping is the most renown landscaping company in S. Florida.

We have video that was taken during and after hurricane Andrew. My entire family minus myself were in my mother's home in Palmetto Bay and they literally held the house together during the storm.

MARK SCHEINBAUM , Angel Fire NM

A stripped landscape..an occasional tree would have the BARK ripped off.

It forced me to get motivated to do something to help people, organizing a drive to feed 4,000 residents and volunteers.

I lost nothing. I was the overnight radio talk host at WJNO in West Palm Beach who stayed on the air all night, and was blessed with the opportunity to help others.

we did a one hour audio special which also ran on the American Radio network..If I can find it I will let you know....but if you check the 2008 obit for Norris Nelson in 2008, owner of the Blue Front BBQ, I posted a belated thank you to him for his role in literally feeding the masses. Much of the staging area and relief support was NOT in Dade but was at South Florida Fairgrounds in WPB with Chinook Helicopters running food with the help of the 82nd Airborne...Mr. Irving Weinsoff of the Miami 82nd Abn Div Association coordinated much of the effort. I think he still lives on NE 36th St.

Laura Sue Wilansky , Fort Lauderdale FL

It was my first hurricane - definitely life changing! Please see below.

I have a poem called "Waiting For Katrina" that I thought you might be interested in airing. It was written while I was waiting for Katrina to arrive, and explores the experience of living

through hurricanes - before during and after - including Andrew, Floyd and others I have been through since moving to Florida in 1987.

Sara Leviten , North Miami FL

Horrendous! It practically wiped out everything in Dade County south of N. Kendall Drive (S.W. 88th St.) Some people were out of their homes for years. Many moved to Broward County.

The day before the storm, as a county employee I was asked to go to the Emergency Management Center on Galloway & Miller Rds. to answer the phones. People were calling up asking us all kinds of questions, such as should I evacuate? Where will the brunt of the storm hit? Which room in my house should I stay in during the storm? How can I protect my home, since I don't have shutters? It's midnight, I live on Collins Ave. and 50th street on the ocean side of a condo. I didn't evacuate. The condo mgr. said I could use an empty unit on the intercoastal side. Should I take it? At the time, we thought the hurricane was going to Golden Beach, Sunny Isles, Bal Harbour, Surfside or Miami Beach. We had been told to tell people to evacuate those areas. Most of them did. Lots of them went to Kendall or South Dade! Little did we know that Andrew would also go there.

I remember driving back to North Miami, when we were finally allowed to leave the next day. It was like driving through Indiana Jones territory, especially on Bird Rd. in Coral Gables, near my former high school (where I had graduated 28 years prior to Andrew), CGSH! Everyone was driving on the side walks, front yards or wherever we could.

When I finally arrived home, I saw that some of the trees in the median on the street where I lived (and still do) were knocked down. Some of the trees from a neighbor's yard fell in our yard, or one of the trees in our yard fell in there's. I don't remember which it was. If my memory serves me correctly, our roof was slightly damaged by Andrew. Of course, our electricity was off for some days, but there was no comparison to the horrific situation in South Dade.

We had a few days off from work, so I went with a friend a couple of times to the JCC in Kendall to help out. FEMA, the state and the county had set up an HQ to administer aid for victims. The second time, I wore my Clinton-Gore campaign t-shirt. I was told to go home, because this wasn't political! That got me angry, because Clinton and Gore were helping more than Pres. Bush I. Also, once or twice I went to Aventura Mall to help out with the water, food and clothing distribution.

I worked at what was called Dade County Building & Zoning at the time. When we finally went

back to work a few days later,(most of us were considered non-essential employees at that time) it was unbelievable. The building (Gov't Ctr.) wasn't damaged, but our department had lots of additional work to do. That's the understatement of the millennia! The Contractors' Section was right across the aisle from Zoning Hearings, where I worked. Contractors from all over the country (and even the Bahamas)came to town to register. They were giving reciprocity to American contractors, but not those from other countries. There were so many (lined up to the elevators), that they had to move most of that section's employees to the building's lobby to process those applications. Sadly, many contractors really ripped off many home and commercial building owners.

Also, in the Zoning Hearings Section, we had about 1,000 or more Administrative Variance applications that year. One of my co-workers had to do the brunt of that work. It was amazing know how she got it all done! Her name was Cheryl Fields. She later became the first black woman general contractor in Dade County. The year before we had about 300. Many people had previously erected structures on their property without permits and too close to the property line. They needed an A.V. to rebuild. Some needed hearings, but I don't remember how many additional ones we had that year.

On Oct. 15, 1992, there was a fire in my condo. It started in the unit next door to me. My unit suffered severe smoke and soot damage. The unit next to me was destroyed. The unit under it was flooded. I included this info in this answer, because it was impossible to get anyone to come do the repair work. All the legitimate contractors were working feverishly in South Dade doing hurricane repair/rebuilding. I was out of my condo for a whole year. I was lucky enough to have a wonderful friend (one of my second mothers) who had a spare bedroom in her house that she let me use. Finally, I paid the janitorial staff from a local theater where I was a volunteer usher, to come clean up and paint my condo unit! Nobody else wanted to touch it.

About 6 months or a year after the storm, Charlie Danger, the Building Official, held a public hearing about strengthening the Building Code all over the state. The hearing was held at Miami-Dade Kendall Campus. I only told a few people that I was going to speak. I wrote my own speech about how important it was to have an extremely strong and effective building code all over the state. Some of the developers didn't like that, because it would cost more to erect buildings. They thought Charlie had written my speech. I remember that I started crying when I read it, because I felt so bad for all those people who had lost their homes and then got ripped off by those bad contractors.

I almost remember a couple of humorous events: 1. There was a house that lost its second floor. It had a sign that said, "For sale, half off!" 2. There was a condo in Brickell right on the bay

that had some damage. The guard house blew away, but the toilet was still there!

Kevin McGurgan , Miami FL

A biblical scene of destruction from Ft. Lauderdale to the Florida Keys that destroyed 67000 homes, rendered US\$30 billion worth of damage and destroyed fragile eco-systems.

I am the resident British diplomat in Florida and am based in the Consulate-General in Brickell Bay Road. During a recent clear out of documents, I discovered the British Government's official 9 page record of Hurricane Andrew and the impact on South Florida. It is written by my predecessor and describes vividly the impact on him, his family, friends and the region including an hour by hour account of the storm as it passes through. I believe that extracts of this would make for "good radio" and would also be prepared to have the record published on your website if you were interested.

Prof. Hal Daniels , Boca Raton FL

I was living in Hollywood Hills at the time, but I was working in the hurricane zone, in Kendall. In Hollywood, I remember it was early Monday morning, at sunrise, when Andrew plowed into Florida City, some fifty miles south of Hollywood. Staring out of my bedroom window, I could see the blue flash of electric power transformers popping like firecrackers. The power went off. Branches and trees were flying down the street. Later on, I would walk my dog down W. Park Road and see that all the stately ficus trees had been uprooted and tossed about like matchsticks.

I drove down to Kendall the next day and saw that headquarters of the Flyer, where I worked back then, had been destroyed, as if a bomb had hit. We had to work in Plantation for about a year while headquarters was repaired.

Susan Osburn-Gordon , Rockledge FL

I lived in Cutler Ridge at the time. A living breathing hell. Not knowing if you were going to live or die.

It was the icing on the cake..marriage fell apart, divorced, still suffer from PTSD. Can't go thru a drive thru car wash..have flashback of Andrew. Have to go to bathroom and sit when there is a thunder storm. Have a bag always packed in case I have to leave in a hurry. Always have extra cash on hand to use if I have to leave. Have nightmares about storms. Have panic attacks around more the 3-4 people.

Lost everything except my pets, daughter. Family was never the same after Andrew. Had a 2 story townhouse that turned into a 1 story when Andrew went thru. Found roofing that came off someone's home. Curtains, parts of siding, etc.

I pray to God that no one ever has to go thru what we did on August 24, 1992 ever again.

Jamard Kemp , Miami Gardens FL

Drove around the neighborhood after the storm passed. I saw trees that were blown over uplifting entire yards. Car kept running into a tree in front of my house that had fallen over. Long lines at gas stations and grocery stores. Ridiculous prices for necessities (5.00 for a bag of ice!!!). Had a hurricane party with my next door neighbors.

Jose Garrido , Miami FL

Like a freight train heading your way without being able to see it from where it's coming...

It did in a way...It let me think how vulnerable we are to mother nature. When all has passed, everything seemed like a battle had ended, like the ones we were used to seeing in pictures.

I was one of the Owners and creators of the Sergio's Family Restaurant Chain in Miami, and we had just opened that same year, about 5 months earlier, our second location on Coral Way and 32avenue in Miami. That morning, after the storm and having traveled from way south where we lived to the Coral Way store, to check on the damage, we found that no electricity was available. People were coming looking for food, praying for a hot meal, anything they could get their hands on, but unfortunately we could not open the store to cook and provide assistance and service. Essentially, many were our customers, our neighbors..We knew that it would be time before anything in this City would be up and running. About 9am, we saw an FPL truck working on the rear of our property and we desperately asked for assistance...That first encounter with some FPL supervisors, helped us get the restaurant up and running as they connected us directly from one of the poles about 50 yards away. We in turn assisted all FPL and out of State electrical workers, for the following weeks and days, every day, from 5- 7am offering them pro-bono a healthy and hot breakfast so they could in turn assist the community. Andrew divided our personal and material belongings, but in the end, united our community in unimaginable ways.

Donald Chauncey , South Miami FL

It was so destructive that it reduced areas of Dade County to life as it was in rural areas before WWI: no electricity or phones, pitch dark after sunset, impassible roads, no street signs.

My house was shaking as the National Hurricane Center (which was a mile south of me) announced that its roof had gone, and it was going off the air. But the effect on me was 19 days without power and no generator. As soon as I could after the storm I got a generator and a gas stove so future power outages were not so worrisome.

I had no personal loss, but I worked for the County Library and we lost 4 libraries.

I still am struck by the irony that many of the expensive Country Walk homes were destroyed, yet the nearby Habitat for Humanity homes withstood the force.

Ira Wolf, Aventura FL

The night of the storm, most people were seemingly caught off guard. The storm formed quickly, and made a turn towards South Florida facing us "head on" very quickly. At the time, I was working in the media at WPOW-FM, where my perspective was watching the big 4 networks coverage simultaneously.

I'm reminded of a huge anecdote. Channel 10 WPLG's Meteorologist Don Noe was quoted as saying "we have nothing to worry about, Hurricane Andrew is going to make a sharp left turn and miss us right before landfall". This erroneous forecast caused many people to react slower and not take the impending killer storm seriously. Ultimately Hurricane Andrew slammed into South Florida and the loss of life, property and commerce, left South Florida on its knees. The one that was "supposed to miss us" will forever be remembered as a night of horror, loss, and death. South Florida's modern day building codes and reaction to tropical disturbances were changed forever. There is almost a vibe of OVER reacting to any announcement of a disturbance in the Caribbean. Those who lived through that night will always remember where they were.

I learned to never take for granted conveniences like running water, power to run appliances, air conditioning, even cell phone service is a privilege. I took a drive to where the eye of the storm passed through in the small community called "Country Walk". The total devastation caused me to break out in tears. As far a life changing moment... I actually saw family pets, even a small child walking around aimlessly in the streets without clothing. Another picture in my mind that will remain there forever.

Working for a radio station in the community, our job was clear. Help as many people as we could. We even joined together with competitors, to plan and promote a concert starring Gloria Estefan. Water, food, even diapers, were donated by businesses and local celebrities, seemingly bringing the South Florida area together as one.

William Hopwoodi , Miami FL

A natural disaster such as one often sees on TV happening somewhere else, but never here at home.

After going through many hurricanes in my same house for over 40 years, I finally had hurricane shutters installed after Andrew was over.

I lost nothing, really, except for a few long-standing palm trees and a downed Poinciana. No broken windows or other significant damage to my house which was well designed and constructed in 1948 by the late architect, Alfred Browning Parker, under then-existing hurricane codes.

In my view the worst thing about hurricanes is the loss of electric power. No refrigeration, no lights, no TV, often no gasoline because of lack of power for pumps, and sometimes no water for the same reason. As I recall, with Andrew we were without power for about two weeks. In my view, the power company is very lax about trimming vegetation from wires and this hasn't improved since Andrew. They say it's because the public objects to having trees cut back. I don't believe that. I think most people would prefer some judicious trimming to sitting around sweating without power after a storm for weeks in mid-summer.

Sonia Lewis , Miami FL

Endless and furious. Cowering in a closet for hours on end. Hearing the tiles fall from my roof,tac,tac,then breaking the neighbors glass doors. The children's cry,"Mami,Papi,make it stop". The fury came in waves. The pelting rain when the roof was blown away, stinging like pinpricks. The groaning sound when the A/C was ripped from its moorings. The entire house reverberated like an echo, again and again. The night was endless. Eerie stillness the morning after when the state trooper fetched me out of the closet and told me it was over.

Yes. I still to this day, go into a closet when there is lightening and thunder. I am still not able to talk about it without crying, and feeling the anger the next day as helicopters flew overhead. How could they not know I needed help. Week 3 after, my first hot meal at a church, crying at the kindness of strangers. All the doctors and nurses from Mt.Sinai where I worked, rented a van, came with supplies including tetanus shots and food. Took my wet sheets and towels to launder them. I have become prepared.

I lost everything, including my house. The county tacked a notice on my door condemning the building as unsafe.

Bill James , Palmetto Bay FL

Devastating. Especially after enduring many California earth quakes.

My wife's grandmother from Bimini told me in the middle of the storm, "I believe this is worse than the 1926 hurricane in the Bahamas"

Alexandra Bassil , Miami Beach FL

I was in terrible shape waiting to have hip replacement surgery and in pain from osteoarthritis, lying in bed the night Andrew hit under a window full of jalousies. As the transformer blew in the backyard of my childhood home in Westchester, about 10 miles north of the eye and the rain started pouring in through the jalousie windows. I kept the radio earphone in my ear all night listening to Bryan Norcross. I was petrified the wind would blow the roof off and I would never be able to get out of the house. My dear old Dad could have never picked me up without me screaming in pain from the osteoarthritis. But somehow all I did was turn around in bed and put my head where my feet had been and let the water drip down. The roof was not blown off but the days of heat and humidity that followed for the next 6 weeks were miserable.

Yes, although I did go and have surgery and totally recovered it took me a long time to not feel post-traumatic stress each time I walked into the bedroom where I had spent that night. It's only been in the past 5-6 years that I do not feel PTS when I walk into the room.

Fortunately I did not lose any material items in the storm.

As a second-generation native Miamian who lived through many of the Hurricanes of the 1960s after Andrew I will never, ever stay in Miami if another Category 5 is forecast to hit the area. As a current Miami Beach resident I'm forced to evacuate my 10th floor condo anyway.

Mark Reagan , Harlingen TX

I'd tell them it was like hell. The storm lasted four hours, but we lived a hard life in the rubble. I was eight when it hit. I held my two-year-old sister in a hallway and ate pretzels - one of the last good meals I had until the MRE's. I watched that little girl try to help us clean up. She had a broom and was sweeping. I'd tell them about the giant piles of debris we burned. I'd tell them how I drew pictures of my house in Jamaica Drive. We weren't as bad off as the two houses next to us that were wiped off the map along with the rest of the block in Cutler Ridge. I'd tell them about the anxiety of waiting for the water to recede so we could go see the damage. I'd tell them about all the different places we stayed during the aftermath. I'd tell them about how the entire ocean floor washed up into the field behind this nursing home that doubled as a

shelter. There were all different kinds of sea fans and sponges and even dead fish. But honestly, this is the most I've really ever said about it. It's hard to talk about. I may only have been eight years old, but that's when I grew up. I'd tell them about boiling water and waiting for ice. I'd tell them about marshal law and curfews. I'd tell them how I wasn't scared. I'd tell them about how August 23, 1992 was the most beautiful day that ever graced this earth. It was so sunny, blue and bright.

Hurricane Andrew still haunts me till this day. I've woken up at 4 a.m. for the past 19 years on August 24 - like clockwork. The aftermath made me angry at the government. I still don't trust it. I can't deal with thunderstorms, loud noises, banging, loud sounds, slamming, cacophony of voices or large crowds. I have a hard time hearing people complain too. It makes me angry when I hear people complain about trivial things. I also think a lot of anger was left in my life. I didn't have time to deal with it then. I used the storm as an excuse to drink and drug. I'm clean now and am only starting to deal with these issues, 20 years down the road. I think I have PTSD, but I never asked a doctor. I'd tell them how fate plays jokes on people. My middle name is Andrew.

I don't remember everything I lost because I knew what I didn't lose, my family. Belongings aren't really something that sticks out in my memory. I can't really remember. I do remember a collection I started. I mean as a kid, you found all sorts of stuff. I still have two conch shells I found. I started collecting little metal circles that must have been used in roofing. I got rid of them at some point - I don't remember when. I collected MRE's and hoarded those! I didn't let the other kids know about them because I learned pretty quickly that they'd try and take them from me.

There's a million questions probably. I have a lot of locked up memories. I would like to ask, that if you do use any of my statements - please let me know as I'd like to have a copy of the paper. I can order it myself. I'm in newspapers, I know how it works. But I'm just starting to deal and cope with my memories. So if you use any of this, please let me know.

Gerald Kratz , Miami FL

It was basically forty mile-wide tornado

For our kids and other family members, who had never experienced one, it was a - shall we say - education...And the sense of community and sharing that we say in the aftermath was eye-opening and touching; too bad it couldn't become permanent.

A car and a truck that were never the same afterward, and were junked. Two brand new front

doors demolished, sliding patio doors that were warped beyond usability (but, surprisingly, not shattered!) and blown out French doors to the family room. This was a house specifically built to withstand hurricanes. And we had a condo in Naranja Lakes that was basically destroyed inside, necessitating a complete cleanout and rebuilding within the concrete shell.

Hurricane Andrew

August 24, 1992 in Miami, Florida

It had been 22 years since the last hurricane had hit Miami, and because of the rapid population growth since that time, there were over a million people in the area who had never experienced a hurricane.

Andrew had been moving across the Atlantic for a number of days, as a nondescript, low intensity storm to which no one in Miami paid any attention. Why should they? There hadn't been a storm locally for 22 years.

But then it suddenly intensified, and headed straight for Miami, as a compact, high intensity system similar to Camille, which had devastated the Gulf Coast in the late 1960s.

On Saturday night we had thrown an early birthday party for Courtney, when someone turned on the TV, just in time for a hurricane update. A major hurricane was actually going to hit Miami!

We forgot about the party, and headed out to buy some hurricane supplies. Bad idea; there were already panicked crowds lining up in front of supermarkets and lumber yards. There was no access to any of them. So we went to plan B; we split up and hit the small convenience stores. Plan B was successful; we paid higher prices, but apparently not many people had considered them, and we were able to lay in supplies of food, water, flashlights, candles, etc.

The next day, Sunday, we were busy clearing from the yard anything that could take flight, and covering the windows. There was no way any lumber or plywood could be bought at that time, but we found enough scrap lumber from the recent construction to cover all the windows except those in the garage.

That night, everybody fell into bed exhausted, except for me, the proverbial night owl. About 11 PM, the phone rang; it was Earle Self in Huntsville, calling to ask what we were seeing. I told him it was all quiet at the time, with no sign of a storm as yet. I went to bed just after midnight, and at that time I could see that rain had started to fall, in the lighted swimming pool.

About 5 AM, I woke up when the power went off, and the air conditioner stopped running. I went back to sleep, but was again awakened by a loud crash, followed by a roaring noise. "The tree," I thought. There had been a 70 year old pine tree, about fifty feet tall, leaning over our new garage, and I assumed it had blown over.

But then Courtney came running down the hall, to tell us that our double front doors had blown in. These were brand new, massive doors, with locking pins top and bottom; the wind had literally dragged the pins right through the wall.

We stepped into the living room (a dangerous thing to do, I later realized), and felt the raindrops cause a stinging pain when they hit us. I got behind one door, and Rose the other, and we tried to push them closed, to no avail. There was simply no way to do it. When we did the calculations later, we discovered that the wind had pushed with a force of over a ton on each door.

We called for Courtney and her friend (I can't recall her name) to come help, but couldn't hear a reply, so we went looking for them. We found them in the family room, yelling for us to come help. We had been about fifty feet apart, but the roaring of the wind made it impossible for us to hear each other.

They were holding on to Inga, our 90 lb Doberman, as the wind tried to suck her out of the house, through the French doors that had blown open at the same time as the front doors. The four of us were able to rescue Inga, and I stowed her in the library. There was a series of loud thuds, as mangoes were blown off the trees and hit the shuttered windows. I then went back to the kitchen.

Just as I did so, I watched one of the cabinet doors, which had been blown open by the wind, slowly separate from its hinges. I reached up and caught it just as it started to go airborne, and stowed it under the sink, then repeated the process with two others. Weird.

I managed to open the kitchen windows on the downwind side of the house, relieving the pressure, and minimizing the wind tunnel effect. At that point, Rose said, "what should we do now? I said, "well, we still have our roof, and everyone is safe. I think I'll go back to bed." And we did.

I was awakened by the sound of a helicopter flying overhead. What we saw out in the yard looked apocalyptic. Dozens of large trees had been uprooted, and one pine tree had been blown into the pool. The roads had been filled with debris, and were mostly impassable. There

was no power, and no water supply.

So Rose organized the troops. Luckily, we had started to set up a 120 gallon reef aquarium, and had filled it with reverse osmosis filtered water, prior to adding salt mix. So we had 120 gallons of pure water for drinking and cooking. We had a grill and charcoal for cooking, and a pool full of water for other uses. We jumped into the pool, and began cutting up the pine tree to remove it, then using piled up debris to close the gaps in what was left of the fence, to keep the dogs in the yard.

When darkness fell, there wasn't much to do but go to bed, since the only light we had was candles and flashlights. As usual, everyone turned in before me. I was sweaty and miserable, but then I stripped and jumped into the pool to wash off.

It felt cool and comfortable when I emerged and dried off. I put on my PJs, poured a glass of wine, sat on a chaise lounge at poolside, and looked up. With the electric power off for miles around, there was no artificial light to be seen, and I could see the Milky Way in all its glory for the first time in many years. It would be a week before the county water system was restored, and almost three weeks before electric power came back on, and by then, I almost hated to see it happen... Knowing it would be weeks before power could be restored, I wondered if a generator could be found. Of the four telephone lines we had, one was miraculously still working, so I started calling.

Obviously, it was impossible to find one in Miami, or in the state of Florida, for that matter, so I called Grandpa Wurst in Atlanta. After searching there, he called back to tell us that Atlanta had been cleaned out of its generators as well.

Stacy had been staying with us while she attended UM, but she had gone to visit a friend in Utah, of all places, when the hurricane hit. She called to tell us that she couldn't get back, because all air traffic to Miami had been canceled. We told her she really didn't want to come back at this time, under the conditions that existed.

Then she asked if there was any help she render, and a light bulb went off. By all means. Could she find a generator to ship down here. She said she'd try. She called the next day from the equipment dealer in Salt Lake City, with a list of options. We made our picks, and it was on its way.

The next day, we were notified it was being flown to Fort Lauderdale, since Miami International Airport was closed. By then most of the roads had been reopened, and Smitty and I drove to

Fort Lauderdale to pick it up. But when we got there, they didn't have it; Miami International Airport had just reopened, and they had sent it on. We finally caught up with it in Miami, and took it home.

It was a very nice Kohler 7.5 KVA unit, that we set up in less than an hour. There wasn't enough capacity to run a stove or air conditioner, but we had lights and a refrigerator. Good enough.

Peter Schmitt , Miami FL

Probably as scary a night as I've spent in my life--crouching in darkness for hours in a bedroom closet, with only a flashlight and radio, the four-story building literally swaying, the sliding glass doors buckling, a palm tree slashing the window, the only lights from outside the green explosions of transformers bursting--trying to survive a Category 5 storm on the northern eye wall.

Remarkably, everything came through intact. Twenty years later I still feel incredibly blessed.

On Sunday, August 18, 2002, I published in The Herald for the 10-year anniversary an account of the storm and its aftermath. I would be happy to provide it here.

Fred San-Millan , Miami FL

A devastating and loud giant (like the ones in Godzilla), roaming, stumping, crushing, braking, using the wind as sharp weapon to destroy lives and properties.

I learned how important home insurance is for a So.Fla. homeowner. Also, I learned to prepare myself in advance of an hurricane warning.

The roof, outdoor tools and furniture. I also found toys, small equipment, and debris coming from everywhere.

Yes, 1-like anxiety to find friends and family after the storm to find if they were alive or not. 2- How long we stayed without any lights, telephone, food. mobility

Andrene Castro , Miami FL

Hurricane Andrew is the storm you never want to experience. In my seven year old mind, it was the stench of gas and the worry of not knowing if you are going to survive to see the next day. It was finding a safe place to hide underneath a kitchen cupboard, just in case you did survive. Hurricane Andrew is the confusion of being homeless and lost and wanting to find your way

back home.

Andrew represented the American struggle to economic and social mobility for my family. As recent migrants to this country since 1991, it immediately changed the common foreign mentality that America was the ultimate land of opportunity. This natural disaster changed my family's perspective and gave us a new outlook on life in America.

My family lost our home and most of our personal belongings. The roof to our modest apartment building in Cutler Ridge blew away with the torrential rain and wind, which ultimately caused damage to all of our personal belongings. After the storm, I remember eating a box of 'Frosted Mini-Wheat' cereal given to us by a Red Cross organization and finding worms in my cereal. At any other point, I would've discarded the cereal, but I remember being so hungry, I ate worms and all.

After Andrew, my family moved to North Miami Beach and resided there for 10 years. After which, I went off to college, and my parents moved back to South Miami, where we have all made a full sojourn back to our beginnings in 1992.

Lynne Katz , Miramar FL

It was like the monster that is coming after you in a nightmare. You feel the anxiety, the apprehension and the sense of inevitability and you have nowhere to run or escape. Ironically, even 20 years later whenever the Weather Center starts to show a new storm in the Atlantic or the Gulf today with the orange, red circular pictures it conjures up how it felt to see Andrew swirling and growing and widening on the screen 20 years ago. It was an event that changed my perspective on our personal vulnerability and also how the pure force of the storm in hours could change lives and communities on such a lasting level. In the recovery years that followed it also clearly pointed out the large schism between the haves and the have knots--those of us who had insurance, who had resources we could garner like insurance to help us get through it--and those who had no resources to remedy their losses.

The morning after the Hurricane passed we were scheduled to take my older son to college up in North Carolina to Duke to start school. In the morning light even seeing the devastation to our house, the neighborhood and the surrounding areas, we still had to make our way out of South Florida and up to NC to get him settled. We literally drove in the same clothes we had slept in, given that everything else we had clothing wise was damp and wet from all the water coming into the house from the damaged roof. We drove up the Florida turnpike seeing devastation everywhere, no gas on the turnpike and had to limp our way into Broward and Palm Beach counties to find stations to gas up. All the way up to Duke we brainstormed what

we would have to do when we returned back to Kendall. About 40 miles outside of Raleigh at a Waffle House we coincidentally bumped into another Miami family coming up to Duke with their daughter. They too were bedraggled and stunned and we all clung to each other not knowing what the true damage would be when we got back home. We just knew we needed to get the kids safely to school and then return back to the devastation we would face. I think we cried more saying goodbye to them at college that day because they were staying and we knew we had to return. We used the opportunity to buy supplies in NC, blue tarp etc. to bring back for our house where we knew supplies would be short down in Miami. Returning home, the magnitude of the clean up both inside the house and outside taught us all how much endurance you can have in the face of an emergency. We lived in the only room that was not wet and mildewing from the roof leaking continuously until we could move up to Broward to a rental. Through the understanding and generosity of the school principal at South Broward HS we were able to enroll our younger son in high school without any documentation or school records. Their understanding of wanting to help us establish normalcy for students from South Dade who had moved up to Broward taught us a lesson in flexibility and empathy. Ultimately our children graduated from them HS and we were forever grateful that they took our students in.

During this whole period, I was ironically enrolled in the UM graduate class with Dr. Eugene Provenzo and was part of the group of students whose new assignments (he threw out the syllabus) were to conduct Andrew interviews in the community. Seizing the opportunity to capture the event in stories and forgoing the actual class syllabus was another example of how seizing an opportunity and being flexible makes more sense when catastrophes strike. I was a doctoral student then. Now 20 years later I am on the faculty of UM in the Dept. of Psychology. Lastly, during the aftermath of Hurricane I was still involved in a University project working with Head Start down in the South Dade area of Goulds. That project, too, recognized that there was an opportunity to be of service and preserve the stories of the storm and support the community. Every day, I would arrive over 2 hours from Broward down on the Florida Turnpike to Goulds, bumper to bumper with many, many cars, trucks, 18 wheelers bringing supplies, to the Goulds HS campus which had been set up as a military support base with National Guard and US Army troops. We would spend each day trying to locate the local Head Start students and their families who had been on our school rosters, to see what we could do and how we could offer assistance, both with concrete supplies and emotional support. Families would also come to interviews we conducted at the Barnett Bank on US1 near Homestead to tell their stories and when possible get connected with initiatives of support that were growing up in the area. Looking back at those months, driving up to 4 hours a day up and down to South Dade, trying to give comfort and support to displaced families with no resources for recovery, taught me just how much emotional support you can give. Without exception, when a family member would recount their story and what they had lost and break-down into tears, so would I. We

had to share our mutual vulnerability to be able to connect. A story about a young child who had hung himself circulated..maybe it was an urban legend, maybe it was true. The story was that he had done so because he was worried that his grandma had so many worries after the storm that he didn't want to add to them...things like that really overwhelmed us.

We lost a lot of the interior structure of our house and belongings we needed to throw out during the re construction phase. Somehow a vintage 50's coffee table given to us by my folks (it was a Nugouchi original) got tossed out by the crew clearing everything into a dumpster. We found a rowboat in our backyard.

Recently, I was in the DC area just after they had experienced what they called a 'dry hurricane' in the DC, Maryland, Virginia area. In talking with local residents who were just finding out that they would be without power for days or weeks, that there were few gas stations open where they could fill up, and that for a while ice and water were scant at the supermarkets, I thought, 'welcome to world of storm aftermath' and the memories of Hurricane Andrew flooded back. We, too, were naive before Andrew's experience. But we won't ever be the same.

Rick de la Cuesta , Hollywood FL

Total destruction! The effects looked like those old pictures of Nagasaki, everything was flattened.

Hurricane Andrew made a life changing impact on my life. The woman who I just started dating just a month before lost the apartment she shared with her 2 year old daughter and she could find a place to live. Apartments were scarce just after the storm because of the destruction in south Dade. We were forced to move in together. Twenty years later we are still together and have now celebrated our 19 year wedding anniversary.

I did not lose anything as my place was not hit, but my wife then my girlfriend lost pictures and other personal items.

Then as now I worked for the BellSouth/AT&T and worked in Cutler Ridge and south Dade for over a year restoring telephone service. I was people at their best but also witnessed some very bad and unscrupulous property owners who ripped off their insurance company.

Peter D'oench (submitted by Lee Zimmerman) , Miami FL

I remember standing in a parking lot with a Commissioner from Homestead as a caravan of tractor trailers from the Midwest came into her city with items for those in need in her city and surrounding communities and that Commissioner burst into tears because of the generosity.

Actor Edward James Olmos came to Homestead to speak to students at the high school and cheer them up. It was a pep talk from the heart from someone who had seen tough times in his life.

It was a time when insurance companies were sending hundreds of representatives out into the field to search for victims in need, writing checks on the spot for rebuilding and repair. We have not seen that since.

There were unpleasant memories too: the contractors from hell who descended on Dade and ripped off homeowners and then took off. But it provided lessons in being careful and limiting one's deposits. And positive steps were taken in changing the building code.

All in all, thought, there were so many inspiring stories of so many people reaching out and helping.

I saw so many stories in which the good side of human nature emerged amid the suffering and sadness. Some people who had thought there was too much selfishness in South Florida saw how so many here and in fact nationwide did to help those in need, with gifts of cash, clothing, food, housing...whatever it took. It was a defining hurricane in that until this event, many had not taken hurricanes seriously.

I made lifetime friends with people who lost homes and who at the same time were having trouble with getting insurance payments. In a two-day period, I was able to get two checks for two devastated homeowners totaling \$148,000. One woman was so grateful that to this day, she still talks about it. I know that because since Andrew, she has moved north to Broward and belongs to my church in Plantation.

I covered Hurricane Andrew extensively at a local South Florida television station and submitted many stories to network radio and even network news.

I did one of the last LIVE shots for 10 on the morning of Andrew. One of our towers fell down in our parking lot at 3:00 a.m. and my photographer and engineer ran inside the station, leaving me standing there in the dark with a microphone cable and mike and the wind blowing. That's when we lost power. As I stood there in the dark holding my mike, a producer poked his head outside the station and yelled at me, "Peter, get inside the building now."

"No," I yelled back.

I remember driving around the streets of Miami immediately after that and hearing over our radio, "Homestead got hit." Amen. It took us four hours to drive to Homestead as so many trees and power lines were down.

I remember how it took 24,000 soldiers from the U.S. Army to rebuild South Miami-Dade...how Presidential candidate Ross Perot showed up at Homestead City Hall with a check for \$1 million for the city...how the Rev. Billy Graham came to Homestead and I took him to the nearest phone booth to make a call to ABC radio...how building codes were strengthened...even appeared on the Phil Donahue show as a featured guest to tour Homestead, Naranja, Countrywalk and a nearby development that survived...the total devastation in many places south of Kendall Drive...you name it, I covered it.

Adriel Anderson , Miami FL

Its funny really, I think of Neil Armstrong or a war veteran, they were there and it's so hard to describe something of that nature to someone else. I do though and then have to show a photo after, you tell em first and they get "MEGO" My Eyes Glaze Over; then the photos and then is the ah ha moment of the whoa's and omg's. For anyone there at that time, especially if you were down south it was a visceral experience. Like an action blockbuster Armageddon movie, now put yourself in it kinda experience.

It changed many people's perceptions of storms, Miami is a port city with many flavors & walks of life coming and going & many including myself; I was a kid then had not experienced such a thing. Afterwards I find myself looking at homes made of wood and chuckle, after seeing the things you see with houses reduced to what would look like a pile of toothpicks. I see the value of homes that were built of CBS and understand a bit more of mindset after the 1926 storm. I wouldn't live in a home made of wood is one way in which Andrew changed my life on a daily basis if you will.

We were very lucky, and you feel guilty about it, the whole why did a home in this spot become reduced to a literal pile of rubble and ours nothing more than a heap of leaves in the front yard kinda feeling. I did not lose anything other than that false sense of humans over nature complex we're all taught.

Tommy chamberlain , CUTLER BAY FL 33157

You're prepared: You've evacuated the rest of your family, and have made all the preparations for the house to be engaged by the worst possible forces, and finally you're alone in the bathtub with a mattress over you, and the wind sounds like a train going over the house. . . .a train that never ends. . . .a train that shakes the house. . .it took forever to arrive, and forever to

stop. . . debris is heard crashing into the roof, exterior walls and shuttered windows. . . .After forever, we waited again forever, for more violence. . . .but it had become quiet now.eventually we awakened to emerge and survey the outside. . . .we didn't recognize anything. . . .no street signs, trees, and debris everywhere. . . . Never again will I stay to protect our property, as I will just evacuate in all future hurricanes. . . .life is too short, to stay behind. . . .

We became hostages of the event and the claims process, and finally the rebuilding process.Between the fighting with the insurance companies, fighting with contractors

Everything was soaked with fiberglass insulation and water. . . .Like Lemmings, neighbors piled their belongings in front of their houses. . . .painted their insurance companies

We were part of an ongoing insured support group that met weekly in Perrine, to help insureds with their claims, and contractor abuses for over 6 years. . . .a group member named Nancy had been in a Homestead Emergency Center, receiving a telex addressed Top Secret to an Air Force officer. . . . mentioning the government had "seeded the hurricane when it was coming in" which had caused the convection cells that did so much damage. This was never mentioned anywhere else as far as we know, but concurs with known weather technology available at that time. A consumer advocate appeared to help consumers but ended up being instrumental in diluting and dividing insurance organizations everywhere, and the Miami Herald refused to notice the meetings in Neighbors when she wasn't present. None of the attorneys knew anything about this claims process until the group found a bad faith claims practices attorney named "Chip Merlin" of the Merlin Group. . . .who along with Public Adjusters knew exactly how this game went. Property & Casualty national stats for 1992 showed 235 Billion in Revenues, 160 Billion in Reserves, or \$395 Billion against total annual claims of \$22 Billion of which Andrew comprised \$16 Billion. . . . pretty nice gross margin for a sector that whines it's going belly up. The solution for windstorm is a coastal coalition, in which the insurers represent all lines. . . .no cherry picking lines. . . . and this would resolve the current dilemma. . .

Patricia Bonner Milone , Homestead FL

I'm a native Miamian. I have weathered many hurricanes in my 61 years. Hurricane Andrew was most awesome force of nature I have ever experienced. I felt grateful to have survived, despair at our losses, but privileged to have witnessed a Cat 5. When it was reported to be a Cat 4, I was outraged because I knew what it was - I was there. It took 10 years for the acknowledgement that it was a Cat 5.

In every way. My husband stayed at our modest home on 2½ acres in Redland Farm Area, which ended up in the path of the eye of Hurricane Andrew. We had serious damage. During the

hurricane, I was at Grant Center, a 10 acre residential treatment facility for children and adolescents, 10 minutes from my house on the "dirty side" of the storm - we had 14 patients there and I was unable to leave until they'd been evacuated to a hospital on Miami Beach 3 days later. Phones were down and I had no way of knowing whether my husband survived until the 2nd day after it hit. The auxiliary generator was broken so there was no power, no water. We took the patients on a "destruction tour" after the winds died. Horses at the ranch next door were standing where their stall had once been. Dead chickens, loose pigs. Psychiatrists who'd lost their homes began arriving with family members to set up housekeeping in their offices. After it was decided to evacuate the kids by bus, we had to drive them by van to the entrance ramps to the Turnpike for transport to a facility on Miami Beach. It drove through people's yards, groves, past a bloated dead cow, over fallen wires and around debris - took me 3 hours to get home. Grant Center was so damaged we were unsure if they would bother with reconstruction - it took several months. Our sparsely populated area was the last to receive power and the hum of generators was a constant comfort. Mosquitoes were unbearable until spray planes saved us. Clean-up efforts at our home exhausted us. After a week, family and friends came down from less affected areas to help. I have no fear of hurricanes. I do respect their power. I know how to survive and material things mean much less to me now. There is a weird camaraderie for all who went through it. We still share our stories with the least provocation every June 1st. Complete strangers will share impassioned recallings as if it happened yesterday.

My husband lost many classic cars, some fully restored, others in the process of restoration. We lost our back porch roof and the rest of the roof was seriously damaged, water damage. Windows broken. Deck ruined. We lost trees - some just disappeared - the green was gone. Our Doberman was blown out of the garage, my husband went out as the eye passed over, found him on the front porch and had just enough time to get him inside before the other eye wall hit. Our fences were down. Loose horses ran down the street.

ROSALINA LABADESSA , Pembroke Pines FL

We were actually driving from Chicago to Hollywood Hills, FL when Hurricane Andrew hit--the sound was like a freight train.

Yes, it made me quickly come to the realization that just as we dealt with tornadoes in Chicago; we would have to battle hurricanes when moving to the paradise of South Florida due to my Papa's relocation of job.

Sue Mills , DeLeon Springs FL

I don't think you can describe it. You had to be there.

My family moved to North Florida after we re-built our house. Just could not bear to live there any longer. We lost a lot of material things but quickly learned that material things don't matter. We had mattress, pictures, tools furniture in our yard that didn't belong to us, oh yes and a mower. A ton of other things, parts of other people's homes.

I Love to come to Homestead to visit friends and family but it still makes me so sad not to see the things that used to be there. I go by my old house that I lived in for over 20 yrs and raised my kids in and it makes me cry to this day. When I see where my in-laws lived it breaks my heart as there is now an appt. building on their property. It's just too heartbreaking to go there for me.

Brian Martens , Boca Raton FL

Driving around after the storm it was almost impossible to recognize your own neighborhood.

I lost my apartment in Naranja Lakes and the day after my roommate was seriously injured while we were working on recovery operations at Ocean Reef in Key Largo as a firefighter. After we conducted emergency treatment on scene, he was airlifted to the Ryder Trauma Center at Miami/Jackson and subsequently died five days later at the hospital. He was selected as one of the Heroes of Hurricane Andrew. In the matter of one week, I lost my home and roommate (22 years old). Hurricane Andrew grounded me in that you should enjoy life and those around you because in the blink of an eye it can all change.

I lost almost everything. There were some items still in the closets when I got by there after the storm on the 24th but after my roommates accident on the 25th, I didn't have an opportunity to get things out before looters cleaned out the apartment. I had always dreamed of having a trophy case to show my children the actual awards that I had won as a child. I was only able to locate one trophy in the grass around my old apartment. All of the others that I had taken from my parents home less than a year earlier were never found.

1992 - Most people didn't have cellular phones. I vividly remember lines of people in the neighborhoods waiting by houses where a telephone actually worked. I made a call from a house that didn't have a roof and most of its walls were gone but on one wall that was still standing the phone worked and everyone was waiting patiently to make a quick call to family.

Marlene Wepf , Cooper City FL

I am originally from New Jersey my husband from So. California. We just moved to a rental in Hollywood while waiting for our new house to be built. We were hardly aware of the

preparations needed for a hurricane in So Fl until my cousin called telling us they were given the evacuation order and would arrive at our house later that day. "But don't worry, we will bring our own water." "OK" I replied. I called my husband that perhaps we should go to the store and buy some provisions. We also filled the gas tank and got water. My cousin, her husband, daughter, her son, the son of their family friend, my mother who was visiting, our dog and the three of us huddled into 2 rooms that had hurricane shutters. (of the 10 windows in the rental only 5 had shutters). What an education we got that night.

Immediately after Hurricane Andrew I volunteered at Miami Animal shelter. Shortly after that I became a Red Cross Disaster Volunteer for 10 years.

We were blessed and lost nothing. Also the house that should have been finished was nothing but slab and block walls. Cooper City inspectors were all very diligent when inspecting construction on our new house. When a tree fell on the roof during Hurricane Florence we had no damage

Several years later, I visited Lewiston Idaho and met a man who lost his home in Perrine and everything he owned. He took the job my husband had left. We spend hours as he gave a step by step narrative of living through the experience. I listened knowing that there is nobody in Idaho could even imagine what we went through that night and he needed to tell someone who understood.

Kathy Stone , Leesburg FL

Terrifying is the best word I can think of. I lived in Country Walk and weathered the storm with my two children ages 4 and 6 along with a friend and her children ages 7 & 8. My husband was called into work at the Federal Correctional Institution and we had very limited phone contact. As the storm got worse around 4:30 AM we realized the intensity and moved from room to room trying to find a safe, dry spot. As I was talking to my husband on the phone we heard a very loud popping noise and smelled smoke. My last words to my husband were "we smell smoke" and I dropped the phone and we all ran to another room. It was not until late the next day that he was able to come to the house to see if we were even alive. My children were so scared and to make matters even worse, we experienced a robbery in our drive way the night before. My husband went to fill up our car and boat and my friend who was visiting from out of town went to fill up her rental car. The airports were closed so she had to stay with us. When she came back to get her purse she had forgotten, her daughter looked out to see a man with a gun "telling my mom to get down on the ground" as she told me. These guys had followed her home from the gas station as the chaos in everyone getting prepared gave them the opportunity to follow her. We practically threw the 4 children in a closet because the robbers

asked if there was money in the house. At the same time my husband drove in and the robbers took off. They had guns and fortunately no one was hurt. I always tell people my children spent one night in a closet due to robbers in the driveway and the next night in the bathtub covered with a mattress frightened because of Andrew. They were traumatized for a long time after that and needless to say, the robbers were never caught as the police were so busy with hurricane preparations. I wrote to Brian Norcross after that and thanked him for his help during the storm and suggested that people be aware during the storm preparations of those out there preying on people getting cash, gas, etc. It was a horrible two days to say the least and a memory that will live with me forever.

Andrew made us all realize how precious life is and how powerful weather can be. I think having gone thru what could have been a near death experience makes me look at life so differently and I take the little things in stride knowing there are many things that could be much worse. The material things we accumulate don't matter; it's our lives that are paramount.

We lost a lot of belongings that the list is too long to add. Of course photographs were the only things that were lost that really meant anything. All of the furniture, clothes etc. were replaced and the house was rebuilt. I suppose the only things we "found" was exotic birds from the Miami Zoo that were in our backyard.

The year after the hurricane, Country Walk had a celebration and my husband was interviewed by David Bloom; it is an interview that aired on TV and we were so sad when David passed away. The Miami Herald poster with the covers of the newspapers from that week hangs in our house as a reminder of the excellent coverage (even though we did not get to see the papers due to not being at our house after the storm).