

A torrential mess

The Marshall News
Messenger,
March 4, 2001



Jacob Croft Botter/News Messenger

THE SEEMINGLY endless series of downpours in recent months has left roads, bridges, and many homes and businesses under water at Caddo Lake.

Things go from wet to worst

By **REBECCA HOPKINS**
News Messenger

The roads near Caddo Lake were quiet this week except for the tapping of rain drops on the flooded ground.

That sound has become one of dread for the residents who have chosen to remain in their homes which have turned into boat houses.

Over the past few weeks, more and more residents have lake front property, not because they have moved, but because the lake has infiltrated their yards.

Drivers use caution on roads which have become narrow peninsulas of asphalt. Streams 50 feet wide cover some areas, making the road nearly impassable.

Mail carriers have given up on many of the areas for delivery, opting instead to hold mail at the post office in Karnack. Some children have missed school because they couldn't leave their island homes, Karnack schools reported. School buses can't make the

trip into some neighborhoods.

Meals on Wheels deliveries have been halted to some residents because the lake forbids passage to the shut-ins, said executive director William "Buddy" Power.

Emergency workers with the Marshall Fire Department are thankful they haven't had any calls for ambulance service in unreachable areas at the lake, said Fire Chief "Kenneth" Buzz Snyder.

Residents say they have lost track of time as they remain isolated in homes. The lake they have come to love has become a little too close for comfort.

It was the wettest of times. It was the worst of times.

But at least they know who their friends are, as they often have to turn to each other for help.

Pat Patrick, who lives by the lake, said a squirrel damaged a transformer near his house sometime last week. Both he and his neighbor, Paul Connally,

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Rain makes life miserable for Caddo residents

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lost electricity at about 6:30 one night.

They called Panola-Harrison Cooperative, Inc. to restore the power. Workers Philip Johnson and Matt Roberts were certainly willing, but they had one problem — a very wet one.

Several feet of water filled the land below the damaged electrical lines, said Patrick. But another neighbor, Gary Summers offered to pick up the workers in his boat and take them to the line. The workers agreed and finished the job, despite the slight unsteadiness in the boat.

"I picked them up in my boat," said Summers. "I held the boat against the pole."

Robert Fisher, construction supervisor for Panola-Harrison Co-op, said the work wasn't particularly dangerous, just difficult due to the nature of the job.

"It's hard to fuse up a transformer with a boat moving," he said. "You take fiber glass and stick it up in the air. It's a challenge."

Patrick was impressed with the job well done, stating that the workers went beyond the call of duty to restore electricity to the residents.

"I thought it was just

fantastic," he said. "Somebody should know they do good."

Some residents don't have positive stories to tell of their experiences with the flood. Dawn Lee, owner of Dawn's Caddo Crossing restaurant, said she's had to close it for two weeks because the road to the restaurant is covered by several feet of water. And she's looking at another couple of weeks of her store being closed because of more rains and flooding.

Her restaurant has already been closed in December for five days because of the ice storm, making this closing even more difficult.

"It's tough," she said. "You do what you can to save for a rainy day. Mother Nature — there's nothing you can do with it."

Besides missing her business generated from the restaurant, she misses her customers which have become like family.

"We miss them," she said. "We really do."

But for now, all she can do is pray.

"Remember all of us down here at the lake in your prayers," she said.

Residents have also learned to make do with what they have, even if it's not much. Caddo Lake resident Lorraine McAvoy said while her house isn't flooded, the land underneath it is. And the nearby bridge has been covered with water for days, making it impassable for anyone in and out. She hasn't left her home for days, despite the fact that her mail was stacking up at the post office and she knows she has bills to pay.

"I'm afraid if I don't get my bills in the mail, they're going to cut me off," she said.

She hasn't been to the grocery store, but fortunately, she thought ahead and purchased enough groceries to last her a while.

"I just keep a good stack of everything — frozen goods, canned goods," she said. "I could've served a luncheon. You just have to keep a good stack of this."

Ms. McAvoy said she hopes she can soon get out of her

home so she can make her trips to the dentist and the accountant.

"I'm hampered," she said. "I need to get to my accountant and see my dentist next week." But she knows that the rain will end someday. And when it does, she will smile.

"It gets tiresome," she said of the rain. "But when I wake up and the sun's out, it just makes me feel so good."