



## CHARLEY BASHES SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

### CAT. 4 STORM CAUSES HOMELESSNESS, DESTRUCTION

The Palermo homestead in Port Charlotte sustained some minor damage in the aftermath of Hurricane Charley on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 2004.

Now we are dealing with life "post Chuckie." There is a lot of landscaping to replace, a few windows to fix, but fortunately nothing too completely awful. Compared to our neighbors - we are lucky.

My wife Helen and I drove east (birds in tow) on the morning on August 13, 2004 and by the afternoon heard on the radio our neighborhood had taken the brunt of a Category 4 storm. As we reached Moore Haven, Clewiston, and finally Belle Glade we made a U-turn back home – which we expected to be turned to rubble by our late-evening arrival.

Fortunately there was a home to come home to. There was no power, no phones and a boil water advisory. Emergency Management gave us a dusk to dawn curfew. The National Guard arrived soon after - as did the Red Cross, Salvation Army, police, utilities and help from around the country.

The power came back to my house after nine days. Some folks aren't so fortunate - they don't even have homes to go back to. They will need help in the short, medium and long term. It will take years – not months – to rebuild. And it will take billions – not millions – to restore our community to what it was before.

But even after a Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, an Easter Sunday is out there somewhere.

Please read more about the toll this storm had on our housing, our community and what you can do to help Easter come sooner rather than later for families in Southwest Florida.

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APA's Housing and Community Development Quarterly is the newsletter of the Housing and Community Development Division of the American Planning Association. We welcome articles, story ideas, letters, suggestions, anecdotes, job announcements, and information regarding workshops and other educational opportunities. Please forward your suggestions by

email to our Newsletter Editor Tony Palermo.

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- Tony Palermo, at home post Charley.

## It's Wayne's World in Charlotte County, Fla.

The eye of the worst hurricane to hit Florida in a dozen years passed directly over and through Charlotte County, Florida Friday August 13, 2004. The communities of Punta Gorda, Port Charlotte and others took a devastating hit.

Thousands were left homeless, Charlotte County Emergency Management Director Wayne Sallade reported. He compared the devastation with 1992's Hurricane Andrew, which the National Hurricane Center attributed the deaths of 26 people, most in the Miami region.



"It's Andrew all over again," he said.



President Bush declared a major disaster area in Florida, making federal money available to Charlotte, Lee, Sarasota and other counties.

The Category 4 storm was stronger than expected when the eye reached Charlotte Harbor, punishing the coastal communities with winds up to 145 miles per hour and storm surge of 13 to 15 feet.

Charlotte County - population around 153,000 - is south of Tampa Bay, Sarasota/Bradenton, and north of Naples/Fort Myers, on Florida's Gulf of Mexico.

When President Bush toured the disaster areas, Sallade urged the president not to let the war on terror overshadow natural disasters such as this.

"Our citizens had their terrorism Friday afternoon," Sallade said to the President.

Downtown Punta Gorda, Charlotte Harbor, Port Charlotte, Deep Creek, and Harbour Heights were turned into a mess of shattered windows, ripped roofs, scattered insulation, broken concrete, snapped telephone poles and tangled power lines. Water, phone and electricity service ended for nearly a million people region-wide.

"My town was destroyed," Sallade said. "It's been tough. We came through a 10-mile-wide tornado, basically. The emotional scars on people are going to be hard to deal with."

Sallade, 50, has been on the job since 1987, warning Charlotte County about the dangers of hurricanes, wildfires, floods, terrorism, and other worst-case scenarios.

Sallade told the president his county needs assistance right away, and also for the long haul. He warned about focusing on terror threats at the expense of disaster preparedness.

"Everything has been focused on Sept. 11, and that's fine, so long as we don't fail to realize that there are natural disasters, too," Sallade said.

Sallade said he was proud of the warnings his people put out, ordering evacuations of barrier islands and mobile home parks, in a county where there are 22,000 mobile homes, a large percentage of elderly and other vulnerable populations.

Charley was supposed to be a relatively mild Category 2 storm, not the Category 4 monster that thrashed its way across the state. It was also supposed to veer north through Tampa Bay, not take a last minute turn down the throat of Charlotte Harbor.

Sallade lives in Port Charlotte. His home escaped major damage.

A 1976 graduate of Florida State University, Sallade studied mass communications. He was a broadcaster for a decade and a sports writer for the *Charlotte Sun Herald* newspaper. While in county government, he also moonlighted as the public address man for Texas Rangers spring training, until the team recently moved its spring home to Arizona. He also does the voice over for the Charlotte High School Tarpons football team at the now-destroyed stadium in Punta Gorda.

## CHARLEY'S TOLL ON HOUSING

Hurricane Charley damaged or destroyed more than half the homes in Charlotte County, according to estimates.

The American Red Cross estimated about one in four homes in the county - 17,000 -- were destroyed or had major damage, including mobile homes.

At least 5,013 homes were destroyed. Some 12,006 had major damage. About 12,457 had minor damage.

Red Cross figures show damage levels comparable with what was reported in rural DeSoto and Hardee counties, where Hurricane Charley moved after leaving Charlotte County.

Hurricane Charley also caused an estimated \$500 million in damage to Charlotte County's government buildings and roads.

The county's total annual budget is over \$579 million.



## CHARLEY'S NUMBERS

- 17 Confirmed Deaths.
- \$5-BILLION TO \$11-BILLION: Estimated damage to insured homes.
- 21: Shelters open in DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands, Lee, Orange, Osceola, Polk, Sarasota, Seminole and Volusia counties.
- 2,315: Number of people in those shelters.
- 985,000: People without power.
- 25: Counties declared disaster areas by federal officials.
- 10,000: Number of people for whom the Federal Emergency Management Agency has requested catastrophic housing.
- 31: Number of mobile home parks in Charlotte County that sustained major damage.
- 250,000: Number of structures in Lee County that sustained damage of any kind.

## **PICTURES OF CHARLEY**



**ALUMINUM WAS SCATTERED THROUGH PORT CHARLOTTE AND THIS STREET IN PUNTA GORDA.**



**MOBILE HOMES SUSTAINED HEAVY DAMAGE IN PORT CHARLOTTE.**



**CHARLOTTE HIGH SCHOOL'S HISTORIC BUILDING WAS HEAVILY DAMAGED AND UNUSABLE FOR A LEAST A YEAR.**



**THE (S)HELL FACTORY.  
A GIFT STORE, IN NORTH  
FORT MYERS.**



**PUNTA GORDA'S HISTORIC DISTRICT  
AS SEEN FROM GILCHRIST PARK.**



**CHURCHES, BUSINESSES, HOMES,  
& APARTMENTS WERE CRUSHED  
UNDER CHARLEY'S WEIGHT IN  
PUNTA GORDA.**

## RELIEF EFFORTS

Those wishing to assist hurricane victims are encouraged to give cash donations.

***American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund - (800) HELP-NOW.***

Charlotte County Chapter ARC, 1300 Enterprise Dr., Port Charlotte, FL 33951

Phone: 941-629-4345

Make checks payable to "Charlotte County American Red Cross."

***Catholic Charities, USA - (800) 919-9338***

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Venice, Inc.

1000 Pinebrook Road, Venice, FL 34285

Phone 941-484-9543

Make checks payable to "Catholic Charities - Diocese of Venice."

***Salvation Army - (800) SAL-ARMY***

The Salvation Army Disaster Relief

P.O. Box 270848, Tampa , FL 33688-0848

Make checks payable to "The Salvation Army Disaster Relief"

The Salvation Army

2120 Loveland Blvd., Port Charlotte, FL 33980

Mail Address: P.O. Box 3006, Port Charlotte, FL 33949-3006

Phone - (941) 629-3170

Make checks payable to "The Salvation Army – Charlotte County"

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