**RECOLLECTIONS of SUPER STORM SANDY**

**By Tony Caputo**

**110 Brandywine Drive**

I was encouraged to record our experience with the 2012 Super Storm Sandy in South Bethany, even though our experience was nothing special. It made sense that the South Bethany Historical Society wanted to have a variety of personal interest stories to preserve and record the different experiences of our neighbors and friends in the community. On Monday, October 29, 2012, at the height of Super Storm Sandy’s flooding in South Bethany, there was 16 inches of water above the cemented floor of our enclosed garage.

I’ve owned a home in South Bethany since 1990 and have had property go through several storms and minor flooding. My first home was a single story cottage built in the 50’s located at 118 Henlopen Drive. The cottage is the 10th building West of Route 1 on the South side of the street, it’s bulk headed on the Henlopen Canal. I owned that home from 1990 to 1997, over which time I knew of only one storm when the water in the canal came over our bulk head. That storm was in 1992 when Ocean Drive was destroyed, and the ocean breached the shore and sea water ran into the canals. Many ocean side home parts, like stairways and shower stalls, were washed down onto Route 1. There was no obvious damage to our cottage. The flood debris marks left by the storm indicated that about 7 inches of water came up the side of the foundation of the house, and it entered the crawl space under the home. Fortunately, the water did not make it up to the residential floor that is about 30 inches above the ground.

In 1997 I sold the Henlopen cottage and had a new home built at 110 Brandywine Drive in 1998. The Brandywine home is the 6th home West of Route 1 on the South side of the street, located on the Brandywine Canal. My wife, Lora, and I moved into the home full time in 2006 and live there today. The home was built by Legendary Homes who designed and built their homes to minimize storm and flooding damage. The bottom floor of our 3 story home is built of cinder blocks to about 9 feet high, with no dry wall until about 3 feet above the garage floor. The garage floor was built about 1 foot above the crest of the road, which is about 1 foot above the bulk head. Our heat pumps, electrical panel and other house services are elevated well above the ground.

Lora and I started to pay attention to Hurricane Sandy when it became a threat in the Caribbean, and there was a good possibility that we were going to be affected in a few days. We went to a party in a
South Bethany home located on the ocean the Friday night before the storm, where the Sandy was the center of the discussions. Some of our South Bethany friends and neighbors were deciding to stay, and others were going to evacuate. Lora and I decided we would be safe and evacuate to my son’s family home in Annapolis. Their home is a safe 30 feet above the water, and we wanted to see and play with the grandchildren anyway. We decided we would leave on Sunday, October 28 before noon to beat any traffic jams. As it turned out the mandatory evacuation took place later in the day, and there were traffic jams. We took both of our vehicles to higher ground, leaving our car in Millville and driving our 4 wheel drive truck to Annapolis.

In preparation of a possible flood, I moved all items I could 30+ inches above the floor of the garage. Most of our items, like the lawn mower, could be placed on our work bench counter. I moved some items inside to the second floor. I also placed a few items on top of garbage containers, which turned out to be a bad decision because the containers ended up floating and those items fell off into the flood water.

We watched storm news from Annapolis, and also had access to the Internet and reports by George Junkin, Pat Voveris and the Town. We decided to return to South Bethany on Halloween, Wednesday, October 31, 2012, the first day residents could return. We arrived at around noon, and to our amazement our home had electricity, heat and water. The water in the canal was a few inches below the top of our bulk head, where it remained for a few days. The home did lose electricity for a short period of time during the storm, but was fine after our return.

All told, we probably had less than $300 in damages for things including the garage door opener sensors, hot tub water pump and the few things that fell off the garbage containers. We consider ourselves lucky, although our planning and decision making helped. We hope we do not have to go through the inevitable South Bethany floods and storms too often.