**RECOLLECTIONS OF SUPERSTORM SANDY**

**Dick and Margaret Oliver**

**410 Victoria Road**

We first heard about Sandy’s well predicted approach probably four days before it actually hit. As it came closer the predictions were much more threatening as it looked like the center could well be the Delmarva Peninsula .We decided to take extra precautions since we had suffered some minor flooding in hurricane Isabel in 2005. Consequently, we had sandbags all filled and ready to go.

We put sandbags in front of all of the doors on our lower (ground) level which consists of a two car garage, a workshop and an office, which was not expensively furnished. We turned our porch furniture upside down, tied down our gas grille and took down our screens. Our plan was to stay during the storm since this is our residence but we warned friends in Bethesda, MD that they might be having guests if we were evacuated. We also went into our downstairs area and placed as many items that might be damaged on shelves, tables, desks etc. We have a moped and we put that up on two five gallon buckets. We put our power mower and power washer up as high as we could in our outside shed under out screened in porch.

The weather predictions became more severe and the possible locations of where the storm would come ashore became more indefinite varying from Delmarva to New Jersey to Massachusetts and we became more apprehensive. Just in case, we packed overnight bags for a quick getaway. Since we had recently purchased a new car, we planned to park it at a friend’s house in Ocean View the day before the storm was to hit. It was already raining hard. That was October 28, 2013.

It rained hard and the wind blew fiercely that evening. We spoke to friends who live two blocks away on Rebecca Road, and they planned to stay as well but made tentative plans to stay with their son in Ocean View. We went to sleep and rose about seven am and went right to the weather channel. It looked like Sandy might hit a glancing blow to Delmarva and strike South Jersey. About 1/2 hour later the phone rang; it was our friend on Rebecca Rd; and he said that we were being evacuated. He is an ex-policeman and not inclined to over react. We turned to WBOC-TV and it said the same. We were planning to go to Bethesda when Mrs. Oliver suggested that we contact our friends Pete and Jeanne Caruso to see how they were doing. They said that there was no need for us to go to Bethesda because the bay bridge could well close and they invited us to stay with them. We accepted immediately.

We packed our bags and plenty of food to take to the Caruso’s. While we were packing Linda O’Malley from the South Bethany Police Department knocked on out door and told us in no uncertain terms to evacuate ASAP. We made one more check for anything we could get as high as possible on the ground level, crossed our fingers locked the house and left.

We got to the Caruso’s around noon and sat glued to the TV switching back and forth from the Weather Channel to WBOC. By late afternoon it appeared that Delmarva would miss a direct hit but that the New Jersey shore would be ground zero. It rained hard and the wind blew hard al night, but it didn’t seem too bad. It was very much like the wind during a summer thunder storm.

By Sunday morning, the wind diminished somewhat so we felt safe enough to go outside. Pete and Dick drove Pete’s big Toyota Tundra pickup in Muddy Neck Road, attempting to get in the back entrance to South Bethany. The road was blocked about 150 yards from the bridge over the Assawoman Canal. The canal was 3 feet over its banks.

They diverted up through Bethany Beach and came down Ocean Highway to York Road in South Bethany. It was blockaded by a Delaware State Police officer. They pulled into the McCabe’s parking lot which was OK. York Road was completely flooded and the water appeared to be about 2 feet deep. Where we live on Victoria is lower than York. Dick knew then that we were likely to have some damage. We returned later that afternoon and Chief DeLoach was at the barricade and again would not give us access. He did say, “Lord help everyone who lives back there”.

We didn’t even try to get back later that day.

The next day the barrier was down and we drove (through 2 inches of standing water) to our house. I saw the scum line on the garage door. It was, as we measured later, at 31 inches. The automatic garage door did open. What we saw was a total disaster. Everything was soaked. Many things we put on table had fallen off as they fell over. The drywall was soaked. The other thing damaged or lost in the garage are to numerous to really account for now; but included our bikes, my moped, boxes of car cleaning and waxing supplies and on and on. Worst of all, our year old furnace, a refrigerator and our freezer were dead.

We went onto my workshop and it was worse. Everything that was stored below 31 inches was ruined and some small tables and shelves that were holding stuff had tipped over. My mother’s antique music stand and a set of antiques shelves that I was planning to re-finish this waiter were hopelessly warped and ruined. All of our power tools had been under water. We had a lot of power tools.

Then we went into our office. All of our surge protectors were shot. The desk, sets of bookshelves, books, office supplies and our cordless phone, our printer cables and other electrical stuff…gone. What was worse was family pictures in and out of frames soaked. That was our first priority to save. We took them upstairs, which was undamaged (we didn’t even lose power) laid them out, dried them, and saved most of them.

We started, with our friends, to throw out everything that was ruined into the front yard. It didn’t take long to have a huge pile of sodden mess. While we there Gale Force Cleaning and Restoration was calling on my across the street neighbors, the Cardillos, about mitigating their damage. I caught their rep, Matt Mc Dowell and asked him to do our as well. He also talked to my next door neighbors the Schulliens and they signed on with them too. I was pretty sure that, since we had three adjacent houses, and that we got them early, that they would come soon. I was right. They arrived the next day and started on ours and the Cardillos. When we pointed out that we were permanent residents, they put more resources on our place. I can only say they were great. They came every day early, stayed late and worked the whole time. We also established some good will with the since Margaret prepared them lunch every day. They loved it! They went back to the office and said how nice we were and raved about our chicken chili. A little kindness goes a long way. While Gale Force was there, we got Clark and Sons to replace our garage door sensors and one motor.

Also on that day, Bob Bunting who built our house and the Cardillo house came by. He said he would do our repairs as soon as Gale Force was done. He did. Gale Force was gone in six days and he came in the seventh. We can’t say enough about Bob and his subs. They were great. They also were there every day until the job was done. Jerry Sipple did the carpentry and drywall repair. We didn’t replace the damaged drywall with new drywall. After Bob arranged for insulation to be blown in, which is impervious to water, Jerry used salt treated plywood and coated it with Durabond, a concrete like mixture, to prevent future damage in the event of another flood. He then put up a chair rail to tie it all together. He then replaced all of the doors (5). After that, Bob Daisey came in and did the painting. We fed Bob’s guys too. The last thing was to have Airbase carpeting replace the carpet on our stairs. With that we were done.

The storm was on October 29 and we had the family Thanksgiving dinner for 14, 3 weeks later and everything was complete before Christmas. Given the damage we were lucky. We weren’t displaced and our damage was much less than many of our neighbors who had finished area on their first floor. Our total damage was about $35,000 and over $10,000 was covered by insurance. That did not include the hundreds of hours we put in cleaning and straightening. In addition to the damage in the house we lost our power mower and our power washer that was under our porch. 90% of our shrubs and much of our grass was killed by the salt water immersion.

All in all it was awful, but, in context, we dodged a bullet.