

N. Main businesses hit hard by flooding

Employees and owners do battle with high water, cleanup chores

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TILLAMOOK — "Business as usual" is a phrase unlikely to be heard for some time along North U.S. Highway 101 here in the wake of last week's record-setting floods.

Rosenberg Builders Supply managed to reopen within a few days of the deluge last Monday and Tuesday that sent higher water levels than they experienced in the 1996 floods surging into local businesses.

But that wasn't the case everywhere and one local business owner, Jeff Johnston of the Dairy Queen, was still pondering whether he would be able to reopen at all.

"We fought the whole way," said Rosenberg's owner Loten Hooley.

He said nine of the stores 50-plus employees spent the first night of the flood moving as much out of the way of the rising waters as they could.

By Thursday evening, they and about 20 other employees and volunteers were still hosing off silt, pumping out water, squeegeeing the floors and wiping down everything that had been less than 3 feet off the ground.

"It takes lots of water and lots of elbow grease," noted employee Diana Crouch, who said she had cleaned up after six previous floods. But, she added, "This (store) is a big part of the community and we're not going to give up on that."

Since the 1996 flood, Hooley said, Rosenberg's had spent about \$100,000 putting a dike around the store.

"If the water had been 4 inches lower or if we had been 4 inches higher, we'd have been fine," he said.

Water was said to have been at least 3 feet high in the store and warehouse at the height of the flooding.

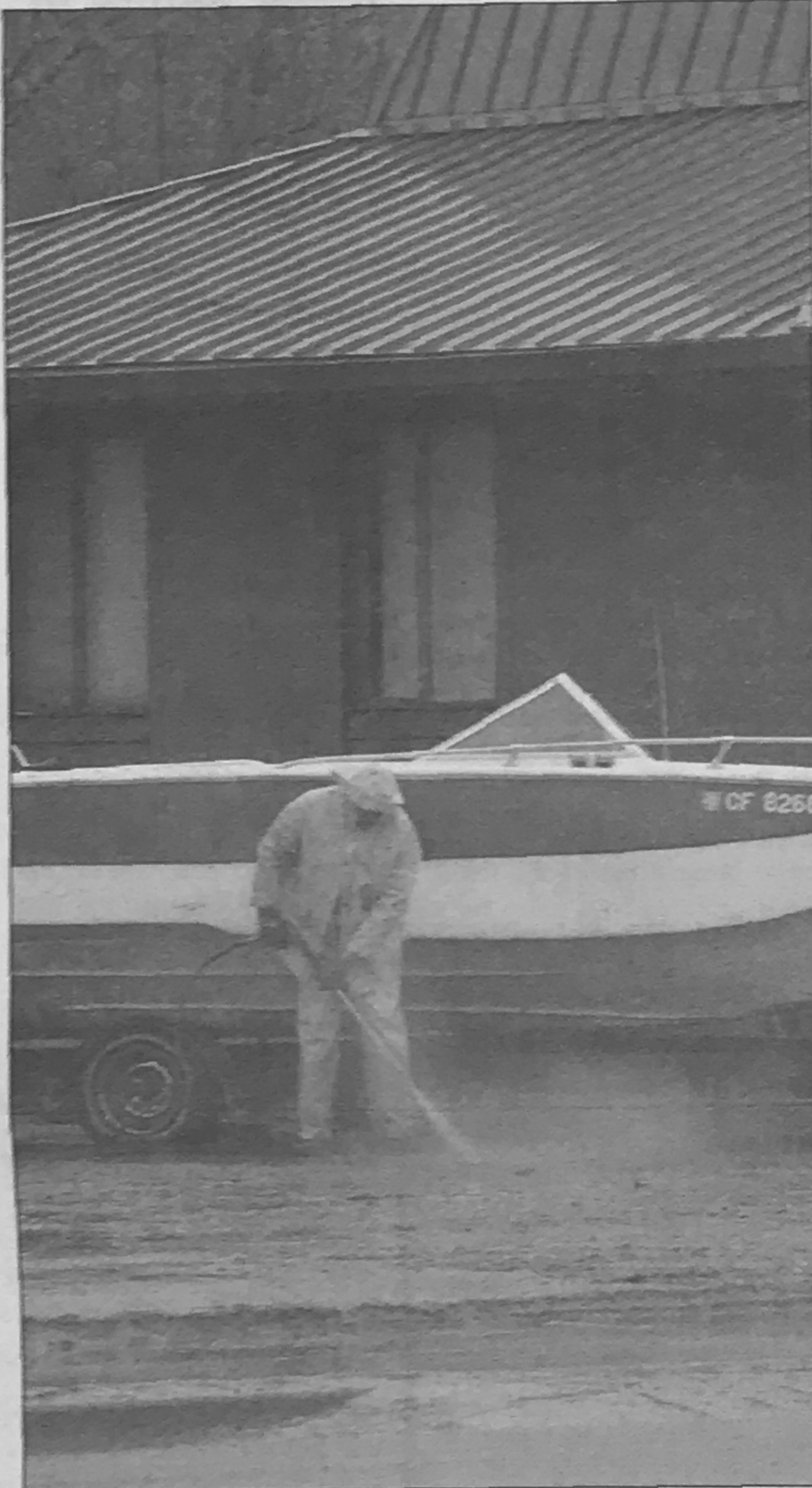
"Those reports you heard about desks floating around in here were true," said Laura Swanson, who handles advertising and public relations for the store.

Hooley estimated damages to be between \$500,000 and \$1 million.

Next door, Johnston said 5 feet of water washed through the Dairy Queen, damaging all of the furniture and most of the equipment.

He said the damage was severe enough to cause him to consider closing the business, which his family has owned for 46 years.

"It's been through several generations," he said. "I'm hiring the kids of the people I first



JOE HAPP/HEADLIGHT-HERALD

A worker power washes mud from the parking lot last Friday at The Cash Company on North Main Avenue in Tillamook.

hired in 1978," when he became manager.

In preparation for the flood, Johnston said he and his crew lifted what they could out of the range of the 1996 flood level, but in some cases it wasn't enough.

Johnston said if he does reopen, he will have to replace all of the furniture, just as he did in 1996. That will take about six weeks, he said.

Johnston expects the damage to be "substantially above" the cost of the 1996 flood, which totaled about \$200,000.

But, he added, the outpouring of the community has made it easier to absorb.

"It's amazing," he said. "Strangers I don't even know are calling me up to see how they can help. This is when the community really comes together."

Mark Wallace, at Grunder Equipment Repair, said floodwaters reached a height of 64 inches there and left a layer of mud and silt an inch thick throughout much of the business's shop area.

"You can't just clean it up," Wallace said, estimating the damage to be in the

\$100,000 range, including about \$60,000 in computer and electrical equipment.

Stumpy Borough, owner of Tillamook RV Repair and Sales on Hadley Road near 101, said he had five-and-a-half feet of water at his facility and the estimated that damage to merchandise and repairs to the building will cost more than \$100,000.

All the businesses in the North Park Plaza at 1000 North Main suffered damage and will need refurbishing said co-owner Jon Cummings. The cost of the repairs will be "astronomical," Cummings said, adding that it was too early to estimate a total figure.

The Fern Restaurant had 16 inches of water in it, according to its owner, B.J. Whitehead.

By late last week, she said, hired help and several volunteers had already ripped out the furniture, floorboards, sheet rock and wall insulation, which will all be replaced in the next few weeks.

Whitehead said she hopes to reopen in time for Thanksgiving, but it could take longer. Whitehead said she lost 3,000 pounds of food, but no equipment in the flood.



SHASTA KEARNS MOORE/HEADLIGHT-HERALD

A mud-soaked office chair sits outside Rosenberg Builders Supply on North U.S. Highway 101. Employees and volunteers helped salvage what they could from a mass of waterlogged products piled in the parking lot.

Movietime Video will be closed for at least three weeks as a crew works to replace the floor and up to 3 feet of drywall in the store. Workers were unable to prepare for the flood and the resulting damage is expected to be more than \$60,000, with 1,100 DVDs and 750 VHS tapes lost.

"We've been asking people to hold on to their (rented) videos for the last few days because right now we don't have a place to put them," said owner Jill West, who added that soon they will be able to put them through the drop slot in the parking lot.

Honda of Tillamook at the rear of the plaza reopened last week as did the Solid Grounds Café, though both suffered damage. Marita Rockwook of Honda said the motorcycles and ATVs were undamaged.

At the Blue Heron French Cheese Co. on North 101, employees said most of the large animals — horses, cattle and llamas — were evacuated to the Tillamook County Fairgrounds on Monday before the flood waters rose too

high. Owner Denny Pastega told U.S. Rep. Darlene Hooley and other state and local officials who toured the area last week that he estimated damage to the business at about \$250,000 and that he was hoping to have it open again by the first week in December.

Swanson, who also handles advertising for the Blue Heron, said about \$18,000 pounds of food was lost, including stocks of brie cheese that had been ordered for Thanksgiving.