

The Augusta Chronicle

50 cents

THE SOUTH'S OLDEST NEWSPAPER — ESTABLISHED 1785

Monday, March 17, 2008

Communities clean up



Jay Craig cuts fallen trees into smaller pieces in a friend's backyard off Front Street on Sunday, cleaning up after a severe storm hit the Bath area on Saturday. A National Weather Service meteorologist confirmed the storm was a tornado.

For video of area storm damage cleanup: augustachronicle.com/video

Lives spared as storms leave swath of damage

By Timothy Cox
Staff Writer

Keith Durham, his wife, Jackie, and friends sat in the glow of sunshine and blue skies Sunday afternoon at the foot of a large oak tree near Minter Street in Bath.

A day earlier, a tornado ravaged their property and several other homes and businesses along S.C. Highway 421.

Mrs. Durham said she was thankful no one was injured.

"I was in Evans when everything happened," she said, adding that her car moved side-to-side as she drove across the state line to be with her family.

On Sunday, neighbors, family and friends used chain saws to cut two large oak trees. The uprooted trees fell across the Durhams' house, leaving a large hole in the roof.

"I had just remodeled the house and was planning to sell it. And no, I didn't have any insurance," Mr. Durham said.

Tony Petrolito, a meteorologist from the National Weather Service in West Columbia, S.C., confirmed Sunday that the storm that caused widespread damage in several area

SCHOOLS CLOSED IN AIKEN COUNTY

The following Area 3 schools are closed today: Byrd, Clearwater, Gloverville, Jefferson and Warrentonville elementary schools; Langley-Bath-Clearwater and Leavelle-McCampbell middle schools; and Midland Valley High School.

counties Saturday was a tornado.

"It started as an EF-0 tornado (wind speeds of 65-85 mph) in Columbia County, then crossed into Aiken County and became an EF-2 tornado (wind speeds of 111-135 mph) once it hit Belvedere and Clearwater, into Barnwell County," he said. "It was one continuous path."

He said the winds increased from 65 mph to 115 mph by the time it reached the Bath area.

At a Sunday news conference, Lt. Michael Frank said there were only two minor injuries in Aiken County, in spite of the widespread damage.

Aiken County sheriff's officials said the worst damage occurred in

Please see STORMS on PAGE 7A



PARISH HOWARD/MORRIS NEWS SERVICE

Where's the steeple?
The steeple of Wrens (Ga.) Community Church on U.S. Highway 1 in Jefferson County was ripped from its roof by Saturday's storm. STORMS, 7A

IN ATLANTA

On a walking tour of the Atlanta convention center with Gov. Sonny Perdue on Sunday, Dan Graveline, the center's executive director, said crews were working to assess the damage caused by Friday's tornado. The governor expressed relief and gratitude for the minimal loss of life and quick response of emergency workers.

— Associated Press

MARCH MADNESS



PHIL COALE/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Georgia's Dave Bliss celebrates after a 66-57 win over Arkansas in the SEC tournament championship in Atlanta on Sunday.

Dogs going to the dance

Georgia men's team has plenty to celebrate on Selection Sunday

1

MOST UNLIKELY QUALIFIER

A tornado. A doubleheader. An improbable trip to the NCAA Tournament?

Georgia's men's basketball team completed its run through the Southeastern Conference Tournament Sunday, earning its first trip to the NCAAs since 2002 with a 66-57 win over Arkansas.

The Bulldogs (17-16), who beat as many SEC teams in the tournament as they did during the entire regular season, are seeded 14th in the West and will face Xavier at Washington, D.C., on Thursday.

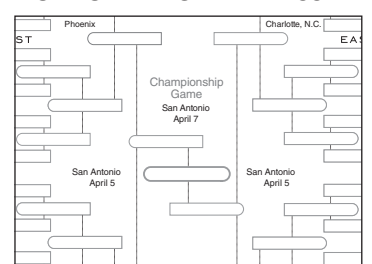
SPORTS, 1C

2

MISSING 2007 FINALISTS

Absent from the tournament are last year's two finalists, Ohio State and two-time defending champion Florida.

MORE ON MARCH MADNESS



► We've got your bracket/4C

4

NO. 1 SEEDS

North Carolina, Memphis, Kansas and UCLA

65

TOTAL TEAMS

March Madness officially begins Tuesday, when the NCAA Tournament field is whittled to 64 teams, with an opening-round game between Coppin State and Mount St. Mary's.

— Associated Press

See it online
augustachronicle.com

INSIDE TODAY

Bayou losing culture in Katrina aftermath

GRAND BAYOU, La. — Grand Bayou is forsaken these days, 30 months after Hurricane Katrina washed over it and dragged one of Louisiana's last authentic outposts of bayou culture into a different world.

NATION, 10A

INDEX

Comics.....9C
Crossword.....10C
Editorial.....8, 9A
Obituaries.....4, 5B
Television.....8C

DEATHS

Mr. Walter B. Campbell Augusta
Mrs. Willette S. French Evans
Mrs. Deborah Goodwin Hephzibah
Mr. Thomas Keys Jr. North Augusta
Ms. Evelyn Lambert Augusta
Mr. Russell D. Newton III Blythe
Ms. Annie Ponder Louisville, Ga.
Mr. Benjamin E. Sanders Statesboro, Ga.
Kady L. Saxon Hephzibah
Mr. Mervin Smith Gibson, Ga.
Mrs. Kathleen P. Suggs Augusta
Mrs. Louise B. Walker North Augusta
Ms. Cheryl Weaver Augusta
Ms. Catherine Q. Wright Augusta

COLISEUM AUTHORITY

Drama starts before new manager

By Sylvia Cooper
Staff Writer

A new facilities manager has been told to report to work at the civic center today over the objections of several Coliseum Authority members.

A discrepancy in Julie A. Huggins' resume concerning her job title during her employment with the Morocco Shrine Auditorium in Jacksonville, Fla., from 2002 to 2007 had members Keith Brown, Janice Jenkins, Willie Law and Mildred McDaniel ready to rescind an earlier vote to hire her.

And Chairman Harry Moore's decision to call Ms. Huggins and tell her to report for duty today — after receiving a letter from the shrine auditorium's board Chairman Tom Lumpkin stating that Ms. Huggins' position had evolved into operations director — outraged the dissenting members.

Ms. Huggins stated on her resume that she was "Non-Fraternal Director of Operations" at the shrine auditorium, but the business manager of the facility said she was rental manager, and that there was no director of operations. But past Chairman of the board of Morocco Shrine Gary Thigpen described her as "a detail oriented director of operations" in a letter of recommendation.

Since 1993, when longtime manager Larry Rogers was fired the first time, six managers, including Mr. Rogers on his second go-round, two management companies and one interim manager have come and gone. And Assistant Manager Linda Roberts, who is still there, has been interim manager six times, the latest being currently, after General Manager Robert "Flash" Gordon was fired March 7.

Reach Sylvia Cooper at (706) 823-3228 or sylvia.cooper@augustachronicle.com.

WHERE THEY ARE NOW?

The civic center has seen seven general managers come and go since 1979. Last week, we caught up with three of them:



WENDY OGLESBY was hired March 14, 1995, and resigned Oct. 23, 1995. She sued the authority and received a \$63,000 settlement. She is now vice president of marketing at Blumenthal Performing Arts Center in Charlotte, N.C. "I enjoyed the people in Augusta. Some I didn't enjoy. If you like rough-and-tumble politics, Augusta is a good place to be. Some people enjoy that."



LARRY ROGERS served as general manager from 1979 to 1993 before being fired by a newly reformed coliseum authority. He was rehired in 2003, only to be fired again three years later. He is now retired and living in Augusta. Mr. Rogers said he had all of the civic center management he could stand. "And what's happened since I left makes me think I wasn't so bad after all," he said.



REGGIE WILLIAMS lives in Atlanta and is the owner of Renaissance Events, which features black history and cultural events. Mr. Williams, who said he's now "kind of retired," was fired from the civic center after complaints about the service at the Methodists' conference. "It really wasn't the Coliseum Authority's problem," he said. "But I was the one who ended up paying the price for it."

PHOTOS from Augusta's St. Patrick's Day Parade and other weekend events: spotted.augusta.com

WEATHER



Sunny
High: 69 Low: 42
More weather on Page 10C



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