

# Recollections from Bruce Maples, P.E.

(City Engineer for the City of Albany 1994 – 1997)

The record setting rainfall that occurred as a result of Tropical Storm Alberto from July 3<sup>rd</sup> until July 6<sup>th</sup> caused record setting flows and flooding in the Muckalee Creek, the Kinchafoonee Creek, and the Flint River. Mr. John Sperry, the City Engineer and knowledgeable area engineer had retired on July 1, 1994, which revised my title as of July 2<sup>nd</sup> from Assistant City Engineer to Interim City Engineer. Three days later I received the first report from the National Weather Service of the impending flood. From that day on, nothing would be the same.

One memorable moment during the period of the actual flooding was the time that I was called by Mr. Roy Lane, who was the City Manager, to get as quickly as I could to HCA Palmyra Hospital located on the northwest side of town. Upon arriving, I was greeted by Mr. Lane, Mr. Alan Reddish, who was



the County Administrator and an Army Major from Fort Rucker. Floodwaters were steadily rising and threatening to flood the rear area of the hospital where the electrical transformer and emergency generators were situated. Without going into all of the technical and logistical discussion that took place, the question was asked, “Could we keep the flood waters off the transformer and emergency generators?” My response was a list of questions to the city manager and the facility engineer at the hospital, “Have you plugged the storm drainage pipes that usually take water away from the hospital? Have you plugged the sanitary sewer lines to keep floodwaters from coming back in? Can you get me enough pumps? Can you get me the sandbags? Can you get me the people to place the sandbags?” Blueprints were examined and more discussions followed. As part of this discussion, the importance of the proposed sandbagging was disclosed because apparently, there were several people in the hospital on life support systems and the evaluation from the physicians was that it would be life threatening to evacuate them. The Army Major representing a Blackhawk helicopter unit from Fort Rucker was present at the meeting to coordinate the evacuation of these patients by helicopter but the consensus was that they preferred not to if the transformer and generators could be

protected. After everyone agreed that the necessary supplies and people could be provided for sandbagging, everyone set out to perform his tasks. The bottom line was that power to the hospital was never disrupted.



Former Washington Home Site and Cemetery  
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The protection to the power supply for the hospital was accomplished by a multitude of dedicated workers and volunteers who filled sandbags at the Albany Civic Center, placed them on trucks, and drove the trucks to the hospital. Citizens, city and county personnel, National Guard members, and Marines then worked relentlessly through the night unloading and stacking the sandbags. Citizens, city and county personnel, and firemen pumped the water that was encroaching on the transformer and generators back into the flooded side of the parking area adjacent to the sandbag wall we were constructing until the floodwaters were no longer a threat to the transformers and

the emergency generators. Hospital staff provided food and water for the volunteers. At one point in the night as I stood in chest deep water in the parking lot awaiting the next arrival of trucks carrying sandbags and knocked the ants off that had been floating on the water and were now biting me, I realized that during all of the planning discussions and the construction activity, not one person asked, "Who is in the hospital that we are trying to save?" I never heard any mention about the race, age, sex, creed or origin of the people being helped. I never heard anyone filling the sandbags make a comment about whether the sandbag he or she just filled was going to a particular neighborhood or section of the City. As devastating as the flooding was, "The Flood" showed how the citizens of Albany and South Georgia could work together.

Hopefully Albanians and South Georgians will demonstrate the same generous attitude under normal circumstances and hopefully no one will have to experience again the devastating flooding as they did in that rainy July summer of 1994.