

A Tale of Two Houses *continued from front page*

community for several years. Camrin was very active in the community—she is a Girl Scout leader, President of the PTA and is also a small business owner. Her store, The Clever Cricket, features educational toys for children.

For Camrin the ranch house on Juniper Street was her dream house—they paid \$245,000 for the 1900 square foot house with a perfect floor plan, including a huge pantry off the kitchen—one of several highlights for Camrin. “It was already painted all the colors I would have chosen—it was perfect!” said Camrin during a recent conversation when she revisited the flood and recovery.

On Monday December 3, 2007, the Eyrrick family got up and started their day like any other day. Brandon headed off to work in North Plains twenty-five miles away; Camrin helped seven year old Kaitlyn and ten year old Jacob get ready for school. Driving to school Camrin noticed the Nehalem River was especially high after unusually hard rain over the past several days but didn't really think much about it. It turned out school had been canceled, another indicator that something unusual was happening. Camrin, Jacob and Kaitlyn went back to their home, south of town, just across Highway 47 from the Nehalem River.

“I talked to several neighbors; some thought it could flood and were starting to prepare, others thought that was an overreaction,” remembers Camrin. She did some laundry and other household chores, “Just stuff I would normally do,” and then decided to load the kids and take a drive around town—check on her store in downtown Vernonia and see what the river looked like. The Nehalem was continuing to rise so Camrin and the kids spent some time moving items to higher shelves at The Clever Cricket just be safe and then headed back

home “I was starting to get panicky,” says Camrin.

Camrin talked with husband Brandon and several friends by phone, and then took another walk to look at the river. “I saw that the river was crossing the highway and slowly moving towards us,” says Camrin. She realized it was time to evacuate and now she was scared.

She and the kids gathered four cats, two dogs, a rabbit, goldfish and hermit crabs and grabbed duffles of clothes, sleeping bags, computers and piled in the car. The road south towards town was blocked by water and an Oregon State Trooper; Camrin's plan was to head north and loop around on Stoney Point Road and head to her friend Stacey Adams house outside of town on Keasey Road. “We found out later from neighbors who stayed that just five minutes after we left the fence in our backyard just burst open with water that it was holding back,” said Camrin.

South on Highway 47 at Biggs Road the highway was covered with flowing water; on the opposite side was another State Trooper stopping traffic from heading towards Vernonia. Camrin then did something she knows she shouldn't have done—she drove her minivan through what turned out to be almost three feet of flowing water. “At one point the van started to float, and then we hit solid ground again and made it through,” says Camrin. “I could see the Trooper shaking his head the whole time, but I just didn't know what else to do.”

The route on Stoney Point took the family up to higher ground and away from the river. They made it to the Adams home safely. Stacey's husband Larry was out of town as well, and Stacey was at home with her three kids, so the two families stayed together that night, as the power went out in Vernonia and the rain finally slowed.

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The flood waters receded and drained away overnight and most people were able to get started the next day cleaning up. The Eyrrick's faced several unusual problems. Brandon Eyrrick was stranded in North Plains and was unable to reach his family for several days. Drainage tiles on Juniper Street had been damaged in the flood of 1996 and had never been replaced; water continued to stay pooled around the Eyrrick home. The ranch house sits in a punchbowl of hard packed river clay the home was surrounded with almost six feet of water; the house had at least four feet of water inside. As the first days of recovery were taking shape, the Eyrrick

home remained inundated with chest high flood water. Camrin pleaded for someone to help her figure out a way to get the water out of her home.

On Thursday the Eyrrick family reunited with Brandon in Hillsboro—the family went to Target to shop for clothes and the supplies they would need for an extended stay away from home and the impending clean up. Dressed in sweats and tall rubber boots Camrin stood in the cleaning supplies aisle in shock, not even knowing where to start and what she would need to buy. “I noticed a woman,



Juniper Street days after the December 3, 2007 flood, after standing water was finally pumped out.

who was very pregnant wearing her rubber boots and rain jacket and looking at all the cleaning supplies, in shock as well,” remembers Camrin. “And I said, ‘Are you from Vernonia?’, and she said yes and then we both just started crying and hugging. I didn't know this lady but later I found out it was Becky Carlton who had only moved into their new home on Heather Lane two streets over from us a couple days before the flood. They had just moved their baby stuff in and were expecting any day and they were having to deal with all the flood stuff too. My neighbor, Ginger Westlake had rescued their dog.”



Brandon Eyrrick, who is over six feet tall, stands outside his Juniper Street home; notice the high water line on the wall under the light fixture.

That same evening the family went to dinner at Red Robin with friends and relatives where the staff overheard them talking about the flood; the Red Robin management bought their dinner and the waitstaff all pitched in and bought them a gift card to Target.

On Friday the Vernonia Rural Fire Department was able to pump water out of the Juniper Street bowl and lower the water level. Friends, neighbors and volunteers arrived to begin mucking out the house and started the process of stripping the walls away to allow the house to start to dry out. “Total strangers came and helped; my mother-in-law was moved to tears by a couple that came out from Portland and didn't even know us,” said Camrin.

The Eyrricks did not have flood insurance on their home. Like many Vernonia residents, they believed the 1996 flood had been an anomaly and would not be seen again in their lifetime. The interior of the house was a complete loss, the family lost everything, including all the Christmas presents that Camrin had purchased early because she was expecting to be running her toy store during what she had hoped would

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