

# From Seaside to Panama City, impact of hurricane is felt

## SEEN FROM SEASIDE

R.J. MARX



A resident of Seaside, artist Paul Brent and his wife Lara own a gallery in Panama City, Florida, where they also have a home and property. The Brents are in Florida now, cleaning up debris from Hurricane Michael, a devastating storm that left more than 20 dead in its wake. The gallery is closed until further notice. We spoke to Paul Brent via phone as he worked to rebuild his gallery and home in the storm's aftermath.



PHOTOS BY PAUL BRENT

Devastation near the Brent home in Mexico City, Florida, after Hurricane Michael.

### Q: Where were you when the hurricane hit?

Brent: We were still in Seaside for the hurricane. We left on the 18th (of October), almost a week after the hurricane hit. We arrived in Florida and had to stay in our Panama City Beach condo. The power came on this past Friday and we have now moved to our primary residence in Panama City. We moved the art from our gallery to our residence even though there was no power. At least it was dry. That stopped any mold growing on damp surfaces. Friends of ours whose home was totally uninhabitable are now in the condo.

### Q: Can you describe what the region looks like?

Brent: Downtown Panama City and the major commercial corridors were hit badly with missing roofs and blown out windows. Large metal buildings were especially hit, like warehouses and boat storage facilities. Marinas and church after church were destroyed. Residential areas that had oaks and large pines received major roof damage with trunks and limbs making holes sometimes cutting buildings in two. Every roof has a blue tarp on it. Many people called it a war zone. Further east, complete structures were wiped out.

### Q: Where is your gallery and how did it make out?

Brent: It's in the downtown area very close to the water. My studio was on the second floor. I had a glass block wall that was facing north. I had excellent lighting for painting. The wind was blowing with gusts of 50 mph with gusts of rain and it forced rainwater throughout the entire gallery. Half the roof peeled, the glass wall collapsed and my studio became ground zero for our office.

### Q: Were you able to rescue the artwork or was much of it destroyed?

Brent: We have a cleanup crew. They've stripped all the wood and Sheetrock. We're drying it out now and getting ready for reconstruction. Even at this point it's hard to determine. All the paintings and two-dimensional artwork is mine.

We carry jewelry, wood, glass, and ceramics by other artisans. We brought all the remaining artwork that did not have mildew or where the surface was not ruined, to my house.

There is a good portion of it that remains. But there's also a good portion that disappeared.

### Q: Did people evacuate? Was there a warning?

Brent: The surprise was, everybody knew pretty much where it was going to hit. But it was first predicted to be a Category 2, then predicted to be a Category 3. It was not until the last day, that they said "Oh, no, it's going up to Category 4."

We've had several 3s come through this area. People were sort of like: "We can live through a (Category) 3." It suddenly went up to a four, went to a 4-plus, it was right on the edge between a 4 and 5. There were some places that winds were clocked at over 150 mph. That will pretty much destroy any structure. Homes in Mexico Beach that were not on pilings are just slabs now.

### Q: What is the greatest need?

Brent: Donating to emergency services for the people who are really in terrible need here is the No. 1 thing. The necessities of life: food, bathrooms, shelter. People are fixing up their homes as quickly possible. They're getting back to work. Now they're trying to get their lives back together. Certainly Red Cross and Salvation Army are two (organizations) at the top for people really in terrible need.

### Q: Seaside is vulnerable in a Cascadia Subduction Zone event. Do you find lessons to be learned from Hurricane Michael?



Damage at the Paul Brent Gallery after the hurricane that hit in Panama City, Florida.



Jensen Brent and friend Paul Keating salvage artwork from the home of Paul and Lara Brent in Mexico Beach, Florida, after Hurricane Michael.



PAUL BRENT

Paul and Lara Brent plan to rebuild their homes in Mexico City, Florida, after Hurricane Michael.

Brent: With homes on both coasts, it looks like we're being hit by a double whammy.

We enjoy living here during the cooler months and we enjoy living in Seaside in the warmer months.

We don't think that it's going to change that part of our lives. If you're in any coastal area, no matter where it is, you're in danger of some sort of natural disaster.

I have relatives in Oklahoma. I remember as a young child going through areas hit by tornadoes. It was like looking at what I'm looking at now.

### Q: Are you putting your gallery and home together?

Brent: We have a professional construction crew doing the final cleanup and dry-out of the structure. Then we'll be working with another crew to do a build-

back. I'm at home. One of our sons came to help us.

We're going through all of the artwork and we'll be doing an inventory.

Then we're going to be moving our offices to our home for a temporary solution, then eventually reconstruct.

People have said, "Do you think people will stay here?" "Do you think our businesses, our downtown will come back?" Every business owner who has logged in on it said "We're building back."

Our Air Force base has said "We're building back." (Vice President) Mike Pence was just here and he arrived at our Tyndall Air Force Base and said "We're dedicating money to building Tyndall back."

So there's really a very positive feeling. We'll make it a better place.



EVE MARX

Two women can go out for breakfast for under \$20... as long as their appetites are modest.

## Lunch for the 'smaller appetite'

I have a friend who enjoys going out for a good breakfast. I'm a person who seldom eats breakfast, although I adore breakfast food, except that I like it for dinner, in particular during winter months when it's dark and cold and all you want to do is put on your pajamas. Eggs, which are cheap and easy to prepare, are an excellent source of protein whether poached, hard boiled, or fried.

There are some excellent places to breakfast in the county. My friend is not adverse to driving all the way into Astoria for breakfast as she has a special affinity for Astoria's Street 14 Café which does an excellent rendition of a New York-style toasted bagel with cream cheese, sliced onion, capers, and smoked salmon. (They call the smoked fish "lox" in New York City, but who's quibbling?) My friend is retired and has some time to spare. As a working stiff, most of my breakfasts (this would be a brown rice cake slathered in almond butter) are eaten at my desk.

Last week I invited my friend to join me in an experiment, the experiment being could two on-the-later-side-of-middle-aged ladies enjoy a full breakfast for \$20, including tip.

We went to the Pig 'N Pancake in Seaside, one of our favorite breakfast spots.

"Let's take our time and study the menu," I said. We contemplated Swedish pancakes. We mused over Sand Dollar pancakes. We both love potato pancakes. We discussed the "smaller appetites" offerings before deciding it was too hard to split two pancakes, one egg and one strip of bacon or a single sausage link. We eventually settled on the award-winning sourdough pancakes at \$9.50 and two house coffees. (In the interest of sticking to our budget, she abstained from her usual latte.)

Our server brought us the pancakes and a plate to share. The order came with six — count 'em, six — huge pancakes. I put three of them on my friend's plate and took the rest.

The pancakes were delicious. They were also very filling. Who on earth can eat six? I should have stopped at two but ate three. Our server refilled our coffee cups a few times. When she brought the check, I whipped out my \$20 and put it on the table.

"We did it," I said, feeling triumphant. To our server I said, "Keep the change."

## LETTERS

### To all Gearhart residents:

I would like to leave the election process with this overriding concern — strong government doesn't ignore the least of us who struggle to pay the tax burden; it's a government that realizes its limitations and fights not to push its citizens into projects which add to deficit spending or special assessments; it balances its spending for the good of everyone; it's a government that provides all the information to all voters at all times, and finally, it seeks to include ALL taxpaying voters regardless of their socioeconomic status.

Jack Zimmerman  
Gearhart

## MEETINGS

### MONDAY, Nov. 26

Seaside City Council, 7 p.m.,  
City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Committee, 7 p.m., City Hall,  
989 Broadway.

### TUESDAY, Nov. 27

Seaside Airport Advisory  
Committee, 6 p.m., City Hall,  
989 Broadway.

### WEDNESDAY, Dec. 5

Seaside Improvement Com-  
mission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989  
Broadway.

Gearhart City Council, 7  
p.m., 698 Pacific Way.

### TUESDAY, Dec. 4

Seaside Community Center  
Commission, 10 a.m., Bob  
Chisholm Community Cen-  
ter, 1225 Avenue A.

### MONDAY, Dec. 10

Seaside City Council, 7 p.m.,  
City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Seaside Library Board, 4:30  
p.m., Seaside Library, 1131  
Broadway.

### THURSDAY, Dec. 13

Seaside Convention Center  
Commission, 5 p.m., Civic  
and Convention Center, 415  
First Ave.

Seaside Planning Commis-  
sion, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989  
Broadway.

Seaside School District  
Board of Directors, 6 p.m.,  
1801 S. Franklin.

### THURSDAY, Dec. 6

Seaside Parks Advisory

Gearhart Planning Com-

SEASIDE  
**Signal**



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