Chapter 4

Andrew Epilogue

As of this writing, assessment of Hurricane Andrew is incomplete. However, the following is a reasonable preliminary estimate of death and destruction and some important characteristics of the storm.

Current death toll stands as 41. This is far less than what has occurred in past hurricanes of comparable strength.

Hurricane Andrew is the most destructive natural disaster in U.S. history! Damage estimates are fluctuating between $15 and $30 billion, most of which is in southern Dade and Monroe Counties, Florida, from Kendall southward to Key Largo. The Bahamas are estimating at least $250 million dollars in damage and Louisiana more than $1 billion.

Florida's agricultural industry loss was $1.04 billion alone. There was moderate impact damage to the offshore reef areas down to a depth of 75 feet (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1993).

117,000 homes were destroyed or had major damage and 90% of all homes in Dade County had major roof damage (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1993).

According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers who worked cooperatively with other agencies to determine environmental impacts, 12.7 million cubic yards of debris resulting from Andrew were hauled away; there were 39 approved debris burning sites (Figure 25).

Damage to the Turkey Point nuclear powerplant belonging to Florida Power and Light Co. was $100 million (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1993).

In terms of damage to moored recreational vessels within Biscayne Bay, a total of 918 hurricane damaged vessels were found. According to Antonini et al. (1993), "roughly ... one-third of the damaged vessels were completely or partially submerged, damaged but floating, and damage aground." The site of the greatest devastation was in the area of Dinner Key Marina near Coral Gables in Miami.

Massive evacuations were ordered in Florida and Louisiana. This accounts for the low death rate. It's called Hurricane Preparedness.

The recovery process is still underway (Figures 19 and 20), but it should be emphasized that the results of tremendous structural
damage by Andrew's winds could become accumulative in the future.

Andrew was a compact system with a radius of maximum winds of about 12 miles. A slightly larger system or one with a landfall a few miles further north would have been even more catastrophic by affecting the more heavily populated areas of Greater Miami, Miami Beach, and Fort Lauderdale. New Orleans was relatively spared also.

Such statistics as the 16.9 foot storm tide in Biscayne Bay, Miami, is a record maximum for southeast Florida. Louisiana had 7 foot storm tides.

Only Hurricane Camille in 1969 and the "Great Labor Day Hurricane of 1935" in the Florida Keys had lower Barometric pressures at landfall in this century. Barometric pressure associated with Andrew bottomed out at 27.23 inches.

A maximum 10-second flight-level wind speed of 170 knots, or 196 miles per hour, was reported by the reconnaissance aircraft in the vicinity of northern Eleuthera Island in the Bahamas on the 23rd of August. The storm surge there was 23 feet!

Andrew will not be the last hurricane to cause such massive devastation and havoc. Another similar storm may appear next year, or ten years from now—there is no way to know when. However, the bitter lessons we have learned should provide us with ample ammunition to survive the next big one.

The 1993 Hurricane Season

No hurricanes or tropical storms struck Florida or seriously affected Florida in 1993. The most powerful storm of the 1993 season was Hurricane Emily, August 22 to September 6. She was a Category 3 hurricane with top winds of 120 miles per hour and a low pressure of 28.38 inches. This storm came directly at Florida until the 28th of August, at which time she turned to the northwest. Emily, because of Andrew in 1992, did a first-class scare-job on the Florida coast from Miami to Jacksonville but she never got to within 800 miles of the Florida coast at any point. Emily scraped the Cape Hatteras area with minimal damage then turned back east again to die out some 480 miles south, southeast of Cape Race, Newfoundland.