

The Battle Of Pemberton Drive

Students save our city/Dan Luzzader, Page 5A

The News-Sentinel

Area Edition

Rainy

Low tonight: 42
High tomorrow: 47
Details on page 2A

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All's Quiet On The Dikes

But flooding war not over as rain hits

From Staff Reports

Fort Wayne's saturated sandbag dikes are holding, but the next 24 hours of weather will determine if the river levels drop or surge anew.

The all-night vigil at the Pemberton Drive dike in the Lake-side Park area passed without problems this morning.

Hundreds of volunteer sandbaggers who saved the Pemberton dike Thursday in a dramatic effort remained ready today to rush back to their Herculean task if needed.

While the three swollen rivers continued to inch slowly downward today, city officials were trying to keep their defenses in the city's near northeast side because of a wide band of thunderstorms moving into the area. A flash flood watch was issued at mid-day.

The receding river levels enabled the city to open a couple major north-south routes and some of the city's 9,000 evacuees were returning to the West Main Street area, flooded since last weekend.

Anthony Boulevard was opened this morning after being closed Thursday evening. The McCulloch Street bridge, also known as the Fairfield-Ewing bridge, was also opened to traffic this morning.

The bridge had been closed because Superior Street on the south side of the bridge was flooded. Officials said the water had receded enough to allow northbound traffic heading onto Wells from Fairfield-Ewing, and southbound traffic to use it. Motorists will not be allowed to turn onto Superior, however.

The National Weather Service at Baer Field predicted showers would arrive in the area by mid-morning, followed by possible thunderstorms with some locally heavy rain this evening and through the night.

Although the NWS said the rain would probably not be heavy enough to send the rivers over record flood levels, it would still be sufficient to bring them back up another foot. The longer the rivers remain above major flood levels, the longer the threat to the city's saturated dikes, particularly the Pemberton dike.

Mike Hayes, a meteorologist for the NWS at Baer Field, said 1 to 1½ inches of rain could fall throughout the entire watershed by 7 a.m. Saturday, as a result of storms moving in from the southwest.

An inch of rain would be enough to force the rivers up again, by at least a foot.

The Maumee River at 10 a.m. was measured at 24.22 feet and had been falling slowly through the night. Officials are hoping it will continue to

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Piedmont to begin flights to city

Piedmont Airlines will begin two flights daily from Fort Wayne's Baer Field to five major cities, beginning July 1.

One-stop flights stopping in Dayton, O., will take local travelers to Orlando, Tampa, and Miami, Fla., Dallas, Tex., and Washington, D.C., through a newly formed hub through Dayton.

Although the flights will stop in Dayton, only passengers on the Tampa, Miami, and Washington flights will change planes there.

The new Fort Wayne schedule will include the Washington flight, leaving Fort Wayne at 6:10 a.m. and arriving in Washington at 9:15 a.m. The return flight will bring Fort Wayne travelers back by 9:30 p.m.

Board of Aviation commissioners president Herb Weber said Piedmont will use 737 Stretch-200 112-seat jets on all flights.

Mayor Winfield Moses said Piedmont's entry into the Fort Wayne air service market will put the number of seats daily above April 26, 1980, levels, when United Airlines cut service from Fort Wayne.

"That's the kind of forward thinking the city needs," the mayor said.

Baer Field manager Ray Hoverman said Piedmont was on the list of airlines the Board of Aviation commissioners had hoped to attract to Fort Wayne. Piedmont, at the same time, was looking to expand in the Midwest.

Piedmont last month established an operations base in Dayton, O., similar to the hub Air Wisconsin formed in Fort Wayne in early 1981. Weber said Piedmont made \$376 million in profits in 1981.

Hoverman said with the recent expansion at Baer Field, the airport will be able to handle Piedmont's entry. He said Piedmont will share counter space with United Airlines.

Weber and Moses said the city will continue efforts to attract other new airlines. "You never close your door," Weber said. "You're always getting ahead or falling behind. It wouldn't be economically healthy to fall behind."

Piedmont, founded in 1940 as an aircraft sales and service company, has national headquarters in Winston-Salem, N.C.

The company entered the commercial passenger business in 1948.

Piedmont flies to 42 airports, serving 80 cities in 18 states and the District of Columbia.



Photo: John Stearns/The News-Sentinel

After hours of piling sandbag upon sandbag against the Pemberton Drive dike, these weary volunteers take time out for a well-deserved rest. Scores of volunteers worked val-

iantly Thursday to save the weakening dike, which, if it had burst, would have allowed water to sweep through the adjacent area and cause the destruction of hundreds of homes.

There's right way, wrong way to pitch sandbags

By CHARLENE MIRES and RICK ANTOINE
Of The News-Sentinel

Of a sandbag. Fifty pounds of sand out of a pile, into a bag, onto a truck, into the waiting, aching arms of volunteers.

Thud. Close to a million soaking sandbags stacked at least three deep for eight miles crisscrossing the city.

In less desperate times, building walls against water might be approached as an art, or a science. But on Fort Wayne's front against impending floods, it is a raucous, strenuous sport. One volunteer bag-passer along Pemberton Drive Thursday called it a game of "Beat the Clock."

It begins in the Memorial Coliseum or the Street Department garage, where sandbags are delivered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. A pall of dust hangs over hundreds of people of all ages and backgrounds, swarming about sandpiles. Their shovels slice into the piles, dropping sand into bags held by other volunteers.

Wire twist-ties are pulled out of the seams of the bags, then pulled tightly around their open ends.

By Thursday night at the Coliseum, more than 19,000 people had signed the waiver forms required for volunteer work. An estimated 30,000 volunteers have pitched in on the sandbagging effort since Saturday.

There is a right way to pitch sandbags. And a wrong way.

Jeff Evans, a Concordia High School student, was hoarse from trying to compete with the loud public address system constantly barking information at the Coliseum. But, dressed in U.S. Navy fatigues, he and his friends demonstrated sandbag techniques.

"We've had people hurt out there because they didn't handle these things right," he warned, "so be careful."

The sandbags weigh 35 to 55 pounds when dry and anywhere from 55 to 100 pounds when wet. Water rushing up through manhole covers or leaking through dikes pack a pressure of 1,100 to 1,500 pounds

per square inch. Behind 1206 Pemberton Drive, Steve Jehl waded in ankle-deep muddy water peeling stray, soaked sandbags out of the yard and heaving them onto the leaky Pemberton dike. In normal times, he manages the Georgetown Square shopping center. For the last three days, he has been in the sandbag lines.

"Unloading trucks is the hardest," he said. "That hurts your back." The trucks backed in between houses begin the process of shoring up the earthen dikes. As soon as a truck appears, a long line of volunteers grows from nowhere. Three or four people stand on top of the load, bending from the waist, swinging sandbags down to the line.

"You try to keep the momentum going," Jehl said. "Weak links slow everything down." People in the endangered Pemberton area Thursday had developed a technique. Standing in double lines, volunteers facing inward, they passed a sandbag from one line to the other, until it reached its intended place against the dike.

The trick is in the rhythm — pushing the bags from one person to the next, not catching them and slowing down the line. A good line can pass 25 or 30 sandbags a minute up to the dike.

But if one volunteer drops a bag or breaks the rhythm, the effort collapses like dominoes in a row, with shouts of "Hold it!" and "Whoa!" passed back to the truck. And Warren Nonemacher, wearing a paper tag designating him as a traffic control worker at the Coliseum, said, "My feet are up in my knees somewhere."

More on Great Flood

- More aerial photos of the Great Flood Page 4A
- Columnist Dan Luzzader looks at the youth that battled for the city. Page 5A
- Dozens of pets have been rescued by animal control workers. Page 6A

Coliseum sorting out conflicts

By KEVIN LEININGER
Of The News-Sentinel

As a grimy Memorial Coliseum cautiously prepares to host Saturday's semi-state basketball tournament, manager Don Myers is wondering who's going to pay to clean up and repair damages caused by the week-long sandbag-filling operation which seized the building's basement last Monday.

"The parking lot was designed for cars, but we've had 14-wheel trucks filled with sandbags going through here," said Myers today. The heavy trucks rolling over the soft pavement have caused damages which could cost \$400,000 to repair, according to Coliseum board president James Shields.

Shields said he's never seen the coliseum as dirty as it's been this week, as thousands of volunteers and tons of sand have filled the lower exhibition hall. Sandbags filled at the coliseum are then trucked to one of Fort Wayne's imperiled dikes.

The Coliseum officials understand their concern may seem callous at a time when so many people have been working to save lives and property, but they know that once the waters go down, someone is

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Today's Chuckle

All that some guys leave behind is seatprints on the sands of time.