

Flood Victims' Bodies Found Along River

By Penny Owen
and J.E. McReynolds
Staff Writers

Janice Drake loved baseball, especially the home team.

Her daughter just loved the ballpark.

Last Saturday, with the Oklahoma City 89ers out of town, Janice Faye and Michelle Renee Drake were seeking shelter from heavy rains about two miles southeast of All-Sports Stadium.

At some point on that stormy day, stranger James Brian White apparently rescued the two from the rain and was driving them to safety.

Today, the mother and daughter will be buried together at a rural cemetery. The final bill for the funeral will be sent to the stadium. White's funeral services are pending.

Janice, 39, and Michelle, 7, drowned in Brock Creek near SW 22 and Pennsylvania. So did White, after he was seen trying to carry Michelle out of the creek before they both disappeared.

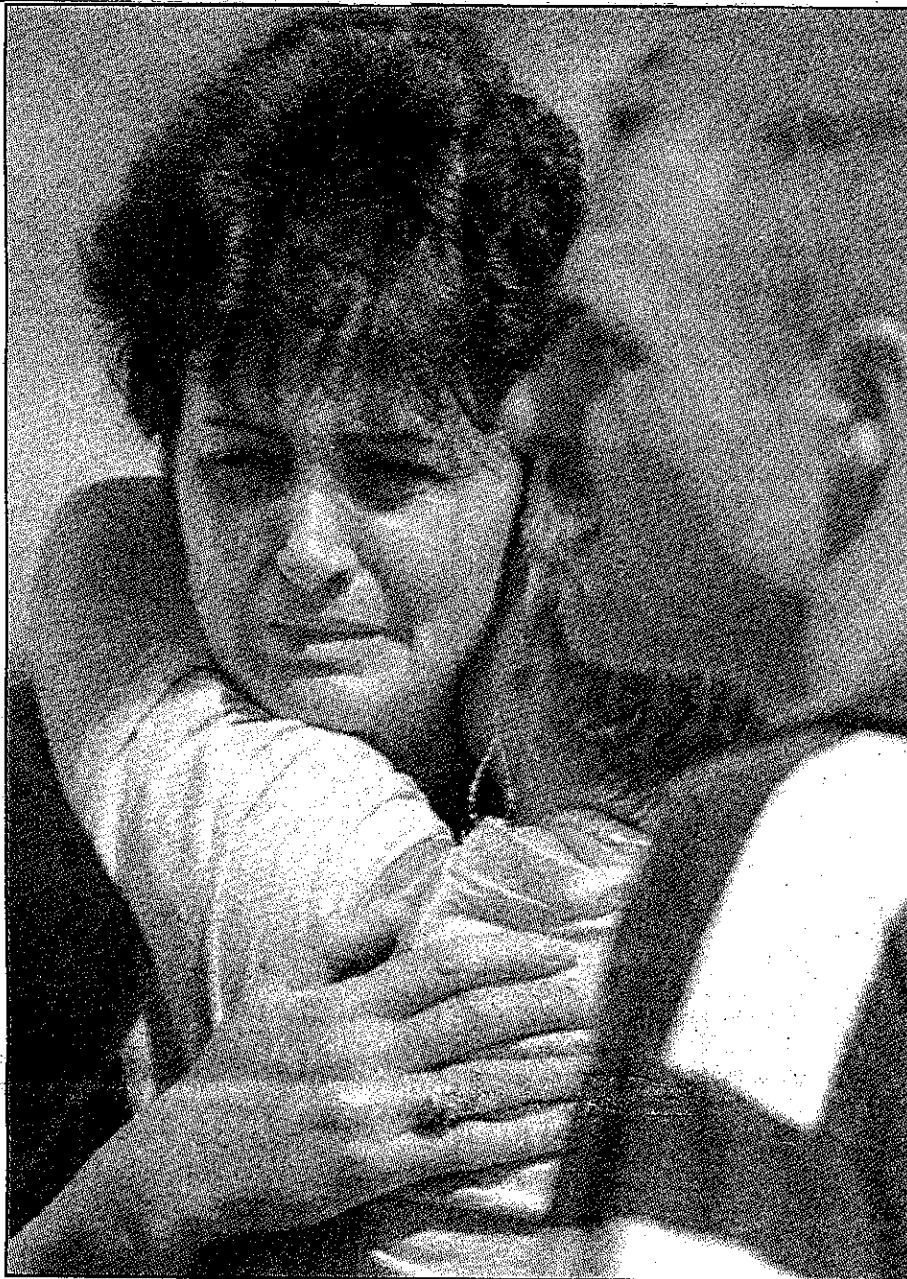
"It was so upsetting," 89ers owner Jeffrey Loria said Friday after making arrangements to pay left-over funeral expenses for the Drakes. "I'm still shaking. It just shows how precious life is."

Although Janice Drake's body was recovered in White's car last Saturday, Michelle's remains were missing until Friday when a contractor hired to clear debris from the North Canadian River found the body. White's remains also were found Friday.

Janice and Michelle Drake were a fixture at All-Sports Stadium, Loria said. Janice was "emotionally involved" in the games, he said, while Michelle liked to play catch with the boys who sell programs and food and drink.

"They used to come to practically every game," Loria said, adding that he had only a "nodding acquaintance" with the pair, but knew them well enough to recognize their

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— AP Photo

Mary Wanner of Oklahoma City is comforted by family and friends Friday as they watch her son's body being pulled from the North Canadian River. James Brian White, 26, was swept away during flash floods in Oklahoma City last weekend.

9 Counties Added to Disaster Area

By Ed Godfrey
Staff Writer

Nine more Oklahoma counties were declared disaster areas Friday and federal emergency officials believe they could receive as many as 7,000 applications for financial assistance from residents in the 13 storm-ravaged counties.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) said Friday that residents of Bryan, Canadian, Carter, Cleveland, Grady, Kay, Pottawatomie, Tulsa and Washington counties are now eligible for federal disaster assistance programs.

Those counties suffered damage severe enough during the storms and flooding on May 8 to

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warrant federal aid, said Graham Nance, federal coordinating officer for FEMA. Oklahoma, Logan, Payne and Kingfisher counties were declared disaster areas on Wednesday.

Other counties are still being surveyed for damage. Gov. David Walters had asked that Creek County also be added to the disaster declaration.

The task of assessing damage to public roads and bridges also

began Friday and those losses will likely be in the "tens of million," said Tom Feuerborn, state director of emergency management.

As of 10 a.m. Friday, FEMA had received 837 applications for assistance including 648 from Oklahoma County residents, Nance said.

FEMA issued its first disaster housing checks Friday totaling \$5,428 to nine Oklahoma City area families. Two of the families received funds for rental assistance while the others received money for minimal emergency repairs to make their homes livable, said Billy Penn, public information officer with FEMA.

Anyone qualifying for disaster

housing assistance should receive funds within four to six days after they apply, Nance said. Those funds are disbursed to storm victims so homes can be made habitable or to rent temporary housing if the homes cannot be made safe, secure or sanitary, he said.

Also, anyone receiving disaster housing assistance may still be eligible for additional aid such as low interest loans, grants or unemployment assistance, Nance said.

The U.S. Small Business Administration offers residential, business and personal property disaster loans at interest rates of 4 percent and 8 percent, depend-

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Nurse Appointed Mental Health Commissioner

By Karen Klinka
Staff Writer

In a surprise move Friday, Sharron D. Boehler, a psychiatric nurse with 30 years of clinical nursing, teaching and management experience, was named commissioner of state Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.

Boehler, director of nursing with the state mental health department since March 1991, has also been serving as the agency's interim assistant commissioner since Oct. 10.

Boehler's appointment was announced Friday at the monthly meeting of the agency's governing board.

Boehler's appointment as commissioner was unanimous and effective immediately, board Chairman Dorothy Stanislaus said.

On March 12, the board announced that its candidate for the commissioner's post was Deborah J.

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— Staff Photo by Jim Argo

Toppled Train

A Burlington Northern railroad car loaded with sand lies crumpled at the bottom of the North Canadian River north of Wetumka. The train derailed late Thursday. No one was injured. See story on Page 13.

Disaster — Drown

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ing upon an applicant's qualifications, said Ray Chatham, area director of disaster operations.

In the past 10 years, 96 percent of the agency's loans have been written at 4 percent interest, he said. The agency can loan up to \$100,000 on real estate repairs and \$20,000 for personal property replacement, he said. Loans to replace a business structure or its inventory can be made up to \$500,000, he said.

The agency will issue either an approval or denial to a loan application within 10 days after it is made, he said. A check is usually issued within a week after a loan's approval if the applicant needs the money immediately, he said.

Anyone not qualifying for a loan may be eligible for a family grant program, Nance said. Also, disaster unemployment assistance may be available to some, he said.

Residents may apply for assistance by calling 1-800-462-9029. Phones will be staffed from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. seven days a week.

The period for the storm claims began May 8 and is being left open because of the possibility of future flooding, Nance said.

Residents and business owners in counties not declared disaster areas may still apply for assistance, but their applications will not be processed until the county is declared eligible for federal aid, he said.

Anyone with a telecommunications device for the deaf may call 1-800-462-7585 to apply. FEMA officials are expected to stay in Oklahoma through July. Temporary headquarters are at the Radisson Inn in Oklahoma City but plan to relocate at 210 W. Park Ave., in Oklahoma City by Sunday, Nance said.

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names from news reports on the flood.

"They were a couple of very sweet people," Loria said.

A family member said Janice Drake was a daddy's girl, a daughter who depended heavily on her father for love and support.

"She was a very sensitive gal, very introverted, very shy and very dependent on her father," said Drake's aunt, Goldie Littlefield of Loveland, Colo. "He helped her far and beyond."

Littlefield said her niece was quick to trust strangers and struggled as a single parent to support her only daughter.

Services for Janice and Michelle Drake will be at 10 a.m. today at the Custer City Nazarene Church. The Drakes will be buried in the same casket at Fountain Cemetery northwest of Oakwood,

according to Stanley-Lee Funeral Home in Clinton.

A memorial fund was set up at Custer City State Bank.

The funeral home said Janice Faye Drake graduated from Clinton High School in 1971 and worked at one time for the Oklahoma Tax Commission. She later had a temporary job as key-punch operator.

Littlefield said Drake and her daughter had lived in Oklahoma City off and on for the past 15 years, with Drake working sporadically. When things got tough, she said, Drake's father was always glad to help.

"Her dad never gave up on her," Littlefield said. "He's a very soft, tender person and so was Janice."

Townspeople in Custer City, Clinton and surrounding areas rushed to comfort Ray Drake with kind words, home-cooked

meals and a few dollars here and there.

"He breaks down," Littlefield said. "It hurts Ray to know the death was by a flood, so traumatic."

"It's been astonishing to me the response in the countryside," said Littlefield. "Even the mortician went to school with her."

Michelle Drake attended Crooked Oak Elementary School in Oklahoma City, where one of her teachers described her as helpful, kind and shy. The two lived at 1706 S High.

Police Capt. Bill Citty said Michelle's body was found on the south bank of the North Canadian River

near Reno and Eastern at about 8:30 a.m. Friday.

Six hours later, White's body was found along the south bank of the river between Reno and Shields.

Mary Wanner, White's mother, was at home Friday with relatives when she heard her son's body had been found.

"It's a relief, but then it's hard to face the reality, too," Wanner said. "I'm grateful they found (the missing child) so they can bury them together. Once is enough."

Because of their tragic bond, Wanner said she was invited to the

Drake family's funeral on Saturday.

"I don't think I'm going to make it. I have to make Brian's arrangements," said Wanner, adding she plans to somehow show her sorrow for the Drake family later.

Wanner reflects back to the fateful Saturday, when she watched the immersed car holding Drake's body being pulled from the creek.

She said she had no

idea then it belonged to her son.

"They said it was a family, so I wasn't even concerned it was Brian," Wanner said. "I thought, how horrible for that family."

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