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SUNDAY EXTRAS: COUPONS WEEKLY TV LISTING BOOK COLOR COMICS PARADE MAGAZINE

Hurricane Charley Sends Woman Back to Dayton Area

BY DALE HUFFMAN

DAYTON, Ohio —

"I'm back home in Dayton," she said. "And I know that God had this in his plan for me."

Jenna, who celebrated her 91st birthday on Sept. 25, lost everything she owns but the clothes she was wearing when Hurricane Charley hit the high-rise building where she lived as part of a retirement center in Port Charlotte, Fla. on Sept. 13.

Speaking from her new home at 10 Wilmington Place, a Dayton retirement center, Jenna, who is a widow, said, "We had never been hit with anything more than high winds in the 24 years since we retired to Florida. But this time, wow, did we get a direct hit."

She was in her third-floor apartment when the rumbling started. Her large picture window blew out and furniture was tossed around in her living quarters.

She took refuge in an interior bathroom. "It went on forever, and we were in the building for two days without electricity or water. We were unable to get out."

Eventually, rescue workers found Jenna and others and took them for medical examinations and then placed them in a hotel in Sarasota.

When the hurricane winds began ripping at her home, and havoc reigned, Jenna said something unusual happened to her.

"I must tell you this. I had not a fear in the world," she said. "I can't explain it well, but it was like a curtain came down over my brain. I was able to function and deal with it as if nothing was happening. I guess the Lord was at work and he allowed me to handle it without trauma. It seems I was prepared for these things in measure. I just did not become unglued, and was prepared for my fate, whatever that would be."

Jenna said the owners of the retirement complex informed her and others that the building was so badly damaged it must be razed. She added, "They did say that if they are able to find any of my personal pictures or items they will try to save them for me,"

She said she called her daughter in Vandalia to let her know she had survived the storm, was living in a hotel — but all her possessions were gone.

"Well, she encouraged me to come home to Dayton," Jenna continued. "To come home and be with family."

Her daughter, Jackie Orme, began looking for living accommodations and sent Jenna money for airfare.

When Jenna, who lived 40 years in the Belmont area before moving to Florida, saw the apartment at 10 Wilmington she said she knew she had found a home.

"It is beautiful and I have a big window with a nice view and the folks are great," Jenna said. "I live near my daughter in Vandalia and my two sons, one in Dayton and one in Indiana. And my grandchildren. It is a blessing."

Little did Jenna Underwood know that a severe hurricane season in Florida in 2004 would send her back home where she now plans to live out her life.

The Dayton Red Cross helped provide her with emergency food and clothing once she arrived here, and her son's church in Indiana held a "kitchen shower" and brought her kitchen equipment.

"The kind folks here at 10 Wilmington were kind enough to lend me furniture until I am able to get my own," she said. "I am also getting my electric scooter replaced."

She admits she will miss all her Florida friends, and does not look forward to the challenges of a Dayton winter after all these years.

"However, things are really falling into place. God brought me home to Dayton after the hurricanes sent me packing," she said. "And now, I must say, I am thankful for every day of my life. Regardless of the weather."