

Local contractors still helping Isabel's victims

By Beth Meisner

Staff writer

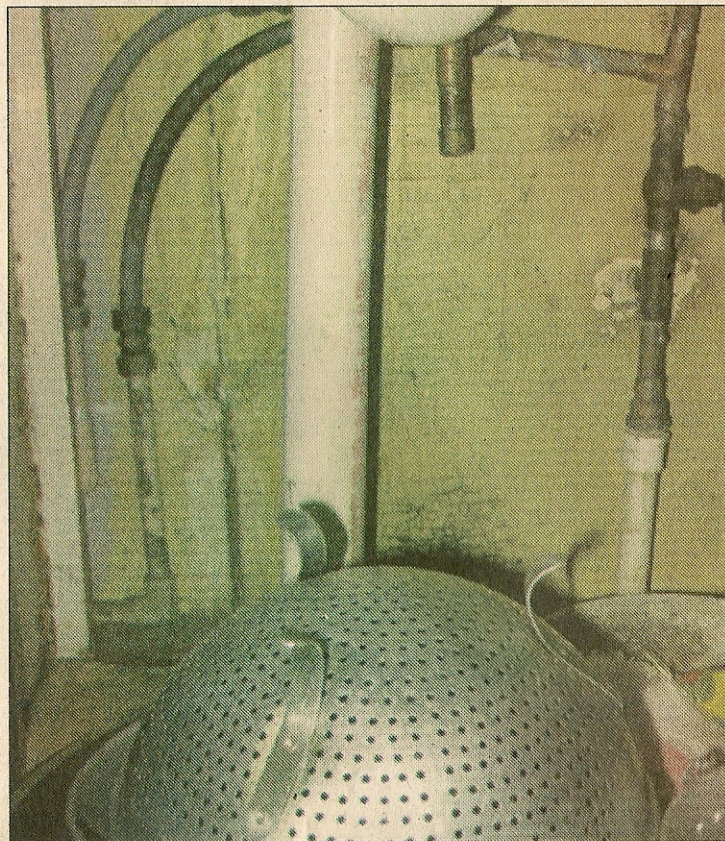
In the 28 years since he's been in the construction business, Robert Criner has learned enough about building, remodeling and running a business to have become a sought-after lecturer on all three topics.

Since hurricane Isabel blew through Poquoson and York County, he's added some highly specialized knowledge on preparing for and rebuilding after major storms to his repertoire. Other builders and remodelers are interested in learning about those specific topics, as well.

But Criner's most recent experience with Hurricane Isabel was very much on the local level - and it wasn't with presenting a program halfway across the country. Instead, it was personal and involved rounding up area contractors to tackle a post-Isabel problem in Poquoson.

While the eyes of the world have recently been on the destruction of hurricanes Katrina and Wilma along the U. S. Gulf Coast, there are plenty of people in Poquoson and York

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Photos by Robert Criner

... and destroyed the wall and flooring under the sink.



Isabel's floodwaters started a rusting process on Pearl Firman's kitchen cabinets . . .

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County who haven't rebuilt from Isabel.

Criner, who owns and operates Criner Construction Company in Tabb, was contacted recently by a member of the Poquoson Recovery Team who told him about Pearl Firman, a long-time resident of Ridge Road. Isabel's flood waters had come up over the doorknobs on Mrs. Firman's first floor.

She and her family had watched the water rise and, as it flooded the downstairs portion of the house, they climbed the stairs to get out of harm's way.

They weathered the storm, but its aftermath just didn't go away. Floodwaters had soaked everything downstairs and, while most of the house eventually dried out, the metal cabinets in Mrs. Firman's kitchen began to rust in the days and months after the storm.

By the end of last year, they were a mess, and the Poquoson Recovery Team hoped Criner knew someone who might be interested in lending a hand.

Criner turned to the Peninsula Remodelers Council, an organization of 15-20 remodelers who also belong to the umbrella Peninsula Housing and Builders Association.

It didn't take him long to line up a number of area remodelers who were willing to donate their time and skills to rebuilding Mrs. Firman's kitchen.

"We're always looking for community projects," Criner says. "So this was a good match." He recalls broaching the project to a meeting of the Remodelers Council.

"The hands went up and people asked, 'what can I do?'"

Over a dozen companies, many of them from York County and Poquoson, "gave up their schedules to make it happen," Criner says. After the job was designed and new cabinets ordered, the work involved resupporting the kitchen floor, stripping the walls back to the studs in some cases, then starting over with new walls, trim and caulking.

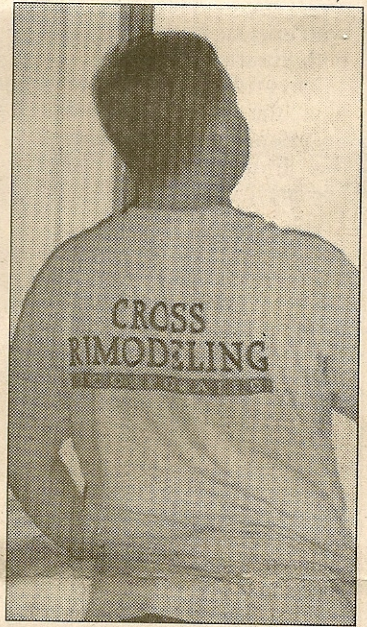
In all, the project took a couple of weeks, and when it was done, Mrs. Firman had a new kitchen - courtesy of volunteers from the Remodeling Council.

Criner wasn't surprised that the local contractors came together on such a worthy project. And he was downright pleased that so many responded to a need which, in the wake of all that's happened since Hurricane Isabel, most of the world has forgotten.

Criner made a point of photographing employees of many



R. A. Jones, Inc



Cross Remodeling

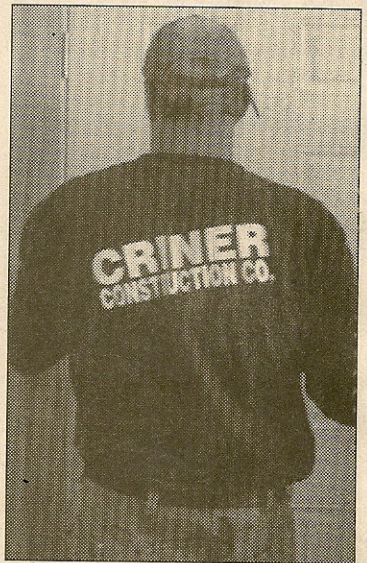


Causey Contracting and C. E. Baker Construction

of the companies in his before, during, and after pictures of the project. The pictures become something of an honor roll of folks who are willing to pitch in and help out when there's a genuine need.

Helping Mrs. Firman were:

- C.E. Baker Construction, Inc.
- Craig Rountree Building & Remodeling
- Couture Custom Remodeling
- Cross Remodeling
- T.R. Construction, Inc.
- R. A. Jones, Inc.
- Causey Contracting
- Contractor Yard
- Reico Kitchens
- Dominion Floor Covering
- Steve Carson & Son Plumbing
- Criner Construction Co.



Robert Criner Construction Co.