

Elevation Near Blanco River Survives Historic Flood

HAYS COUNTY, TX – On May 24, 2015, floodwater from the Blanco River overwhelmed numerous Texas cities. The record floods left residents homeless, structures damaged and claimed several lives.

“San Marcos was among the hardest hit when the river crested at 41 feet with the flood stage at a mere 13 feet,” said Emergency Management Coordinator for the city of San Marcos Kenneth Bell. “The previous record was set in 1929, when it rose to 32 feet.”

All homes on Bogie Drive were inundated with floodwater except for Juan Ponce’s house; the only elevated house on the street.

Ponce, an experienced builder, bought his lot in 1993 and built the house himself in 1995-96. Before beginning construction he was told by county building officials that his lot was in a floodplain and that he would have to elevate the structure.

“The county wanted me to elevate at least four feet high and I elevated a full nine feet,” said Ponce.

On the morning of the flood, Ponce, his wife Maria and their three children were asleep when the floodwaters invaded the neighborhood. Their daughter woke up and found the home completely surrounded by water. She alerted the family that there was flooding. The water was up to approximately eight-feet at their house.

They looked directly across the street and saw their neighbor’s house submerged in nine feet of water. Next door, the floodwaters had risen up to seven feet. The entire neighborhood was covered with water. They were astonished.

“In 1998 and 2002 two smaller flooding events took place that impacted my neighbors but not to this extent,” said Ponce.

Ponce’s 2,100-square-foot, two-story house is situated at the end of a tree-lined street. The house is designed with a retaining wall at the entrance that added a distinctive look to the landscape.

The home is elevated on 15 steel and concrete posts that are embedded seven feet into the ground. Underneath the house is a concrete slab reserved for parking vehicles and storage.

“Although it cost 30 percent more to elevate the home, it has been well worth it,” said Ponce. The entire house was paid for with private funds.

While Ponce’s house did not flood, some of his possessions were damaged when water flowed through the parking space at the front of the garage and out through the back opening. His lawn equipment, work tools and the air conditioning unit were all destroyed, along with his vehicles that were parked at the home.

Nearly three months after the historic event, all of the houses on Bogie Street are still vacant except for Ponce’s house. However, signs of recovery and rebuilding can be seen throughout the area. Dumpsters lining the street are filled with trash, damaged insulation, along with discarded sheetrock and carpet.

Juan said neighbors are asking him for advice and he’s helping them with repairs. As far as his own plans,



Juan Ponce’s home escaped flood damage after Memorial Day weekend flood in 2015
(Photo by Bonnie Hanchett)



Ponce said he wants to build a platform and raise the air conditioning unit that cools the home. Reflecting on recent events, he said, "I consider myself lucky that we do not have damage to our house." For additional information, visit: www.fema.gov/floodplain-management-information-property-owners.



Neighbor's house on Bogie Drive received 7 ft. of water
(Photo by Bonnie Hanchett)



Bogie Drive is lined with debris as residents recover
(Photo by Bonnie Hanchett)