Memories Of Flood Still Vivid 10 Years Later

Crushing Force Of Water Stunned Charleston Area

By TOM CUMMINGS
Of The Daily Mail Staff

The day dawned dull and sullen. Rain dripped steadily from heavy low-lying clouds. Morning hours passed without incident and by noon the rain appeared to be slackening. For a few minutes during the early afternoon the sun shone through the overcast faintly. The sky grew darker by 3 p. m. and the crescendo of a heavier rain began to rise. Cars sloshed through drenched streets and there was no escaping the downpour.

Charleston Police Department's communications centers began receiving calls about flooding basements and curb-to-curb levels of street water. Concern began to grow as reports indicated debris was being dumped into streets by the heavy runoff.

But even then there seemed to be no cause for alarm. As the homebound began to mass at 5 p. m., the first indications came that this was to be no ordinary rain. Raindrops kept falling in increasing intensity. To some it appeared as though a wall of water was falling to the ground.

This was July 19, 1961, when one of the city's most devastating cloudbursts struck hemmed-in areas from one end of the community to the other. Civil Defense mobilized to help harried police and fire department personnel.

Telephone calls came in swelling numbers to the police. Emergency radios were pressed into service at strategic locations to provide more sources of communication. As the story unfolded, shock, disbelief and even terror stunned residents everywhere.

From Garrison Avenue, Elk Two-Mile, Lick Branch, South Ruffner, Loudendale, Campbells Creek, Kanawha City, Wertz Avenue came insistent and fear-filled calls for help.

Disaster struck so quickly there was no time to rally protective forces. Mayor John A. Shaskie, the late J. M. Stobblefield, then the city's CD director, battalion chiefs for the fire department and division officers of the police department gathered in the second floor conference room of city hall to sort out the chaos.

Outside the skies blackened and the rain fell in crushing volumes. It took only a short time to access that this was no ordinary emergency. A call to the office of then Gov. W. W. Barron alerted National Guard units.

By this time calls flooded the police switchboard and set off a tide of rumors that added to the terror of the night. Areas in the city's West Side never before touched by flooding, were unbelievably inundated.

The West Virginia National Guard began to deploy troops to danger areas. When units radioed they couldn't reach Elk-Two Mile because of flooding near the Kanawha Airport access road, the horror of the tragedy began to register. The rain continued without abating.

The crushing weight of the rushing waters in Magazine Hollow piled up houses like match sticks near its lower end at Crescent Road. Officers worked heroically to throw ropes to those caught in the swollen, thrashing waters.

The hollow behind Greystone Motel near Wertz Avenue filled to overflowing. It burst through a culvert with such force that it tore out a section of Kanawha Boulevard.

Police and firemen not given to profanity cursed at their helplessness. The number of lifeless bodies snatched from the swirling waters climbed steadily. It finally stopped at 25.

The late Col. J. Henry Francis, called in to command the National Guards forces, looked at the pin-pricked map in his command post. "This can't be true," he declared. "There's something wrong." Confirmation of disaster came as guardsmen mounted water-adapted vehicles and probed deeper into trouble spots.

At the Good Motel on U. S. 21, a group of men and women clung to the rooftop as angry waters sloshed at the building. It proved to be a miracle that one transient was awakened by water lapping at his bed, and he awakened the others.

Huge chunks of paving were ripped on U. S. 21, W. Va. 14 and several secondary roads. Small bridges lay smashed against stream banks. On lower Elk Two-Mile, a 72-inch culvert under railroad tracks couldn't carry the runoff into Elk River. A motorist trapped on Washington Street near Burton Street drowned when he accidentally slipped beneath his car. One body of a flood victim was found 120 miles from Charleston near Greenup, Ky.

Property damage finally was assessed at $3.75 million. Hundreds of families were left temporarily homeless and field kitchens were set up on Elk Two-Mile as public feeding stations.

C. C. McDonald, then president of the West Virginia Water Co. attributed the damage to the crushing effect of the millions of tons of water that fell during a 24-hour period. The total was finally measured at approximately six inches. Tons of food had to be dumped because of contamination by the polluted waters from flooded streams.

"It can't happen in another 100 years," said officials when the cleanup was completed nine weeks after the catastrophe. It did happen last Sunday on a smaller scale in the Sissonville area.

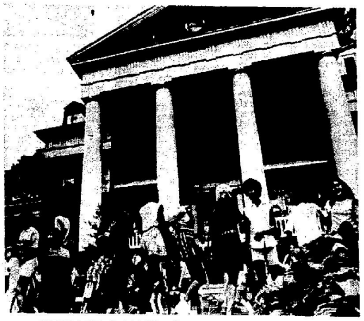
There was eager agitation for protective programs after the flood to prevent a recurrence. The USDA Soil Conservation Service studied 16 proposals, that since have dwindled to three. U. S. Army Corps of Engineers proposed multi-million projects.

At the time, Bluestone Reservoir was completed, Sutton was under construction and Summersville remained on the drawing boards. Still other reservoirs are being projected to stem flood threats.

Tomorrow evening the Elk Two-Mile Watershed Assn. will conduct a 10th anniversary memorial service at Coonskin Park. They still battle for a watershed development for their area that seems only to be running into obstacles. They have only the statistics to remind them of tragedy.

A visit to the stricken area this week showed all marks of disaster had been erased by time.

TYPICAL DAMAGE IN DISASTROUS 1961 FLOOD



SQUARE DANCING ON THE TERRACE

"Swing your partner" was the call this morning as Young People's Folk Festival visitors square danced on the Sunrise terrace. The fourth event, sponsored by the Children's Museum and Planetarium, also includes dulcimer and banjipe playing, singing and demonstration of corn husk doll making, pewter spinning, quilting, spinning, candlemaking and woodcarving. Visitors may attend the free festival tonight until 9. — Daily Mail Photo by Gary Truman.

Hot Line

Got a problem? Need an answer? Hot Line solves problems, answers questions, cuts red tape. For help dial 348-4811, any hour of the day or night, seven days a week. Or write Hot Line, Daily Mail, Charleston, West Va. 25330.

Q. Is it against the law to use profanity in public in the city of Charleston?

S. L.
Charleston

A. Yes, according to Acting Chief of Police L. H. Morris, a person would be charged with disorderly conduct.

Part 5, Article 9, Paragraph 2(b) of the city code says, in part, "It shall be unlawful for any person to curse, swear or make use of any profane language, or indecent or obscene words . . .

Q. I would like to know about the incident that happened recently with Joe Eads at Patrick Street and Fourth Avenue. Does the ruling on this mean that a policeman can use abusive language to your wife and you can't object to it? Are we going to have to stand for that?

J. H.
South Charleston

A. Acting Municipal Court Judge Michael Fewell said the patrolman denied using abusive language and was merely performing his duty of keeping traffic moving. Eads said he would appeal a $32 fine on a charge of disorderly conduct.

Q. My company is giving me an all-expense paid vacation trip because I exceeded my sales quota. Is this taxable?

L. M.
Marmet

A. Yes, IRS says incentive awards and work bonuses which you receive from your employer are taxable. You must include the fair market value of the trip as income in the year in which it was received.

Q. Is there anyone in the vicinity who re-covers umbrellas?

Mrs. O. R.
Dunbar

A. Not that we know of.

Q. Several parents and I have gotten together over a rumor that there was drug abuse at Thomas Jefferson Junior High School. Is this rumor true. If so, is anything being done? How can we help?

Mrs. M.
Crede

A. Drug abuse is believed to be a growing problem in about all schools. Kanawha County Schools staff members, working with a communitywide advisory committee, have developed a unit of study dealing with drugs which will be used this school year. The board of education approved a policy which, in part, calls for a group including parents to be organized in each school to work with drug problems as they surface. Contact your school principal about such a committee. Accurate information on drug abuse is difficult to obtain. Work with the school committee closely to avoid dealing in rumors.

Q. Do residents of Sherwood Forest attend South Charleston or George Washington High School?

D. T.
Charleston

A. George Washington.

Q. Can a female dog be spayed before she is six months old?

B. V.
City

A. A spokesman for a local veterinarian's office told Hot Line he recommends that female dogs be spayed between ages five-and one-half and six months.

BIGGEST OLDEST fastest GREATEST HEAVIEST tallest smallest latest
according to GUINNESS

LARGEST BABY: The heaviest normal newborn child recorded in modern times was a boy weighing 24 lb. 4 ozs., born on June 3, 1961, to Mrs. Sendet Cor of Ceyhan, southern Turkey.

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HELP FOR VIET VETS

Moore Urges Legionnaires To Be Personal Emissaries

By RICHARD HAAS
Of The Daily Mail Staff

Gov. Moore today encouraged members of the American Legion to "be a personal emissary to the young man next door returning from Vietnam" as he explained to them his administration's effort to help returning veterans.

Speaking at the opening session of the group's state convention at the Daniel Boone Hotel, Gov. Moore said the legionnaires had a special obligation to show returning veterans that their efforts in Vietnam were appreciated.

Elaborating on a program he announced recently, Gov. Moore indicated he wanted every American Legion post in the state turned into a well equipped veterans information center.

The State Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Employment Security will be working in a joint effort, he said, to see that all veterans are fully informed of their rights.

He expressed concern that at the present time only five per cent of West Virginia men leaving service are taking advantage of educational benefits.

"We're going to start getting tough with some of these boys," Gov. Moore said. "They're going to have to convince us that they have full knowledge of the educational benefits available and that they really don't want to use them."

For those who do not chose to enter one of the available educational programs, he said the Department of Employment Security would make every effort to see that veterans get preferential job placement. He indicated, however, that as most West Virginia job markets remain tight the veterans would be strongly encouraged to use their educational benefits.

At the beginning of his address Gov. Moore made reference to President Nixon's address last night on relations with Communist China. Gov. Moore said that he realized many legionnaires would have reservations about the U. S. achieving closer relations with China.

He added, however, that in his years of political experience—especially as a Republican governor dealing with a Democrat-dominated legislature—he had learned much good comes when people of opposing viewpoints sit down for frank discussions.

As for the American Legion's reputation as being superpatriotic, Gov. Moore, a lifetime member of the Moundsville post, said he could not accept this view. The legion's activities, he said, were essential to balance the national uncertainty on many major issues.

Congressman Harley Staggers, D-W. Va., was scheduled to give the main address to the gathering this afternoon.

WHERE'S THE FIRE?

Charleston firemen answered these alarms between noon yesterday and 1 p.m. today:

1:12 p.m., 1507 Quarrier St., assistance.

8:08 p.m., 47th Street and MacCorkle Avenue, motorcycle, light damage.

9:15 p.m., 602 Virginia St., false alarm.

11:12 p.m., Smith and Broad streets, false alarm.

6:29 a.m., 912 Quarrier St., The Hub, faulty wiring, light damage.

USING CABELL-PUTNAM BONDS

Federal Support Sought For 'Mini-Midway' Port

HUNTINGTON (AP)—A delegation of Cabell and Putnam county officials is to be in Washington Monday to ask for federal approval and support of a "Mini-Midway" regional jetport between Charleston and Huntington.

Cabell County Commissioner Bill Dunfee put together the $12.5 million package.

Dunfee proposes to activate the $3 million bonds approved by Cabell County in 1966, $800,000 in bonds approved by Putnam County voters the same year, and divert Federal Aviation Administration and Appalachian Regional Commission funds that were earmarked for Tri-State Airport near Huntington.

The bond issues were intended to finance construction of the originally proposed Midway jetport, but Kanawha County voters defeated their share of the bonds.

Two members of the Tri-State Airport Authority said Thursday they became aware of the planning meeting earlier this week and both voiced serious doubts about the plan and indicated it might be the subject of court tests if it reached beyond the talking stages.

Charles F. Dodrill of the authority said that he has serious questions as to the legal right of the Cabell County Court to undertake to sell any bonds under the Midway vote since it was conditional on aKnawha County taking part.

WORLD'S MOST MAGNETIC MALE?

Thomas Woodward (Jones, That Is) To Erupt Tonight At Civic Center

By ANN JOHNSTON HAAS
Of The Daily Mail Staff

"Who?" had to be asked by only one woman questioned Thursday about the identity of Charleston's most prominent visitor today.

And she has plans to be in the Civic center audience tonight watching the Welsh singer who some say has more sex appeal than Frank Sinatra ever had—Tom Jones.

"I wanted to go to an auction tonight, but my husband got tickets at a reduced rate," the woman explained.

She's seen Jones before. It was in Beckley in 1964 and the then-barely twinkling star was with Dick Clark's Calvacade of Stars.

"To play up his name, he wore his hair pulled back in a ribbon then," she reported.

But, it's just as easy to find women like the one in her 20s who said: "I'd give an arm and leg to see Tom Jones. Even if he just stood there and didn't do anything, I'd pay $20. And if he sang, I'd pay $40.

She isn't going to get to the show, however. "My husband won't stand still for me paying that much for tickets," she confessed.

Many others—of various ages—said they'd like to be in the audience tonight, but not quite enough to pay the $8 or $12.

Although Jones is a heralded performer, women making up his audiences are obviously there for additional reasons. In Las Vegas three months ago, women stood in the aisles and danced while he sang. Stage guards were kept busy collecting undergarments, hotel keys and flowers tossed in Jones' direction.

Women were caught trying to smuggle handcuffs into the singer's dressing room and faking faints in the hope they'd be taken backstage and "revived."

Whether these scenes will be re-enacted in Charleston awaits proof, but the females planning to get close to Jones, or maybe talking with him, here is some advice:

—His real name is Thomas Jones Woodward, he's 31, has a sister named Freda, and is a former construction worker.

—He likes soul music, Indian curry to eat, Dom Perignon to drink, and the color blue.

—His favorite singer is Brook Benton, favorite actress Katherine Ross, and favorite actor Rod Steiger (or Paul Newman—depending on which publicity piece you read).

—He travels alone, leaving his wife, Linda, and 14-year-old son, Mark, at home in a three-story mansion in Surrey, or in the Bahamas.

What about Charleston men? Will they turn out to see and hear someone voted "World's Most Magnetic Male" by the Hollywood Bachelorette Society?

One wife is taking his wife tonight on a pass commented: "As the old saying goes, I wouldn't pay $12 to see Tom Jones walk a tightrope across New River Gorge."

Maybe so, but how many husbands and boy friends are letting their wives and girl friends go alone?

DOES IT HURT?—Is Tom Jones belting out a ballad here, or has he been hit in the back of the head by a female fan's hotel key? With Jones' stage reputation, it could be both. The Welsh singer, the 30-piece orchestra comprising the Jeff Stanges Universe, The Blossoms, and comedian Pat Henry appear tonight at 8:30 at the Civic Center.

Elmore Removed To U.S. Prison

Clarence C. Elmore, former state alcohol beverage control commission convicted of tax evasion, today was removed from the Kanawha County jail to the federal prison at Lewisburg, Pa.

Elmore surrendered yesterday to the U. S. marshal after Federal Judge John A. Field Jr. denied him another appeal from the 1968 conviction.

Sheriff's deputies said Elmore was taken by a deputy U. S. marshal from the county jail about 9 a. m. He was sentenced following a trial in Bluefield to a prison term of 18 months and fined $5,000.

Turn On With Light, Power

"Turn on with Jesus" is the invitation from the J. C. (Jesus Christ) Light and Power Co. which will sponsor a program Saturday at 7:30 p.m. at Second Avenue and B Street in South Charleston.

The group of young Christians is conducting weekly "turn on" sessions around the Kanawha Valley.

City Seeking To Fix Slips On 7 Streets

The city has compiled a list of seven streets which have been damaged by land slips and is presently trying to correct them on a priority basis, according to City Engineer James Sell.

Sell said that on orders from Mayor Hutchinson he inspected the slips and has formulated a basic repair plan. The street department presently is working on Craze Drive which has two slips.

Acting Street Commissioner Jack Walsh said today his crews are working on the west or lower slip. He added that another slip on Lilly Drive had been partially repaired with stone, but they were waiting for the earth to settle before continuing.

The other slips on Sell's list are: Wayland Street, about 100 feet of street moving downhill; Daisy Drive, a major project according to Walsh, with about 100 feet of the road deteriorated; Craze Drive, where the northeast corner of a bridge near Sugar Creek also needs repair. Sell said the present condition is "very dangerous." Amity drive which has about 50 feet of pavement sliding downhill.

The city is waiting for legal opinions before proceeding with repair of a major slip on Livingston Avenue. The site has been visited several times. Sell said, in order to work out an engineering solution. Pacific Street was inspected June 10 and Sell said about 120 feet of pavement has slid 12 to 15 feet downhill.

Sell said he also wanted to advise property owners that they will be required to sign permits if crews have to work on private property to repair slides.

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