COMMEMORATIVE 50TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

PALM SUNDAY 1965
THE GOSHEN NEWS

Saturday, April 11, 2015 | Serving your community for **178** years | 32 PAGES | 75 CENTS

FROM THE DARKNESS

On April 11, 1965 our community was changed forever as multiple killer tornadoes tore through Elkhart and LaGrange counties on Palm Sunday, killing 70 people and destroying hundreds of homes.

It was, without question, the darkest day in local history. Now, 50 years later, we can still feel the magnitude of that day as we remember those we lost and those we leaned on for strength.

The Goshen News







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FROM THE ARCHIVES

Rescue Parties Continue Search For Bodies; More Victims Found

Ambulances Run Shuttle Service Between Devastated Areas And Hospital; Death Toll Mounting; Over 200 Hospitalized

THE GOSHEN NEWS

Editor's note

Reprinted from the April 12, 1965 edition of The Goshen News

The worst tragedy in the history of Elkhart County, coming on Palm Sunday evening, took at least 47 county lives and the lives of 17 more in LaGrange County when two tornadoes ripped through the areas. More than 200 were injured, many of whom are still hospitalized.

The magnitude of the storm was still being learned today as volunteers continued the thankless task of searching through the debris for bodies. A number of missing persons were still being sought at noon today.

The first tornado struck about 6:15 p.m. Sunday at the Midway Mobile Home Court along U.S. 33, between Goshen and Dunlap. It had moved north across the county and not many residents of the court saw the storm in time to take cover — and others didn't have a safe place to go.

Debris in bits

The twister ripped through the court, ripping some 30 homes on the south side of the court to ruin. The debris was ripped to bits and scattered over a wide areas. The twister continued in a northeasterly direction and struck the Jefferson Place subdivision along S.R. 15, north of Goshen. It destroyed 15 homes there and three persons, all in cars on S.R. 15, lost their lives.

With every ambulance in the entire area, all police officers, civil defense unit workers, auxiliary police, sheriff's reserves, city firemen and volunteer firemen summoned to the Midway Court and Jefferson subdivision, another twister appeared in the west — just one hour after the first one hit.

A hundred or more volunteers were working at the Midway Trailer Court when the shouts of "take cover" were heard as the second funnel cloud was spotted. Many of the volunteers who survived the first twister almost panicked as they sought shelter — others watched the twister dip in a northeasterly direction across the northwest side of Dunlap, reducing much of the Sunnyside Addition to ruin. At least 20 persons lost their lives in the subdivision.

Bodies found

At least 10 persons, and possibly more lost their lives at the Midway Trailer Court where the bodies of three children under 10 years of age were found this morning. They were not identified at noon.

The twister that tore through the Sunnyside Addition at Dunlap continued northeasterly and dipped down near the U.S. 20-S.R. 15 intersection where five persons are believed to have lost their lives and a number of others were badly hurt.

One of the twisters, possibly a third, touched down northwest of Middlebury and two persons, Mrs. Ed Nihart and Mrs. Lester J. Miller, were fatally injured. Another twister also touched down between Jefferson Place and U.S. 20, causing considerable damage to homes in the Kenneth Getz area.

Direct operations

Sheriff Woody L. Caton and Goshen Police Chief Glenn L. Kindy were among the first at the scene at the Midway Trailer Court and directed operations there. Sheriff Caton soon moved to the Sunnyside area.

Heavy equipment was brought in from contractors in the area and all available wreckers were summoned as the mobile homes at Midway were uprighted and pulled out of the area in search of the wounded.

Steady stream

The injured were being taken to hospitals in all types of vehicles, including panel trucks, stationwagons and automobiles. Ambulances made steady runs to the Goshen and Elkhart General Hospitals. Both hospitals were quickly overcrowded.

The High Park Medical Associates building here was used for treatment of some emergency patients and many were then sent to the High Park women's dormitory where they were provided bed accommodations. Some of the injured were given treatment temporarily at the Dunlap EUB Church. All doctors were asked to report for duty. Many surgery cases were performed as many of the injured were badly mutilated.

There was a threat of gas explosions both at the Midway Trailer Court and at the Sunnyside Addition and strict no-smoking rules were in effect.

Help came from miles around and the workers finally ceased operations about 3:30 a.m. today when the National Guard was summoned to guard the areas to prevent looting. State police, including a number of men from counties out of this area, stayed at the various disaster scenes. The search started again this morning. Rain last night and this morning hampered searching operations.

In millions

No one could estimate the loss but it was in the millions of dollars.

Utility service was snarled and Goshen was isolated from telephone

See RESCUE | 31



GOSHEN NEWS FILE PHOTO

THE GOSHEN NEWS staff photographs editions of the paper for special section 11 days after the Palm Sunday tornadoes raked Elkhart and LaGrange counties on April 11, 1965



GOSHEN NEWS FILE PHOTO

GOSHEN NEWS EDITOR Dale S. Peffley, prepares to send a special edition chronicling the Palm Sunday tornadoes to U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson. Several days after the disaster, Johnson visited Elkhart County.



GOSHEN NEWS FILE PHOTO

VICTIMS OF THE PALM SUNDAY tornadoes and members of the local media crowd around U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson as he toured what was left of the Sunnyside housing edition in Dunlap on April 14, 1965.



GOSHEN NEWS FILE PHOTO

BLOWN ONTO NYC TRACKS — Concord Township volunteer firemen and two unidentified men are shown above, removing Harry Dunker, Route 2, Elkhart, from between the rails of a spur line on the New York Central Railroad. Dunker was a volunteer fireman from Osolo Township who was en route to the scene of the tragedy at Midway. The auto which he was driving was blown off of either U.S. 33 or C.R. 45, no one is certain, and hurtled through the air onto the tracks. Both east and westbound traffic on the NYC tracks for some time was halted.

Additional Bodies Being Uncovered In Tangle Of Debris

Pall Settles Over Goshen, Untouched By Twisters; Industry At A Standstill Again; Elkhart County Toll Now Figured At 54

THE GOSHEN NEWS

Editor's note

Reprinted from the April 13, 1965 edition of The Goshen News.

A pall seemed to settle over the Goshen community mercifully untouched by the twisters which turned Elkhart and LaGrange counties into major disaster areas, leaving 54 persons dead and at least 11 missing. Industry had come to a standstill and the customary string of children playing on the way to school had stopped.

Goshen residents gathered in small groups in the business district and talked tornado. They realized how fortunate they were. Some had seen a twister smack down at the Elkhart River dam and then lift skyward. And a few short miles to the north and to the west was utter devastation ... it might have hit here.

Everyone had relatives, or knew someone who was either homeless or had been killed or injured in the Palm Sunday tornadoes. The Goshen News Agency, which normally handles 90 copies of The Goshen News, had sold more than 1,000 Monday newspapers featuring aerial photos of the stricken areas taken by Mel Troyer from a helicopter piloted by Russ Miller.

"I was on the scene of an airliner crash several years ago. That was nothing compared to this. It got to me," one funeral director said here.

Road blocks

Goshen police officers were stationed on the North Main Street hill and Indiana National Guard units were stationed further out on Indiana 15 to stop sightseers from tying up traffic in the Jefferson Township area. They rerouted traffic around the disaster area south of Miller's Country restaurant.

The impossible task of trying to salvage some personal possessions from the piles of rubble and scattered debris was underway at Jefferson Place Subdivision. Where would one start?

Fires were burning along Indiana 15 as some of the debris was burned to clear the area. Curiosity seekers had been a problem here. This morning Indiana 15 was open to traffic.

"We were anxious to build our new home this spring. We sold our home and are living in an apartment. The contract has been signed and all they are waiting for is the weather. But after you see these people without homes I don't think we should build right now," said one Goshen woman.

Although a number of residents of the Jefferson area were injured, the three tornado deaths in this area were a mother and child and a Goshen man, motorists caught in the twister.

No Midway

That second black tornado, which looked like it would sweep right across the same place, had veered north.

Near the junction of Midway, U.S. 20 and Indiana 15, the winds had raised shingles and damaged farm buildings. A utility pole jutted across the

See TANGLE | 30

Coverage of Palm Sunday tornadoes was a shining hour for news staff



Bob Conrad
GUEST COLUMNIST

I was asked by your managing editor, Michael Wanbaugh to write an account of our coverage of the Palm Sunday tornadoes on April 11, 1965. I have never been fond of first-person stories, but it was kind of him to ask a very old retired editor to jot down a few memories of that fateful day.

It was about 6 in the evening when whirling winds were whipping around our home on West Clinton Street. I went out on the front porch to check out the weather and neighbor Don Ulery did the same. Then his storm door blew out of his grip and slammed open. It was obvious the weather was not good, but I had no idea I was about to be very involved in the worst disaster in Goshen's history.

Next I heard sirens to the north toward U.S. 33 and called the fire department and found out that a tornado had wiped out most of the Midway Mobile Home Park. I called reporter Billy Sheffer and photographer Mel Troyer, but both had apparently departed for the scene. They usually tried to beat each other to news events.

The Midway park was in total ruin. I walked through the park trying to find survivors for a description of the storm. About that time I came across a Goshen fireman who was crying, trying to find family members. That made the storm very real to me. Firemen seldom cry. Later I learned that 10 people were killed in the park, and many injured.

A short time later, others at the park pointed to twin black cloud banks to the north and west toward Dunlap. Another tornado or two were approaching, and people quickly sought shelter. There were no basements in the park, and I got under Goshen's big fire truck.

An Elkhart Truth photographer, Paul Huffman, was driving down U.S. 33 and took a picture of the first twin tornado clouds as they tore up Midway and crossed U.S. 33. The picture was circulated nationally. Huffman passed away several months ago. And my fellow journalists involved in the coverage of the storm, Sheffer, Troyer, Jim Miller, Norm Schweickart and Editor Dale Peffley, also are deceased.

The second tornado was even worse than the first as it wiped out the Sunnyside Addition, north of Dunlap. I did not go there, but did check out Jefferson Place north of Goshen and the U.S 20 and Ind. 15 area, which were both hard hit by the two tornadoes. I had friends living in Jefferson Place.

A visit to Goshen General Hospital was sadly overwhelming. The injured were everywhere, and doctors and nurses did not have time for a probing newspaperman. I was impressed by the

See CONRAD | 30



BOB CONRAD | THE GOSHEN NEWS

A SECOND TORNADO approaches the already devastated Midway Trailer Court just less than an hour after a twin, F4 twister hit the trailer court around 6:18 p.m. on April 11, 1965. This tornado, also reportedly a twin according to witnesses, swung north and leveled many homes in the Sunnyside Addition, north of Dunlap.

Palm Sunday was the most historic day here



Michael Wanbaugh
MANAGING EDITOR

As the skies above Elkhart and LaGrange counties began to turn a sickly color around 6 p.m. on April 11, 1965, many of those who were alive then said they could feel the eeriness of the moment.

It had been a gorgeous Palm Sunday. Temperatures jutted into the 70s as children took to the fields and parks to play. Evening church services celebrating Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem were planned. Most businesses during that era were closed on Sundays. Families were together, breaking bread, relaxing or watching the Master's golf tournament on their black and white televisions.

Soon, that peace and casual pace would be shattered and a lazy Palm Sunday would be transformed into the most horrific and perhaps historic day in our local history.

"It was the nicest day of the year and we were outside playing in our yard," remembered musician Laura Johnson, who was 10 at the time and lived with her family in an old farmhouse at the intersection of C.R. 28 and C.R. 13 northeast of Goshen. "The sky got really funny looking. It had gotten a little bit windy and then became still. It just felt weird."

Moments later, at approximately 6:18 p.m. Johnson said she saw boards flying in the air. That was the first F4 twin tornado that tore through the county, leveling the Midway Trailer Court along U.S. 33 between Goshen and Dunlap and the Jefferson Place subdivision along Ind. 15 north of Goshen. Ten people lost their lives at Midway. That storm also claimed lives north of Middlebury.

Within the hour, rescue workers at the trailer court were ducking for cover as another F4 monster barreled through Dunlap. This twister was farther north and took dead aim at the Sunnyside housing addition, a post-World War II neighborhood just east of the tracks that didn't stand a chance.

"I seen it coming," Carl Burk told Goshen News City Editor Roger Schneider. Burk lives on Kendall Street in the addition today, but lived on Lawton Avenue at the time. "… All we could see was a couple of Christmas (pine) trees floating in the air. We didn't have any idea how bad it was until it was over."

Nearly 150 homes were destroyed in and around the neighborhoods and 27 people died. That tornado that some witnesses say also split into two funnels, continued northeast, leveling businesses and homes near the intersection of Ind. 15 and U.S. 20 and claiming six more lives.

Around the same time, by most accounts, a third F4 tornado had mercifully bounced over the south end of Goshen before landing again and churning up the countryside into LaGrange County. In its path was the Rainbow Lake community just southeast of Shipshewana. There, 16 lives were taken by the storm and eight of them were members of Shore Mennonite Church.

Locally, 70 people died that Palm Sunday here in Elkhart and LaGrange counties. Twenty of them were children. Six of them were 1 year old or younger. In addition, hundreds of homes and businesses were wiped away. The lives of those who survived were changed forever.

What do we still talk about 50 years later? Not much. But we still talk about the Palm Sunday tornadoes, some of us like it was yesterday. The stories are so vivid that for those of us who weren't there, it feels like we were.

John Hertzler, manager of the Goshen Historical Society, said the Palm Sunday tornado is the most asked about local event at the downtown museum. He said he has some old photographs, but that's about it.

"I suppose it was (the most historic event in local history)," Hertzler said. "If it wasn't, I don't know what else would be."

Neither do we.

Michael Wanbaugh is managing editor of The Goshen News. He can be reached at michael.wanbaugh@goshennews.com.

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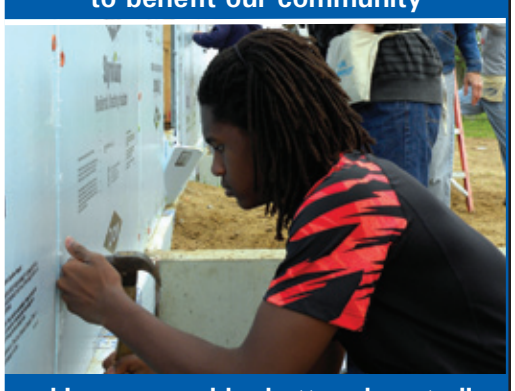

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WHAT HAPPENED THAT DAY?

The anatomy of disaster

Weather experts recount how deadly twisters formed

By ROGER SCHNEIDER
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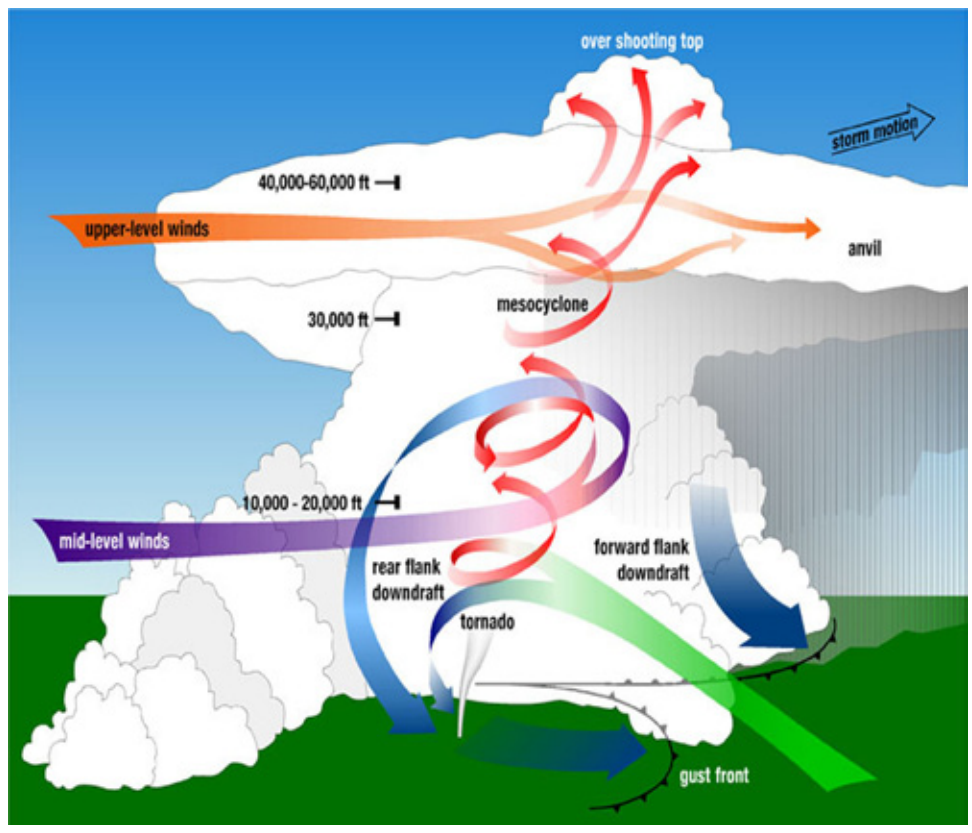
NORTH WEBSTER — Michael Lewis likes to talk weather. It's his passion and livelihood as warning coordination meteorologist of the National Weather Service office in North Webster. When talk turns to the 1965 Palm Sunday outbreak, he grabs worn copies of weather science booklets that define that outbreak and many outbreaks since then.

University of Chicago Professor Tetsuya Theodore Fujita, simply known as "Ted" in the weather service field, authored the booklets. He also created the Fujita Scale in 1971 that assesses the strength of tornadoes. The scale runs from the weakest F0 tornado to the strongest F5. The scale was revised in 2007 and is now known as the Enhanced Fujita Scale.

Fujita visited Elkhart County after the 1965 outbreak and with fellow Professor Dorothy L. Bradbury and C.F. Van Thullenar of the National Severe Storms Forecast Center, wrote in 1970 a landmark scientific paper, complete with graphs, charts and mathematical formulas about how the tornadoes were spawned and acted once they touched down.

Lewis boiled Fujita's document down to plain English.

"Those are big, long-lived supercell storms," Lewis said of the 1965 Palm Sunday tornadoes. "Supercells are individual thunderstorms that develop in an environment where the moisture and warm air is in place. There usually is a good southernly flow of warm air coming in to the base of the storm and as you go up in the atmosphere, the colder air is coming in but the direction of the winds changes in height, in such that when the storm begins to develop, it begins to twist and turn or rotate. When you get to that set of conditions that are ideal for a rotating updraft, you have a storm that can sustain itself.



GRAPHIC PROVIDED

THIS GRAPHIC PROVIDED by the National Weather Service shows the atmospheric conditions that are most likely to form a tornado.

"The updraft will ride up into the storm," he continued. "But then the downdraft will begin to wrap around and act as a bulldozer beginning to push more moist air into the storm. So you end up with the whole updraft, downdraft kind of rotating around itself."

Such long-lasting tornadoes formed four times on April 11, 1965 and struck Elkhart County.

The tornadoes

Four tornadoes touched down in Elkhart County. Three have been rated F4 after years of review and one is rated an F3. All were deadly.

The tornado that destroyed the Sunnyside and Kingston Heights subdivisions on the north edge of Dunlap was once rated an F5, but was downgraded on the Fujita scale, according to the National Weather Service.

All four of the tornadoes were long lived and three of them formed well to the west of Goshen in Marshall or St. Joseph counties.

Only the F4 twister that killed people near Shipshewana spawned in Elkhart County. That tornado formed just east of Ind. 13, several miles south of Middlebury. Witnesses reported they saw a tornado touch down briefly at the Goshen dam and then rise over the hospital. Local speculation is that the Goshen tornado cell may have reformed along Ind. 13.

Big and rare

The Palm Sunday tornadoes were rare occurrences in several aspects. First, tornadoes themselves are very rare. Of the average 100,000 thunderstorms produced each year in the United States, only 800 result in tornadoes, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Supercell storms are even less frequent, but produce most of the deadly tornadoes.

The F3 and F4 tornadoes are among the rarest forms of tornadoes. The National Weather Service estimates that just 6 percent of all tornadoes in the United States reach the F3 size.

"It's also important to remember that EF4 and EF5 tornadoes are extremely rare," said Ball State meteorology Professor David Call. "Only one F5/EF5 tornado has ever occurred in Indiana, and there were no EF5 tornadoes nationwide in 2014, 2012, 2010, 2009 and the years 2000-2006 inclusive."

Figuring the odds of having an outbreak of three F4 storms in Elkhart County might overwhelm the best of statisticians. Just 2 percent of all tornadoes reach the catastrophic F4 size, according to the NWS.

Why here?

For three F4s and an F3 to form and travel along the same general path, favorable weather conditions have to exist and linger. And the unseasonable warm temperatures on Palm Sunday 1965, coupled with high humidity and an approaching cold front from the west, were perfect conditions for big storms to form.

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Warning systems have come a long way since 1965

By DANIEL RIORDAN
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GOSHEN — Some people in Elkhart County sat at home on their porches hoping to catch a cool breeze on an unseasonably hot day. Young couples prepared to go on dates. Children played tag outside. Others flocked to local golf courses to get an early round in.

It was April 11, 1965. Palm Sunday. On the Christian calendar, this holy day marks Jesus' triumphant journey into Jerusalem. In five days, Christians would mark his death on Good Friday and then his resurrection two days later.

Later that day, death and destruction shrouded Elkhart County communities in prayer and contemplation normally reserved for the feast of Easter.

By the accounts of meteorologists, there was no way to predict where those tornadoes would hit with any sort of accuracy. The key tools of those days were crude radar borrowed from bigger cities, including Detroit and Chicago. The Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma, was still 30 years from being formed when tornadoes leveled parts of LaGrange and Elkhart counties in 1965.

Emergency management director positions were created in the wake of September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

"A lot of the response that would happen now," said Mike Pennington, "is a result in the advance in technology."

Pennington is the deputy director of the Elkhart County Emergency Management Agency.

"From then to now there's just more training and push for people to make a plan," he said. "We have weather radios. Now Goshen has 16 tornado sirens."

In 1965, the tornado response due to technology was almost purely reactive.

Today, the Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma can issue hazardous weather outlooks for an area days in advance.

"Back then they could only see the storms themselves," said Nick Greenawalt, meteorologist for the National Weather Service near North Webster, of the response in 1965. "Now we can see what's in the storms. And we can really pinpoint when a storm will hit."

Last week, Greenawalt and staff at the North Webster office were monitoring a chance for severe weather later in the week.

"We really use the ready, set, go mentality," Greenawalt said. "In the days leading up to a potential event it's ready. The set is the watch phase. Once we see a storm we'll issue a warning for that storm specifically. That's the go phase."

TV involvement

"All of the TV stations use the same radar data," WNDU meteorologist Mike Hoffman said. "We just call it different things. But what it does is allows us to peer into a storm and see what's going on."

Hoffman explained that if severe weather is getting ready to hit the area, he'll provide continuous updates on TV. While Hoffman is on the air, meteo-

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Video

WNDU Meteorologist Mike Hoffman describes the Palm Sunday tornadoes at youtube.com/user/thegoshennews

Inside

What forecasting and warning lessons did we learn from April 11, 1965?
PAGE 15

From the U.S. Weather Bureau

The report from the U.S. Weather Bureau for the area on April 11, 1965

Noon — "Call from Chicago to South Bend that a deep low is located over Central Iowa, extending into Texas, while a warm front extended east into Northern Indiana. This clash of fronts results in a severe thunderstorm and tornado forecast until 7 p.m. for areas west of St. Louis to north of Indianapolis."

5:30 p.m. — "Radar shows hook echo or possible tornado just west of Knox and in the vicinity of Michigan City. A warning is issued to all counties in Northern Indiana and Southern Michigan."

5:43 p.m. — "Severe thunderstorm and tornado warning. Radar indicates some very strong storm echoes in Starke County, moving northeast."

5:56 p.m. — "Phone call from Indiana State Police reporting tornado on the ground near Koontz Lake and another between Plymouth and Hamlet."

5:58 p.m. — "Phone call from marshal of Argos, reporting tornado in vicinity of Donaldson on U.S. 30 and moving northeast."

6 p.m. — "Persons in Marshall, St. Joseph, Elkhart and Kosciusko counties should take emergency precautions due to approaching tornadoes."

6:24 p.m. — "More tornadoes sighted 15 miles west of Plymouth and four miles west of Nappanee."

6:28 p.m. — "Tornadoes sighted near Hebron, two miles south of Kingsford Heights, three miles south of Union and five miles west of Goshen."

6:50 p.m. — "Reports of tornadoes and funnel clouds have become so numerous that we are issuing a blanket warning for all of Northern Indiana."

7:04 p.m. — "Funnel southeast of Mishawaka near television hill; hailstones of one-and-a-half inches at the South Bend Airport.

7:10 p.m. — "Tornado just west of Bremen and another over U.S. 31 and New Road."

7:33 p.m. — "Partial all clear statement. Squall line 45 miles north of Terre Haute to Kalamazoo to 55 miles west of Saginaw. Threat of tornadoes now over for west of these locations."

8:30 p.m. — "All clear statement."

WEATHER NOTES

Lawrence A. Schaal, climatologist at Purdue, made an aerial inspection of the areas hardest hit. His estimate was that some tornado wind speeds were between 500 and 600 miles per hour, five times above average.

Some tornadoes were as much as a mile wide and it is believed five tornadoes were striking Indiana simultaneously in the early evening.

The temperature dropped from 73 before the storms to 64 after and the humidity plunged from 76 to 36.

The longest officially recorded tornado traveled 293 miles through Illinois and Indiana on May 26, 1917. It was on the ground seven hours, 20 minutes.









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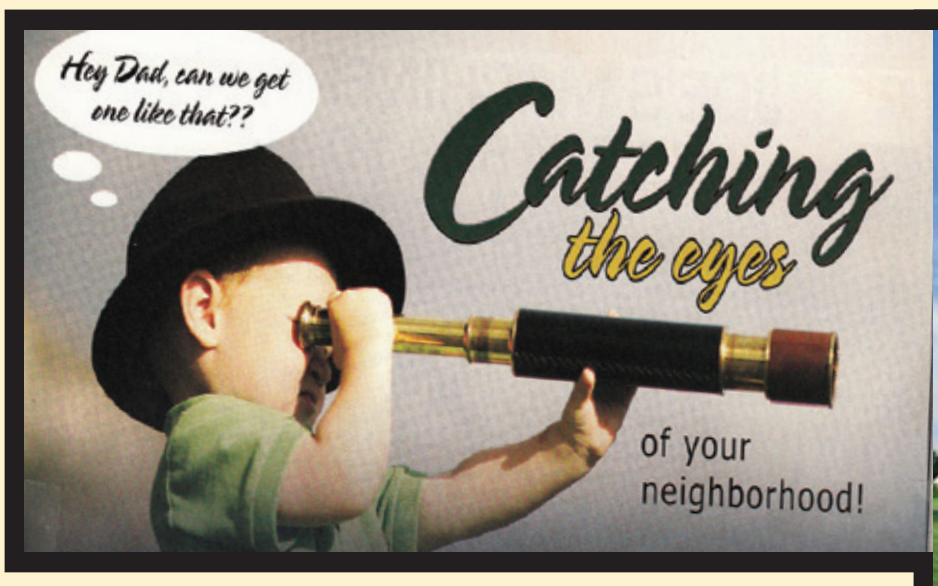



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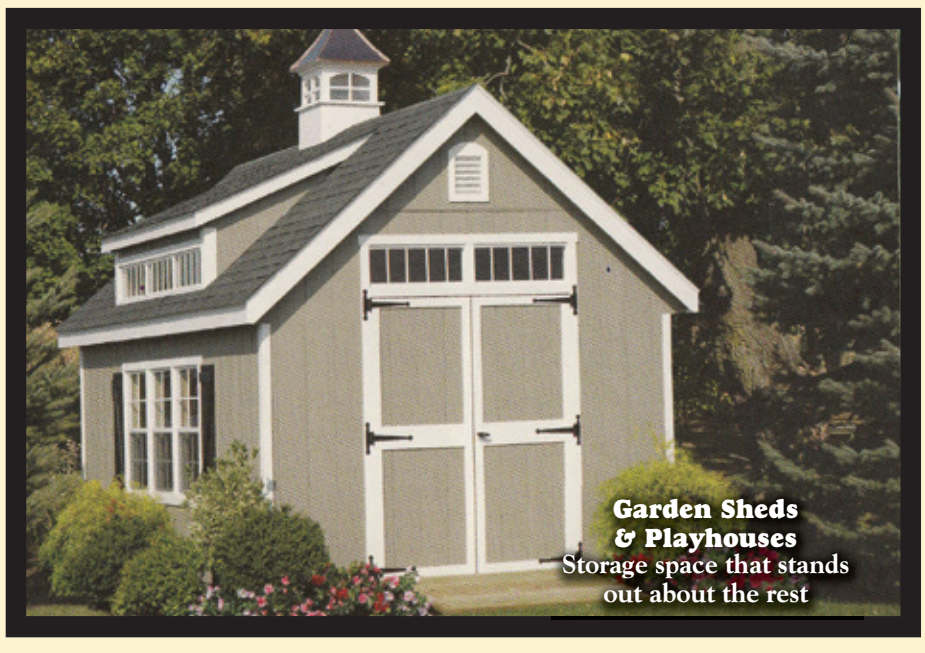



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REMEMBERING MIDWAY TRAILER COURT

THE INITIAL BLOW

Residents recall that horrible day; one survivor taken to local morgue

By JULIE CROTHERS
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GOSHEN — Richard Gresso was as good as dead.

His attempt to outrun the lethal tornado barreling toward him had failed and he was left clinging to a tree.

"The tree came out of the ground, roots and all, and I slid off of it and turned around and slid into a stop sign that was embedded into the asphalt," Gresso said. "And that's the last thing I remember."



Gresso

He later learned two police officers had picked him up near the intersection of Ind. 15 and U.S. 20 after finding his motorcycle running nearby and had thrown his body in the trunk of a police car.

"They took me out to the morgue out at Goshen hospital and stuff and had me, I guess, laying in the hallways someplace," Gresso said. "They just assumed I was dead."

Today, 50 years after twin tornadoes destroyed his home and left him to die, Gresso's memories of April 11, 1965 are as vivid as ever.

Midway Trailer Court, then located on U.S. 33 between Goshen and Dunlap, was among the areas that suffered the heaviest destruction as a series of large tornadoes ripped through Elkhart County.

Perhaps the most iconic image of the Palm Sunday tornadoes was taken just near 6:18 p.m. as twin twisters shredded the Midway Trailer Court and then crossed U.S. 33 and continued on to tear through the Jefferson Place Subdivision north of Goshen.

Reports would later state that at least 10 residents of Midway Mobile Trailer Court were killed and dozens more were injured as the F4 tornado wreaked havoc on the area.

The National Weather Service reported the tornado may have been an F5 — the most severe type of storm identified on the Fujita Tornado Damage Scale — with winds upward of 260 mph.

The path of the tornado stretched for 21.6 miles, according to the National Weather Service.

In the days following, newspaper reports detailed the death of many victims, including six who died in one trailer. They had been visiting family to celebrate a birthday party.

It took emergency personnel and volunteers several days to comb through the 91 trailers in the park in search of the injured and dead, according to news reports. About 18 trailers received little to no damage.



GOSHEN NEWS FILE PHOTOS

THIS VIEW looking east toward U.S. 33 was taken April 13, 1965 and shows the devastation at the Midway Trailer Court following the Palm Sunday tornadoes two days earlier. Ten people were killed at the trailer court.



GOSHEN NEWS FILE PHOTO

AN INDIANA STATE POLICE officer sifts through the debris at Midway Trailer Court soon after an F4 twin tornado barrelled into the community on April 11, 1965. Ten people were killed at the trailer court.

The Gresso family

Gresso was 18 years old and living with his parents in the Midway Mobile Home Park.

His father, Richard Gresso Sr., operated the truck stop at the intersection of Ind. 15 and U.S. 20, north of Goshen.

On the afternoon of April 11, Gresso had just picked up his girlfriend in the family's 1956 Cadillac for a date at the movies. They planned to stop by the trailer park to pick up his mom's 1964 Nova.

"Before we ever got all the way there, we had seen all kinds of debris all over the place, stuff hanging up in the trees, and we couldn't figure out what was going on because I didn't know anything about the tornado," Gresso said.

As Gresso drove into the park, he was stopped by Leonard Spigutz, the owner of the trailer park.

Behind him, Gresso spotted his family's trailer upside down with his mother inside.

"I broke the windows out so I could get in to get her out," he said.

After sending his mom, Lillian (Brown) Gresso, to Elkhart hospital in an ambulance, Gresso jumped back in the Cadillac and drove toward his father's truck stop.

But by the time he got there, Gresso's father had already heard about the tornado and hitched a ride with a customer back to Goshen, he said. His brother, Mike, took the Cadillac and drove through what was then Jefferson Place, flattening all four tires as he attempted to return to town.

"Since I didn't have the car to go on, I had just bought a motorcycle about a month earlier... so I thought maybe I could get on the motorcycle and outrun it," Gresso said. "But I turned around and started and got no farther than across the intersection and the wind got so strong because the tornado was so wide it just looked like a rain cloud hanging down on the ground. I just couldn't keep the motorcycle up so I laid it down and grabbed hold of a tree."

The Wheeler family

Mike Wheeler and his wife, Carolyn, had moved into the Midway Trailer Court with their infant son, Dennis, in late December 1964.

On April 11, Mike and his brother had arrived back to the trailer park from the New Paris Speedway, slightly late for a 6 p.m. dinner scheduled at Carolyn's sister's house.

"She got mad and said 'we're not going. We're going to stay home," Mike said. "I said 'no, you made the arrangements. We're going to go.'"

And it's a good thing he insisted, he added.

"We left there maybe 20 minutes to a half hour before it hit," Mike said.

They'd just arrived to dinner when someone came on the television and said Midway Trailer Court had been hit.

The aftermath

Five days later, Gresso awoke in a hospital bed.

The stop sign had split his head open and nearly severed his leg.

His head had swollen to twice the normal size and his body had been sandblasted by debris.

A cut across his neck nearly sliced his jugular vein and the injuries to his head had busted out a piece of his skull, leaving part of his brain exposed.

While he was unconscious, Gresso had mumbled something that caught his brother's attention as he walked through the hall of the hospital looking at bodies to see if his brother was among them.

"(Mike) realized I was awake so they got me into a hospital room and from what I understand they brought in a priest and gave me my last rights because they figured I was going to die anyways," Gresso said.

Two weeks later, he was released from the hospital, but the debris that riddled his body continued to work its way out of his body for the next several years.

"Between my face, my neck and hands and arms, I was still picking stuff out years later where it was just a little piece of a splinter, a rock and stuff," he said.

Sifting through debris

The Wheelers later returned to the trailer park to sift through the debris from homes scattered across the area.

"We went out and picked through the rubble to see if we could find anything. I think that's when we found our marriage license," Carolyn said. "That's all we found."

It's hard to believe that it's been 50 years, Carolyn said.

"It seems like it was just yesterday. I remember everything about it — how it looked out there, I still remember all of that stuff," Mike said. "It was something else."

Follow Julie on Twitter @jcrothers_tgn

A new future is in the works for Midway site

By JULIE CROTHERS
julie.crothers@goshennews.com

GOSHEN — Although their homes were destroyed and possessions swept away in the Palm Sunday tornadoes, some former residents later returned to the Midway Trailer Court in search of housing.

Carolyn Wheeler and her husband, Mike, were among them.

The Wheelers lost everything except their marriage license in the tornado and Carolyn said she hoped never to step foot in the trailer park again.

"I was petrified," she said. "But we had to (move back) because there was nothing else. All the apartments were full, all the houses were full."

A little more than a week after the tornado, the owners of the trailer park, Arthur and Leonard Spigutz, arranged for the debris to be pushed away or burned and the sites were prepared for new trailers, according to news reports.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

IN THIS GOOGLE EARTH IMAGE, the area that was once Midway Mobile Trailer Court can be seen, including the C.R. 17 bridge that was constructed nearly 40 years after the tornadoes tore through the area on April 11, 1965.

Spigutz also built an underground safety space for people who lived in trailers, Carolyn Wheeler said.

"We had to go in there a few times afterwards," she said.

The space continued to be used as a trailer court for nearly 40 years until the county government began purchasing vacated lots for a future bridge project.

In late 2003, the final lots were purchased and construction on the C.R. 17 bridge began, according to Elkhart County Administrator Tom Byers. That project was completed in mid-2005.

In 2007, the remaining land was purchased by Ancon Construction and the company began the process of developing the area.

The first phase of the new development is a two-story 5,530-square-foot dental center for Aegis Dental, Ancon Construction architect Matt VanSoest said in an email.

The remaining approximately two acres of land is slated for future development of one or two additional buildings, VanSoest said.

The new community development is called "Pointe 33."

"The barren site up to now was a stark reminder of the events," VanSoest said. "We are excited to bring some unique modern architecture to the site and create a new community on the site."

Follow Julie on Twitter @jcrothers_tgn



LeRoy Lambright
GUEST COLUMNIST

The Good Lord was with us that day

What for the most part was a typical spring day clocked out in a frightening whirlwind for this family of five and our six house guests on April 11, 1965 — recorded as the most tragic day in the history of Elkhart County and the surrounding region.

Gathered in a single-wide mobile home at Midway Trailer Court between Goshen and Dunlap, we've been thanking our "lucky stars" that we escaped a virtual home wipeout with nothing more than a few broken ribs, bumps and bruises. Totally amazing when you consider that 16 of our nearby neighbors (10 in Midway) were killed as the powerful twister roared through the court.

Fifty years later while looking at pictures, it still appears that our home was situated just enough to one side from the heart of the main path, that our lives were saved from severe harm.

My wife Georgia and I purchased the mobile home just three months prior and moved in with three children ages 5, 4 and 2. High school friends Frank and Judy (Miller) Fought of Topeka came to visit that afternoon with their four youngsters.

Strange weather feel

It was a rather balmy afternoon as Frank and I were hitting golf balls at a former driving range just up the road along U.S. 33. We talked about how the weather had a strange feel to it. This was in the days before tornado warnings as we know of them today.

Soon after, when we joined our families in the tiny home, we again commented that the weather seems so strange and wondered if this could be a prelude to a tornado. Within seconds, Georgia looked out a window to the southeast and said, "Here comes one."

Growing up in Oklahoma where tornado winds often howl, she said "Quick open some windows." Nobody took the time to ask why. Quickly one window on the west side and one on the east were at least cracked a bit. The reason learned later is that open windows lower the compression. A second key to this survival, we believe, is that the day before all storm windows were removed and placed under the home.

My first thought at this frantic moment was that here we are all bunched together and that we should be spread out a bit if we do get hit. So the reaction was to grab the nearest youngster (Doug Fought), go outside to lie on the ground next to a small tree, about 3 inches of trunk. Once landing on the ground, I thought "This is dumb. If the home next to us tips over on its side, Doug and I will be crushed."

There was no time to scatter. The storm, sounding like two jet airplanes taking off a few feet above our heads, had arrived. When I looked up, the next-door home was gone, apparently picked up and blown over our heads and over the few pieces left of our home.

All of us OK

Miraculously, the nine people who had huddled inside our home, did some flying, but were dumped onto the ground as the sides of the home were blown away and the floor was swiped from underneath them.

See LAMBRIGHT | 14

FROM THE DARKROOM



THIS VIEW OF THE destruction at Midway Trailer Court is looking northwest toward Elkhart.



MUCH PROGRESS had been made cleaning up the destruction at Midway Trailer Court by the time this file photo was taken five days later on April 16, 1965.



RESIDENTS AND RESCUE WORKERS sift through the debris at Midway Trailer Court soon after an F4 twin tornado barrelled into the community on April 11, 1965. Ten people were killed at the trailer park.

MORE PHOTOS OF MIDWAY AT GOSHENNEWS.COM

WHAT WE DO DIFFERENTLY

Housing standards more stringent

By JULIE CROTHERS
julie.crothers@goshennews.com

GOSHEN — As residents of Midway Trailer Court recalled the damage caused by the 1965 Palm Sunday tornadoes, several described what they saw as a mess of exploded mobile homes.

Goshen residents Carolyn and Mike Wheeler had recently purchased a mobile home at Midway when the storms came through.

"Of course I had closed all of the windows before we left because it was raining," Carolyn Wheeler said during an interview last week.

That's probably what caused the trailer to explode, Mike Wheeler said, adding that they returned to the rubble days later and found only their marriage license.

Much has changed in the manufactured home industry in the past 50 years, said Mark Bowersox, executive director of the Indiana Manufactured Housing Association.

"The big change since that time frame is the implementation of the HUD code. That goes back to June of 1976 when production shifted from mobile homes into manufactured homes," Bowersox said.

The Housing and Urban Development — also called HUD — codes are a series of manufactured home construction and safety standards.

Among other safety regulations, the codes determine how manufactured homes must be built, how many windows and fire alarms must be installed and the minimum square footage of the homes, according to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development website.

The homes are also built to standards of one of three wind zones, based on where the home will be located after construction is complete. Indiana is in Wind Zone I, whereas many coastal states fall into Wind Zone II or III, the website said.

HUD Wind Zones

Manufactured homes created across the country are built to withstand one of three wind zones, based on where the home will be located. Indiana and most of the country is considered Wind Zone I, whereas coastal states fall in the Wind Zone II and Wind Zone III range, according to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development website.

- HUD Wind Zone I — 70 mph
- HUD Wind Zone II — 100 mph
- HUD Wind Zone III — 110 mph

Manufactured homes are built in factories and must be constructed according to the national building standards, Bowersox said.

Modular homes are also built in factories, but in contrast, must meet only local building codes.

Mobile homes are not being built anymore, despite many people continuing to refer to manufactured and modular homes as "mobile homes" or "trailers," Bowersox added.

Another more recent change mandated that all manufactured homes be installed by licensed installers and tied to the ground using specific anchors, he said.

"Back then, essentially you would just set a house on the ground and leave it," Bowersox said.

Studies by the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety have shown there's little doubt residents in manufactured homes would be safer during severe weather than they were 50 years ago, and some research suggests they might be safer than residents of "stick-built" homes where builders don't have such stringent codes to follow, Bowersox explained.

Stick-built homes are constructed entirely or largely on-site, rather than being built in a factory and shipped.

Paul Comino, of Millersburg, echoed Bowersox's comments.

"The way the homes are built today is night and day different compared to how they used to be," he said.

Comino, who now owns and operates midwestmobilehomes.com, has worked in the local manufactured home industry for more than 20 years.

"Before 1976 when the HUD codes were implemented, as long as you could get (manufactured homes) down the road and get them where they were going, you were OK," Comino said.

In addition to better anchoring, today's manufactured homes are also constructed with "cyclone" strapping — thick metal strips that connect the roof to the wall and the walls to the floor, he said.

"Before 1965, they had none of that. They had these flimsy, 3-inch outside walls that were just paneling with nothing glued, screwed or strapped," Comino said.

Today's manufactured homes are also constructed with rigid OSB, or Oriented Strand Board, a type of heavy plywood.

As long as regulations are met, manufactured housing should be as safe as a stick-built home and will cost significantly less, Comino said.

"What happened back then would not happen today if they homes are anchored properly and installed according to code," he said..



REMEMBERING SUNNYSIDE ADDITION

In memory of | To those who died in the Palm Sunday tornadoes April 11, 1965 | We miss you | To the many heroes who gave their assistance | We thank you | To the remaining victims | To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under heaven and the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm and the clouds are the dust of his feet | Someday we will understand it better by and by

— The inscription on the Palm Sunday tornado memorial at Sunnyside Subdivision by the Forsythe family: Chuck, Shirley, Mike and Debbie



ROGER SCHNEIDER | THE GOSHEN NEWS

LISA NORMENT, daughter of Palm Sunday tornado survivor Debbie Watters, uses gold paint to fill in the text on the event's memorial marker in the Sunnyside Subdivision in Dunlap. On April 11, 1965 an F4 tornado flattened the neighborhood, killing 27 people there.

THE SECOND BLOW

In a day filled with death, Sunnyside suffered most

By ROGER SCHNEIDER
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DUNLAP — On April 11, 1965 10-year-old Stevie Forsythe was sitting in his family's modest home, keeping track of the warnings about tornadoes in the area. By about 7:15 p.m. he didn't need the TV anymore, he could see the swirling mass approaching at 50 mph along Mishawaka Road through the home's picture window.

"He said 'Mom! There is a tornado coming here,'" is how his sister, Debbie Watters described how the family became aware their lives were in immediate danger.

Debbie, 6 years old at the time, Stevie and their mother Shirley shot to their basement. Moments later their home exploded over their heads.

That home was at the corner of Cole Street and Amy Avenue in the Sunnyside Subdivision, a collection of modest post-World War II wood-framed homes.

The deadly twister first touched down in St. Joseph County farm fields southeast of South Bend. It traveled northeast, growing in size. By the time Stevie Forsythe saw it, the tornado was a frightening monster.

The tornado that struck the Forsythe home was classified years later as an F5, the most powerful of storms, but then reclassified as an F4. An F4 has wind speeds of 207 to 260 mph, according to the National Weather Service. Such storms are killers, they devastate everything in their path. Just 2 percent of all tornadoes reach such fury.

The Sunnyside tornado lived up to that description, taking 27 lives in Dunlap.

That tornado became known as the "Sunnyside tornado" because it obliterated the subdivision. But it also plowed into the adjacent Kingston Heights subdivision. A report in The Goshen News on April 22, 1965, said the tornado destroyed 134 homes, heavily damaged 25 more and 14 houses received minor damage. After the Sunnyside tornado hit the subdivisions, it continued northeast, almost to the state line, before disappearing northwest of Howe.



ROGER SCHNEIDER | THE GOSHEN NEWS

JANET AND DON CHUPP stand in their front yard and talk about Janet's childhood home that once stood where the green house is on Greenwood Boulevard in the Kingston Heights subdivision.

Helping others

Stevie's and Debbie's father, Charles, was a Concord Township firefighter. He saw the tornado approach his home from atop a fire truck at the Midway Mobile Home Park. Forsythe had gone there to help in the rescue effort from the earlier tornado strike on the families hunkered in their frail aluminum homes.

When he realized the danger from the second tornado, Forsythe quickly drove to Sunnyside. But death had already reached his family.

As Watters visited recently on a sunny Saturday morning on the lot where her childhood home once stood, she looked into the distance of time. A few feet away was a fading picture of her brother, forever young in the image, on a marker at the memorial.

"He will always be Stevie," Watters said.

After the tornado strike, all that was left of the home were the family's crumpled washer and dryer in the basement and one basement wall. Debris covered Stevie.

"I had uncovered my brother partially and I just knew he was gone," Watters said. "Thank God I didn't uncover him all the way."

"Then I went over and helped my mom up, who was severely injured," she said. "Obviously we were both in shock. Everything was gone in a matter of seconds. When I looked around it just looked like a bomb had just hit."

Watters and her mother staggered over the nearby railroad tracks that run parallel to C.R. 45. There a Good Samaritan had stopped his car. He shouted, "Lady stop, lady stop!"

Shirley Forsythe was about to walk into a live electrical wire on the ground.

Watters said she had to pull on her stunned mother to keep her away from the wire.

The Good Samaritan then helped them. He carried Shirley Watters to his vehicle and returned and did the same for Debbie. They waited for ambulances to arrive.

When Charles Forsythe arrived, "He found our dog on my brother's body, like guarding him," Watters said.

Stevie's life ended at age 10,

See **SUNNYSIDE** | 14

FROM OUR READERS

A visit from God I'll never forget

By RACHEL BRACKER JACKSON

As an almost 8-year-old little girl living in Dunlap, I have very vivid memories of the deadly tornado that hit the area on April 11, 1965.

When I close my eyes today, I can still see clearly the images of devastation and feel the cold fear that gripped me as the thunderous twister roared by.

Around 7 p.m. that Sunday evening I was, as usual, in a church worship service. But unlike usual, I was up front with a group of children singing for the congregation. We were singing the hymn "How Great Thou Art," but little did we know that we were about to find out how awesome the wonder of God's power would be displayed in a storm that was about to hit our community.

It had been a hot and humid day and the rain was a welcome relief. As the rain picked up and the wind began to blow I remember glancing at the milky window of the church building and seeing the silhouette of small sticks and leaves smacking up against it. Almost as soon as the sound of the rushing rain on the roof began, it stopped.

We began singing and my focus returned to what we were doing. Not far into the song our attention was grabbed from our director and we couldn't help but watch the strange commotion taking place in the rear of the auditorium.

My father was the pastor of the Elkhart Grace Brethren Church, located on Mishawaka Road. So it was his responsibility to try and calm the man who had just rushed into the building and was frantically waving his arms and pointing outside as he spoke quickly and loudly. We dutifully kept singing and watching intently as the scene escalated and my father turned from the man and began speaking to the congregation.

The man, with his family, had been driving toward our church building when they saw the immense tornado barreling toward them. They quickly pulled into the parking lot and ran in to ask if they could join us in the basement for shelter. As my father quickly understood the gravity of the situation he first informed the man that they were welcome to join us but there was no basement in the building. I remember him later saying that as he turned to address the congregation he quickly prayed, asking God for wisdom about where to take everyone. He knew he had only two options and only minutes to move the

See **BRACKER** | 30

Building codes progress to help keep families safe in severe weather

By ROGER SCHNEIDER
rschneider@goshennews.com

GOSHEN — It takes a disaster to improve homes so they are better able to withstand the next powerful natural phenomenon, according to local building inspectors.

When two Class 4 tornadoes swept into the county on Palm Sunday 1965, homes and businesses were crushed by the 260 mph winds. It's hard to imagine anything other than a reinforced concrete bunker withstanding that sort of wind pressure.

The post-World War II homes that dotted the gradual sloping ground in the Sunnyside and Kingston Heights subdivision in Dunlap, were designed to be built quickly, cheaply and house large baby-boom families. They were functional homes that met the building codes of the day. So when a killer twister bounced its way down Mishawaka Road, it exploded those houses into shards of wood, glass and brick.

"I am sure they did," was how Kevin Williams, Elkhart County building commissioner, answered the question if building codes were changed across Indiana following the 1965 outbreak.

"I kind of look at building codes as coming from the insurance companies," he said. "If an insurance company has a major loss, they are going to look at that in the future."



Bice

"Major loss" the tornado disaster was.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Palm Sunday outbreak occurred April 11 and 12 in 1965 in six Midwestern states. There were 47 tornadoes that killed 261 people and caused immense damage to structures.

"Building codes have progressed so much since 1965," said Goshen residential building inspector Steve Bice. "And that is due in part to high-wind situations."

State on down

Indiana has state building codes that are adopted at the local level, Bice and Williams said. Those latest codes have numerous specifications for builders to follow to mitigate wind damage.

One requirement is the use of "hurricane straps" when builders use factory-made trusses. Those trusses are held together with perforated metal plates that are placed on each side the truss joints. The inspectors indicated that while that assembly technique makes trusses quicker and less expensive to build in factories, the plates need the help of reinforcing hurricane straps to hold them to the top wall plate in high winds.

"A lot of times when they nail them in, they are just toenailed in," Bice said. "You can't get enough toenails in a truss to get the 90 mph wind-load requirement."

The inexpensive hurricane straps are sold at all big-box home improvement stores and local lumberyards. They are two small metal plates set at right angles to each other and are nailed in place with five nails in the truss and five nails in the top plate.

"You will find that a lot of the wind problems are occurring in the older truss systems that were not engineered to today's standard,"

See **SAFE** | 15





GOSHEN NEWS FILE PHOTOS

PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON solemnly stands amidst the ruins of what was once the First General Baptist Church of Sunnyside. The American flag (top photo) was snagged on a jagged board. From this vantage point the area was a scene of utter devastation as far as the eye could see. The tornado claimed 48 Elkhart County lives, injured countless others and wiped out nearly 500 homes.

FROM THE ARCHIVE

LBJ Visits Elkhart County On Tour Of Disaster Areas

'It Is Sad' Remarks President Following Motorcade From South Bend Through Area Hardest Hit By Tornadoes

By BILL SHEFFER

Editor's note
Reprinted from the April 14, 1965 edition of The Goshen News.

The motorcade came from the south across the New York Central Railroad tracks on County Road 13 (Lewis Street) north of Dunlap and drew to a stop in the heart of what was once the Sunnyside Addition.

President Lyndon B. Johnson climbed out of a black limousine and was confronted with a scene of utter devastation that reached as far as the eye could see in all directions.

The tall Texan in the slightly rumpled black suit, dark tie and oxfords strode to the shell of a house where Dorothy Warner, a widow, once lived. His expression of sadness did not change.

Secret Servicemen battled to keep a horde of photographers back as President Johnson stepped through the rubble and walked under a section of the shattered house, which had been twisted off its foundation and carried 50 feet to the edge of Lewis Street. Home canned peaches, cherries, green beans and beets were still in the cellar.

One not there

Neither Mrs. Warner nor her four-year-old grandson, Eldon, were there to meet the President. She suffered a concussion and other serious injuries. They found little Eldon under rubble ... two hours after the second of the twin twisters ripped devastated Dunlap.

The bareheaded president, easy to follow because of his height, picked his way through scattered concrete blocks and splintered lumber to where an American flag fluttered from a jagged, upright board.

The president stood beside the flag. This had once been the First General Baptist Church of Sunnyside. Directly across the way was the ruins of Sunnyside Mennonite Church ... it was gone, too.

"I'm sorry to have to meet you like this," President Johnson said, shaking hands with an elderly couple, Mr. and Mrs. Hardy Laird.

"How long had you folks lived here?" the president asked.

Mrs. Laird pointed to the west and said, "We lived at 1819 Sunnyside for 20 years." There was nothing there but ruins stretching to U.S. 33. She thanked the president.

Carl Sharkey talked to the president. Seventeen persons, including three strangers, took shelter in the basement of Sharkey's house. The tornado tore the house away, the sub floor fell downward ... but all lived.

He'll rebuild

Sharkey looked the president in the eye and said." "I built here in '39. I'm going to rebuild."

Two tiny tornado survivors, Kari Sharkey, 2, and brother Randy, 4, were with their mother when the president took time in his tour to hand them each gold pins. The pins were in the form of letters L B J. Kari's birthday is next Monday.

"I touched the president," exclaimed a young girl.

Secret Service agents, who rode in a closed car and convertible flanking the limousine carrying the president, had almost more than they could handle. It wasn't the tornado survivors, volunteer workers or children, it was from the galloping photographers.

"Hey, trooper! Trooper. Get down," yelled one photographer in a loud voice while the president was talking to some disaster victims. The president turned and regarded the photographer in a manner chiding him for bad behavior. "The Trooper" was Sheriff Woody L. Caton.

U.S. Senators Birch Bayh and Vance Hartke and Congressman John Brademas toured the stricken areas with the president.

Fondles dogs

Just before leaving the president fondled the ears of a pair of dachshunds, held by Joy Parsons, aged 8, and another girl named Bonnie.

Then the president's motorcade, which included four big buses filled with correspondents, drove north and circled around to the disaster headquarters at the Concord Fire Department.

Sheriff Caton met President Johnson and introduced him to workers, volunteers, officials and others at the fire station.

The president talked with many persons and stopped at a food counter for a cup of coffee and a doughnut. Several of the women at the counter had been bruised in the tornado. The president asked if their injuries were sustained in the tornado and complimented them on the work they were doing. He spent about 15 minutes at the station in casual conversation.

President Johnson expressed his sadness "over what has happened to the good people of this area" after a fast tour of inspection in Elkhart County.

"We plan to do all we can to help," the President said when slowed down briefly by a television commentator at South Bend.

"Does this mean we'll get federal aid?" the President was asked.

"It does," was the chief executive's reply as he moved on toward his plane for a flying trip over Illinois and on to Minnesota for a touch-down of his plane and another motorcade through flood-stricken areas.

The motorcade was scheduled to go to Midway Mobile Home Court and hundreds of Dunlap residents lining the road and at the park were disappointed when it turned and streaked through Elkhart to the Northern Indiana Toll Road, South Bend and the airport.

This was the day that a president came to Dunlap to tour a tornado stricken area. Hundreds of law enforcement officers breathed a sigh of relief. The task of guarding a president isn't easy — the secret servicemen usually go into an area where the president is going to appear two weeks ahead of time.

FROM THE ARCHIVE

Sunnyside At Dunlap Records 20 Known Dead

Temporary Morgue Set Up In Pierre Moran's School



NEW BUSINESSES along U.S. 33 at the northwest edge of Dunlap were destroyed by the Sunday evening twister that started along C.R. 20 and ripped across U.S. 33 and through the Sunnyside Addition at Dunlap.

Over 20 persons, and probably more, were fatally injured Sunday night when a tornado cut across the west and north edges of Dunlap, causing heavy property loss.

The twister was the second in the area and arrived about 7:15, an hour after an earlier storm had ripped through the Midway Trailer Court and the Jefferson Place Subdivision.

The News was unable to get identification of the dead today at Elkhart's Pierre Moran school where a temporary morgue was set up last night. Only three of 19 bodies had been identified this morning, it was learned unofficially.

Telephone communication between Goshen and Elkhart was out and a News reporter at the scene this morning was unable to get the identifications. A list of patients admitted to Elkhart General Hospital appears elsewhere in today's News.

Homes destroyed

The twister at Dunlap dipped down west of the community, ripping down three new homes just constructed by Donald Goodenough and Herbert Bowers of Goshen. It also damaged an older home at the new subdivision along C.R. 20.

The twister, in full view of more than 100 volunteers clearing debris at the ravaged Midway Trailer Court, cut across the west side of Dunlap in a northeasterly direction and cleaned out an area of new businesses along U.S. 33. Then it dealt a killing blow to the Sunnyside Addition at the north edge of Dunlap as it swept for several blocks across the residential area (see aerial photo elsewhere).

Editor's note
Reprinted from the April 12, 1965 edition of The Goshen News. The death toll at Sunnyside ended up at 27.

See it coming

Don Runnion, a seventh grader and son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Runnion, said he was at home with his brother, Mike, and parents when they spotted the approaching twister. They didn't have time to get to the basement and laid on the kitchen floor. The Runnion boy said "everything got dusty." When the storm ended, the Runnion family's home was in ruins and the family was lying in debris. Mrs. Runnion was seriously injured and Mr. Runnion and the boys carried her several blocks to a main highway and she was taken to Elkhart General Hospital.

The nearby home of Mrs. Marie Eads, who lives with her four children, was badly wrecked.

Ernest Struble, who lives on C.R. 13 at the housing addition, saw the twister coming and went to the basement. He was home alone but was joined by some passersby just as the storm hit. After the twister departed, the Struble home was gone and the 1965 Plymouth Struble got last Friday was in the basement. All were unhurt. Struble said the storm "really rumbled" as it arrived.

The first official word of last night's twister came when a hysterical mother notified Concord fireman Don Singleton that her house was afire. Firemen then got many other calls.

Joe Classon, Oslo Township fire chief, is still hospitalized at Elkhart today with injuries suffered when he was picked up by the twister in the Dunlap area and thrown to the ground. Two other firemen were also injured.

SPRING IS FINALLY HERE !
IS YOUR EQUIPMENT READY ?

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SHEILA SELMAN | THE GOSHEN NEWS

AT THE MEMORIAL DEDICATED to those of Shore Mennonite Church who lost their lives during the Palm Sunday tornadoes of April 11, 1965 are, from left, Maurice and Cecelia Berkey, Truman Miller, Ivan Birky and Paul Mishler.

THE FINAL BLOW

Killer storm helped bring religious communities together in Shipshewana

By SHEILA SELMAN
sheila.selman@goshennews.com

SHIPSHEWANA — There is time before the Palm Sunday storm and time after it. It's that simple. Time split that day for the people of this small community of Shore, just south of Shipshewana near Rainbow Lake in LaGrange County.

The day was unusually warm, in the 70s, people remember. Children were out playing. Families were visiting after Sunday dinner. Evening church services at Shore Mennonite Church would start in about an hour or so, with many looking forward to a performance by a quartet.

In an instant, the fury of an F4 tornado that had just struck in Elkhart County barreled down on residents. Unknown to many Shore area residents, tornadoes were ruthlessly ripping apart Dunlap.

As Midway Trailer Court was destroyed in Elkhart County, a new tornado dipped east of Ind. 13 north of Ind. 4.

According to the National Weather Service this tornado plowed northeast, devastating the Amish countryside of eastern Elkhart County and the northwest quarter of LaGrange County.

As the tornado barreled through Forks, it continued northeast toward the intersection of Ind. 5 and U.S. 20. In its path were several homes and Shore Mennonite Church, where the congregation was preparing for evening services.

Haarers suffer loss

Paul Haarer, whose family owned a farm near Shore, said he and his immediate family were at Marion Mennonite Church, off of Ind. 120 northeast of Shipshewana listening to a men's quartet from Ohio when the storm hit several miles south.



GOSHEN NEWS FILE PHOTO

A GROUP OF AMISH MEN work to rebuild a home near Shipshewana in this April 1965 file photo.

"We didn't know it had happened," he said.

His family, including his young daughter Rebecca, piled in the family car to head home and could only get to the power plant on C.R. 675.

"We sat in the car, waiting and waiting and waiting," he said.

They soon learned that their family farm had been struck by the tornado.

His grandmother had just gotten inside the porch when the tornado hit, Haarer recalled. The only side of the house that remained, was the side she entered. She survived. Haarer's parents, Frank and Grace, and his brother Noble, however, weren't as lucky. All three of them were killed by the storm.

One of the treasures that was salvaged from the rubble was a bottle that held a carving inside. The bottle was still intact. Haarer said his Grandpa Eash used to have this particular bottle. It was inscribed with the words "Fear God" on one side and "God is love" on the other.

For Haarer, the inscription fit the circumstances. He gave the bottle to his daughter, who still has it.

Death toll hits 16

Sixteen died altogether from the tornado in LaGrange County. Eight of those attended Shore Mennonite Church — John and Jennie Yoder, Iva Nofzinger, Bessie and Bernis Hostetler, Noble Haarer, and Frank and Grace Haarer.

Three members of the quartet that was scheduled to sing were also killed: Willis and Grayce Bontrager and LeRoy Yoder.

Another person who died was Mable Mishler. Her son, Paul Mishler, said his mom was taken to a hospital where she later died of injuries sustained in the storm.

Mishler said he was on the north end of Shipshewana and didn't know anything was going on until his daughter saw a trailer being tossed around in the air.

Then he heard something had happened at Ind. 5 and U.S. 20.

"When I got to 5 and 20 I didn't know where I was," Mishler said. "Everything was flat."

On foot, Mishler got to Amos Miller's house and found him walking around in the yard. He heard someone crying and found the Millers' son out in their garden.

A Shipshewana police officer told Mishler to stay and take control of the family until more help could arrive.

Mishler did that, but said he had a sister and mother he wanted to check on as well.

"But before I left there ... here comes a tall person walking down through (U.S.) 20 and I said to myself, 'That's Ivan Birky,'" Mishler said. "He and his wife were walking down through there. I tell ya, everybody looked different. You didn't know them. Their hair was sticking straight up full of mud. It was pathetic."

Happy to be alive

Ivan Birky didn't disagree about how he, his wife and the children with them looked. They were just happy to be alive.

The sky was greenish, Birky said, but he didn't even think about a tornado.

He and his wife had an infant daughter and 6-year-old niece with them that day. His wife, Doris, was getting ready for church and was just in her slip when she heard a loud noise.

Ivan said he thought it was

See SHORE | 26

Funeral home owner knew it was going to be busy



SHEILA SELMAN | THE GOSHEN NEWS

RICHARD MILLER shows a photo given to him by the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette of the mass funeral he arranged for the families of eight victims of the Palm Sunday tornadoes.

By SHEILA SELMAN
sheila.selman@goshennews.com

MIDDLEBURY — The first real inkling Richard Miller had that something horrible had happened came when he arrived at Goshen Hospital for an ambulance call the evening of April 11, 1965.

Miller, at the time 31, was owner of Miller Funeral Home in Middlebury. Back then funeral home hearses were also used as ambulances, and on this stormy Palm Sunday evening, Elkhart County needed all the ambulances it could get.

"People were laying outside (the hospital)," he remembered, injured and caked in mud. Their homes, he said, had been destroyed by the twisters that swept through the hour or so before.

He knew there was going to be a busy and sad week to come for him.

Back at the funeral home, Miller's wife, Lois, handled the dispatches. She advised him that several people from Shipshewana may be coming to the funeral home. Also, two tornadoes had struck north of Middlebury, she informed him. A couple that had escaped the first tornado was struck by the second tornado and the wife was killed.

"Some guys came in and said several (dead) from Shipshewana were coming in," Miller said. "I knew immediately I needed to contact the Civil Defense."

See BUSY | 11

'Mom told us to pray'

Schools superintendent remembers storm that killed her grandmother

By JULIE CROTHERS
julie.crothers@goshennews.com

GOSHEN — Like many local residents, Diane Woodworth recalls how sunny and calm the weather was on April 11, 1965 — and what a stark contrast that was to the roaring winds and destruction that followed.

Woodworth had just celebrated her 10th birthday when the Palm Sunday tornadoes ripped through Elkhart and LaGrange counties.

"It was this balmy Sunday and we were out in the yard playing pitch-and-catch," said Woodworth, the current superintendent of Goshen Community Schools.



Woodworth

At the time, Woodworth was living in rural Shipshewana with her parents, Mark and Clara Bontrager.

Sunday afternoon, her father had pulled the family's car around to the hip roof barn to begin milking their several dozen cows when a big wind whipped through the area and a loud roaring noise followed.

Woodworth said she remembers her mother standing in a large picture window, watching as dark clouds replaced the sunny blue skies they'd been playing in moments before.

"My mom took us down into the basement and we just sat there — my brother who was 6 years old and me — on the bottom steps of the basement stairs," Woodworth said. "Mom told us to pray. So I started praying."

Woodworth's father burst into the basement from an exterior door and joined his family.

A short time later, as the winds grew silent and the family came up from the basement, they found the car smashed and the top of the barn had been picked up and tossed into a nearby woods.

The house had been spared, as had the cows her father had just been milking, and the family's dog, which had been carried off in the storm, was returned several hours later by an Amish family.

Woodworth's grandmother, Mabel Mishler, was injured on her way to shelter at a friends house.

Mishler had been visiting a home when they saw the storm coming and sought shelter in the basement. She was the last to descend the stairs and as she stepped down, a large piece of wood barreled through her thigh, Woodworth said.

Mishler died later that week at a hospital in Fort Wayne from infection.

The Bontragers would later learn from neighbors that the funnel clouds that circled the area had bypassed their home, but a tail could be seen extruding from a tornado.

"From what they said, this small white tail came down, hit the barn roof and then disappeared again," Woodworth said.

It seemed their home — and the homes surrounding it — had been spared.

Woodworth's father prepared for his quartet performance at Shore Mennonite Church scheduled for later that evening.

"He knew someone would come by and pick him up," Woodworth said. "So we just sat and waited with our candles and lamps."

Little did the family know, the church where Bontrager was to perform had been demolished in the storm.

Follow Julie on Twitter @ jcrothers_tgn

Busy

Continued from page 10

They had cots and brought them to Miller so he had a place to put the dead.

"Before the night was over, there were 16 (deceased people at the funeral home)," he said. "It makes you really stop (and think)."

Then the electricity went out.

Miller knew he had to make provisions for the conditions of the bodies. He needed special fluids and pouch bags for people with traumatic injuries.

"It was unbelievable," he said.

Pouch bags from Delaware were flown in.

Miller worked all Sunday night and at daylight, another body was brought in from Middlebury.

Knowing that eight of the 17 dead at the funeral home had come from Shore Mennonite Church, Miller met with those families — four of them — and suggested they have a mass funeral. The families agreed.

Shipshewana school's gym was set up and the caskets were ordered. The electricity had been restored, which allowed for a viewing for a couple of victims.

There were still no phone lines, though. Miller's wife had to go to White Pigeon, Michigan., to communicate and had to drive to The Goshen News to deliver the obituaries.

People in Shipshewana were really willing to help, Miller said. One company even reset all of the gravestones at the Shore cemetery that had been flattened by the tornado before the funerals.

Because other funeral homes in the area were also busy due to the tornado fatalities, Miller could not get any extra hearses. He had his two, so he planned on taking two at a time to Shore Mennonite cemetery for burial services.

Wednesday afternoon and evening, visitation took place.

And then on Thursday, the mass funeral began at 2:30 p.m., just as scheduled — something Miller is proud of to this day. Hundreds packed the gym.

Following the services, Miller said one thing he had not anticipated were the hundreds of people who lined the road to the cemetery. They made it somewhat difficult for the hearses to maneuver in.

Before the week ended, Miller had conducted 17 funerals, including another mass funeral of four people at Forks Cemetery.

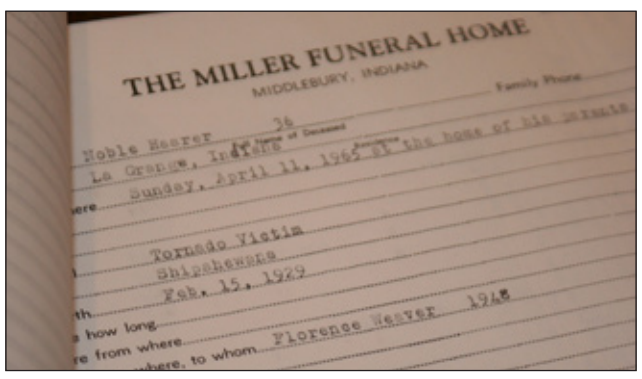
"If I had stopped to think," Miller said, "I wouldn't have thought I'd get it all done."

In all of his years as a funeral director, Miller said he's not experienced anything like it. He keeps a photo of the mass funeral in a curio cabinet at the funeral home.



PHOTO PROVIDED

THIS PHOTO OF the mass funeral held for eight of the Palm Sunday tornado victims — all from Shore Mennonite Church — is framed and on display at Miller-Stewart Funeral Home, Middlebury. The photo was taken by the Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette.



SHEILA SELMAN | THE GOSHEN NEWS

FUNERAL DIRECTOR Richard Miller of Miller Stewart Funeral Home still has the obituaries of the 17 victims of the Palm Sunday tornadoes.

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POLICE & RESCUE RESPONSE



SCOTT WEISSER | THE GOSHEN NEWS

R.T. SNYDER is shown outside Sunnyside Mennonite Church along C.R. 13 in Dunlap recently. Snyder was a reserve officer with the Goshen Police Department when the Palm Sunday tornadoes struck Elkhart County in 1965. He provided assistance at the Sunnyside housing area, and also at Midway Trailer Court.

'I'M NOT ASHAMED OF CRYING'

▮ Goshen Police reserve R.T. Snyder got a first-hand view of destruction on Palm Sunday

By SCOTT WEISSER
Correspondent

GOSHEN — On a recent rainy Thursday afternoon, R.T. Snyder is taking a drive.

Snyder is heading west on U.S. 33 toward northwest Goshen and Dunlap. He's pointing out spots along the way, occasionally turning onto side roads. Some things have changed over the course of 50 years. Some things aren't here anymore.

R.T. Snyder is taking a drive. He's also offering a history lesson.

In April 1965, Snyder was a reserve officer with the Goshen Police Department. The following month, he began a 33-year career with the Elkhart County Sheriff's Department.

On Palm Sunday 1965, Snyder saw what happened during one of the worst days in Elkhart County history.

Looking back

Snyder was born and raised in Goshen, graduating from Goshen High School in 1961. He went to Ball State University and then came home and began working. In addition to being a reserve officer in 1965, he was also employed with the Goshen Engineering Department.

The afternoon of Palm Sunday 1965 in Goshen was extremely warm, Snyder recalled, "and of course the weather forecasting was nothing like it is today." That day, Snyder was at his grandparents' house on the northwest side of Goshen.

"My granddad and I were out in the yard and we could see the black clouds," he said. "We knew it was going to storm." Then an announcement was broadcast on TV: There were tornadoes in the area.

"So we were standing out in the backyard watching, and we could see the first tornado that hit Midway," Snyder said. "… I heard all the sirens and I knew that something must have happened. I was married at the time, and I left my wife there with my grandparents."

Snyder went to the police booth at Main Street and Lincoln Avenue. At that time, operations of the GPD

See SNYDER | 28

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Sheriff: This is really bad

Below is a transcript of the log kept by Elkhart County Sheriff Woody Caton on April 11, 1965:

- 6:08 p.m. — South Bend weather bureau reports tornado on the ground near Bremen.
- 6:15 — Tornado on the ground at C.R. 17 and C.R. 32, heading northeast.
- 6:18 — Tornado strikes Midway Trailer Park. Send ambulances and help.
- 6:35 — This is really bad. Need more ambulances. Have utilities turned off ...
- 6:50 — Another tornado just hit Sunnyside in Dunlap, north of the tracks.
- 7:01 — Call Indianapolis and advise that we need National Guard activated.
- 7:02 — Tornado hit at intersection of 15 and 20. Everything is leveled.
- 7:21 — This station is Signal 100. Hold all but emergency calls.
- 8:10 — Temporary morgues are set up at Masonic Lodge and Yoder-Culp.
- 8:34 — Need more help at Sunnyside and there is a strong smell of gas.
- 9:00 — Turnkey Vern Smith turns over radio duties to LaMar Snyder.

— Compiled by Stu Swartz



GOSHEN NEWS FILE PHOTO

SHERIFF WOODY L. CATON is pictured here accepting the keys to a new Massey-Ferguson loader sent to Elkhart County for use in the cleanup operation here by the Massey-Ferguson Company's state office in Indianapolis. Kenneth Miller of J.A. Miller and Son, Wakarusa is presenting the keys to Caton. The Miller firm went to Indianapolis to get the loader and is providing gasoline for the tractor and maintaining the unit. The loader may be used free of charge.

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Lambright

Continued from page 6

What a blessing it was to see that all 11 of us appeared to come through this mix nearly scratch free. In the meantime, we heard loud cries from hurting people throughout the court.

With our group intact, I ran toward the highway seeking help and met a state trooper on the way, so I turned back to find that our 2-year-old Pontiac was a total loss due to propane tanks being slammed into the driver's side. My truck had a back window blasted out.

I then stayed at Midway while Frank managed to get their car on the highway.

He took the wives and children to a home in Goshen where Dr. Phil Bowser came to examine them.

Second storm in view

While I and many rescue workers were sifting through rubble a short while later, someone yelled "Here comes another one."

Many of us ran into a field to the south seeking refuge behind a few huge piles of soil. By the time we got there, the storm became a twin and was headed just north of us. This became the killer in the Sunnyside section of Dunlap along with other areas in its path.

There were many rather unbelievable happenings, two of them more significant to us personally.

First, on May 12, a lady named Sam Velie from Centreville, Michigan, sent us a letter saying she was mushroom hunting north of Mendon, Michigan, where she found a check that we originally had in our canceled checks file. The bank's cancellation ink was washed off. The letter was mailed to the town (Summersville, West Virginia) which was printed on the check and is where we lived prior to relocating to Midway. The Summersville postal workers forwarded the letter to us.

The second "miracle" came about midsummer. A 12-year classmate, Larry Chupp, contacted me wondering if I was missing a class ring. He said someone found a ring miles away from Midway and asked if he knew anyone who would have a ring with the letter T (Topeka) and the initials "LL" on it. He quickly had an idea.

We were so fortunate. The Good Lord was with us.

LeRoy Lambright is retired and lives with his wife near Greenville, S.C. He spent nearly three decades as sports editor of The News before retiring in 1999.

Sunnyside

Continued from page 8

his death caused by a severe head injury.

They saw it

"I seen it coming," said Carl Burk as he paused his spring chores in his large yard along Kendall Street, just behind the Baptist church that was destroyed by the tornado.

In 1965 he and a friend were about three-quarters of a mile away in Elkhart. They noticed all the earlier excitement along U.S. 33, where firefighters and police officers were speeding south toward Midway Mobile Home Park with their vehicle lights and sirens blaring. They went over to the highway to get a look-see.

"We wanted to see where they were going," he said.

He recalls the tornado being white at that point, and further away than it seemed.

"I would have sworn it was just a block away from us, but it was three-quarters of a mile away," Burk said. He was living on Lawton Avenue at the time.

Like many families that day, they were hosting relatives on Palm Sunday. He and his wife and their two children and their guests watched the twister get closer.

"I said, 'when it takes that house back there, we will head to the basement,'" Burk recalls telling his wife.

"All we could see was a couple of Christmas (pine) trees floating in the air," he said. "We didn't have any idea how bad it was until it was over."

Kingston Heights

Janet (Hess) Chupp recalls the Kingston Heights subdivision as a fun place to grow up. Her friends were scattered throughout the subdivision and they would often gather for some fun.

"Before the tornado," Janet said, "There were three huge trees right on the boulevard. And if you wanted any of the neighbor kids, that is where we would be every night."

Those trees were taken by the tornado that moved up the slight slope from the Sunnyside Subdivision.

Janet was 16 and a Concord High School junior when the tornado took her family's home. The twister picked up the house and dropped it into the basement of the neighbor's house, which had also been blown away.

"The chimney and the front steps, that's all we had left," Janet said.

Before the storm hit, her family, like many others, had gathered on Palm Sunday.

"It was so muggy and so hot. We were just having a get together, my brother was home from the Air Force so we were all over there (along Wolfe Avenue in Elkhart) at my sister's house. It was so extremely hot. You could just see the haze. You knew something was going to happen."

And happen it did. The National Weather Service began issuing tornado warnings across northern Indiana in the afternoon. The outbreak of 47 tornadoes in six states had begun.

"We could see it going down Mishawaka Road," Janet said. "It was huge."

"It came through where the Concord Mall is now and it just hit and missed," she said as she pointed out her home's window across Greenwood. "It didn't get any of the houses along there ... but it came down the boulevard and boom, took all our houses right here."

While the tornado was bearing down on their home, the Hess family was scurrying across Wolf Avenue to a church basement to join many others already there seeking shelter.

Janet's future husband, Don, was at a friend's home along Ind. 15 having his own experience with the Palm Sunday storms. The teens watched through the basement window of that home as the tornado that had earlier struck Midway Mobile Home Park delivered another blow, destroying the Jefferson Place Subdivision and taking more lives there.

"Boy, it was green as grass outside," he recalls. "We could see junk flying around in the sky. It was something else."

The Chupps now live at the corner of Greenwood Boulevard and Tennessee Street. Her parents, Agnes and Herald Hess, owned that lot. Their home in 1965 was next door along Greenwood.

"My mom and dad rebuilt right away," Janet said. The family's new home was ready in July.

"They were putting them up like mad out here," she said.

But not everyone returned to Kingston Heights and Sunnyside. Visitors will find many vacant lots, some with the vestige of a concrete driveway that is just visible through the encroaching grass.

The churches

"This is the place where President Johnson stood. Right here on this lot," said Dwaine Swartzentruber as he pointed up.

Swartzentruber was in the basement recently of the Elkhart County Community Baptist Church at 23805 Sunnyside Ave. working on a plumbing project. He attends there. The church is across the street from the Sunnyside Mennonite Church. Both buildings that stood on the lots in 1965 were blown away. Both were rebuilt to serve as gathering places for two flocks of Christians.

Swartzentruber, in his easy, southern Indiana accent, said he doesn't recall the event as he arrived in 1966. But church lore tells of Johnson's visit and the famous photo that was taken by The Goshen News photographer with the president standing next to an American flag stuck to debris.

Across the road, the scenario was the same. The members present had heard that the Sunnyside Mennonite Church was destroyed on Palm Sunday 1965, then was rebuilt with help from the Mennonite Disaster Service.

A small plaque just to the right of the church entrance honors those who rebuilt the church with the help of "God's grace." The plaque was presented to the church by Everett and Helen Ford.

The congregation was spared that day, because the evening service was canceled due to the tornado warnings, according to Pastor Terry Zehr. But the Fords lived next to the church. They were home when the F4 tornado tore up their street headed for the church. One of their daughters, Carolyn, 4, was killed. A son, Doug, 13, and Mr. Ford were severely injured. Others in the family also suffered injuries.

Zehr said the church did not have a basement in 1965, and doesn't have one now. The congregation relies on the technology available today to avoid meeting during threats of storms.

"We are so connected anymore," Zehr said. "With cell phones, if we have a meeting (scheduled), we just cancel. That is probably the difference between now and then."

Fellow pastor Melissa Fisher-Fast said the history of the storm has not completely been passed by.

"Just this past Sunday we had a member who was a child then present the Sunday school story," she said.

Never forget

That day's events are vivid and fresh for Watters and the other survivors.

"It's not something you can forget," she said.

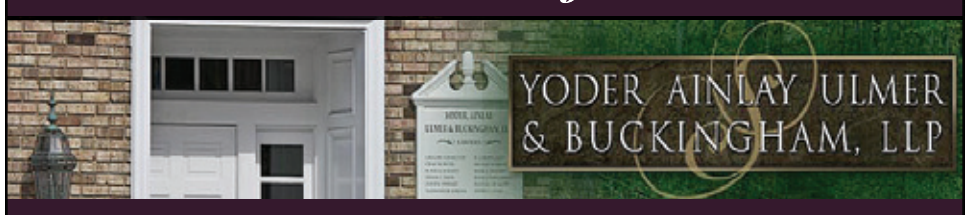
But, according to Watters, some survivors have not told their stories because they are painful to recall. She urges them to talk to others, but only a few have.

Watters has addressed her pain by maintaining the memorial where her brother's life was lost. Every five years she invites the public to gather there and share their stories from April 11, 1965. That's something she does herself whenever a reporter or someone else asks.

Recently Watters went beyond her own memorial and visited the Palm Sunday tornado exhibit at the Elkhart County History Museum in Bristol. She was moved.

"I was very proud... There was a big picture of my dad at the Midway."

In Remembrance of Those Lost



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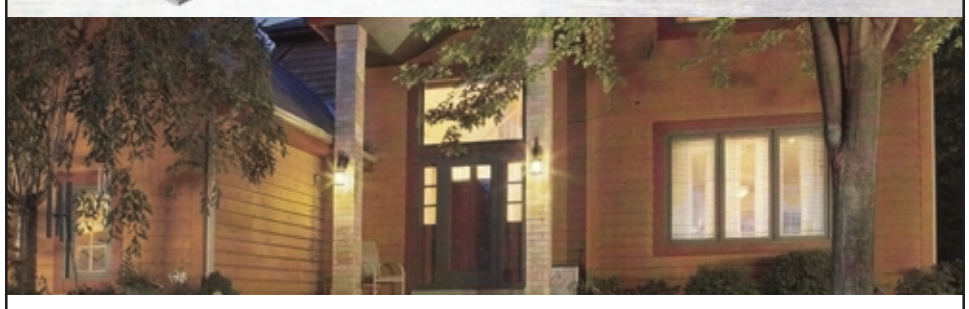

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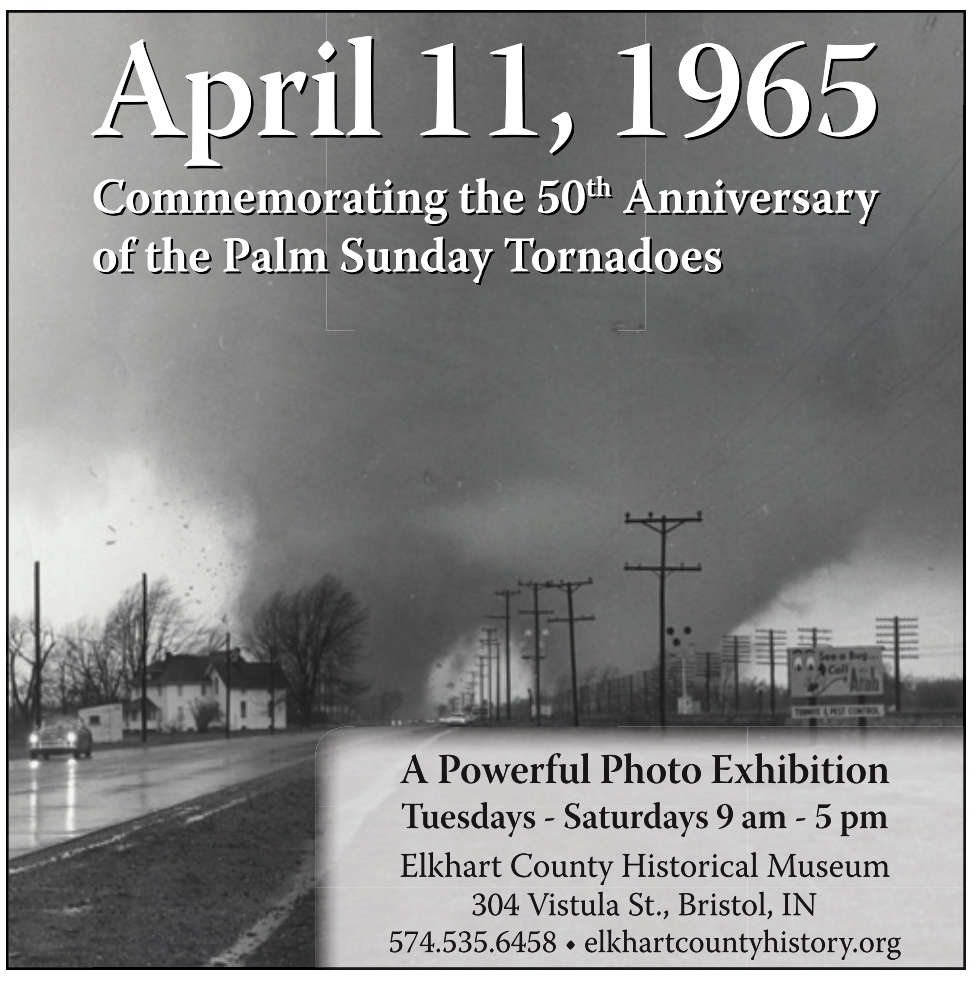

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Technology helps in advanced warning

Families still urged to be prepared in event of storms

By DANIEL RIORDAN
daniel.riordan@goshennews.com

In 1965, meteorologists, especially local ones, had limited access to crude satellite technology out of places like Chicago, Detroit or Fort Wayne.

Looking at the difference between what meteorologists and weather spotters had in 1965 to 2015, it's pretty comparable to computing in general from that era to now.

In 1965, businesses had computers the size of a room. Now people carry around smart phones that are much lighter and have so much more computing power than their behemoth predecessors.

For Nick Greenawalt, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service office near North Webster, a major innovation has been the ability to track potential severe weather days in advance.

"There have been so many advancements in numerical weather prediction," Greenawalt said. "What we call our forecast models. They mimic atmosphere with a bunch of equations. We enter numbers and run it out. So we can get output for potential weather six hours later, 10 hours later and several days out."

Greenawalt said the methods and education meteorologists received in 1965 to 2015 is similar. But the computing power from then to now is so much greater, it gives the modern-day meteorologist much more information.

That, combined with the explosion of social media, the ways to inform the public of impending bad weather has increased.

But despite all the advances in technology, increased use of weather spotters and things like Facebook and Twitter to alert the public, perhaps the greatest tool to save lives is a simple radio.

When meteorologists like WNDU's Mike Hoffman or WSBT's Bob Werner take to the airwaves this month, they both said to expect to hear a lot about weather radios.

Local TV stations will offer programs at local pharmacies where they will sell and program those radios.

"You have to think of them like smoke detectors," Greenawalt said. "Most of the time you don't hear anything from them. But they can save your life."

Greenawalt cited Van Wert, Ohio, in November 2002. Tornadoes ripped through northwest Ohio on Nov. 10. Thanks to the work of emergency management in Paulding County, where Van Wert is, a weather radio was placed in the town's movie theater.

"It went off and cleared people out," Greenawalt said of the weather radio. "That part of the theater was destroyed. People were in their seats just minutes before."

For Werner, a self-described "young farm boy in Nebraska," the Palm Sunday tornadoes stuck with him as a child.

And when he started as part-time meteorologist at WNDU in 1977, he was using a lot of the same equipment used by his brethren in 1965.

"It's enormous," Werner said of the difference between weather technology then and now. "The biggest difference between then and now is the presence of weather radar. We didn't get our first weather radar until the early 1980s. Until then we had a feed from Chicago."

And the lion's share of meteorologist's information back then came from ground reports.

"We were relying totally on weather spotters," said Werner of back then. "It was extremely primitive."

And because of that, the number of tornado-related deaths have drastically decreased over the years," Werner added.

But as Hoffman points out, all the technology in the world can't replace having a plan when severe weather hits.

"Despite all this, people still have to be prepared," Hoffman said. "Families need to sit down and come up with a plan in case bad weather strikes."

Warning

Continued from page 4

rologist Cindi Clawson will be checking radar while fellow meteorologist David Harker would be on Twitter and Hoffman's Facebook page providing updates through those social media platforms.

While their jobs might change for each storm, all three of the station's meteorologists are given a task to provide the most up-to-date and comprehensive coverage possible.

That works for WNDU as it does for WSBT or WSJV.

When the tornadoes hit in 1965, if people had a TV it didn't matter because the power was knocked out. There were no phones because phone lines were knocked down. Information was contained to those who had police scanners or short-wave radios.

In 2015, if someone has a weather radio and access to the Internet through a smart phone or tablet device, they can stay connected even if power and phone lines are knocked down.

Also according to Greenawalt, the National Weather Service makes a concerted effort to bring in and train more weather spotters.

Both Greenawalt and Hoffman agree that the big difference between 1965 and today, and what would make the difference if an EF4 tornado came through Elkhart County again, is the advanced warning systems.

"We can really monitor something two to three days out," Hoffman said. "That makes a huge difference."

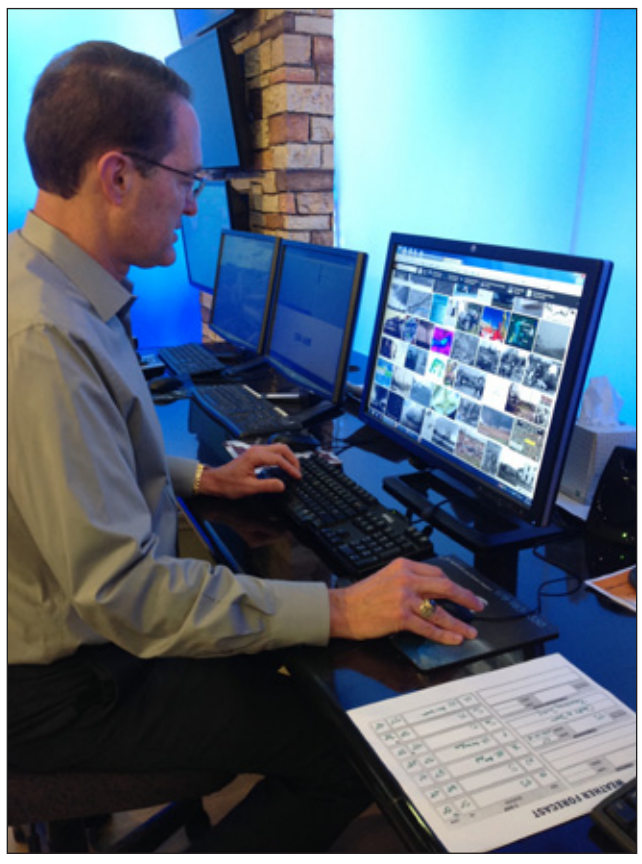
But that doesn't rule out surprises.

On Oct. 18, 2007, an EF3 tornado blew through Nappanee.

Hoffman said he went on the air twice before that for possible tornadoes in Fulton and Wabash counties that never materialized.

Despite the relative short notice of the third system that produced the Nappanee tornado, Hoffman was able to get on the air and warn people of the impending weather.

"Sometimes people come up to me and say we saved their family's lives because of the advance warning for Nappanee," Hoffman said. "I don't know about all that. I do know that we used all of our resources to provide our viewers with as much information as possible."



DANIEL RIORDAN | THE GOSHEN NEWS
WNDU METEOROLOGIST searches for images related to the Palm Sunday tornadoes in the WNDU studios in South Bend last week.

Safe

Continued from page 8

Bice said.

The traditional construction of placing rafters across a house to hold up a roof is still used locally, according to the inspectors. Codes for rafters center around the placement, number and size of nails.

As stated above, the modern codes require roofs to withstand a 90 mph wind. Only the two smallest tornadoes on the Fujita Tornado Damage Scale might be in that speed range. An F0 tornado reaches wind speeds of 72 mph and an F1 ranges from 73 to 112 mph, according to information from the National Weather Service.

"You can't stop a tornado from tearing a house down," Williams said, "but you may be able to slow it down as it is moving through to give you time to get into the basement."

Both Bice and Williams urged the public to consult with their departments before they build a house or structure or place a manufactured home on a lot to make sure they are following codes for their own safety.

"People try to avoid the building department," Bice said. "And so many times these are the people who have these problems."

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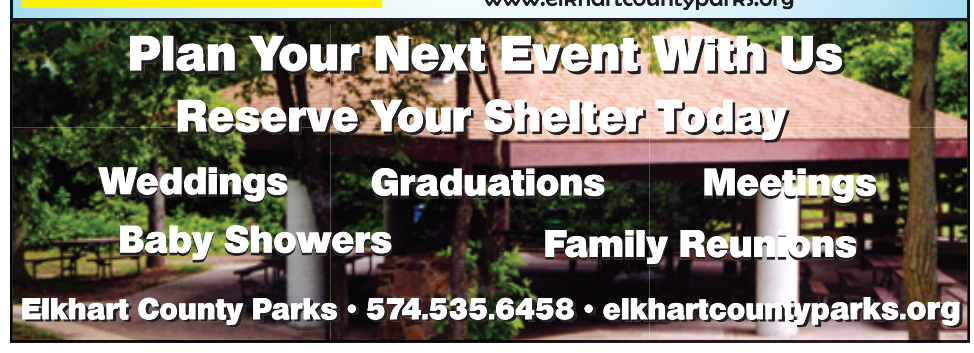



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New Martin's
EXPRESS



COMING SOON!
GRAND OPENING, THURSDAY, MAY 7TH

Martin's Super Markets will open its newest store, Martin's Express, on Thursday, May 7 at 1401 College Avenue in Goshen.

The 34,000-square-foot Martin's Express will feature a mouth-watering fresh shopping experience for guests from Martin's, plus the rest of what is needed to complete meals, all in an easy-to-shop store layout.

Martin's Express features Martin's regular weekly ad specials and customer reward programs. Martin's Advantage Cards will be fully honored at Martin's Express. The store will also have a Side Door Deli Cafe, Starbucks Coffee Kiosk, Farmers Salad Bar, full-service fresh Butcher and Seafood Shoppes, hot Deli foods, prepared meals to enjoy in-store or take home and more. Produce, Dairy, Frozen, Grocery and Health & Beauty Departments will offer a comprehensive range of the most popular selections.

Among the activities planned to celebrate the store's grand opening are:

MAY 7, 10:00 AM: Ribbon cutting

MAY 13, 1:00 PM TO 3:00 PM: Hoosier Lottery Wheel Spin; match 3 lottery purchase scenes to spin on the Wheel for prizes.

MAY 12, 1:00 AM AND 3:00 PM: Eat Smart In Wellness tours with dietitian Kristin Hiscox. Free, but registration seats required.

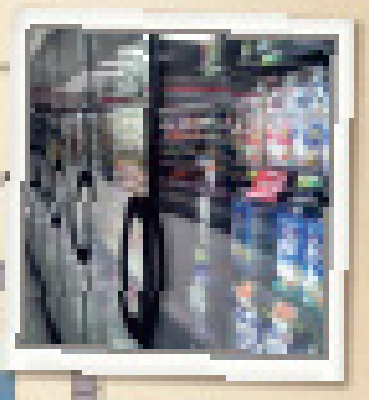
MAY 14, 6:00 PM TO 8:00 PM: Adults only wine and Deli sampling event for just $10 per person. Must be 21 to enter.

MAY 15, 4:00 PM TO 7:30 PM: Meet Martin's General Chef, Melissa Bradley, who will host a free sampling event.

MAY 16, 1:00 PM TO 2:00 PM: Kids Club Day; free children's activities.

MAY 22, 4:00 PM TO 6:30 PM: Martin's Cookout Fundraiser and UFO Live Broadcast; register to win a $500 merchant Jordan Automotive, Martin's and UFO.

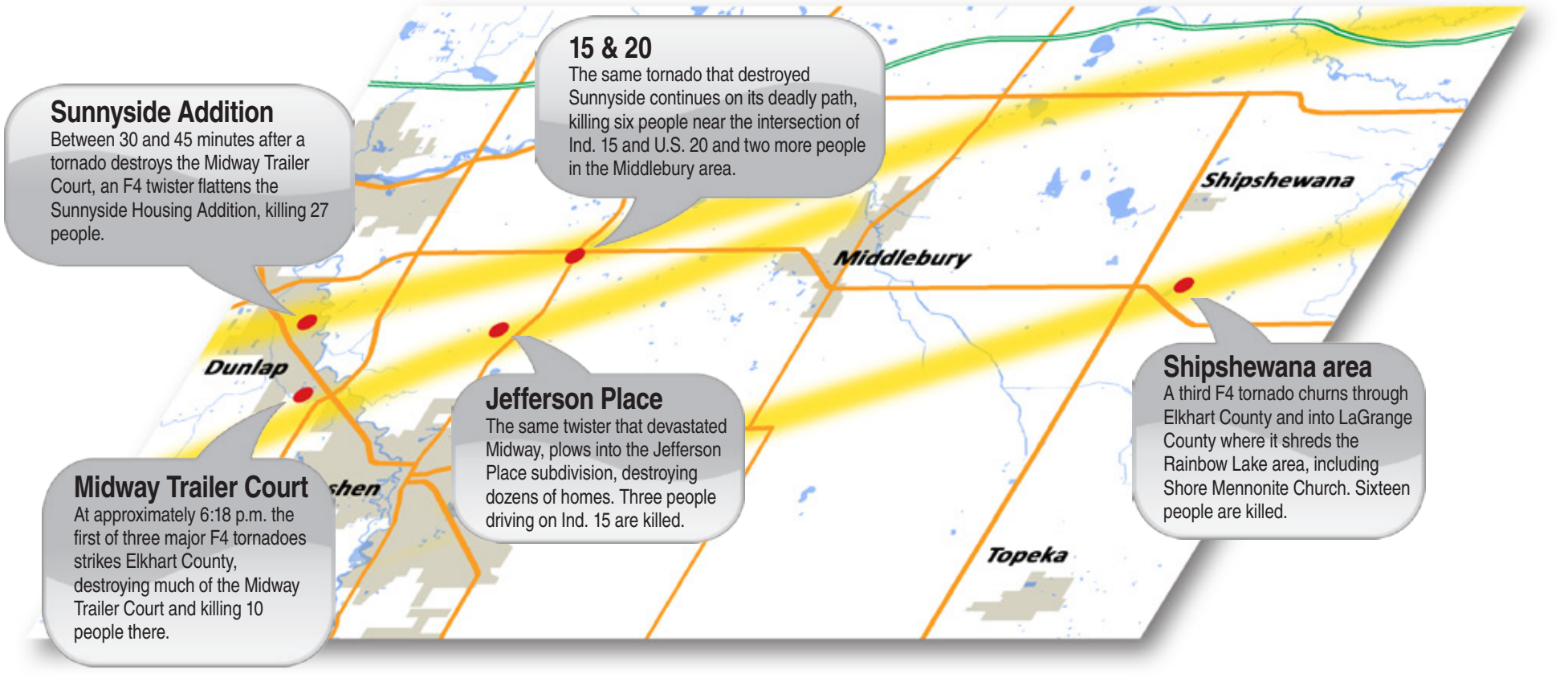








MARKING THE PATHS



Palm Sunday Timeline

4:35 p.m.
- A squall line reached from near LaCrosse, Wisconsin through Rockford, Illinois to Champaign, Illinois. SELS issued another tornado forecast. It was valid over the northern half of Indiana, northwest Ohio, and southeast Michigan.

6:08
- With several twisters already on the ground in St. Joseph County, The South Bend Weather Bureau issues a tornado warning for Elkhart County.

6:18
- Twin F4 tornadoes strike the Midway Trailer Court, near where the C.R. 17 overpass currently crosses U.S. 33. Ten people were killed and nearly all the mobile homes were either destroyed or severely damaged. Six people died in a single trailer.

6:30
- The tornado that leveled Midway continues northwest and plows into the Jefferson Place Subdivision just south of the Jefferson Elementary School. Three people traveling in cars on Ind. 15 are killed.

6:50-7:15
- A second F4 tornado tears through Dunlap and the Sunnyside Housing Addition, killing 27 people and destroying many homes.

6:50-7:15
- A third tornado hops over the south side of Goshen and eventually hits the Rainbow Lake area of Shipshewana, destroying homes, severally damaging the Shore Mennonite Church and claiming 16 lives in LaGrange County.

7:25
- The twister that tore through Dunlap continues northwest and destroys most buildings at the intersection of Ind. 15 and U.S. 20 and killing six more people. The twister cut a path through Middlebury township and took the life of two more residents before it was finished.

ODDS & ENDS

Victims tossed around like dolls

THE GOSHEN NEWS

Notes from the 1965 Palm Sunday Tornadoes as reported in the pages of The Goshen News:

• It was estimated some victims were pulled into the air and carried as far as 1,000 feet away to their deaths. Cars were tossed around like toys.

• Debris was found as far away as Ann Arbor, Michigan.

• Wind speeds were estimated at 260 mph in the Category 4 storms.

• There were 91 families residing at Midway Trailer Court on April 11, 1965. Ten people died, six in one trailer, and 30 were injured. More than half of the park's residents lost their homes.

• Wayne Hoke of Sunnyside in Dunlap lost his First National Bank of Goshen checkbook in the tornado. It was found by Mrs. Robert Voorhees and her sons at the edge of a wooded section near their home in Tecumseh, Michigan. An Elkhart County license plate was found in Sturgis, Michigan.

• Among those having homes destroyed or damaged in Jefferson were Jerry Biller, Cal Zehr, Mel Eash, Fred Call, Frank Lower, Clarence Stahley, Virgil Riley, Ruth Swoveland, Duane Blough, Burns Stark and Delbert Getz.

• Among those residing at Midway in 1965 were LeRoy Lambright, Jerry Snyder, Ted Holewinski, Mike Wheeler, Glen Anglemyer, Eli Kauffman, William Higginbotham, Lula Zimmerman, Keith Stickel and Leonard Spigutz.

• The old landmark intersection of Ind. 15 and U.S. 20 was wiped out on Palm Sunday 1965. Six people died in a home not far from Elcona Country Club. Two semi-tractor trailers at the truck stop were overturned and the Midway Restaurant was destroyed. Only the stools survived.

• John VanHout was among many amateur radio operators kept busy after the storms struck. The Goshen CB Club stood by at City Hall, relaying messages.

• Goshen News sports editor Norm Schweickart and his family of four huddled in the basement of their C.R. 17, just north of Midway Trailer Court. They could see debris flying through the air, but the storm spared the Schweickarts and went east of their home.

• Bill Books and Bill Ogle of the Goshen Fire Department, using a station wagon, took eight injured from Midway to Hotel Goshen for treatment. Dan Delcamp and Floyd Wortinger transported five in the city ambulance to Goshen General.

• Elkhart County Sheriff Woody Caton and Goshen Police Chief Glenn Kindy helped coordinate rescue efforts. The Dunlap EUB Church and Goshen High Park Medical building were among spots used to treat the injured. Pierre Moran School in Elkhart served as a temporary morgue.

• Kenneth Swanson was administrator of Goshen General Hospital in 1965. Attorney Robert Hepler offered the Masonic Lodge for the homeless and George Davis of the Red Cross arranged for blood supplies delivered from Fort Wayne.

• The Goshen News staff worked around the clock to report the tragedy. Among reporters were Bill Sheffer, Jim Miller, Bob Conrad, Norm Schweickart, Jo Wohlford and chief photographer Mel Troyer.

WHAT ELSE WAS HAPPENING?

Other Local news in the pages of The Goshen News from April 11, 1965 (Palm Sunday Tornado Day):

• Ground was broken at St. James Episcopal Church for a new parish house. The Rev. Bruce Mosier shoveled the first dirt. Others involved in the ceremony were G.R. McConnell, John Snobarger, Milton Latta, Lewis Fidler and Goshen High School senior Tom Kintigh who was acolyte.

• Fix-up, paint-up week started in Middlebury with Mrs. Sam T. Yoder, Mrs. Gerald Hayworth and Mrs. Jon Yoder of the Middlebury Garden Club among those on the committee.

• John Boyts returned to his Sixth Street home after spending the winter in New Orleans with nephew Jerry Rarick and his family.

• Jim Yoder, 1960 GHS grad, and his wife visited his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Don Yoder of South Eighth Street, on Palm Sunday.

• Harry Carlson and daughters Sandra and Marcia of Lafayette were Sunday dinner guests of Mr. and Mrs. Earle Thomas on Gra-Roy Drive.

• Monday Night Television: Leave It to Beaver, To Tell The Truth, Voyage To The Bottom Of The Sea, I've Got a Secret, Andy Griffith, Lucy Show, Andy Williams, Bing Crosby, Man From UNCLE, Ben Casey, Alfred Hitchcock.

• There were no Goshen General Hospital births during the tornadoes, but one just before and one soon after. A daughter was born to Mr. and Mrs. Delbert Stidams at 5:57 p.m. and a son to Mr. and Mrs. James Huff, 117 West Garfield, at 8:49. The first tornado hit Midway at 6:18 and the second Sunnyside at 7:15.

— Compiled by Stu Swartz

In memoriam

Remembering our friends and neighbors lost on Palm Sunday 1965:

ELKHART COUNTY

▮ Jefferson Place Area
Jean Krehbiel, 28, Middlebury.
Timothy Krehbiel, 5 months, her son.
David L. Yoder, 28, Goshen.

▮ Middlebury Area
Margaret Nihart, 65, Middlebury.
Lester J. Miller, 38, Route 2, Middlebury.

▮ Midway Mobile Home Park
Carolyn Sue Jackson, 23.
June Ann Jackson, 5, her daughter.
Vandy Jackson, 1, her son.
Denward Jackson, 35, Wakarusa, visiting.
Daniel Jackson, 3, his son.
Leslie Jackson, 5, his son.
Ada Mae Higginbotham, 22.
Timothy Higginbotham, 6 months, her son.
Nancy Keisel, 23.
Chris McIntosh, 1.

▮ Ind. 15 and U.S. 20
Irving Doerscher, 34, Bristol.
William Doerscher, 10, his son.
Tamara Doerscher, 6, his daughter.
Beverly Wolfe, 14, his stepdaughter.
Janie Ruth Spradlin, 10, Bristol.
Jackie Spradlin, 7, her sister.

▮ Sunnyside Dunlap
Donald S. Yoder, 51, Goshen, in his car.
Edward Hearld, 14.
Barbara Burkholder, 29.
Steve Forsythe, 10.
John Price, 13.
Carolyn Ford, 4.
Charles Warren, 86.
Elizabeth Warren, 83, his wife.
Rosabelle Keating, 73.
Calvin Kettlebar, 59.
Gladys Kettlebar, 42, his wife.
Leslie Kettlebar, 9, their son.
Nellie Zentz, 87.
Marklin Roberts, 37.
Frances Roberts, 30, his wife.
James Roberts, 8, their son.
Kenneth Griffin, 54.
Ruth Griffin, 55.
Grace Stoner, 56.
Michael Dowell, 2.
Kent Shanholt, 7 months.
John Edward Wirt, 11 months.
Hans Randa, 50.
Roxann Boone, 6.
Norma Shell, 25.
Helen Brenneman, 53.
Opal Vaughn, 33.

LAGRANGE COUNTY

▮ Shipshewana Area
LeRoy Yoder, 55, Topeka.
Florence Yoder, 53, his wife.
Willie Bontrager, 58, Shipshewana.
Grayce Bontrager, 56, his wife.
John S. Yoder, 66, Shipshewana.
Jennie Yoder, 60, his wife.
Frank Haarer, 78, Shipshewana.
Grace Haarer, 69, his wife.
Noble Haarer, 36, their son.
Bessie Hostetler, 68, Shipshewana.
Bernis Hostetler, 45, her daughter.
Iva Nofzinger, 54, Shipshewana.
Ida Miller, 46, Shipshewana.
David Miller, 19, Shipshewana, her son.
Clarence Clindaniel, 21, Shipshewana.
Mable Miller, 60, Shipshewana.
Hallie Schindler, 70, LaGrange.
Mary Alice Schindler, 75, his wife.
Grover Moore, 51, Follenbee, W. Va., driving on Toll Road.

REPORTED LATER
Anna Dillman, 80, Route 2, Goshen.
Clara Mae Weaver, 62, Osceola.
Tommy Lee Moore, 3, Wakarusa.

— List compiled by Stu Swartz

COMMUNICATIONS



DANIEL RIORDAN | THE GOSHEN NEWS

THYS VAN HOUT holds a picture of himself from 1965 at his amateur radio station in Goshen. He still has much of the same radio equipment at his home near Watervliet, Michigan.

THE MESSENGER

Goshen teen used his radio to help send word to families throughout the country

By DANIEL RIORDAN
daniel.riordan@goshennews.com

WATERVLIET, Mich.

Thys Van Hout couldn't speak a word of English when he and his family emigrated from The Netherlands to Goshen in 1956.

Less than a decade later, it was his voice that was responsible for relaying both messages of hope and despair to people across the country after perhaps the greatest tragedy in Elkhart County history.

With his own money, earned from a Goshen News paper route, he bought short-wave radio equipment. He earned a license from the Federal Communication Commission to broadcast on that radio in 1961, the same year he became a U.S. citizen.

The wall of electronics sat on a desk in the corner of his bedroom in his childhood home at 912 S. Eighth

See MESSENGER | 27

Video

To watch video of Thys Van Hout reading some of the messages he relayed in the days following Palm Sunday tornadoes, go to youtube.com/user/thegoshennews

The Maples
REMEMBERS THOSE TOUCHED BY THE PALM SUNDAY TORNADOS.

There are those at our campus who still recall the event that occurred 50 years ago; the tragic tornados that affected everyone in our community. We hear their stories and are thankful that they are here with us today.

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FROM OUR READERS

Aftermath of Palm Sunday Tornadoes, 'no good sight to see'

By HOWARD YODER

I was a young boy, 13 years old, when the Palm Sunday tornadoes hit.

It was a hot, humid day. That evening, we were milking cows. My dad went to close the door of our bank barn. I remember Dad saying he almost couldn't close the door because there was so much suction.

Later on that evening, our neighbor Levi (Lottie) Miller came with his pick-up truck with a camper on top and asked if we wanted to go and look at what happened, so we went with him.

The tornado went through about two miles south of us, by the corner of C.R.s 28 and 43. It hit my first cousin Monroe Yoder's place. It took the barn down. When we got there, they took a chain saw and cut a hole in the barn to go a little colt out, but the mother was dead.

We drove around until we came to Ind. 5 and U.S. 20. By that time it was dark. In the southeast corner, there was a big pasture field. People took flashlights and were looking for one more missing person, who we found a little before midnight. They rolled him on a cot and covered him, which was no good sight to see.

Next morning, we drove around again. We stopped at Johnny Hochstetler's. There was a 4-by-6 board that went through a cow.

We also went to Chris (Barney) Yoder's. He had two sets of buildings, which were a total loss. The big house was lifted off of the foundation about six feet to the east at an angle. The roof was off. I remember going to the top of the house and it gave me a funny feeling. Chris's lived on 100 South, which was called Cable Line Road. There was a piece of wood 1½-by-14 inches that went through the cable. At Rueben Bontrager's there was a pipe that was twisted around into a knot.

We went back to Ind. 5 and U.S. 20 in the daylight. Every tree was gone. It did not look like the same place. Now there are houses and a factory there.

I remember my cousin, Josie Mast (deceased) had left Ind. 5 and U.S. 20 with a horse and buggy at the time of the tornadoes. All I can recall is that he stopped and hung onto a fence post.

Amish men from Pennsylvania came to help. For five weeks, a big bus would bring men to help. They would drop them off at Monroe Miller's sawmill, which is now Indiana Wood Products.

Alvin K. Miller's wife, Ruth, would take the men to different places for the night. I remember some of the Pennsylvania men staying at our house and we became good friends.

Mornings they would go help free of charge. At noon, places were set up for lunch for the men to eat. Church members brought food in to eat. I am thinking lunch was at Ben C. Millers and Andy Rabers in the Shipshewana area.

I stayed home from school a couple days to plow so my Dad could go and help rebuild.

I don't know how many dollars worth of damage was done. I don't recall any names, but I remember them saying close to Ind. 5 and U.S. 20, five people went for the basement and the last one was on the bottom step and the steps went up and the person fell into the basement.

There was a funeral for (eight) people at Shipshewana School: Mr. and Mrs. LeRoy Yoder, (he was principal of Honeyville School) and Mr. and Mrs. Willis Bontrager.

Howard Yoder lives along C.R. 43 near Middlebury

'My life was spared'

April l0th I had gone to Fort Wayne to visit my girlfriend. I was planning to return to my home in the country, between Middlebury and Shipshewana on April llth. We saw in the news that a strong weather system was coming through the area, so she talked me into staying overnight and returning early April 12th.

As news began trickling in, we heard the massive tornado ripped through Sunnyside in Elkhart and headed northeast on to Shipshewana. Her sister was a nurse at Goshen hospital and she said many injured were brought in as they were found during the evening.

My folks lived in the path of the tornado between Goshen and Shipshewana.

Phones were ripped out so I couldn't get through to them all night. Not knowing if they were OK or not. My father had stood at the kitchen window watching the dark funnel go through the fields just south of our place.

So Monday morning as I drove on Ind. 5 coming to the intersection of Ind. 5 and U.S. 20, I could not even recognize the place that I drove through every day to work. Huge trees were down. Debris was all over the place. I was able to turn west and get to our home. They were all safe, praise the Lord!

Had I left on Sunday as planned I would have been coming through 5 & 20 about the time the tornado ripped through the area. My life was spared.

— Sandy Hartzler
Goshen

'Brothers at the hospital

That tornado Sunday, The Rev. Dr. Andrew Hardie saw to it that all the young people were rushed home from the First Presbyterian Church to be with family. He went straight to the Goshen hospital, where as a member of the board, he was readily recognized. He was asked to be at the main entrance where carloads of people entered the building.

Despite rain and winds, he helped move all the furniture out into the rain, clearing floor space for a triage area where people were identified and placed according to their injuries and critical needs.

Families rushed in looking for lost family members. One couple was desperately looking for their little son. Hardie informed them there had been two little boys, brothers, who were moved up to a pediatric area.

"No, it was just our son," and they rushed out to continue their desperate search.

It was more than an hour later when Hardie looked up and saw the couple again.

"I'll show you where he'll be if he's brought here." So they went upstairs to see the two brothers there in the playpen. The parents suddenly dashed to one of the boys, grabbing him in their arms.

As Hardie lifted the other boy to hold him, the boy said, "Since we couldn't find our moms and dads, we decided we'd better be brothers — so we told them we were."

— Laurie Hardie
Goshen

Tornado response 'tore (father) up'

I was a month away from my third birthday, yet I do remember. I remember being literally thrown into the basement with my brother when the storms came, but instead of seeking shelter with us, our parents stood on the front porch and watched the tornado that took out Midway Trailer Court.

We lived on the corner of Clinton Street and Greene Road, which was almost the boonies back then. For the rest of the summer and for several summers following, just the threat of a thunderstorm would force us to have dinner in the basement. I, for a long time, would panic whenever the fire trucks would come through town to announce a tornado warning.

I also developed a sixth sense of when severe weather was going to develop. It could be a clear blue sky afternoon and I would tell my grandmother that the tornadoes were coming. She would tell me I was crazy, but then she would turn on the TV and the red ball and the tone would come across announcing a watch. After a few times, she would take my word as gospel and she liked to tell that story until she died in 2012.

Since my dad was a wrecker operator for Lechlitner's Garage, he was called to help with the recovery efforts. He used to tell us stories about some of the gorier runs he went on, but working the tornado aftermath tore him up. He was, and is to this day, still bothered about finding the child in a tree who was eviscerated.

Grandma and Grandpa lived on C.R. 17 between C.R. 18 and the bypass. Their house was in the path of the storm that hit Sunnyside as it was making its way to the intersection of U.S. 20 and Ind. 15. My grandparents and my uncle were on the way to the basement and they stopped at the picture window in the dining room to watch. They were too terrified to move and too terrified to scream. Grandma whispered, "We are going to die" and all Grandpa could do was whisper back, "I do believe we will." The wall cloud came between their house and the neighbor's house and left both unscathed. The only evidence of the tornado was scattered pieces of insulation and other debris in the back 40.

Grandpa was the janitor at Concord Junior High and needed to be in the Dunlap area. Those who had legitimate business there had to have a yellow tag. He also was a HAM operator, and he spent a lot of time relaying health and welfare messages to people across the country due to downed phone lines. Remember, there were no cell phones and Internet at the time.

— Sue Wilden
Goshen

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God provides peace as tornado passes above

By PEGGY BOWERS

April 11, 1965 is a date that I'll never forget. It was the date of one of the worst tornados to ever hit northern Indiana.

It was a warm Sunday afternoon and we were going to the home of friends for supper and then to the Palm Sunday evening services at the Elkhart Valley Church of the Brethren.

We had supper at the home of Bob and Gail Rogers on C.R. 24 and as we were doing up the supper dishes, the electricity went off. The sky was dark and had a funny feel to it and suddenly there were sirens with fire engines and police cars passing the house. We went to the door and looked out, commenting that something must have happened and that we would need to go and see after church. This was the tornado that hit the trailer park on U.S. 33.

My husband, John, went out to the car and got our coats because we thought it might rain. Suddenly Bob said that he thought the sky had a funny look to it and maybe we should go down to the basement. They had a home that was a split level and we first went down to the bottom level, but he thought we should go on down to the basement itself.

I could not see the funnel that they thought was a tornado. It was so large that it was dragging its tail on the ground and did not look like a tornado.

Bob thought that we should go to the southwest corner of the basement. We waited there for a minute or so and he and his wife, Gail, ran up to see how close it was, leaving their two sons with us in the basement. They came flying down the stairs and said it was upon us.

We heard some noise and thought that perhaps the roof had been blown off. John and Bob started praying for our safety and suddenly there was such a pressure that you felt that you could not breathe. I remember that my hair was standing on end and my dress flew up over my head. I remember thinking that this is what it was like to die and that when we opened our eyes we would be in heaven with Jesus.

Little did we know that the storm had literally picked up their home and blown it apart above us. We had shut all the windows thinking it might rain. When the storm passed we were all alive and there was nothing above us but the stormy sky.

The only place in the basement that we could have survived was the southwest corner that we were in. The bottom floor where we had been was swept clean and the rest of the basement was full of debris from the rest of the house. We looked around trying to figure out how to get out and piled up some things to climb out of the basement. We were being careful of the power lines not knowing if they were live or not.

We knelt on the road and Bob gave thanks for our lives even though their home was completely destroyed. The only thing we could see standing was the Elkhart Valley Church of the Brethren approximately one half mile away and we started to walk that way. On the way my husband was picking chunks of plaster out of the back of my dress. ...

A car came along with a young couple trying to get through to her home but roads were blocked with downed trees and power lines. They gave us a ride down to the church. I've often wondered what happened to their families and whether they got home OK that evening.

We got out and ran for the church just as the skies opened up and doused us. Bob had a cut on his head but otherwise we were unharmed. A couple from Wakarusa saw us run for the church and came back to see if we needed a ride home, figuring that we had been caught in the storm.

I'll never forget the ride home (to Bob's parents home on C.R. 1). Trees were down, houses and building damaged, power lines were down so that we had to detour several times. I've never been where there was a bomb dropped, but it certainly looked like pictures I've seen over the years. ...

Every Palm Sunday I think of that day and all it meant. So many suffered so much that day, but the people pulled together to help one another in a very special way. People walked the fields to pick up debris so that the farmers could get in their fields to plant. Many fixed meals and offered shelter and help to those in need.

I've thanked God many times for the fact that He chose to spare our lives that day. I know that the storm took away any fear that I felt of dying. The peace that descended on me during that storm made me know that God is always with us and watching over us. If He had chosen to take us home that day I know that we would have been with Him in heaven. That is what we long for as Christians and we know that day will come for all of us.

Peggy Bowers lives in Wakarusa.

Storm really changed outlook

By MARILYN RAPPATTA

On Sunday, April 11, 1965, about mid afternoon, I remember being outside just lazily swinging and enjoying the warm spring day. But I do remember thinking the air and the sky color were just a little different than normal.

I really had no thoughts about severe weather since I had never experienced anything like what was to come later that day. Sure I'd heard of tornadoes and even heard my parents mention one they experienced in the Parkside area of Goshen in the late 30s before I was born. But at age 24 I was oblivious to the fact that another one was even possible.

That evening my father and I were getting ready to go to communion at Goshen City Church of the Brethren. While in the basement of fellowship hall of the church and during the communion service, we heard a few sirens. That seemed fairly normal. But soon a couple nurses started leaving the service. Even then I didn't realize the enormity of what had happened.

I don't remember anyone announcing what was happening. Later I was told that one tornado had gone right over the hospital at the time I was upstairs getting dressed. We lived in front of the hospital on Main Street.

Monday morning at Mennonite Mutual Aid where I worked and that was located by the hospital at that time, we sat around talking about the happenings of the day before and what each of us experienced. One lady mentioned being at a scene where she saw someone with a missing limb. The sky and weather on Monday didn't seem very settled yet, but rather eerie and subdued.

In 1967 I met my husband-to-be who told me about his experiences in helping after the first tornado and later. He was in civil defense, so he was called out after the first tornado struck. While heading to the Midway Trailer Court area, he witnessed the second tornado but was not harmed. He continued on to the trailer park and was able to help look for people. He helped with cleanup for many days following. A co-worker of his in civil defense was killed in the Sunnyside area tornado.

I am thankful that my experience during this time was not as devastating as so many others went through. It definitely changes one's outlook on life anyway.

Marilyn Rappatta lives in Goshen.

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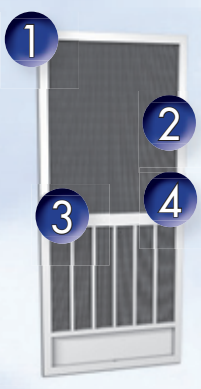

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School sports at GHS not impacted by tornadoes

By ROBBY HOWARD
and GREG KEIM
robby.howard@goshennews.com,
greg.keim@goshennews.com

GOSHEN — For Ron Hoke, April 11, 1965, seemed like a normal Sunday, except it was unusually hot and humid for an April day. Perhaps a little more windy, too.

So the then-Goshen High School junior decided to go golfing. He went to South Shore with his friend Tom L. Stump. They played all 18 holes. Well, Hoke jokes now he only attended 18 holes, Stump played 18. Hoke remembers seeing several other people out golfing, too. It was a nice day for it.

Shortly after the two made it back home, tornadoes swept across the area, leveling entire neighborhoods, forever changing the landscape of Elkhart County and everyone around them.

But just two days later, Hoke was back at school. That Tuesday night, he competed in a track meet against South Bend Saint Joe at Foreman Field. He won the broad jump with a leap of 19 feet, 10 inches, according to the April 14, 1965 Goshen News.

Elkhart County had suffered massive devastation. But it didn't mean an end for sports.

"I think sports is kind of the pulse of the country," he said. "It keeps going."

Despite the president visiting the area, despite 70 lives being lost, despite debris being flung all the way to Michigan, there were still sporting events for most local teams less than a week after the chaos.

Concord High School was supposed to be at Goshen's track meet that Tuesday, but school wasn't back in session yet as the Dunlap area was ravaged the most by the twisters. Reports say Concord missed the entire week of school after the tornadoes.

A story in Thursday, April 15, 1965 Goshen News encouraged Concord students to finish the school year, if they were able.

"Realizing there will be many problems for consideration, such as transportation, lunches, books, etc. parents and students of high school age are asked to call Jay Holaway, guidance director," the story said.

It's unclear when Concord athletic teams played next following the tornado. The Minutemen did, however, part ways with their basketball coach and also the man who coached baseball, track and cross country during that week after the tornadoes as part of an "almost complete overhaul of the athletic coaching system."

"The Concord superintendent explained that the changes are being brought in a renovation of the Concord coaching system," a story in The News during that week said.

It's also unclear how many days schools such as Jefferson Township and Middlebury missed, or how it impacted their athletics.

That same Tuesday as Goshen's track loss to South Bend Saint Joe, The Goshen News also had a report of a track meet between Jimtown, Wakarusa and New Paris, which was won by Jimtown. Wednesday, Wakarusa beat Bethany Christian in a track meet.

The Goshen baseball team lost a 2-0 game at Michigan City just two days after the catastrophe, too. Goshen only missed school the Monday after the Sunday tornadoes, and went back Tuesday.

Hoke doesn't remember anything special being done at the track meet. He doesn't remember it feeling any different. It was just a way of getting back into the routine.

"It's a sense of normality," said Dale Garber, who volunteers alongside Hoke at the Goshen Historical Society.

Other than making note of Concord not making it to the track meet, there were no special mentions of the tornadoes on the sports pages of The News during the entire next week, except for a special fundraiser at the New Paris Speedway. Baseball dominated the headlines. Life in the sports world appeared mostly normal.

That Thursday's paper announced that the New Paris Speedway would have a special event in which all of the proceeds would go to the tornado relief fund. The story estimated it could be the largest single-organization donation to the fund.

The special races took place that Easter Sunday. The Monday, April 19, 1965, edition of The News reported $1,354.50 was raised, with hundreds of people showing up, and 65 drivers participating in 10 events.

Hoke said he didn't expect returning to sports took people's minds off of what had happened, especially since it came during spring sports season. He said people only really talked about basketball and football, and that the tornadoes that ripped through would dominate conversation for at least the next month, regardless of who you talked to.

But at least it was something else to do. Life went on.

"It's really hard to stop sports," he said with a smile.

Educator, coach killed

Harold Gingerich was a senior at Topeka High School when the Palm Sunday Tornadoes hit and he has fond memories of a man who was killed on that dreadful day.

Leroy Yoder was the principal at Honeyville Elementary School in Topeka.

"He was an amazing man," Gingerich said. "He did a lot of coaching in the area. His death left a huge vacancy in the community. He was known as a man of integrity."

Yoder was so well thought of in the community that he is still honored every year at Westview High School.

"The National Honor Society at Westview is named in honor of him," Gingerich added.

Gingerich played basketball and baseball at Topeka. According to him, Topeka played baseball in the fall so he was not involved in any spring sport when the tornadoes occurred.

He does, however, have vivid memories of the day.

"I took my girlfriend to see the movie 'The Longest Day,'" he said. "I had to get home early so my parents could have the car to go visit my aunt and uncle in Dunlap. They never made it and had to drive at right angles to avoid the storms and get home. There was a time when I had no idea where they were.

"I heard the windows in the house rattle and later saw the devastation in the Shipshewana area."

Gingerich is the founding pastor of the New Eden Worship Center in Topeka, which is in the old Honeyville School.

"We bought the building a few years ago," he said.

Gingerich knows others who were killed that day, including a woman who was in a singing trio that was rehearsing at Shore Mennonite Church for a program that night at Forks Mennonite Church.

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FROM THE ARCHIVES



GOSHEN NEWS FILE PHOTO

BILL JESSUP, one of many volunteers who helped tornado victims over the weekend used his "Big Cat" to push over the remains of a tornado-wrecked house.

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FROM THE DARKROOM



GOSHEN NEWS FILE PHOTO

TWO NATIONAL GUARDSMEN knock off a few minutes from patrol duty to get warm and dry in front of a fire at their improvised lean-to. Members of the guard worked throughout last week on traffic control duty, which reached a peak yesterday as sightseers by the thousands drove through damaged areas.



GOSHEN NEWS FILE PHOTO

NEW BUSINESSES ALONG U.S. 33 at the northwest edge of Dunlap were destroyed by the Sunday evening twister that started along C.R. 20 and ripped across U.S. 33 and through the Sunnyside Addition at Dunlap. A service station, noted for its beautiful petunia bed, was located in the foreground of the above photo, along with a reducing salon and fruit market.



GOSHEN NEWS FILE PHOTO

CLOTHING DONATIONS for tornado victims are sorted in this file photo.



GOSHEN NEWS FILE PHOTO

THESE MEN WORK to repair a home that was damaged by the Palm Sunday tornadoes

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AT GOSHEN HOSPITAL



GOSHEN NEWS FILE PHOTO

NURSES IN THE PEDIATRIC WARD at Goshen General Hospital comfort children who survived the tornadoes which ripped through Midway Trailer Court and Sunnyside Addition in Dunlap. Edward, 5, and John, 4, are the sons of Mr. and Mrs. Bennie York of Midway Trailer Court and their mother lived through the tornado and are both listed in fair condition at Goshen General. York, who was working when the devastation occurred, is shown by the bedside of one of his sons.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIRST-CLASS RESPONSE

THE GOSHEN NEWS

GOSHEN — Following the first tornado on Palm Sunday, Goshen Hospital Administrator Kenneth Swanson reports:

• 6:30 p.m. — Mrs. Francis Eby, evening supervisor, is alerted by police and rounds up the three doctors on duty — Haney, Rheinheimer and Hooker. She calls for extra bedding as the first Midway patients arrive.

• 6:45 — Off-duty doctors, employees and volunteers arrive. A call for more blood is made to Fort Wayne. The radio stations issue a call for help at the hospital. The cafeteria is cleared of tables.

• 7:00 — A laundry was contacted to bring our Monday load early. Ralph Gunden of Goshen College brings sheets and mattresses to High Park. Extra beds set up in lobby and hallways. Pharmacies deliver needed supplies.

• 7:30 — Dr. Gunderson and RN Florence Yoder evaluate patients. Auxiliary police arrive to handle traffic, visitors and relatives. First major surgery begins. Dr. Weldon Troyer reports short wave communications available.

• 8:00 — Called Chicago for first medical supplies. Began discharging patients with minor injuries. Began feeding people and had a list of patients available for relatives who were looking for them.

• 8:30 — Opened college dormitory and admitted patients. Dr. Amstutz and physicians from Warsaw covered that building. Dr. Mosemann and students from the nursing program were a great help.

• 9:00 — High school and college students helped escort patients to clinic.

• 9:30 — Began discharging victims; cleaned vacated rooms.

• 10:00 — Transferred intensive care patients to nursing stations.

• 10:30 — Opened up Goshen College gymnasium as temporary morgue.

• 11:00 — Began sending some workers home; return at 7 a.m.

• 11:30 — Cleaned up kitchen to get it ready for breakfast.

• 12:00 — Sent some doctors home for rest; did surgery until 4 a.m.; there were 150 patients treated at Goshen General Hospital with only two neurological patients transferred to other facilities.

— Compiled by Stu Swartz

FROM THE DARKROOM



GOSHEN NEWS FILE PHOTO

MEN AND WOMEN take a moment for a meal at a local school gymnasium during recovery efforts from the Palm Sunday Tornadoes.



GOSHEN NEWS FILE PHOTO

THE DUNLAP FIRE STATION has served as the headquarters for law enforcement agencies assisting in the investigation of the tornado destruction. All agencies used the station to complete lists of residents in the area who were still being checked to determine who was still missing, injured or dead.

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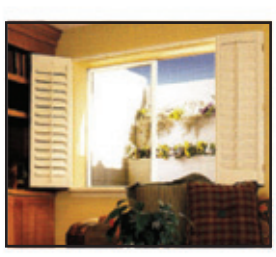





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Shore

Continued from page 10

the wind, then he saw a piece of barn roof fly across the field.

He looked outside and saw solid black clouds within 100 yards of him.

He and his wife picked up the kids and headed for the summer kitchen, where their basement entrance was located. By the time they reached the kitchen, the windows of their home were sucked out.

By the time they got down the stairway their house was gone.

Birky's family was safe, but had lost everything. Doris found a dress in the rubble to put on and Ivan had to find a pair of shoes for himself. They didn't match, Birky pointed out.

"Then we started walking," he said. "We didn't realize it at the time how bad we looked."

A police flasher at Ind. 5 and U.S. 20 was their guiding light.

The first car to come by were some of Doris' relatives and they didn't even recognize the family.

Birky was thankful for those who were able to help them, especially Mabel Mishler's family. Mabel had died and her family suggested that the Birkys move into her house since they were homeless. Paul Mishler gave Ivan a jacket and another neighbor gave them a baby bottle to feed their infant.

'There's a tornado coming ..."

Maurice and Cecelia Berkey were at home. Four of their children were playing outside and one was inside watching TV. The boy who was watching TV yelled, "Dad! There's a tornado coming our way."

The Berkeys got all of their children into the basement and Maurice pulled a wooden ping pong table over them. Maurice saw the tornado coming. He watched it take Jim Miller's home and barns. He said the tornado picked up the buildings and then discarded them.

When the Berkeys came up from the basement, they saw a wasteland before them.

"It looked like pictures of a war zone," Maurice said. "There was nothing there. It was flat."

Then another warning came. Another person yelled, "There's another tornado on the way!"

There was indeed another tornado but it went farther north.

Coming home to disaster

Truman Miller had been in South Bend eating lunch with his wife, Joyce, and had not heard about the tornadoes. They were coming back when suddenly they saw ambulances and police cars coming through Elkhart. The couple followed, wondering what had happened.

When they started seeing damage, the couple decided to head toward home in Shipshewana.

When they arrived back around Ind. 5 and U.S. 20. The homes that had been there were gone. And so was much of Shore Mennonite Church, which Truman was helping to remodel.

"Truman built our church, Shore, a couple of times," Ivan Birky quipped.

The couple, who had a daughter at home, wondered if their place had suffered the same fate. But they soon learned their daughter was safe. She had heard the tornadoes were coming and got into the basement.

Truman stopped by his hardware store and handed out supplies to rescuers. He then went to Shore.

Truman said his parents were only slightly injured but spent the night in the hospital.

Once everyone was found, the survivors had to arrange funerals, say goodbye and then find a way to continue even though the tornadoes had taken everything. That is where the community really helped.

Mass funeral

Richard Miller, funeral director and owner of Miller Funeral Home in Middlebury, met with the families and decided that since eight of them went to the same church a mass funeral would take place. The families agreed.

The Thursday after the tornadoes in the Shipshewana school gym, eight caskets were placed at the front. Family packed all levels of the gym to say goodbye.

Twelve people sang at the funeral, with a song dedicated to each person who died.

"Nobody cried," Ivan Birky recalled.

Mishler explained that by the day of the funeral, everyone was cried out.

After the funerals, the clean up continued and rebuilding of Shore Mennonite began.

"I thought it brought the community together," Birky said.

Before the tornadoes, the churches didn't really participate together.

"We didn't do anything with the Methodists," Birky said. "Or the Amish."

"We do now," Mishler said.

It's this sense of community that the survivors of the Palm Sunday tornadoes say they hope to pass down to younger generations. That's why on April 25, a special program on the Palm Sunday tornadoes will take place so those experiences can be shared.

"We can't lose this history," Al Yoder said, "of what happened."

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Messenger

Continued from page 18

St. He'd use them to contact other short-wave radio enthusiasts. He belonged to the Goshen Amateur Radio Club.

On April 11, 1965, the 17-year-old Goshen High School junior, in the wake of the Palm Sunday tornadoes, would be tasked with passing along messages to emergency personnel and concerned family members after tornadoes blew through the area, leaving death and destruction in their wake.

That day

"I ran outside as the weather rolled in," Van Hout recalled from his home north of Watervliet, Michigan. "The sky was like no color I'd ever seen before. The storms rolled through and for the most part I guess they missed us (in Goshen proper).

"After it was over it was real quiet. And I'd say about 15 minutes later, a fella from the local American Red Cross showed up at my door," Van Hout continued. "They had known me from the radio club. They had me get on my radio and make some calls."

The first call was to the national chapter of the American Red Cross in Washington D.C. with the message "We have a major emergency. We need your help."

Van Hout, by chance, was able to reach another short-wave radio enthusiast, Charles Mills of Buchanan, Michigan. Mills worked for Michigan Bell Telephone at the time. The phone company set up a portable operators station at Mills' home with five operators on duty at all times.

As word spread of their connection to the outside world, the Van Hout's home served as the de facto communication center for Goshen and surrounding areas.

Fifty years later, Van Hout has kept old newspapers and



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

SAM KING, left and Levi Mast, center, are shown wanting to assure relatives that they were "OK" in Thys Van Hout's bedroom where Van Hout's amateur radio set up was located.

boxes of all the messages he sent after the tornadoes swept through.

Last week, Van Hout went through a large binder reading those dispatches.

"Come with trucks to Midway Mobile Home Park," Van Hout bellowed. "Can't get a hold of state police."

After delivering that message, he then was able to reach state police.

The shorthand language was used between Mills and Van Hout. AARL-1 meant everything was O.K.

"It was sort of a message system to let one family member know the person sending the message is fine and it was their job to then let the rest of the family know they're fine," he said.

As Van Hout flipped through page after page of messages, many simply had someone's name with AARL-1 next to it.

However many were far more grim.

Breaking the news

Van Hout was given a list of deaths of people from Goshen, Dunlap, Jefferson, Shipshewana and Middlebury. The Goshen Hospital staff provided him with a list of 102 who were injured.

He'd cross check both lists when people called in to check on a loved one. Often he was the one who broke the news of someone's death.

"People would call or contact us through amateur radio," Van Hout said looking at the list of dead he's kept for the past 50 years. "And they'd say, 'Is Mrs. Vance Jackson OK?'"

Following along with his finger Van Hout read "Answer is no. She died as well as her two children in the Midway Trailer Court."

Van Hout's sister Mary would stand on the front porch of their home. People would stream to the house and scribble notes on sheets of scrap paper. Mary would then run piles of messages upstairs to Thys' room.

For four days, Thys and Mary would miss school to help relay messages nearly 24 hours a day.

"I'd take little five minute breaks to stretch my legs or grab some coffee, use the restroom," Van Hout said. "At one point a young reporter from CBS was sitting in my bedroom. It was Dan Rather. I was apparently on Walter Cronkite, but I never saw it."

Instead the teenager was in charge of passing along information to concerned loved ones as far west as California, as far east as New York and everywhere in between.

The kid who couldn't speak a word of English and was nicknamed "John" by Parkside Elementary Principal Park Lantz on his first day of school to fit in a bit more, was now in charge of communicating to a nation.

Those early days in Goshen as an outcast, Lantz said, in a way prepared him for his role in the tornadoes' aftermath.

"It was very difficult to come to this country and have the kids in the school yard make fun of you because you couldn't speak English. And when you finally began to speak English, you spoke with such a brogue or accent they still made fun of you. That kind of toughens you up pretty fast.

"Like I'm sure that many of the doctors and police and all the emergency workers, you have to kind of go into this detached mode. You're there to try and help people. You can't be there to deal with how you're feeling about stuff."

Of the thousands of messages Van Hout passed along, one was from Lantz and his wife Mary to let Ethel Ewin in Visalia, California know they were all right.

50 years later

But looking back at those messages, now 50 years removed from his solemn duty to pass that information along, Van Hout couldn't help but get emotional at times. His voice cracked and his hand shook on the page as he read notes like:

"To Mrs. Opal Higginbotham in East Bank, West Virginia. My wife's dead and your littlest boy. Can't locate the other one. Be sure to tell Edward Dickinson."

After high school, Van Hout went on to Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, then the Krannert School of Management at Purdue where he'd earn his MBA. He was recruited out of school by Procter and Gamble to do logistics using linear programming, stuff ahead of its time. He started his own business, worked for Kraft and later was the chief technology officer for the sandwich restaurant chain Subway, before retiring.

But despite a life filled with accomplishments, he still carries the memories of those four days in 1965 when he was the only way for many in and around Goshen who had a voice to the outside world.

"I still think about it. Every April 11 I certainly think about," Van Hout said of the Palm Sunday tornadoes. "What always strikes me is that I was the lucky one. My house wasn't destroyed. I wasn't hurt. My relatives didn't die. How fortunate I am. I was just a small part of it. The police and volunteers — they're the real heroes. I could just fill a special little void.

"When you're not born in this country, you gain a different sort of appreciation for it. I was never as proud of being an American as I was in that time being in a small town in Indiana that rose to the occasion."



Snyder

Continued from page 12

were conducted out of the booth. Calls were received and radio dispatches were handled there.

"Larry Sarver was on duty in there by himself going nuts with all the phone calls and radio traffic," Snyder said. Word came through that more ambulances were needed at Midway. Snyder worked out of the Water Department, where an old civil defense ambulance was stationed. He told Sarver he would head there.

"I always kept that running," Snyder said of the ambulance. "It did have a cot in it and some equipment and stuff like that. I figured it would be of some use out at the scene."

Snyder started up the ambulance and headed out on U.S. 33 to the mobile home park.

"I got to the scene, and never saw anything like it in my life, and never want to see anything like it again," he said. "Everything was gone at Midway. It was a shambles."

At Midway

Most of the injured had been accounted for by the time Snyder reached Midway. Search efforts were focused on the missing and the dead. Snyder's ambulance wasn't needed to transport anybody. Elkhart County Sheriff Woody Caton, Goshen Police Chief Glenn Kindy and Goshen Fire Chief Bob Moriarty were taking command at the scene.

Time passed. Snyder remembers an announcement being made over the loudspeakers from a fire truck doubling as command center: Another tornado was approaching.

"At that point all you could see were black clouds rolling in," Snyder said. "They told us to get out, everybody evacuate. They thought they had all the living people they could find. They didn't want to lose anybody else." The sheriff and the two Goshen chiefs stayed at the scene.

Snyder left Midway in the ambulance and pulled off at C.R. 28.

"I made a U-turn and pulled around so I was headed back to the west" and got out of the ambulance, Snyder recalled. Also at that spot was Elkhart Truth photographer Paul Huffman ("We always called him 'Pic,'" Snyder said). It was there that Huffman snapped the famous photo of the twin tornadoes.

"As soon as (the tornadoes) crossed the tracks, I got back in the ambulance and headed back to Midway," Snyder said. "You wondered if you'd ever see any of your fellow officers or any of the other emergency crews that were there that stayed — if they would still be there, and be alive. We couldn't tell if (the tornado) had hit Midway again or not. Luckily, it didn't.

"I got back there and a short time after that, they told us that Sunnyside had been hit in Dunlap, and that we should go over there," he said. Snyder rejoined with then fellow GPD reserve officer Maynard Hartsough, with whom he'd earlier partnered with at Midway, and the two went to the Sunnyside housing area.

"It was raining, and the temperature was dropping," he said. "You got over there and you could tell — everything was gone."

At Sunnyside

"We were one of the first (emergency responders) in," Snyder said. "All the units were just then arriving."

Neighbors and families were looking for their loved ones. The emergency personnel helped them search.

"We started going house to house," Snyder said. "You could tell where a house had been."

Snyder also recounted being with the ambulance at Sunnyside Mennonite Church along C.R. 13.

"… Some firemen took the stretcher out of the back of the ambulance and took off with it someplace," he said. Then a nurse approached him.

"They found a girl in a basement close by who was hurt pretty bad, and I said, 'Well, I don't have a stretcher,'" Snyder said. "So a couple guys, just strangers, said, 'Well, put her on a door.' So they put her on a door and brought her over and put her in the back of the ambulance, and we took off for Elkhart hospital."

Snyder said U.S. 33 was packed with traffic. Getting the girl to the hospital was neither easy nor direct.

"People by then knew that something happened and were coming out of Elkhart," he said. "A lot of them were just sight-seers, and other people were coming because they had family out here, either in Midway or Sunnyside."

The girl made it to the hospital via Snyder's ambulance. Snyder made two more runs after that. Those trips were to deliver bodies to the temporary morgue that had been set up.

By the time those runs were completed, it was 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning. Snyder was done for the night, but would spend the next week working in the disaster area.

Changing times

How do emergency responders deal with the mental toll taken by a disaster like the Palm Sunday tornadoes? Snyder — who dealt with the Palm Sunday catastrophe, homicides, crashes, etc. over the course of his decades-long career — provides a then-and-now.

"Back in those days it was, 'Suck it up and accept it,'" he said. "It's not like today where they offer you counseling. Back then, it was part of the job and if you couldn't handle it, you weren't made for the job."

"…Now later on, after I was an administrator, I had been to some schools and was aware of employee assistance being a necessary thing you should have," he continued. Sheriff's department administrators saw that assistance for their officers was important.

"We made sure we had available for our officers some type of counseling they could go through instead of 'Suck it up and accept it,'" Snyder said.

Fifty years have gone by. Snyder still remembers Palm Sunday, 1965.

"It's not something that will ever go away," he said. "…I can cry easily and I'm not ashamed of crying. Thinking back, if I'm by myself, I can still get teary-eyed thinking back over things like this, Palm Sunday and some other things I've been a part of."

Just let the red phone ring

R.T. Snyder has many memories of the Palm Sunday disaster. He also has a story to tell about a photograph.

Snyder was a Goshen Police Department reserve officer when the tornadoes struck. A 50-year-old black-and-white photo shows Snyder and other officers gathered at the command center for tornado relief. It was taken the afternoon President Lyndon Johnson was in Elkhart County to survey the storm damage.

Snyder points out an interesting detail in the picture.

"There's a phone sitting right in front of me," he said. "Actually, the phone was red. That phone was a direct line to Moscow."

This was during the Cold War, and President Johnson had to have contact with Moscow wherever he went. The day the photo was taken, Snyder had a question about the phone.

"I said, 'What am I supposed to do if it rings?'" Snyder recalled. "They said, 'Let it ring.'"

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NICHOLAS GREENAWALT, left, and Nathan Marsili, work their shifts at the North Webster National Weather Service office. The office staff uses a Doppler radar to track storms as they move into northern Indiana, southern Michigan and northwest Ohio.

ROGER SCHNEIDER | THE GOSHEN NEWS

Disaster

Continued from page 4

"Conditions were favorable for the development of large, long-lived, rotating thunderstorms called supercells," Call said. "Supercells are the most intense form of thunderstorm and capable of producing large hail, strong wind gusts and tornadoes."

Call said that 99 percent of thunderstorms are ordinary and produce rain, some lighting and the spring and summer showers that water Indiana's corn crop each year.

"Supercells only form when we have a lot of twisting and turning of the wind with height in the atmosphere and conditions are favorable to the formation of thunderstorms. Often we are missing one or more of the necessary ingredients," he added.

Lewis said when conditions are right, storms can form along the same path, over and over.

"What we saw in Dunlap was the family, or parallel mode," he said. "In this case you end up with a tornado forming along the path of the storm. So, one tornado forms and is then followed by another... Generally what happens in that type of environment is the storm forms but the atmosphere doesn't modify enough, so you have the development of additional thunderstorms in that same environment. So you can see those storms form and another develop in the same general area ... In '65 that is what we were seeing."

Supercell storms are immense, often towering to more than 40,000 feet, according to Lewis.

"Once you get into that, you are dealing with jet stream winds," he said. "If you push the clouds away, it allows the sun to work on the ground below. You are able to take the moisture and heat and evacuate it out of the top of this storm and allow the sun to work on the ground below and keep it going ... You create an engine."

So why doesn't every thunderstorm end up creating a supercell? Lewis said supercells require a horizontal column of air. Most thunderstorms have a tilt to their air currents.

"... the updraft and downdraft get tilted so the downdraft can push but the updraft just rides over it and they end up just sort of riding over the top of each other," he said.

And why do most people who saw the tornado outbreak that day say the sky looked strange, with yellow and green light?

Lewis said the light was filtered through a lot of clouds.

"It was a deep, deep storm system," he said.

Tornado alley

Occasionally locals are heard to say they live in tornado alley. Do we? The answer depends on what map you consult and what expert you talk to.

"We certainly are not the Southern Plains," Lewis said. "But we have a tendency to see more tornadoes here than in Michigan or even the Northeastern states."

Fortunately, not all tornadoes in northern Indiana are in the F3 or F4 categories. Lewis said most of the tornadoes reported here, are much smaller.

"But (they are) just as deadly, just as dangerous. They are a threat to lives and a threat to property," Lewis said.

Lewis said "Tornado Alley" is generally outlined as starting in Texas and taking in the Plains states and having just its northern edge enter north central Illinois and northern Indiana.

"Tornado Alley is generally thought of as the Great Plains, and over long periods of time this is where the most tornadoes have occurred," Call said. "However, the Midwest and Deep South are two other regions that also get an above average number of tornadoes. In any given year they may actually be more active than the Great Plains."

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration statistics, Indiana averaged 22 tornadoes a year from 1991 to 2010. Texas topped all states with an average 155 tornadoes. Kansas had an average of 96 twisters and Arkansas averaged 62.



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Tangle

Continued from page 2

highway at a crazy angle.

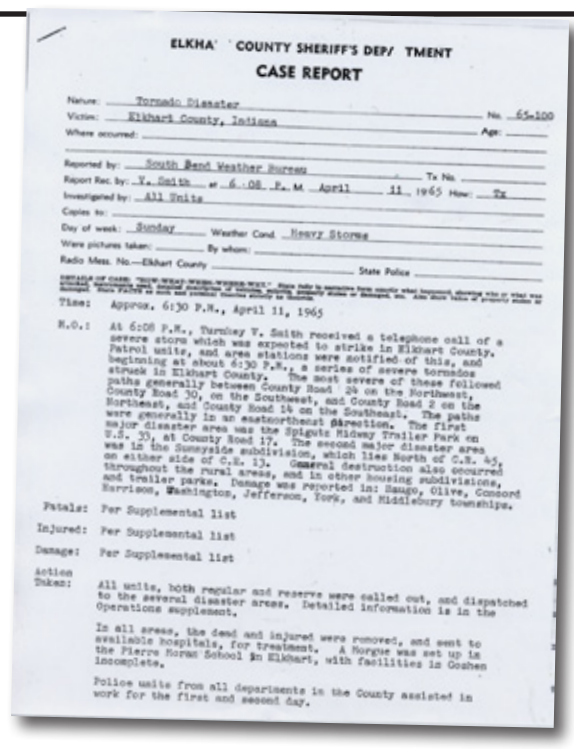
The scene from the top of the hill overlooking the junction was one of utter ruin. The truck stop where Richard Gresso fixed eggs and hash browns and pumped gasoline was simply wiped off the face of the earth. The woods on the southwest corner was a tangle of twisted trees. Homes to the west along U.S. 20 were like crushed matchboxes.

The tornado had torn the lives from a man and five children at this location.

Everyone knew by Monday morning that the heavily settled areas in Dunlap, Midway Mobile Home Court and Jefferson Township had been hard hit. It wasn't until you drove along U.S. 20 and looked over to the south that you realized that farm homes, barns and outbuildings were leveled, too. It was a forlorn scene as solitary figures poked through the wreckage.

Another scene

National Guardsmen were also on duty in the Elkhart area, rerouting traffic in a firm but courteous manner.



ELKHART COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT
CASE REPORT

Nature: Tornado Disaster — No. 65-100
Victim: Elkhart County, Indiana — Age:
Where occurred:
Reported by: South Bend Weather Bureau — Tr. No.
Report Rec. by: V. Smith at 6:08 P. M. April 11 1965 How: Tr
Investigated by: All Units
Copies to:
Day of week: Sunday — Weather Cond. Heavy Storms
Were pictures taken: — By whom:
Radio Mess. No.—Elkhart County — State Police

Time: Approx. 6:30 P.M., April 11, 1965

M.O.: At 6:08 P.M., Turnkey V. Smith received a telephone call of a severe storm which was expected to strike in Elkhart County. Patrol units, and area stations were notified of this, and beginning at about 6:30 P.M., a series of severe tornados struck in Elkhart County. The most severe of these followed paths generally between County Road 24 on the Northwest, County Road 30, on the Southwest, and County Road 2 on the Northeast, and County Road 14 on the Southeast. The paths were generally in an easterntheast direction. The first major disaster area was the Spigutz Midway Trailer Park on U.S. 33, at County Road 17. The second major disaster area was in the Sunnyside subdivision, which lies North of C.R. 45, on either side of C.R. 13. General destruction also occurred throughout the rural areas, and in other housing subdivisions, and trailer parks. Damage was reported in: Baugo, Olive, Concord Harrison, Washington, Jefferson, York, and Middlebury townships.

Fatals: Per Supplemental list

Injured: Per Supplemental list

Damage: Per Supplemental list

Action Taken: All units, both regular and reserve were called out, and dispatched to the several disaster areas. Detailed information is in the Operations supplement.

In all areas, the dead and injured were removed, and sent to available hospitals, for treatment. A Morgue was set up in the Pierre Moran School in Elkhart, with facilities in Goshen incomplete.

Police units from all departments in the County assisted in work for the first and second day.

COURTESY OF THE ELKHART COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM

This is the first page of the Elkhart County Sheriff Department's official case report. To see all 31 pages, visit our web site at goshennews.com

Another scene was the Mishawaka Road strip running northwest from the Concord Township School. These substantial homes, many of them brick and limestone, were destroyed. Like other areas, cars were simply twisted into balls of battered metal.

It will take a long, long time to clear up the wreckage from the twisters.

"We are concerned about reaching a lot of farmers in an effort to give them assistance," said Sheriff Woody L. Caton from disaster headquarters at Dunlap fire station this morning.

"These farmers need help. Their barns and homes are down. Cattle need to be milked, hay restacked in addition to general cleanup," Sheriff Caton said and added that a number of farmers reported "sightseers driving by, but not stopping to help."

"Our department, state and city police, firemen, volunteers and the National Guard have things pretty well under control now at Midway Mobile Home Court and Dunlap. All major roads are open, but we will close them again if sightseers become a problem," the sheriff said.

The sheriff said that anyone wishing to help farmers or knowing of some farmer needing assistance should telephone Dunlap Fire Station at either 875-5865 or 875-9962 or report there in person.

"We have had some reports of looting immediately after the tornadoes struck. It was not widespread and stopped when officers and others arrive on the scene," the sheriff said.

Conrad

Continued from page 2

great work provided by the care givers.

About midnight I was saddened to see several bodies from the U.S. 20 and Ind. 15 storm. They had been stripped of much of their clothing and were completely peppered by sand or gravel in the air. This made the tragedy even more real to me. I recall going home in the middle of the night to freshen up and change clothes. I'm not sure about sleep.

The next morning started very early in the newsroom, and getting accurate information was difficult because sheriff's deputies were still on the job. City aidmen provided reports of their services. Pictures told a vivid story.

There were all sorts of personal stories from survivors of the storm that killed 49 people in Elkhart County and 16 in the tornado that devastated the Shore community in nearby LaGrange County. More than 300 people were injured in the storms.

Covering the tornadoes continued daily with more and more reports uncovered from survivors. One man was driving a car on a county road northeast of Goshen, and the tornado lifted his car above the utility wires, and he then floated back to earth uninjured. Some injury reports were unbelievable. Some houses were blown away and some simply exploded. In one situation, family members reached the basement but the father was at the head of the stairway and blown away. These tragic incidents kept reaching the newsroom for several days and we were busy checking them out. Some were tragic, some were of miraculous survivals.

Eleven days later we printed a special follow-up edition of our storm coverage when more facts could be confirmed. It included a photo of President Lyndon Johnson standing in the rubble in Dunlap. Also included was a photo of the combined funeral in the Shipshewana gym for eight victims of the Shore community twister.

All of us on The News staff became reporters of the storm for several days. It was a sad time, and a major challenge to provide our best coverage for our readers, who wanted to know the facts. We did our best to provide them, and I think it was a shining hour for our newspaper at a very dark time.

Bob Conrad worked at the Goshen News for nearly five decades. He became managing editor in 1972, a position he held until his retirement in 1991.

Bracker

Continued from page 8

crowd. As he considered either taking everyone outside to a lower grassy area behind the building to lie down or to a slightly lower large room of the building and stay inside. He settled on staying inside.

Having not understood what my dad was saying, I became very frightened as I saw people getting up and moving quickly toward the rear doors of the room. Finally, we stopped singing and it was every child for himself as we all ran and pushed through the crowd to find our parents!

Things happened quickly from that point. We arrived in the dark room, were instructed to open all the windows wide, to crawl under anything and lay flat on the floor. Everyone complied and as the freight train-like sound got louder, people were singing, praying and crying out for God's help.

At this point my father tucked me and my mom under a piano and, together with my older sister, he slipped out a nearby door to see how close and which direction the tornado was headed. That became a problem when they tried to come back in but the door was locked.

From this point my memory only involves sounds. My eyes were glued shut as the sound of 10 trains rumbled closer. The cries of others mixed with my own expressions of anguish and concern: for my brother who was out ... somewhere in the area, the banging on the door of my dad and sister wanting desperately to come in and my mother praying. Then my dad was by my side saying, "It's over. The storm has passed. God saved us!"

There was a breeze through the open windows and everyone was laughing and crying and thanking God for keeping us safe!

Sirens were screaming outside that drew us to the windows. We could see that although our church building had been in the direct path of the tornado, at the last possible second, it made a zigzag. It went into the grassy area that we had almost gone to and then back to its original course. It sucked the roof off of the tool shed and the roof was nowhere to be seen. But we were spared!

My brother had been driving along U.S. 33 when he saw double tornadoes heading toward him. He saw cars ahead of him be lifted off the ground so he pulled over and dove into the ditch. He heard the same roar that we heard as the twister traveled near him. And he, too, was spared.

The next day my father found a huge I-beam shoved into the front yard of the church building as a dollar bill came floating to his feet. One side of it was perfectly normal and the other side was completely sand blasted. Such unusual things happen with these kinds of extreme weather.

For days and weeks after the storm I would go with my dad to visit the people who lived in neighborhoods that were destroyed. Many were searching for belongings and anything of sentimental value. We heard story after story of amazing ways that people escaped tragedy, but lost everything.

I wasn't very old, but I certainly saw clearly that God, in His infinite wisdom and mercy, had visited us that day in a way that I would never forget.

Rachel Bracker Jackson now lives in Pennsylvania.

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Rescue

Continued from page 2

contact with outside areas. NIPSCO's power supply was limited and the company asked that schools be closed and industries close today to conserve the limited supply of electricity for residential users.

Not new to him

Ken Atherholt and his wife and child lived in trailer 25 and he said the storm arrived with a "loud roar." He said he had been through twisters before in Texas. They arrived in this area two years ago and he is employed at Concord Mobile Homes. Their home was badly damaged.

As is usual with twisters, the storm raised havoc with one area and missed another nearby. Six trailers located on the west end of the Midway court, at the south end of the lot, were not damaged. However, all the trailers on the south side were destroyed, starting with the one on the southwest corner.

Edward J. McCourt, who lives in one of the six trailers which escaped destruction by a matter of a few feet, said he saw the storm approaching and opened the front windows and even used a hammer to knock out one or two windows.

Arthur Cornish and his wife and two children left the court when he realized the severe weather was in the areas. The storm wrecked his mobile home he had left five minutes earlier. Cornish brought his family to Goshen at the home of his mother, Mrs. Eva Cornish, 405 East Wilden Avenue. Cornish lost his father last year in a fire at the Wilden Avenue home. Cornish said "we're just thankful the Lord gave us enough time to get out."

Waitress escapes

Mrs. Ada Mast, waitress at Miller's Restaurant, had just arrived home from work and was getting ready to go to church when the storm hit. Her trailer was overturned and thrown against the trailer home of Alex Koski. Mrs. Mast found herself in a pile of debris in the wrecked trailer when the storm ended and she walked out of the home and drove to the First Assembly of God Church and asked for help.



GOSHEN NEWS FILE PHOTO
RESCUE WORKERS comb through the debris at an unidentified location after a tornado ripped through Elkhart County on April 11, 1965.

Mr. and Mrs. Koski heard the twister approaching and left their living room and went to the bedroom. The corner of Mrs. Mast's trailer smashed into the living room the Koskis had just vacated and Mr. and Mrs. Koski also escaped injury. Their son, Dale, 21, is in critical condition in Goshen General Hospital after suffering a stroke.

Mr. and Mrs. George Phelps and their daughter, Brenda Gail, lived in trailer 80 on the south side of the court but were gone Sunday to visit Mrs. Phelp's brother in Toledo. They found the court in ruins when they returned about 8 p.m. Their pet squirrel monkey was not found and apparently was a victim of the twister. Both Mr. and Mrs. Phelps are employed at the I-XL Furniture Company Inc., and they have lived at the court the past six months. They didn't escape the storm entirely, however, as they met a twister while en route home on the toll road and stopped under an overpass while the storm passed.

One of the first

Bernard Miller, Elkhart, was one of the first volunteers to reach the scene. He had stopped along U.S. 33, east of the trailer court, and watched the storm pass. He said the air was filled with debris when the storm ripped through the mobile home court. Miller went into the area and helped out a number of injured and found the body of a 14-month-old boy.

The Salvation Army of Goshen had coffee at the Midway Trailer Court for distraught residents, authorities and other volunteers by 8 p.m.

All types of heavy equipment were moved into the Midway Trailer Court and at the Sunnyside Addition, Dunlap, to move debris and search for the dead and injured.

All types of auxiliary lighting were brought to the area so the search could continue into the night. The Midway Trailer Court was brightly illuminated as heavy wreckers worked into the night. Heavy bulldozers were brought in to pull the debris from the area of the south side of the mobile home court.

Emergency units, including salvage trucks, wreckers, auxiliary lighting vehicles, came from a wide surrounding area, including Warsaw, Rome City, Atwood, Cassopolis, Mich., etc.

State police troopers from a number of surrounding counties were sent to this area. There were nurses and doctors here from Warsaw along with civil defense workers from a number of surrounding communities.

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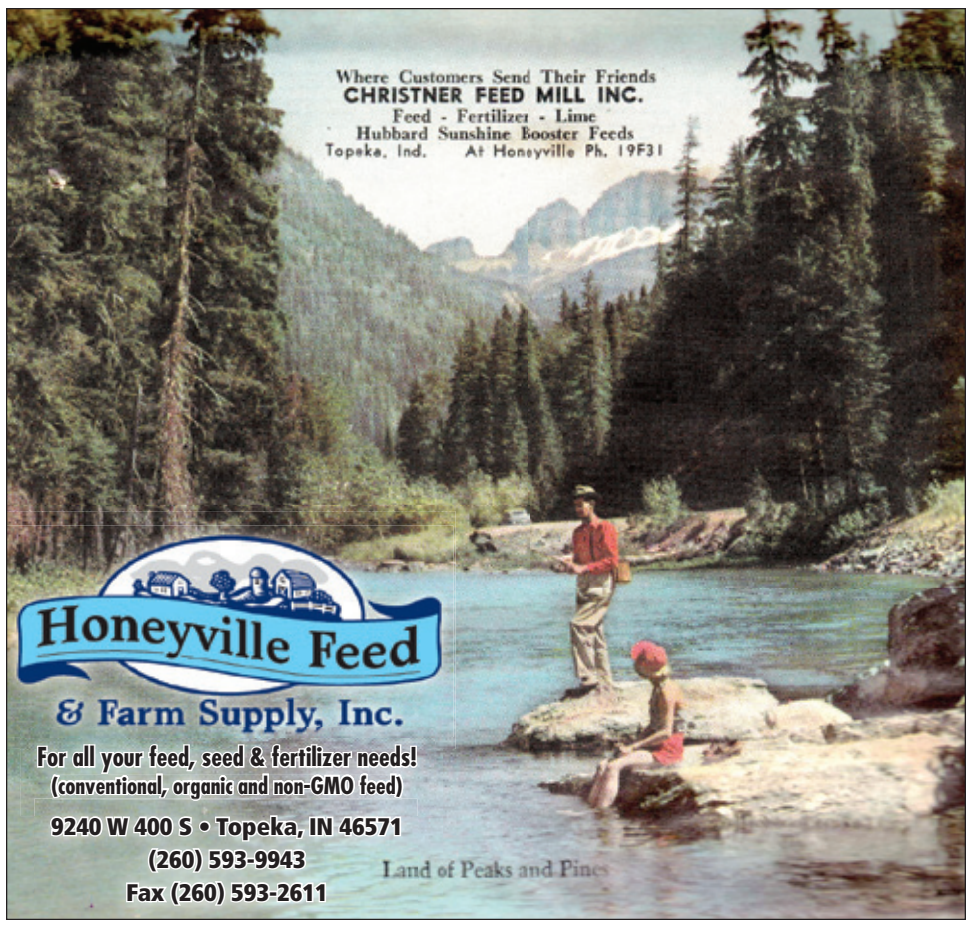



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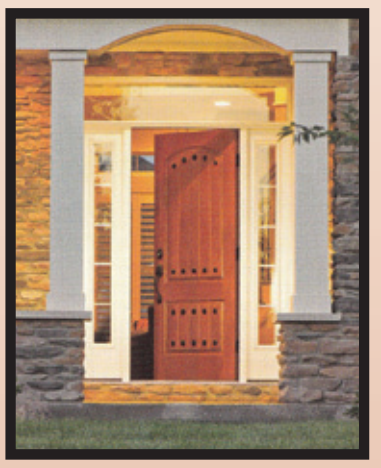



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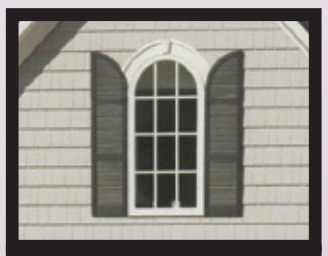





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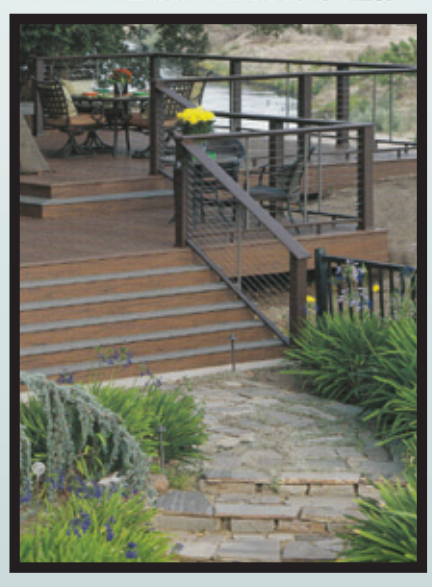



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