Brief History Of

April 3, 1974, Tornado (3)

This is one of many sections that contain information, documents, letters, newspaper articles, pictures, etc. of the St. Matthews Fire Protection District. They have been collected and arranged in chronological order. These items were collected, organized and entered into a computerized database by Al Ring. Last revised in 2023.

There were many people who helped with this project over the years, however 3 deserver special mention. Rick Albers, John M. Monohan, Jr. and Jack Monohan.

All graphics have been improved to make the resolution as good as possible, but the reader should remember that many came from copies of old newspaper articles. This also applies to other items such as documents, letters, etc. Credit to the source of the documents, photos, etc. is provided whenever it was available. We realize that many items are not identified and regret that we weren't able to provide this information. As far as the newspaper articles that are not identified, 99% of them would have to be from one of three possible sources. *The Courier-Journal, The Louisville Times* or one of the *Voice* publications.

Please use this information as a reference tool only. If the reader uses any of the information for any purpose other than a reference tool, they should get permission from the source.

April 14, 1974, *The Courier-Journal:*

700 tornado victims attend sessions

Debris-clearing process is explained

By DICK KAUKAS
Courier-Journal Staff Writer

Jefferson County officials met with about 700 residents of three tornado-torn areas yesterday to explain how debris will be cleared from their land and to obtain releases giving contractors the right to enter property without liability for incidental damage.

County Judge Todd Hollenbach told those at the three sessions at the Second Presbyterian Church, 3701 Old Brownsboro Rd., that employes of Blankenship Construction Co., Inc., had begun clean-up work yesterday morning in two ravaged areas — Indian Hills and Glenview Manor.

Blankenship was awarded the contracts for work in those sections Friday afternoon.

County Works Director Scott Gregory said he expects contracts for all the other damaged sections of the county will be let by midweek. The contract for the Northfield area will be awarded Tuesday, he added.

In Louisville, meanwhile, Lawrence Mattingly, acting works director, said that the city awarded four contracts for removal of debris on private property in the Bardstown Road area.

Two of them went to William Cropper Construction Co. of Prospect, low bidder on two parcels at $43,000 and $32,500; and two were awarded to George M. Eady Co., low bidder on two other parcels at $48,960 and $3,980.

Mattingly said the city will have contractors at work in all nine parcels in the area by tomorrow.

Both the city and county have required owners of damaged property to sign indemnity agreements, releasing contractors from liability for damage they may cause when they go on the land to clean it up.

During the three meetings yesterday at the church, County Atty. J. Bruce Miller explained that the releases are prerequisites to reimbursement for the work from the federal government.

Works Director Gregory said that during the removal process, "there are going to be some accidents, and there is going to be some damage," but he added that the county contracts attempt to assure that such incidents are kept to a minimum.

Lt. Col. Robert Grant of the county police said that officers will continue to patrol in damaged areas.

The county plans to hold other meetings for those affected by the storm in other sections. During each of these meetings, the release forms will be obtained.

Miller said forms were signed by many residents earlier, but these documents were "hastily drawn" and it was decided to get new ones from everybody in the disaster areas.

County officials said that about 160 persons attended the first session at 11 a.m. for those from the area bounded by I-71, Glenview Avenue, and U.S. 42, about 350 came to the 1 p.m. meeting for Indian Hills residents; and a count by a reporter totaled 180 persons during the 3 p.m. session for Northfield residents.

Hollenbach explained to those at the meetings that they could not start repair work until they had obtained building permits from the county. He said that the permits are necessary because they assure a building is sound enough to undergo repair.

County government has arranged to provide a team of architects and engineers to check damaged buildings at no cost, Hollenbach said, adding that those who want this service should call the county building and housing department, 581-5950.

April 15, 1974, *The Louisville Times:*

Contractors removing debris from tornado-damaged areas

By JIM RENNEISEN
Louisville Times Staff Writer

Debris-removal contractors begin work today in the storm-hit areas between Norris Place and Bardstown Road from Eastern Parkway to Bonnycastle Avenue.

City Works Director Lawrence W. Mattingly said the three firms that were awarded contracts Saturday for cleaning up that section were gathering their equipment over the weekend.

He said another set of contracts will be let, perhaps by Wednesday, on the areas along Grinstead and Frankfort avenues.

The city contracts call for removal of lumber, trees, root wads, bricks, fences, rock, household articles, pavement and completely detached portions of dwellings and outbuildings.

Not considered debris under the city contracts are: wrecked automobiles, partially standing portions of buildings and homes, any damaged portion of a home that is still structurally attached, damaged chimneys still on the roof of a building and trees that have not been irreparably damaged.

The contract requires the contractor to remove trees and root wads if the roots are exposed and to fill the cavity left with soil.

Where the root wad is not exposed, but the tree is damaged beyond recovery, the contractor is required to cut the tree off at ground level but not remove the roots.

Clearing, under the contract, entails the removal of debris from all areas of a lot from the foundation of buildings and outbuildings to the center line of the street or alley or to the abutting property line of the neighbor.

County Works Director Scott S. Gregory said the removal of debris from public rights-of-way in the Glenview Manor and Indian Hills sections began yesterday.

He said removal from private property probably would begin today after property owners signed the forms allowing the crews of the contractor, Blankenship Construction Co., Inc., to work on their land.

Gregory said the county expects to take bids tomorrow on debris removal in the Northfield area and on Wednesday for the remaining three county areas that were damaged by the April 3 tornado.

Utility work continues

Utility repairmen continued wiping up the pockets of service outages, and yesterday the Louisville Gas & Electric Co. (LG&E) had to deal with new power failures caused in part by high winds and trees damaged by the tornado.

A tree limb fell across a high-voltage line near Bardstown Road and Eastern Parkway about 9:40 a.m. yesterday and caused the LG&E substation at Highland Avenue to lose power.

Homes on both sides of Bardstown Road as far out as Roanoke Street were without power, but only for about five minutes.

A tree limb also fell on a power line in the 3600 block of Kelly Way, and a truck backed into a pole near Produce Road and Jennings Lane, causing other power losses in those areas.

Curtis Craig, LG&E vice-president of sales and public relations, said the crews are still restoring service, but much of the work now depends on how rapidly repairs are made to individual homes in the storm-damaged areas.

He pointed out that many damaged homes will need substantial repairs before they will be ready for electric service.

Phones out in 900 homes

South Central Bell Telephone Co. reported that about 900 homes were without service, but the company was attempting to get most of those back on the line by tonight.

The last 900 phones, most in areas where the numbers begin with 89, were mostly in the hardest-hit sections.

Cable splicers and other repairmen were still "working around the clock" to try to meet the deadline tonight.

U.S. Sen. Marlow W. Cook, R-Ky., has announced the installation of a toll-free, wide area telephone service (WATS) line to aid persons having difficulty getting federal assistance on storm problems.

Cook said Kentuckians can call his office from anywhere in the state by dialing 1-800-292-5589 in the daytime. At night, the line will accept recorded messages.

Cook said he also has dispatched his field staff into the storm-damaged areas to confer with city and county officals to determine the effectiveness of federal assistance.

The storm work is winding down in some areas. The Federal Disaster Assistance Administration announced that it had closed the one-stop service center at the St. Matthew's Episcopal Church on North Hubbards Lane and is consolidating its business in the one-stop center still operating at Knights Hall at Bellarmine College.

Eight other centers were operating out in the state today at Burlington, Somerset, Leitchfield, Greensburg, Whitley City, Mount Vernon, Burkesville and Lawrenceburg. Another center will be operated at the Laurel County Courthouse at London tomorrow.

The Salvation Army food-service program at the Second Presbyterian Church, at 3701 Old Brownsboro Road, is "tapering off" but still serving about 350 persons a day from the cleanup crews, according to Maj. Wesley Mott.

Trees, Inc., a nonprofit organization, will begin fund-raising efforts today in downtown Louisville for the restoration of trees in the storm-damaged parks.

The firm opened an office at Room 308-C, 304 W. Liberty St., today to accept donations for the work and to solicit volunteers help in the fund drive.

One of the founders of Trees, Inc., Barksdale Roberts, a vice-president of the First National Bank, said a formal fund-raising drive probably would start this month.

The other founders of Trees, Inc., are Dann C. Byck Jr., president of Byck Bros. & Co., and Edwin H. Perry, an attorney. Mayor Harvey I. Sloane announced the new group at a press conference Friday.

The group plans to raise funds for restoring the trees in the badly damaged Cherokee Park, in George Rogers Clark Park, along the public parkways and, in some cases, along neighborhood roads where trees were destroyed.

One bright note from the aftermath of the storm was the discovery of a woman, alive and well, who had been feared missing.

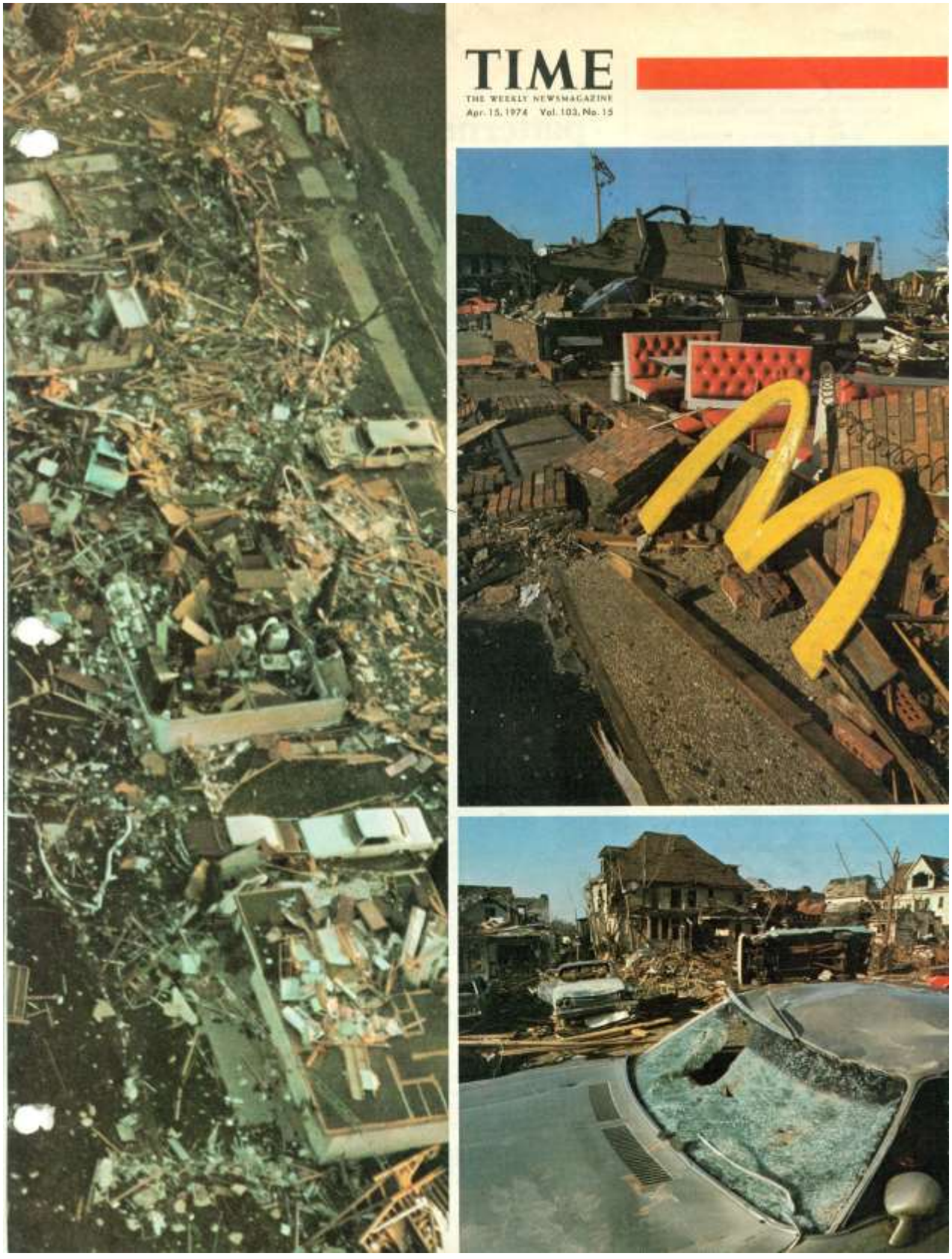
The local Red Cross chapter had been seeking the whereabouts of Evelyn Cook, of 400 Rolling Lane, according to a story in The Courier-Journal & Times yesterday.

The story brought a flood of reports on Mrs. Cook and her uncle, Arthur E. Lotz.

It turned out that the elderly pair had decided to stay put in their home, which had received only minor damage in the tornado, although they were without electric and telephone service.

Lotz had become ill since the storm and has been hospitalized at SS. Mary & Elizabeth Hospital. He was reported in satisfactory condition there yesterday.

April 15, 1974, *Time Magazine*



April 15, 1974, *Time Magazine*

DISASTERS

Twister Terror: Nature Runs Wild

It is one of nature's bitter ironies that spring—the season of rebirth—also brings an irresistible, destructive force that strikes terror into the hearts of all who have experienced it. That deadly force is the tornado. Last week, as nature ran amuck, tornadoes struck with their full fury.

The storm built slowly, ominously. From the Gulf of Mexico, huge masses of warm, moist air moved northward toward the center of the continent. From the West, a threatening layer of cooler, drier air seeped eastward toward the Appalachians, sliding under the moist air. As the two layers converged in an uneasy mixture, tremendous turbulence developed. In the roiling atmosphere, embryo funnels of spinning air formed, dissolved and reformed—a telltale sign that the tornado season had arrived. Weathermen issued increasingly urgent warnings to residents in "Tornado Alley," that vast stretch of plains lying between the Appalachians and the Rockies and sweeping from Georgia and Alabama up to Canada. When the storms hit in midweek, the tornado funnels were twirling at 200 m.p.h.

From Decatur, Ala., to Windsor, Ont., tornado winds chewed up homes and businesses, sent cars, buses and even freight trains spinning aloft, toppled massive power line towers and wiped out whole families. More than 60 twisters flickered out of the sky over an eleven-state area, claiming more than 300 lives and destroying property worth nearly $400 million. It was the most devastating salvo of tornadoes to hit the U.S. since 1925, when 689 were killed. President Nixon declared Alabama, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Georgia and Tennessee disaster areas. Vice President Ford, after viewing devastated portions of Ohio from the air, called the wasting of the landscape "unbelievable. Houses have been reduced to matchsticks."

Blew Away. The roll call of death and destruction was staggering. Alabama: 72 dead, more than $40 million in damages. Georgia: 16 dead, nearly $15 million. Illinois: two dead, $3 million. Indiana: 40 dead, $100 million. Kentucky: 71 dead, $100 million. Michigan: three dead, $3.5 million. North Carolina: five dead, more than $4 million. Ohio: 37 dead, $100 million. Tennessee: 46 dead, $25 million. Virginia: one dead, $1 million. West Virginia: one dead, $1 million. Additional thousands of people were left homeless, hundreds of others injured; estimates of property damage were certain to increase.

Among the hardest-hit regions was northwestern Alabama. The main street of Jasper (pop. 11,300) sustained $14 million worth of damage and was practically wiped out. The city hall was demolished and the stone courthouse left close to toppling. Radio Announcer Joel Cook of station WARF gasped to listeners, "We can't talk to the police department—it just blew away." In the same region, 19 persons were killed, most of them from the small town of Guin, Ala. (pop. 2,200). Reported a state trooper after the storm: "Guin just isn't there."

In Georgia's rural Dawson County, Henry Bearden, 63, herded his wife and sons into the kitchen at the first sign of the storm. A tornado passed right over the area, leaving Bearden and his family unscathed. But when he looked toward his daughter Delores' house next door, "there wasn't nothin' there." He found his daughter and her family in a pile of lumber that had been blown across the road: she and her son were dead, one of her daughters lay dying, and her husband Jimmy and another daughter were seriously injured. The center of the tornado must have passed directly over the house of Bearden's daughter. Because pressure inside the eye of a tornado is so low, a partial vacuum developed around the house and the greater pressure inside literally blew

For left: aerial view of devastated homes in Xenia, Ohio; McDonald's hamburger stand leveled; residential section resembles an auto graveyard. Below: family leaving scene of destruction in Louisville.

the structure apart. The raging winds then scattered the debris.

In Brandenburg, Ky., 29 were killed, most of them children caught playing outside after school. Relatives and friends at week's end were still having difficulty identifying some of the disfigured remains. One woman spent more than 24 hours searching for her 1½-year-old boy; she finally found him in one of the plastic bags that Army volunteers had been using to store the remains of dead victims. Most of the town's business section was wiped out. Said Kentucky Governor Wendell Ford after surveying the damage: "I looked at it and wanted to cry."

In Xenia, Ohio (pop. 27,000), half the town was demolished, 28 persons killed and more than 585 people injured. The storm cut a swatch a half-mile wide and three miles long through Xenia—all in five minutes. One terrified elderly victim, the roof of her small frame house completely blown off, sat wrapped in a blanket in a rocking chair hours after the holocaust. When firemen tried to persuade her to leave, she simply shook her head, refusing to say a word.

Curling Deaths. Karen Scott, 17, of Fort Wayne, Ind., was returning from Iowa with five companions in a Volkswagen bus. As the vehicle crossed a bridge over a narrow finger of Indiana's Lake Freeman, a tornado funnel lifted the bus and flung it 50 ft. into the water. Karen managed to escape the sinking vehicle and swim to safety. The body of one of her companions was found when the van was finally hoisted from the lake. The other four are still missing. When the tornadoes approached Madison, Ind., Larry O'Connell and his wife Beverly huddled with their four children in a closet of their bedroom. The only part of their shattered home left standing after the storm had passed was the closet. They were uninjured.

In Decatur, Ill., a 20-minute storm siege plowed a path 80 yards wide through three residential sections of the city, killing two people and damaging or demolishing 150 homes. Farther north, in Windsor, Ont., contestants at a local curling rink heard a loud bang, then saw one wall begin to buckle. Before the storm ended, two-thirds of the roof had been lifted off, eight people were dead, and 20 more were injured.

In Sugar Valley, Ga., neighbors found the home of the Goble family demolished and nine-year-old Randall Goble running in circles in the backyard, screaming hysterically. He was alive only because the tornado's winds had picked him up and carried him 200 yds. before flinging him to the ground. Young Randall was taken to a hospital where he cried to a nurse, "Tell me it was a bad dream. Where's my mommy and daddy?"

As with hundreds of other families, it was more than a bad dream. Randall's parents and two sisters were found dead in the den of their battered home.

April 18, 194, *The Courier-Journal:*

On Call

Volunteer firemen reacted quickly in wake of tornado

By BILLY REED
Courier-Journal Staff Writer

Late on the afternoon of April 3, only minutes after the tornado had leveled the affluent suburb of Northfield in eastern Jefferson County, volunteer fire fighters were on the scene, looking through the debris for survivors, checking the demolished homes for gas leaks, working to clear the streets for rescue vehicles.

Their helmets and trucks identified them as being from several departments — Harrods Creek, McMahon, Lyndon, Werthington, St. Matthews and Middletown. But they worked together quickly and efficiently, as if they were regularly confronted with such disasters.

Soon the streets were criss-crossed by a cobweb of thick canvas hoses. The red and yellow helmets of the fire fighters bobbed among the ruins in the fading twilight.

"Hey, somebody trapped over here!"

At the cry, the firemen dropped their hoses and dashed toward a demolished home. For a few frantic moments, they dug and poked among the ruins, looking for some sign of human life.

It turned out to be a false alarm. Nobody was trapped. But the point was, somebody could have been, and the volunteer firemen were there.

Commentary

"I've never been so proud in my life," says Al Ring, a filling-station operator who also is a St. Matthews volunteer fireman and president of Firefighters, Inc., an organization of county fire fighters.

"None of us had ever been involved in a disaster of that nature, so we feel that what we did was a miraculous feat. The cooperation, the fact that we got there so quick. One of our men put it best when he said, 'When they crawled out of their houses, they saw a fire fighter.'"

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Like a lot of other people, the volunteer firemen did a marvelous job in the minutes and hours just after the tornado struck. Of the 22 departments and estimated 860 volunteer firemen in the county, about 75 per cent of them were on the job that night, according to Ring.

Understandably proud, the firemen — or at least a healthy number of them — were disappointed that they didn't get more recognition through the media.

Last Friday, at a meeting of Firefighters, Inc., at Harrods Creek, the McMahan Fire Protection District circulated a letter calling attention to "the shoddy treatment given to the volunteer firemen and to the Louisville Fire Department by the news media and certain elected officials of Jefferson County."

"A lot of us wondered why we weren't mentioned more in the press," said Ring, "and we finally figured out that we were in there so quick — within 10 minutes in some cases — that we were already breaking down and leaving the area by the time the media got there. Also, most of our work was done within three hours after the tornado struck, instead of continuing for days."

Volunteer firemen are accustomed to doing a lot of good work for little or no return. Most are men whose main line of business is elsewhere. They are plumbers, electricians, bankers, businessmen. Except for a few professionals, none receive any financial reward for the time — sometimes 10 hours a week or more — they spend as volunteer firemen.

At best, it's a thankless job, so why bother? Why do men spend time at the firehouse instead of bowling or watching TV or something like that?

"A variety of reasons," says Al Ring. "First, there's the very strong fellowship. Some people belong to country clubs, others become volunteer firemen. Second, there's the small element of helping the community, although I'm not going to tell you that's the only reason we do it.

"In a lot of cases, I think there's a sense of adventure and challenge involved. I know that's why I do it. Am I good enough? Can I meet nature's challenge? Those are questions we ask ourselves."

Most volunteer firemen train about four hours a week, besides participating in community projects — such as helping collect money during charity crusades. And, of course, there are fires to be fought and false alarms to be run down.

"Some take only 30 minutes but others take eight or nine hours," says Al Ring.

See VOLUNTEERS
Page 3, col. 4, this section

A Jeffersontown volunteer fireman walked through the rubble that was Northfield after the April 3 tornado ripped through the community.

Staff Photo by Larry Spitzer

April 18, 194, *The Courier-Journal:*

Volunteers were quick and efficient

Continued From Page D 1

"There's no telling how much time some of these guys put in."

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On the night of the tornado, volunteer firemen worked primarily in the Camp Taylor area, St. Matthews and Northfield, alongside the county police and rescue workers from the Ohio Valley Rescue Squad (who also were dragging the Ohio River at Brandenburg for possible victims of the storm there.)

"Our first and foremost duty was search and rescue," said Al Ring. "Our instructions were to get in and search every single house for people injured, trapped or dead. That had priority over everything.

"Second was to turn off gas leaks to prevent fires. About an hour after we were into Northfield, we found out there was no water, so we had to call in tanker trucks just in case. There was a tremendous amount of gas leaks, so we had to be extremely cautious. Within three hours, we had stopped all the leaks.

"Our third job was getting the roads open for ambulances and fire trucks to get back into the streets. And once we got them open, we positioned trucks on each street so they were right there in case of fire."

Fortunately, there were virtually no fires, so Ring had no stories of firemen rushing into burning homes to save lives. But this doesn't mean there were no heroes. Consider Capt. James H. Murphy, for example.

A fireman for 16 years, Murphy works for Snorkel Co. No. 2, Louisville Fire Department. But on his off days, he works for Harrods Creek. One of his off days happened to fall on April 3.

"Within 10 minutes, he had set up a command post and begun to direct the entire operation in the Northfield area," said Ring. "He had never done anything like this, but he did an absolutely beautiful job. Spectacular. When he was through, the other firemen applauded him."

Murphy's command post was at the junction of Lime Kiln Lane and U.S. 42. He set it up at 5:05 p.m.—just moments after the tornado hit—and ran it until 9 that night.

"I'm not looking for any glory," said Murphy. "Give it to the volunteers. They did such a tremendous job it's a shame they didn't get more credit. Ask the people in Northfield. They'll tell you the story."

Ring said the volunteer firemen currently are assessing what they did, both good and bad, on that night.

"We've formed a committee and we're gonna make a complete booklet," he said. "Not to say that we did a bad job, because we didn't, but maybe there were some things we could have done faster or better. We hope to be better than we were if something of this nature happens again."

April 18, 1974, *The Voice*:

Putting the pieces together

Bulldozers begin clearing debris

By Mary Bridgman
Staff Writer

Angie Gottschalk sat on an overturned tree outside her house at 21 Glenwood Road Monday morning. She watched the bulldozers pick up the debris in the Glenview Manor area left by the April 3 tornado.

Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. George Gottschalk, had signed a consent and indemnity agreement to allow the Blankenship Construction Company "to come onto their property to remove debris created by the storm and tornado. . ."

Jefferson County and Louisville officials awarded the debris removal contract to Blankenship for Glenview Manor and Indian Hills. He was the lowest of nine bidders for Glenview Manor with $144,000 and the second lowest of seven for Indian Hills with $809,200.

Jefferson County Judge Todd Hollenbach said he expected contracts to be let for the remaining disaster areas by mid-week.

The contractors have 90 days to complete the project.

At a meeting for Glenview Manor disaster victims Saturday, county officials encouraged the residents to be on their property when the contractors come to clear the debris, and also to mark their septic tank site.

Blankenship also plans to raze the houses of those who request it.

The county judge said he expects Glenview Manor to be cleared in several weeks.

Some still are waiting to hear from insurance adjustor before deciding whether to rebuild, but most are taking positive steps to salvage what is left and to ready their property for construction and repairs.

"We praise God we're alive"

Mrs. Gottschalk estimated the tornado caused $15,000 to $20,000 in damages to her house. The $62,000 insurance policy for the house and furnishings will cover the loss, she said.

She said the kitchen and inner walls are still "a big question." They will be saved if mended before the weather damages them irreparably.

"We're lucky," she said. "We praise God we're alive. That's what matters. Material things are not as important as we thought.

"It's going to be long, but I think everybody's taking it day by day. . . I think we're stronger spiritually than ever before. I feel like we've been through the valley of the shadow of death, you know, like in the 23rd Psalm."

Northfield

In Northfield, Bill Blankenstein, 2405 Northfield Court, hopes to be living in his new house in six months. His subflooring is intact, but everything else will have to be razed and rebuilt.

The Blankensteins have been used to. They came to Northfield nine months ago. Since Apr. 3, they have taken a townhome in Hunting Creek.

But Blankenstein keeps a smile on his face as he rummages through the piles of debris, looking for anything that might be salvageable.

"The only way to think about this is to think positively," he said. He added that, "There's every indication that almost everybody here is going to rebuild."

Just down the road, at 2509 Stanley Drive, Carl Taylor was trying to salvage and save anything that might be used to rebuild, and trying to locate some perspective momentum.

Taylor's son Skeeter and several of his friends scraped cement off bricks and stacked them.

The Taylors have rented a house for the time being. Their builder told them it would be six months once he gets started before they would be back on Stanley. He could not say when he would be able to start.

Indian Hills

In Indian Hills, Peyton and Judy Ray, 4 Indian Hills Trail, are waiting to hear from the county inspectors about how much of their house is salvageable.

Since the tornadoship, at least 50 volunteers have come to help them, Ray said.

Staff photo by Mary Bridgman

ANGIE GOTTSCHALK, 21 Glenwood Road, watches employees of the Blankenship Construction Company pick up the debris left by the April 3 tornado at her home.

"Milton Hafner and his son Joe came from Kenwood Hill in a brand new pickup truck and begged to help," he said. "We didn't know them, they didn't know us. We'll probably never see them again."

Mrs. Ray looked down at her front yard. They had cleared part of it earlier, and she saw some green grass. "I feel more at home now, just seeing that little cleared area," she said. "It looks like somebody could live on it."

Rolling Fields

In Rolling Fields, Houston Acres resident Charles Reisert was volunteering his time and a little elbow grease to Brownie Leach, 411 Rolling Lane.

He had worked as a volunteer on Top Hill Road the weekend before.

"I just wanted to help," he said. "It's Good Friday, I was fortunate that God spared me. I wanted to help someone less fortunate. My heart goes out to these people who lost everything."

Crescent Hill

In Crescent Hill, Dr. Robert Hendon's sons were putting a plastic covering over their father's 146-year-old home. Three months ago, Hendon had updated his insurance policy for furnishings within the house. It was to go into effect April 10.

"You look at it at night and it looks dead," said the younger David Hendon. "You hope it's just in the state of coma and can be brought out."

April 18, 1974, *The Voice*:

Praise for volunteers

Dear Editor:

I am very happy to see the news media relaying much justified thanks to those organizations that did such good work during the recent tornado; however, I believe that one very important organization was taken for granted as I have seen no mention in any of the media about them. This organization is comprised of the volunteer fire departments of Jefferson County.

No one mentioned the fine job that Capt. Murphy of the Harrods Creek Fire Department did in setting up his command post and directing the rescue and fire fighting operations in an orderly manner.

Capt. Murphy did an excellent job in uniting eight volunteer fire departments to methodically search for survivors, render first aid, and give immediate fire protection for an area full of broken natural gas lines and fallen high voltage wires. No one was aware that of main concern to the area was shutting off the gas meters into individual homes to prevent the already damaged structures from receiving further damage due to explosion and fire.

Even the police in their fine efforts did not have as many men on the immediate scene as quickly as did the volunteer fire departments in this time of crisis.

I believe the people of this county should be proud of efforts put forth by these fine departments: Eastwood, Harrods Creek, Lyndon, McMahan, Middletown, St. Matthews, Worthington, and Jeffersontown.

Lt. Jim French
Adminis. Asst. to the Chief
Jeffersontown Fire Protection District

Editor's note: A substantial story on page 5 of the April 11 Voice-Jeffersonian told of the work of the volunteers and specifically mentioned Captain James Murphy's role.

April 18, 1974, *The Voice*:

Firefighters burn police, media, DuRand

Anger and frustration filled the air last week at a meeting of Jefferson County volunteer firemen, as they reviewed the events of April 3 and their role in the tornado aftermath.

There were three main targets of their criticism:

-- Jefferson County police, who the firemen said failed to respect the fact that the firemen had "control" of the disaster scene.

-- Civil Defense Acting Director Elden E. DuRand, who was criticized for failing to sound a "take-cover" warning and preventing the firemen from obtaining a first-class communications system.

-- Some news media (with the specific exception of The Voice-Jeffersonian) who the firemen said ignored the swift and effective work done by the volunteers.

While much of the criticism Friday night came in strongly-worded statements, by this week some of those present were modifying their views and making it clear they want to avoid hard feelings between firemen and other officials.

The meeting took place at the Harrods Creek fire station on Upper River Road and attracted over 100 members of Firefighters, Inc, including representatives of most of the county's 20 fire departments.

The main action taken by the group was to authorize appointment of a special study committee to review all aspects of the firefighters' response to the tornado and prepare a series of recommendations for improved emergency service.

Al Ring, a St. Matthews fire lieutenant who is president of the group, said he expects the committee to focus on specific ways in which disaster communications and command structure can be improved.

Ring said he believes the committee could consider such changes as:

-- more radio bands for use by the volunteers. "One just isn't enough," Ring asserted.

-- better truck numbering, to avoid confusion when the trucks of many volunteer companies are being deployed, many of them with identical numbers.

-- color coding for hats of different fire departments. This would make identification easier.

-- more equipment for disaster situations, such as generators, chain saws, and so on.

The firefighters gave a standing ovation to Harrods Creek Capt. James Murphy, for his work in establishing a command post of the firemen and directing rescue work in the Northfield-Glenview Manor area.

Murphy, who is also a professional fireman with the Louisville department, voiced the strongest criticism of the county police when he said he wanted to evacuate the most seriously damaged areas of Northfield. He said police refused to help and would not cooperate.

Murphy said there were many broken gas lines and the "danger of fire was too great" to allow people to remain in the area.

partments -- the fire chiefs.

Ring said the firemen's complaints deal only with the first few hours of confused work immediately after the tornado.

"From then on they (the police) did a magnificent job. The security we have had in the last 10-12 days is fantastic. The point is there is a need to get together now. There is vast room for improvement," Ring said.

Fierce resistance

Further, Tucker said a great many people were guarding their homes against possible looters and would have fiercely resisted any police effort to evacuate them.

Lt. Ring said there had been a "total lack of communication" between firefighters and police.

This view was supported by other chiefs, among them Carl F. Hauns Jr., of the Worthington Volunteer Fire Department.

Hauns claimed the firemen should have controlled the disaster relief efforts in the beginning and be assisted by the police and National Guard. But he complained "they didn't give us the time of day."

Hauns and others said county officials on television and in the daily newspapers were quoted as praising the work of everyone but the volunteer firemen.

"The County Judge didn't mention our name, so I guess he don't know we're here," said Hauns. "But he'll be here next Ladies' Night -- next October like he was last year."

Capt. Tucker said the proper agency to take charge of a situation such as the tornado was Civil Defense, but he acknowledged having had no contact or direction from that office before or after it struck.

Tucker, who commanded his men from a point near Brownsboro Road and Pennington Lane, said in that area the cooperation with the volunteer firemen from St. Matthews was excellent.

Another complaint raised by firemen focused on the lack of adequate civil defense warnings. Robert Caddle, Jeffersontown Fire Chief, said a "warning" siren was sounded, but the "take-cover" or "red alert" siren never did sound.

Caddle insisted the Civil Defense office has failed to work cooperatively with the volunteer firemen and asked "where was DuRand (Acting CD Director Elden E. DuRand) when he should have been sounding the 'red alert'?"

Interviewed this week, DuRand said the "red alert" or "take-cover" siren was discontinued for weather warning use "several years ago," and that it is now activated only in the event of a national alert by the federal agencies in Colorado.

The steady, two-tone siren, known as a "yellow alert" or "warning" siren, is used for weather warnings, DuRand said.

He said that warning was sounded, but not enough sirens exist to adequately warn everyone in the county.

Ring and Middletown Fire Chief Robert Martin both telephoned The Voice-Jeffersonian last week to explain that many of the statements of last week's meeting were made in anger and should not be regarded as the final views of those who really run the fire de-

Capt. Tucker's response

District One Commander Capt. Sam Tucker, said this week he disagreed with Murphy's evaluation of the situation, but had agreed to discuss it with Murphy at 7 pm on the night of the tornado at Lime Kiln Lane and I-71. Murphy did not show up, Tucker said.

Murphy also told the firemen he had asked "a million times" for police to halt all traffic in the area, but said he "did not get much cooperation."

Murphy said he made repeated requests for help from the many police who were there, but "had to drag everything out of them. They wouldn't give me nothin'," he said.

Tucker and Sgt. Lon Goss, who was present in the area of Murphy's command post, said they could not accept any such criticism.

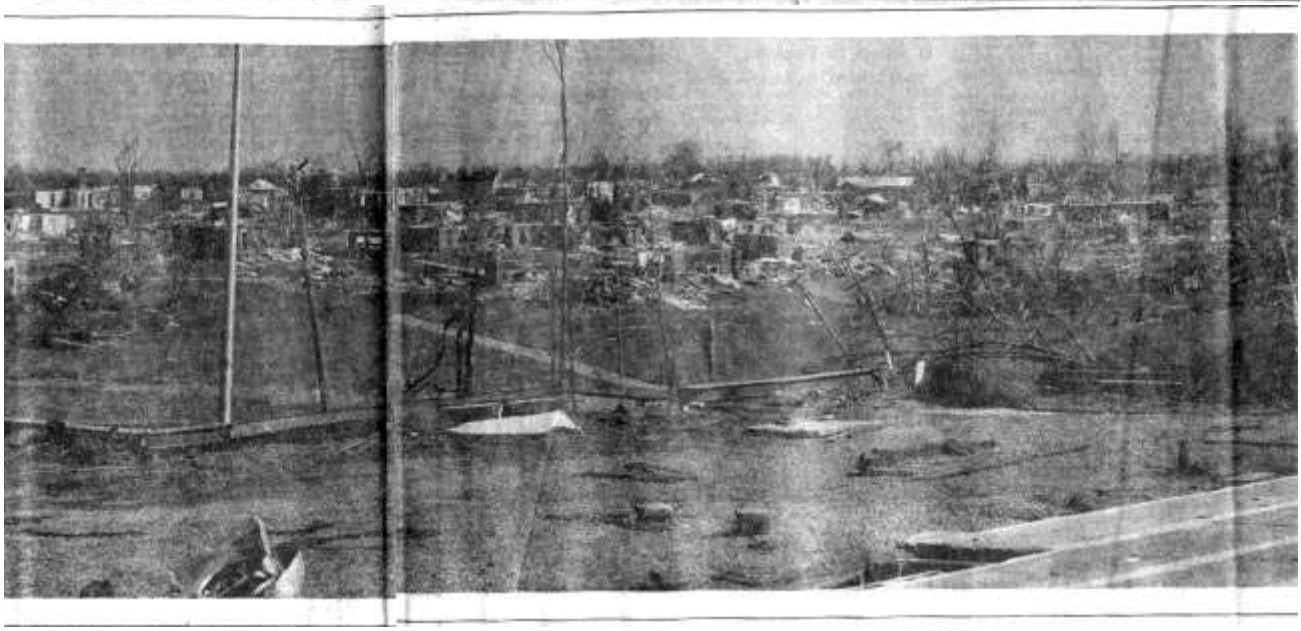
They said the few roads in the area not already blocked with trees were sealed off to all but official vehicles. Police did that in keeping with their duty to protect property in the area, he said.

"No one got in there," Tucker said, "unless they lived there or had official business."

On the basis of nine years employment with Texas Gas Transmission Co., Tucker said he knows more about gas than most volunteer firemen.

He said there was no fire and no serious threat of it in the Northfield area. Even if a broken line had ignited, which none did, it would have burned with only a small flame, and since the gas was venturing into the open air there was no danger of explosion, he said.

April 18, 1974, *The Louisville Times:*



Along the path of devastation

A composite photograph by staff photographer James N. Keen presents a panorama of the complete destruction inflicted by the April 3 tornado that sliced through Jefferson County. The view is from the roof of Dunn Elementary School, 4799 Brownsboro Road, where workers at left repaired damage after the storm. The spread of splintered homes in the distance is in the 6th-class city of Northfield, on the other side of Interstate 71.

April, 1974

Storm problem

Funds for 75 sirens sought, forum is told

By LES WHITELEY
Louisville Times Staff Writer

Louisville and Jefferson County governments will be asked to appropriate funds for 75 new Civil Defense sirens within a few weeks, a Civil Defense official said yesterday.

Speaking at a forum to assess the community's response to the April 3 tornado, Elden E. DuRand, acting director of the city-county Office of Civil Defense, said the community needs a minimum of 75 new sirens to provide an ample warning system to all of Jefferson County.

DuRand acknowledged that some areas struck by the tornado were not within the range of any of the present 38 sirens.

He said a national Civil Defense official is due in Louisville today to review the county's emergency notification needs, and that he will recommend the additional 75 sirens.

The sirens would cost approximately $300,000, DuRand said, with the federal government paying about half the cost. The remainder would have to come from local government.

"We plan to ask the Fiscal Court and Board of Aldermen for those funds either next Tuesday or the week after that," he said.

Yesterday's forum, attended by 25 to 30 persons from hospitals, police and fire departments and other agencies involved in emergency response to disasters, was sponsored by MEDICS (Medical Emergency District Inter-County Services), a group attempting to organize emergency services for a 17-county area in Kentucky and Southern Indiana.

Most of the speakers were complimentary of various agencies' responses to the disaster, but nearly all cited the lack of a central communications clearinghouse as a major problem immediately following the tornado.

Kathy Mershon, director of nursing at St. Joseph Infirmary, said the hospital was not able to get accurate information about the severity of the storm.

Most of our information came from "frenzied policemen" as they brought in victims and "from commercial radio and television," she said. "But we never had good accurate information as to the severity of the tornado."

Officials from hospitals in Clark and Floyd counties in Indiana said they were also unable to obtain information about Louisville's situation.

Others mentioned problems of not knowing where to send emergency medical personnel and with letting disaster victims know where these personnel were.

At the end of the meeting, MEDICS president Dr. Robert Levy appointed three of the persons to head a task force "to study the actions taken during the disaster and to suggest improvements."

Named to head the study group were Franklin Yudkin, an attorney; Jo Wilson, coordinator of the data processing for the Louisville-area Family Planning Council, and Jack VonderHaar, coordinator of MAST (Military Assistance to Safety and Traffic).

The task force hopes to complete its assessment by the end of May.

April 21, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:

Volunteer firemen were on storm call

By DAVID COOPER
Courier-Journal Staff Writer

Harold Adkins, a boat salesman, was driving home about 5 p.m. on April 3, when he heard over a radio in his car that a woman was trapped inside her house by a fallen tree.

Adkins immediately assumed his role as chief of the Camp Taylor Volunteer Fire Department and rushed to the 6th-class city of Audubon Park, an area affected by the tornado.

Adkins said that when he arrived the woman had been freed by firemen and was unharmed. A tree, knocked down by the tornado, had fallen on the house and jammed the bathroom door, trapping her inside, he said.

But Adkins said this was just the beginning of the post-storm work for his and 11 other volunteer fire departments in Jefferson County, as they cleared fallen trees and debris from roads, checked houses for gas leaks and searched for fallen power lines.

Adkins said that the Black Mudd, Buechel, Dixie Suburban, Edgewood, Fairdale, Fern Creek, High View, Lake Dreamland, Okolona, Pleasure Ridge Park and South Dixie volunteer fire departments all sent men and equipment to assist in clean-up operations.

"Buechel and Lake Dreamland served as a back-up group to make fire runs, while we were cleaning up the roads," he said.

And some of the fire station wagons were converted into temporary ambulances for hospital runs, said Adkins, who added that the only injury to the workers was to a wrecker driver who received a cut over his eye from a tree limb.

The workers had to evacuate the area around 8 p.m. after a second tornado alert was issued, but they returned as soon as it was lifted, he said.

None of these men receive pay for their work; most of them hold other full-time jobs while they donate their spare time to serve as volunteer firemen.

While the men worked, the wives of the Camp Taylor Department prepared food and drinks, Adkins said, and one of the women operated the radio at the fire station.

The men worked into the night. One of their tasks was to cover the Audubon Baptist Church's half-destroyed roof to prevent further damage, said Adkins.

The firemen finished their work in the area early the next day. "We sent our last units home at about 3:30 the next morning," said Adkins.

Police, residents find new respect

By Roger Auge
Staff Writer

Before the April 3 tornado struck homes off Blankenbaker Road, Police Officer Howard Nethery thought the people who live there were aloof, maybe even snotty.

A few of them told him last week they had thought he was a strange breed of man, different from "regular, normal people." Some of them said they were not really sure what they thought he was, but they were surprised to find a policeman is just like them, he said.

Patrolman William Stovall, of Fern Creek, did not know what to expect when he parked his patrol car at Limewood Circle and Lime Kiln Lane that night.

But when he left his post for the last time Easter Sunday and returned to duty in central Jefferson County, he felt like part of the neighborhood.

Six-and-a-half-year old Julie Johnston, a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William F. Johnston, of 6317 Limewood Circle, had a lot to do with it. Easter Sunday, she gave "Policeman Bill" two toy eggs. Inside one was a note: "Policeman Bill, we love you. P.S. one egg is for you and one is for the chief of police."

County Police Chief Russell McDaniel is keeping the egg and the note for a scrapbook.

Until last week, about 300 of the county's 404-man force were on duty at one time or another in the tornado-ravaged areas of Rolling Fields, Indian Hills and Northfield.

Stories such as Nethery's and Stovall's are examples of a love affair that seems to have developed between the police and the residents whose homes were damaged.

"I have to say I was surprised that they were just real nice," Nethery said. "Usually we don't deal with people like that. When we do, they are mad."

But during his period of security duty at the checkpoint, Nethery got to know some of the residents on a first name basis. One woman brought him home-baked cookies every day. Another man dropped off a cup of coffee every morning.

Nethery received six boxes of candy and a couple of cakes from residents. Frequently, children stopped to offer food.

"I never had to go anywhere to get anything to eat," Nethery said.

Public relations

Stovall said the close contact between police and people "probably gave everyone a whole lot better outlook. Such close contact for such a long time gave us time to get to know each other.

"Where before, when they saw a policeman in a car, they'd think 'Oh, I've got to slow down,' I think they know we're here to help, not just in a disaster, but any time," said Stovall.

"It (the tornado) makes a big difference in the relationship we have with people," Nethery said. "So many stopped to tell me they really hadn't ever looked at a policeman. They thought we were different than regular, normal people.

"But when they talked to us, they found there is really nothing different except our line of work. We're just ordinary people. We like the same things they do," Nethery said.

Different jobs

His job is different from that of the typical East End businessman. On April 3, Nethery was on duty when the tornado struck about 4:30 pm. He had worked all day. He was assigned to a roving police car and found himself chasing some suspected looters with National Guardsmen near Pennsylvania Avenue about midnight.

It was not until then he learned his parents' home at 200 Pennsylvania Avenue had been hit.

About 3:30 Thursday morning, Nethery was with the group of rescue workers that uncovered the body of Mrs. Bernice Orr under the kitchen wall of her home on Knollwood Road in Indian Hills.

His last day on security assignment was Sunday, April 21. On Monday, April 22, Disaster District, which had operated 19 days around the clock, was dissolved. For the most part, county police have returned to normal assignments.

Bids received for demolition of 81 houses

The city of Louisville has received bids totaling $84,791 for demolition of 81 houses considered beyond repair in tornado-damaged areas of the city.

Roy J. Reynolds, administrative hearings supervisor for the city Department of Building and Housing Inspection who handled the bids, said it probably would be a week before any demolition contracts are signed. Property owners must sign agreements for the city to do the work, he said.

Most of the buildings to be removed are in the Crescent Hill area, Reynolds said.

The city previously awarded contracts totaling $816,527 for removal of debris from private property damaged in the tornado.

The federal government will reimburse the city for the cost under the federal disaster assistance program.

In a related matter Friday, city-county Purchasing Director Henry Dosker received a high bid of $25,277 for the purchase of 97 walnut trees blown down in Cherokee Park during the tornado. The bid was submitted by Baker Trading Co., Lexington, Ky.

Two other bids were received, the lowest being $15,866.

Dosker said Baker Trading has 21 days to remove the trees from the park.

Trees that were uprooted or severely damaged in the Cherokee section of Indian Hills will be cleared out beginning this week, according to a spokesman for the sixth-class city. The Hardin Trucking & Wrecking Co. was awarded the contract by Jefferson County on a low bid of $51,900.

Northfield's gratitude

The board of trustees of the City of Northfield has adopted the following resolution:

"Whereas the city of Northfield was struck by a severe tornado late in the afternoon of April 3, 1974, leaving the city almost completely paralyzed with utility wires down, streets impassable

Northfield in ruins
. . . after the tornado

with parts of trees and buildings strewn over the area, it appeared to be almost total destruction. Fortunately, only minor physical harm was experienced, but many of our residents experienced great property damage and, in some instances, almost total loss, and

"Whereas in a matter of minutes the county police and other government services were in action, the National Guard was activated, most of the volunteer service agencies such as the Red Cross and the Salvation Army appeared on the scene, many business concerns with heavy equipment and individual volunteers joined hands with the citizens of Northfield in helping to preserve and protect what had been left. This type of help and understanding cooperation in time of need makes one feel proud to be a resident of the area and therefore be it,

"Resolved that the members of the Board of Trustees of the City of Northfield express, in behalf of all the residents, our sincere appreciation to the county police, the National Guard, and all others who joined with us in providing us protection and help in bringing back some semblance of normalcy to our City. We shall always be grateful."

CARL A. YENTSCH
Chairman, Board of Trustees
City of Northfield
2002 Northfield Dr., Louisville

April 25, 1974, *The Voice*:

the opinion page

The Voice-Jeffersonian

EDITORIALS

It's time for heartfelt thanks to all tornado relief workers

Perhaps the only good to come from the tornado of three weeks ago in the sense of community -- of interdependence -- which has been rekindled here. The myriad acts of rescue and relief performed by volunteers, the official acts of police and welfare workers -- all have deeply impressed the victims and those close to them. Shortly, the resilience and bravery of the victims has touched the rescue teams.

It began with neighbors who had never really met, helping each other out of their basements. It continued with strangers, who normally would be too self-centered to speak, falling into conversation about the devastation they were seeing for the first time together. It flowered with builders and architects and lawyers offering services free to whole groups of people they had never met. It matured with the warm friendships which grew between police searches and those whose property they protected. It seems inscribed to conclude with the sustained, intimate relationships between scores of ministers and doctors and victims who will spend the months before us rebuilding lives.

These acts of mutual caring have caused many self-motivated subordinates to look with new respect on such organizations as the Salvation Army, American Red Cross, volunteer firemen, local police and Kentucky Rescue Squad. Churches of all faiths, school groups, government agencies and people unaffiliated with any group rose to a challenge which never really was spoken. They just came and helped -- with money, advice, understanding, labor.

For many of the victims and their families, now is an appropriate time to say "thank you." The county police pulled back from their effective sentry duty this week, a kind of relief-worker in the relief effort. The one-stop relief centers have closed. The church kitchens have stopped serving emergency meals. The most uncertain phase of the tornado aftermath is over.

But how does one say "thank you" under these circumstances? Erect a monument to the contribution of the relief workers? Hold a commemorative banquet? Conduct a prayer meeting? Invite a policeman to lunch? Donate to a charity?

There must be a dozen ways -- all with benefits, all with drawbacks. None is personal enough. None will reach, or even please, all who deserve recognition. Some seems to capture or adequately celebrate the feeling of togetherness which the tornado forged in us to recognize.

Possibly three suggestions will be helpful.

One is for those who have not already contributed money to some disaster relief effort. Such a gift would be appropriate.

We suggest a gift to a Bicentenary, publicity-shy private fund called the Illinois 66. Established several years ago by former Louisville Police Commissioner George Skelton, Illinois 66 exists solely to help the families of local police and firemen killed in the line of duty. Tax deductible donations may be sent to: Illinois 66 of Louisville, Inc., c/o Ian V. Rasmussen, treasurer, Box 1067, Louisville, 40201.

Another idea is to write a Letter to the Editor. Such communications have an impact on few people recognize. They not only carry your message to the beneficiary of your praise, they magnify that message thousands of times. There's another advantage: it only costs the price of a stamp.

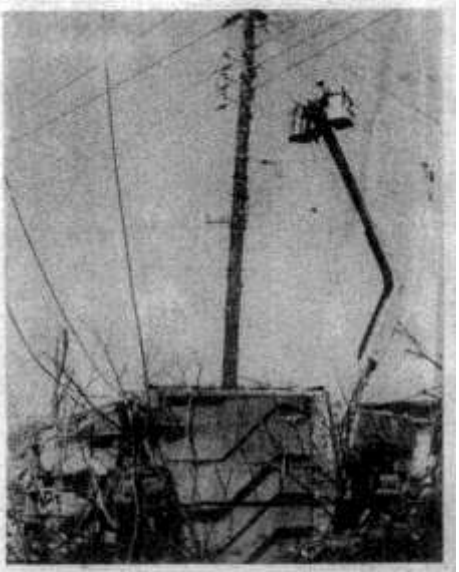
Finally, a third idea is simply to drop in at any Jefferson County police district office or volunteer fire station or other relief agency office and personally say "thanks." There is nothing -- absolutely nothing -- like a personal expression of appreciation from [illegible] who has been helped. It does wonders to sustain the sort of goodwill police and others have demonstrated in recent weeks. If this seems too simple and obvious, take it on faith: few people ever take the time to do it. If you do it, it will be long remembered.

These gestures are better ideas, here at the newspaper, we stand ready to lend our support to any community-sponsored program of appreciation for those who helped so many so much.

In the meantime, let it be repeated, the disaster has left the East End community with an unbounded goodwill toward unnumbered men and women who came to its aid. They know we appreciate their unselfish work. But we want them to know that now, as we begin to find our separate ways back to normalcy, we have a new respect for them all.

May the feeling last.

Buried cables can't fall down



After the applause for the hard work by our electric and telephone utility companies has been given and received, there ought to be time for talk of corrective action.

Much of the loss of telephone service and electric power suffered in the April 3rd tornado need not have happened. Had the wires been buried, the storm would have had little or no effect on them.

Ask just about anyone if they would prefer to have the wires buried and they'll agree it would be more attractive and less hazardous and would result in fewer service interruptions.

But almost to a person, they'll ask what about the cost? Wouldn't it raise our rates?

Well, how high do you mean? Ten cents a month? Twenty? A dollar? Who knows how much more it would cost? Surely no one in Jefferson County knows, other than the utility companies, and they are not anxious to talk about it.

So let's not argue against it on the basis of cost to consumers until we know what that cost is. It may be, as the electric utilities have said for years, that very high voltage lines -- such as were struck by the tornado off Brownsboro Road -- cannot be buried except at prohibitive cost. But this is not where the main problem lies. The main problem is with the forest of more vulnerable feeder lines which line every minor street outside of downtown Louisville. And our own bet is that the added cost of a cable burying program would be minimal. Certainly a beginning could be made at very low cost.

Others who want to avoid the issue will point to new utility installations in selected subdivisions and say this proves the utilities really want to bury their wires and already are doing so, but this is done at no loss to the utilities. The cost is passed right along to the new developer and the new home buyer who, we note, pay for the service without grumbling. The point is the general public would without doubt accept a bump in their utility rates to pay for a general program of burying existing cables.

Why should they? What's in it for them?

Several things, a more secure system, safer roadways, a less cluttered landscape. These advantages don't take a lot of explaining; they are obvious.

Here in Kentucky our utility lines are subject to severe ice storms. Not a winter goes by without at least one major outage to this area caused by ice. Most of them are unnecessary.

There in our county, utility poles crowd many of our roads, creating a hazard to drivers, an impediment to commerce. This is contrary to the public safety and welfare.

There in our town, the horizon in every direction is marred by poles and cables and wires of every description. There is no good reason for it -- unless you believe we in the East End should sacrifice our environment to keep the quarterly dividends of L. G. & E. and Mother Bell.

In the tornado's aftermath, let us cheer our utility workmen for restoring service quickly. And then let us insist the utility executives start making plans to get their existing cables -- not just their new ones -- underground.

May, 1974, Louisville Gas & Electric Power

CHEROKEE PARK . . . DEVASTATION

Photo by Billy Davis, III

"I think that I shall never see, a poem as lovely as a tree . . . Poems are made by fools like me, but only God can make a tree." — Joyce Kilmer, "Trees."

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MAY, 1974
VOL. XXX, NO. 6

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OFFICE: 311 West Chestnut Street. Telephone 582-2511

TORNADO AFTERMATH . . . IN MEMORIAM

Dedicated To Those Who Lost Life, Loved Ones, Property And Treasures And To Bravery, Heart, Hope And Spirit With Will To Carry Forward

Photo by Billy Davis, III

GRINSTEAD DRIVE . . . NEAR CHEROKEE PARK
(Arrow, Crescent Hill Woman's Club)

May, 1974, Louisville Gas & Electric Power

Photographs in this issue of L★H★P do not attempt to document the entire scope of the tornado disaster of April 3, 1974. It would be impossible to do so. These photos pinpoint some of the severely stricken areas. They do not, and could not, begin to portray the personal agony, hardship, pain and suffering of those who lost loved ones and their belongings. LG&E wishes to express its deepest condolences to those who suffered loss of loved ones and property, and to express admiration and appreciation for the endurance and patience of those in stricken areas who waited for their lights to come on again. Also, LG&E pays special tribute to the TV, radio stations and to the "ham" operators who kept a constant vigil of communication throughout the tragic occurrence, and to the scores of agencies and thousands of volunteers who have aided in the cleanup.

May, 1974, Louisville Gas & Electric Power

BRANDENBURG . . . BEFORE TORNADO

Courtesy of The Louisville Times

Brandenburg, county seat of Meade County lying some 44 miles southwest of Louisville, was one of the hardest hit areas in Kentucky by the tornado. At last count, Brandenburg — a city of some 1,650 population — tolled 31 persons dead. Virtually every home and building in the path of the tornado was shredded or leveled.

The tornado that swept through Brandenburg had a wind velocity of about 260 miles an hour, according to meteorologists. By comparison, the hurricane that struck Miami, Fla., in 1927, sweeping automobiles into the bay and ocean, had a recorded wind velocity of 175 miles an hour when the wind gauge was broken.

In the aerial photograph (above right), the day after the tornado struck Brandenburg, the devastation clearly is shown.

Brandenburg was settled by Colonel Solomon Brandenburg. Meade County was formed in 1824, and Brandenburg was incorporated as a city on March 28, 1872. Brandenburg's citizens, who lost loved ones, homes and belongings, have vowed to rebuild the city. In 1937, after the great Ohio River flood disaster, Brandenburg had to rebuild a substantial part of the city.

BRANDENBURG . . . AFTER TORNADO

Photo by Billy Davis, III

At least five of the 16 counties in LG&E's service area, including Meade, suffered tornado damage. There were 19 separate tornadoes touching down in Kentucky, causing a total of 73 deaths at last count, including the 31 in Brandenburg. Property damage in Kentucky has been estimated to exceed $85 million, and 29 counties have been declared disaster areas eligible for Federal Disaster relief funds. Fortunately, not a single fatality in our service area was attributed to fallen electric lines or gas leakage.

LG&E extends its deepest condolences to the valiant people of Brandenburg and will be working with the community in rebuilding our utility system. The tragedy of the tornado, however horrifying its consequences, has not defeated or dulled the pride, faith, hope and determination of the people of Brandenburg, or that of other communities in Kentucky where damage was wrought.

May, 1974, Louisville Gas & Electric Power

LG&E TROUBLE CREWS WORKED "36-HOUR DAYS"

DAMAGE TO LG&E SYSTEM IS EXTENSIVE

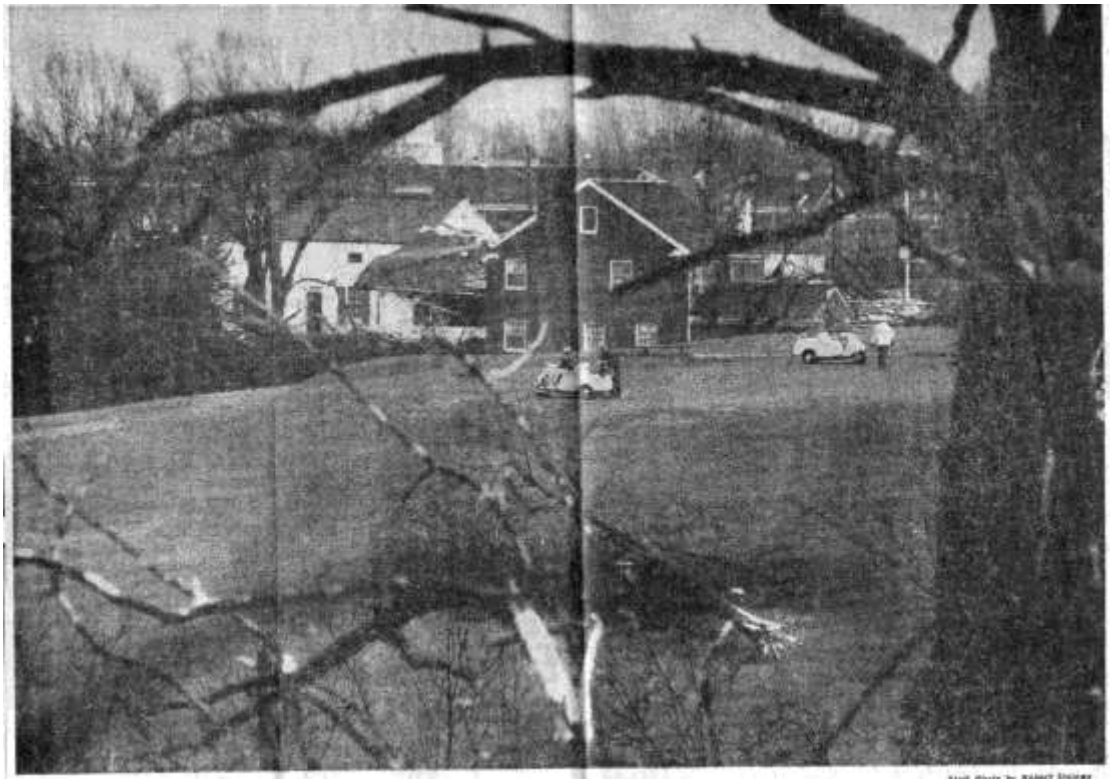
Instantly on impact of the tornado, our dedicated electric and gas trouble crews of about 1,000 were mobilized and worked "36-hour days" to clear lines and restore service, where it could be restored. Thousands waited patiently for service to come on again. Fortunately, none of LG&E's major electric generating stations was knocked out. Steel transmission towers were twisted and crumpled, distribution poles were splintered or shattered, lines and other allied equipment were smashed. Damage to LG&E's system was extensive.

May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:

The Courier-Journal & Times

SUNDAY, MAY 5, 1974 SECTION B

THE STORM

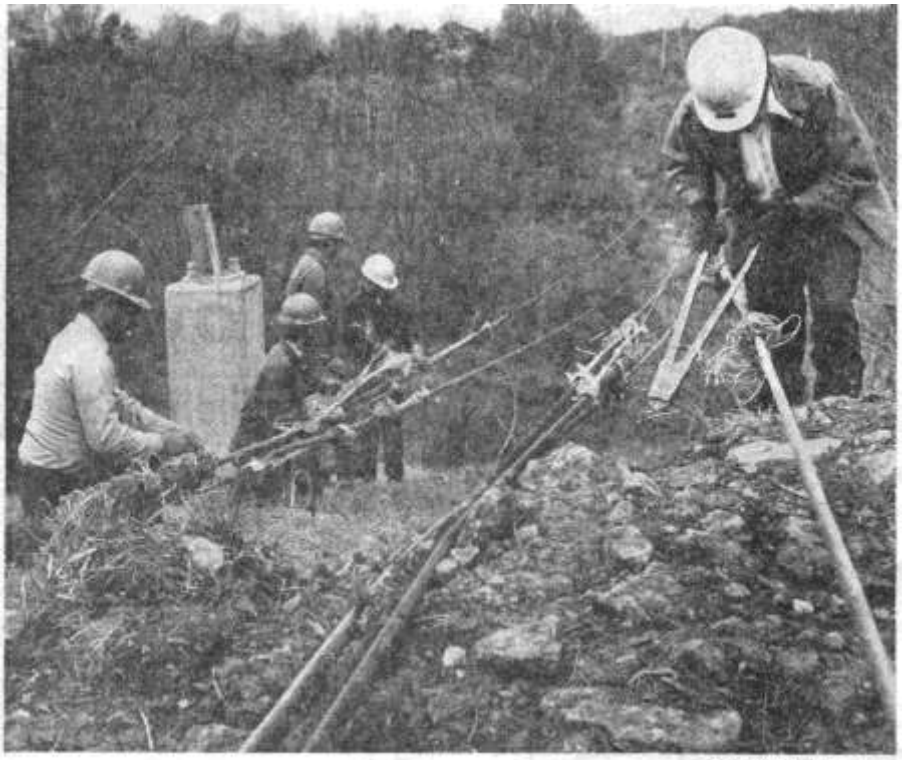


Staff Photo by Robert Steiner

Any old transport after a storm

Golf carts doubled as work vehicles in the cleanup of the Crescent Hill Golf Course that last week's tornado tore up and littered. With volun- ...teers' help, the course was restored enough to reopen yesterday for about ...90 players. Normally, there would have been about 150.

May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:



Staff Photo by Martin E. Hoover

Bill Drake normally spends his workdays in an office, but the tornado damage has caused him to take up a pair of cutters to help restore power in the Indian Hills area. The concrete post at left was the foundation of a tower that held the cables that ran from towers in the background.

Staff Photo by Keith Williams

Ken Eilers was one of a crew laying plastic pipe yesterday to carry telephone cable along Frankfort Avenue. Last week's tornado destroyed feeder cable, cutting off phone service in the area.

May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:

An open letter to the people of Louisville.

The tornado tore through Louisville in less than a minute on April 3rd with a staggering loss of life and property. It will take months to completely rebuild our devastated areas and years to regrow our fallen trees.

As a major insurer of homes and businesses, Fireman's Fund American's primary role in rebuilding is the prompt, fair and professional settlement of claims. Within 72 hours from the time the tornado struck, eighteen highly-trained "storm specialists"—appraisers and adjusters—were flown in from our other offices around the United States to augment the efforts of the eighty-one people in our Louisville Branch Office. A special claims assistance team was also assembled to aid in the handling of the increased paper work.

Within two weeks 97% of all losses reported to the company had been inspected and appraised. Over 75% of all losses have now been paid. Remaining losses are being adjusted as quickly as possible based upon availability of replacement items and repair facilities.

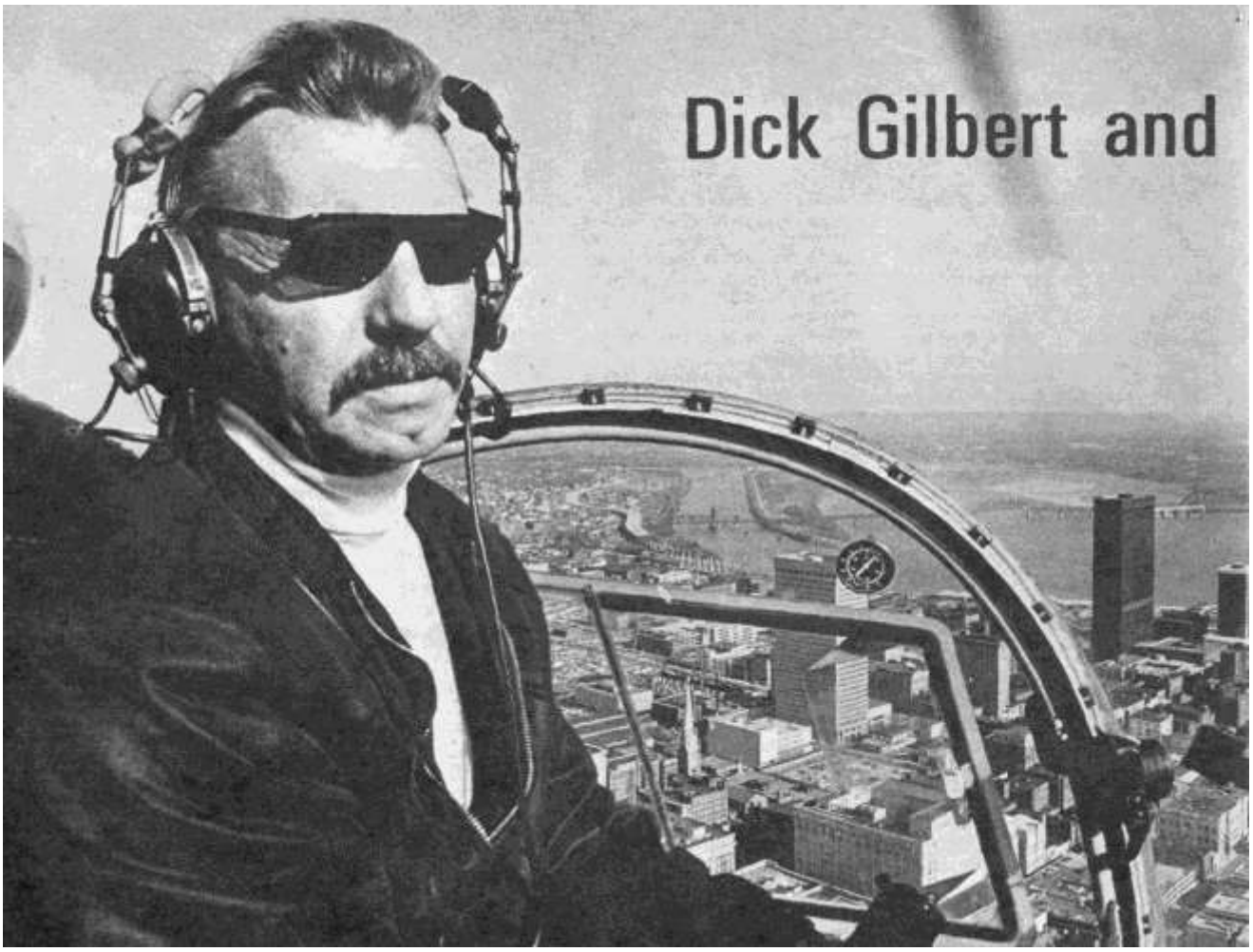
Like other insurance companies, we were assisted by many people who reacted courageously and unselfishly.

Fireman's Fund would like to salute the County and City Police and Fire Departments, the public utility companies, the American Red Cross, school authorities, the Civil Defense workers, and all the members of the Louisville community who pitched in to make the best of a horrible situation. We are proud to be a part of this community, and we are proud to be properly insuring a growing Louisville.

Floyd White
Resident Vice President
Fireman's Fund American Insurance Companies

May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:

May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:



Dick Gilbert and

How an airborne traffic tracker kept a city informed when he found himself keeping company with a tornado

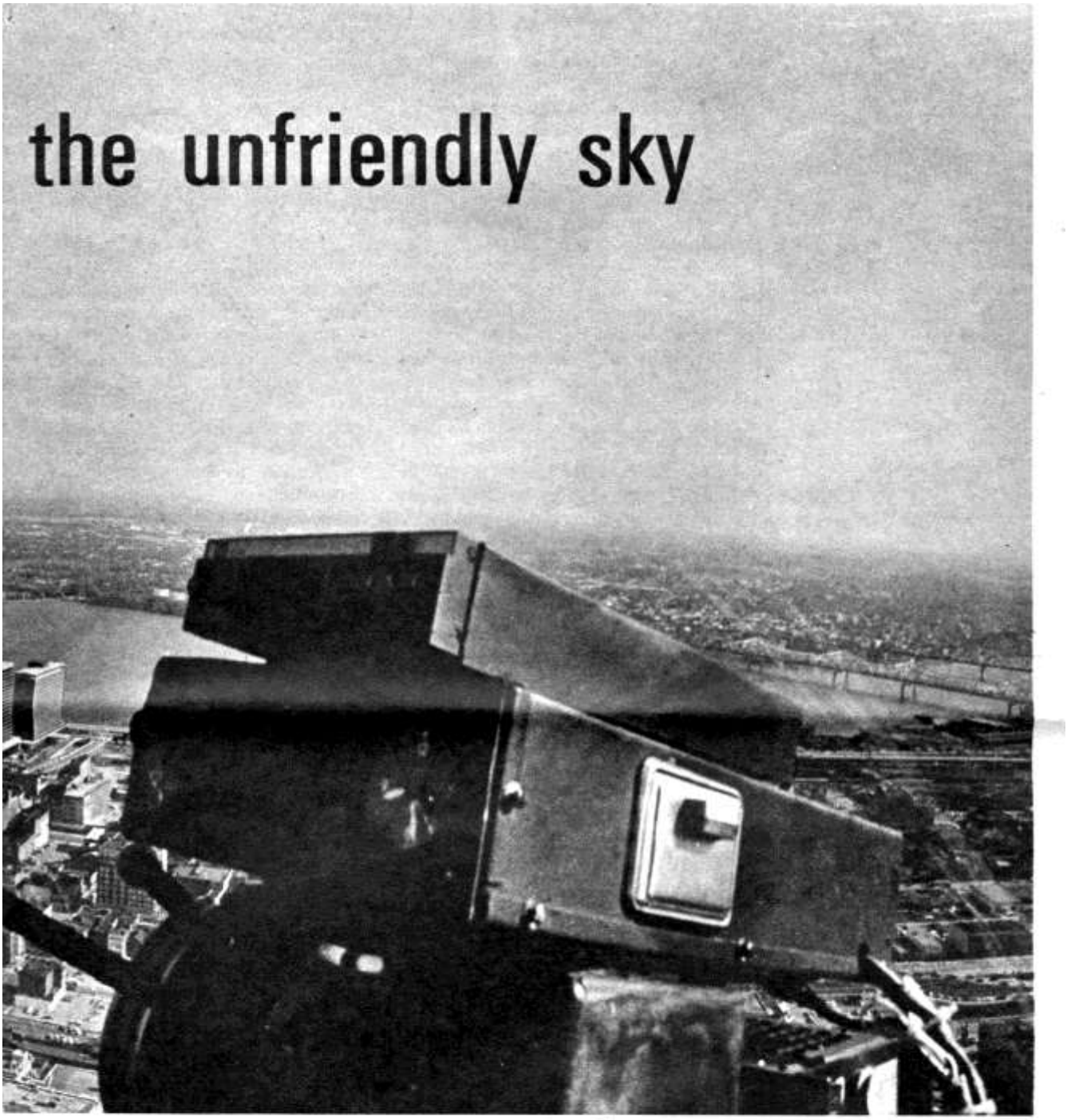
By HOWARD ROSENBERG

IT IS THE MORNING of April 3, 1974. Dick Gilbert is in his camper truck, pulling away from his tidy, two-story home in Louisville. In about 20 minutes he will be at Hap's Airport in Southern Indiana, five miles north of the Ohio River.

Gilbert, a redhead with a good-sized mustache and a large dimple on his chin, has been airborne traffic reporter for WHAS Radio in Louisville since 1970. He is fond of recalling to friends how, after being away from his native Louisville for 28 years, he walked into the office of the station's manager, Hugh Barr, asked to become the station's traffic tracker, and was hired almost on the

HOWARD ROSENBERG is radio and television critic for The Louisville Times.

May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:



spot. He is experienced. He has been flying for most of his 49 years.

At Hap's Airport, Gilbert and Jack Poe, part owner of the firm from which WHAS leases its helicopter, push the two-seater from the hangar. Gilbert climbs aboard, deposits his thermos of coffee and transistor and puts on his dual headset, which puts him in communication with WHAS as well as Standiford and Bowman Fields.

At 7 a.m., after a preflight check, Gilbert pushes the stick and feels the helicopter lift off the ground. In 30 seconds, he is at 700 feet, cruising at 70 miles an hour. It appears to veteran pilot Gilbert, as he surveys Louisville far below, that he is beginning a routine day of traffic tracking.

Mrs. William Pederson Wheeler spends the morning shopping for her husband's birthday and addressing invitations for their Kentucky Derby party. Mrs. Wheeler has fond memories of Dick Gilbert. They had met when they were both 15 years old and had frequently double-dated in their youth. Although Mrs. Wheeler hasn't seen or talked to Gilbert in

May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:

Dick Gilbert *Continued*

Photographed
by RICHARD NUGENT

many years, she occasionally hears him on the radio. And on these occasions it always occurs to her that, even after all these years, her old friend hasn't lost his fine speaking voice.

Gilbert's morning shifts run from 7:10 to 8:40 or 8:45 and his afternoon shifts run from 4:08 to 5:35 or 5:40. In between, his time is his own, and Gilbert, a widower, uses it this morning to fix his refrigerator. He likes fixing things. After lunch, he plays his concert organ for a while and takes a nap. When he awakes at 3 p.m. his daughter, Candy, 14, has returned from school.

An hour later, Gilbert is in the copter again, heading south toward Louisville, checking the major highways in Southern Indiana along the way. Traffic is light. Wednesday is always the lightest day of the week. The overcast sky is of little concern to him. He will be flying well below the clouds.

Gilbert hears the severe weather bulletin read by Ray Shelton on WHAS at 4:02 p.m., alerting the Louisville area to a possible tornado. He doesn't take it seriously. How can he when it has been — how many years? — since a tornado has touched down in Louisville? Like so many others, Gilbert has what he likes to call the hometown philosophy. "We'll never have a tornado in Louisville," he had told Candy when they moved to Louisville. But the warning has to go on the air. Federal authorities require this as a condition for allowing WHAS to broadcast at 50,000 watts clear channel. It is routine.

"Just stay tuned," Gilbert says during his first traffic report at 4:10 p.m., "and you'll know what's coming. You'll hear me playing cribbage." No harm in joking about the impossible.

But glancing toward Fort Knox,

Continued

Gilbert sees flashes of lightning in a sky turning from gray to purple. As a precaution, he alters his course, deciding to forego, for the time being, his usual cruise over Southwest Louisville and to work his way eastward instead. It is a move he has made many times before. A routine precaution.

When it comes to cooperating with the press, John Burke has a good reputation. A friendly man, Burke is chief meteorologist for the U.S. Weather Service in Louisville. When pressed on the air to pinpoint the likely path of a tornado south of the Ohio River, Burke is reluctant to be specific. "But I feel sure," he adds, "she's going to blow right across the county."

Gilbert is not the sort to panic. After enlisting in the Army Air Corps in 1942 he had flown 31 missions as a bombardier. His B-26 Marauder was shot down over Koblenz, Germany, on Feb. 24, 1945, and he was interned at Nuernberg and Munich until liberated in April 1945. After a brief stint as a civilian, he returned to active duty in 1948 and earned his wings, becoming a fighter-pilot instructor. In 1951 he went to helicopter school and he eventually became one of three copter pilots assigned to the H-bomb test site at Eniwetok in the Marshall Islands. Since leaving the Air Force in 1953 as a captain, he had worked almost exclusively as a commercial helicopter pilot, tracking traffic in such cities as Chicago and New York.

Dick Gilbert is a pro. He glances around and sees that his is the only aircraft in the sky.

At 3:30 p.m. Mrs. Peyton Ray Jr., glancing from her home in the Indian Hills suburb of Louisville, had noticed how threatening the sky looked. "If it storms be sure to come home," she had warned her 9-year-old son, Peyton III, when he left with a friend, Ben Cartwright, to sell Scout-a-rama tickets. Her youngest son, Richard, 5, was playing at the home of a friend.

Now it is almost 4:30 and Mrs. Ray, listening to the radio, is becoming increasingly apprehensive. She calls the mother of Richard's friend and tells her she will pick up Richard in 45 minutes. A few minutes later, Ben Cartwright's mother drives up and drops off Peyton III. Outside, a drizzle has turned into a downpour.

During flight training, Dick Gilbert had seen a film showing the development of a "textbook" tornado: A cumulus cloud intensifies into a violent thunderhead, with hail, lightning and severe winds; the cloud swells and acquires an anvil-shaped peak. At an altitude of about 3,000 feet and a half-mile ahead of the thunderhead, a dark purple cloud that resembles a tightly rolled rug forms. The roll cloud sags, touches ground and begins feeding on the landscape like an elephant's trunk.

What Gilbert observes now reminds him not of this, but of a severe thunderstorm he once sat out in a diner in San Angelo, Texas, in the mid-1950s. He says in his radio report, "We *do* have a pretty wild and rugged weather situation here, so be prepared for it as you're driving." But certainly not a tornado. Not yet.

It was Gilbert's practice during his afternoon shifts to hover briefly over his house as a greeting to Candy. Today, after sighting Candy emerging from the house, he makes a violent circular motion with his left hand and points to the ground. No need to take chances. Amazingly, Candy understands. She promptly goes inside, grabs Gabriel, the family dog, and goes to the basement. By the time Gilbert is over Oxmoor Shopping Center he can hear B.J. Thomas on WHAS singing, "I Just Can't Help Believing."

The tornado warnings begin to trouble Mrs. Wheeler, who had spent part of the afternoon working in the greenhouse adjacent to the family room of her home off Blankenbaker Lane in Louisville. She reenters the greenhouse to watch for hail. Then she remembers that her husband, who is out of town on business, had told her always to seek cover beneath a pool table in the basement in dangerous weather. So there she heads, transistor radio

May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:

Dick Gilbert *Continued*

in hand, to crouch in a fetal position and wait out the storm.

Cautiously Dick Gilbert keeps his helicopter two miles from the ominous black clouds churning up over southern Louisville.

WHAS has been broadcasting tornado warnings and safety rules with increasing frequency. Now it is 4:40 p.m. and WHAS newsman Bob Johnson has just joined Jeff Douglas on the air with a report that a tornado has touched down at Freedom Hall:

"Jeff, the city police say that a tornado is moving across the southern part of the city. It was spotted near the fairgrounds, moving from the south generally toward the north. They say that it has touched down at the fairgrounds and apparently damaged Freedom Hall. We don't have any other details at this time other than the fact that people in the Louisville area should take cover."

Douglas switches to Gilbert: "Can you ... fill us in any more on what you can see from your vantage point?"

"Well, it's a spectacular sight," Gilbert reports. "...the low clouds, very black low clouds... let's see ... at the moment they're just about over Bowman Field in the Taylorsville Road area, and it *is* swirling around. It looks like smoke underneath it. There is no real tight, definite tornado as such; it's still turning in a large .... *Yes!* There's one now...started...yes, dipping down from the bottom of the cloud. Let's see...that will be over in the Highlands ... and probably along Bardstown Road and somewhere near Eastern Parkway .... The power transformers have been blowing regularly in the path of this thing.... Big, large explosions of blue-white light that help to clock it pretty well. Now it's clearing up very nicely behind it.... But it is *definitely* moving up toward the Crescent Hill water tank now and I'm starting to get some strong, *very* strong gusts, way out here on Bardstown Road near the GE plant. That's the way it looks to me. Be careful, *very, very* careful. . . ."

To Mrs. Ray in Indian Hills this is a warning to take cover. With Peyton III and Zipper, their waddling toy dachshund, she seeks refuge in a basement room beneath the porch. Peyton's feet are wet from the rain. Before taking the action that saves their lives, she makes him change shoes.

At WHAS Radio, people are walking in and out of the studio. News director Glen Bastin has never experienced anything like this before. He and the other WHAS broadcasters are too busy airing the flood of reports of tornado activity to give much thought to Gilbert's safety, but for one brief moment he wonders what the severe winds are doing to the helicopter high above the city.

With a teen-age daughter who needs him, a mortgage and plans for the future, Gilbert is no daredevil. He had gotten the jitters during the days he was a pilot for a troupe of aerial performers — fearful not so much for their safety as because the act required him to stretch the aircraft to the limits of its capability.

Yet he is a fatalist. Once, on furlough in London in 1944, he had ignored blaring air-raid sirens that sent other officers rushing from their beds to the air-raid shelter. "The hell with it," he had shouted to a naval commander shooting out the door, "this is my only night in London. I'm not about to spend it in a dank celler." He had remained in bed and gone back to sleep.

Crouched beneath the pool table in her basement as the twister passes only a block away, the noise so terrifying she can barely stand it, Mrs. Wheeler begins praying, repeating more times than she would be able to remember later, "Dear God, don't let me be so scared."

From his helicopter, Gilbert gazes mournfully down at the disfigured landscape and begins following the trail of devastation, reporting his observations to listeners.

Expecting to see superficial damage at the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center, he is shocked at what's below: Exposed rafters and dangling lights are visible through a hole in the roof of Freedom Hall. He searches for the horse barns and finds them ... flattened. Steel light

Continued

standards at nearby Twilite Drive-in Theater look like wilted flowers. The roof of the East Wing of the Fair and Exposition Center is worse off than Freedom Hall's. Nearby, mobile homes have been wiped out. Debris from the horse barns is strewn across the North-South Expressway, and vehicles have been blown into each other.

Gilbert gazes toward Audubon Park and sees what seems to be relatively minor damage. He sees broken trees in the Poplar Level Road area. "This has to be all there is," he says to himself.

Secure in their basement, Mrs. Ray and Peyton III have no idea what has occurred outside. Emerging from their refuge, Mrs. Ray is stunned. The house is an open shell. The outer walls are still standing, but the roof is gone and the rooms are a wreck. Peyton begins to cry.

Although his voice remains calm, Gilbert is astounded by the devastation he sees during the remainder of his storm-tracking mission. "The whole park over here, Cherokee Park, there aren't any trees left in Cherokee Park," he reports. "It has ripped everything down here on the golf course and over to the tunnel. The I-64 traffic is at a standstill. There are huge trees blocking Lexington Road . . ."

Gilbert spent the first 17 years of his life living in a story-and-a-half frame house at 121 Pennsylvania Avenue in Crescent Hill. It was a middle-class neighborhood, quiet and dignified. He used to infuriate his mother by climbing onto the roof of his house and surveying the view. Now he looks down at the house and sees that is is partially destroyed.

"It . . . came came on up Stilz and Frankfort, Pennsylvania, Hillcrest," he reports. "Right there at the Frankfort Avenue intersection, it completely wiped out . . . almost every house is damaged to some extent. Then it came across the Crescent Hill Golf Club, and I'm over Indian Hills right now, and I can't . . . I can't even begin to count . . . I would guess 200 homes out there have at least the second floor gone.

Continued

May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:

Dick Gilbert *Continued*

Many of them are completely demolished . . ."

Mrs. Wheeler is sure the tornado is gone. She crawls from beneath the pool table and for the first time in a long time, it seems, she is aware of the voice coming from her transistor radio: Dick Gilbert describing the areas of the city that were hit hardest. One of them is the Cherokee section of Indian Hills where her elderly parents live. It is a six- or seven-minute walk to their house. But Mrs. Wheeler runs. When she arrives she finds their house, on Choctaw Road, is damaged. Her mother is outside with a broom in her hand; her ailing father is sitting, staring blankly.

Finally, Gilbert is above Northfield. He thinks back to the 1960s when he was tracking twisters in Indiana, remembering two that touched down 20 miles south of Gary and ripped across the state toward Ohio, like the 3rd Army moving across France and Germany, blasting everything in its path. Northfield reminds him of that.

Before bringing in his copter for the day, Gilbert gives a final report on the snarled traffic and takes a WHAS photographer on a tour of the devastation. It is nearly 6 p.m. when he finally lands at Hap's.

"Where did you land during the storm?" Poe asks.

"I didn't land," Gilbert says.

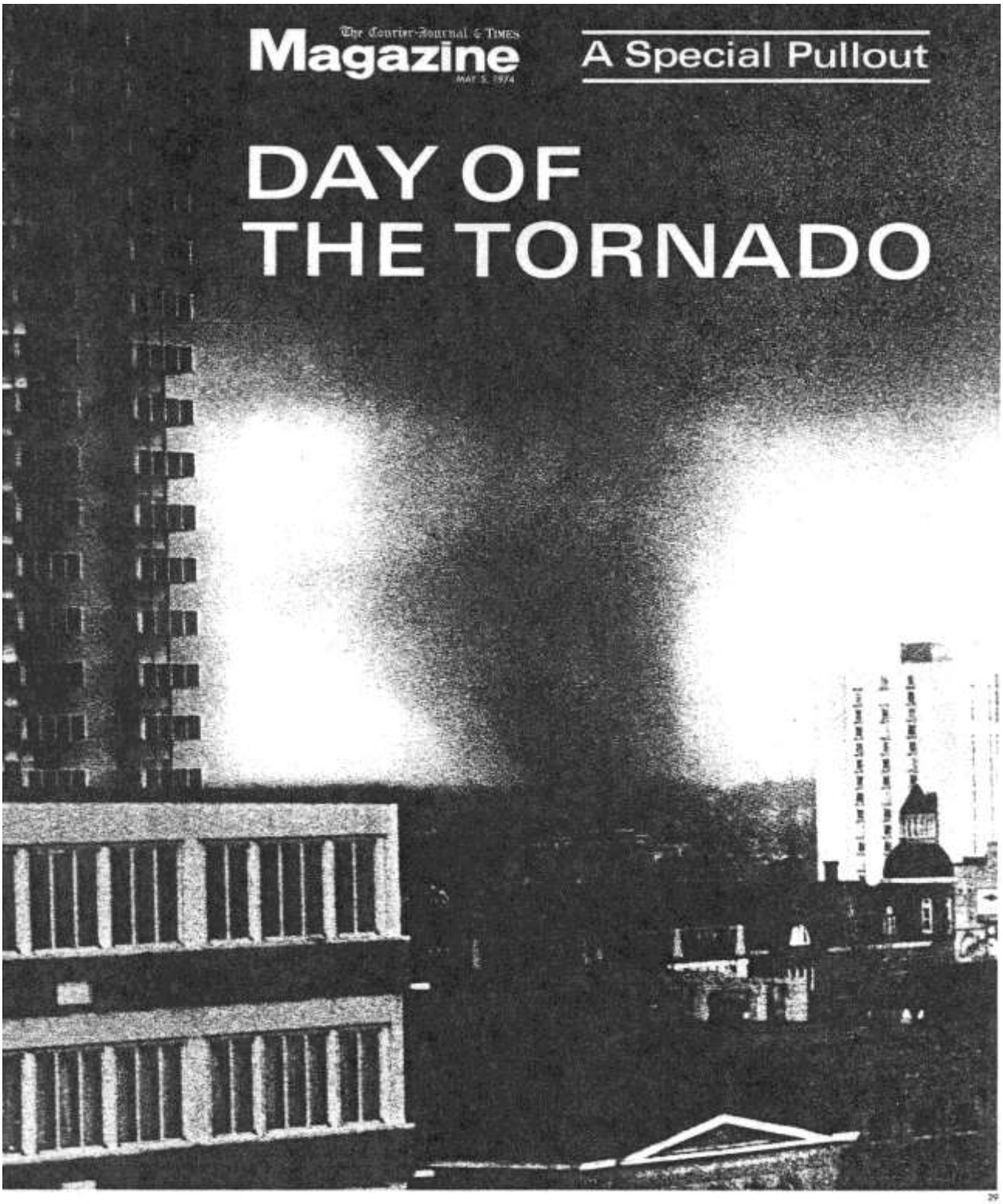
There is a look of amazement on Poe's face.

Gilbert stands by at Hap's for an hour in case he is needed again. At 7:25 p.m., he is home, backing the camper into his driveway. At 10:30 p.m., he is asleep.

Dick Gilbert's day of the tornado is over. But it is a day he will remember. And it is a day that Mrs. Peyton Ray Jr. and Mrs. William Pederson Wheeler and thousands of others will remember, too. And they will remember the voice of Dick Gilbert tracking the tornado and describing the devastation from his grandstand seat in the sky.

But for Dick Gilbert it was all just part of his job, with this difference: "For one of the first times in my life, I was in the right place at the right time." □

May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:



May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:

TORNADO

XENIA, OHIO: *A couple leave what's left of home, their possessions packed in leaf bags. Some 38 were killed at Xenia.*

Associated Press

APRIL 3, 1974, started out as a routine news day. The Queen Elizabeth II was stalled at sea with boiler trouble and 1,650 passengers aboard. W. A. "Tony" Boyle was on trial for the murder of Joseph Yablonski. Donald Nixon denied to Senate investigators that he had helped financier Robert L. Vesco get a message to Mr. Nixon's brother, the President. The stock market opened on a sluggish note, though the Arab embargo had been lifted and the gasoline crisis appeared about over.

In Kentucky, Governor Wendell Ford had just signed a bill, passed by the recent legislature, putting into effect a compromise form of no-fault insurance. There was a general lament that no horse had emerged as a favorite to win the 100th running of the Kentucky Derby, and fears that the race might have to be run in two heats because so many colts were entered. Campbellsburg was recovering from a tornado that had swept through the town two days earlier, killing one person, injuring 20 more and doing more than $1 million in damage.

A typical April day, with typical April weather, wet and warm. A chance of showers and thundershowers was forecast for much of the Eastern half of the U.S., following the pattern of the previous week and due mainly to a large, warm air mass pushing up into the Midwest from the Gulf. Warm with a chance of rain was forecast for Kentucky; for Indiana: windy and warm.

Map by Bill Donovan

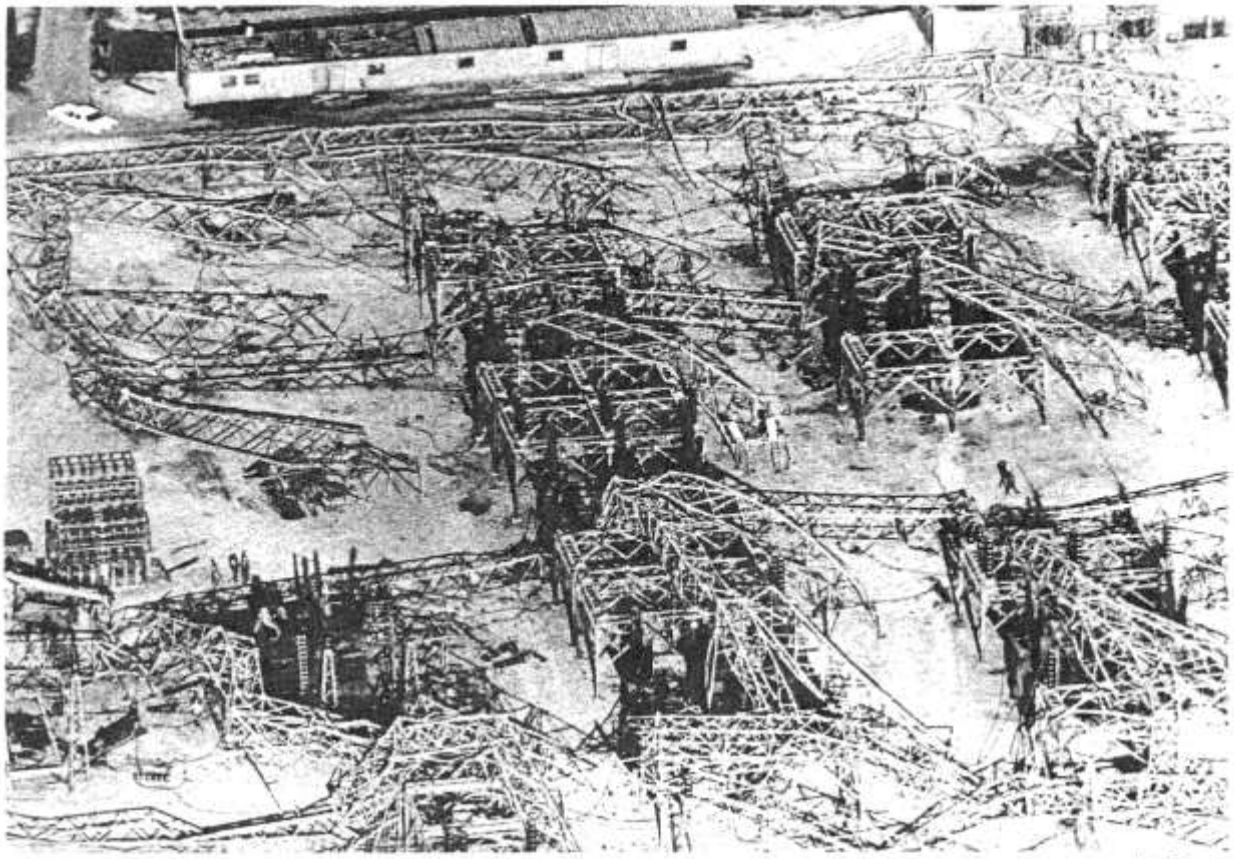
Shaded areas show states hardest hit.

But for 24 hours a large, intense, fast-moving low-pressure area had been surging eastward across the Great Plains, pushing the warm air from the Gulf faster along its course to the Northeast. Shortly after noon, on a line stretching from Mississippi to Canada, the two masses collided, and along the extended front the wet, warm, conflicting currents began spewing out a series of tornadoes. From northern Alabama through Tennessee, Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Michigan, radio warnings crackled. Tornado watches became tornado warnings. Then the deadly twisters started ripping through the countryside, turning April 3 into a day of terror that left its mark on history.

In all, more than 100 tornadoes touched down along the squall lines from Alabama through Michigan, killing 317 people, injuring more than 1,500 and causing an estimated $570 million in damage. In 10 states, 100 counties suffered heavy damage. Parts of eight states were declared disaster areas.

It was clearly the worst storm since the tornadoes of 1925 that killed 740 people, and the fact that the death toll was far less was due largely to improved warning systems that sent hundreds of thousands scurrying to shelter and let them survive the storm's passage.

May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:



Larry Spitzer

Stan Denny

INDIANA: *The power plant at Madison, above, was reduced to spaghetti. The Palmyra resident, left, lost her stepmother and trailer home in the storm.*

A Special Pullout

Pullout cover photograph of the Louisville tornado, taken by LARRY SPITZER from Sixth and Broadway, looking toward the Kentucky Fair & Exposition Center

Color photography by C. THOMAS HARDIN

Text by JOHN ED PEARCE, a member of the Magazine staff

May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:

Bryan Moss

BRANDENBURG, KY: *In the throes of this destruction, 31 of the town's 1,800 people lost their lives.*

AS KENTUCKIANS went to work Wednesday morning there seemed to be no reason to worry about the weather. It was a little windy early in the day, with showers here and there, but April in Kentucky is usually windy and damp. Even when, at 10:28, Louisville radio stations began broadcasting severe-weather warnings, there was no alarm. Campbellsburg had been hit by a tornado two days earlier; in retrospect, it sounded an ominous overture, but at the time it was considered a freak. And there had been a half-dozen weather warnings in previous days and nothing had come of them.

Then suddenly, at 2:45 in the afternoon, the warnings took on a frightening tone. Following a severe-thunderstorm warning, a tornado had hit near Palmyra, Ind., and smashed into Borden. Madison was then battered. Reports started coming in of other tornadoes in Alabama and Tennessee. At 3:45 a tornado warning was issued for the area around Brandenburg, Ky. At almost the same moment, a tornado sideswiped Irvington; 15 minutes later it slashed through Brandenburg.

At 4:18, Louisville got its first tornado warning; sirens screamed and people headed for their basements, as radio and television stations hammered out the danger warnings. At 4:37, a tornado touched down at Standiford Field and began its 15-minute, 12-mile journey of death and destruction through Louisville, buffeting Oldham and Henry counties before blowing itself out in the open land of Owen County.

Three minutes after the Louisville twister sprang to life, Hardin County was hit. At 4:45 Simpson, Warren and Barren counties were struck. Nelson and Spencer counties were hit at 5:00. Another tornado touched down in Anderson County at 5:50, and in 25 minutes roared through Frankfort and into Scott County, where it lashed at Stamping Ground. Across the state, the barrage became a drumfire of reports of death.

Throughout the evening, the terror continued. Twin tornadoes hit Wayne and Clinton counties between 6:40 and 7:15. Another raged through Harrison County for 20 minutes after it struck at 6:55. There was another near Cynthiana at 7:15. At 7:20, a vicious one tore through Garrard County into Madison County. The Madison-Fayette line was hit at 7:30. Then came others in Pulaski and Rockcastle counties at 7:55, at Camargo in Montgomery County at 8:05, in Scott and Harrison counties at 8:15, in Wayne and Pulaski at 9:25, and in Boone County at 11:30, before the fury of the storm finally abated with a smash near the Pulaski-Rockcastle line at midnight.

In Kentucky, 18 tornadoes and two severe storms were counted that day, a dozen more in nearby areas of Indiana and Ohio. Xenia, Ohio, a town of 25,000, lost 38 dead. But for its size, tiny Brandenburg (population 1,800) was probably hardest hit of all: 31 dead, scores injured, its business district gutted.

In a sense, Louisville was lucky, with only two deaths directly attributed to the storm (two more persons died of heart attacks). But as the stunned survivors crawled from their basements, they were bludgeoned by the numbing sight of destruction. Louisville was deeply scarred. Some of its finest parks and suburbs had lain within the storm's lethal path. It would be a long time before the city — like the entire nation — forgot April 3, 1974.

May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:

LOUISVILLE: *The downtown skyline is a quiet horizon for the Northfield suburb, blasted in 30 seconds.*

May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:

Into the fashionable suburbs—Rolling Fields, Indian Hills, Northfield — the storm tore, ripping the costly homes with the stately trees, neat walks and shrubs, filling swimming pools with debris. After the fury passed, there was little to do but inspect the damage, thankful life had been spared, and then begin the grim task of clearing away the past so that homes and hopes could be rebuilt on what was left.

May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:

May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:

Larry Sutton

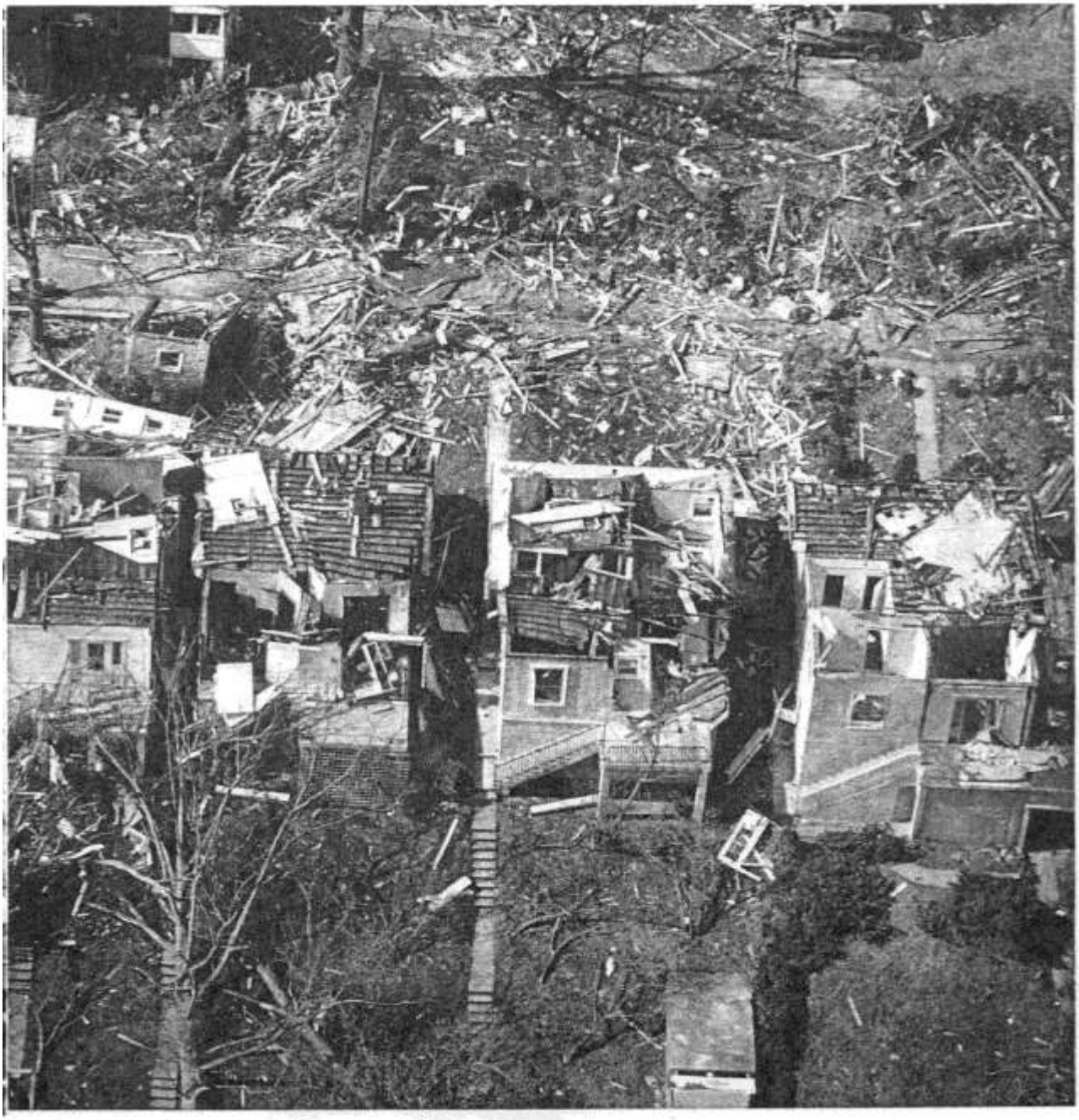
May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:

Nothing softens for long the hurt of seeing one's home in ruins. For some the mercy of shock stuns and numbs and lets the anguish of truth seep in slowly. But the child feels in the heart the stab of reality, of dear things gone, of home and haven and security taken from her.

May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:

The storm dealt its wrath unevenly. Along Eastern Parkway (below) some houses lost only roof tiles. But in the Grinstead Drive area of Crescent Hill (above and right) homes were ripped apart, century-old trees twisted and shattered, and neighbors who had shared the comfort of quiet streets and shade now shared the common grief of loss and worry over what to do next.

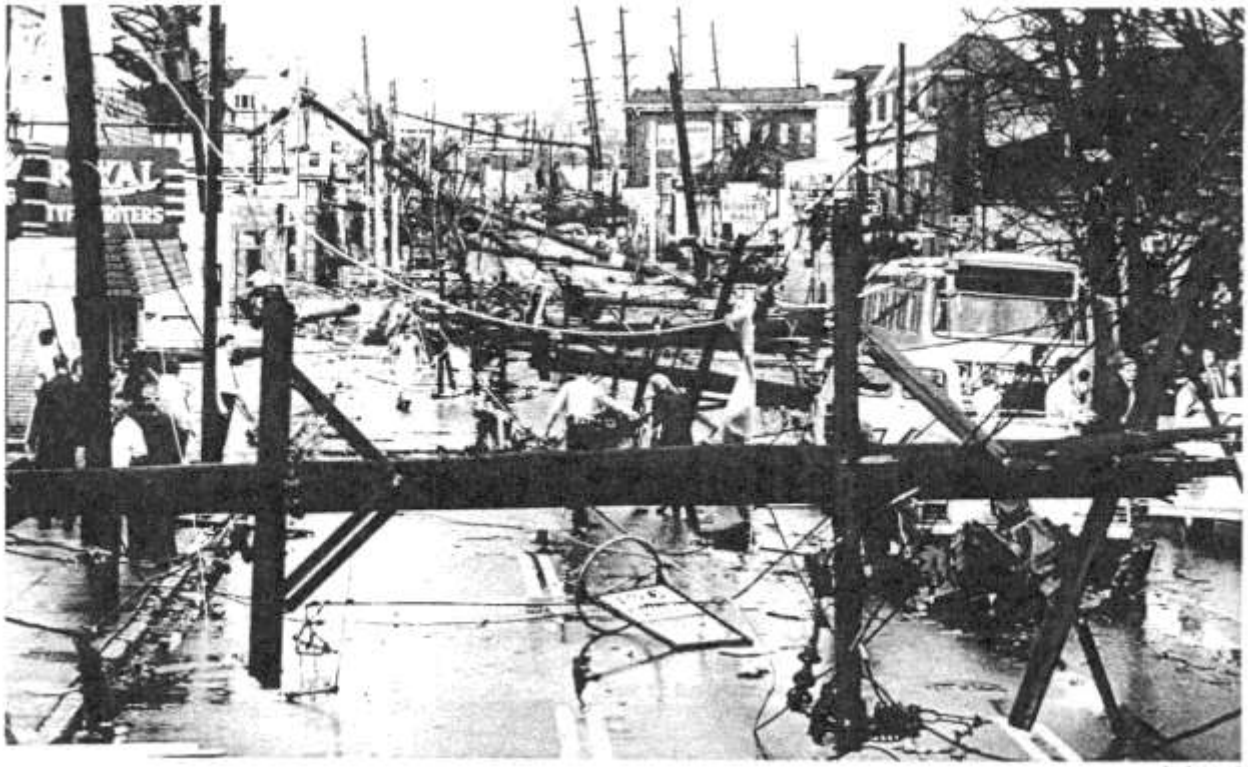
May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:



May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:

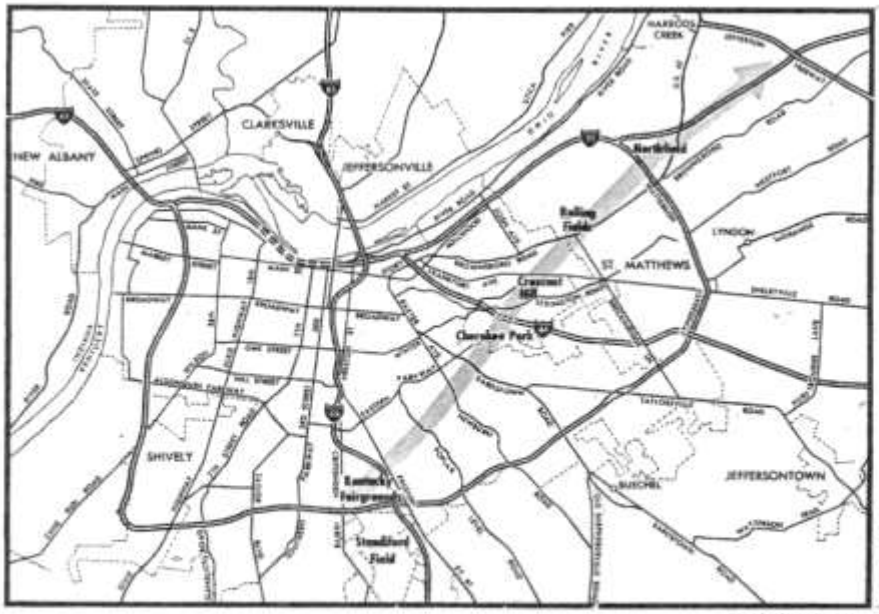
Cherokee Park was 80 years old when the storm struck. Another 80 years may pass before all scars are healed.

May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:



Frank Kimmell

One of Louisville's busy commercial districts — Bardstown Road in the Highlands — was among the first areas hit. Looking southeast from Eastern Parkway, the street, above, is a maze of felled power lines and snarled traffic.

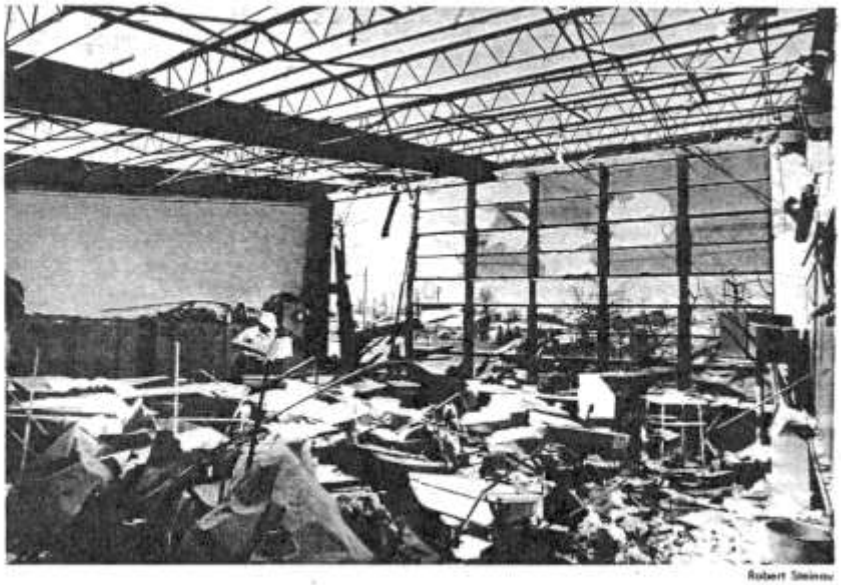


Map by Steve Durbin

THE TORNADO'S PATH: *"My God, it's right here!" meteorologist John Burke yelled to a newscaster as the twister formed before his eyes at Standiford Field. The map at left traces the trail of terror the storm then took in Louisville.*

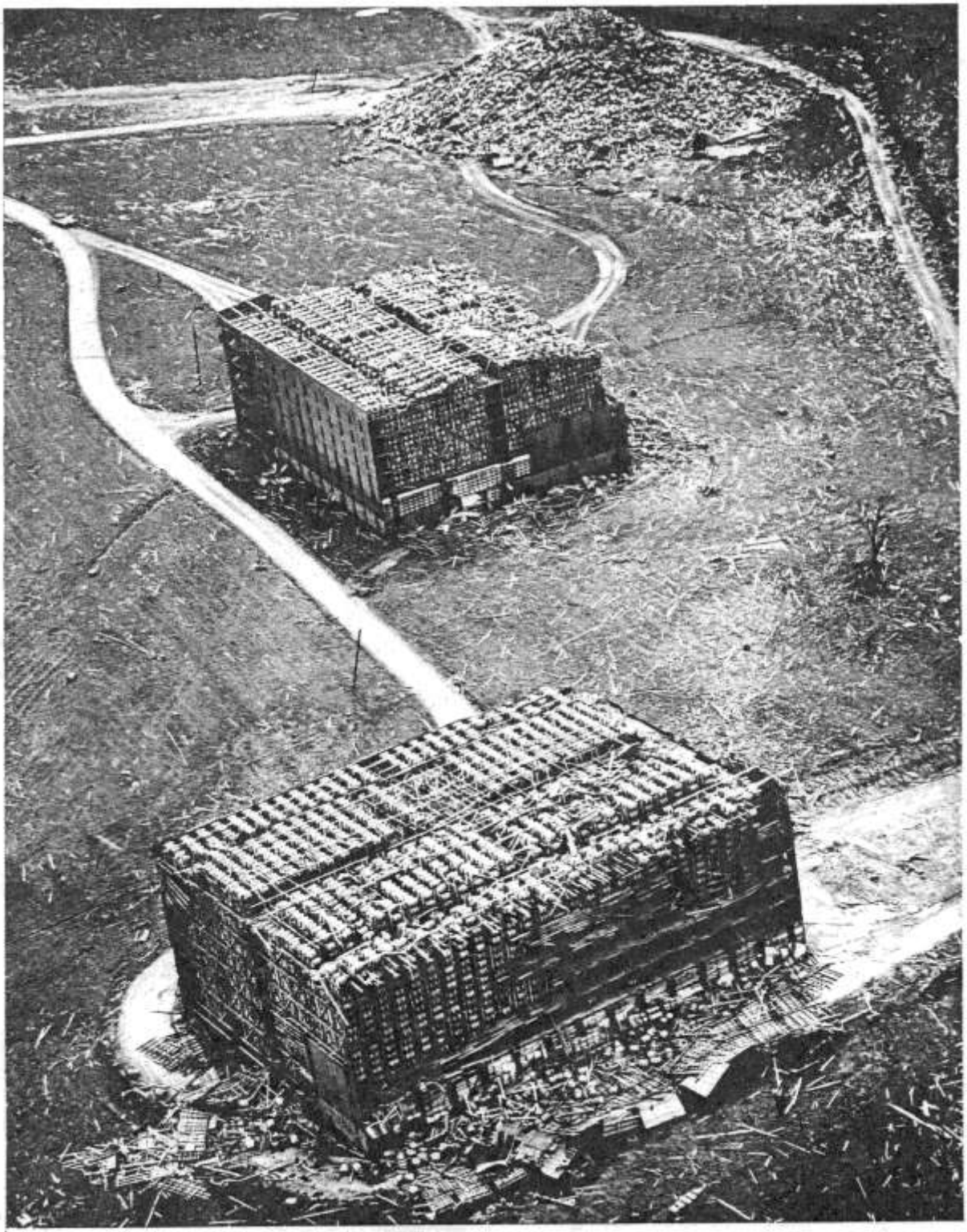
May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:

James R. Russell



Robert Steinau

THE KENTUCKY TORNADOES *affected virtually every segment of life. Farmer June B. Perkins, of Madison County near Richmond, lost livestock, home and barns, and his farm machinery was blown into a pond, above. Wooden barrels filled with whisky were piled in a jumbled mass and walls stripped bare as the winds ripped through warehouses owned by the James B. Beam Distilling Co. between Boston and Lebanon Junction in Nelson County, right. Schools, among them Louisville's Audubon Elementary, left, were also hit, but, fortunately, classes weren't in session at the time.*



Billy Davis

May 5, 1974, *The Courier-Journal*:

James N. Keen

AT JETT, NEAR FRANKFORT, *members of Capital City Christian Church showed, like most storm victims, that their faith was unshattered by the ravages of the tempest. Their church will be rebuilt on the same site according to the original plans.*

IT IS a saving grace of mankind that the human spirit responds to times of tragedy with courage and generosity, and the storms of April 3 brought forth both in reassuring measure. True, police and aid operations were hampered by sightseers and curiosity seekers. But volunteers swarmed into the stricken areas to help the victims clear away the debris, homes were opened to the homeless, and a flood of food, clothes and medicine poured into battered towns. Neighbors became neighbors again in the sense of sharing and helping. Committees were formed to buy and plant new trees to replace the fallen shade-givers of parks and streets.

And slowly, as senses recovered from shock, and muscle and machine cleared off the rubble, signs of recovery appeared. Workmen hammered at new roofs, replanted lawns and shrubs. Homeowners began to plan and rebuild. For those who needed it, disaster aid was painfully slowed by the red tape that seems inherent in bureaucracy, and for them the time of recovery must seem an eternity.

For those who lost loved ones, of course, the scars of the storm will never quite heal. But already now, only a month since the tornadoes gashed their grisly path through our lives, the scars on the land are beginning to soften. Not all of them. For some once-lovely streets and for the parks that lost the beauty of towering trees to the storm's massive blast, recovery will be, if not an eternity, a time that few of us living today will be fortunate enough to see. □

May, 1974

Louisville-area utilities estimate $6 million damage done by April 3 tornado

About $6 million damage was done by the April 3 tornado to the power, telephone and water utilities that serve Louisville, according to figures reported yesterday by company officials.

They provided this breakdown:

- South Central Bell, $2.5 million "to restore service to normal efficiency," including $1.5 million in Jefferson County, in labor overtime, new equipment and other costs. Service to some 43,000 South Central Bell customers, including 29,550 in Jefferson County, was knocked out.

- Louisville Gas & Electric Co., between $2 million and $2.5 million. Within minutes, "perhaps one-fifth of our electric load disappeared," said B. Hudson Milner, LG&E president.

- Louisville Water Co., $1,242,255, most of it at the Crescent Hill water plant. Frank C. Campbell, vice-president and chief engineer, told the Board of Water Works yesterday that all except perhaps $100,000 of that amount may be reimbursed from insurance or federal disaster aid.

The tornado which struck Louisville roared through the water plant at 4:40 p.m. and wiped out three separate LG&E power supplies, crippling the city's water system.

The storm broke 1,469 window panes at the water plant, blew away 15,000 square feet of slate shingles and destroyed 208 trees, 85 per cent of them a foot or more in diameter, said Campbell.

In addition, 3,000 feet of fence was damaged, and the Board of Water Works yesterday approved the $22,705 bid of Cardinal Fence Co. to restore it.

Major estimated damage figures for the water plant facilities include $175,000 to building roofs and gutters, $200,000 to the coagulation basins and $160,000 to the reservoir gatehouse. Emergency work in the immediate aftermath of the storm cost $80,000.

Milner told stockholders at LG&E's annual meeting yesterday that 90,000 customers lost electric service initially, but all but 20,000 of them had it restored within three hours.

Gas service was cut off to the city of Brandenburg, where 30 per cent of the homes were demolished or seriously damaged. Gas lines were also torn apart in Louisville, as the storm uprooted many large trees, but "fortunately, so far as we know, no gas fires or explosions occurred," Milner said.

Milner said that "destruction at some places was so complete that reference to system maps was the only way to know what had been there."

lies eligible for temporary housing in the wake of the April 3 tornadoes have been placed.

Of 1,020 eligible families, 1,017, or 99.7 per cent, had been placed in temporary homes as of yesterday, according to HUD. The agency intends to have all eligible families housed by May 31. The families are entitled to rent-free housing for one year.

Warning-system plans ignored, official says

City-county Civil Defense Director Elden E. DuRand said yesterday that city and county officials are "ignoring" his proposals to improve a disaster-warning system that was criticized for its inadequacies after the April 3 tornado.

DuRand said yesterday that 10 days ago he submitted to Mayor Harvey Sloane and County Judge Todd Hollenbach a detailed proposal to add 62 warning sirens to the current countywide system of 38.

Since then, "I haven't heard a word from them about it," he said. "I can't even get in to see them."

DuRand said the cost of the additional sirens would be $400,000, which, under his proposal, would be paid out of federal revenue-sharing funds.

The 100-siren system that would be created, he said, would "completely cover" the Louisville area. "There would be no dead spots."

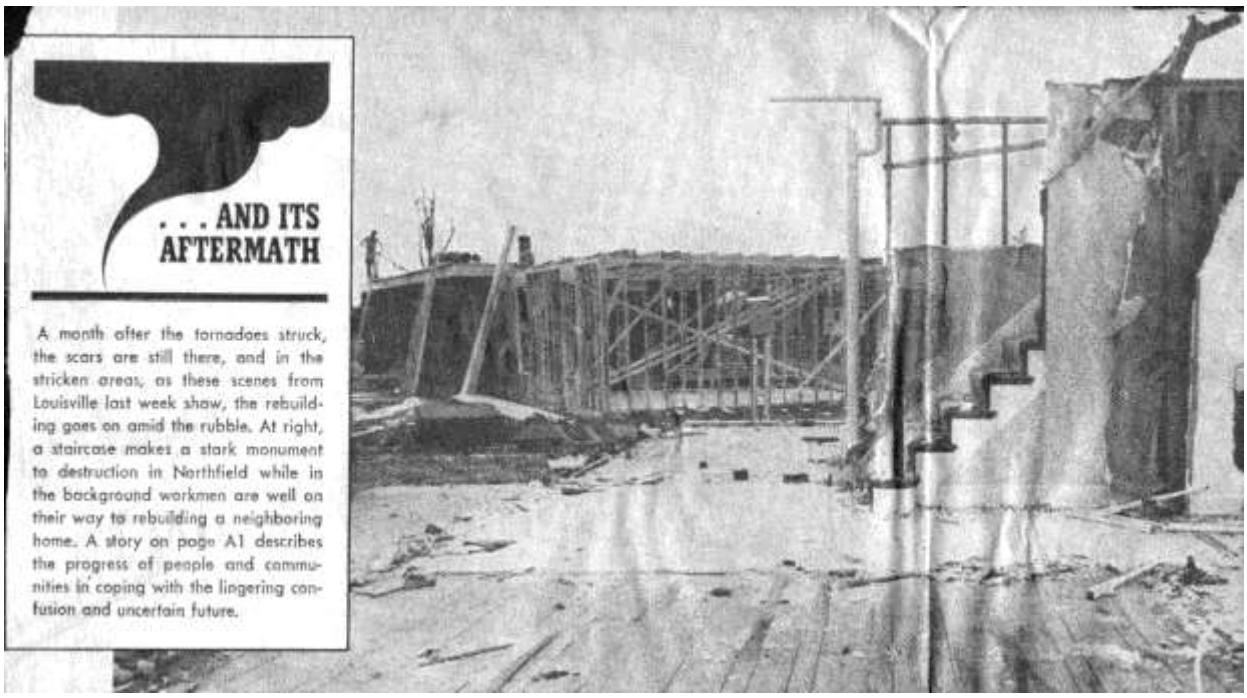
Hollenbach, responding to DuRand's complaints, said yesterday that he wants a better warning system, but "I'm just not sure sirens are the best way. And before we commit ourselves to spending $280,000 (the county's share of the cost under DuRand's proposal) I'd like to see if some other system could work better."

Allen Bryan, an aide to Mayor Sloane, said that since the tornado he has been working on plans to improve the area's warning system, and he also has doubts about the effectiveness of sirens. "Historically, sirens have been used, and historically they have been ignored," he said.

However, according to Lowell Hanna, communications chief for the Civil Defense Preparedness Agency in Washington, D.C., it's sirens or nothing. "We've always recommended sirens," he said in a telephone interview yesterday. "At present there just isn't anything else."

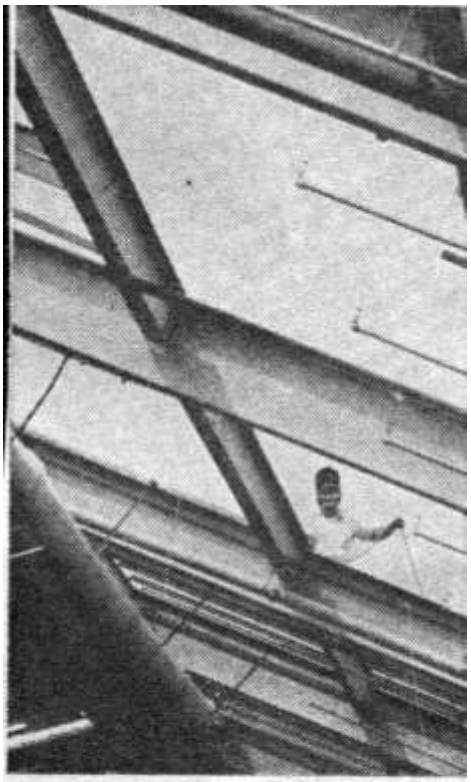
And DuRand indicated yesterday that city and county officials haven't heard the end of the matter. "I think, by golly, that something's got to be done," he said. "And I'm going to sound off about it until it is."

May, 1974

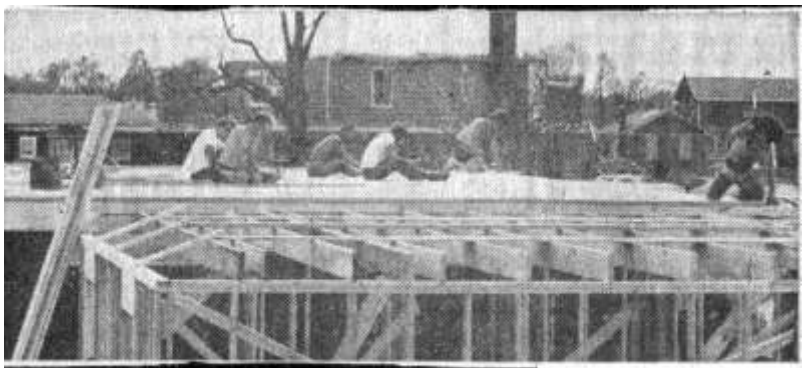


. . . AND ITS AFTERMATH

A month after the tornadoes struck, the scars are still there, and in the stricken areas, as these scenes from Louisville last week show, the rebuilding goes on amid the rubble. At right, a staircase makes a stark monument to destruction in Northfield while in the background workmen are well on their way to rebuilding a neighboring home. A story on page A1 describes the progress of people and communities in coping with the lingering confusion and uncertain future.



At the State Fair & Exposition Center, repair work began almost immediately after the storm. One worker was killed in a fall from the bared beams.



Workers are at the second floor of a new home being built on the foundation of one leveled in Northfield.

May, 1974

In Audubon Park, Mrs. J. R. Bachmann and her daughter, Jude, stroll between their damaged home and the one next door, at left, where only one wall was left standing. "I think everyone's coming back," said Mrs. Bachmann. "It's wonderful."

"It just takes time," said Miss E. Klee of Stevens Avenue. "You can't expect everything to be done in one day."

Desi Nowlin shovels away at the rubble on Hillcrest in Crescent Hill

Mrs. Edward Denker of Grinstead Drive said, "Somebody started a rumor—tie a yellow ribbon if you're going to come back. My girl went right out and got a yellow ribbon."

May 16, 1974, *The Voice*:

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Adam District Commander recalls tornado

Dear Editor:

The evening of April 3, 1974, is one which will long be remembered by those of us who lived and/or worked in the area of devastation left behind by the worst disaster in the history of our County.

I had just returned to my home, after completing my tour of duty for the day as the Commander of the Adam District of the Jefferson County Police Department, when the electronic media began broadcasting the news that a tornado had been sighted in Louisville and advised all residents to take shelter immediately. Within a few seconds I could see what appeared only to be an extremely wide cloud which extended to the ground. It did not have the funnel of a tornado, but as it passed to the north of my home, I could see the debris swirling in the cloud. Without the advance warning of the media, few people would have recognized this "cloud" for the ferocity that it carried and no doubt, many lives would have been lost.

From the debris in my yard which included fibre-glass insulation, I was certain that at least some homes had been badly damaged. Never realizing, though, the extent of the damage, I got into my police car and proceeded to investigate the damage.

After shutting off a natural gas leak at a damaged house near my home, I learned from the police radio of more severe damage at U.S. Highway 42 and Chenoweth Lane. Upon arriving there, the sight was awesome. Having never seen such devastation, one could hardly believe what his eyes saw.

You felt totally helpless – what could you do for these citizens who had lost so much. Reports from area after area indicated that the tornado had left a long path of destruction in our jurisdiction – from the City limits to the County Line. Many of these areas were totally sealed off by fallen trees, utility poles and wires.

The immediate concern was for the safety of those people who were in the disaster area and who may have been trapped in the wreckage of their homes.

It was at this time that people – men and women, young and old, volunteers and professionals, – responded above and beyond the call of duty. The response from the community was just as unbelieveable as the wreckage left by the storm.

When I arrived, some 24-hour police patrol cars were already there from the Baker District in Central Jefferson County and the Charlie District in Southwestern Jefferson County. I don't know how they got there so quickly. All available policemen of our department, St. Matthews, and every fifth and sixth class city in our area responded without having been called. Every volunteer fireman from Eastern Jefferson County responded to this tremendous devastation. Construction companies brought in heavy equipment to help clear the roads. Many, many individuals came out with chain saws to help clear the roads so that we could get help to the injured. One youth of about sixteen rushed up carrying a double-bit axe and asked "Where can I start?" The Kentucky National Guard was quickly activated by the authorities and began arriving to help in record time. Doctors and nurses flocked in to treat the injured.

The tornado struck at four forty-five pm. By dark these persons were responsible for gaining access to each and every area of the storm in the County, and had made a cursory search of every house for survivors or had talked with residents who had assured us that their family was all accounted for.

Road blocks were set up and manned by police and National Guardsmen to prevent looting. The entire area was sealed and no one was allowed to enter unless they could prove that they lived there.

A temporary hospital was set up for treatment of the injured and the staff worked long hours for many days to care for those injured in the storm and those who were injured during the initial stages of the "clean-up."

For most of these people, the storm struck before their dinner. But, before anyone became too hungry, the Volunteers of America had set up an emergency kitchen and began feeding all residents and workers.

Churches opened their doors for disaster victims and workers to sleep and to eat and to be used for treatment of the injured.

And the catalyst which drove these men and women to work to the limits of their capacity was the victims themselves, who, after such tragedy had struck them, could reciprocate with such warm and friendly attitudes toward the workers. The gratitude of these people was simply tremendous. These people were continuously bringing food and drink to the personnel manning the road blocks. And it does something to you to have them run out into the street, stop your car, shake hands with you and say, "You are the greatest – thanks."

Signs such as "Chicken Little Was Right" hanging from the rubble of the homes, reflected the philosophical manner in which the victims accepted the tragedy – and, the most touching thing was the number of American flags which were flying from the rubble which had once been the victims' homes.

It makes one misty to reflect back upon the hardships endured and the magnificent response from all involved who gave so much to help his fellow man. To these great citizens, I want to express my sincere appreciation to all who helped in our time of need in the Adam Police District in Eastern Jefferson County.

Also, a special tribute is in order to Judge Hollenbach, the Fiscal Court, and Chief McDaniel who have been so far-sighted and innovative as to develop such programs as the 24-hour patrol, helicopter unit and the Charlie Medical Units which provided us with ample and adequate equipment to allow us to provide the necessary services to cope with any emergency. These programs have proven their worth and the wisdom of those who initiated them, during this one disaster – a special thank-you to these men.

Captain Sam Tucker
Commander, Adam District
Jefferson County Police
9300 Whipps Mill Road

June, 1974, *The Louisville Times*:

THE FEELEYS

By EDWARD BENNETT
Louisville Times Staff Writer

Mostly, the tornado took from its victims.

From Dennis and Jo Feeley, it took almost everything except their lives and their two children. They were left only their lot in Northfield, a foundation, a chimney, a basement's worth of odds and ends and a few pieces of scarred furniture.

It took their present—the year-old home to which they had devoted themselves, their way of life, their daily stability.

And it took their symbols of the past —heirlooms, family albums, belongings valued more for history than utility, do-it-yourself stuff that represented time once invested, now wasted.

But, in a devilish sort of way, the tornado also gave to its victims, if, like the Feeleys, they happened to be well off and adequately insured.

What it gave—or, perhaps more precisely, forced upon—them was a not altogether comfortable freedom to weigh their lives, choose the future and entertain fancies of a fresh start, a new land, a different life.

"Everybody has probably had that dream of just chucking it all and going somewhere like Australia," Feeley said a few weeks after the tornado struck on April 3. "And for the first time, we're in a completely liquid position where we could do it . . . Everything we own has been converted to cash.

"We haven't committed ourselves to rebuilding yet, and we still have the freedom to think about not doing it. Australia, Colorado, Montana — we think of new places every week. Pack everything into one suitcase, buy a new car and leave town. In another year we'll have purchased so much more junk we'll be tied down again.

"If we just had some place in the back of our minds where we really wanted to go, this would be the time. But we don't. We've always wanted to stay in Louisville."

The Feeleys had chosen the city for their home, first coming here 12 years ago via St. Louis and Washington, D.C., and then returning a few years back after giving Indianapolis a try for a year. They speak fondly of the community being "the right size," "the right speed," "not too pushy."

So, like lovers separated by a spat that somehow got out of control, they flirted with fantasy and then came back.

They began rebuilding

They talked of Colorado and wondered about busing and finally began rebuilding their Stannye Drive home, using the same foundation, correcting some mistakes made the first time around, altering the floor plan a bit.

"You just put your values somewhere else, I guess," Mrs. Feeley said of the decision to cast wanderlust aside.

Values. The very use of the word indicates the scope of the problems that faced the people wiped out by the storm.

Holed up in apartments, their moorings gone, they were in a state of animated suspension in which absolutely everything — from such basics as buying

Continued From Page One

clothes to the ultimate of deciding how to live—had to be rethought. And it all had to be done while they weathered the pains of loss, bouts of resentment, questions of money and mounds of frustrations.

The Feeleys, apparently like the majority of their fellow sufferers, weathered it fairly well.

"You sometimes wonder; we've really taken it all pretty calmly," Mrs. Feeley puzzled aloud. "Is it Peggy Lee who sings that song, 'Is that all there is'? That's sort of the way we've been. You think your reactions should be stronger than what they are."

Which is not to say the Feeleys haven't gone through turmoil.

They seem to have had a hard time reconciling themselves to the magnitude of their loss. He talks of contradictory desires he felt both to avoid and to return to the rubble and of a lingering reluctance ever again to put so much of himself into a house.

They and their children share in the now-common fear of bad weather.

But they have not experienced the overpowering emotions the movies and television led them to expect —neither, immediately after their harrowing escape, the romanticism and adventurism of Clark Gable and his heroines nor, in the longer run, the idyllic transformations of family sentiment portrayed by "The Waltons."

They seem a calm, deliberate and rational couple. He makes his living as an administrative law judge with the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. He managed to make it through almost three volumes of the 12-volume "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" in the belief one had to read it to be fully educated.

They chose Northfield for their home because of its convenience to highways, and they chose a somewhat set-off and barren lot because of its price and privacy.

In the aftermath, they salvaged bricks to use again, and, when the insurance settlement came, they gave their 10-year-old daughter, Heather, and 9-year-old son, Mitchell, shares to use in replacing their belongings.

The discrepancies between expectations and reality began for them immediately after the storm hit.

Mrs. Feeley had been in the basement doing laundry when the kids heard the warnings on TV, and the three of them made it under the basement steps just as their house was being torn apart.

Feeley was caught in his car a few houses from home, and the winds tumbled the car into a neighbor's yard, leaving it right side up and him with a broken ankle. From there he watched the surrounding homes "exploding like strawberry boxes." He couldn't remember if he saw his own go.

"Afterwards," he recalled, "we were standing in the street and we were so devastated that we thought, 'Boy, sirens are going to come and ambulances are going to come and armies of people will help us.' We heard sirens, but it must have been a half hour before anybody showed up . . . A doctor in the neighborhood came around with his bag, but there wasn't anything organized. No organized activity reached us until the next day. We were totally cut off."

"They do the movies all wrong," Mrs. Feeley said. "All these people aren't running around all emotional."

Neighbors checked on each other. Families stuck together. Wives waited for their husbands. Eventually, some of the residents congregated at a nearby home left standing to try to figure out what to do and find out how widespread the destruction was.

Some friends managed to get through police lines to check on the Feeleys and offer them a place to stay. After making sure the gas was shut off, making a quick search of what was left and picking up a few items, the Feeleys left.

Almost immediately there arose the problems of adjusting to being without home or possessions.

"I began to feel like a terrible mooch," Feeley said. "You can only ask so much of your friends, and you try to space yourself out and lean on five or six rather than totally collapse on one. You begin to feel that you're quite a load."

"That's one of the hard parts," Mrs. Feeley added. "They did umpteen things for us and it'll probably never be necessary for them to come to us."

Later, the Feeleys moved into an apartment complex off Westport Road, where they had lived while building their house, renting furniture and beginning to stack what they salvaged along a wall in the living room.

At first, the efforts to re-establish some permanence, deal with the insurance, move what could be moved and buy what needed to be bought dominated their minds.

"The first week is very different from the following weeks," he said. "The first week there's no depression. You're very busy and feel very clearheaded. You know what you have to do because there are so many things to do. But then you run out of things you can actually cope with yourself —there's only so many things you can pick up. Then it all goes over into the hands of someone else."

They figure Mrs. Feeley drove 300 miles in a matter of a few days going to stores and cleaners, buying a frying pan on one trip only to remember later that they also needed a spatula. Even a month later, when she bought a black dress so they could finally go out for an evening, she forgot she was without a black slip and shoes.

"You think you're all set, but you're not," she said.

"You realize that every little thing that you had — a safety pin —represented a trip to the store sometime in your life, and now you've got to make all these trips right now," Feeley said. "You don't even have a pencil or a piece of paper. Nothing."

It's hard to accept

Each day the realization of loss had to be suffered anew, and there was a recurring inability to accept it and let go.

"Every time you walk through the debris, you see things that you liked that are just all smashed. You want to stop and try to glue things together. It would seem that if you had the time, you could stand out there and glue some of these things back together. But you know there's going to be pieces missing and that you just can't do it," Feeley said. "You see the old desk all smashed to pieces that you spent hours on."

"Each time you go over there you swear that the pieces keep getting smaller," Mrs. Feeley said. "Each time it seems they're getting smaller and that there's that many more pieces."

but for one elusive cushion, they would have managed to save a striped couch.

"I know that cushion is probably sitting as junk in somebody's front yard, and I've thought of tying one of the other cushions on top of the car and riding around with a sign saying, 'Have you seen one like this?'," Mrs. Feeley said. "It would mean so much to us and it wouldn't mean a thing to anybody else."

Decisions, decisions

Throughout the salvaging operation, the problem of choice was a persistent and acute one, best symbolized for Feeley by a brass pot used for starting the fire in the fireplace.

"You're always changing your mind," he said. "You turn things down your first time out, and then days later change your mind. You bring them back to the apartment and you still may have to throw them away.

"Like the brass pot. It'd been out there for days, and I'd turned it down. I thought, 'Well, what do I need a brass pot for? It's a fireplace starter, and I don't have a fireplace. The lid's gone, and the thing you stick in the kerosene's gone.' But I finally picked it up."

There were other objects of the same ilk —an electric razor without the shaving head, a camera case without a camera, a chair seat close to ruin.

"These things have value, but no value. You can't make up your mind about them," he said. "You have no use for them, but then again, they might be some good and you can't bear to throw them away.

"We've picked things up—broken barometers, things that won't work, books that are so wrinkled and soaked with rain that you could never read them—and I know we're going to have to throw all that stuff away again."

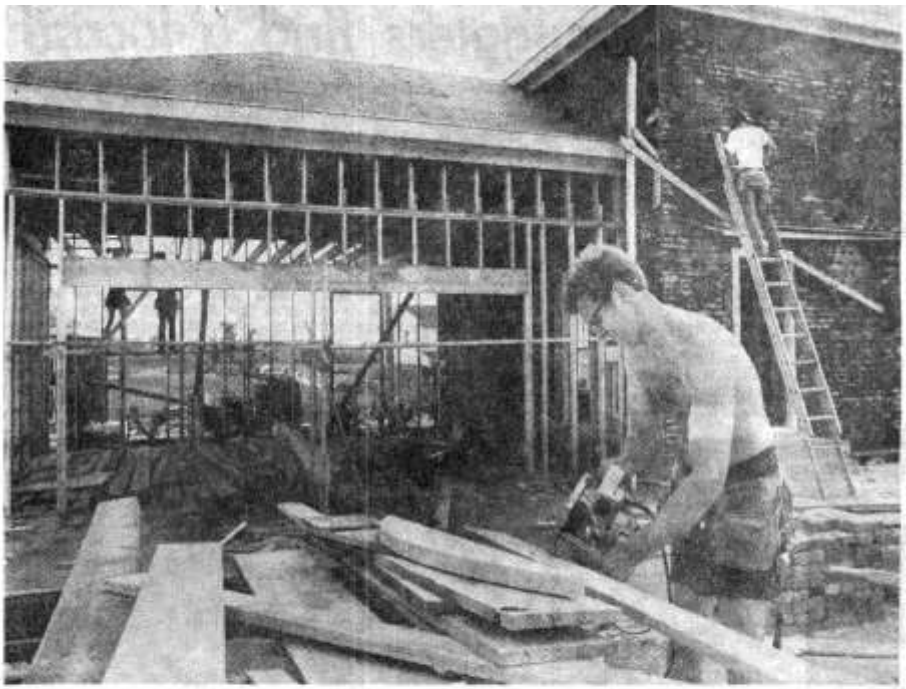
It can't be put together

The worst part, though, was the pain of being unable to find or to put back together even a semblance of the things that did have value — personal value.

"Things like the couch that you can buy in a department store, that really doesn't bother you so much," he said. "But a painting that Jo's grandmother painted in 1930, that's a terrible loss. You can't replace it."

For Mrs. Feeley, one of the worst losses seemed to be a grandfather's clock, the casing of which was more than 200 years old and works that were put in by her grandfather about 50 years ago.

All she found were some pieces of its



Staff Photo by Bud Kamenish

Carpenter Robert Green cuts lumber outside a damaged home he is helping to rebuild on Stannye Drive, in Northfield, one of the areas hardest hit by the April 3 twister. He works for Tri-Way Trim, Inc.

wood, with brass knobs used for opening its doors attached. She took the knobs and had to pitch the wood.

Such little items seemed to take on new importance. Two days before the storm, Feeley had finished mounting two arrowheads for his son.

"I kept thinking I was going to find those arrowheads," he said. "They're only worth a dollar and a half apiece. But for some reason, finding them would be real important to me."

Couldn't break habit of thought

For both of them, shucking their habitual protection of their property, getting used to the idea they owned only a mound of junk, was difficult. They persisted in acting as if things were intact.

They resented workmen scavenging the debris, taking a skunk collar off one of Heather's make-believe, dress-up dresses, carting off a crushed bicycle, hauling away heating ducts.

And their attachment to their property spawned feelings that, in retrospect, seem a bit ludicrous.

"The brick people were over knocking mortar off and it made me kind of mad the way they just let it fall anyplace. They just weren't very neat," Mrs. Feeley said with a laugh.

"Yeah," Feeley added grinning, "I got all worried about them chipping the patio. What more harm could anybody do?"

Still to be felt fully are the financial consequences.

Even though Feeley had figured on inflation when insuring his home, the settlement is not going to cover the entire cost of rebuilding. To replace just what they had will cost them about 15 per cent more than what they paid 14 months ago. And that doesn't count the trees and shrubs and other landscaping, which weren't covered.

Furnishings cost more, too

Mrs. Feeley is also discovering that inflation has not spared home furnishings. "It's fantastic, terrible," she said. "You want time to mull it over and to make sure all these things are going to go together. But I feel I should really buy all these things now, because everything's going to be 10 per cent more if I wait."

Even after adjusting to their fate, they still had to fight bouts of resentment.

"There are moments when you do get resentful," Mrs. Feeley said. "To think that your things with sentimental value are gone and can't be replaced with any amount of money. But really, to think that the two kids were saved and there was Dennis out there bouncing around in the car, I'm still grateful for that. When I start thinking about the grandfather clock or something, I think about that."

"That wears off, though," Feeley said. "At first, there's that glad-to-be-alive thing. But the further you're removed from the event, the less you remember the danger and then you get down to the realities of how it affects your everyday life . . . People say you should be happy you're alive, but I'd be even happier if I had my house back together."

Is unsure about future

He's still unsure how he's going to feel once they move back in.

"We were quite house-minded in that the house was the focal point of our family, and we spent all our money and all our time on the house," he said. "I think I'm less likely to be interested in things like that, that maybe I'm going to downgrade houses now. I don't see them as being as important, as being as permanent or as much like a castle as I thought they were. They're becoming more like a suit of clothes than a castle."

Instead of finishing their basement themselves, they're having it done this time.

"Never again," he said. "I'll never spend that much time working on anything again. All those hours."

Yet, despite such feelings, the Feeleys kept returning to their homesite to do what work could be done, even starting to replant the yard before the building began and before the water was back on.

"Well, it looks like the one thing we can do," he explained, "and we feel like we want to do something."

June, 1974, *The Louisville Times*:

Crescent Hill: Hopes rising

By EDWARD BENNETT
Louisville Times Staff Writer

When the losses were weighed after the April 3 tornado, Louisville's Crescent Hill area stood out as the neighborhood with the bleakest future.

The storm tore savagely into the area's large, old homes and trees. In a concentrated section along Grinstead Drive and Frankfort Avenue, an estimated 480 homes and buildings were damaged. Seventy to 80 of them were so severely mauled that city officials considered them sure candidates for demolition.

Many homes, given the high costs of restoring aged houses, were underinsured. The population contained large segments of old people and young couples of modest means, for whom coming back would not be easy.

A gradual trend of sales and conversions of single-family homes to multi-family dwellings had already developed in the area, and the zoning permitted apartments.

It all combined to create a vision, oft-bemoaned by the residents, of flight, redevelopment and the eventual destruction of a quiet, stable and picturesque community.

But now, nearly three months after the storm, the fears of a neighborhood lost are being replaced by hopes—glimmers in some cases, belligerent optimism in others—of a neighborhood restored.

"Things have come along pretty well," Charles Ferris, president of the Crescent Hill Community Council, said. "Most of the people seem to have gotten money and are trying to come back."

"I think the crisis is over," said Steve Bonney, a district representative on the council whose home at 2940 Grinstead Drive was hit. "Things are still unsettled, but we've got a nucleus of stability."

"It's going to be better than ever," said Jim Wood, who lost his home at 318 Crescent Court and then bought the one next door to restore. "Everybody that's decided to fix up is going to fix up right, and the ones who decided not to have sold to people who want to fix it up right."

Uncertainties, however, do remain, and they are important ones.

From a hisorical standpoint, the fate of two of Crescent Hill's most cherished landmarks hasnot been decided.

Facing estimates that run twice as much as their insurance coverage, Dr. and Mrs. James Robert Hendon are still wrestling with the decision on what to do with their 146-year-old brick home at 201 Crescent Court, the centerpiece of the block off Frankfort Avenue.

And on Kennedy Avenue, the owner of "The Turrets," a famous old house that once was the home of Civil War abolitionist Thomas Kennedy, has not decided whether to sell or tear it down. Despite intense community pressure to preserve it and offers from people who want to restore it, owner Robert Gorman said, "It has not been sold and I don't know what I'm going to do with it."

From a broader standpoint, the devastated portions of Grinstead Drive, the area around which the fears of high-density development swirled, are still in limbo.

Several homes and small apartment buildings have been torn down, with the lots standing idle. Some residents have started to repair houses and then put them up for sale. Others tried to sell, failed and are now debating what to do.

In the block running from Bayly to Birchwood avenues and the one running from Crescent Court to Stilz Avenue, the vast majority of owners either intend to sell or are contemplating it, according to

See CRESCENT HILL
Page A10, col. 1

Staff Photo by Bryan Moss

From a hill on Southern Baptist Theological Seminary grounds, this view across Grinstead Drive shows Crescent Court and Kennedy Avenue area houses, some being fixed, one awaiting action.

June, 1974, *The Louisville Times*:

big uncertainties remain

Continued From Page One

Michael R. Johnson, of the Community Design Center, a volunteer working with the community council's tornado task force.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, whose campus lies across Grinstead, is interested in buying some property for construction of student housing but is not actively seeking the land.

While this area remains a question, the course of the residential streets running between Grinstead and Frankfort seems to be one of widespread restoration.

Several homes have been sold, perhaps as many as 25 or 30 per cent of those severely damaged, according to council members' estimates. But many of them have been bought by young couples and construction tradesmen intent on rebuilding.

"Every day, you see somebody new start working," said Leo Erb, who is rebuilding his home at 205 Kennedy Ave. "And every time you see them working, it feels good."

Butch Leonhardt, a carpenter with a wife and two children, for instance, bought the home at 114 Crescent Court and was out over the weekend hosing it down. "I plan to do most of the work," he said. "It's going to be a lot of work, but I'd rather have an old house than any new one."

The rebuilding activity was rather slow to begin.

In part, the fears for the neighborhood's future accounted for some indecision. But the release a few weeks ago of city-county Planning Commission recommendations to "down zone" most of the area to preserve its current residential patterns allayed some of the fears.

Also contributing, though, were the very practical problems of money and workmanship.

"Most people were just grossly underinsured, like maybe half of what their expenses were," said Larry Leis, an architect on the council's tornado task force. "They're sitting on the fence because of the difficulty of getting contractors who are even interested in redoing old homes. And the prices of the good contractors are just out of sight."

The Hendons on Crescent Court are still facing that very problem. They've lived in the old, seven-bedroom home for 22 years, and their four children are now grown.

At first, they were told the house couldn't be saved, then that it could be.

"Each time we got an estimate, it went up several thousand dollars," Mrs. Hendon said, adding that the most recent was twice as much as their insurance coverage. "Even at the most expensive estimate, it's not to restore it, but to put back a reasonable facsimile of it."

Considering their family situation, the loss of all the surrounding trees, the uncertainty of what the neighborhood eventually will be like and the costs, she said, "We've just been going up and down."

"I feel like it's part of me and to see it torn down would be like losing an arm," she said. "But it's so expensive . . . We're going to have to make up our minds. I wish I could say something encouraging, but I can't. I just feel gloomy."

Staff Map

Wood had similar problem

At the other end of the block, Wood, who stubbornly refused to believe his home was lost for a month before giving in to the experts and buying the one next door to repair, faced a similar problem.

To have the new home repaired would cost $38,000 to $40,000, he estimated.

"Some people are doing that, spending that just for the privilege of living here," he said. But Wood, a teacher, can't.

Thus, he plans to do the work for which he can't find a contractor with affordable prices.

"I don't have any skills," he said. "I've got a little book that tells you how to do it all. I read for about half an hour, do about five minutes of work and go back and read some more."

He's convinced the neighborhood will come back, despite the financial problems. "It's going to be looking decent by fall and by next spring it's going to be just fine," he said.

Barbara W. Davis, of 117 Pennsylvania Ave., almost had to succumb to the money and contractor problem.

Her three-story home was heavily damaged and she couldn't find a contractor willing to do the necessary work. "They would say they weren't interested or didn't have the time," she said.

Those who did look at the house gave her estimates ranging from $43,000 to $48,000, far above her insurance coverage.

Finally, she found a contractor who quoted her a price of $33,000, and she took it. It was still more than her coverage and she couldn't afford payments on a loan, so she ended up committing half of her settlement for personal and household possessions to pay for the rebuilding.

Her children didn't want to leave Crescent Hill, and, she discovered, she didn't either. "It was more than just a house; it was a home," she said.

"But it was such a terrible decision to have to make," she said. "Whether to put all that money into a house to rebuild it when you don't know what's going to happen. I just didn't know what to do. I guess you just go ahead and keep your fingers crossed."

In spite of her worry, though, Mrs. Davis, too, is basically optimistic about the future.

"I joined the Crescent Hill Community Council and I get real enthused about that. I think we can probably make it a better community than it was before," she said.

Many share her view

And, in fact, many seem to share her view.

"Although there's been a hell of a lot of devastation, the people are more together than ever," Jim Roberts, the city's Neighborhood Development Office worker in Crescent Hill, said. "The people in the community are really interested and aware of what's going on. They're thinking about land use and neighborhood systems."

Clough Venable, vice-president of the council, agreed. "It (the tornado) got people thinking about things they had dormant in their minds for a while," he said.

For instance, the Crescent Hill Ministerial Association is now planning to use some damaged property to set up an expanded day-care center and a community building, in which would be housed services that would include a social worker and community coordinator, he said.

In addition, one church is considering donating some land for a small recreation area for children, he said.

The disaster also spurred on previous plans for community projects and programs.

A Jaycees chapter has been formed, as well as a businessmen's association. The council is making room in its structure for representatives of churches and other institutions, such as the Baptist Seminary.

And a council-sponsored public-relations campaign has begun. "Welcome to Crescent Hill" signs bearing a symbolic tree have been put up around the neighborhood's boundaries. And billboards have been rented and bumper stickers made, bearing the symbol of the tree and a simple message: "We Care!"

June, 1974, *The Louisville Times*:

Architects of tornado-hit Dunn school admit variation from building code

By RICHARD C. HALVERSON

The exterior walls of the tornado-damaged Dunn Elementary School were not anchored to its structural-steel framework as state and county building codes require, The Louisville Times has learned.

Officials of the architectural firm that designed the school acknowledged the deviation from that requirement of the codes but said that the building's ability to withstand strong winds was nonetheless equal to the codes' requirements.

The Times also has found another apparent deviation from the building codes in one collapsed wall of the school, and was told by an engineer not associated with the school's construction of a third apparent departure from the code involving that collapsed wall.

However, even if the codes had been fully complied with, the building would have been unable to withstand the force of the April 3 tornado, according to that engineer and two others consulted by the newspaper. One estimate is that winds of 199 miles an hour hit the school during the storm.

The school was heavily damaged by the tornado. Extensive sections of walls on the north and east sides of the building were toppled.

The three engineers are Associate Prof. Michael A. Cassaro, of the University of Louisville's Speed Scientific School; John Hummel, owner of Hummel Engineering Associates, and Stratton O. Hammon, an architect and engineer.

The three agreed that the use of steel reinforcing rods in the school's exterior walls would have improved greatly the chances that the building, at 4799 Brownsboro Road, could have withstood the tornado. One of them estimated that this would have increased the school's cost by less than 2 per cent.

Cassaro said that county and state building codes should be toughened to require the use of steel reinforcement in buildings like the Dunn school.

However, an official of the architectural firm that designed the school disputed the usefulness and practicality of that construction method. He said the use of steel-reinforced walls might necessitate other expensive changes in building practices.

The official, William H. Dohrman Jr., is chief structural engineer for Hartstern, Schnell, Campbell, Schadt Associates.

"It would not be worth the extra cost to design against a tornado when one happens only every 50 or 100 years," Dohrman said.

Advised of The Times' findings, Jack J. Dawson, associate superintendent for buildings and grounds for the county schools, said he was unaware of any code violations and that Hartstern, Schnell had assured him there were none.

"I'd have to know more about it before I could comment," Dawson said.

"I'm sure the school board will investigate the situation," he added.

"We have nothing to hide, and we're trying to do what's right," Dawson continued.

"I'm sure we will correct whatever might be wrong and not make the same mistakes again," he said.

In a previous interview, Dawson had

See APPARENT
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Continued From Page One

said the Dunn school was properly designed and was going to be rebuilt exactly as it was by its contractor, Stevens Contractors, Inc.

That may not be the case, according to Eugene Drago, director of the county Building Department.

When advised of what The Times discovered, Drago said, "They are going to have to anchor those walls," adding that he first is going to have to check out the information.

Then he will inform the school board of whatever defects his inspection confirms.

"I am sure the school board will voluntarily comply with the code requirements," Drago added.

John E. Gambill, director of new buildings for the school board, said today he would personally inspect the Dunn school today to check for deviations from the building codes.

Construction changed to save money

Dohrman said steel-reinforced construction had been used on some school projects in the past but that it had been eliminated as a cost-saving measure.

Dohrman said that at the time that technique was used, it was the cheapest method available—the extra strength of the walls was coincidental.

The walls, roofs and floors of Westport, Waggener, Eastern and Valley Station high schools were built of poured concrete reinforced with steel, Dohrman said. Because of their strength, they became known as Hartstern Fortresses, after Fred J. Hartstern, the now-retired head of the firm.

"I can't imagine building a school that way. If that school had been built in the city, the walls would have been tied to the steel posts and girders."

However, Dohrman contended that the walls were built to withstand winds of about 70 m.p.h., as required by the codes.

Dohrman also said the steel straps normally used to tie a masonry wall to a steel framework were deliberately omitted to prevent walls from cracking. Steel expands more than masonry, causing it to crack if joined together, he said.

Engineer Hummel told The Times that flexible metal ties and expansion joints would permit the steel to expand and contract without cracking the masonry.

The Times also found an additional deviation from code requirements in a collapsed section of the rear wall of the school auditorium. That wall was 60 feet long and 20 feet high.

The codes require vertical bracing in such a wall at 15-foot intervals.

Dohrman said that the bracing was provided at 20-foot intervals.

He conceded that the bracing interval "was a little bit above the criteria. . . . Maybe we were cheating a little bit there," he said.

The bracing is provided by a coarse wire mesh called hardware cloth, which ties the outside wall to the concrete-block facing around steel columns. The outside walls were not tied to either the columns or the steel roof girders, Dohrman said.

But he said that despite the spacing of the support points, the school was built as well as any of its type.

A third possible variation from the building codes involves additional requirements for providing solid anchorage points for exterior walls.

The exterior walls of Dunn Elementary, which opened in the fall of 1972, are of hollow concrete blocks. The $1.7 million school received about $700,000 damage in the tornado, school officials have estimated, and has been closed for the remainder of the school year. It is expected to be reopened in the fall.

Donald A. Schnell, president of the architectural firm that designed the school, acknowledged in an interview that the school's exterior walls were not tied to the structural steel framework.

State and county building codes require such walls to be "securely attached" or "anchored" to the steel frame.

Dohrman said the concrete-block walls were put up alongside the steel columns or girders but were not anchored to them.

He said he was aware of that provision of the building codes. "I don't know what to say, whether we're right or wrong on that," he said.

Robert P. Meyers, chief building inspector for the city of Louisville, said, "I

Hammon, one of the engineers who inspected the school for The Times, said construction methods at the school didn't comply with these requirements.

The codes require walls such as these to be braced at right angles every 15 feet, both inward and outward, by such means as piers or buttresses built into the outside walls or into interior walls that meet them at right angles.

Dohrman conceded that there was "very little" to brace the walls against an outward force of wind, such as might occur in a tornado.

The third possible variation was pointed out in the remains of the auditorium wall.

Hummel said the wall attachment points behind the school auditorium failed to constitute a true pier, buttress, or crosswall. Rather, the anchorage points were just decorative facing around the steel column, he said.

Schnell acknowledged that what the auditorium wall was attached to was not a true pier, or pilaster.

Examination of the damaged wall dis-

June, 1974, *The Louisville Times*:

closed that one of two anchorage points tore out, along with the wall.

Inspections of the damage at the school by this reporter and the engineers acting at the newspaper's request showed that most of the wall sections that toppled at Dunn fell outward.

The winds punched a 28-foot-long section of wall into a classroom and then blew over an interior wall, Cassaro said after inspecting the school.

Once inside the building, the wind blew out extensive sections of the walls on the north and east sides of the one-story building, Cassaro pointed out.

"Any children who were taking shelter in school hallways could well have been blown out of the building along with the walls," Cassaro said. The tornado struck at about 4:45 p.m., after school hours.

According to Associate Supt. Dawson, the Dunn school librarian was blown along a hall by the winds. To keep from being "blown out," the librarian had to grab onto a doorknob and get into a classroom, Dawson said.

He said, however, that had the storm struck during school hours, children taking refuge in the hallways — as disaster drill procedures instruct — would have escaped unharmed, except perhaps for "scratches and bruises."

The Times also learned that no one for the county Building Department or the school board inspected the school during construction to determine if it was being built to the codes' structural requirements.

Drago said that when the school was built the school board was refusing to take out building permits. So Dunn got no county building inspections, he said.

Drago said that the school board six months ago agreed to take out building permits and that construction will be inspected from now on.

Bill Carrithers, coordinator of new construction for the county school board, said his inspections are limited to seeing that the builder follows the architect's specifications.

Nor does anyone from the state Department of Public Safety inspect schools for structural strength, said Stanley A. Boyd, a chief deputy fire marshal in the department.

The fire marshal's office does inspect schools to make sure they comply with the fire-safety sections of the state Standards of Safety. But he has no inspectors to look for structural defects, Boyd added, and must rely on the expertise of the architects and engineers in these areas.

The three engineers who inspected the school for The Times agreed that the following construction methods probably would have enabled the walls to withstand the tornado.

- Tying the walls to the structural steel framework, as the codes require.
- Bracing the walls every 15 feet, as the codes require.
- Exceeding the codes by reinforcing walls with 5/8ths-inch-thick steel rods placed every 4 feet.
- Using solid metal ties to connect outside walls to inside walls, rather than ties of wire mesh.
- Using epoxy mortar, rather than ordinary cement-sand mortar.

Hummel said epoxy mortar makes block walls 50 times stronger than ordinary mortar walls. They become so strong that sections of epoxy-bonded walls are actually swung into place as if they were a solid slab of concrete, he said.

Hummel estimated it would have cost about $25,000 more — or less than 2 per cent of the total cost — to reinforce the school walls with steel rods.

Hartstern-Schnell's Dohrman agreed that the walls probably would still be standing if built as those engineers recommended.

But if the walls had stood, he pointed out, they might have pushed against and damaged the steel framework of the building, possibly collapsing the entire school.

As it was, the steel framework was undamaged, Dohrman said.

More than half of the walls still stood after the tornado passed.

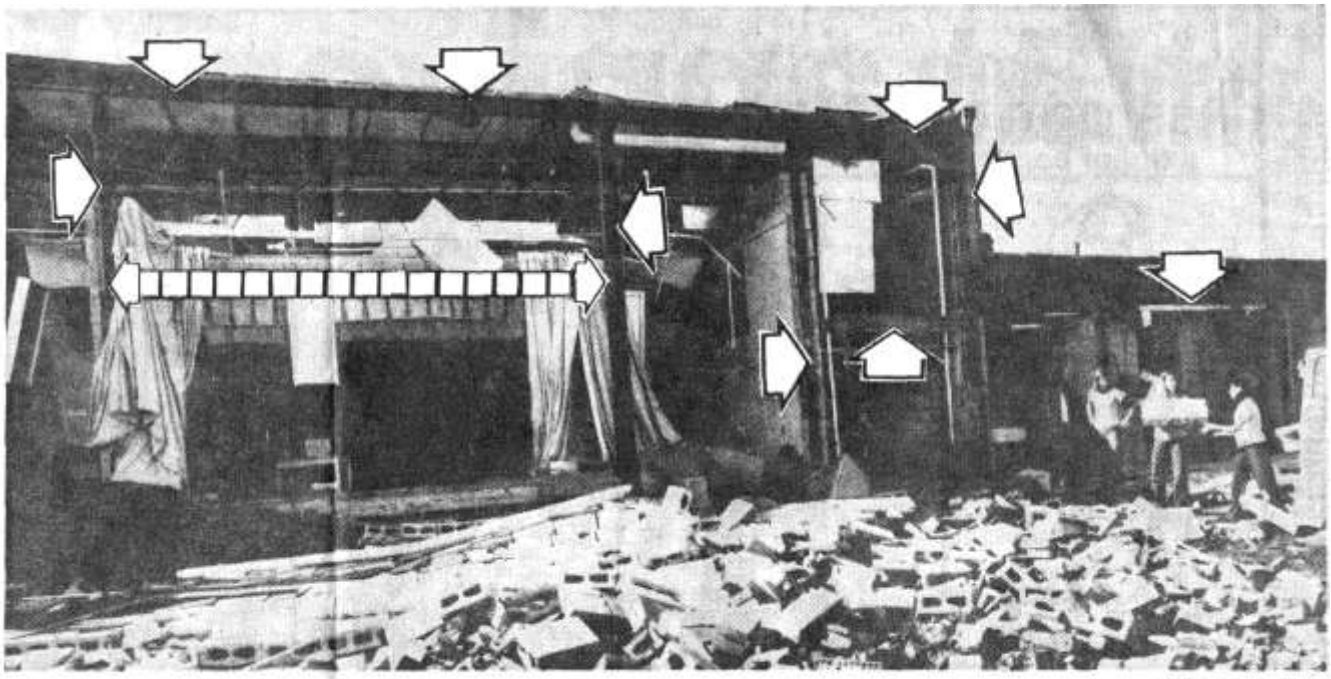
Dohrman said he designed the steel skeleton of the school and the framework to withstand a force of 15 pounds per square foot, equivalent to a wind of about 70 m.p.h. That is the minimum specified in the state and county building codes.

The tornado hit Dunn with 199 m.p.h. winds, Dohrman said an engineer calculated, exerting a force of about 112 pounds per square foot. Winds bent to the ground every steel light post around the school and tore out the engine of a car parked there.

Dohrman estimated it would have cost about $170,000 more to build a steel framework designed to take those forces.

Cassaro asserted that state and county codes should be tightened to require steel-reinforced walls.

But, asked Hammon, "What is the point of strengthening codes if we don't enforce what we already have?"



Staff Photo by Larry Switzer

Arrowheads superimposed on this photo taken the day after the April 3 tornado accent where walls that collapsed were not anchored to structural steel framework of Dunn Elementary School, though county and state codes require that they be. The segmented double-headed arrow shows where some bracing was provided at 20-foot intervals behind the school's auditorium. The code calls for 15-foot-interval bracing.

August 8, 1974, *The Voice*:

GENERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY'S RESIDENTIAL CENTRAL AIR CONDITIONING

GOOD NEIGHBOR

DISASTER PROGRAM

FOR ALL VICTIMS OF THE APRIL 3 TORNADO HAS BEEN EXTENDED THROUGH AUGUST 31, 1974

GENERAL ELECTRIC HAS A PLAN TO COVER THE OWNERS OF ALL RESIDENTIAL CENTRAL AIR CONDITIONING AND HEATING EQUIPMENT (ANY BRAND)

- We will extend a substantial Good Neighbor cash refund (direct from General Electric Company) toward the purchase of General Electric Central Heating and Air Conditioning equipment – to replace any storm damaged equipment.

IF YOU WERE A VICTIM, HERE'S WHAT TO DO:

- Consult your yellow pages for the name of your nearest FRANCHISED GENERAL ELECTRIC CENTRAL AIR CONDITIONING DEALER. He can assist you in making arrangements for inspection and/or replacement of your storm damaged equipment.
- The dealer can supply you with cash refund certificates and the refund amounts. (See instruction on the form.)

Automatic Air Corp. 367 Baxter Avenue 583-1759	Birkhead Company, Inc. 2747 S. Seventh St. Rd. 637-4904	Hettinger & Shuck 5101 Crittenden Drive 363-2613
Production Heating Service 208 E. Lee Street 636-2128	Project Heating & Cooling 5802 E. Manslick Rd. 968-6211	Prudential Heating & Air Cond. 4728 Allgood Avenue 368-5813

September 12, 1974, *The Voice*:

Tornado clean-up angers resident

By Sandy Mattingly
Staff Writer

Mrs. Edgar E. McCulley of 329 S. Birchwood in Crescent Hill is unhappy with the clean-up in her neighborhood after the April 3 tornado. And she is "fed up" with Louisville City Hall.

She said the O'Rourke Wrecking Co. bulldozed 14 trees down in her back yard, taking off "a lot of dirt," and she alledged the firm cracked her sewer line.

"I called City Hall ... it was like a take back there with the sewer leak. They told me to let it drain on someone else's property and I should fill it in," she said.

"I called and called and called and they finally told me if I had a plumber come down here and say it was the bulldozers that cracked the sewers, they would pay for it," she said. Mrs. McCulley said she has a letter from a local plumber to that effect.

She paid about $540 of her own money to repair the sewer trunk line, she said, and "now when I call down there and they find out who it is, they won't talk to me and they won't return my calls."

She said she had to pay $1,500 to repair the gas joints in the Crescent Hill home which were "shook loose" during the tornado, and she cannot handle the needed expense of repairing the sewer line.

Lawrence Mattingly, acting city public works director, said Mrs. McCulley signed a release for the city before O'Rourke came on her property. "If she feels O'Rourke (a Cincinnati firm) used negligent means, that's between her, her lawyer and them," he said.

Mattingly said the wrecking firm was contracted by the city, but all liability was released when she signed the form.

"There were a bunch of sewer lines busted when the trees were uprooted and they brought some of the lines with them, so it makes it very difficult to say who did it in her case," he added. He said about 1,700 or 1,800 trees were down in her immediate area after the April 3 storm.

"I just don't know how anybody can grab out of the clear blue sky and say who or what did the damage," he concluded.

The McCulley's, who have lived there for 30 years, only returned to their home a week ago. Mrs. McCulley points with pride to the remodeling job just completed. Windows were shattered, the roof gone and paneling was stripped from the walls. Blood, supposedly from dead animals, covered the walls and furniture, she said.

She displayed a large wall picture painted by her mother and said a brick had gone right through the center, but she had had it re-done. "Isn't it a beautiful job?" she asked.

Her husband, sitting on the front porch at the time of the tornado, was severely cut in the tendons in his right hand, and Mrs. McCulley was cut on a finger.

She explained a freakish happening during the night of April 3. When she arrived at the hospital with her husband, a nurse pointed to the top of her foot. There, she said, under her hose, was a two-inch piece of glass. The hose was not torn and her foot was not cut. "How did it get there?" Mrs. McCulley said. "Nobody believes me, but it was there."

December 26, 1974

Northfield

Residents bounced back as they promised

"I guess it's like labor pains," says one Northfield mother with a chuckle. "After it's over, you forget what it was like."

Incredibly, the worst pain is over for this area of U.S. 42 where the storm mowed through dozens of $50,000 to $100,000 homes.

Like the bumper stickers promised, the 6th-class cities of Northfield and nearby Glenview Manor have come back. Fast.

In Northfield, where about 60 homes were badly damaged, there are a number of "for sale" signs and new neighbors — but not a single new vacant lot. In Glenview Manor, where six houses had to be razed, only one cleared lot is empty.

Youth and popularity have apparently aided the comeback, which got a big boost from builders who purchased damaged homes and rebuilt them.

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"I personally would rather live in Northfield than Indian Hills," said Carl Cox (who does).

And, he added, "This has been the best-selling subdivision in Jefferson County."

Cox was explaining why he joined with another builder after the storm to form Cox & Campbell Construction Co. which went on to buy and rebuild 17 houses in the area — 15 in Northfield and 2 in Glenview Manor.

Eighty per cent of the houses, Cox says, were bought within a month after the storm. "People worked on their houses for two or three weeks and it just got worse. So they said, 'Hell, I give up.'"

So far, they've sold seven of the houses. (Six are not quite completed.) But Cox feels pretty relaxed about selling the others. 'I'll make the profit I anticipated," he says. "But when it's all well and done I won't make any more money than I would in a new development."

The storm was an awful tragedy, Cox emphasized.

But he allows: "Without it, construction in Jefferson County would have been at a standstill this year. It brought millions of dollars into Jefferson County."

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Estimates are that perhaps 20 Northfield residents sold out after the storm — and some of those were transferred out of town.

Steadily, the others who were displaced are returning. "Just about every week," says city clerk Phil S. Crutcher Jr., "someone else moves back in."

About 80 per cent of the residents who said they would return are already back, Crutcher figures.

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For Fran Dukes, who moved back to 2406 Northfield Court with her husband, two children and three dogs this month: "It seems almost like we've been gone on a long, awful vacation."

"After you come back," she explains, "you think all this didn't really happen to me.

"The walls are back where they should be," she says. "You can walk through the house at night and not bump into things . . . It really feels like home."

The storm, which leveled their year-old home, left the family more insurance-wise and weather-conscious. "I don't think we'll ever get over that," says Fran Dukes.

But slowly, the Dukes are filling their house with furniture and replacing lost possessions.

They lost the few big trees that were in the area before the storm. "One was this magnolia in the front yard that was severed at ground level by the tornado — it came back through the rubble. Then they dumped bricks on it and it's sprouting again."

It will stay, she says.

"Anything that wants to live that badly deserves to."

The Highlands 12-26-74

Except for lost trees, few traces left of storm

"Five years from now," a Highlands neighborhood leader begins, "I bet it will be hard to tell a tornado ever hit here . . ."

He pauses, then says, "Well, really, it's hard to tell now."

Roofs are patched. Paint has been applied outside.

Folks in the Bonnycastle and Deer Park neighborhoods can sit back these days and marvel that they have only a sparse peppering of empty lots to wonder about.

On the residential streets — Alta, Bonnycastle, Sherwood and Stevens avenues — there are only five newly vacant tracts.

It is the loss of trees that's changed the area most. Giant trees that shaded the neighborhood's older homes. Hundreds of trees that toppled in Cherokee Park.

Replanting the park and Eastern Parkway may begin this winter by the parks department, but it will be up to residents and private groups such as Trees, Inc., to tackle other tree replacement.

Of course, there are still a few other items of unfinished business in the Highlands.

er, she says, and has made her feel more a part of the Deer Park neighborhood.

"It's all made people value things they didn't value before."

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A few other residents of the area are still finishing up repairs.

One problem for some, like that of the Schleicher family at 2223 Sherwood Ave., is getting special materials for older homes.

Locating roof tiles for their Rennaissance-style home (and finding someone to install them) has held them up, said Grace Schleicher. "We've also been writing all over the U.S. trying to get some special hardware."

Most of the businesses in the hard-hit Bardstown Road commercial strip have come back.

"A little wind can't do us in!" advertises one, Bauer's Candies, at 1554 Bardstown Road. While owner Fred Bauer concedes that he considered quitting after the storm, he rebuilt because his 19-year-old son "was so enthused about coming into the business."

And, of course, there is the unfinished business of vacant lots.

An old duplex house on Sherwood has been demolished and a new duplex has already been built in its place.

Of the five currently vacant lots, one (at 1900 Stevens) is to be the site of a single-family home and at least two (at 2149 Sherwood and 2011 Alta) will have apartments. The family that owns a fourth lot (at 2160 Sherwood) hasn't made any decision on it yet. And the owner of the fifth, at 2055 Bonnycastle, says that while it is for sale, he may keep it himself and eventually build something "compatible with the neighborhood on it."

December 26, 1974

Rolling Fields

Enthusiasm abounds, but recovery is slow

"This is an exclusive neighborhood. The prices of houses keep a lot of people out." But the tornado let this young woman and her husband in.

They are restoring a Rolling Avenue house that was worth more than $60,000 before the storm. For the price of the lot — about $15,000 — they bought the damaged and roofless house. Now that contractors have built solid walls and a new roof, the couple will finish the rest of the repairs.

"We used to ride around a lot, thinking about where we would like to live if we could afford it," said the young woman as she took a break from some chores. "We definitely thought we'd like to live in this area . . . For the houses and the caliber of people. They are professional people, more than middle class."

Her husband is a proud man who asked that their names not be used. Among other things, he felt their acquisition of the Rolling Fields house might look as if they had taken advantage of a hard-luck situation. He works at night as an electrical-maintenance man. The couple also owns a few pieces of real estate in the Highlands.

He heard about the house when the former owners — an elderly couple — answered his advertisement for cabinets he needed to restore an apartment. He took a look at the house and agreed to clean up the property and stay there overnight. A few weeks later, he and his wife were the new owners.

It may be two years before remodeling is complete. But they plan to move from their Highlands duplex in a month or two.

"It was sort of a speculative deal," he said. "We don't know what it's going to cost to live here — what the taxes are going to be like. But the neighbors so far have been great."

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Even with the enthusiasm that newcomers and residents are bringing to restoration, Rolling Fields — a 6th-class city — is recovering more slowly than other county areas hit by the tornado.

When Aubrey Edwards, chairman of the Rolling Fields Board of Trustees, says, "Frankly, we're coming back faster than most of us expected," he adds that the city "is not overpopulated with younger couples."

Of the 10 families that decided not to rebuild, most of them had been thinking about moving to smaller houses or apartments anyway, he said. "You get to the age where cutting an acre of grass starts getting to you," Edwards said.

Thirty-two of the city's 256 homes were severely damaged by the tornado and builders bought several of the lots.

Six bare foundations remain. Edwards thinks that only three of them have been sold.

Other unfinished business in Rolling Fields includes some major improvements to storm-damaged drain pipes and eroded creek beds. An engineer's estimate of $36,000 for the work has been "adjusted down" to $12,000, a figure Edwards says will take care of modest repairs that the city can better afford. Bids on the work are to be opened early next month.

Also to be done is the restoration of several large foundations along Brownsboro Road, roughly between Lightfoot Road and Country Lane The lots are just outside Rolling Fields.

Tom Helm, a real-estate dealer and builder and one of Jefferson County's commissioners, said he and some partners hope to buy total interest in the property for condominiums. Helm now has ownership of four of 20 condominium units that were there before the storm.

"I have a feeling it's all going through," he said of his business deal, "and come January a new project will start there."

Marion Goodman has one of them.

With the help of her family, she hopes to finish her business — rebuilding her 1 1/2-story frame house at 1901 Stevens Ave.—in time to move in by the end of January.

For Ms. Goodman, who is 30 and divorced, the house that she bought two years ago was something that "made me proud of my independence." The rebuilt house "will be just the same" as the old one.

The tornado has had some strong positive impact on her life, she says.

Her 74-year-old father and a cousin who is a builder are doing the rebuilding. The rest of her family helps out on weekends. The experience has drawn them all clos-

Audubon Park

'Generally, things look like they did before . . .'

"A stranger probably wouldn't notice it, but to us it doesn't look like it used to . . . There's so much more open space. Used to be, you couldn't see down the street for the great big old trees."

Thomas Young, of 909 Rosemary Drive, was right about how a newcomer would react to his North Audubon Park neighborhood: There are no obvious signs that a tornado went through it. Buildings are repaired, and many stately trees stand at the sides of streets with names like Greenleaf, Ivy and Fern.

Just to the south of Young's area—in the solid, old 6th-class city of Audubon Park—the remnants of tornado damage also seem to be gone.

"We lost a considerable number of trees," said M. Brooks Senn, chairman of the city's Board of Trustees. "But there is a considerable number left. Generally, things look like they did before the tornado. An outsider wouldn't know it had happened."

Left to be done by Audubon Park officials are the plantings of about $500 worth of trees. The city also is waiting on the last federal reimbursements for debris-removal contracts. Audubon Park spent $37,000 to get rid of uprooted trees and other debris and has received $26,000 in return, according to Senn. "We have an application in for the remaining $11,000, but meanwhile we've had to borrow that much to keep the garbage collections going.

"Federal wheels turn slowly," Senn said.

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Across Preston Highway from Audubon Park, the shell of Don Schwartz's equipment-rental business stands unrestored. But not abandoned.

"We were the only ones completely put out of business," the 42-year-old Schwartz says of rows of stores and small industries along Preston. "It was seven months before we got the insurance settled. The damage amounted to over $100,000."

During his wait for insurance, Schwartz drew unemployment benefits and cleaned up what used to be his Southern Rentals, Inc., at 3120 Preston Highway. As the insurance settlement dragged on, he borrowed $50,000 against another piece of property that he owns to pay the debts of Southern Rentals.

Now, with insurance money in hand, Schwartz is ready to rebuild. He guesses it will take three months.

"Everybody else was back in business within a month," Schwartz said the other morning as he was waiting for a contractor. "The thing I liked the least about all this was spending all this time just doing nothing."

Indian Hills: 'The beauty, privacy gone'

"Now we have 40-odd houses from Rolling Fields looking into our lives. The tree loss has been the great personal tragedy. The beauty and the privacy are gone," says a resident of Indian Hills.

With all but three houses rebuilt, affluent Indian Hills is turning attention to trees.

"The thing that's so wonderful," says Jeanne Richert, chairman of the Indian Hills Board of Trustees, "is the replanting with very large trees in an effort to get it back like it was as soon as possible."

Take Owsley Frazier, of 123 Arrowhead Road. He lost most of his home and about 200 trees. His house is restored now and he's concentrating on caring for about 20 large new trees. Five of them are huge evergreens that he bought for $300 apiece and planted at the foot of a hill that makes up his yard.

"We were lucky to be able to afford trees of the approximate size of the others," Frazier said. "But it may be four or five years before it looks like it did."

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Helen and Bill Lucas, of 2 Indian Hills Trail, lost 55 trees on property that slopes down to a point near where the city of Rolling Fields begins.

The young couple and their children returned home only last month and have been too busy inside to work on a backyard that now is open for inspection by about a third of the Rolling Fields population.

"We're an outdoor family. We live outdoors for six months a year," said Mrs. Lucas as she helped unpack glassware. "Without the trees, the beauty and the privacy are gone. We don't have the money to replant like that. It'll be a long time getting it back the way it was."

Nevertheless, the Lucas family is elated about the homecoming. "Little things that concerned me before, I just don't care about now," said Mrs. Lucas. "It's too good to be back."

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Next door, at 3 Indian Hills Trail, is the only bare foundation in the city with an uncertain future. According to Mrs. Richert, chairman of the Board of Trustees, the other two bare foundations have been sold for new homes.

A widow who has left town and bought another home in Las Vegas is the owner of the uncertain foundation. She had her property cleaned up and a fence built around the swimming pool before she left. Beyond that, say people who know her, she has made no decision about the lot.

"There's a concern in the neighborhood about whether she's going to rebuild," said Mrs. Lucas. "Our fear, of course, is that we've spent all this money and worked so hard to come back, and next summer, when it's time to enjoy, the dust and hammering will start next door."

March 30, 1975

Tornadoes left many with emotional problems

3-30-75

By GLENN RUTHERFORD
Courier-Journal Staff Writer

Last April 3 a Louisville businessman — we'll call him Harvey — was sipping a martini in a bar with friends shortly after 4 p.m.

His wife and children were home, and, though he'd planned to be there for dinner, after a drink or two he thought he'd probably be a little late.

As it turned out, dinner was more than a little late.

While Harvey was relaxing, his wife and children were crouched in a corner of the basement, listening to their house blow away.

Though the house was extensively damaged by the tornado, no one was injured. And after the usual trauma that accompanies such an incident, Harvey and his family set about rebuilding their house and returning to normalcy.

Then in January, following a brief threat of severe weather, Harvey and his wife learned that the tornado had not only ripped apart their home but also had left some scars on their marriage.

Harvey couldn't understand why the threat of thunderstorms frightened the rest of his family. He made fun of his wife for going to the basement every time the sky turned dark. And when she wanted to remain awake until the January tornado watch ended at 4 a.m., he reacted with anger.

According to psychiatrists and counselors in the Louisville area, the tornado-related tensions Harvey and his wife are experiencing in their marriage aren't uncommon.

Dr. William Arnold, assistant minister for pastoral care and counseling at the Second Presbyterian Church on Brownsboro Road, said cases of marital discord resulting from or amplified by the tornado are coming to his attention regularly.

"I began running into it regularly about four or five weeks ago — right after we had a spell of thunderstorms and a tornado watch," Arnold said.

He said a recent community meeting held at his church for a discussion of tornado-related problems produced some surprising results.

"Of the 35 people who were there, 20 to 25 said they now feel uneasy about storms," Arnold said. "They want to know where everyone in the family is, and in many cases, they stay awake until the threat of the bad weather passes."

The marital tensions caused by the tornado seem to center around an unsympathetic spouse — usually a husband — who didn't experience the terror first-hand, according to Arnold.

"I can't say I know of any marriages that broke up as a direct result of the storm," Arnold said. "There were several marriages already troubled that came apart. . . . The tornado and problems related to it amplified troubles that were already present."

"I do know several marriages where the tensions caused by the tornado, the fears of the family and an unsympathetic spouse have created air that's thick enough to cut," he said.

Arnold said that in his counseling with some of these families, he's emphasized the fact that, since the events of last April 3, many people in the community have become more conscious of storms and their danger.

"I've tried to tell them their anxiety is normal, especially with the anniversary date rolling around," he said. "It's like the feeling you get when you lose a relative — when the date of their death rolls around again, you begin thinking about it and experiencing the anxiety."

In a sense, Arnold said, the new anxieties over the threat of severe weather are more realistic than the attitudes most people had toward tornadoes before last April 3.

"Now most people are concerned with safety; they know the proper procedures to follow," he said.

During counseling, Arnold said, he found that some of the husbands who made fun of their wives' and children's fears were, in fact, "concerned" about severe weather themselves.

"In some cases the men were like 7th-grade girls who were asked for a date. They didn't know what to say so they giggled," he said. "This is the same fellow who can't understand why his wife doesn't want to go to a party on a night when it's storming."

Arnold said he thought the unsympathetic spouse — the husband who complains about the fears of his wife and children — is actually "the one who's out of touch with reality."

Psychological scars resulting from the tornado aren't limited to adults. Arnold said he'd counseled several teenagers who've had trouble sleeping during thunderstorms or threats of bad weather.

And Dr. Martin Sundel of the River Region Mental Health-Mental Retardation Board staff, said that reports from the organization's neighborhood mental-health centers indicate a wide age group of persons being counseled for tornado-related psychological problems.

The reports showed that River Region psychologists and psychiatrists had talked with people ranging in age from 8 to 55 about their tornado-related traumas.

"It really represents quite a spectrum," Sundel said. "We've worked with an 8-year-old who experienced a fear of sleeping after the storm, a 29-year-old female who developed a fear of being alone, a 26-year-old male whose loss of a job as a result of the storm caused depression. There have been a whole range of problems in various age groups."

As a result of the knowledge gained from the weeks following the tornado last spring, Sundel said, many agencies are developing a disaster plan that will determine the types of services different organizations could and should provide following a disaster.

And Arnold said the Second Presbyterian Church is planning a "thanksgiving" service Wednesday as a sort of tornado remembrance ceremony.

Most of the service organizations who set up headquarters at the church during the real thing — the Salvation Army, Red Cross, Civil Defense, and Jefferson County Police Department, to name a few — will participate in the service, Arnold said.

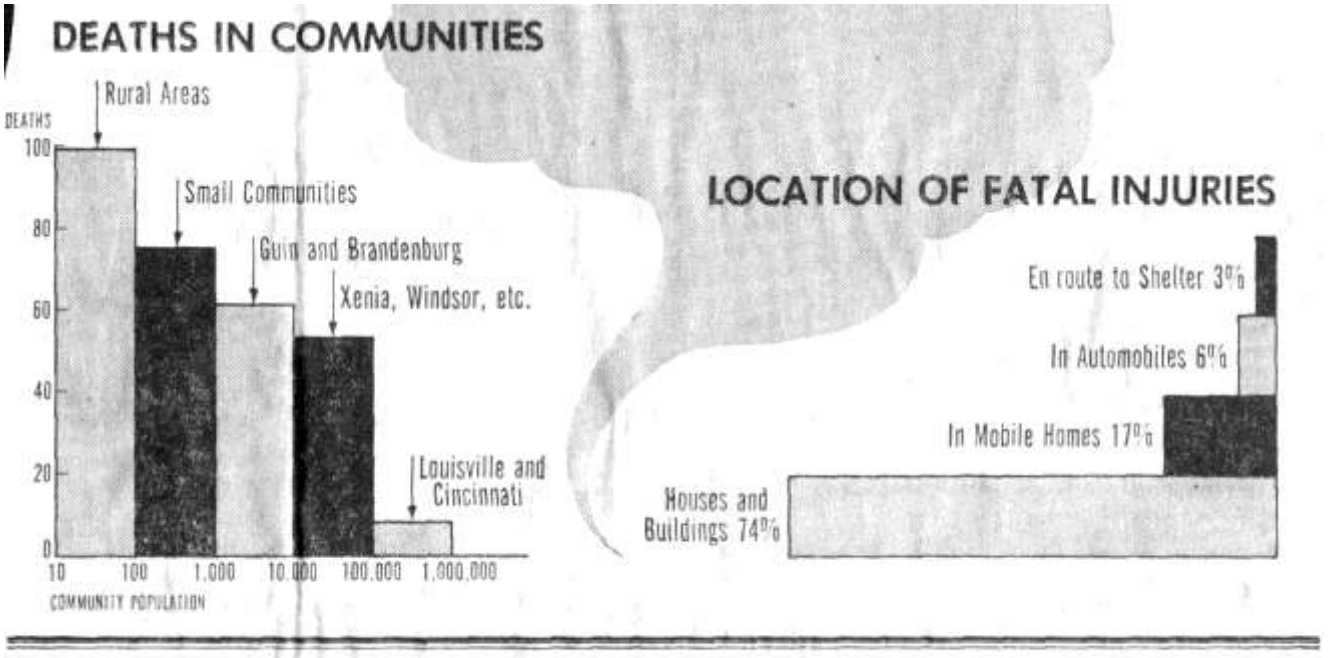
"We'll have a mock soup line and the Salvation Army Band will be here," he said.

The service will begin at 4:45 p.m.

"Four forty-five is the time the clock stopped here at the church," he said.

"The service will have some religious meaning, but will also have some psychological implications. We're not trying to draw attention to any bad memories again, we're not trying to relive something terrible. But we want to make people talk about what happened, to develop a more relaxed attitude about it."

March 30, 1975



Staff Chart by Johnny Mauhin

The bars at left above show death totals in communities of various sizes from the destructive outbreak of tornadoes in 13 states April 3-4, 1974. The second set of bars shows where the fatally injured were when the tornadoes struck. Official reports indicate the death rate would have been even higher if schools hadn't been out.

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SUNDAY, MARCH 30, 1975 The Courier-Journal & TIMES

A Most Tragic Day April 3, 1974

March 30, 1975, *The Courier-Journal & Times*:

It was Brandenburg, Ky., in the cover photo by Bryan Moss. But it was dozens of other communities, towns and cities in Kentucky, Indiana and 11 other states after the unparalleled outbreak of tornadoes that began April 3, 1974. That outbreak, which the National Weather Service calls the worst in history, was 148 tornadoes that killed 315 persons, 71 of them in Kentucky and 49 in Indiana. They wreaked more than $200 million damage in Kentucky and Indiana alone. The numbers are impressive. But more impressive, though mostly untold, are the stories of the people who endured that day of tragedy. Here then are some of those people and their stories.

By Bill Peterson
Photographed by Frank Kimmel

"It just wasn't my time to go."
Martha Barger

A Most Tragic Day

1 Brandenburg

Mrs. Martha Barger, an athletic looking grandmother, went bowling that morning. She rolled 190, her highest score ever, and won a league trophy at Bosley Lanes.

At 2:30 p.m. she picked up the first of three loads of students in her schoolbus at Meade County High School in Brandenburg, Ky., an old rivertown of 1,700, some 32 miles downstream on the Ohio River from Louisville. She drove 100 students to their homes in the rolling countryside and returned to her farm on a gravel road near Midway, Ky., at 4 p.m., just as she had each day for almost four years. The sky had darkened in the Southwest, but she wasn't alarmed.

Her daughter, Mrs. Sharon Rhodes, was. Moments before, she had carried her three-week-old baby from her house trailer to her parents' new red-brick ranchhouse next door. She could see an awesome, swirling cloud moving across the pasture toward the house. As her mother backed the schoolbus into the driveway, Mrs. Rhodes yelled frantically at her.

Mrs. Barger didn't hear.

Then it was too late. The cloud with its swirling torrents of rain and debris engulfed the farm. Mrs. Rhodes dived behind a chair with her sister-in-law, Mrs. Dale Barger, and their two small children.

The wind hit the barn first, shattering it to smithereens. It tore the roof from the house, exploded the house trailer next door, demolished the Bargers' 1973 Chevrolet, killed two cows. Within seconds, the farm was a shambles.

"There was nothing left of that trailer," says Mrs. Barger's husband, Kenneth, who commutes to International Harvester's plant in Louisville each day. "We had a little Corvair that we never did find."

The wind hoisted the schoolbus from the ground like a clumsy box kite.

"It just picks up whatever it wants. Doesn't matter how big it is," he says. "It picked that bus up and carried it 300 yards into that field over there. My wife was in it all the time. When it landed, the bus skidded another 300 yards or so.

"There wasn't nothing left of it but the chassis and the motor," Barger says. "There wasn't a speck of yellow anywhere."

Mrs. Barger, her body cut and battered, was thrown clear of the wreckage.

"She looked like a glob of mud all rolled up in a ball when they found her," recalls one rescuer.

"Wasn't anybody that thought she'd live," says Kenneth Barger.

She did. After almost three months in the hospital, she returned home.

"Don't ask me what happened that day," Mrs. Barger says. "I can't remember a thing.

"I guess I was in worse shape than anyone around here that lived," she says as she stands in her backyard beside a newly rebuilt barn. "Guess I was too mean to die."

She pauses, staring across the road to the field where her schoolbus landed. A stiff wind ripples through her hair. There is a scar on her neck.

"It just wasn't my time to go," she says.

The tornado, the first and deadliest of 27 that would hit Kentucky that day, first touched down at 3:30 p.m. near Tar Fork in Breckinridge County, 28 miles from the Barger home. A radio announcer in Hardinsburg spotted it at 3:45 p.m. and telephoned the National Weather Service in Louisville. A few minutes later a state trooper near Irvington reported a similar sighting.

Meteorologists had been on the lookout for funnel clouds since two days before, when a twister rampaged through Campbellsburg, Ky., killing one person. This one appeared as a thunderstorm with a fishhook cloud, a frequent sign of a developing tornado, on the National Weather Service's radar screen at Standiford Field.

At 3:55 p.m., a teleprinter bulletin clicked off for Meade County: TORNADOES REPORTED NEAR HARDINSBURG AND THREE MILES NORTHWEST OF IRVINGTON AROUND 3:45 P.M. MOVING NORTHWEST ABOUT 50 M.P.H. TORNADO WARNING IS IN EFFECT.

WMMG, Brandenburg's only radio station, didn't subscribe to the NWS weather wire at the time (it does now), and the only people in town who heard the warning were those listening to Louisville stations.

Meanwhile, the tornado, with winds from 100 to 300 miles an hour, churned across rural Breckinridge and Meade counties, splintering trees like toothpicks, battering farmhouses and barns, knocking down utility lines. It spun a bus with 13 schoolchildren aboard off a road (none were injured) and damaged about 60 homes near Irvington. It flattened five houses and trailers near the Barger home at Midway.

At 4:07 p.m. Bill Byrne, an announcer at WMMG, wandered outside the station's office about a mile and a half from Brandenburg and spotted an approaching funnel cloud. He rushed to the station's control room.

"We've spotted a tornado heading for the station," he said on the air. "We're going off the air and taking cover!"

Moments later, the station went dead, its 50-foot tower destroyed by the wind.

Roy Neafus was reading a newspaper in his white, clapboard home on KY 79, near the center of downtown Brandenburg.

"We didn't have any warning," he says. "My wife and I were just sitting here like any afternoon. All of a sudden there was this noise like a locomotive. Our side windows blew out and all this stuff went flying through the room. A two-by-four hit that wall over there."

Neafus shook his snow-white head slowly as he spoke.

"I don't hardly like to talk about it," he said hesitantly. "It strikes you so you don't even know what happened. It took my roof off, blew away my garage and my fence. It broke down that big tree over there and knocked out all our windows and lights."

Actually, Neafus, who is retired, was lucky. Before the tornado reached he place, it leveled Alta Dugan's beauty salon (Alta and a customer died), the Meade County Rural Electrical Cooperative, and almost everything else in its path.

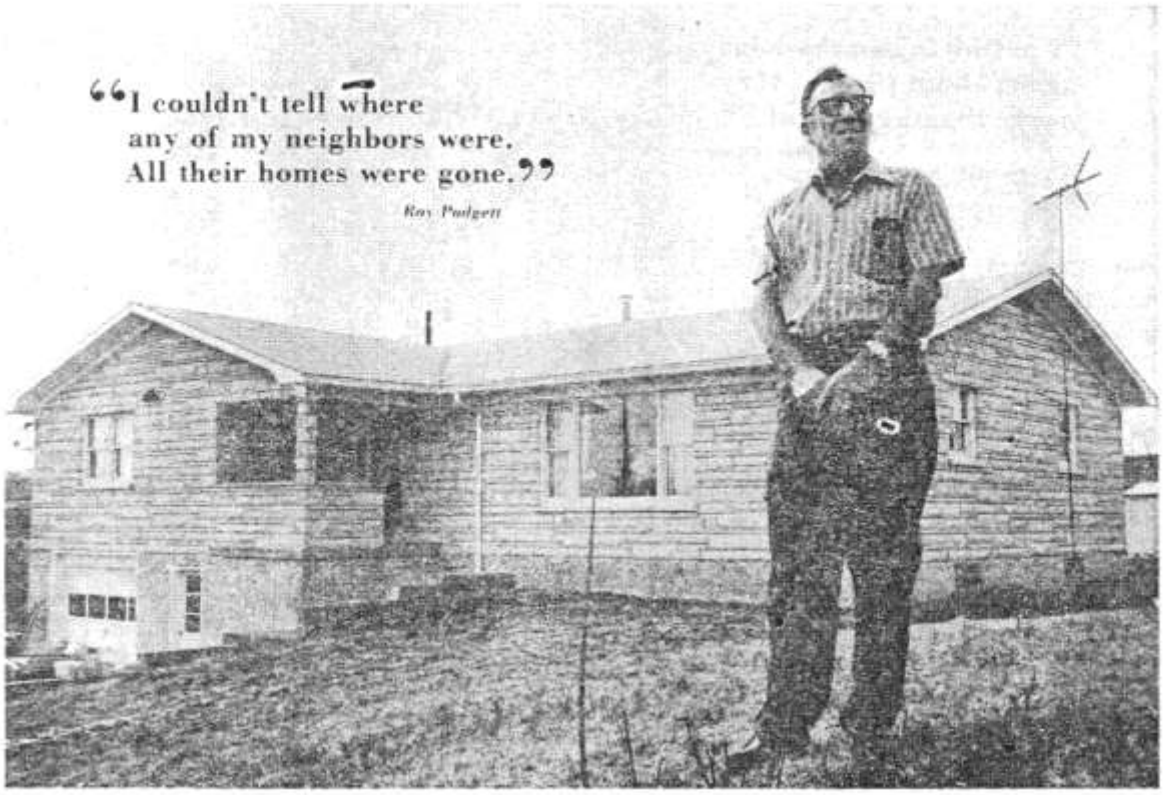
A home two doors away from Neafus' place was destroyed. The Applegate-English Ford Agency, half a block away, was flattened. Frogtown, Brandenburg's black area, literally disappeared.

"I looked out there and all the houses were gone," Neafus says. "It more or less paralyzes you to think what happened . . . It's a thousand wonders that I'm still here."

Leck Craycroft, 52, had been shopping with his mother-in-law and was setting grocery bags on the kitchen table when his house on West Hill "exploded."

"It blowed up," he says. "I'd always heard they exploded, but I never believed it. But it really did explode. It made a bombing sound . . . The walls were blown outward, not in . . . It sucked cement

March 30, 1975, *The Courier-Journal & Times*:



Padgett has rebuilt the house demolished, below, by the April 3 tornado.

Staff Photo by Bryan Moss

blocks out of the basement wall three rows down."

Craycroft grabbed his mother-in-law by the hand and rushed to the basement steps. They made it halfway down the stairs.

"Then those steps went right up in the air," he recalls. "We rode them for a split second."

The wind sucked the steps and the two helpless riders higher in the air, like a vacuum cleaner. For a moment, Craycroft held his mother-in-law's hand fast. Then he was hit by debris. She spun loose.

Craycroft went sailing through the air toward the Ohio River.

"I always will think I went feet first," he says. "Of course, I was knocked kinda goofy, but I didn't feel like I tumbled at all. I landed on one side against a little hill. I stood up right away, but the tail wind of the tornado hit me again and knocked me over."

When the storm died down, he found the wind had carried him 100 yards. He remained conscious the entire time.

Much of West Hill, one of Brandenburg's most substantial residential areas, was gone. Trees were uprooted, homes flattened, cars crumpled up like gum wrappers. Craycroft's mother-in-law was dead.

Bruised and bleeding, he hiked half a mile to the Meade County REA office, searching for his wife. The building was destroyed, but she survived.

"Ona, your mom's gone," he told her. "I held on to her as long as I could. She's gone. Everything is gone."

Roy Padgett, the caretaker at Phillips Memorial Baptist Church, sent his wife and two children into the basement as the storm approached. But he stayed upstairs in his four-year-old Bedford-stone ranchhouse.

"I've heard those storm warnings all my life," he explains. "I'd never been afraid of them. I stood there, looking out toward the church. It got awfully dark. The wind blew harder and harder. It got so bad I couldn't see the house across the street. Things were flying everywhere."

Padgett belatedly ran for the basement. He had made it down three steps when the wind seemed to grab him by the armpits. He grasped the railing and held on for his life.

"It lifted me up, kinda bouncing me up and down like a yo-yo," he says.

"It let up for a second and I dropped down into the basement. . . . Seemed to me, it took forever for it to blow over. But they say it lasted only a minute and a half."

When it ended, Padgett peered from the basement in a daze. "Everything is gone," he recalls telling his wife.

"I couldn't tell where any of my neighbors were," he says. "All their homes were gone. You just can't describe it."

Padgett's son-in-law, Robert Morris, was rushing home in his pickup truck when the tornado rammed into West Hill. Terrified, he lay down on the truck floor. The wind hoisted the vehicle into the air,

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> **"I got hit . . . on the head. First thing I knew, they were digging me out."**
>
> *Arnold Hutcherson*

> **"When I looked around, across the hill, there weren't any buildings left."**
>
> *James "Red" English*

tipped it onto one side and pushed it 30 yards along the ground before leaving it upright with Morris unharmed.

Padgett and his family had survived.

But the tornado took a heavy toll on Green Street.

Ten persons were in the frame duplex next door to the Padgetts. Seven of them were killed, including Mrs. Martha Son and her three young sons, who were neighborhood favorites. There were six other deaths on the gravel, one-block street.

Mrs. Katherine McQuary was in the middle of her Wednesday afternoon piano lessons with three third-graders.

"One of the girls was playing," she recalls. "We were busy and didn't notice anything unusual going on.

"But the first thing I knew, there was this terrible roar, like a freight train smashing into our house. Then the house began to pop. I ran to the front door to hold it shut and told the girls to head for the basement."

Her voice quickens as she continues.

"I saw the wall and upstairs window breaking apart," she says. "The front window broke and glass flew right at where we'd been standing. Someone's bathroom sink crashed through the roof upstairs. And the whole house next door rammed into ours."

Her three students weren't injured.

"They all took it pretty well," says Mrs. McQuary. "After it was over one little girl came up and said, 'It looks like Mother Nature is mad at us.' "

Meade County Judge James E. Greer was unconcerned when secretaries in the courthouse at the foot of Main Street told him of the tornado warnings. A former schoolteacher whose hair was slowly turning gray, Greer had been in office only four months. Women, he thought to himself, overreact to these things. He wouldn't panic.

Greer nonchalantly finished a discussion with a man who wanted a beer license and made a phone call from his office on the second floor of the newly remodeled courthouse.

He then wandered downstairs where several women had gathered in an old storage vault. Others milled nervously about. He peered out the glass courthouse door up Main Street. It had the usual look of an old rivertown that had seen better days.

But something was different.

"I heard a rumbling in the distance," Greer says. "It kept getting louder and louder."

The judge ducked into an interior doorway, grabbing two frightened women.

"The windows broke, the ceiling fell. My shoulder was hit," he says. "The more the wind blew, the harder I squeezed those women. We really couldn't see what was going on. Then all of a sudden, everything got quiet."

He paused in his narrative, shaking his head slowly.

"Then I looked outside. It was a sight I couldn't believe. All the buildings I could see were flat. Cars were scattered everywhere, just smashed. Trees and light poles were all across the road. It was awful."

The second floor of the courthouse, which had overlooked the Ohio, was gone.

Arnold Hutcherson narrowly missed death.

He was across Main Street in his insurance agency when the devastation began. He had heard the warnings on the radio and telephoned his wife, warning her to "take cover."

He noticed an old customer, Robert Dressel, Dressel's wife and another woman getting into a car outside. He beckoned them into his inner office.

"About then the wind started blowing. I saw a whole tree sail by the front. There was rain and debris everywhere. Then the front window popped. Our concrete block building exploded. I got hit on the right side of the head.

"It knocked me unconscious. First thing I knew, they were digging me out. They carried me to the clinic on top of a door."

Dressel, a Mulcraugh businessman and city councilman, had been at Hutcherson's side. He was killed.

"We were elbow to elbow," Hutcherson says. "They figure he was crushed."

James "Red" English and all the employes of Applegate-English Ford agency fled to the basement when they saw "things boiling up in the West."

When the roar overhead stopped, they emerged through the wreckage.

"You can't imagine how the place looked," says English, a thoughtful, lucid conversationalist. "Everything was plastered with mud. It had knocked down our whole building. We had about 75 cars on hand. We lost everything except two demonstraters.

"When I looked around, across the hill, there weren't any buildings left," he continues, pointing to a hillside 500 yards away. "Everything was gone: houses, fences, trees. My reaction was to get up there and see if we could help. I could see there wasn't anything I could do for myself."

"It was the most depressing thing I ever saw."

For a few long minutes, an eerie calm settled over Brandenburg. The tornado crossed the Ohio River and blew itself out over Buck Creek in Harrison County, Ind. Then, as survivors picked their way from the debris, a drizzling rain began to fall.

Brandenburg had been dealt a deadly blow. In a few minutes, its Main Street and two residential sections had been wiped out. Thirty-one persons had been killed. Another 150 were injured. Damage estimates have run as high as $19 million.

"I looked at it and I wanted to *cry*," Gov. Wendell Ford said when he visited the next day.

What the governor called "probably the most tragic day in the history of Kentucky" had begun.

March 30, 1975, *The Courier-Journal & Times*:

A Most Tragic Day

2 Indiana

Unknown to the people of Brandenburg and, for a time, even weathermen, a savage series of tornadoes had already rampaged across Southern Indiana leaving a trail of death and destruction.

A state trooper spotted the first between Marengo and Leavenworth, not far from the Kentucky border. It moved northeastward through hilly farm country, chewing up trees, utility poles, mobile homes and small towns in its path.

At 2:30 p.m., it crossed the southern outskirts of the tiny town of DePauw, killing one person and crushing homes. Half an hour later, it wiped out a block of homes and a trailer park along U.S. 150 southwest of Palmyra, killing an elderly woman. At 3:13 p.m., it swooped into Martinsburg, a crossroads town of 100 in Washington County, then headed for Borden, where it flattened all but two of the 30 homes on Daisy Hill before blowing itself out between Bunker Hill and New Liberty.

Within minutes, another, even more deadly tornado sprang to life southwest of Marysville, heading toward Jefferson County, Ind. It destroyed a number of homes and farms outside tiny Chelsea. But the storm reserved its most brutal fury for the picturesque and historic cities of Hanover and Madison on the banks of the Ohio River.

It left Hanover a shambles. A 75-home subdivision and several schools and businesses were destroyed. The campus of Hanover College, regarded as one of the most picturesque in the nation, was ravaged. The college reported damages of $10 million and claimed that 80 per cent of the trees on its grounds were uprooted or splintered.

Moving toward North Madison, where it killed two, the swirling twister clawed its way through Happy Valley. It left the Clifty Creek Power Plant looking like a pile of spaghetti and Clifty Falls State Park a mass of fallen trees.

Then, losing strength, it moved toward China and Canaan.

As it died, two new tornadoes were born. One moved through Bear Branch, the other swung through Northern Kentucky before ending in a downpour near Cincinnati.

The largest outbreak of tornadoes in Indiana history — surpassing even the Palm Sunday tornadoes of 1965 — had begun.

By 8 p.m. at least 20 tornadoes in the Hoosier state would kill 49, injure 768 and damage 5,996 homes in 39 counties. Destruction totaled $19 million in Jefferson County alone, and the county recorded nine deaths.

Hundreds of lives had been altered.

Don Hazelip

He is tall and sleender with the salesman's gift of gab. He swears that two tornadoes came over the watertower at Martinsburg the afternoon of April 3. He was working at Billy Martin's Furniture Store in the center of town at the time.

"There wasn't anyone warned about a tornado around here," he says. "I knew there was a bad storm coming. Suppose everyone did. It was real dark out."

Hazelip saw the funnel clouds approach over the hill.

"About that time the windows went out," he says. "I hit the deck and started crawling toward the back of the building. So did Billy (Martin). I never saw a boy get humble so quick. So did I.

"We got under the desk and started praying. It was the scaredest time of my life . . ."

Hardly a building in town was left undamaged. Gravestones were overturned, trees shattered. The roof and walls of the town's fire department building collapsed around emergency vehicles. One woman was thrown into a tree. Some 14 persons were injured.

"I saw a two-by-six come through the window," Hazelip recalls. "It went all the way through a couch in the showroom. . . . Billy kept saying, 'I wonder how my little girl is. I wonder how my little girl is.'

"He went running down the street when it was over. It was pitiful what had happened to the town. . . I'm not saying we were worse hit than anyplace else. But for our size we were very hard hit."

Determined to get help, Hazelip rushed to the outskirts of town, climbing over debris in the roadway. He met Washington County Sheriff Clyde Nichols, who had heard tornado reports and headed that way, at the edge of town. Up the road, Hazelip ran into several state troopers.

"Come to Martinsburg," he recalls telling them. "We've had a terrible disaster. We've got a lot of people hurt."

Larry Griffith

Short, curly-haired, happy-go-lucky, cocky. Sixteen years old.

He had heard warnings of an approaching storm but was in a hurry to deliver bundles of the Madison Courier to carriers. He called his mother, Mrs. C. H. Griffith, before heading his van for Hanover. "If anything happens to me," he told her, "take good care of my cycle."

He was parking in the driveway of the Wayne Harrison home on Jackson Lane in Hanover when he spotted the tornado.

"I saw the trees and everything else coming toward me," he says. "I could plainly see that it was a funnel and it looked like it was coming right at me."

Larry felt the wind lift the van from the ground. He had a bundle of newspapers in his hand that he intended to leave at the Hamilton place.

"I dropped the papers and ran for the house," he says. "I could see the trees swirling in the air."

The glass door to the house was locked. Larry banged at it. He was frantic.

"Then I kicked the bottom pane out and crawled through it," he recalls without an ounce of emotion in his voice. "I went for the basement. Mrs. Hamilton told me to get up against the wall. She gave me a pillow to hold over my head."

The tornado struck the house seconds later.

"It sounded like a giant vacuum cleaner," he says. "I heard this crashing and banging. I looked up and saw the sky. The whole house had disappeared. There was this big hole right over us.

"I thought it was all over for me. I kept thinking, 'What the hell am I doing here?' "

Larry was unscarred. But he was shocked at what the tornado had done. "It looked like a bulldozer had driven over and leveled everything," he says.

It was almost two hours before Larry reached home. "I was never so relieved in my whole life," Mrs. Griffith says.

George Lihvarchik

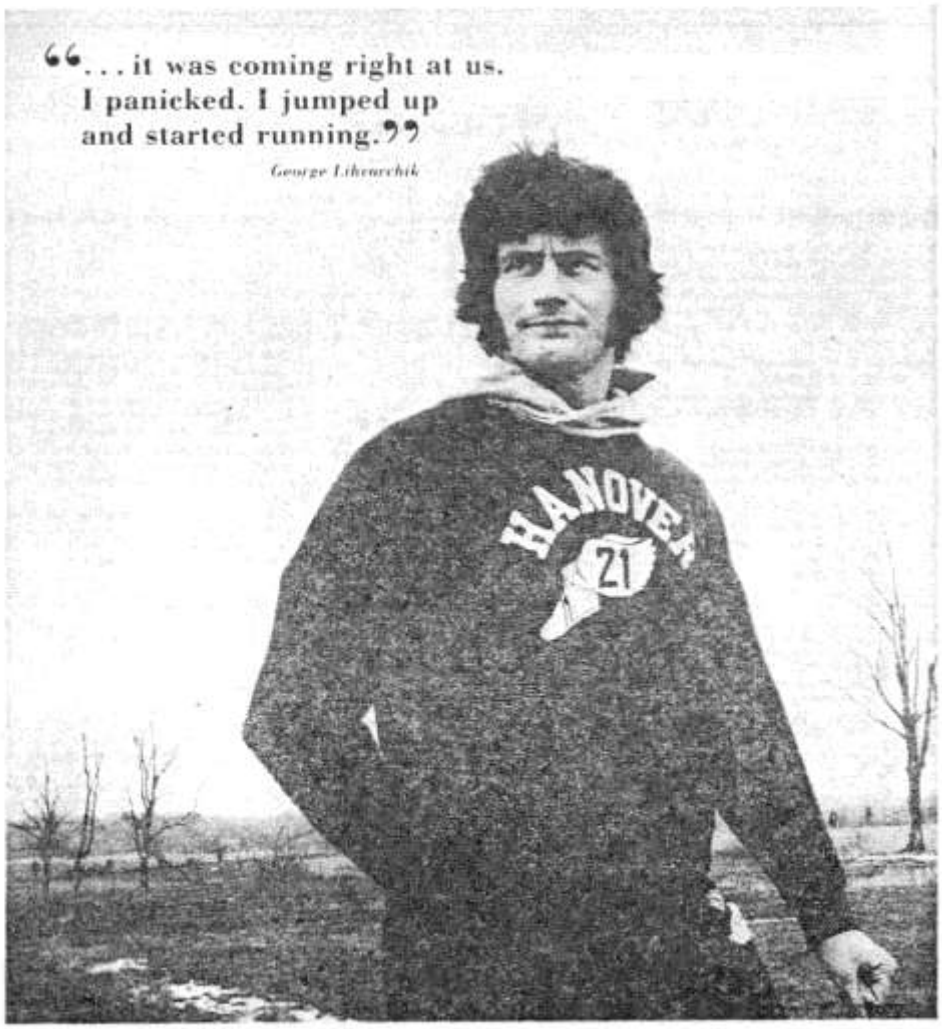
He had no business being caught outside in the middle of a tornado.

But he is a distance man: wiry, handsome, intense — and stubborn. He holds the Hanover College record for the 3-mile. To understand him and what he was doing April 3, you have to understand distance runners and the particular code they operate under.

Lihvarchik, a junior from Portage, Ind. who wants to become a lawyer, had been writing a critique of Moby Dick for a literature class until Gary Green, a fellow distance runner, persuaded him to go out for a workout at 3:15 p.m., 45 minutes earlier than usual.

Hanover had a meet scheduled with arch-rival Earlham College that weekend. Both runners wanted to do well in it.

They were midway through their seven-



mile workout when it began to rain, then hail. Anyone else would have headed for cover.

But not a distance man.

"Anyone who is into this sport runs in any kind of weather," Libvarchik says. "Most anyone on our distance team would have kept going."

They decided to end their workout with a series of 220-yard dashes around the stadium track. As they rounded the first curve in the half-mile oval, the siren at the Hanover Volunteer Fire Department went off and they spotted a funnel cloud churning toward them.

"Good God! It's a tornado!" Libvarchik recalls yelling at his partner.

The two runners sprinted for a nearby ditch and lay flat. Libvarchik lifted his head.

"I saw it was definitely a tornado," he says. "It looked like it was coming right at us. I panicked. I jumped up and started running."

Green caught him after a short distance, grabbed his arm and ordered him into a shallow washout, barely large enough for the two of them. They wrapped their hands around a waterpipe and held tight.

"We looked, open-mouthed, as the whipping tail ignited explosions of brown smoke and large splintered fragments," Libvarchik later wrote in the college alumni magazine, The Hanoverian. "It continued down the main street of town resembling an old-fashioned steam engine churning up huge billows of smoke and fragments while following its uncharted course."

"I buried my head in the mud and started to pray," he recalls as he revisits the spot. "It seemed like hours and hours passed. I looked up and could see large fragments of trees in the air. Behind us, the storm fences around the tennis courts swayed back and forth like a wing in the wind. The fence finally fell, but missed us.

"We put our arms over our heads and hung on to that pipe with everything we had."

The tornado ripped through a nearby trailer court, crumpling mobile homes like tinfoil, tore roofs from campus buildings, damaged faculty homes, and leveled Happy Valley, a college-owned woods.

> **"I thought the world had ended and God had left just a little place for me."**
>
> *Helen Bush*

"When we stood up and looked around, we knew we were lucky to be alive," Libvarchik says.

Patrolman Steve Wilson

He is a conscientious young cop, whom friends in the Madison, Ind., Police Department good-naturedly call "road hog" in recognition of his girth.

He was one of two patrolmen on duty in the city the afternoon of April 3. By 3:45 p.m., he was two hours into his shift. He had answered one call — a domestic quarrel — and was hankering for action.

He had heard warnings of storms brewing in the Southwest. Curious, he headed his patrol car westward toward Hanover on Ind. 56. He had parked near the Madison sewer plant when he saw the tornado hit Hanover College, sending tons of debris spiraling into the air.

He watched it move from the campus.

"It crossed the Ohio, touched the Kentucky shore, then turned back," he recalls. "When it hit the river, water went straight up in the air. The whole river went up. There was water as high as the smokestacks (at the Clifty Creek power plant)."

Some witnesses reported that the tornado sucked so much water from the Ohio River that they could see the river bottom. Although Wilson doesn't dismiss such reports, he didn't see it.

However, he'd seen enough to decide to move. Fast. "I told them over the radio: 'It looks like a tidal wave coming at me.' I tried to outrun it."

He headed back toward Madison, his public address system blaring warnings to passersby. But it was too late.

"Trees started to fall behind me. The tornado kept coming at me. I knew there was a concrete bridge up the road. I pulled off west of it and started running. I thought I could make it to that bridge.

"But the wind came up behind me and just picked me up. It threw me over the embankment. I thought I was about to die. It was like some bad dude had given me a toss. I landed in a batch of honeysuckle. That's the only thing that saved me.

"Then a big billboard fell on top of me. I thought I was finished. But somehow I slid down the embankment into the creek."

Wilson, a second-year man on the Madison force, scrambled through the water to the bridge abutment. He sat there, wet and puffing, as the tornado sucked trees up by their roots, smashed into the Clifty Creek Power Plant and headed up the hillside toward Clifty Falls State Park.

He could see he had a long night of rescue work ahead of him.

Mrs. Helen Bush

"I used to think you had to work all the time to get ahead," she sighs in her U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development trailer. "But it's not worth it."

The April 3 tornado convinced Mrs. Bush of that. She firmly believes that God saved her from death during the storm so she could use her life "to help other people."

For 21 years, she and her husband, Kenneth "Buck" Bush, operated the Bush Grocery on Green Street in one of the oldest buildings in North Madison. They worked dawn to dusk seven days a week, didn't take a single vacation, built a steady clientele, remodeled the apartment above the grocery, began to grow old.

Sickness had dealt harshly with Mrs. Bush, 60, in recent years. She had developed heart trouble and rheumatoid arthritis. Walking became difficult. But she had retained a lively twinkle in her hazel gray eyes and a ready smile.

She was finishing a midafternoon bath ("I almost went out of the world the same way I came in — naked," she now says with a grin.) about the time her husband wandered outside and spotted a funnel cloud bearing down on the grocery.

"Buck couldn't get up to warn me. There wasn't time. So I was upstairs alone when it hit," she recalls. She shakes her head woefully as she speaks. "He hid downstairs in the walk-in freezer. Seemed to me I was up there 15 or 20 years before it was over."

Throwing a bathrobe around her, Mrs. Bush hobbled into a storage room at the rear of the building. The walls shook.

"The light fixtures were acting like a cat when he gets mad — spitting out all over the place," she says. "Something told me to go in that room.

"I didn't know what was happening. I thought God was destroying the world . . . Nobody wants to die. You want to live as much as the next person."

The apartment walls crumbled around her. Wind sucked the furnishings from the house. Nearby homes and autos disappeared.

"We lost everything," Mrs. Bush says.

"I'd never been in such a terrible experience in all my life. But someone was with me. I knew God was protecting me. It was just me and God up there in that apartment. It had to be him that saved me."

Tears come to her eyes as she speaks. She gently pats her wavy, red hair.

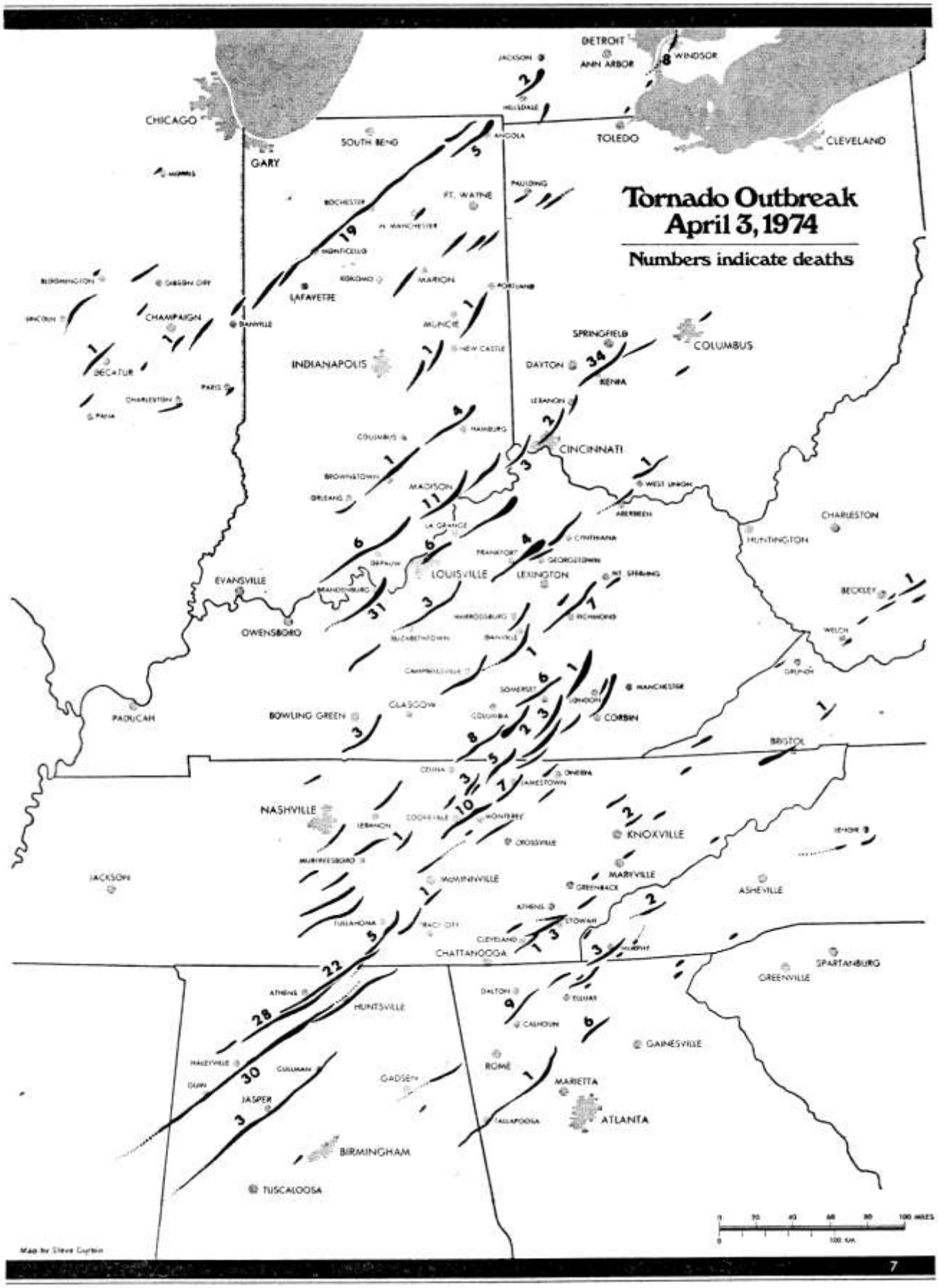
"I thought the world had ended and God had left just a little place for me," she says. "But then, you know, I can't walk very well. I started thinking, 'You reckon I'm the only one left in the world and I can't get down from here?' "

The grocery was utterly demolished. And most of the Bushes' customers assumed the couple had been killed. Rescuers, however, found both of them shaken but not seriously injured.

Rumors of their deaths persisted though. Several days later, Mrs. Bush's husband called the Madison Courier, the local daily newspaper. They printed a story the next day. The first paragraph said:

"Buck Bush lives — pass it on."

March 30, 1975, *The Courier-Journal & Times*:



March 30, 1975, *The Courier-Journal & Times*:

A Most Tragic Day

3 Louisville

David Reeves went to work an hour ly that Wednesday. He normally shed days at the National Weather Ser- e office in Louisville, but this week he d drawn a 4 p.m. to midnight shift.

At noon, he'd heard a severe thunder- rm warning for much of Kentucky on e radio.

"I knew we could be in for a busy ght," he says. "I wanted to be ready."

At 38, he was a pro, a tall square-jawed eteran weatherman who looked like he ould play guard for the Pittsburgh eelers. On Monday, he had been on ty when a savage tornado slashed at tle Campbellsburg, Ky., killing one per- n and causing $2 million damage.

Tuesday was sunny and clear in Louis- lle, "a beautiful spring day," Reeves calls.

But the National Severe Storm Fore- st Center in Kansas City warned weath stations throughout the Midwest that wednesday could be a bad day. Stations ere urged to check their radar systems d prepare for trouble.

A sullen, low pressure center had gath- ed over Wyoming early Tuesday. Dur g the next 24 to 36 hours, the low pres- re center and the cold air behind it trengthed and moved rapidly over the ckies and across the central plains.

Ahead of the cold front, a warm, moist ast of unstable tropical air moved into ennessee and the Gulf states. When the ld, dry air from the West collided with e warm, wet air from the South over the io and Mississippi valleys, three in- ensely turbulent tornado-producing ass fronts developed.

They resulted in the worst single out- eak of tornadoes in U.S. history.

By the time Reeves left his car in the epot parking lot at midafternoon ednesday and made his way to the eather service's pleasant, newly remod- ed office on the second floor of the andiford Field terminal, the area's first rums had already begun to churn ver Southern Indiana.

"I hit the place running and never opped," he says.

30 p.m.

After reviewing the day's weather pic- es, Reeves relieved meteorologist Ed dnson so Johnson could prepare the eather outlook for Thursday. During e day, Johnson had issued severe eather watches for Louisville at 10:23, 10, 2:34 and 2:54.

32 p.m.

Reeves issued another severe weather atch, the fifth for the day. He issued a rth at 3:47, but the Weather Service's ajor concern had become a threatening shhook cloud that hovered over Breck- ridge County, 45 miles southwest of ouisville, on the weather radar screen.

53 p.m.

After two confirmed sightings of a fun- l cloud, Reeves hurriedly issued his rst tornado warning of the day, this one r Brandenburg and Meade County.

10 p.m.

Afraid the Brandenburg storm was ading for Jefferson County, Reeves icked up the red telephone that con- ects Civil Defense sirens at 29 locations i the county.

During the next 18 minutes, he issued ve severe storm warnings. There was an rgency to them: Tornadoes were form- g in the Louisville area.

J.P. Burnett, co-owner of General Rub- er Supply Co. heard one of the warnings ver the radio at the Watterson Towers, a mile from Standiford Field, where he was meeting a customer. Burnett had spent several years in Oklahoma and knew the damage tornadoes could cause.

He immediately telephoned his office at 3118 S. Preston to warn his employes.

"There were 18 or 20 people there," he says. "I told them to take cover. I found out later they all walked down from the second floor kind of laughing at me."

4:36 p.m.

Reeves rushed to the Weather Services observation room, which overlooks the runways at Standiford Field, with his binoculars.

"I thought I might be able to see the tornado coming," he says.

4:37 p.m.

John Burke, chief meteorologist at Standiford Field, was broadcasting a live message over WHAS radio from a telephone on the observation room console.

"The wind was really kicking up. Rocks were flying up against the window," Reeves recalls. "The rest of us took cover. One of the girls screamed."

Burke continued talking to the last second, then said:

"Here it comes. I've got to go."

Reeves glanced out a window on the other side of the terminal.

"That's when the cloud picked up the roof at Freedom Hall."

4:38 p.m.

The tornado leveled General Rubber and Supply Co., causing $240,000 in damages. There were no injuries, perhaps because of Burnett's warning phone call.

Louis Osborne, the day bartender at the Audubon Lounge, a few doors away, heard a deafening roar.

"Myself and several others yelled, 'Hit the floor!' I dove under the archway to the lounge with two women.

"We didn't have time to do anything else. It tore the roof off and the storage shed down like a bulldozer . . . It's something nobody can describe."

A customer heard Osborne's account. "The worst thing about it was: I stopped for a drink on the way home an hour later," he said. "They wouldn't let me in. They said they were closed."

Leroy Jackson was dictating a letter to his secretary in the Jackson Tile Co. across Preston Street.

"It got black right quick," he says. "We saw the building across the street collapse, but the cloud seemed to rise as it came at us."

Jackson ran to the back of his shop, attempting to open a loading door.

"The wind blew our roof off and dropped me down in the basement," he says.

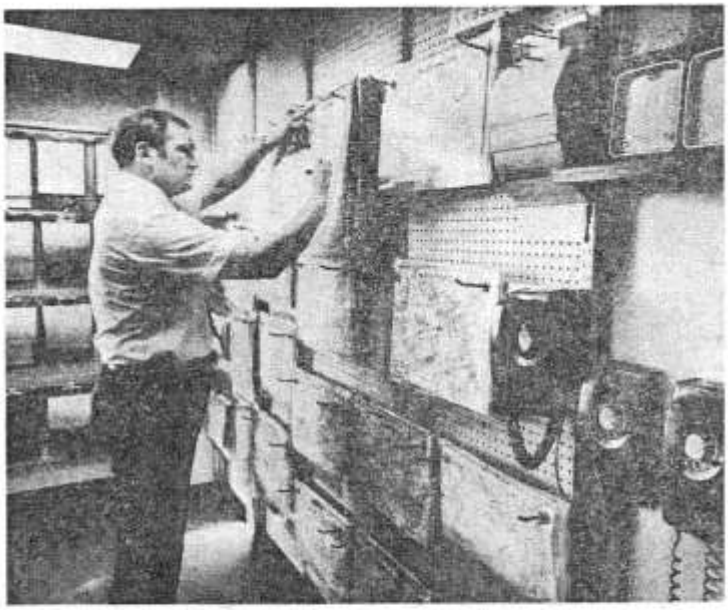
4:39 p.m.

Linda Bock, a freckle-faced 12-year-old with wire rimmed glasses, couldn't convince her father that a tornado was coming.

"I was crying and yelling at him to open the door so the house wouldn't explode," she says. "But he kept saying, 'It's only a rainstorm, don't worry.'"

Linda, her parents, her two sisters and her brother huddled in the basement of their white, frame house at 2927 Pendell as the tornado moved over Audubon Park, a heavily wooded residential area. Trees were uprooted, gutters and storm windows ripped off, windows shattered.

The funnel, which had been traveling at treetop height, swooped down on the 1000 block of Hess Lane, lifting the roof from the Audubon Baptist Church, and demolishing two wings of the John J.



"I hit the place running and never stopped."

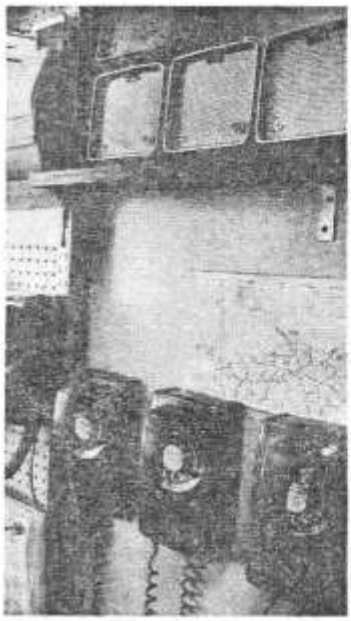
David Reeves

Staff Photo by Harry Tarrier

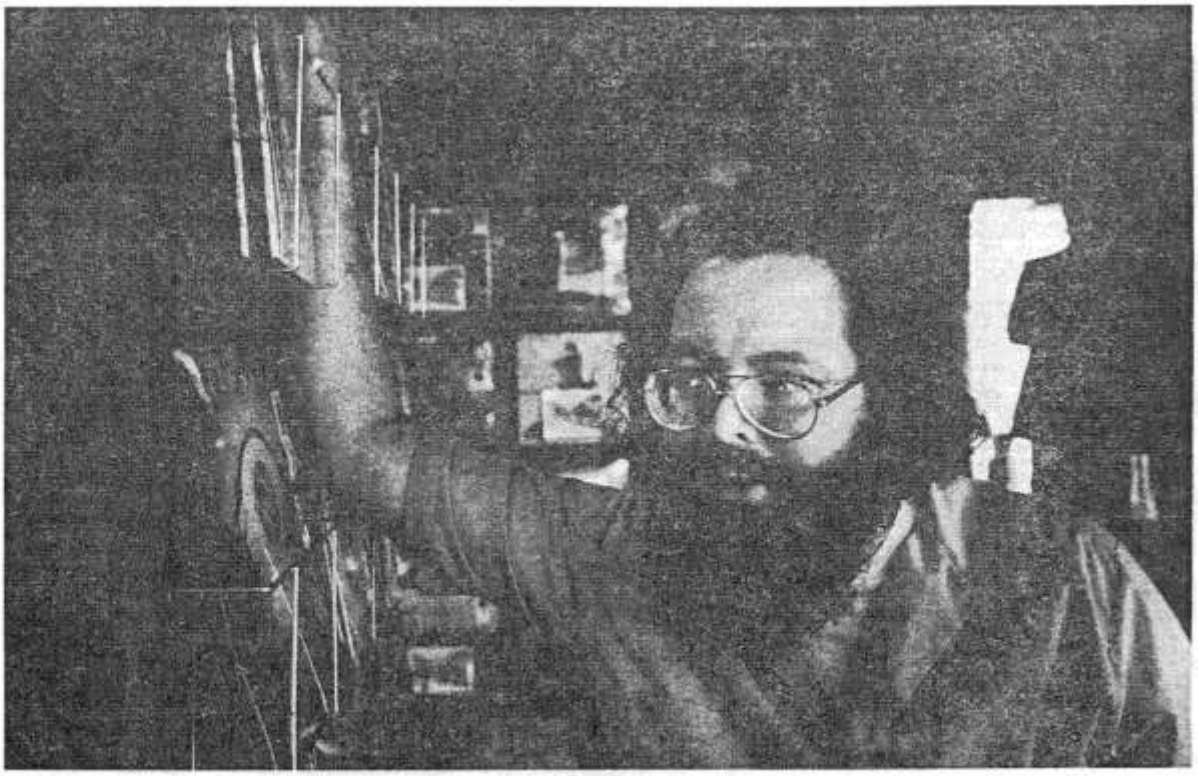
"Customers dove down behind the counters."

Chris Dennison

March 30, 1975, *The Courier-Journal & Times*:



"I told them to take cover."
J. P. Burnett



down
ters."
Beanison

March 30, 1975, *The Courier-Journal & Times*:

Audubon Elementary School, which Linda Bock attended.

"It sounded like a bunch of jet planes revving up," she recalls. "It only lasted about 10 seconds over our house."

But in that time, it mangled the house like a giant eggbeater. Only one exterior wall remained standing. The Bock family couldn't move back until February.

4:40 p.m.

Knocking down trees like they were bowling pins, the twister moved northeastward through George Rogers Clark Park and Calvary Cemetery.

The scene resembled those earlier in Brandenburg and Southern Indiana. The difference: This was Kentucky's most densely populated urban area and the twister was flirting with thousands of lives.

Remarkably, it directed much of its fury at open spaces and park land, missing nearby residential areas.

4:41 p.m.

Paul Bowles, 63, a security guard, was eating a late afternoon sandwich.

"I looked out the window and saw a metal roof blowing by," he remembers. "Then a tree fell and our garage went sailing across the alley."

Bowles rushed toward the basement, but, "The suction blew me down the steps. It knocked me about half goofy . . . Sprained my ankle, laid me up for about three weeks." Half a block away, the tornado almost scooped Mrs. Phyllis Barnett, 33, and her two children off Bonnycastle Avenue.

She had heard a warning on television and was hurrying across the street to her parents' place when her mother, Mrs. Virginia Humes, saw her.

"The tornado was right behind Phyllis and the children, about ready to grab them," Mrs. Humes says. "But they didn't see it. We yelled. Phyllis froze."

Claude "Doc" Humes charged from the house, scooped up his grandchildren, Jeff, 1, and Teresa, 7, and rushed back inside. Phyllis at his heels.

"They were almost trapped," Mrs. Humes says. "By the time we got to the basement, it was all over. They'd made it by the skin of their teeth. They could have been killed."

4:41 p.m.

A recording by the Grateful Dead, a rock group, was blaring inside Karma Records, 1562 Bardstown Rd.

"We didn't know anything was coming. We didn't hear any warning or roar," says Chris Dennison, 28, an employe on duty that day. "All of a sudden, all the glass blew out. Customers dove down behind the counters. One girl tried to hold the door. She was blown halfway across the store."

Few records were damaged. But about $800 worth of "smoking papers," used to roll marijuana cigarettes, blew away.

4:41 p.m.

Rocks, pieces of roofing, and tree limbs were hurling through the window of Bauer's Candies, 1544 Bardstown Rd., when Mrs. Harriett Newlon heard a scream.

It was from Mrs. Anna Maye Pearce, a co-worker, in the rear of the store.

"There wasn't anything I could do until the wind died down," Mrs. Newlon says. "Then she came out of the kitchen with blood streaming down her face. 'My God,' I thought, 'how am I going to get her to help?' "

Around the corner, a huge tree had fallen on Mrs. Newlon's car. Bardstown Road was a shambles. With trees and utility poles down and storefronts wrecked, it looked like a jungle of wire and broken glass.

A man staggered by from a tavern and offered help. "He was so drunk he didn't realize there had been a storm," Mrs. Newlon says.

A few minutes later, a normally hardnosed gas station attendant stopped by the candy store to describe his narrow escape.

"He said he'd never curse or drink or chase around again," Mrs. Newlon says with a twinkle in her eye. "You've never seen anyone reform so much — for a day or two."

Mrs. Pearce's wounds turned out to be minor head cuts.

4:42 p.m.

The storm was not without its touches of humor—or its embarrassing moments.

Just ask Mrs. June Richardson, who call herself "the grandma streaker." She was enjoying a bubble-bath when her daughter Dale, 8, screamed: "Mother! Mother!"

Mrs. Richardson, a petite and youthful-looking mother of five, ignored the call. She'd heard it a thousand times before.

But a moment later came a second call: "There's a tornado coming!!"

Without throwing so much as a towel around herself, Mrs. Richardson leaped from the tub and ran downstairs in her large, comfortable home on Eastern Parkway near Cherokee Park.

When she reached the basement, she found three children, including Dale, hiding under the pooltable. She stood on the steps shivering until the tornado passed.

Then she remembers that her daughter, Vickie Owen, and her grandson Todd, 2, who were visiting, were missing.

"I said, 'Oh, my God,' and ran back to the second floor," Mrs. Richardson recalls. "They were in a bedroom and okay. But then I wasn't sure if everyone was all right in the basement. So I ran down there again."

It wasn't until later, as she surveyed the wreckage on Eastern Parkway from her living room, that Mrs. Richardson realized she was naked.

"I'd been streaking all over," she says. "It never occurred to me to put anything on."

4:42 p.m.

"It was quiet for a second," says Adolph van der Walde. "Then there was a tremendous bang like a sonic boom."

That's when the tornado, which meteorologists later determined had the energy of a hydrogen bomb exploding every 30 seconds, smashed into Cherokee Park.

Hundreds of beeches, oaks and sycamore, some more than 100 years old, were left mauled, pinched in half, their trunks skinned bare. The park was left a hideous skeleton of its former self. 3,000 tons of debris shattered on its floor.

Van der Walde watched the funnel move across the park from his second-floor apartment at 2118 Eastern Parkway.

"It was a terrible, depressing sight," he says with a heavy accent. "I felt like part of the neighborhood was dying."

4:43 p.m.

Dick Gilbert, the WHAS radio traffic-tracker, followed the twister across eastern Louisville. His live broadcasts were later credited with saving dozens of lives.

When he reached Crescent Hill, where he grew up, Gilbert said:

" . . . This is a disaster area out here. I can't even begin to describe to you the damage that this has made . . . My old homestead here — Pennsylvania Avenue — is, uh, Pennsylvania Avenue and Hillcrest are just about wiped out here at Frankfort Avenue . . . It went right between Barret Junior High School and the Baptist seminary and just wiped everything out. Roofs, trees, the whole bit . . . This area is no longer an effective community."

Edward Ficks, 78, was in the living room of his home at 100 Pennsylvania Ave., where he'd lived alone since his wife died in 1970.

"The only thing I saw was this old, big black cloud coming in low and fast," he says with a grin. "I said, 'Lord, I've got to get out of here.' "

Ficks, a retired bookbinder, made it only a few feet.

"The whole house just blowed in on me," he says. "The neighbors had to come in and pull me out. I was buried under all that stuff."

Ficks was unconscious, a gash across his head, his hand crushed. The first thing he remembers is being carried across the alley by neighbors in an old armchair.

A newspaper photographer snapped his picture. "Take my picture when I come back," Ficks yelled at him.

Ficks never returned. He spent much of the last year in hospitals and nursing homes. He now lives with relatives. There is a large bare spot where his house once stood.

"I ain't in as good a health as I was," he says. "I can't walk or hear like I used to. But I'm a lucky old man. I'm lucky to be alive."

Mrs. Ann Standefer, the wife of a pre-med student at the University of Louisville, was convinced "I was going to die" when the walls began to crack in her house at the corner of Crescent Court and Grinstead Drive.

"But nothing happened," she says. "I saw a tree and a car and part of a house go by. But nothing happened to us."

Later that night, Mrs. Standefer, who was eight months pregnant, began to have false labor pains as she walked amid the debris.

She was rushed to one hospital, then another. "This poor cop kept saying, 'You can't have a baby in here, Lady, please don't have a baby in my car.' "

The Standefers' "tornado baby" — a seven-pound boy — arrived April 23.

4:44 p.m.

Advancing at a rate of about 50 miles an hour, the twisting winds plowed across Brownsboro Road, throwing a car in the parking lot at Bauer's Restaurant 600 feet, and moved toward the affluent East End communities of Indian Hills, Rolling Fields and finally Northfield, destroying scores of $50,000-plus homes like they were match-boxes.

March 30, 1975, *The Courier-Journal & Times*:

4:45 p.m.

Charles F. Spencer, Jr., the 64-year-old president of a drying machinery company, was heading toward home at 8924 Brownsboro Rd. to comfort his wife. She had called him at the office and told him of the tornado warnings.

The tornado caught him from behind. Near the corner of Brownsboro Road and Lightfoot, it hoisted his car 10 feet in the air, whirled it around, then dropped it.

The wind then picked it up a second time and hurled it into a tree. Spencer was pinned in the car. He died instantly of head injuries, one of three persons killed in Louisville by the storm. Three others died in tornado-related incidents.

4:45 p.m.

Jean Campbell, a 15-year-old student at Ballard High School, was fixing popcorn for the TV repairman. A girl friend across the street from her Rolling Fields home telephoned twice to warn her about the tornado.

Jean didn't pay any attention to the first call. But after the second, she started down to the basement with her two dogs.

"I was at the top of the steps when I looked up and saw part of our roof go," she says. "I was wondering what was going on when I saw the house next door blow away. Then our porch and the walls upstairs went."

Two-thirds of the Campbell house was destroyed.

4:46 p.m.

Jim Norsworthy, a young media teacher, was repairing a video tape machine at Dunn Elementary School, one of only three persons in the two-year-old building.

"The ironical thing is that up until a few days before the custodians always listened to the radio over the intercom system while they worked," he says. "But someone at the board (of education) put a stop to it.

"We didn't have a way to hear the warnings." Norsworthy continues. He is in the school's carpeted library. "All we heard was this roar. It wasn't like a freight train, like everyone says. It was more like a giant vacuum cleaner.

"Books, papers, ceiling tiles, bricks, everything was sucked up in it. Everything went flying down the hallways. The whole place shook.

"Thank God the children weren't here," he adds. "We would have had so many killed, it would be unbelievable."

4:47 p.m.

Across the Watterson Expressway, Northfield, a new subdivision of expensive traditional homes, was ready. Accounts of the tornado had been on radio and television for 12 minutes. Most families had fled to basements.

Mrs. Thomas A. Player Jr. was an exception.

"We had no warning," she says. "All I know is, my ears started popping from pressure and I saw all these things flying through the air. I knew the house was going to go."

Mrs. Player gabbed her children from a second-floor bedroom where they had been watching Spider Man, and rushed to the basement.

But when she got there she realized only two children were with her. Gregory, 3, was missing. She thought he'd been at her side.

At that moment, the wind leveled the Player house on Northfield Court.

"I was sure Greg was dead," Mrs. Player says.

But she found him a few minutes later in a pile of rubble in the backyard.

"His hair was standing straight up. His face was full of blood, but he was alive," Mrs. Player, now of Atlanta, says. "It was a miracle."

That night in the hospital Greg was asked what had happened. He said:

"The house popped. It exploded. I came down in Spider Man's web. Spider Man saved me."

4:48 p.m.

The tornado left Jefferson County near Glenview Manor, south of I-71.

It had spent 12 minutes on the ground in the Louisville area.

> "This poor cop kept saying, 'Lady, please don't have a baby in my car.'"
>
> *Ann Standefer*

A Most Tragic Day

4 Kentucky

As ambulances plowed through debris to rescue Louisville tornado victims, a scene approaching chaos developed at the National Weather Service office.

"The phones were ringing like crazy," weatherman David Reevet recalls.

Reports of tornadoes were coming in from across Kentucky and Southern Indiana. And they kept coming all night. The Weather Service could barely keep pace with them.

Before Reeves left Standiford Field at 2 a.m. Thursday, 27 twisters had touched down in Kentucky. A list of areas hit reads like a rollcall of counties in the central third of the state.

At 4:45, a tornado ripped through Simpson, Warren and Barren Counties, injuring 46. At Rocky Springs, the David Payne home vanished; its remains were deposited 300 feet away in a sink-hole. Mrs. Payne, 37, was dead. Winds had driven a two-by-four with nails in it into the back of her son Todd, 10. He survived.

Meanwhile, three killer tornadoes that would string out northeastward for 2 hours and 15 minutes, had sprung up in Tan Yard, near the Butler-Grayson county line.

They left two dead at Colesburg, in Hardin County, and spilled hailstones as large as softballs north of Elizabethtown.

At James Beam Distillery No. 2 near Boston, in Nelson County, 16 warehouses were destroyed or damaged. Scores of wooden bourbon barrels cascaded down hillsides.

Later, on U.S. 31E on the other side of the county, the tornado wiped out the Robert Whitneys' horse farm, his barns, his fences and his house. Fourteen prize horses died.

Whitney, 61, put his farm on the auction block and moved to Lignum, Va., where he now works as a horse trainer.

At 5:13, Mrs. Earl Wilmouth hwas pasting trading stamps in a book in her house trailer on Mobley Mill Road near Samuels, north of Bardstown.

The tornado tove through the trailer and tossed Mrs. Wilmouth and the table she was working at into the air. She was cut so badly that "you couldn't put a finger on her without touchin' a cut place," her husband said later.

His mother, Myrtle, broke her back when she was blown into a field.

"I ain't got nothin' left except hospital bills," Wilmouth said. "All I got is the clothes on my back. I don't know what's gonna happen to us."

In Frankfort, then-Gov. Wendell Ford learned of the Louisville tornado when his appointments secretary, Joe Bell, burst into his office at just after 5 p.m. Ironically, the governor had spent much of the day arranging state and federal aid for victims of the tornado that struck Campbellsburg, Ky., early in the week.

But at 6 p.m., as Ford hurriedly marshaled state emergency assistance for Brandenburg and Jefferson County, the tornado churned through Franklin County, cutting a swath through the farmland.

"We watched it coming from the governor's window," says Thomas Preston, Ford's press secretary. "It was moving right toward the Capital Annex building when it made a right turn a couple miles away and crossed the Kentucky River. That's when it hit Jett."

Ford dispatched two of his top aides to Jett, a suburb southeast of Frankfort.

Four persons were killed in the community; 100 more injured. The Evergreen Road area was also hit hard. By the time the tornado left Franklin County, it had destroyed 134 homes, two trucks and five autos.

It also knocked out electricity in the capitol. Ford worked through the night by candlelight. By midnight, 3,000 state workers had been marshaled for the recovery effort and State Police and National Guardsmen dispatched to the hardest hit areas.

At 6:15 p.m. Edith and Ralph Parker, owners of Parker's Mobile Home Park in Stamping Ground, Ky., made a dash for the basement of an old apartment house they owned 50 yards from their trailer.

"I had been listening to the warnings on the radio when we saw it coming," Mrs. Parker says. "We stood there watching it for a minute. Then my husband said, 'I don't know about you, but I'm going to the basement.'"

The tornado struck moments later.

"It was the most terrible, vicious sounding wind I've ever seen," Mrs. Parker says.

It hit the trailer park, Ralph Parker says, "like a steam roller." Of the 16 trailers there, all but two were pulverized.

"The unbelievable thing is that it happened and no one was killed or seriously injured," Mrs. Parker says.

The destruction shifted southward as new storms clawed across central and southeastern Kentucky. Barren, Simpson, Warren, Green, Taylor, Casey, Lincoln, Harrison and Boyle counties all recorded additional twisters by 7 p.m.

Two savage tornados leaped across rural Clinton, Cumberland and Wayne

March 30, 1975, *The Courier-Journal & Times*:

> **"Yes, there's a feeling of loneliness out here."**
>
> *Billy Bob Turpin*

counties. Within only 40 minutes, they killed 8 and injured 113. They destroyed 215 homes, 12 trailers and 660 barns, causing damage estimated at $4.5 million.

Small farms were devastated near dozens of communities. Farmers lost not only their homes but also their barns, their crops, their fences, their livestock, their livelihoods.

At 7:20, the wind destroyed six historic Shaker barns at Pleasant Hill, Claysville, in Harrison County, was hit at 7:15; Whitehall, in Madison County, at 7:30.

Billy Bob Turpin had owned his 151-acre farm near Red House in Madison County 25 years, worked it hard, cherished it and raised his family and 35 tobacco crops on it.

That night he had finished the evening chores after 7 p.m. when his son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. William G. Turpin rushed into the house. Both had been listening to tornado reports on the radio in their nearby trailer.

At the urging of his daughter-in-law, Turpin led his family into the basement. They could see a dark cloud on the horizon.

"We'd been down there five or 10 minutes when it hit," Turpin, 65, says. "Zip and the house was gone right off the top of us."

His car, garage, barns and outbuildings were swept away as the family huddled in the southwest corner of the basement beside shelves of fruit jars.

"I didn't see a funnel cloud," Turpin says. "It looked more like a cyclone."

He lost everything but his livestock. Neighboring farms had whole cattle herds wiped out. A quarter of a mile away an elderly couple died in their small tenant house.

"The odor after the cloud passed was horrible; it was full of animal blood and I suppose human blood," a neighbor said later.

Today as Turpin, his leathery face coated with mist, leans against the rough-hewn barn that volunteers built for him, he is pensive, taciturn.

He hasn't rebuilt his house and probably won't, he says. "I'm too old to start over now. I would have sold the place by now if it wasn't for my sons."

The yard is barren as he looks across it.

"Yes, there's a feeling of loneliness out here," he says.

The barrage continued into the night. Fayette, Rockcastle, Clark, Montgomery, Mason and other counties were pounded by savage winds. A path of fallen trees 20 miles long and a quarter-mile wide was beaten through the Daniel Boone Forest in McCreary County.

However, the tornadoes' greatest fury was directed a three counties in the Lake Cumberland area. By 11:30, when what appeared to be Kentucky's last tornado of April 3 touched down in Boone County, 13 had died in this area, damaged totaled millions.

But before the day ended, there was one last moment of destruction and death.

A Most Tragic Day 5 The Johnsons

On a low, barren-looking ridge in the rolling foothills of the Cumberland Mountains 15 miles west of Somerset, Ky., is a cluster of homes and small farms known as Piney Grove. It is a closely knit, unpretentious place without a store or streetlight and with only one church, Piney Grove Baptist Church No. 2. Residents aren't sure why it is called Church No. 2, but, when asked about their community, they invariably say it is "just a nice neighborhood where everyone helps everyone else."

On April 3, Mrs. Ernest Johnson, whose husband has lived in Piney Grove almost all his life, spent the day in Russell Springs and returned to her eight-year-old ranchouse in late afternoon. She prepared supper for her family and her husband's aunt and uncle, Minnie and Robert Johnson, who lived next door.

"They were an elderly couple — both 82, I think," says Carla Johnson, a slender but sturdy mother of three. "She was crippled by a stroke. He couldn't see from cataracts. They really couldn't take care of themselves. I waited on them all the time.

"The weather had been kicking up. I told them it would be a stormy night and they could come over and spend the night with us if they wanted. But they said they'd rather stay home."

The evening passed quickly. Mrs. Johnson was tired from the day's travel and didn't pay much attention to the weather. Her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Bobbie Johnson, did, however. And her concern may have saved the family.

"She's the scary type. She was listening to the radio all the time about the tornadoes in Louisville and Brandenburg that night," Mrs. Johnson recalls. "Me, I didn't pay any attention. Weather never bothered me much. Never thought about it really."

At about 11:35 p.m. a warning came for the Nancy area of Pulaski County. Nancy is about three miles from Piney Grove. Bobbie Johnson thought that was too close for comfort. She persuaded her mother- and father-in-law to flee to the basement.

"We woke my two boys up and told them to come along downstairs," Mrs. Johnson says. "But I didn't wait around to see that they'd come. I still didn't think anything was going to happen. I kind of went to make Bobbie feel better."

Before Mrs. Johnson reached the last step to the basement, a ravaging tornado rammed the house, rocking its foundation. Her son Lewis, 16, a 6-foot-5 basketball player at Nancy High School, had made it as far as the kitchen refrigerator when the front picture window shattered. Her son Larry, 24, Bobbie's husband, had made it midway across the living room.

"It took the whole house and blew it away. Picked it right up," Mrs. Johnson recalls in a low, nervous voice. "Both boys were blown away with it. I still don't know how they survived.

"A couple across the way saw it hit our place. They say the house just exploded. Larry came to himself in the backyard. He was hurt badly. Lewis landed not too far away in a pile of bricks. He was scratched and shook up.

"It lasted only a couple seconds," she continues. "It's something that seems like a nightmare. I can't tell you how torn up we were."

An eerie moonscape and a feeling of helplessness greeted the Johnsons when they emerged into the dark, stormy night. Mrs. Johnson felt confused, isolated, depressed.

"It took our whole house. Just left the floor," she says. "We lost everything. Our house, our furniture, our garage, our barn. Everything we worked for.

"You can't imagine the feeling. There wasn't a light anywhere. Everything was gone. All the houses were completely blown away like they'd never been there.

"It rained pouring down. Larry had blood running down his face. We knew he needed help but there wasn't any way to get him to the hospital. We knew Robert and Millie (Johnson) were probably dead."

That wasn't all. The elderly couple's home was destroyed. So was a nearby rented frame house where Clifford Weddle, 60, and his wife, Noble, 57, had been sleeping.

Robert Johnson's body was found moments later near his home. Minnie Johnson was still alive. Her relatives wrapped a blanket around her, but she died before help could arrive.

The next day the mangled bodies of the Weddles were found in the rubble behind the Ernest Johnson home.

Half a mile away, the tornado leveled the home of Tom Johnson, Ernest's father. He and his wife were killed. They apparently were in bed when the storm struck. Piney Grove's death toll was six.

But the Ernest Johnsons didn't learn that until later. At the time, they were cut off from communication with the world. All phone and electrical lines were down. Roads were covered with debris. Their cars were destroyed.

Sixteen-year-old Lewis Johnson hiked to the Cumberland Parkway about 150 yards away. He eventually flagged down a pickup truck. Using small pliers, he cut back through three barbed wire fences.

"He could never have done it under normal circumstances. The pliers were too small," his mother says. "Seemed like he had superhuman strength that night."

His brother Larry, badly bruised, cut around the face and barely able to walk, hubbled to the roadway and the waiting truck, which rushed him to the hospital. He was unable to return to work for three weeks.

He left the rest of the family in shock.

"I don't remember much about the rest of the night," Mrs. Johnson says. "So much had happened. I was so torn up. I kept thinking we'd lost everything." Her voice drops as she speaks. Her eyes wander. Her left hand moves through her short, dark hair.

"We'll never be out of debt because of all this," she says. "I suppose I could have sat down and grieved myself to death. But I was so thankful that my boys were spared. When I get a little down, I think about that and I'm so thankful that my boys are alive."

A Most Tragic Day

6 The Next Day

Thursday dawned crisp and sunny.

In Washington, Kentucky Sen. Marlow Cook and Ohio Sen. Robert Taft, both Republicans, met in the White House with President Nixon and federal disaster chieftains.

The President promptly declared Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio, Tennessee and Alabama major disaster areas. Help, the politicians said confidently, was on its way.

It sounded easy.

But on the narrow, once tree-shaded streets of Crescent Hill in Louisville and other communities across the nation, dozens of lives were shattered in the piles of rubble.

The road back to normalcy would take most families months, perhaps even years. Some would never find life, or their neighborhoods, the same.

Many didn't realize it that day. They were too shell-shocked, or too busy.

The streets were full of repairmen, cleanup crews, National Guardsmen, volunteers, friends, relatives — and the irritating, but inevitable sightseers.

The volunteer organizations, too, were out in full force: the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the church groups.

A 13-year-old boy carrying a large, wooden cross paraded around Cherokee Park with a small band of followers. The group's leader, Mrs. Tom Riner, local president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, said she believed the tornado was punishment from on high.

The boy, she said, built the cross because he wanted "to praise the Lord and show people that He doesn't like what's going on in Louisville."

On April 4 the three Andriot sisters, who have lived in the same house at 201 Kennedy Ave. for 50 years, were calm, accepting. That morning the windows were broken, the roof pockmarked, the garage door wrecked, the yard full of debris.

If Maude Andriot had known that day what would happen in the next weeks and months, she says: "I wouldn't go through with it. I couldn't go through with it."

During that time, she and her sisters suffered:

Heavy financial loss. Their insurance company made a fast settlement with them for $8,200. When repair costs went over $12,000, the sisters dipped into savings.

Illness. Miss Andriot says she became "violently ill" in mid-April with pneumonia, "caused by the tornado." She was hospitalized 10 days.

Endless headaches getting their home repaired. Their general contractor was severely injured in an auto accident. Subcontractors were undependable. The single women didn't know how to deal with them.

At one point, cleanup crews tore up their backyard. At another, roofers left their work half-done on Friday and it rained all weekend. Water poured into the house. The sisters tried to catch it with pails, but rugs, wallpaper, draperies and bedspreads were ruined. Damages totaled almost $1,500.

"That weekend was when we almost lost our minds," says Miss Andriot, 64.

Trauma. The sisters found themselves edgy. Arguments developed over trivialities. Bad weather made them nervous.

There were also a few good memories: the friends and relatives who expressed concern, new friends made in the neighborhood, and the day Louisville Mayor Harvey Sloane dropped by to say: "You've had a rough time up here. I'm sorry."

But none of that was predictable on April 4, the next day.

"We didn't feel anything that day," Miss Andriot now says in her comfortable church people," Marcum says. "If there be any pain.'

"For God said, 'Behold I make all things new.' "

A Most Tragic Day

7 A Funeral

On Sunday, Brandenburg held a mass funeral. For four days, it had bravely endured an ordeal few cities face, except in war. Now it mourned.

A makeshift morgue had been set up Wednesday night in the pale green hallways of Central Elementary School in the heart of the city's most devastated area.

That first night was the hardest. There was no electricity and it rained into the early evening. Police radios barked outside the morgue, where children had played a few hours before. Blood stained the floors. Many of the bodies were mangled almost beyond recognition.

"You pick bodies up, and they break all to pieces," a state trooper told a reporter then.

Residents milled outside, searching for their loved ones.

"Anybody know who is in there?" one middle-aged man asked.

"Looking for someone?"

"My wife and three kids."

But the city dug itself out of the rubble with surprising calm. Volunteers, soldiers from Ft. Knox, Red Cross workers, politicians and state troopers flocked to the scene. Unnamed heroes were everywhere.

"People were tremendous," says County Coroner Kenneth Hager, who worked through the night. "It was a terrible situation but everyone pitched in."

Destruction pulled the city together as it had torn it apart. Clergymen could comfort the grieving. They had all suffered.

Phillips Memorial Baptist Church and its modern parsonage had been leveled. The Rev. Billy D. Marcum had left the parsonage at 4:05 p.m. the day of the tornado.

"Five minutes later the house left," he says. "I had a great feeling of being spared, a feeling that I had to make better use of my life than before. . . . It was a great opportunity to meet a sudden need, to try to salvage what was left and get the community back on its feet.

"These were all our friends, who had been killed or injured. Many were our church people," Marcum says. "It was a case of being fellow sufferers.

"We told people that this was just part of man's existence, that everyone experiences tragedy and joy, life and death. . . . I tried to say, 'You can trust God, you can rebuild.' "

The funeral was held in the Meade County High School under the harsh lights of the television cameras. Sixteen bodies were arranged in a semicircle of caskets over a green Army canvas. A Coca-Cola scoreboard and the "player of the week" honor roll hung on the wall.

The caskets seemed out of place. The body of Regina Yates, a 10th-grader at the school, rested in one. Next to her was classmate Glenn Adair, 15.

A few feet away, the body of Patti Wallace, 16, seemed to cradle that of her daughter, Angela Wallace, born Dec. 20, 1973. In the next coffin was Patti's 13-year-old brother, Richard Wallace.

Nearby were the caskets of Emma F. Wilson, 79, and her sister, Mrs. Sue Elizabeth Bircher. Both died on Green Street.

The services lasted 45 minutes. Members of the Meade County Ministerial Association read the birthdate and name of each of the deceased. There were some tears, a few screams of anguish. Several people fainted.

The Rev. A. J. Nelson, of the Zion Grove Baptist Church, read Biblical passages that had particular poignancy.

" 'His anger endureth but a moment,' " he said. " ' . . . Joy cometh in the morning . . . and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying. Neither shall there be any pain.'

For God said, 'Behold I make all things new.' "

A Most Tragic Day

8 Recovering

This is a story about a church and a town.

It was once a slaves' church, the small old building on the hill above town. White Baptists encouraged its founding in 1821, some 19 years after the first slaves were brought to the area.

Once the church had 400 members, brought from Virginia to work in the nearby hemp, tobacco and grain fields and in the kitchens and nurseries of the early Bluegrass farms.

But, by the time of the April 3 tornado, the First Baptist Church claimed a membership of only 36.

The tornado destroyed the church and much of Stamping Ground, a town of 400 named for an old buffalo watering hole.

The storm, the town's mayor said, "hit Stamping Ground right in the face." It flattened much of the town's business district, three churches and a trailer park. The Stamping Ground Elementary School and half the town's homes were severely damaged.

"Somehow we will dig out of this . . . these are strong people," Mayor Clayton Kidwell, a rural mail carrier, told newsmen the next day. "We'll have a larger and better town."

Privately the mayor had doubts.

Many destroyed homes were owned by old people. Maybe they'd be unable or unwilling to rebuild. City coffers were low. The town's only industry, the old George T. Stagg Distillery, had closed years ago. Business development had long been hampered by the lack of a sewage treatment system. And, of course, there was the debris.

"It looked so bad I didn't know if we'd ever come back," Kidwell says.

At First Baptist Church, the Rev. Henry Dailey, had similar doubts.

The church was demolished. Replacing the old building would be expensive — $75,000, it was estimated. With such a small membership, fund-raising prospects were meager. Some favored shutting the church down.

"We figured the insurance we had wasn't much more than enough to lay a foundation for a new building," Dailey recalls.

Both the black minister and the white mayor had underestimated the human factor.

On April 4, some 200 volunteers — church workers, students from Georgetown College, state highway maintenance crews, and just plain people — arrived in Stamping Ground.

State troopers and Kentucky National Guardsmen threw up roadblocks around the town. The Salvation Army, which was to earn unyielding respect in many tornado-devastated areas, set up a round-the-clock kitchen in the old Masonic Hall.

The forestry building, one of three downtown buildings untouched by the tornado, was converted into a first aid station, city hall, emergency aid center and disaster headquarters. Utility crews moved in to restore phone and electrical service.

Working under a bright spring sky, Stamping Ground began to pick itself up.

By noon, the sounds of the city were not of pain or shock but of chain saws and bulldozers clearing the debris.

John Hall, who lost his home and grocery during the storm, and his wife were attempting to salvage belongings from their house on Main Street.

"All of a sudden, a bunch of college

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> **"I had prayed for the Lord to make a way and he did."**
> *The Rev. Henry Dailey*

kids swarmed in. I don't know who they were, but they picked everything up and loaded it on a truck. They didn't miss a thing." Hall says. "My wife was flabbergasted."

By Sunday, the Red Cross had set up headquarters in Georgetown, eight miles away, to provide food, clothing and housing assistance to tornado victims. Representatives of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development arrived to talk to victims about federal disaster aid.

Disaster assistance — food, clothing, household goods and money — continued to flow into Stamping Ground in the next few months. Those were times of decision and daily crisis, both for the city and for individuals.

The city fared well. It took on the air of a boom town. By June, it had acquired a $3 million grant for a sewage treatment system and was working on a plan to build the city's first shopping center.

School officials announced that portable classrooms would be set up at Stamping Ground Elementary so its 350 students could attend school there in the fall. State highway officials agreed to resurface city streets that had been torn up in recovery efforts.

Recovery for individuals was often harder. Shelter and clothing had to be found, lives rebuilt, insurance claims settled, assistance sought. Frustrations were inevitable.

A surprising number of persons decided to repair their damaged homes or build new ones. Insurance claims helped some; federal disaster grants, others (tornado victims were eligible to recover up to $5,000 in uninsured losses); 5 per cent disaster loans from the Small Business Administration (SBA), still others.

Rumors flourished over who got what. Bitterness developed among some who felt slighted.

Delbert Covington, 59, is one. The tornado destroyed two homes he owned.

"I never got a dime's worth of help. Not a penny," he says with an edge of harshness to his voice. "I applied for it, but they sent me a letter saying they wouldn't give me anything because I had insurance.

"That's not right. They gave some a bunch of money who didn't lose anything. . . . I'm not asking for charity. I just think everyone should be treated equally. If they were going to give it to some, they ought to give us all at least $5,000."

With the aid of insurance money and an SBA loan, Covington nonetheless rebuilt both his house and the one next door where his son lives.

Others received help from a group of Mennonites from as far away as Oklahoma and Canada. They set up residence in a home on Pea Ridge Road in the weeks after the tornado and are still at work.

"It's amazing what they've done," says Stamping Ground Postmaster Garrett Robey. "Without anyone asking, they moved in and started cleaning up and helping people build houses. They don't want any money. Everything is free of charge. They've built whole houses."

The Mennonites offered to rebuild the First Baptist Church.

"I had prayed for the Lord to make a way and he did," Dailey says.

Working long hours with little recognition, expert Mennonite craftsmen have almost completed a new house of worship for the tiny congregation. The church's contribution has been the building materials.

Dailey estimates the church has saved $50,000 in labor costs.

A year after the tornado, Stamping Ground still has a general look of devastation about it. Streets are bare of trees. A few stores are boarded up. Mobile homes are prominent.

But the signs of progress are impossible to ignore.

"We're getting new streets, new sidewalks, a new sewer system. All the people are back and living in their homes. I think we're doing real well," says Mayor Kidwell.

He now seems certain a larger, better Stamping Ground will emerge from the destruction.

John Hall, who operated John Hall's Kentucky Food Store for 32 years, agrees.

"Maybe it was a blessing in disguise. Nobody was killed. Only a few people were injured. All the houses have been done over. It looks like a new town."

Construction of the R. L. Parker home on the site of what was an apartment building is but one sign of Stamping Ground's recovery.

Mrs. Bennie Dukes thought her family would not return to Northfield Court but they have rebuilt there.

A Most Tragic Day

9 A Family

"I knew we're not coming back," Mrs. Bennie S. Dukes Jr. confided to a neighbor the night of April 3. "I told my husband, 'You can sell the lot because I'll never live there again.' "

She'd had a premonition about a tornado all afternoon. And she'd watched it move from Crescent Hill to Rolling Fields to Dunn Elementary School from her son's second-floor bedroom window.

But she'd never really believed the tornado would hit her fashionable colonial home at 2406 Northfield Court in eastern Jefferson County.

When it did, Mrs. Dukes, an attractive, high-strung woman in her late thirties, huddled in the basement with her two children, one of their friends and two dogs.

"All Hades broke loose," she recalls. "I died about five times . . . It took an eternity for it to pass over."

The basement door was left covered with debris. So Mrs. Dukes and the children crawled out a narrow basement window, barely a foot wide.

"It was a panorama of devastation. This must be what it looks like after a nuclear bomb,' I said to myself. I thought we must be the only people alive."

The Dukes house was an ugly pile of rubble, a battered mass of bricks and boards. All that remained was the second-floor bathroom and two first-floor walls.

Everything else — the big pillars, the living room, the bedrooms, the mementoes of 21 years of marriage and $10,000 worth of furniture so new that the tags hadn't been removed — was gone.

Mrs. Dukes wandered to the street, feeling remarkably composed.

"Are you all right?" several neighbors inquired.

A middle-aged man in a late model car asked her if he could do anything to help. Mrs. Dukes asked if her children could sit in the man's car, away from the drizzle, while they waited for their father.

He refused.

" 'You're all wet and muddy. You'll get my car dirty'," Mrs. Dukes recalls his saying. "You meet the very best and the very worst type people in that kind of situation."

The Dukes family spent that night and every night for the next two months in a motel.

"We looked like we'd just come off the boat without a suitcase," Mrs. Dukes says.

The next day they returned to Northfield. Friends, relatives, neighbors and helpful strangers joined them as they sorted through the wreckage.

Aside from what was in the basement and a few other pieces of furniture, there was little to be salvaged.

"I searched for the sentimental stuff," Mrs. Dukes says. "I wanted to find the things that meant something to the family."

She found two of her 9-year-old daughter Kathy's favorite teddy bears, her high school graduation ring, the family Bible, two dozen of her husband's dental school books and a single family photo album.

Sightseers and looters plagued the neighborhood.

"So many friends, relatives and volunteers had come to help, you couldn't tell who was helping and who was stealing," Mrs. Dukes says.

But she feels tragedy drew the neighborhood, people living in a collection of new homes in the $50,000-plus price range, together.

"We hardly knew our neighbors before the tornado. We were all so involved in our own lives and our own homes," she says lounging in the comfortable den of her new home.

"But after it, we were all in the same boat. There was more a sense of sharing. We're a pretty close bunch now."

The next weeks were trying and busy. There were clothes and furniture to buy, debris to be cleared, insurance claims to be filed, a new home to find.

The Dukeses found they were underinsured. And their insurance company dragged its feet settling their claim.

"We took a real financial beating," says Mrs. Dukes.

Dr. Bennie S. Dukes, fortunately, is a dentist with a comfortable income. He could afford things that other tornado victims couldn't. He was determined that his family return to a normal life as quickly as possible.

They searched for a new house.

"We looked all around," Mrs. Dukes recalls. "People were raising their prices and there were a lot of dogs on the market."

Eventually, they decided, as did most of their neighbors, to rebuild. There were financial advantages: they owned the lot and the foundation was intact.

"But the main thing was the children," Mrs. Dukes explains. "They were happy here. They were close to school. All their friends were here."

As a temporary measure, the Dukeses bought a house in the Hunting Creek subdivision in far eastern Jefferson County and moved everything they had saved from the wreckage into it.

Mrs. Dukes eagerly awaited moving day.

"All those weeks I had the idea we were going to salvage a lot of our things, that everything would be okay when we had a house," she says. "But when I opened the door, I realized that all we had was a bunch of junk and rented furniture."

She is an open, expressive woman, a nonstop talker. Here, however, she hesitates, slowly shaking her head in thought, before continuing:

"It was the most depressing day of my life."

Summer brought new problems.

The weather was the biggest. Mrs. Dukes and the two children, Kathy and Greg, 12, became nervous at the first sign of a strong wind or rain. Frequently, they retreated to the basement.

Her husband, who hadn't been at home when the tornado hit, tried to understand, but, Mrs. Dukes says: "Nobody who hasn't been through a tornado can appreciate what it does to you."

The family outlook changed also. After the storm, the Dukeses felt lucky to be alive. Material things don't matter, they told themselves. Thank God, we're still together.

As the months passed, that attitude changed. "You become less grateful as time passes," Mrs. Dukes says. "You start thinking, 'I should be alive. Why should I have to go through all this?' "

In December, the Dukeses moved back onto Northfield Court.

To all outward appearances, the house today is a carbon copy of the one that was destroyed. An unknowing visitor might not guess that anything unusual happened one year ago. The place has the air of tasteful, but conservative, prosperity.

The family is adjusting, Mrs. Dukes says confidently.

But she adds:

"I really feel one year of my life has been wasted because of all this . . . In a way, it's like a bad dream."

March 30, 1975, *The Courier-Journal & Times*:

A Most Tragic Day

10 Epilogue

Fear lingers on the barren ridge.

It is midmorning, a gray and windy Saturday almost a year after the April 3 tornado. Scraps of underclothing and huge strips of tin flop awkwardly from tree limbs. Ravines are clogged with scores of fallen tree trunks. Here and there, one still finds a government house-trailer or an uncared-for pile of debris.

Some said Daisy Hill, a string of some 39 homes and farms about two miles outside of Borden, Ind., would never recover. But it did. In most respects anyway.

There are more than a dozen new homes, modest, red-brick ranchhouses with white trim for the most part. New pickups sit beside them. Farms are in production; the road is busy.

But the people of Daisy Hill — like those in many areas devastated by the tornado — are uneasy.

Forrest Troxel, 54, worries about whether he'll ever be able to replace the big brailer house that the twister leveled. Or find enough money to repair his home properly.

Mrs. Robert Taylor wonders if the winding ridge will ever regain its natural beauty. "In the spring this was one of the most scenic places around," she sighs. "We don't know if it will ever be again."

And Mrs. Charles Day is anxious to get into her new home so her family can move out of its government-trailer house.

But beneath those surface difficulties is a deep underlying uncertainty, an almost unrealistic, yet understandable, apprehension about the weather, a fear of the elements that grows with the approach of the tornado's anniversary.

Malinda Troxel, Forrest's 9-year-old daughter, has it.

"Storms scare her to death now," he says. "I don't know how long we can stay up here."

The tornado hit Daisy Hill hard, all but destroying 37 of the 39 homes on the ridge and tearing apart countless barns and outbuildings. Many families lost everything they owned.

No one suffered more than the family of Mrs. Charles Day. The schoolbus had just dropped off her two children, Jerry Arrowood and Melody Day, in front of the house when Jerry spotted a black funnel cloud pressing down on them.

"They didn't have any warning at all," Mrs. Day, a tall, slender woman, says in an uneven voice. "Jerry saw it hit a neighbor's house up the road. The house disintegrated. He grabbed the little girl and ran."

Jerry, 16, frantically banged on the trailer beside his parents' place where his grandmother, Mrs. Edith Diermeier, and uncle, Harvey Lee Peace, lived. But the trailer door was locked.

"He tried to get them out, but there wasn't any time," Mrs. Day says. "He and Melody ran around back and dove to the ground. Jerry fell on top of her to keep her from blowing away. He dug his fingers into the mud.

"Whatever of the house and trailer that wasn't blown away was torn up," says Mrs. Day. "My mother-in-law and uncle and their dog were lying together in the field across the road. Uncle Harvey and the dog were dead. My mother-in-law was in the hospital four months. It's a miracle she lived."

The memory of the tornado still haunts Mrs. Diermeier, 70, and Jerry. Mrs. Diermeier wasn't home this Saturday. She had gone to visit relatives because of storm warnings the previous day.

"She gets real upset when that happens," Mrs. Day says. "She's terrified anytime it rains or the wind starts to blow."

Jerry, now 17, is also uneasy. When there is a storm warning, he gathers up blankets and goes to the drafty, empty basement of the house the tornado destroyed. It is cold and damp.

"He gets real nervous," says his mother. "He doesn't feel safe in this trailer, so he sleeps over there in the mud.

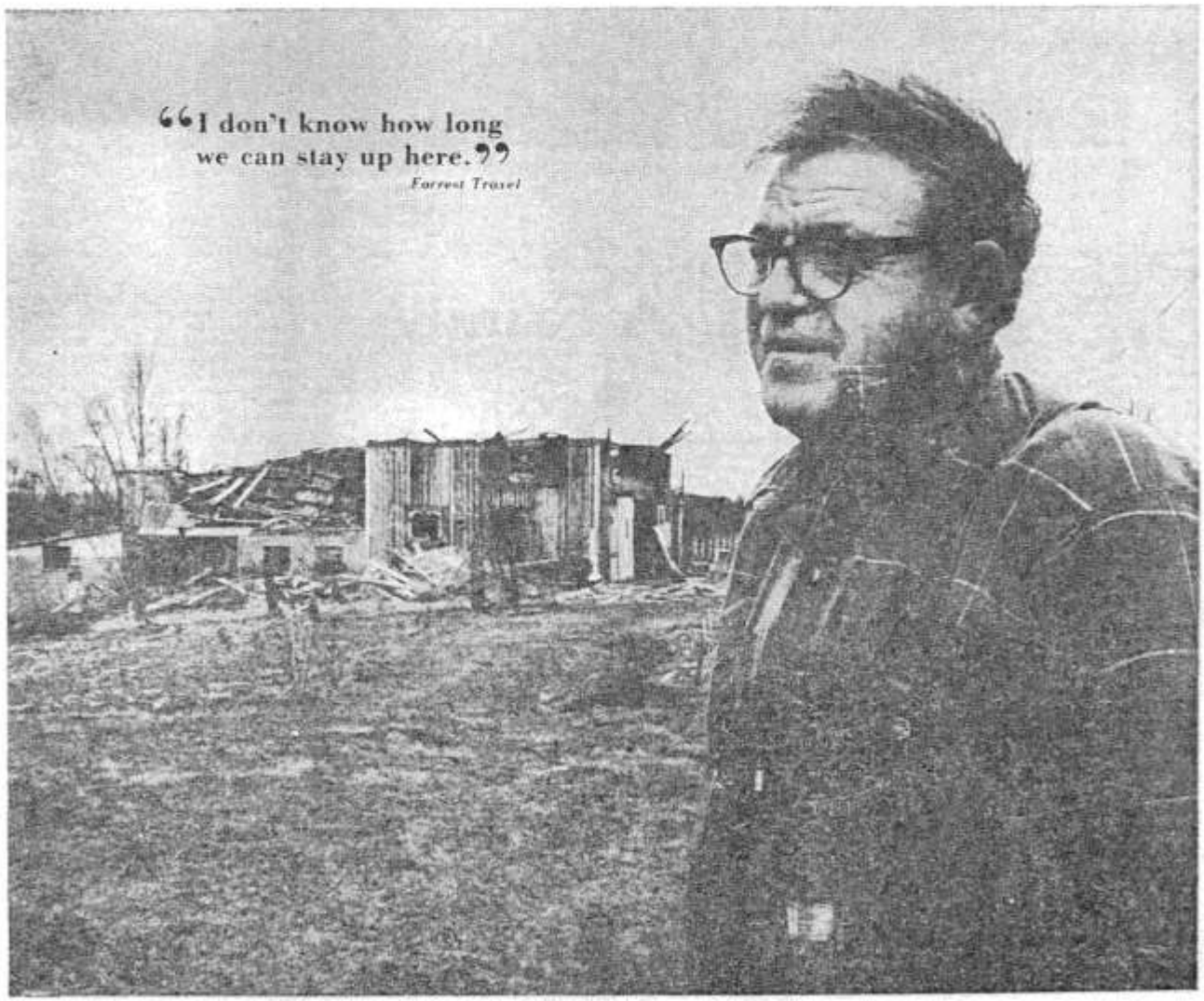
"We all live in fear here."

Mrs. Eldon Hurst, a shy young woman with long brown hair and saucerlike brown eyes, agrees. She and her family narrowly escaped injury when the tornado ripped her house apart.

The Hursts built a new home near their old one on Daisy Hill Road. Neighbors and relatives flock to its large basement whenever there is a threat of a severe storm. One night last month 20 persons stayed there until nearly 4 a.m.

"We're scared to death when storm warnings come up," Mrs. Hurst says. "When something like the tornado happens, it changes you.

"A day like that is something you never forget."



April 3, 1975

Emotional recovery is slow going, but tornado areas are on the mend

4-3-75

By RICHARD MANNING
Louisville Times Staff Writer

First it was the stillness, the eerie silence when it seemed as though the earth had suddenly stopped.

Jean Green looked out into the back yard of her Crescent Hill home but the squirrels that came every afternoon to feed in the yard had stayed away. And the birds, if they were near at all, made no sound.

Then there was the roar. A chilling thunder that Mrs. Green mistook for a jet plane. But the sound stayed and increased and convinced Mrs. Green that the television reports and husband's telephone call were right. Something very serious was in the wind!

There were seven children in the Green home that Wednesday afternoon, none of them older than age 6. Two-year-old Leda Mathers, her 4-year-old brother, Jody, and their babysitter's daughter had come from the house next door to join Mrs. Green's three daughters and 6-year-old Jenny Tate, who had been picked up from school earlier in the day when Mrs. Green took her turn in the neighborhood car pool.

At Mrs. Green's command, they all scrambled to the basement. All but Leda, who lingered behind on the first floor. Mrs. Green screamed for her, raced to the top of the stairs and grabbed the child's arm just as the first window shattered.

As the rest of the windows blew in and the roof buckled under a fallen backyard tree, Mrs. Green, seven children and a blind dog huddled under a basement workbench and prayed.

That afternoon a year ago, when a tornado turned portions of peaceful Crescent Hill into scattered rubble, is still vivid in the minds of Mrs. Green and her children. The terror of the event and the months of trouble and tension that followed have left emotional scars that may not fully heal for many more years.

Mrs. Green today finds herself still vigilant, still constantly concerned about the weather, still waiting for another storm that may not be so merciful in its warnings.

"When it's muggy and still outside, I worry," she said. "If it's still and calm and you can't see any birds or squirrels, I'm like a cat in a cage. I just walk back and forth in front of the window waiting for anything to come up."

The children, too, have not been quite the same since the storm. The basement

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is now a special place of safety for them, but they don't like to be there without their mother. And a harmless thunderstorm sends them into shivering fright.

"All they have to do," Mrs. Green said, "is hear the wind blowing or a heavy rain and they'll start crying that they're afraid." If it storms while they're in their third floor bedrooms, "they'll cry for maybe 45 minutes before I finally give in and bring them down to the guest room."

The tension in the Green home is not an isolated case. Ministers and mental health counselors have detected an undercurrent of storm anxiety in tornado-hit neighborhoods with much of it just recently becoming evident.

The Rev. Roger Heimer conducted group sessions on post-tornado problems while he was director of the Louisville Area Interfaith Organization for Disaster Recovery. While the groups dealt mostly with the practical problems of rebuilding, Heimer said "it would come up naturally how people were losing sleep or not concentrating or were irritable. They traced these feelings directly to the storm and the stress of rebuilding."

The Rev. David Cull is chairman of the Inter-Faith Counseling Service, the group that provided counselors for the discussion sessions that Heimer organized. He said the counselors have told him that "in the areas where the tornado actually was, there is more trauma, there has been more evidence of people expressing emotional apprehension.

"They tell us (in studies of other disaster areas) that the anniversary period this spring will probably reveal a good many of these situations that have not been resolved," Cull said.

Dr. William Arnold, the minister of counseling at the Second Presbyterian Church on Old Brownsboro Road, also believes that spring's arrival will revive unwelcome memories for some tornado victims. "It's kind of an anniversary syndrome," he said. "It's the kind you see people go through the first year after someone close to them has died. I wouldn't call it a real severe kind of trauma that hangs on for five or six years, but I suspect that for many of these people it will be two, three or four years."

Dr. Carleton Riddick, the clinical director for the Inter-Faith Counseling Service, said he also noticed an increase in storm tensions as the spring tornado season approached.

"People are building up a great deal of anticipatory anxiety," he said recently. "In other words, they're handling things pretty well now but saying I don't know how we're going to do when the clouds start gathering and the wind starts blowing."

Most of the troubled people that Arnold has dealt with in his group sessions are like Mrs. Green. They are women who were home alone with their children when the storm hit. They now feel a strong need to be constantly aware of where their family members are. They also experience anxieties that are not shared by their husbands.

Edward Green had called his wife from the office to tell her of the storm warnings, but he decided to stop off for a beer instead of coming straight home. He never shared his wife's worries about storms but now, she said, he's more understanding.

"He used to always lecture me because I was so freaky about the weather," Mrs. Green said. "I'd say 'let's get the kids downstairs in case a tornado comes' and he'd say 'don't be stupid' and get on me for alarming the kids."

But since last April, she said, it's now often his idea to move the children to a safer room.

"Part of the problem," said Arnold, "is getting the spouse to be a little more understanding and realistic about this feeling of anxiety. If he comes across with a 'this is ridiculous' attitude, it kind of exaggerates the situation, makes his wife feel worse and compounds the problem. Even in a marriage that is stable and functioning well, it can put more tension on it."

Arnold tells his callers that it's good therapy as well as good sense to go through the routine of preparing for a disaster. Go ahead and get the transistor radio, flashlight, water and blankets collected and make sure everyone knows where the southwest corner is. "Just going through the routine tends to relieve the anxieties just because they know they're prepared," he said.

As if the storm itself wasn't traumatic enough, the rebuilding process turned out for many people to be even worse. When the Greens started putting things back together, Edward Green switched jobs and while he was away at work, adjusting to a new situation, his wife was at home wrestling with her own fears and with a building contractor who proved to be totally unsatisfactory.

"I thought about a divorce, I thought about setting the house on fire. Some days I would just sit in the backyard crying like an idiot and I wished the tornado would just come back and finish the job."

She wanted to leave, avoid the hassle of rebuilding and move away from what she is convinced is a tornado-prone area. He had invested time, money and pride in the old house and he vowed to stay. He won.

"I would say every other weekend I had a suitcase packed ready to haul off back home to Washington. It was really

April 3, 1975

bad and I don't think our relationship has gotten back to where it was and I don't think it's going to. We still fight about the house. I still want to sell it and just get out of Crescent Hill."

Those are the kinds of sentiments Arnold has heard before, from several people. And, he said, "I'm convinced we'll be seeing more of this as we get into the spring."

Arnold suggests "talking it out," coming to grips with the storm-related fears and the family tensions that they may have generated. He also sometimes suggests adopting an "as if" approach to dealing with the anxieties. "You live as if you're not as scared of it as you really are and after a while the feelings will eventually follow the behavior."

Heimer said the people he's worked with "are handling their problems quite well" by getting practical tasks accomplished together, like planting trees and rebuilding their neighborhoods.

To Arnold, the "most important thing" is assuring people of the normality of their feelings."

For Mrs. Green, this spring's greening of Crescent Hill won't be quite as pleasant as it has been in past years. But she will look forward to the return of the squirrels and the birds, the creatures that gave her the special disaster warning last April.

They'll be especially welcome in her yard this year, and the more noise they make, the better.

One year later, another piece of pre-twister life falls in place

K-3-75

By FRANK FOX
Louisville Times Staff Writer

The Rev. Edwin F. Perry and his wife June, found a piece of their former lives yesterday at a special service commemorating the disastrous tornado that struck Louisville a year ago today.

It was held at the Second Presbyterian Church, 3701 Old Brownsboro Road, which served as relief headquarters immediately after the tornado for residents of Indian Hills and Rolling Fields whose homes were severely damaged.

The Perrys were among a standing-room-only crowd of about 275 persons who gathered for the "Commemoration and Thanksgiving" service on the eve of the anniversary of the tornado. The service was held to thank neighbors and agencies that provided assistance to the twister's victims.

Afterward, the Perrys stayed for a dinner provided by the Salvation Army at the church and browsed through a display of unclaimed articles held by the church since last year.

Among the various items, which included a fur wrap and several tarnished and bent serving silver pieces, Mrs. Perry found a mud-splattered family album.

Mostly intact but bearing the obvious marks of exposure, it was one of 11 albums compiled by Mrs. Perry in their former home at 3717 Edmond Lane.

It is the only album she has been able to locate since the tornado demolished the two-story parsonage, leaving only the foundation and chimney.

Perry is the pastor of Broadway Baptist Church, a few blocks west of Second Presbyterian, at 4000 Brownsboro Road.

Mrs. Perry was in the house when the tornado struck. She was found in the den by her son Carl a few minutes later.

In an interview later that evening, Carl said his mother was conscious long enough to say she had heard the tornado coming, hadn't been able to make it to the basement and crawled under the dining room table instead.

She suffered a crushed right arm and cuts all over her body and was taken, still unconscious, to Suburban Hospital.

Perry said yesterday that the lot has been sold and that he and his wife are living in another home off Blankenbaker Lane.

"About all we were able to salvage was our dog and a few pieces of furniture. Everything else is gone — 25 years of records, sermons, irreplaceable things," he said.

Staff Photos by Larry Spitzer

The trauma was too much for Mrs. Gene P. Jaggers and daughter, Leigh Ann. The family sold the remains and moved to Hunting Creek.

April 3, 1975

A tornado-shattered Northfield, above, as it looked one year ago, and today, below, almost restored—except for its trees.

Staff Photos by Billy Davis

April 10 & July 26, 1975

April 10, 1975, *The Voice*:

Memorial service

A service in memory of the April 3 tornado last year was held at George Rogers Clark School last Thursday.

The PTA donated three dogwood trees to the school as a memorial to families from the school who lost their homes

July 26, 1975, The Courier-Journal

What next?

Tornado damage fixed in time for lightning bolt

By MILFORD REID
Courier-Journal Staff Writer

Neal Hammon of 420 Country Lane is beginning to wonder what nature has against him.

Hammon's home was badly damaged in last year's tornado. The roof was wrecked, the porch destroyed, and doors and windows blown out.

"Your usual tornado stuff," he says.

It took about six months to repair. Then Thursday night the house was struck by lightning.

"My wife and I were in our bedroom when whe heard an explosion," Hammer said. "We had no idea lightning had struck the house."

But a son, Stratton, who was studying with a friend in another room, told them lightning had struck the area of a storage room.

Hammon said he checked the room and it was smoking. Then it burst into flames.

"We tried to save a few things, but it wasn't much use," he said.

Hammon said the St. Matthews Volunteer Fire Department prevented the fire from spreading, but not before it had destroyed his winter clothes, some photograph albums and some Christmas ornaments. The fire also damaged the ceiling of an adjoining room, Hammon said.

Besides damaging his home, Hammon said, the incident put a damper on his wedding anniversary yesterday.

"It's always nice to have lightning strike your house the night before your anniversary," he said.

What does he think will happen next?

He doesn't know, but at least, he says, "the house is high enough so we don't have to worry about floods."

April 21, 1975, *U.S. News & World Report*:

We've Been Asked

A RECORD YEAR FOR TORNADOES?

From Top Authorities Come Answers to Questions on Topics in the News

From what's happened to date, it looks as if 1975 is going to be another bad year for tornadoes. Is that right?

Yes. In the first three months of this year, about 200 tornadoes tore through the Southern States. This is more than twice the number reported for the same period last year and is 50 per cent above the long-term average. There were 35 people killed in this period—which compares with 3 deaths in the first quarter of 1974 and 18 in early 1973. So 1975 is starting off as a very rough year for tornadoes.

Now that the final figures are in, how does 1974—the year of the "maxi" tornadoes—compare with earlier years?

The U.S. was hit by about 950 tornadoes last year. The National Weather Service described the early-April twisters of 1974 as the "most devastating outbreak of tornadoes ever recorded anywhere in the world." In about 18 hours, 148 twisters hit 13 States, killing 307 Americans and 8 Canadians. More than 5,500 people were injured and property damage was put at 500 million dollars. About 50 of these twisters were classified as "maxi," or "super," tornadoes—the ones likely to kill. All this followed another bad year, 1973, in which more than 1,100 tornadoes were reported. That still is the record.

How about deaths?

There were 361 last year. In 1973 the total was 87.

What is causing all the turbulent activity?

Meteorologists say the weather is an unpredictable animal. Ups and downs in tornado activity are expected. As for this year's upsurge, scientists just don't know.

What's the outlook for the rest of this year?

The heaviest months of twister activity are February through June. Allen Pearson, director of the National Severe Storms Forecast Center in Kansas City, Mo., says April and May are two of the worst months. As warmer weather comes to the Northern States, tornado activity moves out of the South and into the Midwest and Great Lakes States. Mr. Pearson expects the season to get a slow start in the North Central States this year because of heavy snow pack in the Dakotas and Minnesota. Melting snow tends to sap solar energy needed to form a tornado. In late summer, places like New England become vulnerable. Then in early fall, activity again moves southward.

Is research being conducted on ways to reduce the strength of tornadoes, say through cloud seeding?

Scientists are experimenting with ways to reduce the fury of hurricanes. There also are programs to see if hail and lightning can be decreased by seeding storm clouds. Weathermen don't see much hope in trying to seed tornadoes, however. Twisters come and go so fast that it would be nearly impossible to get a plane in position to seed before the tornado had already spent itself.

Twisters in first three months of 1975 numbered 200, and claimed 35 lives.

There are tornado watches as well as warnings—what's the difference?

A tornado watch issued by the National Weather Service means that weather conditions are ripe for a twister to develop. People are urged to keep a radio on for weather bulletins and to keep an eye on the sky. A tornado warning is more serious. It means a funnel cloud has actually been spotted. Once a warning has been issued, it may be just a matter of minutes or seconds before the tornado hits, and people should take cover without delay.

Where is the best place for cover?

It depends on where you are. If you are driving in an automobile and you hear a tornado warning or spot a funnel cloud, stop the car immediately. Don't try to outrun a tornado because you'll probably lose the race. Get out of the car and lie face down in a ditch or ravine.

What if you are at home?

Basements generally offer the greatest protection. If you don't have one, seek shelter in an interior room on the ground floor and get under a sturdy table. Bathrooms usually offer good protection because of the maze of plumbing in the walls. Stay away from windows, they will probably shatter.

What about schools and other buildings?

If there is a basement handy, go for that. If not, then good bets are short, interior hallways and washrooms on the ground floor. If you're in a hallway, it should be one that opens to the east or north, away from the oncoming blast of wind. Tornadoes generally strike from the south or west so stay away from those sides of the building. One other tip: Don't take shelter in a gymnasium, auditorium or in any other large room. These are some of the most vulnerable parts of a building. If you are in a multistory building, get off the upper floors.

What causes the most damage when a tornado strikes?

Researchers rate tornado damages in the following order: High winds cause the most destruction by pushing in walls and windows and ripping off the roofs. Flying debris is the second most deadly problem, followed by the collapse of the upper portions of a building that fall into the first floor. The explosive effect caused by a rapid drop in pressure outside a structure is rated as the fourth greatest danger. Schools and other public meeting places that are designed to meet normal building codes do not usually explode the way a windowless barn or shed sometimes does when caught in the path of a twister.

March 26, 2003, *The Courier-Journal*:

Book will recall 1974's tornadoes

By MARTHA ELSON
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The Courier-Journal

Marcia Hasenour Larkin was too stunned by the 1974 tornado to take photos of her devastated house near Brownsboro Road in Northfield, where she and her three young daughters had frantically struggled to get to the basement.

"I just really wanted to get out of there," she recalled last week. Once she knew everyone was safe, "I would just have liked to get in the car and drive, but the car was underneath the rubble, too," she said. Ultimately, her family rebuilt and lived there for 21 more years before moving to Prospect.

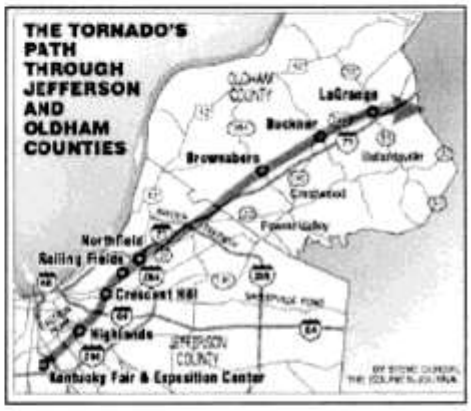
SPECIAL TO THE COURIER-JOURNAL

Marcia Hasenour Larkin's home was destroyed by the April 1974 tornado that ripped through Northfield.

Her brother, Lee Hasenour, did take snapshots of her home and neighborhood in the aftermath of the storm, to make sure she had a record of it. As the 30th anniversary of the tornado approaches, she has shared her album of photos with Bill Butler of Butler Books, who plans to publish a coffee-table book about the tornado next spring.

He's putting out a call to residents of the Highlands, Crescent Hill, Rolling Fields, Indian Hills, St. Matthews, Northfield and eastern Jefferson County for per sonal stories and photographs of homes, churches, businesses and neighborhoods affected by the tornado.

"It still means an awful lot to people," said Butler, who did a book about the old Hasenour's restaurant for Larkin.



1974 photos, stories wanted

To submit photos and stories for a 30th anniversary book about the 1974 tornado, call Bill Butler at 897-9393, or write him at: bbutler519@aol.8com.

The storm, which killed two people and damaged about 1,800 homes, was one of 20 in the state that day, together causing more than $110 million worth of damage, according to the Encyclopedia of Louisville. The Kentucky tornadoes were among an estimated 148 that day that ripped across about a dozen states in the South and Midwest, killing 322 people and causing more than $570 million in damage.

In Oldham County, one of those tornadoes did the heaviest damage in the Brownsboro area, before dissipating as it headed east through Buckner and La Grange, said Jim Morse, deputy judge-executive and director of Disaster and Emergency Services for the county.

Although the destruction wasn't nearly as extensive as in Jefferson County, 20 to 30 dwellings (including 10 mobile homes), a dairy barn and a bank were damaged, according to Morse and an Associated Press account from 1974.

"Luckily, it did not go through a very heavily populated area," Morse said last week in reference to the storm's path in Oldham County. "If it traced through the same track now, we're probably talking dozens or more homes damaged."

Morse was in high school at the time and watched the tornado cut across the area from a friend's home in Crestwood. "It was probably one of the most awesome sights I've ever seen," he said.

The tornado missed Butler's family's home in Indian Hills by about 100 yards, but the electricity was off for about two weeks. His parents left for Florida, and just a year out of college, Butler moved into what is now the Best Western Brownsboro Inn at Brownsboro Road and Rudy Lane. He remembers the refugee-camp feel there.

The tornado "is a marker in people's timelines," he said last week at his office at the University of Louisville, where he also is in a publishing partnership with the university called Minerva Books. "I can't think of another thing that is a county memory like that."

Butler Books, which will soon release a history of the Cherokee Triangle written by local historian Samuel W. Thomas, has production facilities in Bluegrass Industrial Park in the Jeffersontown area. Butler was working for the old Courier-Journal book division at the time of the tornado and helped compile "April 3, 1974, Tornado!" a book the newspaper published soon after the event.

"There's so much more" to tell and show, he said.

The Crescent Hill Community Council and United Crescent Hill Ministries undertook a commemorative effort on a smaller scale for the 25th anniversary of the tornado in 1999. The ministry coalition was formed as a result of relief efforts organized after the tornado. The council and the ministry group invited people to bring photos and tell stories at a "Tornado Reunion" held in Kennedy Park and at Crescent Hill Baptist Church.

Those sharing accounts of their experiences were filmed. The footage was featured on a "Special Crescent Hill" updated edition of a video called "Winds of Destruction" about the tornado, written and produced in 1994 by Dave Creek of WDRB-TV.

In it, WAVE-TV meteorologist Tom Wills said his most vivid memory of the day was hearing another reporter who had gone to Cherokee Park say repeatedly: "It's not here. It's just not here" — referring to the park.

"Of course, the park has recovered marvelously," Dick Rivers, a member of the Cherokee Triangle Association's board, said last week.

Elmer Vogel of Graymoor-Devondale, a World War II veteran who lived on Pennsylvania Avenue in Crescent Hill at the time, was taking a bath upstairs — where the roof was blown off. He discovered that all his clothes had been blown away, except for one pair of work pants that ended up in another bedroom. "I saw the storm as close as you could ever see it and live," he said.

"I feel most blessed," he said last week, adding that the house was totaled.

Todd Hollenbach, who was Jefferson County judge-executive in 1974, related in the video that his sons, Todd and John, were delivering papers in Cherokee Gardens and that he heard the tornado was headed in that direction. "Both dove in somebody's basement" and were safe, he said.

That night, he traveled the county to see the damage and said Northfield was the most devastated. "I don't think I slept for 72 hours." Within one hour of the strike by the tornado, police had sealed off everything from Mockingbird Valley to Oldham County, Hollenbach said. He also flew along the tornado route in a helicopter and said "it looked like explosion after explosion."

Billie Ed Harris of Crescent Hill recalled making her way over logs and downed electrical wires to Cross Hill Road to check on her mother — after Harris had called and gotten no answer. All the windows and most of the roof were gone, she said, "and what's my mother doing? Fixing supper." She figured it would be a long night and they would have to eat, Harris said. After the house was repaired, they had a party with a cake with a tornado on it, Harris said last week.

The Rev. Jim Holladay, pastor of Lyndon Baptist Church, was a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at the time and remembers his room was pitch-black before the storm hit. Afterward, he saw hundreds of trees down on the Grinstead Drive side of the campus. "You could see the top of Crescent Hill Baptist Church, which had never been possible," he said. A professor from England compared the scene to the bombing of London in World War II, Holladay said.

Holladay recalled going without electricity and taking cold showers, and also helping with relief efforts. He was invited by a friend to a gathering at a home in Hurstbourne, and "it struck me in a way it never had before the disparity in the world between those who have and those who don't have," he said.

March 31, 2004, *The Courier-Journal*:

Remembering the Tornado

30 years later, survivors recount twister's punch in new book

By MARTHA ELSON
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The Courier-Journal

Thirty years after the tornado of April 3, 1974, mowed through Louisville — inflicting the heaviest damage from the Kentucky Fair & Exposition Center to Northfield in the northeast — people still relive the effects.

"To this day, about once a year, I will still dream that I am in some strange building, aware of an oncoming tornado, and searching with other strangers for a safe place to hide," Lee Putney of eastern Jefferson County recalls in a 30th-anniversary book about the tornado that will be released Saturday.

Putney was driving east on Brownsboro Road after passing the Crescent Hill Golf Course and Bauer's (now Azalea) restaurant when he stopped at a grocery in the small shopping center next to Chenoweth Lane.

"I could see a thick, black swirling mass picking up debris and cars and headed directly for me!" he wrote. He dived under a checkout counter and heard a "huge explosion" as the tornado hit, blowing the roof off the store and smashing its glass front.

When he emerged, his car was demolished and the surrounding area in Rolling Fields and Indian Hills looked like a scene from "Gone With the Wind," he recalled last week. "There was nothing but total devastation and destruction." He still thinks he is experiencing a form of "post-traumatic stress syndrome."

Putney is among more than 50 people whose accounts are included in the hardback pictorial book, titled "Tornado: A Look Back at Louisville's Dark Day, April 3, 1974," edited by William S. Butler and published by

SPECIAL REPORT

The '74 Tornadoes
Coverage from April 3, 1974 of the storms that ripped through the region.

Courtesy of Edward Monheimer Jr.
This view of the roiling storm's "rolling pin" formation was taken from an upstairs window of a house near Plantation, off Westport Road.

March 31, 2004, *The Courier-Journal*:

Butler Books.

Butler, who lives in the Lexington Road area, lived in Indian Hills in 1974. He recounts his experiences with the tornado in the introduction to the book.

"It was unforgettable in every way," he wrote. The tornado missed his family's house, but a tree flattened his Fiat, and his family moved out because the area was without electricity for about two weeks, he said.

Butler had still expected to find a "pretty rich vein of interest" in the tornado 30 years later, but he was amazed to receive "hundreds and hundreds" of e-mail messages and phone calls when he put out a request last spring for people's photos and memories — especially from the hardest-hit areas in the Highlands, Crescent Hill, Rolling Fields, Indian Hills, St. Matthews and Northfield.

Experts estimated that in Cherokee Park, 10,000 trees were lost in 90 seconds, Butler writes in the book. He even heard from people out of state who had moved away or had just heard about the tornado. Both the Weather Channel and the National Weather Service also have been interested in his research, he said, and he has already added 1,000 copies to the first printing, bringing it to 3,500.

Debby Donnellan, who moved to Tyler Park in the Highlands in 1999, said last week that "every March, everybody comes up and says, `Do you remember 1974?'"

She wasn't here for the 1974 tornado, but she and her family had intended to move into a house in La Grange in Oldham County the day a tornado struck there in 1990, leaving "spears of glass" stuck in the walls in her daughter's room, she said.

Her family was still staying in a hotel because a moving van had broken down in North Carolina. And in 1979, her house in Lexington caught fire as the result of a tornado. "Any tornado, it is not something you ever forget," she said.

The 1974 tornado (or a related one) also moved across parts of Oldham County, and officials in Bullitt County are testing additional weather-alert sirens that were

Courtesy of Dick Tong/Doug Hargrove

Experts have estimated that 10,000 trees were lost in Cherokee Park. This view shows the meadow and hills below Hogan's Fountain.

Courtesy of Dan Siebart/David Vish

Dan Siebert looked out from what was left of his upstairs window in the apartment he was renting in Crescent Hill in 1974.

installed in the wake of a 1996 tornado that ripped across the northern part of the county. It caused about $75 million in damage.

The 1974 tornado was among about 20 in Kentucky and 148 that struck from Alabama to Michigan that day. More than 300 people (including two in Louisville) were killed, and more than 5,000 were hurt. The twisters also did nearly $600 million in damage.

Real-estate developer Cash Lewman, who was living in the Cherokee Triangle in 1974, described in the book how a "renaissance of sorts" began in the Highlands in the aftermath of the tornado, after some people who couldn't face rebuilding their damaged homes took their insurance settlements and moved out.

"A lot of investors and developers jumped at the chance to buy Highlands property at bargain prices," including Lewman and other younger people, she wrote.

Anne Rives and her family had been looking for an old house with lots of trees when they moved to the Glenview Manor area off Lime Kiln Lane just east of Northfield. They were in Florida when the tornado struck and had just had some of the trees trimmed — shortly before the tornado eliminated them, Rives recalled in the book.

Upon returning to Louisville, "as we came to our house, it looked like a war zone," she said last week. Rives, who now lives in Prospect, recounts in the book how they retrieved her ruined wedding dress from a tree and how a part of it was made into a handkerchief that her daughter carried in her wedding last year. At the time, "we just got busy rebuilding," Rives said.

The book contains a photo of downed trees and grave markers in Zachary Taylor National Cemetery on Brownsboro Road.

Administrators at Cave Hill Cemetery considered it "sheer luck" that the tornado missed Cave Hill, superintendent Lee Squires said last week. It came down Bardstown Road toward Cave Hill but veered to the east at Grinstead Drive and headed toward Crescent Hill.

To the south, at the old Snyder's delicatessen at Bardstown and Bonnycastle Avenue, where the Leatherhead shop is now, Leatherhead owner Nick Boone had just bought a corned-beef sandwich. Boone, whose recollections are included in the book, was preparing to walk back to his store, which was then to the east, toward Speed Avenue, but he ended up running as fast as he could.

"I heard this big train whistle, and then thought ... that's something besides a train because we don't have a train around here," he said last week.

"I ran through the door and told the customers to hit the deck," he recounted in the book. Although his sign was blown down to Speed and he lost roof shingles (some of which mysteriously showed up in his locked Toyota Land Cruiser), the damage to his store was minimal.

But Bardstown Road was closed off all the way to Eastern Parkway, and his store had to shut

March 31, 2004, *The Courier-Journal*:

down for weeks, he said. Boone also is a farmer in the Bardstown area and is used to being able to see a storm coming. But on the day of the tornado, "it was already there," he said.

Dan Siebert recounts his harrowing experiences in an apartment in an old home that was damaged in Crescent Hill and how a stack of notecards for a term paper was untouched by the tornado. The owner rebuilt, and Siebert moved back in, but first he "ran away" to Hawaii for about eight months. "It kind of blew me away," he said last week. He's now an attorney living with his family in Seneca Gardens.

The book includes photos that residents sent in and many taken by Dick Tong in the WAVE Radio traffic helicopter and Dick Gilbert in the WHAS Radio traffic helicopter. Gilbert said a tornado also had been reported at Terry and Greenwood roads in Pleasure Ridge Park, according to the book.

Now-retired Courier-Journal photographer Larry Spitzer, whose photos also are in the book, kept seeing weather bulletins coming in about tornadoes elsewhere in the state while working that day at the newspaper at Sixth Street and Broadway.

He went to the roof to check out the weather and took rare photos as the tornado crossed Interstate 65 at the Kentucky Fair & Exposition Center — not knowing then that it was a tornado. It blew the horse barns down and tore open the roofs of Freedom Hall and the East Wing.

"It wasn't like an elephant's trunk," Spitzer recalled last week. "It was more like a wide, wide black wall." But he was struck by the flash of transformers exploding in its path, and he and a reporter headed east to check the situation out.

After parking at Interstate 71 and the Watterson Expressway, they walked on to Northfield — arriving just minutes before people began crawling out of what remained of their houses, Spitzer said.

"There was just this horrendous destruction," he said. "They were yelling for family members, wondering where they were."

One of Spitzer's photos showed a stunned Pat and Bill Blankenstein in front of their heavily damaged house in Northfield. Pat Blankenstein, now 67, said last week she didn't have a radio or television on at the time, and the only way she knew the tornado was coming was that her daughter's ears were popping. They rebuilt their house, but moved about 10 years ago to a townhouse near Northfield. "I don't get all uptight over it anymore," she said, regarding the threat of tornadoes. But they do have a weather alert system that sounds an alarm.

On the other side of the Watterson, along Blankenbaker Lane, developer-to-be Jeff Underhill, then 13, was at home with his 17-year-old sister, eating ice cream and watching "Gomer Pyle" on television.

He thought it was odd that the family's golden retriever — who normally bounded into the back yard when let out of the house — sniffed around on the porch and immediately wanted back in. The eerie-looking sky was pinkish-orange, and Underhill didn't hear any birds, he said last week.

His dad, George Underhill, who recounted the family's experiences in the book, had called from downtown to warn them of a tornado in Brandenburg and suggested first that they go to the fortified fireplace in a 200-year-old log cabin in the back yard — which was gone after the storm. Then he changed his mind and told them to go to the basement.

Jeff Underhill said he heard his sister shriek in the kitchen, watching a large tree flip back and forth. They grabbed the dog and a portable radio and headed downstairs.

But the radio went dead, and "my sister and I both thought everything was going to cave in, and we were in our last moments."

Neighbors helped them out of the basement of their demolished house, and their parents cried with relief when they found them safe about an hour later — after running up Blankenbaker Lane from River Road past the rubble of their home.

"We could not believe they were alive!" George Underhill wrote in the book.

The Underhills rebuilt their house and others on the street, and Jeff Underhill said the experience taught him not to place too much value on possessions.

Despite their losses, "I think we were very fortunate that day," he said. "As much as the human race can make advances, in the end, Mother Nature's a pretty awesome force that can give and take away."

March 3, 2011

Courtesy March 3, 2011——-http://www.courier-journal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/gallery?Site=B2&Date=20110302&Category=NEWS01&ArtNo=303020119&Ref=PH&odyssey=mod|mostpopphotos

Rolling Hills

Crescent Court

Stannye Drive

March 3, 2011

Courtesy March 3, 2011——-http://www.courier-journal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/gallery?Site=B2&Date=20110302&Category=NEWS01&ArtNo=303020119&Ref=PH&odyssey=mod|most popphotos

Brandenburg

Sherwood Ave


The Courier-Journal

Tornadoes rip Kentucky, Indiana; 112 killed, damage in the millions

Nixon agrees to heed IRS tax ruling

LOUISVILLE: At least 10 persons killed

KENTUCKY: At least 69 are dead after series of tornadoes strike

Grindstead Drive Crescent Court

Bardstown Road

April 3, 1974 and on—-

Courtesy March 3, 2011——-http://www.courier-journal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/gallery?Site=B2&Date=20110302&Category=NEWS01&ArtNo=303020119&Ref=PH&odyssey=mod|mostpopphotos

Crescent hill

Stevens Ave highlands

Harvey Sloane Crescent Hill

Brandenburg

March 3, 2011

Courtesy March 3, 2011——-http://www.courier-journal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/gallery?Site=B2&Date=20110302&Category=NEWS01&ArtNo=303020119&Ref=PH&odyssey=mod|mostpopphotos

Rolling Fields

Stannye Drive

Grindstead Drive

Northfield

March 3, 2011

April 28, 2011, WLKY.com:

WLKY.com

Southern Tornado Outbreak Worst Since 1974

Survivors Of '74 Louisville Tornado Recount Memories Of Similar Devastation

By Steve Tellier/WLKY

POSTED: 9:26 pm EDT April 28, 2011
UPDATED: 5:31 am EDT April 29, 2011

Related To Story

LOUISVILLE, Ky. -- After the worst tornado outbreak since 1974, survivors of the tornado that hit Louisville 37 years ago this month recount their memories of similar devastation.

April 3-4, 1974, is known as the 1974 Tornado Super Outbreak. The storms killed 315 people, injured 6,000 more, and did $600 million in damage. The National Weather Service said 148 tornadoes touched down across 13 states. Of those, 26 slammed Kentucky, and one tore a path straight through Louisville.

"This is the path of the tornado through our neighborhood, and it started here and went this direction," said Gary Bockhorst Sr., as he pointed to an aerial view of the tornado's devastation. "For a tornado to happen in Louisville -- you never imagined it would happen."

But it did happen, late on a Wednesday afternoon. Bockhorst was still at work. But his son, then 5 years old, had just come home from school.

"All of a sudden, I remember my mom came in and grabbed me and grabbed the dog and said, 'We've got to go in the basement right now,'" said Gary Bockhorst Jr.

They got underground seconds before the tornado started ripping their home apart.

"It sounded like maybe a million people were marching through the house. There was just all this noise and commotion," Bockhorst Jr. said. "We actually had to climb over trees to get out of here, and we couldn't find a way out. There was so much garbage and broken glass."

"The roof was pretty much blown off. The side garage was blown off. There was a side porch that was blown off and the whole back of the house had kind of exploded," Bockhorst Sr. said.

"I'm very grateful for actually being able to live through it," Bockhorst Jr. said.

"You leave one day and everything is fine, and six to eight hours later, your whole world is turned upside down," Bockhorst Sr. said.

On that same day, a whole region was turned upside down. It was the worst single-day tornado outbreak in recorded history.

Now, the only event that comes close to rivaling April 1974 is April 2011.

"It's a total life-changing event, and my heart goes out for all those people," Bockhorst Jr. said.

The National Weather Service has received 164 reports of tornadoes from Wednesday's outbreak. But that number must be confirmed before it would officially break the record set in 1974.

March 3, 2011

April 28, 2011, WLKY.com:

May, 2011

Courtesy http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=60425137223#!/photo.php?fbid=1137487089142&set=o.60425137223&type=1&theater

Mark Hoskins Northfield area, Jefferson County

Mark Hoskins Northfield area, Jefferson County

Grinstead Drive, Don Krebbs

Crescent Court, Don Krebbs

Frankfort & Stiltz, Don Krebbs

301 Crescent Court, Don Krebbs

May, 2011

April 3, 1974
Tornado That Hit Louisville
&
Jefferson County Kentucky

Personal Memoir of Kenneth C. Reising, Jr.

Let me start out by emphasizing that these are my personal recollections of what happened on the afternoon of April 3, 1974, and in no way constitute any official record of the performance of St. Matthews Fire Department on that fateful day. Any variances of the facts of what happened should be attributed to the excitement of the moment and the fading of memories of all involved over the years since this event occurred. What I am stating here is the sequence of events, as I remember them.

The events of this fateful day remind me of the quote form Charles Dickens: " It was the best of times, it was the worst of times…" It was the best of times for me as I had only one more month before I earned my Bachelor of Science Degree from the University of Louisville's Speed Scientific School of Electrical Engineering. I was proud of this accomplishment, and furthermore I had a job waiting for me with The Louisville and Nashville Railroad. A second dream accomplished, the first serving as a member of St.MFD. The worst of times was about to unfold in the late afternoon and evening.

The day was very hot and humid, with hazy sunshine and afternoon storms that are so prevalent in the Ohio Valley at this time of the Year. We had a strong cold front dropping down from the northwest, with torrents of warm humid air from the Gulf of Mexico riding northeast along the front. This extreme difference in temperature across this front was setting the stage for tremendous atmospheric energy releases in the form of severe thunderstorms and tornados. I got home in the early afternoon from school, and decided to lie down on the couch and take a nap. I lived with my wife, at 331 Ridgeway Avenue, just a block from our new firehouse on Lyndon Way. If any storms did develop, this could be a busy afternoon. As I recall, during this period of time in Jefferson County Fire History, the county fire alarm office would knock out all the county departments if the National Weather Service issued a severe weather alert for the area. This allowed firefighters extra time to man their respective firehouses in the event of bad weather. It was one o'clock in the afternoon when I laid down on the couch.

The tones hit at about three o'clock pm, when the weather service issued a tornado watch for the county. I got up and proceeded to the firehouse. Several people were there, with people trickling in throughout the afternoon. During this time in history, the cable channels broadcast a 24-hour weather radar scan from Standiford Field (what is now Louisville International Airport). We gathered in the poolroom to watch the TV and the radar scan. We somehow got a report that a tornado had been sited on the southwest part of the county. We did not pay particular attention to this, as these sightings were a common occurrence, with no twisters actually on the ground. We went on waiting.

A little while later one of our firefighters came in the firehouse and told us that Lt. Dick Tong, on WHAS radio was reporting a tornado on the ground around I-65 and the Kentucky State Fairgrounds. He was flying in his traffic helicopter for the afternoon rush hour drive home. As I remember he flew south of the storm and gave a continuous report on the tornado's track, damage occurred and gave advanced warning of the next neighborhoods that were in the path of the storm. This was the first warning we were going to have trouble. As the storm progress northeast through Audubon Park, Bardstown Road, Cherokee Park, and Crescent Hill Areas, it became apparent the tornado was heading for St. Matthews. A little while earlier I had seen my wife heading home, so I called her and told her to alert the neighbors in our building, get the cat, and go to the basement in our building. An L&N Railroad southbound train stopped in front of the firehouse, reversed directions and

backed up north of the Hubbards Lane crossing. I remember the firehouse lights going out momentarily and then coming right back on.

We went outside on the apparatus ramp in front of the firehouse. Looking westward down Westport Road, we saw the most eerily pink sky, with dark, boiling, black clouds moving ever so swiftly in our direction. Then we saw it. Not a regular funnel cloud associated with tornados, but the whole cloud down on the ground, headed our way! We stood there mesmerized, not believing what our eyes were seeing. We were stunned and speechless. Eventually we saw that the cloud was going north of us. All I can remember is hearing the roar of the tornado, and seeing this black cloud down on the ground. I remember the debris churning in the cloud; large trees, limbs, plywood, other building materials. The debris was swirling in the cloud, like spaghetti in a pot of vigorously boiling water. It seemed the cloud was traveling very fast as it passed by in a few moments. The cloud appeared well north of our location; we were in no immediate danger.

The officers in charge, Captains Ring and DeHart, decided our area had taken a direct hit. We loaded up S-5, (1957 Seagrave 750 GPM, 75 foot, quint), and pulled her out on the ramp. (S-4 our quad was out of service for some reason.) We sat there with the truck running waiting for the tones to hit dispatching us to the scene where the tornado hit. The alarm radio was eerily silent, no traffic for us or any other east band department. What had happened? Did the tornado hit north of us in Indiana? We didn't know. We just sat there dumbfounded and waited. This was the stupid thing we did that day as I remember: a fully loaded quint, sitting on the front firehouse ramp, engine running, with nowhere to go! This was the epitome of our stupidity giving credence to the old adage: "All dressed up, with nowhere to go"!

After about 15 minutes, we decided to back the quint into the firehouse, and park her. I shut her down, and hung my turnout gear in my location back on the pole. Still there was no traffic on the alarm radio. Then Harrords Creek, the neighboring fire department immediately to our northeast, was knocked out on the report of a person with a heart attack in the Glen View Manor area. (This was the time before EMS came into existence in our area, when fire departments carried resuscitators to revive heart attack victums, if possible.) One of Harrods Creek's assistant chiefs was making the run south on Lime Kiln Lane, when he topped the hill, crossing I-71. Seeing the devastation in the subdivisions at this location, he immediately informed county alarm of the tornado damage, and asked for each east band fire department that could, to send a unit into the area for search and rescue. County Alarm dispatched the run, as we loaded up S-1 to responded to the call. Captain Ring was in charge, and I was the engineer. We had a full crew, but the only person I remember on the tailboard was Bob McGrath. This was the beginning of a very long night!

The predetermined route from the firehouse on Lyndon Way to U.S. Highway 42 and the Waterson Expressway was Westport Road, Hubbards Lane, and Rudy Lane to U.S. 42. This is the route we took, and luckily it was as Chenoworth Lane was blocked at U.S. 42. As I drove down Rudy Lane the winds started strongly blowing, with the rain from the storm falling. I realized I was about to witness sights that I had never seen before nor even imagined I would ever see. I said a silent prayer, and told myself to do what needed to be done for the moment, no matter how horrendous the scene. There was time for emotion when this was all over! I asked the heavens above for the strength to accomplish what I had to do.

I had just negotiated the sharp 90-degree curve to the left on Rudy Lane at Ambridge Way, heading for the slight reverse curve just before the Lutheran Church. I was having trouble seeing as the rain was blowing into the open cab truck, blurring my vision. The windshield wipers both outside and inside were doing little to aide my vision. As I proceeded towards this curve, I saw what appeared to be a tree limb on the right side of the road bobbing up and down in the wind directly in my path. I adjusted the speed of my vehicle to clear the limb as it moved on its up stroke. I just missed on my speed calculation, with the limb breaking the glass dome on the Federal Model 17, twin-beam warning light, mounted to the center post of S-1's windshield. I heard the distinct "clunk" as the limb hit the light. I looked up and saw the front of the thick glass red dome missing, with the twin-beams still burning and rotating. I hoped the men on the tailboard were ok!

May, 2011

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We arrived at U.S. 42 and Rudy Lane, with very heavy traffic conditions. We proceeded through the heavy traffic on U.S. 42, turning left onto Lime Kiln Lane. I remember seeing a two-lane road, with high voltage powers lines down about a ¼ mile in front of us, lying across the road, blocking our path. The rain had stopped, with the sun starting to come out. The sky was clearing with it then becoming very hot and humid. Captain Ring told me to park S-1 on the left side of the road and shut the truck down. We then paired up and grabbed forcible entry tools to begin our search. Bob McGrath and I partnered up together. We grabbed an axe and a haligan tool. Both crews followed Captain Ring to the subdivision entrance off Glenwood Road, making sure not to come in contact with the power wires on the ground. They were not arcing, which made me feel the power was off. I was not about to find out first hand though!

Captain Ring conferred with one of the Harrods Creek Assistant Chiefs to determine what our assignment was going to be. We were instructed to start our search and rescue efforts on Harwood Road and work our way westward to the intersection with Glenview Road for further assignment. Bob and I took the south side of the street while the other half of our crew searched the north side. We walked into the subdivision on Glenwood Road turning onto Harwood starting our search efforts.

What we saw on Harwood Road was nothing less that breath taking. I remember as a child watching the Victory At Sea television series on World War II in total amazement at the destruction wrought by both the Allied and Axis bombing on each other's respective cities. In its own strange way this is the same destruction that faced Bob and I as we turned on to Harwood Road. I saw large two-story brick homes with the second stories substantially wrecked or completely gone. Trees that once stood tall were twisted, broken, littering the once beautifully manicured lawns. Mud splattered almost every surface that was left standing. The smell of natural gas from the broken gas meters feeding these homes was very strong, presenting its own special set of circumstances to the situation. The gas could not be shut off in most instances, as the break in the line was upstream from the shutoff valve. It was eerily silent, with the only sound heard the wailing of sirens coming our way. The sun had come out and it was turning very hot. Bob and I looked at each other and started to work.

Bob and I search all of the houses on the south side of Harwood Road. We would gain entry into the house and make a complete search from basement to second floor, making forcible entry into most. Three of these searches stand indelibly written in my memory, each for a different reason. I will tell our story for each.

On initial approach to each house, we would try to make contact with any occupant by knocking on the front door, and announcing our identification as the "fire department". If we got no answer at the front and back door, we would force entry and make our search. Early on we came to a house that appeared to have escaped substantial damage. We knock on the door several minutes announcing our presence. Eventually the door opened, but only as much as the security chain would allow. A very weak, scared voice of an obviously elderly lady asked what we wanted. Imagine what this lady must have felt, having just survived a tornado and then being confronted by two young men, both disheveled looking, sporting bushy mustaches, dressed in weird looking "raincoats" with crazy looking hats (I had an aluminum Cairns helmet on), carrying axes and ominous looking tools! It is an understatement to say that she was scared to death! On top of all this we told her she had to leave her home, her only place of refuge from the storm and then move down the street to a place for residents from the neighborhood to take refuge. She told us in no uncertain terms, "Thanks, but no thanks!" I tried to explain to her in the nicest, most calming, reassuring voice I had that she was in danger if she remained in her home. I saw I was getting nowhere, when she started to close the door. What would we do if she persisted and closed the door? I just kept the conversation open, and finally she saw it my way when I told her the county police would take care of her. She unchained the door, and let us in. She told us no one else was in the house. She got what little she needed and we escorted her down the street with Bob on her right arm, and I on her left, supporting her as we proceeded to the command post. We gave her over to the custody of the county police, and went back to our task.

May, 2011

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We picked up our search where we left off. When we had to affect a forcible entry into a house, we would pick a ground floor window, break out the windowpane above the latch securing the top sash to the bottom sash, opening the locked window with very little damage. We came upon a house with the ground floor completely intact, and the second story exterior walls gone, leaving only some interior walls and doorways. We quickly found no one was home. This required a forcible entry. All three exterior doors had dead bolt locks so we decided to go through a window. Subsequently we found all ground floor windows secured with dead bolt locks on both sashes. What do we do now? We decided the only option we had was to completely remove a ground level window as we were taught to do on the fire ground. This allowed us to enter uninjured. We climbed through a rear window that led into the dinning room and made a complete search, finding no one in the house. We left the way we came in, preceding to the next house. Bob and I joked that the homeowner would wonder how the tornado destroyed his house's second story, left the ground floor intact, except for the neatly removed dinning room window!

We searched several houses with nothing found. We came upon a brick house where we had to make entry for the search. The house had no second story left. We came into the living room, and were immediately confronted by a large pile of brick about eight feet in diameter, and five feet deep. Bob and I looked at each other in bewilderment. Bob finally said, " What the hell are we going to do now?" I gave it some thought and said that we had to dig down in the pile of brick to the floor, in such a pattern that we would find anyone who might be trapped underneath the pile. We methodically started to dig down into the bricks until we found the floor. This proved to be a monumental task. After about a half an hour of digging holes in the pile of bricks, we were satisfied that there was no one trapped by the collapse of the chimney into the living room. We then searched the rest of the house, finding nothing.

We continued to search the rest of the south side of the street, until we reached the intersection of Harwood Road and Glenview Avenue, at the county police command post. We reported to Captain Ring, standing by until we were released by Harrods Creek Fire command. We walked back to S-1, loaded up, driving back to the firehouse. It was dark when we got back to our quarters. We waited around until we were released. The power was off still in St. Matthews. People had candles in their windows and in use for light. We were under a boil water order. I went home to my wife on Ridgeway Avenue. I gave her a big hug and then told her all that had happened that afternoon. We were just happy to be back together again, safe and unharmed.

It is now July of 2012 as I write these memoirs. Major Ring gave me a call to see what my plans were for the upcoming St.MFD reunion. He mentioned to me that Bob McGrath just recently passed away. I told him that Bob and I had become close friends, and our working together as partners had solidified a very strong friendship between us. I was saddened to hear this news. Bob and I became close initially due to our ages and similar backgrounds. We were a part of a small group of "yellow helmet" firefighters that were in our late twenties, not in the officer ranks, that were relied upon to lead and help the larger contingent of younger firefighters we had on the department at the time. (Bill Wilke was another close friend who was part of this group). Bob was dedicated to St. Matthews Fire Department. He was always there on Tuesday night training, putting out a maximum effort to learn all he could, and become the best he could be. He also came to Sunday morning training we had at the time, for the people who could not make Tuesdays, and those of us who wanted to hone their firefighting skills. Bob was always first to show up for each Crusade for Children, and one of the last to leave on Sunday afternoon. He was one of the groups of dedicated firefighters that WAS and IS still St. Matthews Fire Department. A lot of us have moved on, going our separate ways, both in life and death. But we can be sure that we will meet again at the glorious reunion that is the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Rest in Peace, Bob.

This memoir is dedicated to the memory of Firefight Bob McGrath.

Kenneth C. Reising, Jr., Med July 29, 2012, Clayton, N.C