

# It Was A Miracle... In The Middle Of Violence

**Earl Davis**  
Register City Editor

A miracle happened in Oelwein, in Maynard, and in the mind of mothers and fathers and even in the hearts of little children who lived through this miracle of the most devastating disaster to strike northeast Iowa in many, many years—a twin twister.

The devastation lasted three minutes Wednesday afternoon when the sun went under black, twisting clouds—and two killer tornado funnels touched the darkened land to create hell on earth—the miracle took hours to materialize. It took hours for Register-land residents to wake up to the fact that God spared so many and took the lives of so few during that unforgettable three minutes.

Thirteen hours later the sun

came out again to shine on a city and small town people couldn't recognize. Land marks are gone; buildings are either gone or twisted, but the fortunate still stand. Eighteen persons died; a tiny tot, and a grandmother, as well, before the sun returned. Mrs. Grace Damon died in utter pain and despair pleading for God's mercy as volunteer workers tried helplessly to remove a man-made creation from above her body while her blood drained away the life from her body; we couldn't help her.

In Maynard, Aaron Schlegel, postmaster, walked out of his battered home on the west side of town, crossed the street to help others and found the bodies of both Glenda Kelly and Mrs. Louis Ponsar. "They were both alive then," Schlegel said, "but they were hurt so badly." At the same time one block away West Central School Principal John "Jack"

Kappmeyer and two neighbor women were covering up the very blackened shape of Henry Warnke. "We had looked for him," Kappmeyer said, "because I had seen parts of his home going flying by before I had the good sense to head for my basement; something I've never done before during a storm," he added. "A woman walked right by Henry; he looked so much like all the blackened rubble that we all just simply missed him," Kappmeyer added.

The residents of Oelwein stood in disbelief along South Frederick at exactly 3 p.m. Wednesday evening as they observed what they believed could never happen to their town. The crying and screaming started and most persons began to move.

Two telephone lines remained open in the immediate downtown area, and this, too, was a part of the Oelwein-Maynard miracle—

one line was open at the Register office, to call out, and not in; the other line fed the juice to ring a bell on a phone at Crosse Printery, buried under tons of rubble and each of the many firemen were individually praying for help with telephone lines, it was ironic.

As the phone that couldn't be answered at Crosse rang, a vocal line rang down the stairs and out the windows of an apartment above Ben Franklin on South Frederick—Mrs. Grace Damon was caught by a huge cement-covered chimney and vertically smashed through a two-foot thick floor. Still in somewhat of a state of shock, men had to be shouted at to get them to go up the stairs to help the pinned woman, but once they began they worked like horses to release the trapped woman—and a grandmother could be heard praying in the background.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Bonnie Barton

cleared out the rubble indirectly caused by the twister and led nine little children out of what was left of a basement—a basement wrecked by an explosion of a furnace located in the room she had taken the children to for safety. Not one of the children were hurt.

Husbands found wives, boy-friends found girlfriends, and parents found children, and the beginning of the miracle began to strike both residents of Oelwein and of Maynard; the twin twister was then striking Charles City.

People realized that the death toll in their immediate area wasn't too high, but the injured passed on the street in a daze and some who snapped to begin to lead them toward possible medical attention. (Realizing the significance of the shortage of city doctors, and after being informed that the National Guard could not be called out without official word, and also assuming the Daily Register's

phone was the only one in operation, the governor was called at his home for help; he didn't hesitate; he gave this caller authorization to inform Capt. Leslie Ohl to call out the guard and also promised help from other cities as quickly as possible under the conditions.

Things began to settle down 45 minutes after the twisters hit; much of the direction of city employees and the outstanding job they did in beginning to clear a pathway to the hospital can be and should be attributed to City Clerk Tom Peterson. The man was a leader in a time when people needed a leader.

Asked if he had been through a similar incident, he said: "No, but somebody has to do something."

That "something" probably saved many of the injured lives.

## Federal Aid May Be Available

Federal assistance to city and state governments will be available if and when damage to state and local public facilities exceeds \$2 million in the state of Iowa in a 12-month period.

This means \$2 million in public facilities, not private businesses or homes... this would be highways, roads, water, sewer, city building, etc.

If, in the governor's opinion, this figure has been reached, he will request of the president a declaration of Iowa as a major disaster area. If the president makes such a declaration, the Office of Emergency Planning can make many different kinds of assistance available, for example, the city can be reimbursed up to 50 per cent of the costs, included to repair of public school facilities, etc.

The Office of Education can provide assistance for repair of public school facilities, etc. In addition, the Small Business Administration may declare a disaster in a given area independently of the president's action and if this is done business and home owners may qualify for 3 per cent interest loans to be repaid over 30 years for uninsured damage.

The Farmers Home Administration may also independently declare this area a disaster and make loans available to farmers at low interest and long term.

We have contacted the appropriate agencies and asked for assistance. All have responded and are sending people to the disaster area.

## Bulletins

**Drowns In Pool**  
DES MOINES—A 6-year-old boy reported missing Thursday night was found drowned, apparently accidentally, in an Urbandale attorney's swimming pool Friday morning. Mrs. Robert Maerlin of Des Moines reported her son, Robert Jr., missing about 9:27 p. m. Thursday.

**End Giant Sweep**  
PHU BAI, Vietnam—The allies ended their month-long sweep through the A Shau Valley today and North Vietnamese were believed moving back to the area, their biggest supply and staging base in South Vietnam. U.S. officers said the drive through the valley had killed 726 enemy troops.

**More Paris Unrest**  
PARIS (AP)—Mushrooming unrest among France's students and workers spilled over today into the national radio-television network. Producers and directors of the network struck and radio-television newsmen said they would no longer accept government orders on how the news should be presented.

**1,073 Deaths**  
RANGOON—The death toll from cyclones that lashed Burma's southwest coast on May 10 has risen to 1,073 according to reports reaching here today.

**Upper Iowa Lets Students Out To Help**  
FAYETTE—Classes and activities at Upper Iowa College were dismissed Thursday to allow students and faculty members to assist in relief work in the nearby tornado-stricken communities of Oelwein and Maynard.

More than 500 students answered the call for workers and spent the day helping officials clear debris, cut trees, and perform other tasks in the two disaster areas. Many students responded to the plea for help shortly after the tornadoes struck Wednesday, and worked throughout the night.

Faculty members, too, donned overalls and work clothes and assisted in the clean-up process.

Two spring activities scheduled for Thursday were postponed: the annual President's Ju-co-te (juice-coffee-tea) will be held on Tuesday, May 21, while the scheduled sidewalk art show and sale will be held "on the first sunny day," according to Phil Manning, head of the Art Department.

The faculty picnic, scheduled for Friday at Klock's Island Park, has been postponed until the following Friday, May 24.

The Professional Food Service Management Co., which operates the cafeteria at Upper Iowa, prepared sack lunches for students working in the clean up, and also furnished food for the Red Cross centers.

Dr. Eugene E. Garbee, president, stated today that both students and faculty will continue to offer assistance as long as such aid is needed; however, it was expected that classes would be resumed Friday morning.

## Johnson Makes Commodity Foods Available, City

DES MOINES—State Superintendent Paul F. Johnston today recommended that government commodity foods are available for feeding disaster victims.

"These government commodities are distributed through the School Lunch section," Dr. Johnston said. "These foods may be diverted to emergency use when natural disasters strike."

"Disaster victims have first priority for USDA foods," he continued, "and we make every effort to have them immediately available."

USDA food needed during an emergency situation is released to the American Red Cross or other public and private disaster relief agencies.

E.E. Cowan, chief, School Lunch, and Ellis Fischer, commodity supervisor, were in Charles City and Oelwein early Thursday morning to make these commodities available wherever needed.

## 900 More Protestors

WASHINGTON—About 900 more protestors rode into the suburbs of the nation's capital today to join the Poor People's Campaign that was still underway for them. The demonstrators, mainly from New England and the northeast, left Baltimore on the final leg while campaign leaders, in confusion, were still debating whether to delay them there for one or two more nights.

## Several Residents Are Confined To Hospitals

Mercy Hospital authorities late this morning issued the following condition report on tornado victims: Mrs. Kathryn Beaman, Emily Carlson, Mrs. Dorothy Flaucher, James Fred Ingels (not Mrs. James or Fred as previously reported). Mrs. Hazel Jones, Mr. and Mrs. N. J. Michael, Ben Proctor, Julie Trotter, Mrs. Marjorie Trotter all as good and Mrs. Viola Zacharias fair.

Mrs. Leslie Ohl, who had been reported hospitalized, was treated and released as were Connie and Jason Francis. Fred Scheppe, Du-buque, was dismissed. Mrs. Hattie Zander was not a tornado patient but had already been hospitalized at the time of the disaster. Her name was included in the hospital report Thursday.

The Kelly children were reported good at the Summer hospital and Julius Wegner, Fayette, was dismissed.

People's Hospital, Independence, released the following condition reports for Mrs. Florence Paulsen, Oma Neffzer, Oelwein, good; Lucille Taylor and Henry Warnke, both of Maynard, Mrs. John Phillips, Russell Phillips, and LaVern Warhan, Oelwein, fair.

Mrs. W. L. (Nina) Hicks was reported in good condition at St. Francis hospital and Mrs. Winifred Joyce, good at Scholtz Memorial hospital, both in Waterloo. Allen Memorial hospital, Waterloo, said the condition of Mrs. Gordon (Geraldine) Kelly was

## MYSTERY NUMBER TODAY Is Good For \$9

Number in upper left hand corner of page one of this issue is your Mystery Number. See if you find an "MN" number in an ad in this issue exactly the same as the number on page one.

Eligibility for a prize is limited to subscribers of the REGISTER prior to the time contest was announced. A subscriber who has the correct Mystery Number cannot transfer the paper to another person.

No Register employee or carrier or their family may enter. Bring your full paper to the REGISTER office no later than 10 a.m. Monday.

If unclaimed, \$3 is always added.

Wednesday's Mystery Number was MN-4851 in Robins Surplus ad. Now check back, would you have won?

## MYSTERY

No. 6198

# The Oelwein Daily Register.

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Per Copy 10c

Oelwein, Iowa 50662

## 8,000 Stories About May 15; Survey Total Damage

by Mike Mahoney  
Register Managing Editor

Oelwein is a city of over 8,000 stories... over 8,000 incidents... 8,000 accounts of the worst day in the history of this city, 95-years-old. To tell them all would be impossible... but to mention a few is a must.

We'd first like to relate that we certainly are in no position to say these incidents are the most unusual... they're no different or shocking than the average resident experienced May 15 at 4:57 p.m.

Of all the unusual sites and freak happenings, the topsy-turvy appearance of the Frank Gates residence on 2nd Ave. N. E. is worthy of discussion. The Gates' home was turned completely upside down... and the house was a large two-story building.

While the weather flipped the house, Frank and his wife, were among the "lucky ones" to escape serious injury and possible death when the Earl Moore garage was flattened by the violent winds. The Gates couple and Jere Vyverberg were locked together, attempting to hold on.

Across the street in what used to be St. Mary's Episcopal church, the Rev. Ronald Whitmer was serving communion in a Wednesday evening service. The Rev. Whitmer led his attending congregation to the basement in hopes of escaping the storm. The church was flattened, beyond recognition.

At the same time, Rev. Whitmer's wife (Marty) was in the second floor of their home at the north end of 3rd Ave. N. E. (The Lyon duplex). She and her two small children were pinned beneath a wall while the remainder of the second floor was whisked into a nearby field. Only a quick grasp at the last second saved the baby.

John Cross, who lost his building on First Ave. N. E. (Crosse Printery), was in his car on North Frederick, trying to get home before the storm hit. He noticed debris flying up the street, and when his windshield exploded from his car, he threw his body to the floor of the car and rode out the storm.

And what about the woman who found grass in her refrigerator when she opened it?... or the men's store on one side of the street who had women's clothing in its building... blown in from across the street.

Supt. Arthur Sensor denied a report that the Junior High and Central grade school buildings had been condemned. Sensor reported both buildings were completely insured for replacement value. School officials are awaiting arrival of insurance adjusters to investigate exact damage.

"We won't know for sure about the buildings until they arrive," said Sensor. The school head said the Central building was heavily damaged, but also reported that the Junior High was worse.

School has been called off until further notice. All buildings in the school system suffered heavy wind damage. The general contractor for the school gymnasium, Youngblut Construction of Oran has already begun work to replace the roof on the high school gym.

The school board is expected to meet Monday (if possible) to work out details for school and building repair.

L. Stan Kuch of the Iowa Highway Patrol, who directed the police units from the basement of the telephone company, explained the worst problem facing crews was the traffic delaying dump trucks enroute to the city dump.

City officials and others were expected to meet and discuss other possibilities about re-rout-

ing traffic. "Look what has been accomplished already and if we can get those trucks moving faster and keep the traffic off the streets, we're going to get those trees cleaned up sooner than we could have dreamed possible," said Kuch.

Kuch reported no looting of city stores and no major problems. "The communications have been excellent all along. In fact this telephone company has been tremendous, just like other utilities in town."

Dump trucks carrying debris were being re-routed on city streets today Friday to assist in the problems. The trucks are traveling on South Frederick to 7th St., turning a block west and going south on 1st Avenue to 10th St., then out to the dump. The trucks were returning via Highway 190 and 150.

Officials estimate as many as 75 dump trucks are carrying debris to the dump. Leaders were named to clean-up crews this morning (Friday) to make efficient progress in the work.

Iowa Highway Patrolmen are making arrangements to handle those citizens who have lost their licenses or have had licenses expire.

City taverns have been closed until Monday.

Mayor Samuel Mazzotti commented Friday noon, "I would like to express my personal thanks for everyone's outstanding cooperation during this time. Please bear with us and be patient."

Mazzotti reported good progress in the city. City hall has been declared "lost" because of heavy damage. Officials are considering setting up a temporary office in the basement of the library.

Rep. John C. Culver, Cedar Rapids, will be in Oelwein Saturday morning to look over the damage and check Oelwein's future problems with the Mayor and council.

"It has been most gratifying to see the city rebound so quickly," Mazzotti said. Plate glass windows were being replaced in downtown stores and several businesses are open again.

**Skirts Too Short**  
HOUSTON, Tex.—Fifty girls at Jesse H. Jones High school have been suspended because the school said their skirts were too short.

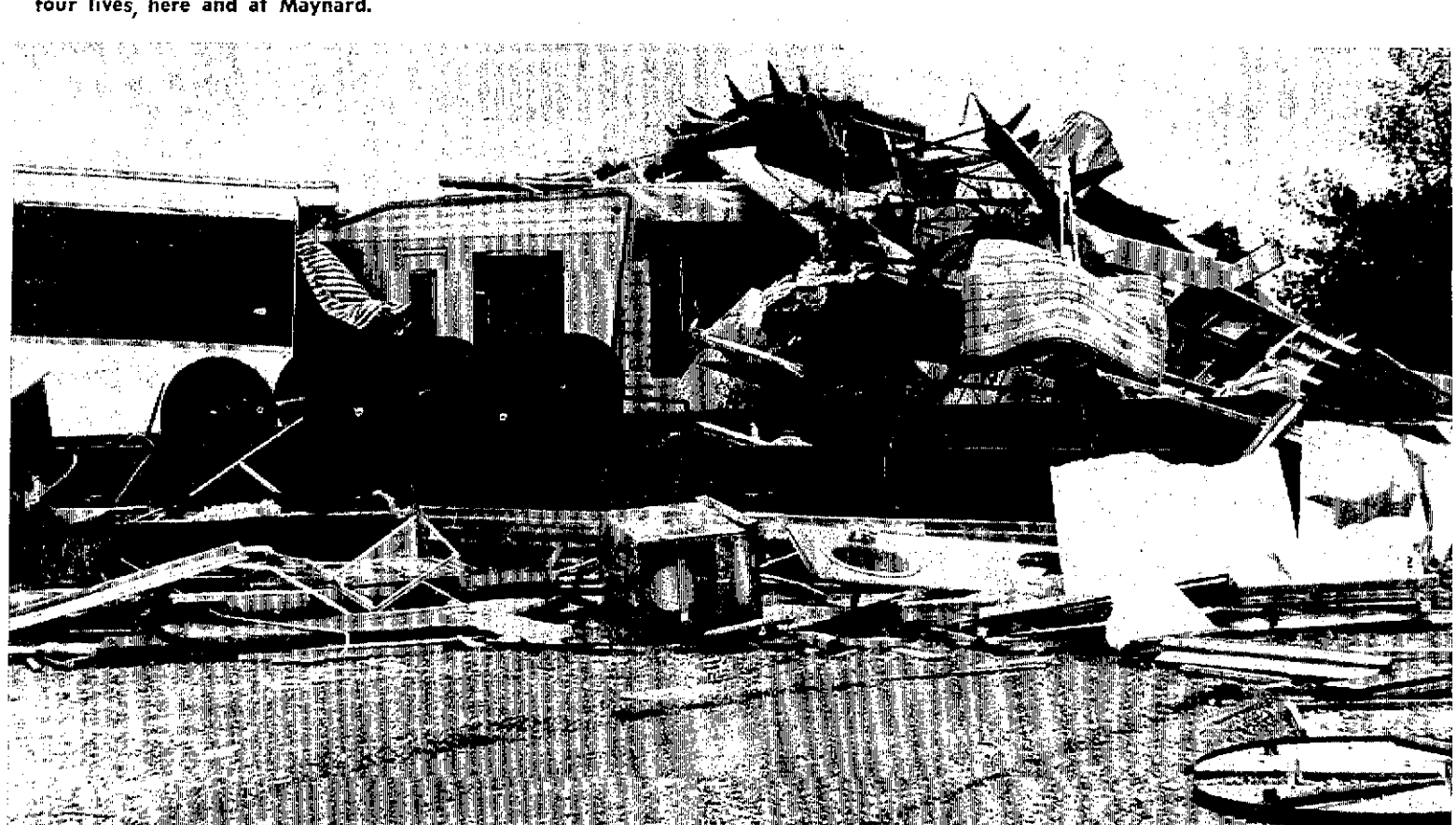
**REGISTERLAND**  
Weather and River Stages REGISTERLAND WEATHER Fair and slightly cooler Friday night, lows upper 30s to lower 40s. Partly cloudy, little temperature change Saturday, highs lower to middle 60s, precipitation chances 5 per cent on Friday night, 10 per cent Saturday.

**RIVER STAGES**  
DAVENPORT (R)—River Stages: Lansing—8.3, rise .3 Dam No. 9—14.2, fall .3 McGregor—7.9, rise .3 Guffenberg—6.3, rise 1.2 Dubuque—8.7, rise .5

**Stock Market**  
NEW YORK (AP)—The stock market widened its losses in active trading this afternoon. The Dow Jones industrial average at noon was down 7.22 to 896.50, making a decisive break below the psychologically important 900 level.



THE VALLEY MOBILE HOMES overall scene from about half way between Lake View Trailer Court and Valley indicates just a bit more of the more than \$14-million estimated damage to the city of Oelwein during the 4:57 p.m. tornado which struck the city and took four lives, here and at Maynard.



RESIDENTS LIVING NEAR VALLEY MOBILE HOMES on City Park Road were in shock after leaving their trailers at Lake View Trailer Court and looking across the 200 foot span to see absolute havoc in that area. The above photo shot by Roger Draheim, Oelwein Daily Register employe illustrates the overall scene here and his family found when they became brave enough to venture out of their trailer home and look around.

## Enemy Says Bombing Must Be Stopped

PARIS (AP)—A spokesman for the North Vietnamese delegation to the Paris peace talks said Friday "there is no compromise possible" on his government's demand that the United States stop all bombing and attacks on its territory without any conditions.

The spokesman said Ambassador Xuan Thuy will go into Saturday's third meeting with a new demand that all attacks be stopped.

"We will ask it again and again until it comes to pass," Nguyen Van Sao told newsmen.

U.S. Ambassador W. Averell Harriman has said North Vietnam must show some "restraint" in its military actions to justify elimination of all bombing. He called for restoration of the buffer zone between North and South Vietnam and for a scaling down of infiltration.

A U.S. spokesman said a decision to halt the bombing would be made only at the highest level—by President Johnson—and on the basis of the total situation at the time.

Asked what North Vietnam would do to get a bombing halt,

## Accountant Team To Help City Revamp

DES MOINES—Iowa Society of Certified Public Accountants will supply a team of its members to help Charles City and Oelwein businesses get back on their feet, Jerry J. Perpich, Des Moines, Society president said Thursday.

Perpich said he has already made arrangements for the CPA's to work with the Small Business Administration, which will establish offices in the two tornado-stricken areas within a few days.

The CPA's will work without compensation.

"When a disaster like this occurs, records often become lost, merchandise must be accounted for and accounting systems become disorganized," Perpich said.

"Iowa CPA's can do little to alleviate the tragic personal losses suffered by these two devastated communities, but we can do much toward helping their economies get back into operation."

## Jaycee-Ettes Order Park Equipment

STRAWBERRY POINT (Special)—Don Miersen, Strawberry Point fire chief, was guest speaker Tuesday evening, May 14, at the regular meeting of the Strawberry Point Jaycee Ettes. He told of the function of the Fire Department. The chapter has ordered a 4-way Rainbow Climber for playground equipment to be installed in Inger park.

The June meeting will be a dinner meeting at Al Mar when there will be election of officers.

Lunch was served by the hostess, Mrs. Larry Sheffert.

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