

# SUPER TORNADO

## "A NIGHT TO REMEMBER"

In the worst tornado outbreak in history, 148 tornadoes touched down in 13 states.

During the late afternoon and evening hours of April 3, 1974, at least eight tornadoes, including four extremely intense and long-lived storms, brought death and unequalled storm destruction to Alabama. Eighty-six persons were killed, 949 were injured, and damages exceeded \$50 million. Sixteen counties in the northern part of the State were hit the hardest.

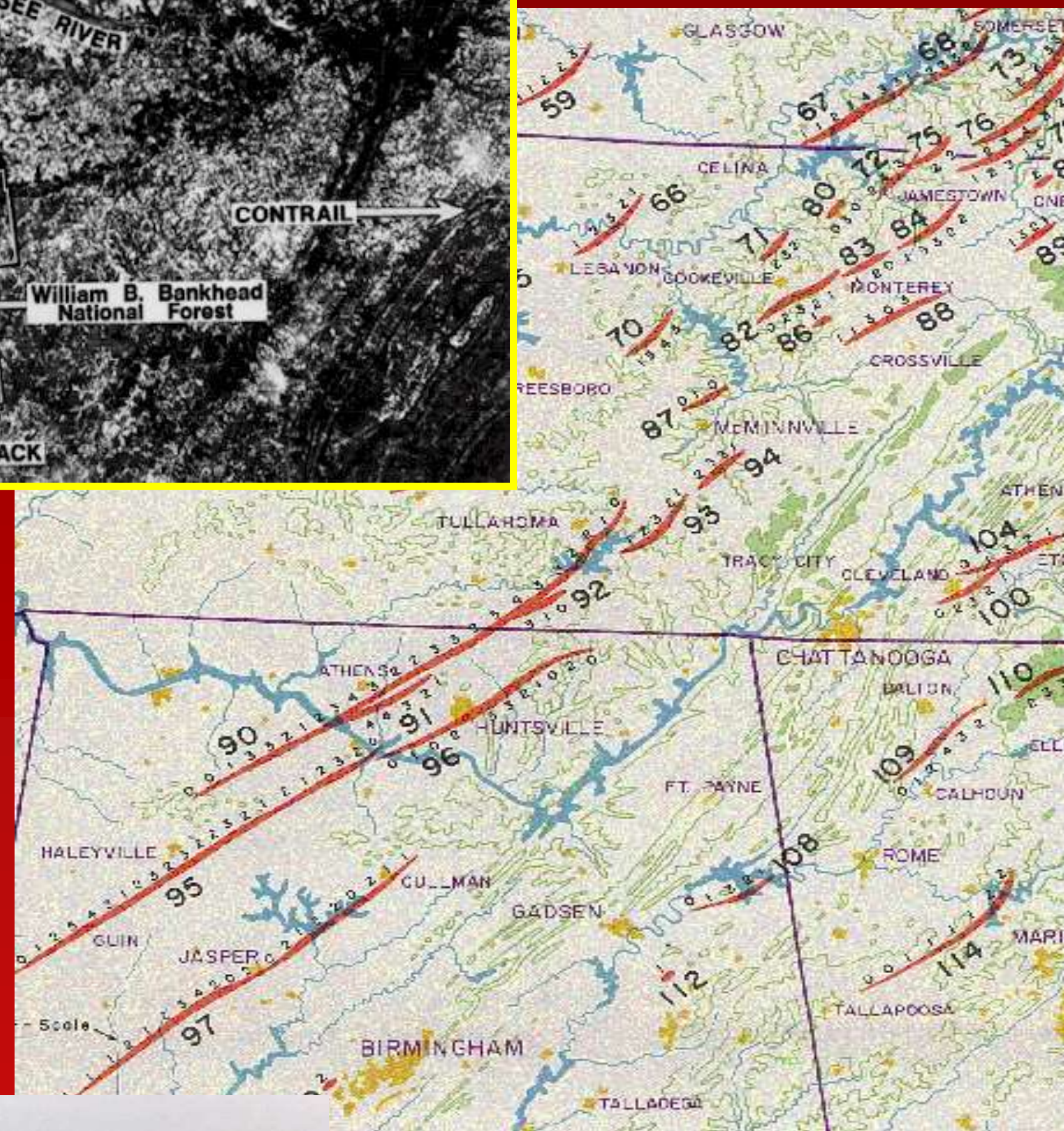
Alabama's major tornado activity began when a storm (90) touched ground near Newburg (Franklin County) at 6:30 p.m. CDT and plowed viciously northeastward. This tornado moved on the ground continuously for 85 miles in Alabama before it entered Southern Middle Tennessee. Reports at the time described it as "big and powerful and taking everything in its path." Severely damaged were rural areas of northern Lawrence County, the communities of Tanner, in Limestone County, Harvest and Hazel Green, in Madison County, and Vanntown in Lincoln County, Tennessee. This tornado entered Limestone County about 7:05 p.m. CDT. At 7:35 p.m. CDT, in nearly the exact point of entry near the Tennessee River, a second major tornado (91) touched down and followed the first tornado. Its 20-mile-long path varied from that of its predecessor by only a block to less than 2 miles. This storm struck hard and hindered rescue units moving into the area. Many communities were hit twice in 30 minutes. Well over half of Alabama's storm deaths and many of the injuries were dealt by these two tornadoes, which killed 55, injured 408, and caused destruction or heavy damage to over 1,100 buildings, more than 200 mobile homes, and numerous motor vehicles. A third tornado (92) followed a similar path into Southern Tennessee. Eleven people were killed and 121 were injured in Lincoln and Franklin Counties that day.

Another tornado (96) moved northeast to strike south Huntsville at 10:50 p.m. CDT. There was severe damage at the Redstone Arsenal and in south Huntsville. Staff members at the Weather Service Office in Huntsville were forced to temporarily abandon their hectic duties. Shortly after 11:00 p.m. CDT, this final storm of the outbreak in Alabama moved across Monte Sano (elevation 1,640 feet) just east of Huntsville, dissipating over western Jackson County.



"It was almost like a nightmare, and I didn't think I was going to ever wake up. ...Total chaos and destruction..."

Spencer Black,  
Limestone County EMA



One tornado hit Redstone Arsenal on the western boundary south of Martin Road. A total of 23 buildings, including the new Post Gym, were completely destroyed. One soldier called it "an air raid without bombs." There were 26 soldiers and 5 others injured, but none seriously. The total cost in damaged facilities and government property was established at \$13.2 million.



"It was like something out of the Old Testament, a pillar of clouds, black, majestic and ominous... So I hugged that ditch and wondered how far the storm would carry my body."

Bob Dumnivant,  
Huntsville Times



OFTEN BRIBED

# 1974