

David Parcus - Interview by Chelly Amin

November 15, 1989 was one of the craziest days in my life, and I saw one of the biggest tornadoes I've ever seen (still to this date). At the time, I worked for Ford Aerospace Company, and the white (now brown) buildings were located beside the "Useless Overpasses" (as all true Huntsvillians call them) on Memorial Parkway, just one exit north from Airport Road. We knew that storms were coming that day, but didn't realize it would be that bad. My boss and I were avid smokers, and when he went outside for his afternoon smokebreak, it didn't take him long to come right back in and comment that it "just looks weird outside." I asked him what he meant, and after walking outside, I understood his description. It was eerily calm and unseasonably humid. The color was off, much like it is right before a storm rolls in. This time was a little different though. It was like all the color had been zapped out of everything, and all you could see was this huge dark black wall cloud forming toward the Police/Fire Training Academy at the Old Airport to the southwest. We stood and watched the swirling clouds for a few minutes, and then you could see the red dirt billowing up from the ground, and the tornado was formed.

We ran back indoors at this point, after figuring out what was happening. I noticed when I ran back by my computer, the screen was messing up, like there was interference (like on an old TV screen). That didn't last long, and then the power went out. At that point, all we could hear was the deafening roar (that felt like a thundering locomotive passing). We ran back outside briefly to see the tornado barreling toward our building and then, all of a sudden, it just made a 90 degree right turn and headed for Airport Road. I'll never forget the sight of the debris swirling in the sky around this huge tornado as it ripped through Airport Road.

We looked at Memorial Parkway, and all you could see was a sea of red tail lights from people who were trying to do everything they could to keep from driving into the tornado. It was at that point that we heard the tornado sirens, and we ran back inside to our Break Room downstairs and waited it out.

Driving home that night, I was listening to the radio. It was heartbreaking to hear all the stories of the injuries and fatalities of those people who were stuck in their cars. What usually was a half hour commute turned into an hour plus, having to take all the back roads from Airport Road home to Maysville. Luckily the tornado had lifted before it hit our house, as we lived just about a mile north of where the track ended.