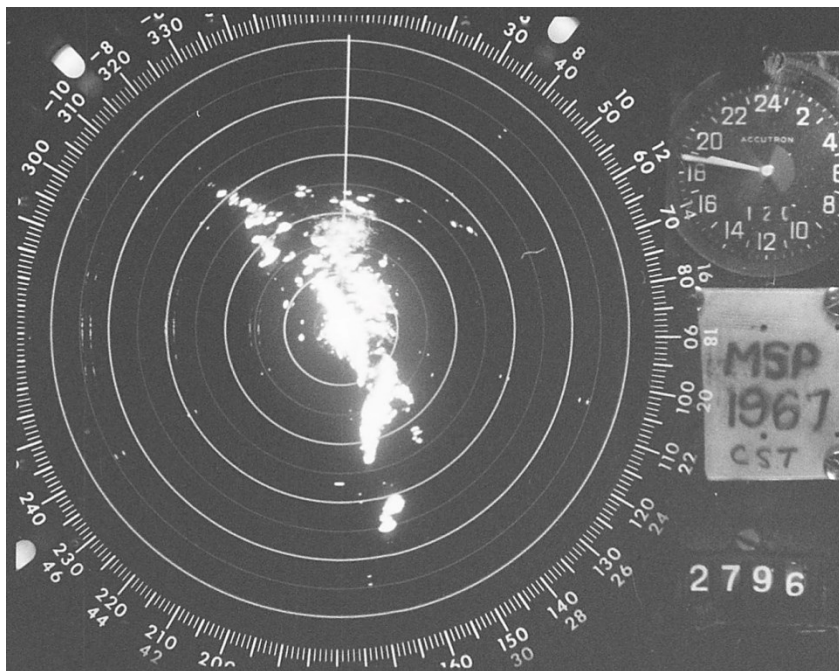


# The April 30, 1967 Tornadoes in Southern Minnesota: A Retrospective



National Weather Service, Chanhassen, Minnesota  
Originally written in 2007; updated in 2017

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Cover photo by Duane O'Malley, U.S. Weather Bureau, Minneapolis  
Photographed in Waseca, Minnesota

Radar image from April 30, 1967 from the U.S. Weather Bureau WSR-57, which was located at the Minneapolis-St Paul (MSP) International Airport. The MSP airport is at the center of the image. Brighter range rings are at intervals of 50 nautical miles; the radius is 250 nautical miles.

## 1. Introduction

For long time residents of southern Minnesota, Sunday, April 30, 1967, known as "Black Sunday," is a day that has lived in vivid detail for 50 years and will likely continue to be remembered for many years to come through stories passed through generations of Minnesotans.

On Black Sunday, a windy, humid afternoon was replaced by an evening of devastation and destruction, as a series of northward moving supercell thunderstorms spawned several long tracked, violent tornadoes across Freeborn, Waseca, and Steele counties. Between the hours of 6 and 7 pm, portions of the cities of Albert Lea and Waseca were destroyed, while Owatonna barely escaped ruin from a tornado that passed just a mile west of the city limits. Mother Nature also took aim at more rural areas surrounding the communities of Alden, Hartland, New Richland, Myrtle, Clarks Grove, Ellendale, Emmons, and Twin Lakes.

The amount of human suffering resulting from the Black Sunday tornadoes was tremendous. Thirteen Minnesotans perished, and eighty more were injured. The names of those lost in these storms follow.

Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Manuel  
Herman Nehring  
Mrs. Michael Hassing  
Harlan Holleschau  
Mr. and Mrs. Merton Bickford  
Mr. and Mrs. John Ripple  
Mr. and Mrs. George Willock  
Mr. and Mrs. Art Rux



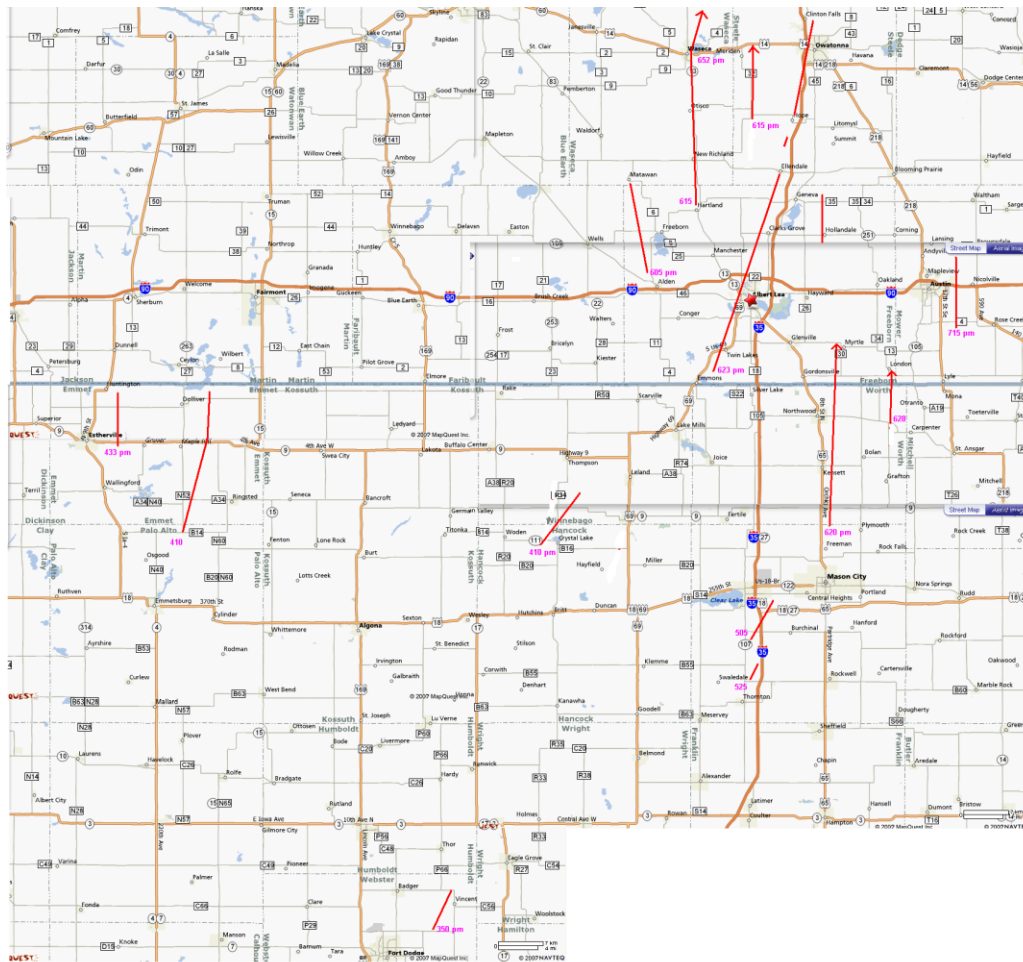
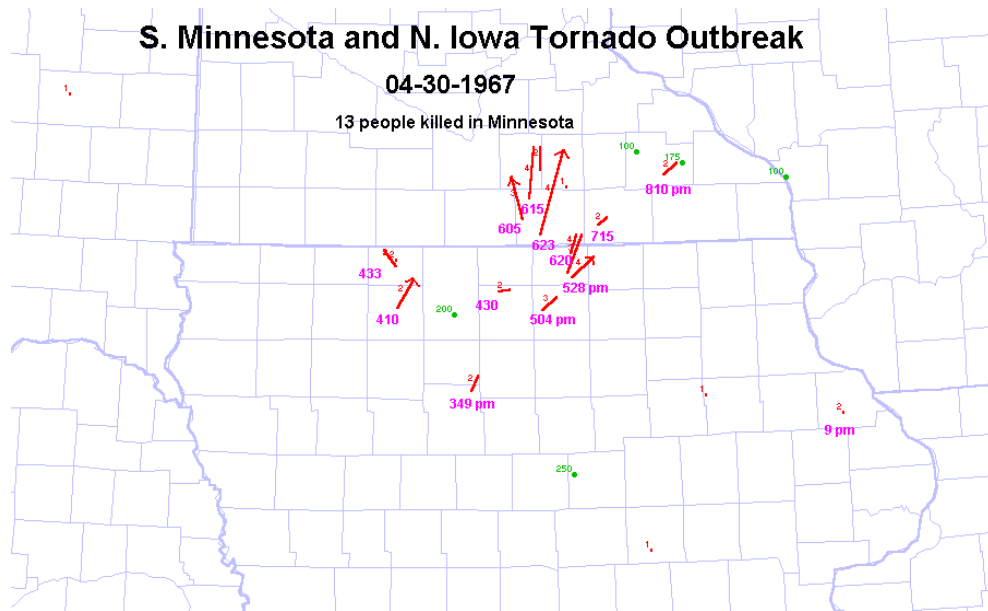
At the end of the day, nine tornadoes had affected south central and southeast Minnesota, including the seven in Freeborn, Waseca, and Steele counties and one each in Mower and Olmsted counties. Additional tornadoes occurred in northern and eastern Iowa. Of the nine Minnesota tornadoes, only one received a Fujita scale rating of less than F2 intensity. In all, southern Minnesota was raked by three F4s, two F3s, three F2s, and one F1.

The maximum tornado width observed was 500 yards, almost a third of a mile, while the tornado that damaged Albert Lea and narrowly missed Owatonna traveled 40 miles without once lifting. Characteristics of each tornado affecting southern Minnesota, as outlined in *Significant Tornadoes: 1680-1991* by Thomas P. Grazulis, are found on the next page.

Property losses totaled 9 million dollars (not adjusted for inflation), including extensive agricultural and livestock losses.

While Black Sunday certainly served as the “worst of times” for many in southern Minnesota, the tragedies of that evening also revealed the lend-a-hand spirit of local residents. Newspapers and other publications contained numerous accounts of communities banding together to resurrect their cities and take care of their own, as well as students and other volunteers traveling from many miles away to help those in need. This spirit certainly provided the lone silver lining to an otherwise tremendous catastrophe.

<b>Time</b>	<b>Counties</b>	<b>Fujita Rating</b>	<b>Path Width</b>	<b>Path Length</b>	<b>Narrative Description from <i>Grazulis</i></b>
6:05	Freeborn, Waseca	F3	100 yards	14 miles	"Moved NNW from NW of Alden to near Matawan. Farm damage was near-F4 in the first part of the path. Homes and barns were destroyed."
6:05	Steele	F1	Unknown	Unknown	
6:15	Freeborn, Waseca	F4	500 yards	30 miles	"Moved N from near Hartland to 7 [miles] NNE of Waseca. This tornado followed Hwy-67 into Waseca, destroying or damaging farm buildings on both sides of the road. It cut a four-block-wide swath in town, destroying 16 homes, six of which were leveled, and 25 more were heavily damaged."
6:15	Freeborn, Waseca	F2	Unknown	30 miles	"Moved N, parallel to and 4 [miles] E of the previous tornado. Destroyed barns were noted west of Lemond and Meriden. Little attention was paid to this event in the press."
6:20	Freeborn, Worth (IA)	F4	400 yards	18 miles	"Moved N from 2 [miles] SE of Manly, Iowa to near Myrtle, Minnesota. This tornado destroyed about 10 farms, leveling at least three of them in near-F5 fashion. Ten other farms, mostly in Iowa, were extensively damaged."
6:23	Freeborn, Steele	F4	200 yards	40 miles	"Moved NNE from SW of Twin Lakes to Albert Lea, Clarks Grove, Ellendale, Hope, and west of Owatonna. Farms were leveled at a half dozen locations along the path. There was \$2,000,000 damage in Albert Lea, where 26 homes were destroyed and 64 were badly damaged. Two deaths occurred near Owatonna."
6:28	Freeborn, Worth (IA)	F3	400 yards	6 miles	"Moved N from just south of the Iowa border to near London. About a half dozen farms were extensively damaged, with at least two farm homes destroyed."
7:15	Mower	F2	Unknown	6 miles	"Moved N after touching down on a farm 1.5 [miles] SE of Austin. At least two barns and one home were unroofed and torn apart."
8:10	Olmsted	F2	Unknown	8 miles	"Moved NE, from near Marion to NE of Eyota. A trailer and a barn were destroyed."



Images showing the tornado tracks and locations of large hail reports

## **2. The Weather Pattern**

A dynamic and powerful combination of weather features converged on Minnesota and Iowa during the afternoon and evening hours of April 30, 1967, producing the severe weather and tornadoes across the area. The storm system wreaked havoc across a large section of the country over a two to three day period, including blizzard conditions in the Northern High Plains and Northern Rockies and severe thunderstorms and tornadoes in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and the Mississippi and Ohio Valley regions.

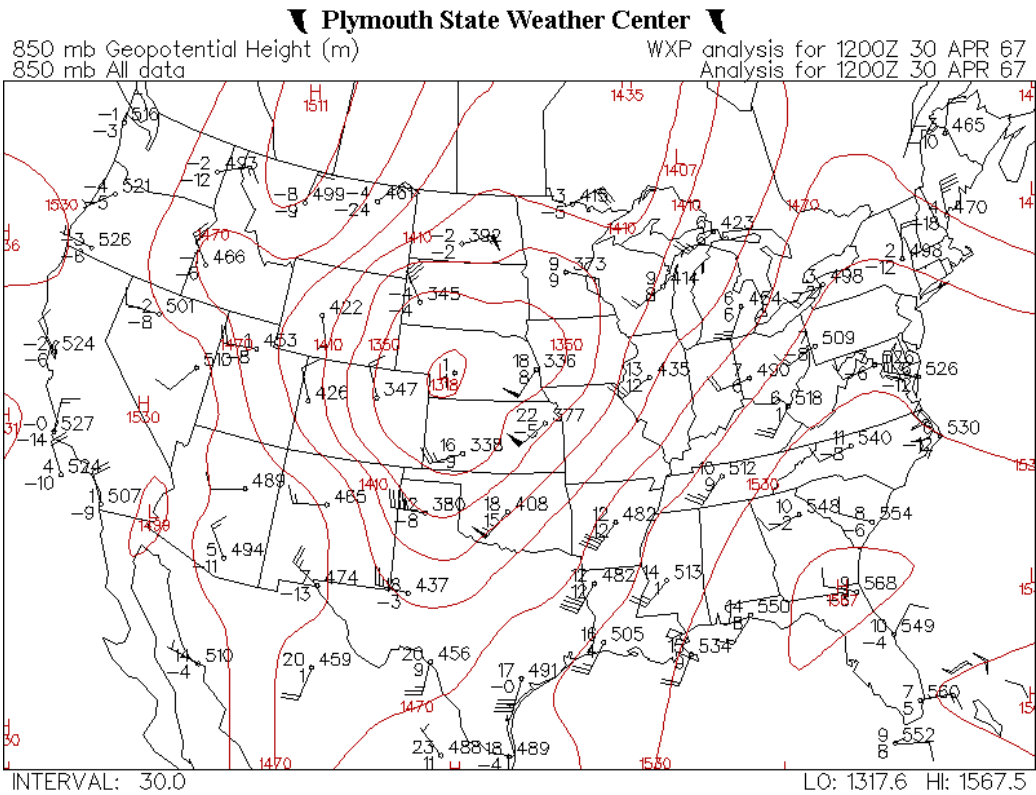
### **The Morning of April 30, 1967**

The main branch of the upper level jet stream stretched from the southwestern United States into west Texas, snaking northeastward into the Central Plains and eastward through the Ohio Valley. A 135 knot speed maximum in the jet stream had nosed to near the eastern New Mexico and western Texas Panhandle border. In severe thunderstorm forecasting, the orientation and speed of the jet stream is important in producing large deep layer wind shear values, maintaining and organizes thunderstorm updrafts.

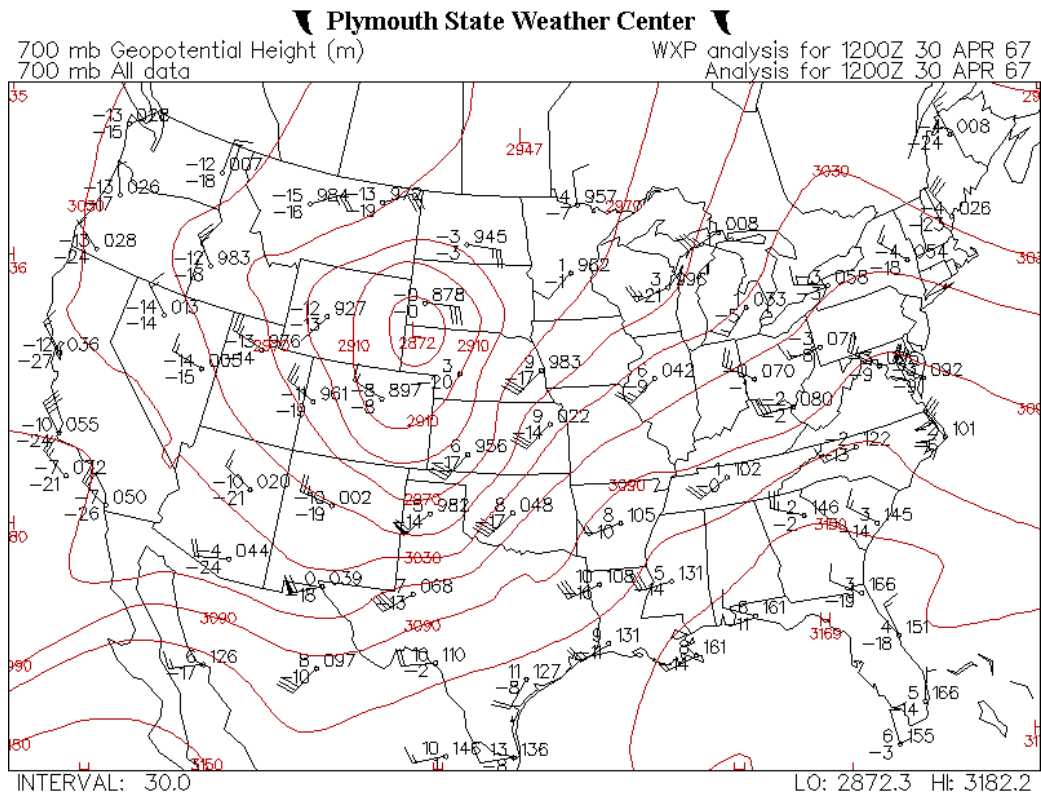
In the mid levels, a closed low pressure area, oriented from northwest to southeast, was positioned from eastern Idaho, across Wyoming, and into north central Colorado. The diverging winds to the east of the low in the Plains states resulted in a large area of synoptic scale lift, which is a key ingredient in forecasting active weather during all seasons, including thunderstorms, flash floods, and winter storms.

Just above the surface, a southwest to northeast oriented 50 knot speed maximum, known as the low level jet, stretched from central Oklahoma and into northeastern Missouri. The low level jet was responsible for transporting a large plume of moisture from the Gulf of Mexico into the Upper Midwest. A large supply of moisture is another critical element in thunderstorm forecasting, as it is necessary to form clouds and also increases the amount of environmental instability, which is necessary for air to accelerate upward to form and sustain a thunderstorm updraft. The low level jet also accentuates both the deep layer wind shear and the low level wind shear, the latter of which is critical to tornadic thunderstorm organization.

At the surface, a stationary front, associated with a surface low pressure center near the central South Dakota and Nebraska border, stretched through the southern half of Minnesota, just south of the Twin Cities. Warm and moist air was found to the south of the stationary front, across southern Minnesota and points south.



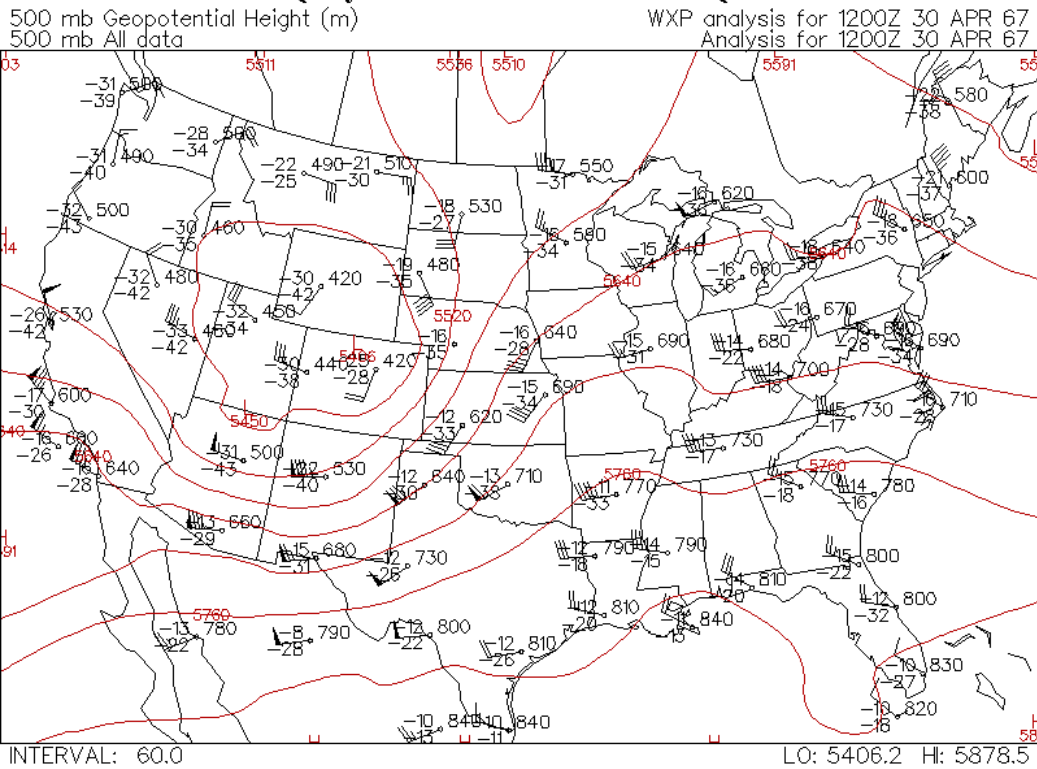
850 millibar map, 7 a.m. CDT, April 30, 1967



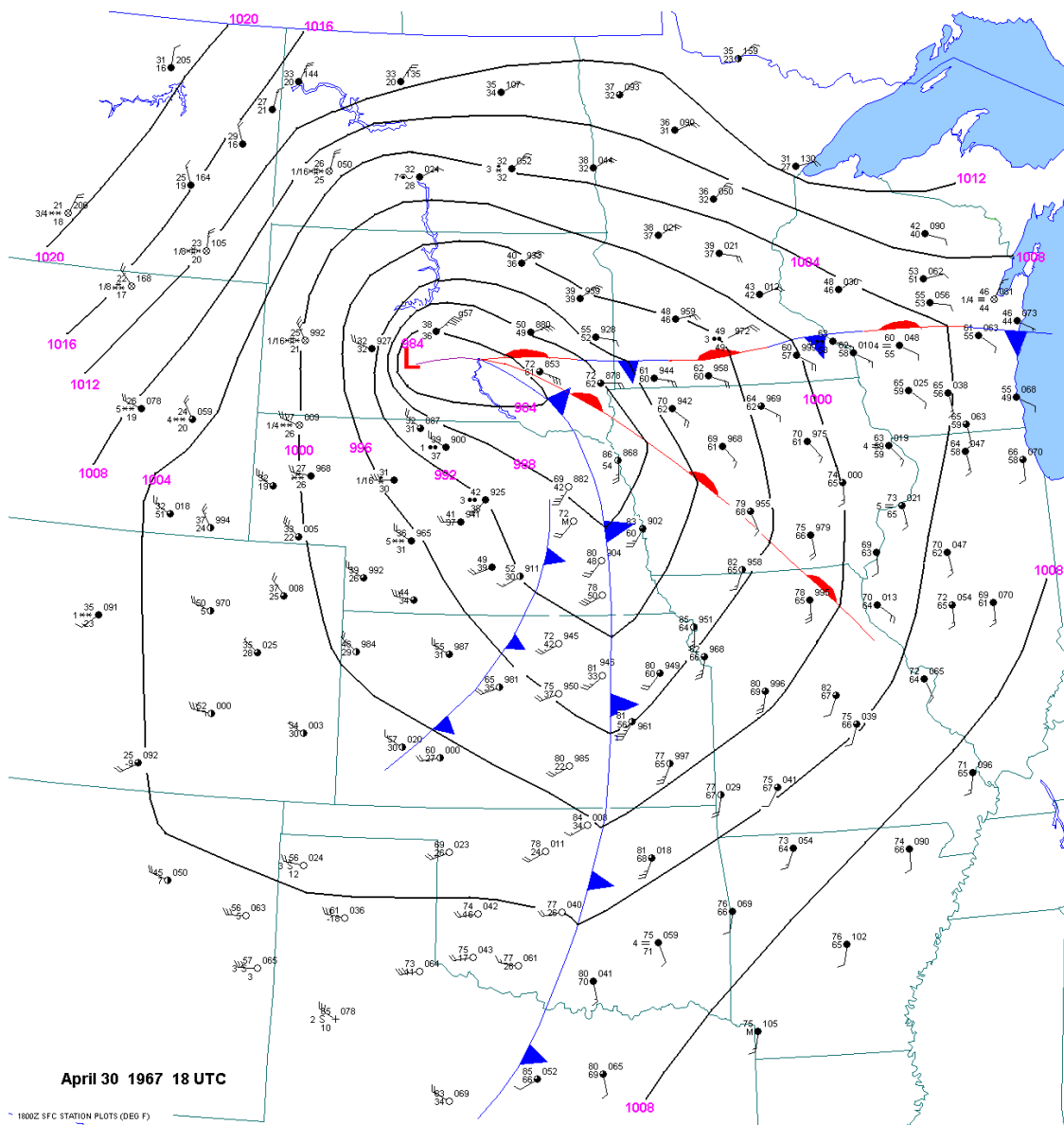
700 millibar map, 7 a.m. CDT, April 30, 1967



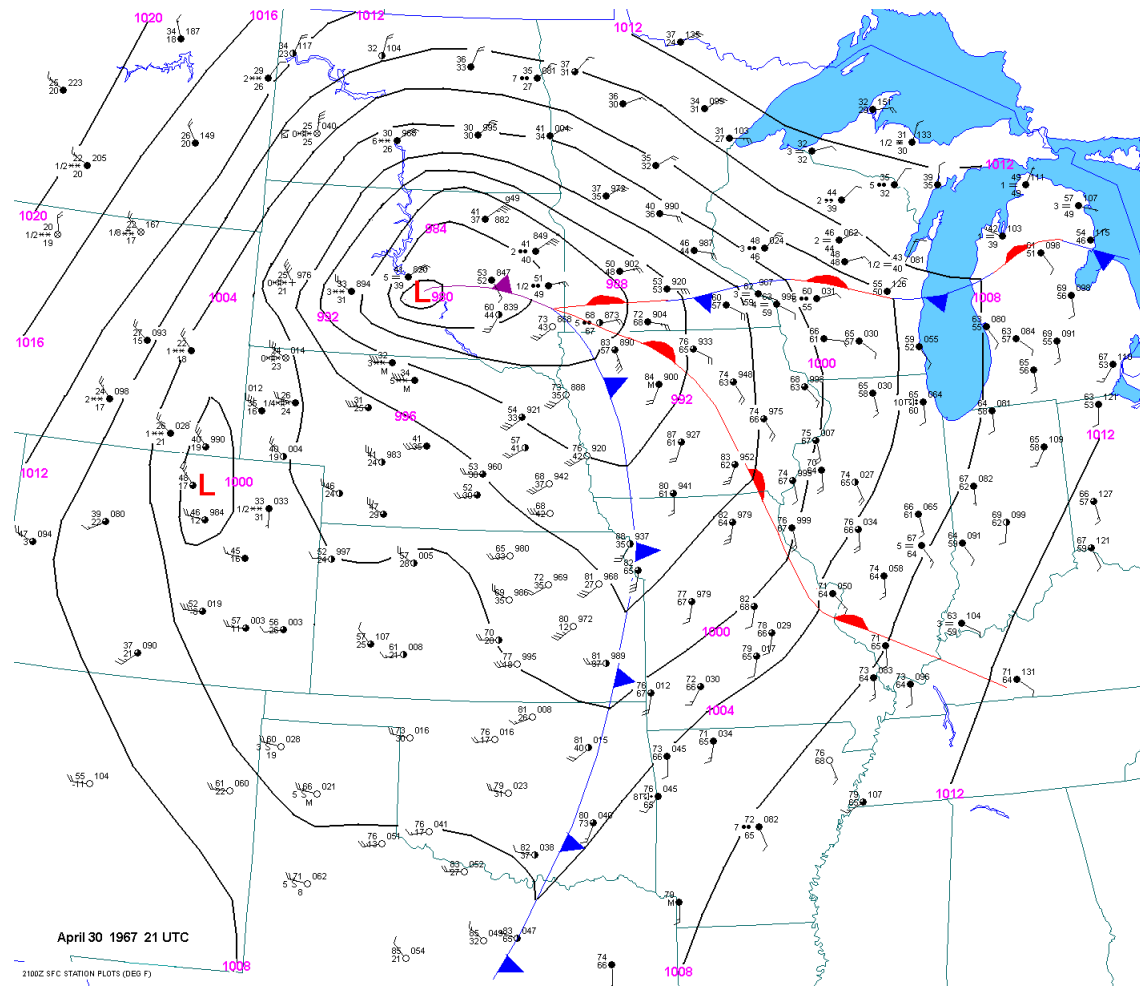
**▼ Plymouth State Weather Center ▼**



## Midday April 30, 1967



At 1 pm CDT, the surface low pressure center had moved slightly northward to a position just southwest of Pierre, South Dakota. Several fronts stretched from the low pressure area, including the stationary front, located from north of Sioux Falls, South Dakota to near La Crosse, Wisconsin. A warm front also extended from south of Sioux Falls to near Des Moines, Iowa and St. Louis, Missouri. The air between the two fronts had warmed into the 60s and low 70s, and dew points in the 60s were prevalent. Winds across far northern Iowa and southern Minnesota were quite strong, with speeds in the 15 to 25 mph range, and from the east-southeast.

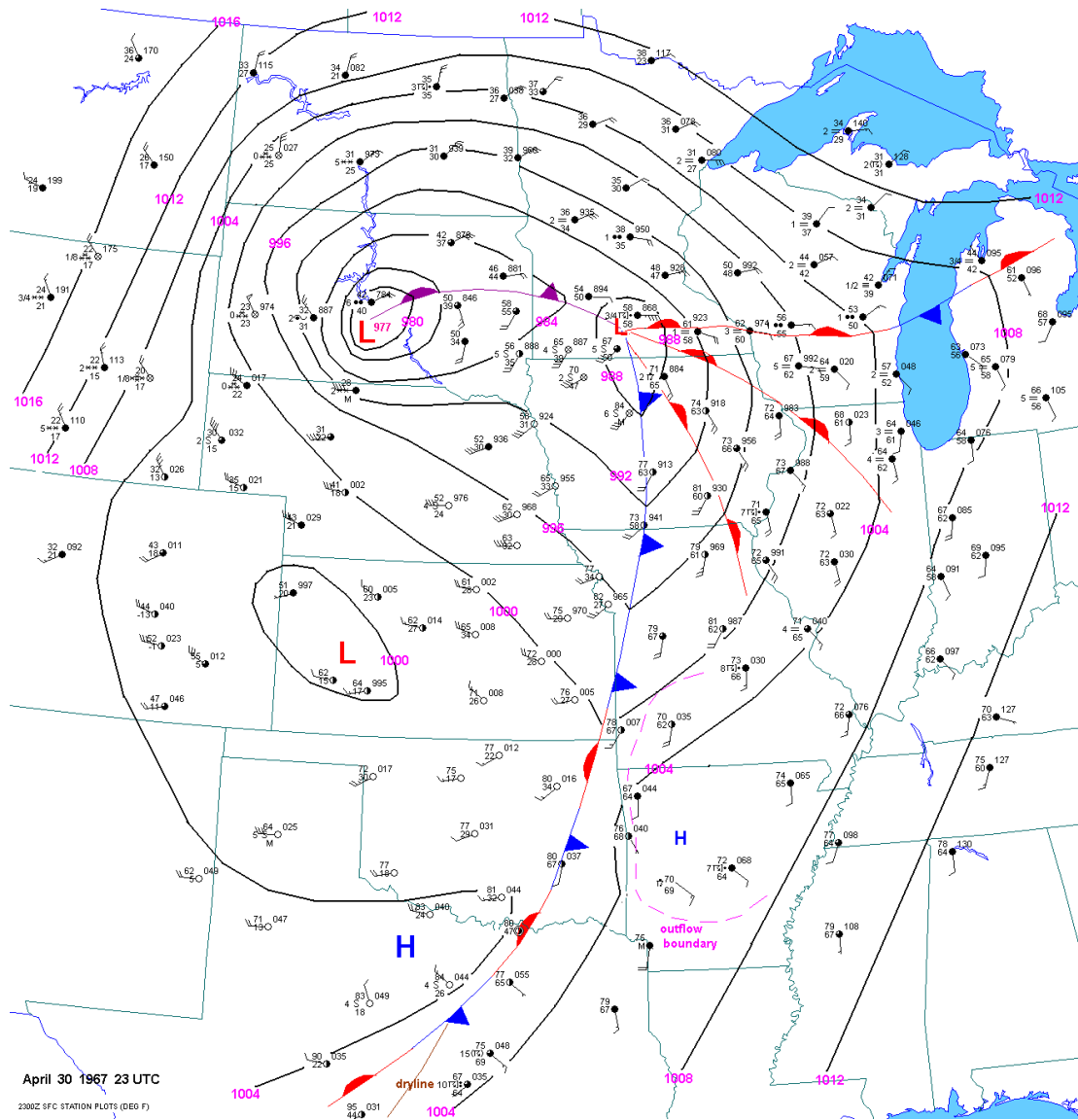


By 4 pm CDT, the only element of the surface pattern that had changed substantially was the location of the warm front. The front had bulged to just south of the Minnesota and Iowa border, extending from Worthington to near Mason City, Iowa. The stationary front remained in its previous location.

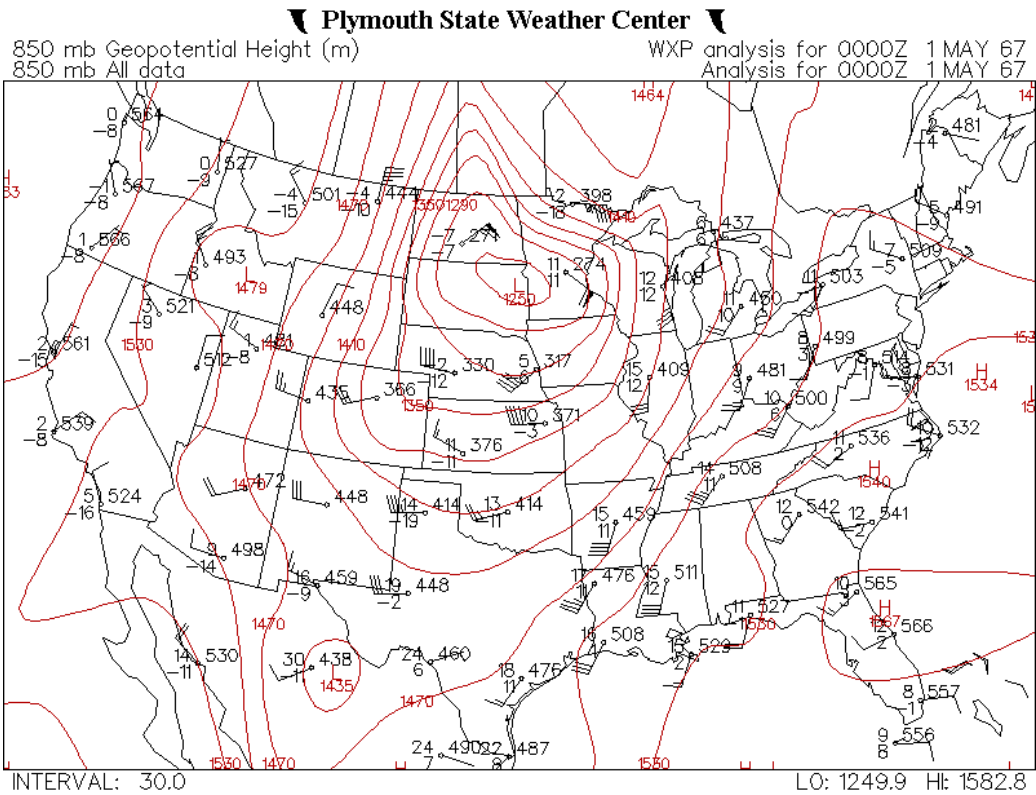
The positions of both the warm front and the stationary front are noted, as the tornadoes developed along and just north of the warm front as it moved northward through northern Iowa and into southern Minnesota, and the stationary front marked the northward extent of the tornadic weather. Between the two fronts, temperatures were in the low to mid 70s, and dew points remained in the mid and upper 60s. Surface wind speeds and directions remained comparable to their 1 pm levels.

Maps of the weather conditions above the ground are not available for the middle of the day, as weather balloons were only released twice a day, during the morning and evening.

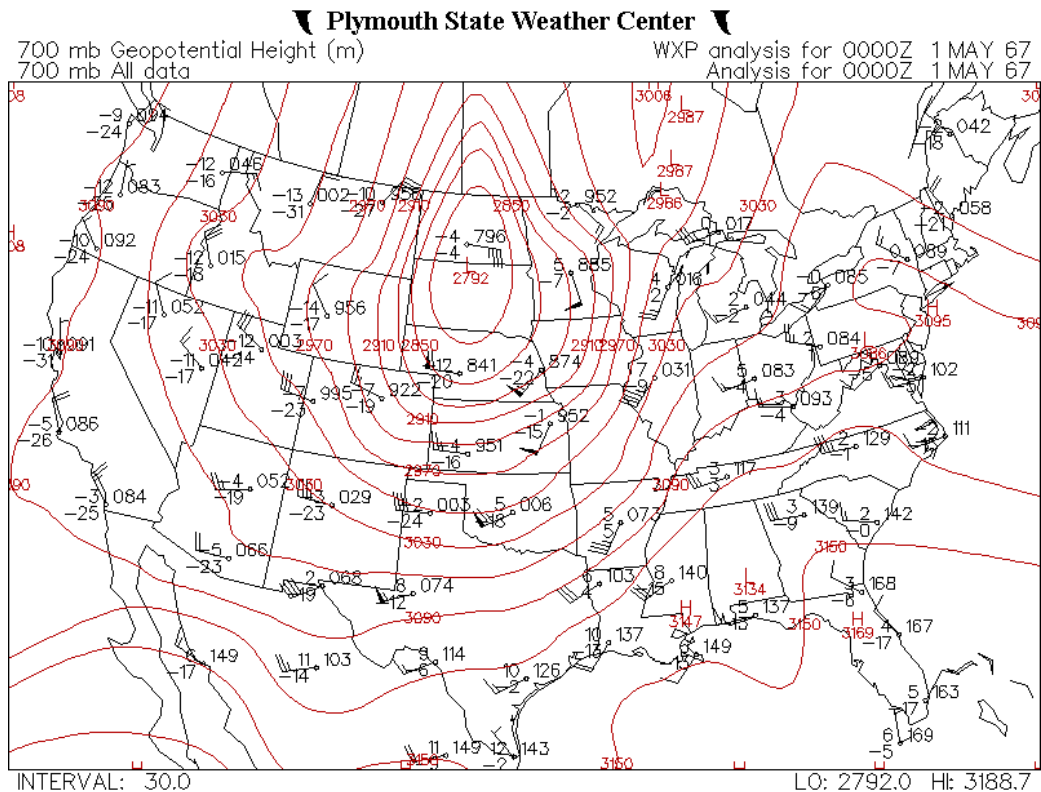
## The Evening of April 30, 1967



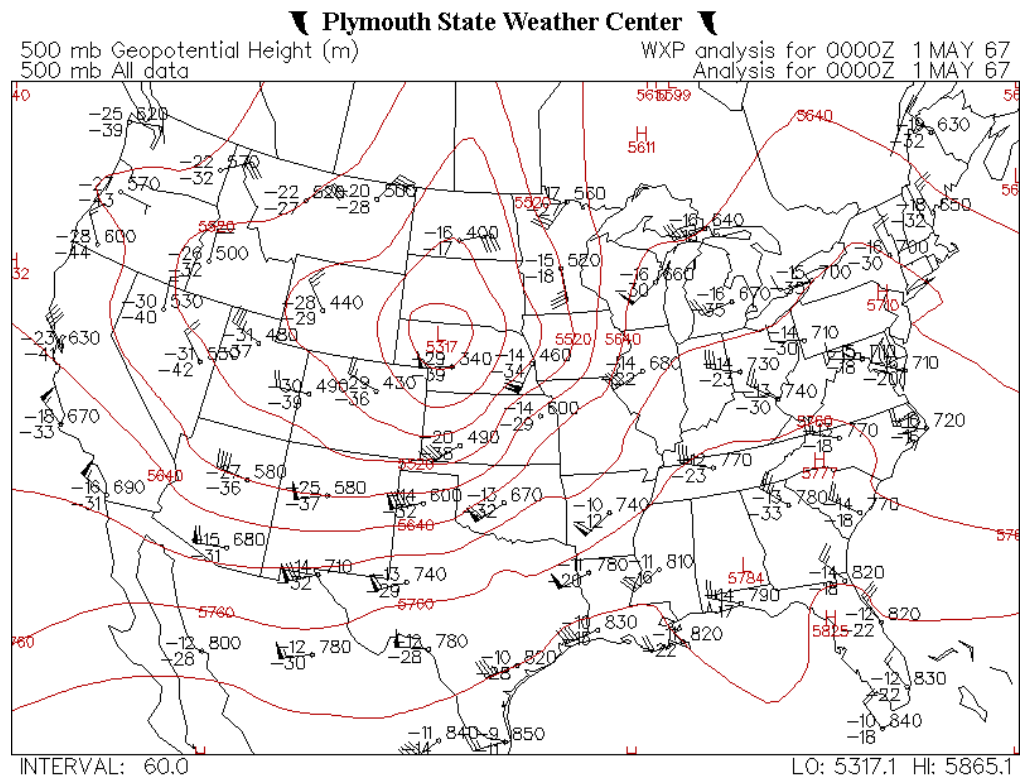
By 6 pm CDT, a “meso-low” associated with thunderstorms had developed in south central Minnesota. This would be a very favorable setup for tornadic storms.



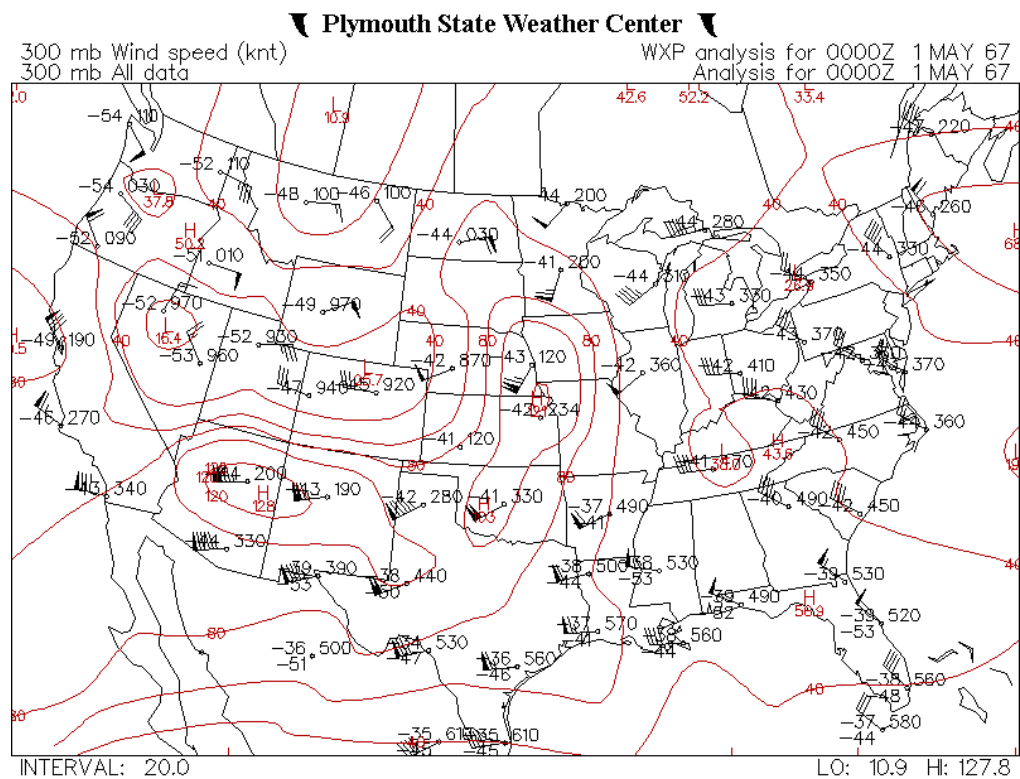
850 millibar map, 7 p.m. CDT April 30, 1967



700 millibar map, 7 p.m. CDT April 30, 1967



500 millibar map, 7 p.m. CDT April 30, 1967



300 millibar map, 7 p.m. CDT April 30, 1967

The upper air maps show that the weather features above the ground, located relatively far away from Minnesota 12 hours previously, converged on the Upper Midwest during the evening hours.

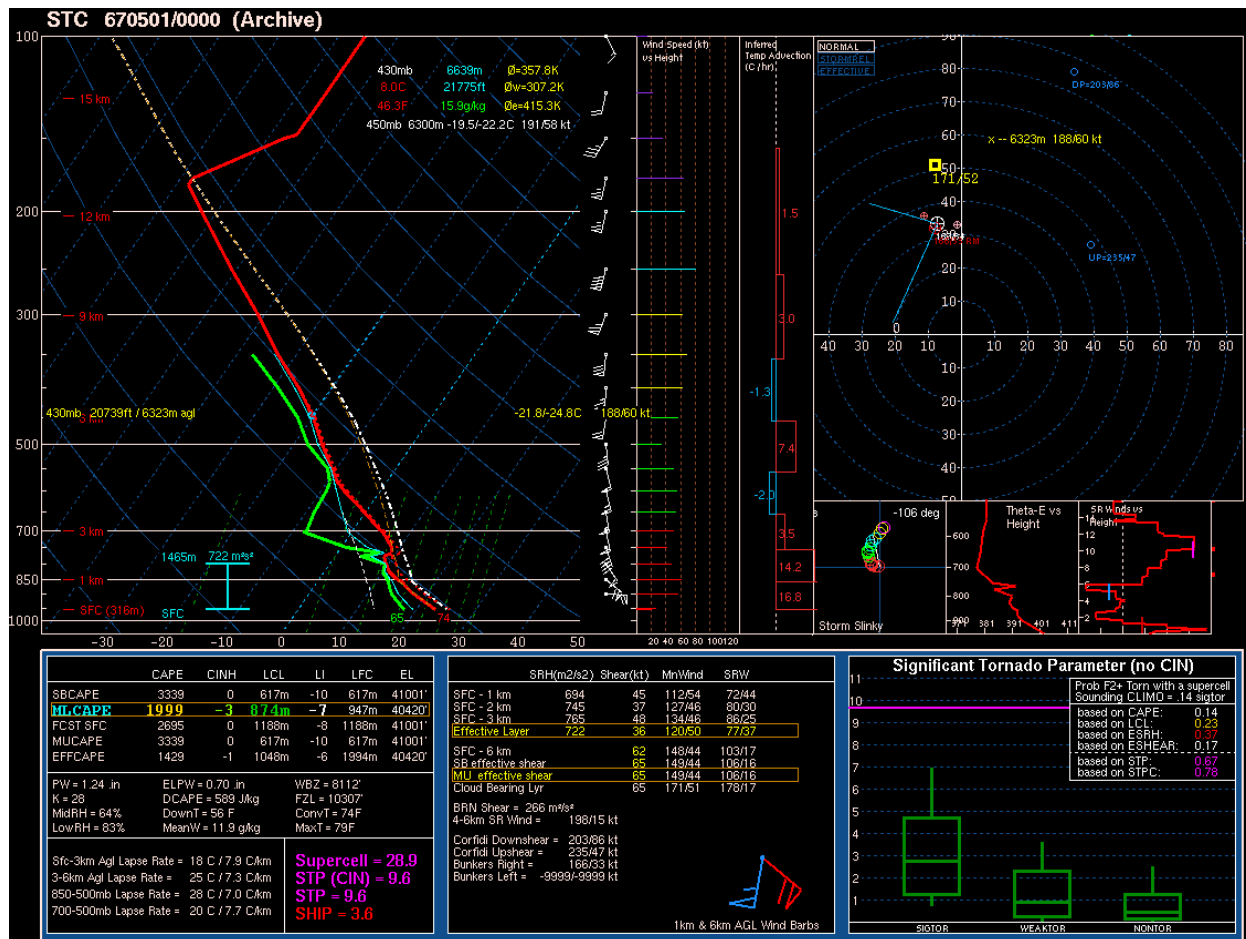
The upper level jet stream remained in its previous orientation, but the speed maximum had nosed into north central Iowa. This change increased the deep layer wind shear across southern Minnesota and northern Iowa, increasing the likelihood of supercell thunderstorms in these areas.

The closed mid level low pressure area had ejected into the Northern Plains, placing itself along the South Dakota and Nebraska border, due south of Pierre. Since the low had maintained a northwest to southeast orientation, divergent winds continued ahead of it across southern Minnesota and Iowa, providing an intense source of lift for thunderstorms in this region.

The low level jet had weakened slightly overall, typical afternoon and early evening behavior for this feature, but remained strong with 40 to 50 knots from Little Rock, Arkansas to Saint Cloud. The associated plume of Gulf moisture also exhibited this orientation, as did the tongue of warm temperatures. The strongest thunderstorms developed on the western edge of the speed, temperature, and moisture maximum, something that is not uncommon during severe thunderstorm outbreaks.

*Note: All weather maps shown above are courtesy of Jonathan Finch, Forecaster at the National Weather Service Forecast Office in Dodge City, Kansas.*





Upper air data from the St. Cloud weather balloon launched at 6 p.m., modified near the surface for conditions observed in southern Minnesota. The data indicate a very unstable environment containing ample low level wind shear, conducive to violent tornado development.

*Note: The sounding profile is courtesy of Dan Miller, Science and Operations Officer at the National Weather Service Forecast Office in Duluth, Minnesota.*



### 3. U.S Weather Bureau Timeline

The following copies of watches, statements, memos, and summaries were saved and contained in a small folder at the National Weather Service.

ESSA WEATHER BUREAU TWIN CITIES APRIL EP QOYU EP 30 1967  
12.06 PM CDT

SEVERE THUNDERSTORM WATCH BULLETIN NUMBER 134

THE WEATHER BUREAU HAS ISSUED A SEVERE THUNDERSTORM WATCH FOR  
PORTIONS OF SOUTHERN AND CENTRAL MINNESOTA AND  
PORTIONS OF NORTHWEST WISCONSIN.

THE THREAT OF A FEW SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS WITH LARGE HAIL AND DAMAGING  
WINDS WILL EXIST IN THESE AREAS FROM 2 PM TIL 8 PM CDT THIS SUNDAY  
AFTERNOON.

THE SEVER THUNDERSTORMS ARE EXPECTED IN AN AREA ALONG AND 60 MILES  
EITHER SIDE OF A LINE FROM 40 MILES WEST OF REDWOOD FALLS MINNESOTA  
TO WAUSAU WISCONSIN.

PERSONS IN OR CLOSE TO THE SEVER THUNDERSTORM WATCH AREA ARE ADVISED  
TO BE ON THE WATCH FOR LOCAL WEATHER DEVELOPMENTS AD FOR LATER  
STATEMENTS AND WARNINGS.

IN MINNESOTA THE AREA COVERED INCLUDED MOST OF THE SOUTHERN HALF  
OF MINNESOTA SOUTH OF A LINE FROM 25 MILES NORTHEAST OF ORTONVILLE  
TO PINE CITY AND EAST OF A LINE FROM ADRIAN TO 25 MILES NORTHEAST  
OF ORTONVILLE.

END 10.10XXXX 12.-0000 12.10 PM CDT

Severe Thunderstorm Watch issued at 12:06 p.m. CDT.

ESSA WEATHER BUREAU TWIN CITIES APRIL 30, 1967

4.50 P.M. CSTXXX CDT..

THIS IS A TORNADO WATCH BULLETIN ISSUED AT 4.30 P.M. CDT  
BY KANSAS CITY SEVERE LOCAL STORM UNIT..

THE WEATHER BUREAU HAS ISSUED A TORNADO WATCH FOR...  
PORTIONS OF SOUTHER MINNESOTA  
AND EXTREME WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN AND EXTREME NORTH NORTHEAST IOWA..

THE THREAT OF A FEW TORNADOES WILL EXIST IN THESE AREAS FROM 4.30  
P.M. UNTIL 10.00 P.M. CDT THIS SUNDAY AFTERNOON AND EVENING. SCATTERED  
SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS WITH LARGE HAIL AND LOCALLY DAMAGING WINDS ARE  
ALSO FORECAST.

THE GREATEST THREAT OF TORNADOES AND SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS IS IN  
AN AREA ALONG AND 50 MILES EITHER SIDE OF A LINE FROM  
50 MILES WEST OF REDWOOD FALLS MINNESOTA TO LA CROSSE WISCONSIN.

PERSONS IN OR CLOSE TO THE TORNADO WATCH AREA ARE ADVISED  
TO BE ON THE WATCH FOR LOCAL WEATHER DEVELOPMENTS AND FOR  
LATER WEATHER STATEMENTS AND WARNINGS..

IN MINNESOTA THE AREA INVOLVED IS SOUTH OF A LINE EXTENDING ACROSS  
THE STATE FROM ORTONVILLE TO BAYPORT AND THE TWIN CITIES ARE ON THE  
NORTHERN EDGE OF THE WATCH AREA.

END 4.55 P.M. CDT 4/30/67

Tornado Watch issued at 4:50 p.m. CDT.

M

ESSA...US WEATHER BUREAU AIRPORT STATION...TWIN CITIES  
WEATHER RADAR STATEMENT ISSUED AT 620PM CDT APRIL 30, 1967

A LINE OF THUNDERSTORMS, SOME LOCALLY SEVERE, IS MOVING ACROSS MINNESOTA AND IOWA. AT 6PM CDT THE TWIN CITIES WEATHER BUREAU RADAR SHOWS THIS LINE EXTENDING FROM SOUTHEASTERN NORTH DAKOTA ACROSS MINNESOTA AND IOWA, WITH THE LEADING EDGE ALONG A LINE FROM NEAR BRECKINRIDGE TO JUST SOUTH OF ALEXANDRIA TO NEAR ANNANDALE TO WACONIA SOUTHWARD TO NEAR WASECA TO JUST EAST OF ALBERTLEA AND MASON CITY INTO SOUTHERN IOWA EAST OF DESMOINES. THIS LINE OF THUNDERSTORMS CONTAINS LOCALLY HEAVY RAIN, SOME HAIL AND LOCALLY STRONG GUSTY WINDS, AND IS MOVING FROM THE SOUTHWEST. THUNDERSTORMS SHOULD BEGIN IN THE WESTERN AND SOUTHERN SUBURBS OF THE TWIN CITIES WITHIN THE NEXT HOUR AND CONTINUE 3 TO 4 HOURS.

TWIN CITIES WEATHER BUREAU AIRPORT STATION

SPECIAL TORNADO REPORT  
SUNDAY APRIL 30, 1967 9.12 PM

FROM OUR WEATHER BUREAU AT ROCHESTER COMES A REPORT OF

TWO FATALITIES AND TO XXX TWO HOSPITALIZED WHEN A TORNADO STRUCK ONE MILE WEST OF OWATONNA. EXTENSIVE DAMAGE TO FARMS IN THAT AREA, CONTINUES THE REPORT.  
END 9.14 PM CDT

1805CDT A severe thunderstorm warning was issued for Steele, Rice, and Mower counties until 2030CDT.

1816CDT A severe thunderstorm warning was issued for Dodge county until 2030CDT.

1845CDT Received report from amateur radio network that a tornado had touched down in the Albert Lea area at about 1830CDT.

1848CDT Received report that tornado had touched down in the Manley Iowa area from amateur radio network.

1848CDT A Tornado warning was issued for Eastern Freeborn County until 1948CDT.

1849CDT A Tornado warning was issued for Steele, western Dodge and Mower counties until 1930CDT.

1855CDT A Tornado warning was issued for Rice county on the basis of a tornado reported at Waseca at 1852CDT. Report received from amateur radio network. Warning in effect until 2000CDT.

1905CDT Tornado reported near Owatonna at 1905CDT by amateur radio network and Owatonna radio station KRFO.

1906CDT Tornadoes reported at Murtle and near Austin Minnesota by amateur radio network.

1910CDT A Tornado warning was issued for Olmsted County until 2015CDT.

1930CDT A Severe thunderstorm warning was issued for Goodhue County until 2130CDT.

1955CDT A Severe thunderstorm warning was issued for Fillmore, Winona, Houston, and Wabasha Counties until 2200CDT.

2015CDT Amateur and citizens band radio and highway patrol reported Funnel cloudy near Stewartville, Tornado near Marion at 2008CDT, Tornado near Eyota at 2015CDT.

2015CDT A Tornado warning was issued for Winona County until 2200CDT.

2112CDT A Tornado warning was issued for Houston County based on possible hook echo on radar, valid until 2230CDT. Phone lines were jammed so warning was relayed through amateur radio network, Rawarc to La Crosse, and over the NAWAS phone.

2115CDT to 2230CDT Numerous reports of damage, deaths and injuries in Freeborn county and Steele county areas. All clears for warnings were called to area as soon as danger had passed.



4/167 STORM  
Sp1 Folder

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
WEATHER BUREAU

# Memorandum

TO : Central Region Headquarters, Kansas City, Mo.  
Attn: NSSFC & Chief WXAP.

DATE: May 5, 1967

In reply refer to:

FROM : MIC, WBAS, Rochester, Minnesota

SUBJECT: Report on tornado activity of April 30, 1967.

Following is a listing of station actions and results of severe weather activity on Sunday April 30, 1967. This report is not all inclusive as it would require at least an additional three days to cover the entire area and prepare a complete report. Included in this report are; the listing of actions taken by the WBAS prior to and during the storm, the track of the tornados and a listing of approximate damage, a summary of the overall effectiveness of the Watch and Warnings along with some comments received from the public and the press, and finally a summary of station staffing during the storm.

1610CDT Following statement was issued locally.

"The severe thunderstorm watch continues in effect for Southeast Minnesota. Weather Bureau radar shows an area of thunderstorms developing rapidly in the Southwest portion of Minnesota, in the Fairmont and Windom area. These thunderstorms are moving rapidly Northward, but the area of thunderstorms will be gradually advancing Eastward. It will most likely be several hours before they reach the Rochester area. Further statements will be issued as they approach the area."

1635CDT Tornado watch number 138 received, plotted and coordinated area with Minneapolis WBAS.

1717CDT Tornado Watch call list calls completed to county area of responsibility. Area defined as all of Southern Minnesota South of a line from Ortonville to Bayport. The following statement was attached to the Watch message; "At 1645CDT Weather Bureau radar shows a line of heavy thunderstorms extending from 10 miles West of Mankato to Blue Earth Southward into Iowa."

1730CDT Called Freeborn county sherriffs Dept. telling them we had severe thunderstorms moving into the area within the hour. We were informed that the Sheriffs office was closed on Sunday.

1734CDT A severe thunderstorm warning was issued for Freeborn County until 1930CDT. Warnings based on radar and reports from Gruver Iowa area of Tornado touchdown in the area moving northward.



BUY U.S. SAVINGS BONDS REGULARLY ON THE PAYROLL SAVINGS PLAN

5/9/67  
Minn  
given copy  
of this  
5/9/67



The first tornado was reported to have touched down at 1805CDT, just Northwest of Alden, Minnesota and moved directly northward along county road 6 to just Southwest of Freeborn, Minnesota; it then lifted with the path shifting eastward about three miles and then it touched down on county road 33 about three quarters of a mile west of Hartland, Minnesota; the tornado then moved northward along Minnesota highway 67 into Waseca county. Destruction along the path from Alden to Freeborn was extensive with most of the farms suffering extensive damage. Two persons were killed along this stretch, the first was Mrs. Michael Hassing, age 26, whose home was completely demolished; the second was Mr. Harlan Holleschau, age 38, of Shakopee, Minnesota, who was visiting a family reunion at the Holleschau farm. The Holleschau farm was completely destroyed. A total of 9 persons were injured at the Holleschau residence and 3 were injured at the Hassing residence. This is undoubtedly the same tornado which struck Waseca at 1852CDT. The total width of the path ranged from about 100 to 500 feet with the vortex shifting from one side of the road to the other as it traveled northward.

After shifting eastward to near Hartland this tornado then moved northward along Minnesota highway 67 into Waseca county. It was along this stretch that Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Gulbranson were injured with the house totally destroyed. Again the vortex shifted from one side of the road to the other damaging or destroying many farm buildings. Along both of these paths the Tornado was on the ground about 90 percent of the time.

The second Tornado touched down near Twin Lakes, Minnesota at about 1823CDT and moved north northeastward through the Western side of Albert Lea to Clarks Grove and Ellendale, Minnesota, remaining on the ground about 90 percent of the time; it then lifted in the Ellendale area and skipped through Steele County touching down in the Hope, Minnesota, area and again in the Owatonna area where it destroyed several farm buildings and the home of Mr. and Mrs. Gerhart Johnson where Mr. and Mrs. Merton Bickford of Albert Lea were killed as they baby sat the two Johnson children who were also injured. This tornado caused other damage to the North of Owatonna, but then lifted. The average width of damage ranged from about 100 to 600 feet. The tornado was on the ground about 50 to 60 percent of the time from Ellendale to north of Owatonna. Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Emanuel were killed in their home in Albert Lea, where damage was very extensive with 55 homes substantially damaged, 19 declared unlivable and 5 others questionably safe. There were 10 homes which were completely leveled in Albert Lea. The tornado then swept a house trailer into a gravel pit just southwest of Clarks Grove Minnesota, killing the occupant who was Mr. Herman Nehring about 60 of Clarks Grove.

The third tornado initially touched down in the Manly, Iowa area at about 1830CDT, then moved northward through the Northwood, Iowa area into the Myrtle, Minnesota area. One person was injured in the Myrtle area and several farms and dwellings suffered damage.



STORM DATA AND UNUSUAL WEATHER PHENOMENA

MONTH AND YEAR

Cont'd APRIL 1967

PLACE	DATE	TIME	LENGTH OF PATH (MILES)	WIDTH OF PATH (YARDS)	NO. OF PERSONS		ESTIMATED <sup>†</sup> DAMAGE		CHARACTER OF STORM
					KILLED	INJURED	PROPERTY	CROPS	
MINNESOTA									
Waseca, Steele, Olmsted, Freeborn and Mower Counties	30	6:05-8:15 p. (C.D.T.)			13	65	7	?	Nine tornadoes
<p>A family of 9 tornadoes struck this 5-county region leaving a large number of rural and urban homes destroyed and more heavily damaged. In Freeborn County alone 75 to 100 farms received light damage to total destruction. Final damage figures will be about \$6 million in Freeborn County and will be well above \$9 million over the total region.</p> <p>The first tornado touched down at 6:05 p.m. NW of Alden (Freeborn County), and moved NW along County Rd. 6 to SW of Freeborn. It then lifted and touched later near Matawan in Waseca County. Destruction along the early part of the path was extensive. Two people killed within the 100 to 500 foot track width.</p> <p>The second tornado began near Twin Lakes (Freeborn County) about 6:23 p.m. It moved NNE through west Albert Lea to Clarks Grove and Ellendale, remaining on the ground about 90% of the time. Lifting in Ellendale area it skipped through Steele County touching down in Hope and Owatonna area where two people were killed. Width of damage ranged from 100 to 600 feet. On ground 50-60% of time from Ellendale to north Owatonna. Five people killed along the full tract. Two million dollar damage in Albert Lea, with 26 homes destroyed and 64 substantially damaged.</p> <p>The third tornado began about 6:30 p.m. near Manly, Iowa. Crossing the Minnesota border, it moved about 4 miles north into the Myrtle area (Freeborn County), smashing a number of farms before lifting.</p> <p>The fourth tornado began near the Iowa border and moved north into the London area. It paralleled the track of number 3 which occurred just a few miles east of it. About 20 farms were damaged by tornadoes 3 and 4.</p> <p>The fifth tornado touched down on County Rd. 33 near Hartland (Freeborn County). It moved north along Highway 67 into the city of Waseca about 6:52 p.m. Along Highway 67 the vortex swept from one side of road to the other damaging or destroying many farm buildings. On ground about 90% of time. In Waseca the tornado destroyed a section of the urban area about 4 blocks in width, extending from</p>									



## STORM DATA AND UNUSUAL WEATHER PHENOMENA

MONTH AND YEAR

Cont'd APRIL 1967

24



#### 4. Damage Photos

*In 2007, in preparation for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Black Sunday, the National Weather Service requested any photos and stories from survivors, family members, and others who helped during and after the tornadoes. We appreciate the help and time in remembering this sad event. Those photos and stories are provided again now, for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.*

The following seven images were provided courtesy of the Waseca Virtual History Museum in 2007. Links to the photos and captions are here:

<https://www.waseca.k12.mn.us/vhm/1961-1975/tornados.htm>



Aerial Damage over Waseca



Doherty home, Waseca



Looking northeast toward the Doherty home



Foundation of Rux home in foreground, Waseca



Archie Draheim farm, rural Waseca



Firemen search Youngberg home, rural Waseca



White Castle Night Club, Waseca

The following four photos were provided in 2007 by John Miller, titled "our snakeroad farm":







The following seven photos were taken by Duane O'Malley of the U.S Weather Bureau (Minneapolis-St Paul office).



Waseca-1



Waseca-2



Waseca-3



Waseca-4



Waseca-5



Waseca-6





One mile west of Owatonna

The following six photos were provided in 2007 by Lynn Vasquez, taken three miles north of Alden MN.



Grain bins and downed tree



Hog house and grain bins



House and driveway





Machine shed and grain shed



The kids' "giant slide"



Steve's bed

## 5. Personal Accounts and Photos

*In 2007, in preparation for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Black Sunday, the National Weather Service requested any photos and stories from survivors, family members, and others who helped during and after the tornadoes. The following quotes were sent to the National Weather Service via e-mail. We appreciate the help and time in remembering this sad event. Those photos and stories are provided again now, for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.*

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*Recorded interviews with survivors of the Waseca tornado can be found on the Waseca Virtual History Museum web page at [www.waseca.k12.mn.us/vhm/1961-1975/audio.htm](http://www.waseca.k12.mn.us/vhm/1961-1975/audio.htm).*

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### **Gary & Judy Johnson:**

"Our home in Owatonna, MN was totally destroyed by a tornado on "Black Sunday." We were gone for the day at a Barber Convention in Hopkins and my parents, Merton and Olga Bickford from Albert Lea, were babysitting our 2 boys – Terry 2 ½ and Tim 4 months.

"We were paged at the convention and then handed a note that said, 'call this phone number, your house is sitting in the middle of the highway!' The number was the police department and they informed us a tornado had struck our house. Gary asked if there were any injuries and they said, 'none known.' A friend gave us a ride back to Owatonna in his car. The highway patrol was looking for us to escort us home but they were looking for our car.

"We hadn't gone very far when we heard on the radio about all the other tornados and all the damage. All of a sudden, they had a live broadcast on the scene and the announcer said our house was totally destroyed and that 2 people were killed and 2 people were alive. Our hearts just about stopped. We didn't know which 2 of our loved ones were gone. It was a horrible long ride home.

"When we arrived home, a neighbor ran to meet us and told us that the boys were alive and my parents were gone. They rushed us to the hospital to be with our children. The boys had been brought in by ambulance and no one knew who they were – they thought they possibly were brothers. Our neighbor called the doctor I worked for and he went right to the hospital and identified the boys and took care of them. Terry had cuts and bruises and

almost cut his little nose off. Tim was more seriously injured – fractured leg and arm and he laid in traction for 28 days. A month later he was hospitalized in Rochester. He had a hematoma in his head that was aspirated a few times.

“What started out as a nice day ended with no home, our children in the hospital, my mom & dad killed, planning a double funeral and finding a place to live. You really get extra strength at a time like that!

“We lived in a mobile home that we parked on our lot and rebuilt a new home on the same location as we had part of the foundation to start with.

“The boys (now grown adults) have had no after effects from that day.

“Little do you know that when your loved ones stand in the window and wave good-bye to you that by the end of the day they will be dead, your children injured and your home gone!

“Also, when my sons read what I had sent to you they couldn't believe I left out the little story about our dog, ‘Snooky.’ He was picked up with the tornado and no one could find him so we thought he was dead. A few days later someone found him in a chicken coop across the road. He was so scared & growled so much at everyone that no one could get near him. They finally contacted us and we went and persuaded him to come out and come home with us. We were so happy to find one more thing alive from that terrible storm!”

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### **Dan Bogenschutz:**

“We were out for a Sunday drive. It seemed somewhat humid, but not that hot. We got home and clouds were quite dark to the south. We were eating dinner and it was raining very hard. It seemed to let up and we heard a noise off to the south, getting louder. All my dad said was get in the basement. No sirens, there may not have been any in 1967. We got to the bottom of the stairs, turned to go into a bedroom and we heard a big thud against the side of the house. We went back upstairs a few seconds after the thud. It was over that fast. We think the thud was the garage hitting the side of the house. The pictures show the result. The first thing we did when we got to the top of the stairs was open the outside door. Because the garage was gone, we could see the house across the highway to the south. The houses roof was gone and the remaining part was completely black. It looked like it had burned, but it was actually covered in mud. I think when it went thru Pickerel Lake to the south it picked up a lot of mud.”



*Note: the following five photographs were provided by Dan Bogenschutz.*



B1: Front of house, garage missing, tornado went thru at the bottom of hill.





B2: Back of house. tornado went left to right, large oak trees shredded.





B3: Back of house, garage debris.





B4: Area where parents of Manuel family were killed. Tornado went left to right.





B5: Street at bottom of hill, looking toward where picture B4 was taken.

## **Rachael Hanel:**

"My mom has great stories from April 30, 1967. She and my dad lived south of Waseca at the time, and on that day, they were visiting my dad's parents north of Waseca. Mom and Dad had a two-year-old girl at the time and Mom was pregnant with my brother. They could see the black and green clouds to the south that afternoon. They came back through Waseca and saw the extensive damage.

"I was born several years after those tornadoes but was continually fascinated by the story and asked Mom to tell me the details over and over ... She would show me the houses that had been damaged in the storms and where people who were killed had lived."

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## **Amy Bettwy, a meteorologist in 2007 with the Duluth National Weather Service:**

"My mom (Micky [Klingbeil] Henry) was 11 at the time. Her brother was baptized (on Black Sunday!!) that morning and then my grandparents had a reception at their house, which is located on the south side of town [Albert Lea]. My mom said she got back to the house and she left during the party in the afternoon to walk to the Skyline Mall with her cousin.

"She remembers vividly that on the way home from the mall in the late afternoon, everything suddenly became deathly calm and the sky turned black. She remembers this because it had been windy all day and now it was calm and eerie. She got home and her grandparents were just leaving on their way back to Wells, MN. Within a few minutes, the storm hit hard and all of the guests and her family quickly ran to the basement. She doesn't remember any sirens, but she said there could have been. They weren't watching TV, and that was usually how they got their warnings. Her grandparents made it back to Wells just fine and said they didn't see any tornado.

"The tornado actually hit the southwest side of Albert Lea, just behind (west of) Graceland Cemetery...which is also just west of Skyline Mall. The tornado hit many homes, including the home of the Manuel family. The Manuels had three teenage kids. Their daughter was out babysitting, and their sons were in the basement. The mother went upstairs to get her husband who was working in the garage when the tornado hit. Both parents were killed, but the kids were fine. My mom believes those were the only tornado deaths in Albert Lea that day. The Manuel kids moved into the house across the street from my mom, where their aunt, uncle and cousins lived.

"My grandpa took my mom and her siblings out to look at the damage the day after the tornado. She said many homes were completely destroyed...nothing left. They were single family homes with basements. There was no damage at my mom's house.

"My dad, who lived on the north side of town, said he and his family were out in the front yard watching the storm. He just remembers that the sky was very dark and green looking.

"Finally, my mom remembers watching another tornado just south of her house either later that day or within a few days after April 30<sup>th</sup>. She says her dad took the kids out to watch the tornado until it got too close. The tornado came within 100 yards of her house and destroyed many garages just to the southwest of her. I'm not sure if that tornado was documented or not."

*Note: National Weather Service Storm Data records do not show any additional tornadoes in the Albert Lea vicinity during the remainder of the year 1967. Another documented severe thunderstorm affected Albert Lea on June 15, 1967, although damaging thunderstorm winds are only mentioned in Storm Data. However, records indicate that a small tornado moved through Freeborn County on May 15, 1968, although the exact location is not clear as the records are not complete. It is the hypothesis that the second tornado mentioned in the last paragraph of the above account could have been during one of these two storms.*

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### **Carroll Aasen Jr.:**

"I remember seeing much damage following the tornados. We (my parents and family) had been to Hartland and had not known about the tornados until we were close to home in Albert Lea. We drove up Sunset St. from Highway 13 and the street was blocked by downed trees and debris. My aunt & uncle lived at the top of the hill and had witnessed the tornado and told my parents what happened.

"We turned around to go another way and saw all the windows on the west side of St. John's Lutheran home were blown out and many trees to the south were down.

"My parents were anxious to get home to check for damage, which upon arriving home, found it virtually untouched."

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**Anne Greibrok:**

"My mom went into labor during the tornado and had my younger brother on May 1. I recall my Mom and Dad stating that [they] just sat in the car while she was in labor because of the tornado victims coming into the hospital. We lived just a mile north of Myrtle and my parents were at Naeve Hospital, Albert Lea."

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**Jake Waddington:**

"Just to show the distribution of debris from the Black Sunday tornado, I live on west side of Lake of the Isles (Mpls MN) and my garden and surrounding area were littered with checks from a bank in Albert Lea clearly hit in the Black Sunday tornado (approx. 4 checks/square meter)."

*Note: The checks traveled a distance of approximately 100 miles.*

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**Sister Ramona Miller:**

"I was not in Waseca County at the time, but our family often recounts the stories. My uncle, Francis Miller of New Richland, was sitting in his living room reading when it got very quiet and his instinct was 'to hit the basement.' He and his son, Paul, got in the basement instantly as the house was taken and everything in the house spread out through a tree grove and over the yard and into the fields. One of Francis' daughters was to be married the weekend following the tornado, so they were sad about the loss of home and belongings, but rejoiced that none of the family was injured.

"My Dad, Alvin Miller Sr., lost the buildings on a farm northeast of Waseca. Although I was no longer living at home, my younger brothers and sisters recount the hard work and long hours of picking up the debris from the field so that the field could be cultivated. The clean up of that farm led to its sale. Again, the renters in the house were not home so there was always the tag line to the family storytelling, 'But no one got hurt, and someone would have been killed had they been in the house.' "

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### **Marianne Miller Strom:**

"I wanted to let you know that my mother and dad's farm home and outbuildings in Waseca County were destroyed in this tornado. The photo of it appears on the front page of the Mpls. Star and Tribune for May 1<sup>st</sup> of 1967. It stated, 'a farm in Freeborn County,' but in fact our family's farm was in Waseca County. The farm is still in the family owned by my older brother, Paul Miller. He, my youngest sibling and my father, Francis Miller barely made it to the basement. They were lucky, uninjured."

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### **Sister Ethylind Loudner:**

"What I remember:

- 1) The warning siren went off AFTER the tornado hit.
- 2) It happened on the EAST end of town.
- 3) I answered the phone call from the hospital asking if Sisters could come and help the victims that were arriving to be treated.
- 4) Five Sisters piled into a red car ready to be assigned.
- 5) For some time, we were occupied removing glass and splinters from bodies and cleaning mud from arms and legs.
- 6) I set the time of the tornado at 4:30 pm on a Sunday.
- 7) I recall there was a confirmation celebration at a farm home on the east side of town. It was while at the supper gathering that the tornado moved through the house."

*Note: The tornado that moved through Waseca began in northwest Freeborn County at approximately 6:15 pm, and therefore, the tornado most likely moved into Waseca around 6:30 pm.*

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### **George Hagge:**

"I was active in a portion of the search of the tornado damaged area in Waseca shortly after the storm hit. I also helped to provide security late that evening until 4:00 a.m. when the National Guard came in. For a couple of weeks afterwards I joined other volunteers and parked around the outside of the damaged area to provide security."

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**Paul Miller:**

"The memories of the tornado are still clear in my mind. I was twenty-five years old at the time. It was a late Sunday afternoon. There had been some rain showers earlier. My mother and other sisters were in Minneapolis for a wedding shower for my oldest sister. My youngest sister and I were in the kitchen fixing a sandwich. I remember hearing a noise. As I was going to look out the window my father came running from the front room of the house. He had looked out the window and saw the spruce trees lying flat on the ground. As we were going down the basement steps, debris was already hitting the house. My ears were popping at the time, so I had figured out what was going on. The actual noise of the tornado was so loud that my mind must have blocked it out. We went to the southwest corner of the basement. I remember the basement windows blowing in and small pieces of the block wall falling from the cracking of the wall, to the extent that we were afraid the wall was going to fall in. It was over in less than a minute.

"The shock of seeing what had happened is not something that can be put into words. I remember having no shoes to wear and staying in the neighbor's house overnight.

"At least two wooden posts eight foot by six or more inches came in through the kitchen wall and window where we were standing seconds earlier. One of the posts also smashed a door on the opposite wall of the kitchen. As for the rest of the damage, you can see the before and after pictures. They tell the story.

"Some of the crops had already been planted. They were littered with branches and debris. The volunteers that came to help were amazing. The high school was closed so the students could volunteer. The students, neighbors, relatives, and people from the community helped clear many truckloads of debris from the fields and the farmstead.

"I don't know what we would have done without them."



Aerial pictures of the Francis Miller farm, rural New Richland, Minnesota.  
Photographs provided by Paul Miller.



Before and after photographs of the Francis Miller home.  
Photographs provided by Paul Miller.



Photograph provided by Paul Miller.

## **Sister Rafael Tilton:**

"I remember the day of the Waseca tornado. It was a peaceful afternoon at Sacred Heart Convent when I answered the doorbell. It was the Sisters from Sleepy Eye, saying the wind was terrible, there were trees across the road, and they were going to wait till the storm died down. They came into the parlor, and we visited for a short while. Then the rain suddenly stopped. They jumped up and left in a hurry to take advantage of what looked like a brief respite from the weather.

"I stood in the hallway door looking to the south across the playground and street in front of Sacred Heart Church. It was perfectly calm for a few moments. I was marveling at how quickly the change had come about, when the wind and rain came up again. I watched in amazement as the sheets of rain changed direction, first coming from the east, then the south, and then the west. I heard a heavy roar, which even then I associated with the sound of a train. It was like nothing I had ever seen or heard before, and I did not connect even with the 'cyclones' we had paid attention to by barricading ourselves in the hallways while I was a novice.

"When the spectacle had died down, I wandered upstairs to see what was going on. It was a game of Five Hundred. One of the sisters asked me to take her hand for a little while, and I was sitting down when someone turned on the radio. The announcer was calling everyone who could possibly come to get over to the hospital as soon as possible as they needed help.

"'Tornado!' someone said. In minutes, we were walking down the street. I'm sure we were at the hospital within ten minutes of that announcement.

"The injured were being brought in, sometimes by other people who needed attention. Bruises, cuts, open wounds with sand ground into them. People were lined up in the hallways.

"Organization was amazingly strong. Many people answered the call. Each one of us had a job washing wounds, comforting, cleaning up, applying bandages almost as soon as we arrived. I believe we helped for about three hours before we were told they had things under control."

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**Sister Marice Hughes:**

"April 30, 1967. It was a Sunday and some of us were not aware that a tornado had hit. I was a teacher at Sacred Heart High School that year and I lived at Sacred Heart Convent.

"One place it hit was Clear Lake which is the lake on the east end of Waseca. I believe, as I remember hearing, it hit some houses on the south side of the lake, went right through the lake carrying furniture, refrigerators, etc. with it as it moved to the north side of the lake, destroying homes and injuring people.

"Some of us Sisters went to the hospital to help care for the injured. I was one who helped take care of one man who was very badly injured – he was taken to Rochester for special care."

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**Rosalie Grams:**

"I remembered the Waseca tornado well, as I was a senior that year at Sacred Heart High School in Waseca. I thought that probably some of the Sisters of St. Francis from Rochester, who staffed the school at that time, might still be around. The sisters were enlisted by the local hospital to come in and help with triage at the ER due to the large number of victims and the smallness of the hospital.

"I have a newspaper picture from our high school newspaper showing me as a candy striper visiting with one of the child victims at the hospital some days after the tornado."

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**Nicki Blowers (Schumacher):**

"My parents were living in Waseca when the storms came through. They were, however, unaffected by the storm, other than my grandfather ran the ambulance service in town at that point in time and was very busy that day. My dad said his sister was married the day before and they were all driving around out by the college (now the Federal Correctional Institute) when the sky went green and the temperature dropped dramatically. They went home just as the sirens began to blow. The trees swished a bit, and that was all they really had on the SW part of town. Then the phone rang and they heard that the other end of town had been wiped out."

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## **Bonnie Schlotzhauer:**

"Yes, I remember this day very well. I was 20 at the time and married nearly a year – anniversary June 4. My husband and I, my mom and dad and 2 brothers had been in Windom, MN to a confirmation celebration. It was a very humid, sticky, hazy day. On our way home, we stopped in Albert Lea to see my sister-in-law in the hospital who had just given birth to a little boy who was stillborn. After spending some time with her, we then headed home towards Northwood, Iowa. The sky started looking more like rain the further south we traveled. When we arrived in Northwood, my dad stopped at the gas station to get gas in the car before going home. We headed east out of Northwood on Highway 105 and turned right on our gravel road which was about 3 miles east of town. It had started raining by this time. As we were driving south, I noticed a huge cloud with a V-shape but very wide at the bottom, and I told my dad, who was driving, that it looked like a tornado and that we should turn around immediately and go back north or we would be directly in its path. We found the closest field driveway and began to turn around when the wind then was sucking up the rain as it was hitting the car and also sucked the air out of the carburetor etc. and the car stalled. We finally got it started after what seemed like an eternity. We drove north on the gravel road as fast as we dared, but the tornado caught up with us just before we got back to Highway 105, and it sucked us off the road and left us hanging on the edge of the road in the ditch. When the storm passed, the barn on the farm next to us was gone. We were so fortunate to not have been injured in any way. Shortly thereafter one of the farmers pulled our car out of the ditch, and we proceeded to go home which was down the road only a couple miles. On our way, there was nothing but destruction. A new farm home on the right only had the fireplace left standing. On the left an older lady's house was gone. Thankfully she was not home when the tornado struck. Our home was next down the road. Our house was gone. The barn collapsed on the cows, some injured, some killed, new calves lost from their mothers, pigs roaming all over, LP gas tank sizzling, debris all over, one of my coats stuck way up in a tree. It was a horrible [sight]. I had just purchased a Mother's ring for my mom from my brothers and myself, and knew I would never find it. As we sifted through the debris trying to save whatever we could, I found where my dresser had exploded. I also found the box the ring had been in, but no ring. I wandered around just looking for anything which was salvageable. I came back to the site where I found the ring box and saw something shiny in the dirt. I loosened the muddy dirt and there was mom's ring. I was so excited I had found it and gave it to her that day. Just could not wait until Mother's Day. It was since meant so much to both mom and myself.

"My husband's mom and dad just lived further south from us a mile, so we drove down there to see what damage they had. The barn there was the only thing destroyed, and many cows injured. A few days after the storm my mother-in-law fell and broke her hip, so she was in the hospital in Mason City recuperating. And 2 weeks following the storm my husband was out planting corn on his dad's farm when he was involved in a tractor accident and somehow fell, and the tractor drove over him. He died that day so we never got to celebrate our first anniversary.

"The tornado that struck our home came from down near Manly, Iowa and went up to Myrtle, MN. There was also another tornado that went through the west side of Albert Lea and one in Waseca both claiming lives."

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### **Nancy McIntire:**

"On that Sunday evening, the majority of my family was still gathered around the kitchen table, while my brother, Bob, was in the dining room talking with my Dad, looking out the front window, watching the rain.

"All of a sudden, Bob jumped up and yelled (which we knew meant something very, very bad to risk saying that in front of Dad), ran into the kitchen, yelling 'It's a tornado!'. He flipped my younger sister, Betsy, out of her high chair, my brother, Marty, grabbed my younger brother, John, and all seven of us dashed for the basement.

"Prior to this, it had been raining very hard. Then everything became really 'green' – no other way to describe it. The air seemed to have a green tint; very still and very green. When we were in the basement, we could hear banging, and then silence.

"What my brother had seen was the roof on the house directly across the street literally pulled off and dropped in its front yard. The banging in our house had occurred when the tornado lifted up our roof, and then slammed it back down perfectly in place; but it cracked every ceiling in our three-story home.

"We sat there for a while, then my parents decided to go up and outside to see what had happened. They were gone for quite a while, so we tried to peek out the windows, but they were completely covered with debris. So, we did what any kid would do – we went upstairs and outside to investigate, and see if something had happened to our parents since they hadn't returned.



"Where everything had been neat and tidy before dinner, it was as if an explosion had occurred as far as you could see north, south or east. We were the very last house on the edge of the tornado, so to our west, it was totally unchanged on the other side of our fence. Completely untouched.

"My great aunt Alice Madel lived directly behind us (north side), and I can remember her nervously picking her way over downed electrical lines over to us, to see what happened. My mom explained to Alice that she was safer in her house, which hadn't sustained much damage, than wandering around, so I was recruited to walk her home. Yes, I was utterly scared to death walking through piles of ... everything, remembering not to touch any wires, which seemed to be everywhere.

"That night, the city needed volunteers, of course, and Bob was one of the first to go. At the time he was 13, but he was a big kid who looked 16, and he said he wanted to help. So they put him at the edge of Clear Lake to detour cars around the lake away from the main damage on Highway 14.

"Bob told the story that he had a flashlight and was waving people to go right, around the lake road, but one car kept coming at him, and he kept waving, and the car kept coming, and he kept frantically waving. At the last minute, Bob jumped out of the way. Two State Patrol cars, posted with Bob, '...jumped on that car like tigers', Bob recalled. The driver was drunk, and was definitely at the wrong place at the wrong time. Bob was there all night and into the next morning without relief.

"While we (my brother, John, sister, Betsy, and I) tried to sleep that night, we kept hearing loudspeakers requesting help or ambulances, as they found people in the rubble. Throughout the next few days, we found out that there had been seven people killed in our neighborhood alone. Two were the grandparents of a classmate of mine – and my classmate and her family had just left their grandparents (Mr. and Mrs. Rux) about ten minutes before the storm struck after spending the day with them.

"On Monday, cleanup began at our house. Because we were the last on the edge of the storm, while we had yard and house damage, we also had phone lines and electricity. So, our house was set up as a base area for most of the crews that came to help.

"The first group that showed up to help was the Salvation Army. They were incredible – they gave and helped and gave and helped, comforting all the while. My mom caught them making collect calls to their offices to request more supplies, and my mom told them they had to dial direct. They didn't want to cause any 'financial burden' on us, but my mom told them to dial

direct or not at all. Our family has generously supported the Salvation Army since that day – they were truly amazing. Words cannot describe how grateful we were for their aid without ego.

“The job of picking up our yard, my great aunt Alice’s yard, and everyone else who needed help, took days and weeks. My dad had picked up so many books, all with ‘Manley Youngberg’ written in the front cover, he joked that he wished Manley (a family friend) would come get his books. We found out days later that Youngberg’s home had been completely demolished.

“We had huge, heavy, beautiful wooden Adirondack chairs that ended up in splinters a block away, but our ugly, red metal chairs went nowhere. Those two ugly chairs were in the yard, right where they started, with debris piled up around.

“My grandmother happened to be on a cruise in Alaska, and this was such a rarity – a tornado in Waseca – that it made the news all the way there. She was terribly worried until she could get through on the phone, but we could tell her everything was fine. (Her house was at the other, west end of the block, and had no sign of any tornado occurring less than a block away.)

“For many years after the tornado, we were not permitted to go barefoot anywhere outside, because glass and nails still came up through the grass. A plastic blow-up Santa hung on an electrical wire across the walking trail around the lake – and for all I know, it’s still there. People learning scuba diving practiced diving for refrigerators, stoves, etc. that ended up in the lake.

“As for our cracked ceilings, it took two years before anyone was available to do the construction work to repair them. Unfortunately, they had to be completely replaced, room by room, all three stories. But we considered ourselves very fortunate that, aside from a few broken windows, it was the only major damage we had. We knew so many who had lost everything, including their families.

“There were no sirens until long after the tornado had hit our area. We were standing on the lawn, surveying the damage, when the sirens went off, and everyone was terrified for a second. Cooler heads prevailed when it was pointed out there were absolutely no clouds in the sky, so it was probably not about us.

“Also, our tornado ‘comfort level’ vanished that afternoon. We had always heard that Waseca would never have a tornado because it was located

between two lakes, and since there had never been a tornado in the past, that was obviously proof that it was true.

"Over the years, there would be tornado watches & warnings, and we would slowly make our way to the basement, grabbing the accounting books for my parents' store on our way, but not really thinking it was something serious. Many times, my dad didn't go to the basement with us, so sure he was that there couldn't be a tornado.

"From that point forward, we all took tornado warnings very, very seriously – perhaps even a little overboard – but we knew what they could do, and how strange they can act.

"We heard stories of how the White Castle bar had a tree go directly through the roof, landing on a table around which four guys had been playing cards. None of them were hurt, but directly behind the bar was a farm, where two people were killed, and the children were orphaned.

"There are many memories that have faded with time, and others that are just as crisp and frightening as that night. And always, we respect the power and the seeming randomness of the tornado's damage.

"My brother, Bob, who was busy for days, volunteering 'in the disaster area' (and my dad pointed out, 'but you live in the disaster area!') and helping anywhere he could, passed away last September [2006] at age 53. My parents still live in the same home, and we have never had another tornado in the neighborhood. And we never take it for granted. Ever."

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### **Dewey Zabel:**

"I was 5 years old when I was in my first tornado. That was on a Saturday evening, August 17, 1946 in Wells, Minnesota. That tornado struck at 7:50 PM.

"The second one was on Sunday, April 30, 1967 at 6:50 PM in Waseca, Minnesota. I was 25 years old, my wife (Kathy) was 23 and my two kids; Tammy was 2 and Curt had turned one earlier in the month.

"All day long the weather was unstable. Temperatures would go up, then down, then up and down. The street by our place would have steam coming off it when the temperatures would rise.

"Not long before the tornado hit I had gone downstairs to check the car out because when it would rain it would leak in the trunk. It was raining and cold when I went down. I was in the car about 10 minutes then it got real dark and windy. So I thought I better get back upstairs. When I left the car my glasses steamed over because the weather changed so fast to hot and muggy and it was raining and hailing which is a good sign a tornado is in the area.

"Just before the tornado hit, Tammy and I were in the living room. I was sitting on the couch and Tammy was looking out the south window when it got real dark and windy. Tammy said to me, as she was looking out the window, 'Daddy, it's windy and dark out there'. I asked her to come and sit on the couch with me and she did. Kathy and Curt were in the bathroom getting clothes ready for Monday wash day. So I picked up Tammy and we went to them. I told Kathy to take Tammy and I'd take Curt and we would head for the basement because I didn't know if anything was going to happen, and that we would stop and get Mr. and Mrs. Ripley. (Who lived below us in the duplex.) But we didn't make it to the main floor. We got hit while we were in the stairway.

"We started down the stairs. Kathy and Tammy were first. We had four steps down to a landing and then seven steps down to the main floor. Tammy and Kathy got down to about the second step from the bottom. Curt and I were up on the fifth step or so when the front door blew in. I looked back up to our apartment and saw the south window that Tammy had been looking out of a short time earlier blow out and our living room that we were in was being destroyed. When I looked back to see where Kathy and Tammy were the front door came flying by Curt and I. That's the last thing I was sure of.

"I still had Curt in my left arm but I didn't know if we were tossed in the air or on the ground but I was always trying to stop us being tossed in the air or on the ground.

"When it was all over Kathy and Tammy were tossed about 110 to 120 feet in the neighbor's yard and Curt and I were about 105 feet north of our apartment along with the house and Mr. and Mrs. Ripley. When I came to, Curt and I were looking in the neighbor's big bay window which was blown out. I still had Curt in my left arm. I was standing up with my left leg bent back on a fallen tree, not knowing the leg was broken. When I came to my senses I started looking for Kathy and Tammy. I yelled their names for some time until Kathy finally moved a little. I could see where they both were and I asked Kathy if she still had Tammy. She said that she was under some debris but she had a hold of her hand.



"Mud had been driven into our skin and it took us a long time to get the mud and dirt cleaned out.

"Grandpa and Grandma Zabel lived in the northwest part of town and didn't even know the tornado hit our street. They did hear the sirens from the ambulance leaving the hospital though.

"I was in the hospital for only one day. I stayed at Grandpa and Grandma Zabel's after that. It was snowing that day. It was May 2, 1967 and I was off work at Red Owl for six weeks. (Red Owl was the local grocery store where Dewey worked in the meat department.)

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### **Kathy Zabel:**

"Curt and I stayed home from church that day. Curt wasn't feeling very good. Some friends of ours told us after the storm that they had planned on coming over to see us, but that he fell asleep on the couch and so they didn't come. Good thing.

"As Tammy and I were heading down the stairs I could hear windows breaking and I saw the front door fly by. I remember screaming 'Oh God! Oh God!' We were pulled down on the second step from the bottom, with Tammy still in my arms. (Never thought we would have lived through it!) We got picked up and banged against a door that went into a bedroom of [the] Riple's. Then we landed outside in the neighbor's yard to the north. (Part of [the] Riple's house landed on their house.) I came to for a split second. Could see the storm was not over. Then I passed out and didn't come to until Dewey called for us. My left arm was stretched out to the left of me. It looked like Tammy had rolled right out of my arms. Tammy was covered from neck to feet with twigs and debris. A tree was up over her head, but not touching her. When I sat up I looked back at the neighbor's picture window and saw them looking at us. We were in their yard. Dewey crawled over to me and Tammy. He told me to take Curt and he would dig Tammy out. When I tried to walk with Curt I fell down. Not knowing I had a broken pelvis.

"People across town had no idea that anything had happened. The whistle went off after it was all over. When the ambulance got there, it was driven by Mr. Kinder himself; and another guy had come along with him. They put Mr. Holtz and Dewey in the back. A neighbor down the street to the north came and got Tammy and Curt and took them to the hospital. (We found

out years later that the person was Ethel Nodland's dad. We didn't know him at the time.) The ambulance crew put me in the front of the ambulance, as they had no other place to put me. My clothes were almost all ripped off of me. At the hospital, the man that had taken the kids stayed to tell me that they would be ok. When we first got to the hospital they had Dewey laying on a cart at one end of a room and me laying on another cart in about the middle, next to the wall. We both had lots of mud on us. (It rained the whole time during the storm!)

"Our Pastor at the time walked right by me and went to where Dewey was. Then a priest came into the room and came over to talk to me. I started to laugh. I told him, 'That was pretty good, you stopped to talk to me and my own pastor walked right by me'.

"With all the people they had no wheel chairs left. So Jim Keller carried me up on the elevator to the second floor. (Years later he tells people how I hurt his back. I weighed a lot less then!) I never knew Jim before that day.

"Dewey and I never slept that first night. When Dewey finally got his leg in a cast they brought him in to see me. I think we both wanted to see that the other was ok! I slept that night. I laid in the hospital for 6 weeks. The hardest part was not being able to see my kids! I had a doctor from Mapleton, Doctor Norman from Waseca and my doctor coming in to see me right after the storm. Also the priest came quite a few times to see me; our pastor and the nuns one day. One of the nurses came in after and asked me what religion I was. Even had the governor of Minnesota come to see me...I had to have stitches up by my right eye, also on my left arm as I had no feeling in my hand. [I] had to work on getting strength back in that hand. I popped wood out of my arm for a while after I got out of the hospital. I also had a hole in my right ankle. The doctors didn't see that right away. Lester Root's sister was a nurse at the time. When she came to check me a day or so later she really got mad that no one had looked at my ankle. She put stuff in it to clean it out each day. Then when it got to the bone it really hurt! Out of the 6 weeks, 5 of them I couldn't even put my foot over the edge of the bed. The 6<sup>th</sup> week the doctor said I could get in a wheel chair. (I couldn't wait for a nurse each day to bring a wheel chair into the room so I could get out from that green room!) My doctor came every day to see me. If he didn't feel very good he would just stand by the doorway and ask how I was. He told me he should never have let me get into a wheelchair as he could never find me when he came. He had to go looking for me.

"When Grandpa and Grandma Weed came to see me after the storm I told them what happened and how bad it looked. Grandpa Weed thought I was talking out of my head. When I first woke up right after the storm I thought I had died! When Grandpa Weed got back after seeing how bad it was he said, 'Boy, I guess you did know what you were talking about'. He said he didn't know how we ever came out alive.

"Our bed was found across the street. [I] was told it looked like I had just made it. But when they went to look at it they found the bedding was shredded, as was the few clothes they found.

"Aunt Shirley came to the hospital as soon as she heard we were there. Tammy and Curt and another girl, who was 7, were in another room. Shirley asked the nurse where Tammy and Curt were. The nurse pointed to them and said, 'Right there'. Shirley had to leave as she couldn't handle it. Both of the kid's faces were like a ball from the pressure of the storm.

"When I finally got out of the hospital Tammy remembered me but was torn between Grandma Weed and me. Curt took one look at me and headed away. I didn't think either of the kids would remember me. We stayed at Grandma and Grandpa Zabel's until we moved to the little house in Waldorf.

"Other people on our street the day of the storm said it sounded like a train going too fast. We never heard a thing. They say that you cannot live through it if you are in the eye of the storm. But I believe that is where we were. Otherwise I don't think the kids would have had faces shaped like balls and we would have heard the sound of the train. Very much believe that we lived a miracle!

"Curt lost a nail and had a cut on his face that left a scar. Dewey's back looked like someone had whipped it. Mrs. Ripple was found farther to the north in the same yard we were in. It took a day or so for them to find Mr. Ripple. He was in parts.

"People from our church and other people from the area were really good in giving money to a fund for all of us in the storm."

## **Leona Root Wenzel McDonald:**

"On Sunday April 30, 1967, I attended 6:00 a.m. mass at Sacred Heart church in Waseca. I then went to work my day shift at Waseca Memorial Hospital. After having an evening meal with my family, we decided to go to the basement for a while because the air and the sky were so different.

"The next thing I knew, there was loud pounding at our front door. Either our phone was not ringing or we had not heard it. It was the hospital administrator telling me I had to come with him right away. I had never gone to work wearing tennis shoes or gone without stockings. In all the excitement, I put on a new pair of tennis shoes I had never worn before and no stockings. By the time I got back home the next afternoon I had large blisters on both heels. I can remember sitting on the edge of the tub with cold water running on my feet trying to cool them off.

"At that time in my nursing career I was in charge of surgery, emergency room and central supply.

"One of our nurses, Elizabeth Freseman's total home was blown away. My father, Enoch Root, had just redone a piano for them which was in their basement. She told me many times that they got behind the piano and that is what saved their lives. Elizabeth got a ride to the hospital, borrowed a uniform and worked all night with us tending to people that needed her.

"We helped take care of many injured and scared people that night and many, many wonderful people from our community came to help comfort, hold hands, wash instruments, clean up or whatever needed to be done.

"We had two Sisters come from Sacred Heart Convent. We had a very injured man that had to be put into the big operating room. A lot of debris came with him. I was so concerned about how we could best clean up. The good Sisters told me not to worry; it was just a little bit of Mother Nature being spread around.

"Whenever I see Duane and Kathy Zabel, I think about the tornado. They were both injured badly. They lived in the home where both Mr. and Mrs. John Rippe were killed. My friend Evelyn Holtys husband Louis was injured very badly, he lived in a care center for many years.

"My daughter Laura was age 6. She spent the rest of that night on her dad's lap in the big chair. It took her a long time for her not to get upset when she heard sirens or knew a storm was brewing.



"One last bit to my story. About four o'clock in the morning when we thought we must have everyone taken care of, another man came to our door. It was Archie Draheim. I think he needed a few stitches. I remember asking him where he had been and he said he was taking care of his cows."

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### **Kathleen Eberline Smith:**

"'Black Sunday' was meant to be a fun and interesting day for the youth group from St. John's Lutheran church in Waseca. After the service that day, roughly two dozen jr. and sr. high school students from St. John's mounted one of the Clemon's school buses, so commonly seen around town, and headed for a convention at a Lutheran church in Albert Lea. My sister (Noreen Eberline Reding) and I were part of that group. The other students I remember on that trip were our pastor's son Tim Landgrebe, his friend, Jim Gutfliesh and my classmate Lynnette Schoenrock.

"The youth convention went off without a hitch and a little past mid afternoon, we mounted the bus to return to Waseca. I remember thinking that, not only was it hot, but the air was so sultry it was almost impossible to get a breath. We left Albert Lea city limits en route to Waseca via Owatonna. Somewhere along the way, between Owatonna and Waseca, it became so dark, Mr. Clemon's actually used the headlights on the bus! The darkness was striking since it was still early in the day and the days had been getting longer. At some point, there was a tremendous cloud burst including lightning and thunder. The bus trudged forth going west on Highway 14 toward Waseca. The bus stopped at some point before the A&W Root Beer Stand. The sky had lightened some and we could see out the windows. Things looked chaotic, but from our vantage point, we could not see what exactly was going on. Our youth group leader, a pretty, blonde woman whose name now escapes me, left the bus to get information about the reason for the road being closed. When she came back she calmly announced that there had been a tornado in town and that there was much damage, including downed power lines. She told us we were going to have to leave the bus and walk together to the church. She said that because of the chaos and downed electrical lines, we should form a line and hold on to each other's hands so we would not get separated. We did as we were told. Luckily, no one stepped on a live electrical line because unknown to us at the time, all two dozen of us could have gone up in smoke with one wrong step if we had!

"As we proceeded through town we saw some of the devastation. I remember Tim pointing to a spot that was filled with no stick of wood larger than a pencil and saying 'That was Scotty Martin's house!' I had seen

Scott's house many times before, but no matter how hard I looked, I could not visualize that mass of ruin being Scott's house. I could not even think of how it had looked before that day, where the windows had been or which side of the house the garage was on. It just seemed impossible that this war torn block had been the same one that I had traveled down so many times before.

"By sheer coincidence, my parents and brothers, in our family car, turned the corner going south on 8<sup>th</sup> avenue off of Highway 14. Somehow Noreen, Lynnette and I got their attention and went off with them. I remember us taking Lynette to her house on North State Street. Her sister, Karen, was in the front yard and we chatted with her for a few minutes before going home. Our house, at that time, was on 7<sup>th</sup> avenue SE, near to the damaged part of town, but unharmed."

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### **Cheri Register:**

"April 30, 1967, was my 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday, and I was going to school in Chicago. My folks called me from back home in Albert Lea about 6:00 that evening. My sister and brother-in-law were visiting them, and they all wanted to wish me a happy birthday. I was chatting away with my mom when she screamed and the phone went dead. I didn't know what had happened. I didn't even think tornado, because my birthday is often cold and rainy, not yet hot and muggy enough for tornadoes to develop. I don't remember how much time passed while I made one attempt after another to reach them by phone. The busy signal sounded more and more ominous. When I finally got through, Mom told me that my brother-in-law had come running in the house yelling, 'Tornado!' and they all hit the basement except my dad, who went outside to look. I don't know how he avoided getting sucked up and carried to Owatonna. The path of destruction went right through our neighborhood, about four houses away. The Manuels, who were killed, lived just across what was then U.S. Highway 16, in sight of our house. One of my favorite houses was lost: a cottage-style house with a screened porch that belonged to Verna Graves, a high school home ec teacher. Although there were tornadoes before and there have been tornadoes since, people in Albert Lea understand that 'The Tornado' means April 30, 1967."

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**David Hinna:**

"I lived on, and still do, the snake trail in Waseca. I was 12 yrs old when the tornado hit our place. We were lucky as no one was home at the time. My Dad and Mom and two sisters were in town having supper and my brother and I were just across the field helping the neighbors with chores. I remember running for [their] house to get into the basement for cover. A neighbor drove up and told us that the Hinna place was gone. It was a real scare on account my brother and I thought my mom and dad were home and they thought we were home. Lucky no one was [home] because there was nothing left but total destruction."

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**Deb Kleindl:**

"I was 6 years old in 1967 and remember a lot of the stories that my mom and dad would tell of the tornado. My oldest cousin Linda's husband was in the Service and was state side in Alabama. He was in a car accident that took his life on April 29, 1967. We found out about his death the following morning and our family went to first visit my Grandmother, in Emmons, to tell her about Brad's death. Then later that afternoon we went to my aunt and uncle's farm near Hartland. I remember being outside playing and that it was sprinkling and there was a rainbow. My aunt was on the phone with one of her neighbors when all of a sudden, her neighbor said, 'Oh, my...a tornado' and hung up on my aunt. My mom said she looked outside and saw the beautiful spring day that I just described.

"Shortly after this we headed back to Albert Lea. We lived in the 'Garden Villa Neighborhood' and as we passed St. Johns Nursing Home, the billboard across the road was either missing or broken. We would normally turn on to Wedgewood Road to get to our house on Will-O-Bruce. Once we reached the turn for Wedgewood we were not allowed to go home that way. My dad eventually convinced the officers to let us through. Once we arrived on the scene of our 'house' the only thing I remember was that I cried about some doll that I had. I find that to be unusual because I never was one to play with dolls growing up hardly at all.

"Our front steps had an evergreen tree on each side and they remained intact along with the steps, other than that our home was totally demolished. My dog Rover was under one of the Evergreens, and was very protective of me and did not like anyone wearing a uniform. Therefore no one wearing any sort of uniform could get near him or the house until we arrived home. People feared that the four of us were dead because of the lack of items in our basement. Normally at least the furnace is left in the

basement because of being cemented into the foundation, ours was not nor were the major appliances. People have said it was as if the basement was completely cleaned out and that garbage was put into it. A family friend had tried calling our house, the phone rang but no one answered, so Vern ran from their home to ours which was about 3+ miles away in less than 10 minutes.

"I have always been led to believe that the tornado was a Godsend for our family. First of all, my mom was 6 months pregnant with my brother and my parents were contemplating a possibility of having to move because our home was only a two bedroom home and my sister and I already shared a room. My dad had just put up our new bunk-bed on Saturday evening and we slept in it one night. My mom had a dream of all people who were at our home before we arrived to the scene. The only thing different was that my grandma was in the place of her sister according to my mom's dream. My cousin's husband Brad's life was taken to spare the lives of our family. We rebuilt our new home on the same lot as our previous home and also bought an extra lot. We created many new memories and never forgot how God spared our lives that weekend."

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**Unknown Contributor, taken by permission from the Waseca Virtual History Museum webpage on the event:**

"I was a junior at Waseca Central High School on the day of the tornado. My family had gone to Kiester, Minnesota to attend my cousin's confirmation party. When we left their house after supper, we heard reports of bad weather in the area. As we came into Waseca, it was obvious that something was amiss. There were police blockades at the corner of Elm Avenue and 8th Street. We were told that a tornado had gone through and that we were not allowed to travel down 8th Street. My dad explained that our home was across the street from Clear Lake Park. We were let through, but did not know what we would find. Luckily, our home was untouched, but we were soon to learn of the devastation near the White Castle area and of the terrible destruction and loss of life on the other side of the lake."

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**Unknown Contributor, taken by permission from the Waseca Virtual History Museum webpage on the event:**

"I remember my friend said she was taking a bath when a tree flew by her second story window. She was pretty shaken up."



**Unknown Contributor, taken by permission from the Waseca Virtual History Museum webpage on the event:**

"I was a sophomore at Waseca when this happened. I was walking from the house to the barn, south to north, when something made me drop the pails of water I was carrying to wash the milkers. I ran over to the windmill and wrapped my arms and legs around it. I remember thinking how stupid I was and that my dad was going to be mad about dropping the water pails, when, the tornado hit me. It felt like the whole Viking football team beating on me. When I got inside of the twister, I opened my eyes and watched shingles, nails, boards, and dirt circling me. I remembered that I did a lot of praying and that it would be great to live through this. It was then that I saw the barn explode, and was knocked out when the debris started settling down.

"By the way, the cow with the board through its stomach was not dead instantly. I remember it walking around with the board sticking through it. My dad was wondering what to do with it when it finally went down and died about an hour or two after the tornado went through."

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**Unknown Contributor, taken by permission from the Waseca Virtual History Museum webpage on the event:**

"My grandparents house is among those pictured on 11th St SE; Rux's were their neighbors. Dave & June Dunlap are my grandparents and I remember, even though I was small, the HORRIBLE noise the tornado made, things flying by the window and walking over to my grandparents house after the worst was over. We lived on 10th street and just walking a block I don't think I'll ever forget the noise or the things that we saw."

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## 6. Newspaper Accounts

### The Waseca Journal



"At Waseca the storm hit without warning and no tornado funnel was sighted in the darkened skyline."

"The storm had subsided and we had gone over to the residence to see if we could help, the Pastor [of the Grace Baptist Church in Waseca]: 'We assumed that no one had been in the house and were turning around to go back to the church when the tornado alert [siren] sounded.' "

"Fortunately, a misfortune of a week ago Saturday, probably saved the lives of members of the family. A week ago, a fire damaged the house so badly that the family has been living at the Twilite Motel. Other members of the family would likely have been at home [which was leveled] had the fire not forced them out."

"...had placed a \$20 bill on the table, three feet from where the tree penetrated the building [White Castle night club on the north shore of Clear Lake]. After the storm, the currency was still there."

"The father and three sons had remained seated at the supper table [at a residence in Alden]. That area of the house was the only part left intact after the storm had passed."

"Witnesses in nearby homes said the funnel looked like 'a flock of crows' as it [Owatonna tornado] approached."

"Cleaning up this morning...found his glasses under the sofa. Two fancy plates that were hung on the living room wall were still hanging there, but they had been turned around and were facing the wall."

"...was out in the garage trying to get a report on the weather on his car radio when he heard the roar of the tornado and they barely made it into the basement."

"When the tornado struck, we didn't hear much of anything except that it sounded like someone threw a hammer through our plate glass window."

"Our ears went 'dead'...We hardly heard a thing..."

"Monday morning, he was searching for the dynamite caps he knew he had somewhere and was worried that they might explode."

"The garage roof sailed across her backyard like a flying saucer."

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## The Minneapolis Star



"Through a living room window, she saw the family car backing down the driveway by itself in the rain. 'The noise was terrible, and I thought the house would go, so I ran into the broom closet.' [She] had been told by her husband that the broom closet was the safest place in the house because of brick walls around it."

"A Waseca County deputy sheriff said the cloud cover was so low the funnel could not be seen from the city."

"All of a sudden the rain stopped and it was very quiet and looked as though it was clearing up. I glanced out the window and saw some debris flying by. That's when I got everybody into the basement. There was a roar but what I noticed most was the pressure on my ears."

"We were sitting at the dinner table eating when the picture window hit me and my husband right in the face. There was no warning. There was this terrible rain falling and all of a sudden I was diving along the floor with glass all around me."

"And a 22-foot house trailer from the lot behind the [house] was now in their back yard, lying on its side – an eight-foot hedge between the yards untouched."

"Concrete block foundations looked as if they had just been laid for new houses."

"It [Albert Lea tornado] was over before people knew it was hitting."

"Many persons in stricken areas said they were taken by surprise by the suddenness of the storm although the Weather Bureau had begun broadcast of warnings at 11:40 am Sunday."

"I hadn't been well and I was lying on the couch in my living room. I heard this crash. I looked out the window and saw a fir tree fall. I tried to run to the basement. I saw I couldn't make it. I was by a planter and then I fell. I don't know what hit me. When I came to, I was in a pool of blood. I tried to crawl out. Something, it must have been the roof, was slanted down from the planter to the dining room table. My cement steps disappeared. I tried to get out the door but I fell again. My shoes were gone. Everything was open – the door to the porch, the screens. Three men came up. One was a neighbor building a house. His place was untouched. The men grabbed me and they said, 'Get her to the hospital.' "

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## St. Paul Dispatch





"...it was fortunate the residents were not in the dining room lounge where six large plate-glass windows shattered. Their dinner hour had been changed because of daylight-saving time which began Sunday, or they would have been in that area when the [Albert Lea] tornado struck."

"It roared like a jet plane. The wind sucked me right out the door of the barn. It just picked me up and carried me out. Then the barn started coming down."

"The Midland [Cooperative gas plant in south of Albert Lea] records and paperwork were speared on small branches in a grove of trees on the other side of the embankment."

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## New Ulm Journal

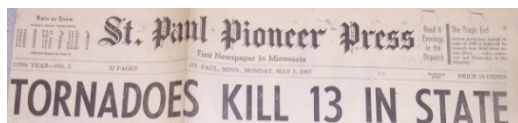


"A tornado watch had been posted all afternoon, but this southern Minnesota farming community of 6,100 [Waseca] had never been hit by a tornado in recent history."

"During the roar, [he] told his dad, 'We should have opened the windows.'"

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## St. Paul Sunday Pioneer Press (May 7, 1967)



"[They] were watching television a week ago [April 30, 1967] when [she] noticed the barometer had fallen to near 28, the lowest reading she'd ever seen. Then the sound of what might have been a dozen freight trains."

"It was over in about a minute...The living room furniture we'd been sitting on was gone – we haven't seen it since."

"It's [Waseca tornado] the worst thing that has ever happened here for as long as I can remember. But almost the minute it was over, people started helping other people...They [volunteers] don't ask for anything. But Waseca owes many people a great deal."

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## The Minneapolis Tribune (May 2, 1967)



"It [Albert Lea tornado] sounded like I was 6 feet away from a big 707 jet taking off...Then a big brick section of the house fell and just missed us in the basement. All of a sudden it was over. The house was gone and I felt it raining on my face."

"I was looking out the store window and the house just seemed to be breathing. It went in and out a couple of times and then – poof! – it just wasn't there anymore."

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## The Faribault Daily News



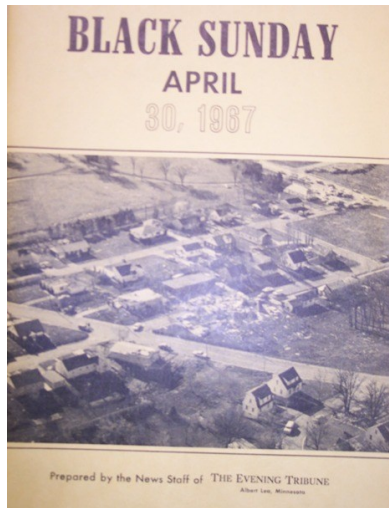
"At about 7 p.m., we heard that sound, just like a train. We took two steps toward the basement, but didn't go down. It was all over. I looked out the front window (facing Highway 14, just west of Owatonna) and there was the house next door in a heap on the highway...It's so hard to understand. Why would it come along and pick out just one house from four?"

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## The Rochester Post Bulletin



## **Black Sunday April 30, 1967 – Publication by staff at the Albert Lea Evening Tribune**



"[He] had milked right through the storm. He heard nothing more than loud thunder."

"An electric clock was in the kitchen. It stopped. The time was 6:13. He had left a stack of books and papers on a chair in a first floor bedroom. They hadn't been moved."

"All of a sudden the southeast corner of the barn roof lifted up. I laid down and covered my head...Ten minutes before the tornado, [he] was in the silo, which was completely crushed."

"[He] related that he had just told his wife he was going to fix himself some supper and had gone into the bathroom to wash his hands. He looked out the window and saw it [Albert Lea tornado]."

"It sounded like dynamite but was sharp like lightning...The snapping glass sounded like an electric welder."

"I was talking to my dad on the phone...When I heard what I thought was a freight train...It was too loud for a train though...so I looked out the window and saw this cloud coming and all kinds of debris flying around about two blocks away. I ran into the bedroom and grabbed the baby. When I came out I looked out the window again and it was just down the street. I ran down into the basement and into the southwest corner. We hadn't been there more than 10 seconds, when everything went."



"We found a china closet and none of the dishes were broken...We found a lot of clothes that weren't even dirty."

"I couldn't see the bottom of the funnel because of the other houses...The top of it was a dark gray in color."

"All of a sudden it [the wind] stopped, and the trees were perfectly still. I always heard that when the trees stand still like that, that's the time you should go to the basement."

"Both boys said the sky was grayish-green in color shortly after the storm."

"It was raining hard, the wind quieted to a standstill and when my wife and I looked to the south, the sky resembled a red blanket."

"I got an eerie feeling by the looks of the weather. I handed my son to [him] and walked eight feet into the kitchen. The sound was like that of 100 locomotives. I told everyone to hit the floor and cover their heads."

## **7. The Aftermath**

Damage incurred during the April 30<sup>th</sup> tornado disaster in southern Minnesota totaled some 9 million dollars (54 million in adjusted 2006 dollars), with 13 persons killed. Dozens more were injured, according to Minnesota state civil defense authorities. Freeborn County suffered the most damage from the tornado outbreak.

The storm in Albert Lea damaged or demolished from 60 to 100 homes in the Jordan Addition, Garden Villa area, Sunset and Oakwood areas and near the Albert Lea Country Club. The Loyd Battleson home was completely destroyed in the Country Club area.

The tornado then skipped over the lake and damaged both the house and barn on the Martin Just farm, as well as a barn on a neighboring farm. The thunderstorm that produced the tornado struck at 6:24 p.m., and initiated a power outage to half of the city.

All available police, firemen and emergency workers were called in to assist. Nurses and doctors responded to the emergency on their own. The hospital emergency rooms overflowed with injured residents.

The Albert Lea National Guard units were called in to patrol the damaged areas and transport the homeless to an emergency center established at the local Armory.

Lea College students were also commended for their response to the emergency. Many of them aided at the disaster sites. Several brought their bedding from the Albert House dorm to the Armory for use by those left homeless.

Governor Harold LeVander declared the city of Albert Lea and surrounding areas damaged by the storm disaster areas. He requested the deployment of three National Guard units.

Albert Lea rescue authorities said the tornado cut a path about 150 to 200 feet wide for 2.5 miles through the city of Albert Lea. National Guard troops patrolling the damaged areas refused to allow unauthorized persons into the ravaged region. Guardsmen patrolled the damage areas with fixed bayonets protecting property from looters.

A total of 19 homes in the Albert Lea disaster area were declared un-repairable from the storm, five were questionable, and 56 more were damaged but considered repairable.

More than 20 farms located in the London and Myrtle areas of eastern Freeborn County were also heavily damaged. The tornado smashed farms in the Myrtle area, beginning near the Iowa line and moved north four miles. Thankfully, only one person was seriously injured by this twister.

**Information provided by George A. Cobley:**

"I was just reading the Waseca County News of 22 March, 2007 about your efforts to collect information on the April 30, 1967 Tornado in Waseca, Minnesota. I was there at the time and was involved post event. At that time, I was a newly appointed Civil Defense (now Emergency Management Agency I suspect) Communications Chief. That group was made up of a few amateur radio operators (hams). This group had conducted their first drill just a few weeks before the tornado and the lessons learned had really not been fully implemented, but we set up a base station at the Waseca County Sheriff's office and began to supplement disaster communications under the direction of Robert (Bob) Deef.

"I am sure you have by now more information than you can use, but I thought I might supplement some of it. I don't expect to add anything new. When I was finally able to get into the field I remember driving around Clear Lake and seeing a restaurant, the White Castle, in pieces. It is where a piece of wood had been driven through the wall. The storm track missed the heart of the city, but traveled along the eastern edge and crossed the lake before hitting the White Castle.

"Following the disaster my communications team learn from the experience and evolved into an early version of today's weather spotter networks. Our team brought into service the local Citizens Band radio operators. The fact that E. F. Johnson Company was located in Waseca provided talented engineers and technicians to form the communications team. The group spent many hours observing storms as they approached and passed by Waseca for many years. I left Waseca in 1978 and I wonder if they still have a communications team that does weather spotting? *(Editor's note: Waseca County continues to have an active spotter group and Skywarn classes as of 2017).*

"Learning from the April 30th disaster, citizen warning became an important function of Civil Defense. The siren system was supported by the weather spotters. Waseca County had the unique distinction of installing and operating a weather radar system. The operators were able to advise storm location and movement which allowed for more optimum placement of weather spotters. The spotters had preplanned locations to observe

storms. The sites were selected so they offer clear views and, most importantly, an exit route should a tornado approach the site.

“As the 40th anniversary approaches, I am looking forward to seeing what you have come up with. I am sure it will stir some memories. After all the years I am still watching for storms. I am now in Linn County Iowa and continue training with the Davenport office of the weather service.”

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## **8. Times Have Changed**

Since 1967, many aspects of the severe weather warning process have changed drastically – all for the better. The changes encompass how storms are observed, how weather warnings are composed and disseminated, and how the public receives weather warnings. Some of these alterations were the direct result of the Black Sunday tornadoes.

### **Storm Spotting**

The human eye always has been and always will be the most effective tool for observing severe thunderstorms and tornadoes. Although the technological advances over the past few decades have made it easier for meteorologists and weather enthusiasts to remotely observe thunderstorm characteristics, only the human eye can actually determine what a particular thunderstorm is producing.

Every year, thousands of volunteers across central and southern Minnesota and west central Wisconsin take to the fields and the highways when there is a threat of severe weather. These volunteers, after receiving official training, serve as the eyes of their local communities, counties, and the National Weather Service when severe weather strikes.

In 1967, storm spotter groups were few and far between, and the training was only loosely organized. Correspondence between the Weather Bureau's (now the National Weather Service) Central Region in Kansas City and the former Meteorologist-in-Charge of the now closed Rochester Weather Bureau Station, Glenn Trapp, indicates that prior to the Black Sunday tornadoes, the city of Albert Lea and Freeborn County did not have a storm spotter network; however, after the July 5, 1967, meeting of the Disaster Preparedness Planning Committee, committee members decided to form a spotter network in Freeborn County, soliciting training assistance from Mr. Trapp. In addition, the 1967 tornadoes led directly to the organization of the Waseca County emergency management department, which oversees the county's storm spotter network.

For additional information on the Skywarn program and training opportunities, please see the following link:

[www.weather.gov/mpx/skywarn](http://www.weather.gov/mpx/skywarn)



## **Weather Radar**

While storm spotters provide critical observations, occasionally, conditions make it difficult for eyes in the field to see the whole picture. Nighttime storms, storms producing very heavy rainfall, and both natural and manmade obstructions, such as trees, buildings, and terrain, may mask critical portions of a dangerous storm. Under these conditions, remote observations made by weather radar become even more critical.

In 1967, the Weather Surveillance Radar 1957 (WSR-57) was the radar technology of choice across the nation, with the local site located at the Minneapolis/St. Paul (MSP) airport. The radar technology in the WSR-57 was first used for military purposes in World War II. The WSR-57 was manually operated, meaning that a radar operator had to manually adjust the attenuation and scan elevation; as such, the quality of the radar data was strongly dependent on the skills of the radar operator. In all cases, the information received was very rudimentary, only green or black reflectivity blotches that showed where a storm was located and occasionally, basic storm structure. One of the most sought out clues that a storm might be capable of producing a tornado was (and still is) a hook echo. Official records indicate that the MSP radar data did not show any hook echoes during the Black Sunday tornadoes, which made issuing Tornado Warnings with ample lead time very difficult.

The MSP WSR-57 was decommissioned in 1996 to make way for the new radar technology, which remains in use across the country today. Weather Surveillance Radar 1988 Doppler (WSR-88D or NEXRAD) is the current standard in weather radar technology for the National Weather Service. The WSR-88D not only has the capability to detect radar reflectivity, but also measure velocities within the storm. This last capability allows users to see circulations within storms, as well as damaging straight line thunderstorm winds. Unlike the WSR-57, computer software controls the operation of the WSR-88D, determining the rotational speed of the radar dish, the scan elevations, and the radar energy characteristics. The better and more consistent information provided by the WSR-88D has allowed for Tornado Warning lead times to increase over the past two decades, with a local average of 12 minutes. Additional improvements in the WSR-88D technology have occurred during this most recent decade, including the capability to discern large hail from raindrops, debris signatures, etc., making the technology even more valuable to meteorologists and the public.

For additional information on the WSR-88D, please see the following link:

[www.srh.noaa.gov/jetstream/doppler/doppler\\_intro.html](http://www.srh.noaa.gov/jetstream/doppler/doppler_intro.html)

## **NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards**

National Weather Service meteorologists have the responsibility of deciding when to issue severe weather warnings and when issued, somehow relay that critical information to users in a timely manner. One of the primary warning dissemination methods used by the National Weather Service is NOAA All Hazards Radio (NWR). NWR is a network of radio stations programmed and operated by the National Weather Service to broadcast local weather information 24 hours a day. The beauty of NWR is most visible during severe weather, as the special radios, needed to receive NWR broadcasts, will sound an alarm when a Severe Thunderstorm or Tornado Warning is issued for counties within the coverage area of each radio transmitter. If a Tornado Warning is issued during the middle of the night or while other common warning sources, such as television, the Internet, or commercial radio, are not being monitored, the NWR will immediately alert users that a dangerous storm is in the area. During severe weather, NWR acts much like a smoke detector during a house fire and is as important to have in your home as a smoke detector.

In 1967, however, NWR was not an option for the public to receive warnings. In the late 1960s, the only locations across the country to broadcast via NWR transmitters were in marine locales, and as such, Minneapolis/St. Paul did not even have an NWR broadcast, much less south central Minnesota. Newspaper accounts from April 30, 1967, indicate that some common sources of warning information included local commercial radio, word of mouth, and city storm sirens. Many of these sources failed to warn residents in time.

Today, 95 percent of the country is covered by NWR broadcasts, and all of central and southern Minnesota and west central Wisconsin are within range of various transmitters. If the Black Sunday outbreak were to occur today, residents of Waseca, Steele, and Freeborn counties would receive warning information via the NWR transmitter near Mankato, and Freeborn County would also be covered by transmitters near Forest City and St. Ansgar, Iowa.

For additional information on NWR, please see the following link:

[www.weather.gov/mpx/nwr](http://www.weather.gov/mpx/nwr)

## **Other Advancements in Information Dissemination**

Many other advances in recent years have made it more possible to receive weather information. The pervasiveness of the Internet in everyday society has provided the capability of on-the-go, on demand, and up-to-date graphical weather information on smart phones and other mobile devices. At any time, users can see weather information specific to their location(s). These advances allow the public to stay informed about past, present, and future dangerous weather situations.

For additional information on mobile weather services from the National Weather Service, please see the following link:

[www.mobile.weather.gov](http://www.mobile.weather.gov)

## 9. Acknowledgements

The Chanhassen National Weather Service would like to sincerely thank the following for their assistance in compiling the information contained in these pages:

- Jonathan Finch, Forecaster at the Dodge City (KS) National Weather Service, who contributed the weather maps, [www.bangladeshtornadoes.org/UScases/043067/043067new/30apr1967.html](http://www.bangladeshtornadoes.org/UScases/043067/043067new/30apr1967.html)
- Dan Miller, Science and Operations Officer at the Duluth (MN) National Weather Service, who contributed atmospheric sounding information
- Jim du Bois, President and CEO of the Minnesota Broadcasters Association, who digitized the radar images from April 30, 1967
- Danny Henry of the Pavek Museum in St. Louis Park, who created video loops of the radar images
- Waseca Virtual History Museum, [www.waseca.k12.mn.us/vhm/1961-1975/tornados.htm](http://www.waseca.k12.mn.us/vhm/1961-1975/tornados.htm)
- Waseca County Historical Society
- All the individuals who so graciously shared their photos and accounts, despite the tragic memories it brought back for many

Information from the following publications can be found in these pages:

- *Significant Tornadoes: 1680-1991*, Thomas P. Grazulis
- *Black Sunday April 30, 1967*, Prepared by the News Staff of *The Evening Tribune*, Albert Lea, MN

Author of the 2007 retrospective: Karen Hatfield, then with NWS Chanhassen MN and now with NWS Tulsa OK

Editor of the 2017 update: Todd Krause, Warning Coordination Meteorologist, NWS Chanhassen MN