

THE FLOOD:

**Ten
Years
Later**

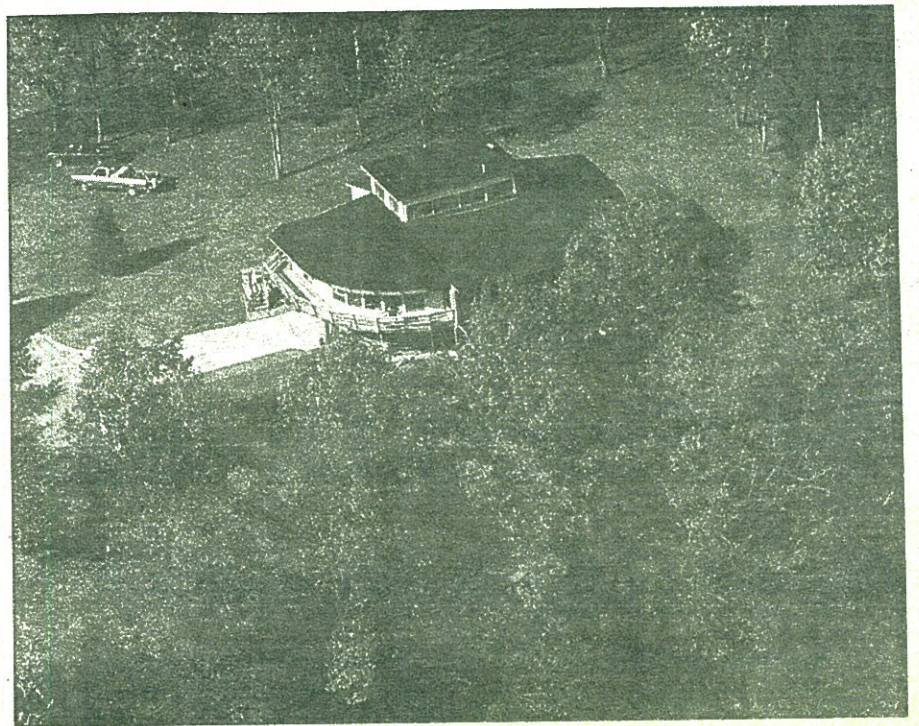
1985



News-Record File Photo

House south of Elkton and camper during 1985 flood.

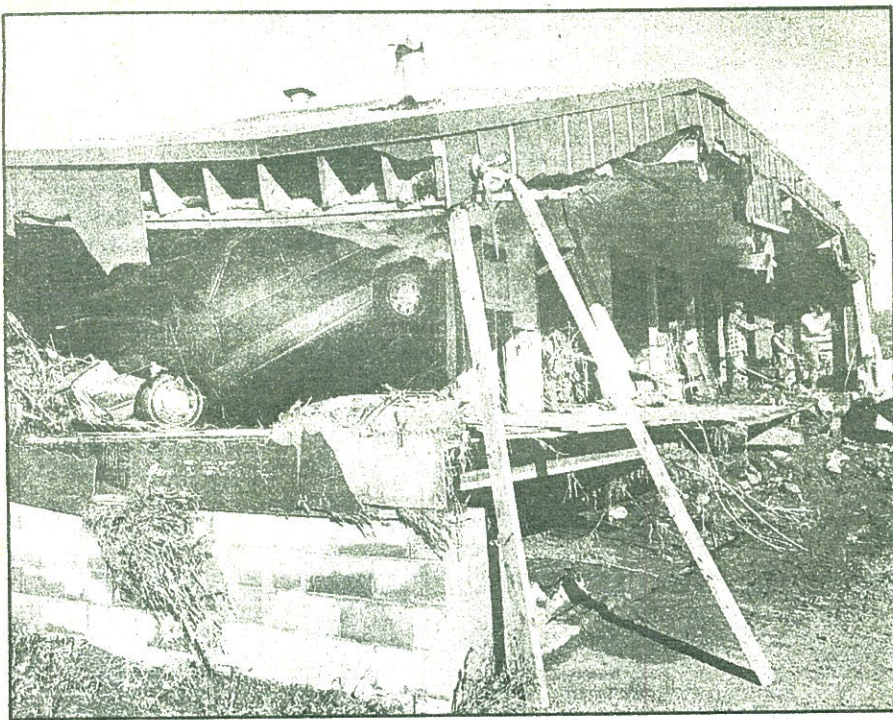
1995



News-Record Photo by Allen Litten

The same house in the fall of 1995.

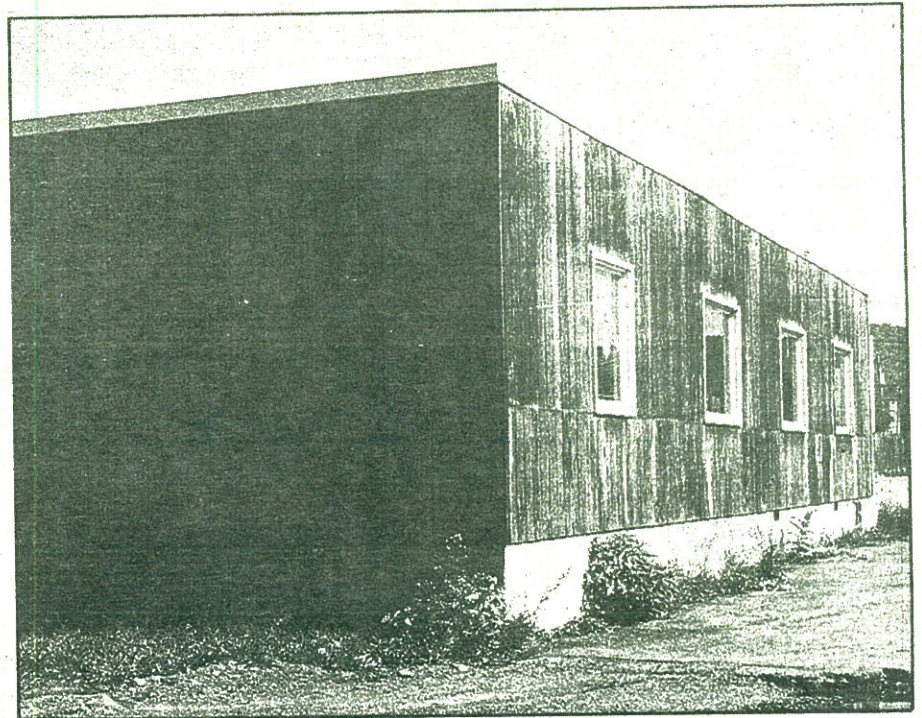
1985



News-Record File Photo

Flood waters jammed this car against the roof of Monarch Supermarket in Petersburg, W.Va.

1995



News-Record Photo by Allen Litten

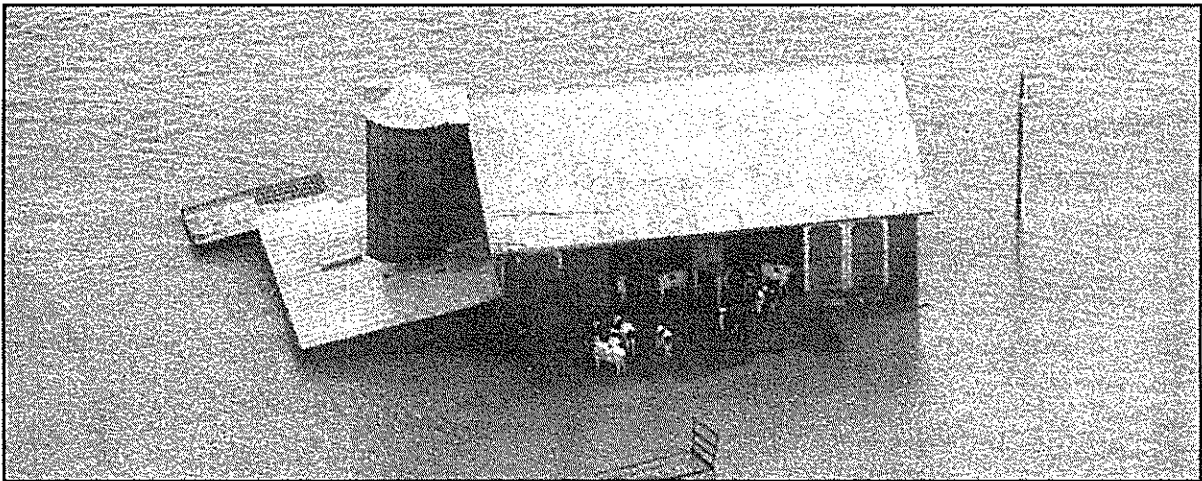
The Petersburg building was rebuilt but is no longer operated as a supermarket.

A Special Supplement To:

Daily News-Record

November 7, 1995

THE FLOOD: Ten Years Later



News-Record File Photos

A house near Port Republic; cattle find the only high ground at their barn.

The Flood Of '85

Flooded Rivers, Streams Caused More Damage Than Civil War In Area

RICHARD PRIOR
News-Record Staff Writer

John Imboden, a Confederate general only five years out of uniform, wrote that the flood of 1870 did more damage to the Shenandoah Valley than was inflicted by the warring armies.

The flood of 1985 was worse. The torrent that caused such destruction built from a trickle that began Halloween night, Oct. 31. Barely 1 1/3 inches fell through the next two days. But the ground was already saturated from the previous week's soaking. Rivers and streams crept up their banks.

And then the skies opened up. Above the Alleghany Mountains, what was left of Hurricane Juan banged into persistent high pressure from the Northeast and a deep low in the Southeast. Clouds rose till they hit cooler air. They gathered, grew dark, then burst.

Twenty inches of rain fell in 12 hours on parts of West Virginia.

Between Nov. 1 and 5, the National Weather Service station at Dale Enterprise recorded a 6.20-inch downpour. The record rainfall for all of November had been 6.43 inches, set in 1886.

Creeks became rivers; rivers and streams poured over their banks.

1985 Flood Damage Estimates			
	Total Damage	Agriculture	Highways
Augusta County.....	\$6.5 million	\$1.6 million	\$2.1 million
Page County.....	\$2.37 million	\$0.48 million	\$0.33 million
Rockingham County.....	\$22.8 million	\$9.5 million	\$5.0 million
Shenandoah County.....	\$2.6 million	\$1.1 million	\$0.23 million
Grant County, W.Va.....	\$94.2 million	\$7.5 million	\$8.7 million
Hardy County, W.Va.....	\$56.4 million	\$12.99 million	\$10.5 million
Pendleton County, W.Va.....	\$71.71 million	\$32.39 million	\$28.6 million

The danger came quickly. A West Augusta man said he walked into his house through knee-deep water to rescue his dog. When he turned to leave, the water was waist high.

Water toppled church steeples, swept away homes, cars and livestock.

Rescuers helped a person near Bergton and another near Port Republic who had climbed trees to escape the flood.

In Harrisonburg, uneasy eyes watched spillway waters gnaw at the face of Switzer Dam.

The dam held, and the city survived the disaster with only bumps and bruises.

There was damage to the water supply and Riven Rock Park. Basements were flooded, and a few creeks stretched their banks.

Other communities met the brunt of the storm head-on.

Forty-two people were killed in seven counties in western Virginia and eastern West Virginia: Rockingham, Augusta, Page and Shenandoah counties in Virginia; Grant, Hardy and Pendleton counties in West Virginia.

Most of those who died in Virginia were drowned when cars and pickup trucks were swept off roads or bridges.

Floodwaters swept a Maurertown man away Nov. 5 as he and his wife tried to rescue some of their sheep. His body was found three days later in Strasburg, 18 miles from where his canoe capsized.

Many deaths in West Virginia came when floodwaters washed entire homes away. But there were others.

A 62-year-old Moorefield, W.Va., man died of a heart attack trying to save his granddaughter.

In Seneca Rocks, W.Va., a 16-year-old drowned while trying to notify neighbors of the rising danger. He did not know that his neighbors had already fled.

As West Virginians made their way to telephones that still worked, they told of incredible devastation:

"Riverton is gone . . . all of Petersburg business district is under water . . . dead cows hanging in the trees."

Residents and visitors by the thousands were moved to safe, if not dry, ground. Rockingham County schools became evacuation centers for people from Bergton, Briery Branch, Clover Hill, Criders, Fulks Run, Naked Creek and Rawley Springs.

Damage to property was staggering. Overall estimates were put at \$700 mil-

See DAMAGE, Page 27

The Flood: 10 Years Later

As 1995 rolled along we began to realize that, come November, it would have been a full 10 years since heavy rains inundated the area, causing massive flooding up and down the Shenandoah Valley.

How have things changed since then? Are we fully recovered from the devastation? Could the same thing happen again under similar circumstances? These are some of the questions we had and we felt you, our readers, would be interested as well.

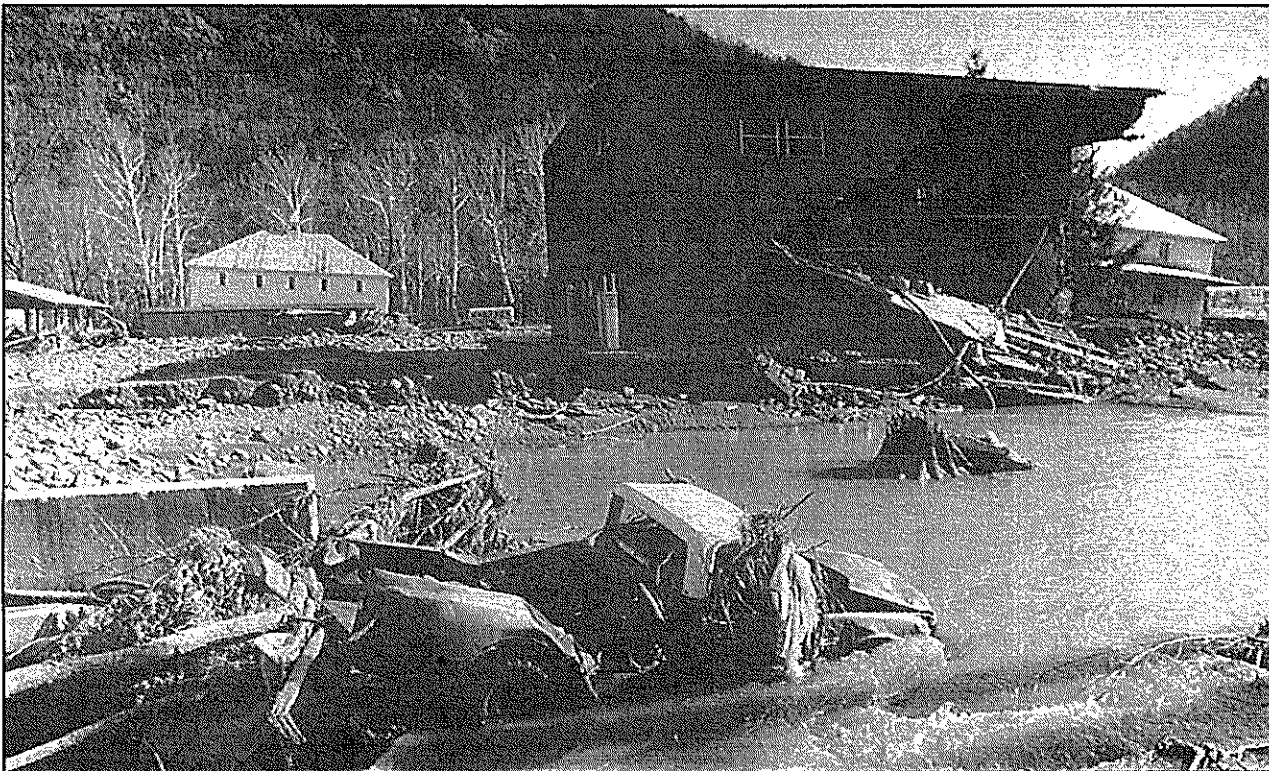
With that in mind, we began to compile photographs from the 1985 flood and to look up our news coverage to see what we could do to bring you up to date.

The results: Our 40-page special section called The Flood: 10 Years Later. We trust you will find it to be a treasured keepsake edition as you look through it and recall not only the damage it caused but how such an event works to bring people together as they struggle to overcome adversity.

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THE FLOOD: Ten Years Later



News-Record File Photo

The remains of the fire station and a truck at Riverton in Pendleton County, W.Va., illustrate the damage left in the wake of the November 1985 flood. Computerized equipment now provide better warnings that conditions are leading to flood, rescue officials said.

Computer-Linked Rain Gauges Provide Warnings

By **DEREK BARR**
News-Record Staff Writer

Man is still powerless to stop acts of nature such as the Flood of 1985, but several technological and other advancements have increased preparedness for a similar catastrophe, officials said.

Several area communities were decimated by raging waters on Nov. 4 and 5, 1985, but now those areas are better equipped to identify dangerous conditions much sooner, said Charles Silliman, director of emergency services in Hardy County, W.Va. Silliman also coordinated emergency efforts during his Air Force career.

The biggest advancement is IFLOWS, the Integrated Flood Observing and Warning System. Rain gauges are set up

at numerous locations along various rivers and are connected to a computer network. The system calculates how much rain is needed in increments of one, three, 12 and 24 hours to produce flash-flood conditions, Silliman said.

"This is something that was not available in 1985, but it is available now because of 1985," he said, referring to the flood.

Radio and telephone communications have vastly improved for rescue organizations, Silliman said, ensuring that rescuers can keep in contact with one another and know what others are doing. Cellular communications have been a great asset, he said.

Even the advent of television channels like The Weather Channel has helped, because potentially dangerous atmos-

pheric events are forecast much sooner, and citizens learn of the dangers much sooner. This would likely have resulted in fewer lives lost in 1985, and would almost certainly have allowed some farmers to evacuate livestock that was ultimately lost, Silliman said.

Mike Short, executive director of the Central Shenandoah Emergency Medical Service Council, said the group has doubled its emergency agencies since 1985. The organization includes emergency services in Rockingham, Rockbridge, Augusta, Bath and Highland counties and the cities in those areas, he said.

The increase can be attributed to several fire departments whose members have been trained in administering emergency medical care, he said.

Short said the group also has trailers

or ambulances which are specially equipped to handle dozens of patients in response to a wide-ranging emergency situation.

Computer technology allows the EMS council to contact state offices quickly, and word can be sent out immediately detailing what resources are needed, he said.

Staff Sgt. Phillip Diehl of the Virginia Army National Guard said his agency's response would mostly be the same as in 1985. About 12-14 members of the unit were called out for the flood in Rockingham County. They delivered water to people without those necessities, helped residents evacuate and used National Guard vehicles to check road conditions where water had covered highways, he said.



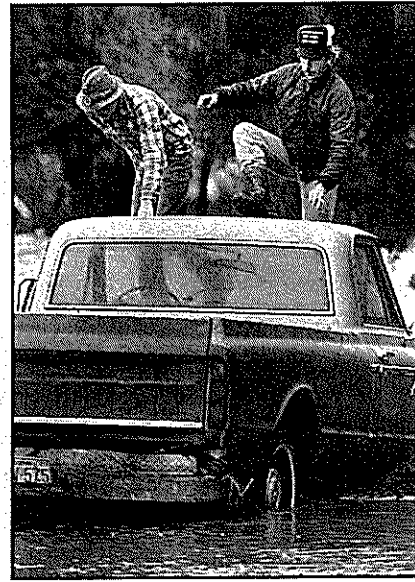
News-Record File Photo

Rockingham Administrator Bill O'Brien (left) confers with Bill Patterson of the Soil Conservation Service and Extension agent Harold Roller during flood.



News-Record File Photo

A fire truck is caked in mud after it was caught in the flood at Petersburg, W.Va.



News-Record File Photo

Residents try to recover pickup truck in Clover Hill area.

THE FLOOD: Ten Years Later

Three Storms Converged To Create Flood

By PAT MURPHEY
News-Record Staff Writer

The lead actor in the Flood of '85 was Hurricane Juan. However, it was a strong supporting cast that turned what should have been soaking rains into devastating downpours.

Juan developed in the Gulf of Mexico and wallowed off the coast of Louisiana for four days before moving ashore for good on Halloween. While dallying in the Gulf, Juan not only was sucking up moisture, it also spun off a second storm that moved eastward toward Florida.

When Juan came ashore at Mississippi's Gulf Coast, it failed to follow the normal northeastward track for hurricanes. Instead, Juan moved almost straight north.

The northward path was caused by an abnormal bend in the jet stream. After dipping south to Texas from the western United States, the jet stream turned almost due north.

By Nov. 2 (Saturday), the jet stream and accompanying cold front stretched from southern Texas to Hudson Bay and created a trough for Juan to follow northward.

The spinoff storm that had headed for Florida also was sucked northward. It came ashore in the Florida panhandle Nov. 3 and sped northward through Georgia and the Carolinas.

By the next day, it had found a track along the spine of mountains that form the North Carolina/Tennessee and Virginia/West Virginia boundaries.

A third storm that contributed moisture developed off the South Carolina coast and moved inland to join Juan and its spinoff. The third storm, which brought in moisture from the Atlantic, merged with the spinoff storm in western North Carolina.

The warm, moist clouds from the Gulf and Atlantic cooled as they rose over the mountains. The cold front to the west

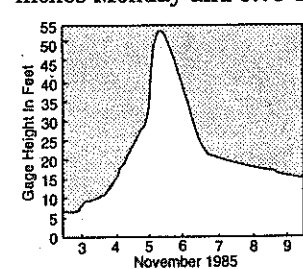
also helped wring rain from the clouds.

Rains in the Shenandoah Valley and eastern West Virginia began as drizzles Halloween night (Thursday). They steadily increased until they became downpours Nov. 4 and 5 (Monday and Tuesday).

The heaviest rains were in the mountains. At Big Meadows in Shenandoah National Park, 3.75 inches were measured Monday and 7.55 Tuesday. The Dale Enterprise station west of Harrisonburg received only 1.87 inches each day.

No accurate reports are available for the mountains of West Virginia, which was hit hardest. Of towns where measurements were taken, Franklin reported the heaviest downpour — 7.55 inches on Monday.

Moorefield, which was wracked by flood waters, recorded only 1.1 inch Monday and 2.83 Tuesday. Petersburg, which also was devastated, had 1.65 inches Monday and 5.75 Tuesday.



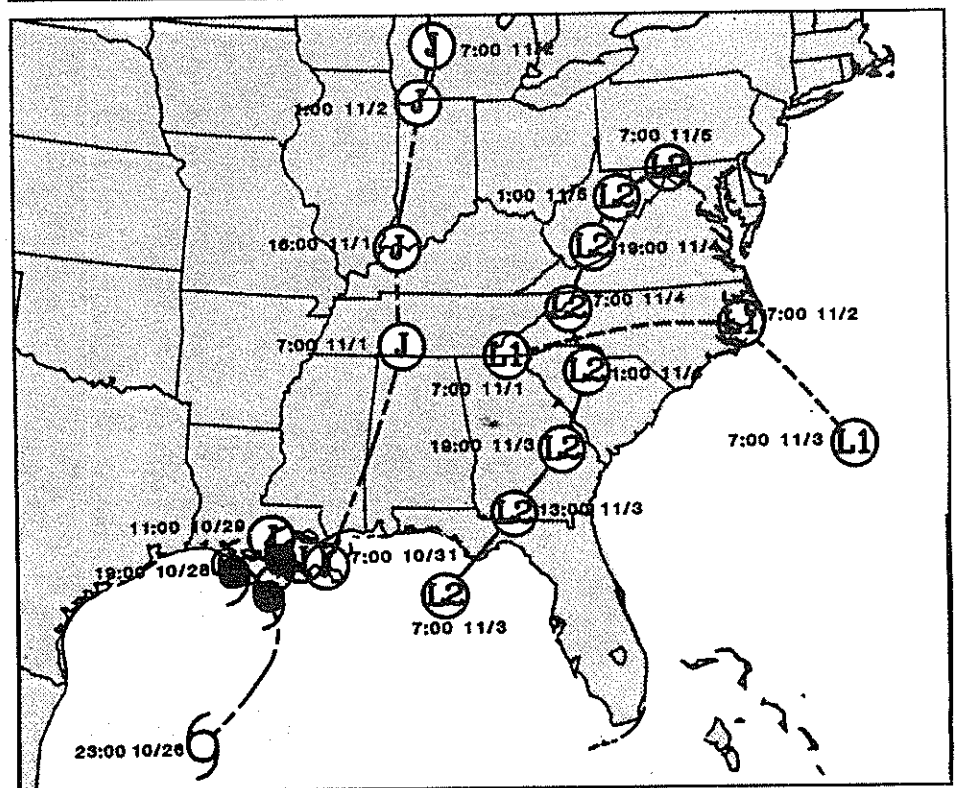
Graph shows how water level surged at PawPaw, W.Va., in early November 1985. Source: U.S. Geological Survey.

South Forks of the Potomac, which caught most of the floodwater.

On Sunday, the gauge showed the Potomac at about 6.5 feet. By midnight Monday, the river had reached 30 feet and was beginning its most rapid rise. In 24 hours, it crested at 53.6 feet.

A better indication of the torrents that fell on the West Virginia mountains comes from the Potomac River gauge at PawPaw. The gauge is downstream from the confluence of the North and

Paths Of 1985 Storms



Hurricane Juan ("J") was joined by two other low-pressure systems ("L1" and "L2") to create record flooding in Virginia in November 1985. Source: State Climatologist's Office

At Franklin, Moorefield and Petersburg, tributaries of the Potomac reached record levels.

The South Branch of the Potomac crested at 22.58 feet at Franklin on Monday. That is almost twice as high as the previous record of 11.4 feet set in 1949.

At Petersburg, downstream from Franklin, the South Branch reached 25.4 feet in 1985. The previous record was 21.1, also set in 1949.

At Moorefield, the South Fork of the

South Branch topped out at 19.99 feet. The flood of '49 had set the previous record there of 16.1.

On the Virginia side of the line, the South Fork of the Shenandoah also reached a record high, but the North Fork did not.

The South Fork of the Shenandoah crested at 29.46 feet at the Lynnwood gauge in eastern Rockingham County. The North Fork reached 25.13 feet at Cootes Store, but that was just shy of the 25.3 record set in 1942.

Local residents slosh along water-covered road to survey the situation after rain, which began as a drizzle on Halloween night (Thursday), became a downpour Nov. 4 and 5 (Monday and Tuesday).



News-Record File Photo

THE FLOOD: Ten Years Later

Another Flood? The Question Is When

By PAT MURPHEY

News-Record Staff Writer

Floods. They've come before, and they will come again. The only question is when.

"The more we study these events, we become more aware" of what creates a major storm, said Jerry Stenger of the state climatologist's office in Charlottesville.

It's just a matter of time before the right set of circumstances come together to bring down torrents of rain.

Most floods in the Shenandoah Valley and eastern West Virginia are caused by hurricanes or thunderstorms.

The flood of 1985, which probably brought the worst flooding to the largest area of any previously recorded storm, had elements of both. The key factor in the flood was the remnants of Hurricane Juan, which moved northward from the Gulf of Mexico.

However, the hurricane clouds were joined by a low pressure center that swept in from the Atlantic and brought thunderstorm activity.

The combination of storms dumped torrents of rain from the Blue Ridge well into West Virginia.

Traditionally, storms created by hurricanes cover wider areas than thunderstorms.

Hurricanes also normally move northeasterly. Usually, if the hurricane moves in from the Atlantic, the worst part of the storm will stay east of the Blue Ridge.

However, if the storm moves west of the mountains, the Shenandoah Valley often becomes a track for it. This is what happened with a pair of hurricanes 1955.

Another hurricane track is the mountains and valleys to the west.

Juan and the storm of '85 covered several of these tracks.

While hurricanes normally bring widespread rain, thunderstorms can dump the most rain on a small area. This is what happened in the Bridgewater flood of 1949 and the Madison County flood this year.

The 1949 rains were concentrated over the Little River area west of Bridgewater. Just how much rain fell is not known because of the mountainous area and the loss of the only known gauge in the area to flooding.

In the June flood that devastated parts of Madison County, more than 30 inches of rain fell in 24 hours, with most of it coming in six to eight hours, Stenger of the state climatologist office said.

Although the 1969 flood that hit Nelson County was spawned by the remnants of Hurricane Camille, it acted more like a thunderstorm. Again, as much as 30 inches of rain was poured on a fairly narrow area.

A major reason for the rain was the clouds rising to cross the Blue Ridge rather than following a northeasterly track west of the mountains.

The 1985, Madison County, Nelson



File Photo

Harrisonburg's West Market Street was flooded in the 1949. Photo was shot looking west.

Major Floods In Area, Virginia

Here is a look at some of the area and Virginia's major floods.

Flood of 1985 — It's not hard to make a case for 1985 as the mother of all floods in the area. All-time high water marks were set at numerous river gauges in Virginia and West Virginia. When the waters receded, damages totaled more than \$1 billion and 42 people had died in seven counties of the two states.

Madison County 1995 — The storm may have brought the heaviest rainfall ever recorded on a small area in Virginia, Stenger indicated. More than 30 inches fell in about eight hours in western Madison County the night of June 27-28. Although Madison County was hardest hit, there was flooding in western Virginia from Franklin County on the North Carolina border to Warren County to the north. Eight people were killed and damage was estimated at \$120 million. That included \$38 million to roads statewide and \$29 million to farms in Madison County alone.

Floods of 1870 and 1877 — The flood of September 1870 is regarded as the Shenandoah Valley's worst at least before 1985. The Flood of 1877 may have been even more widespread than in 1870, but the damage was less, probably because there were not as many mills, barns and homes in the path of the waters and that Valley residents had learned valuable lessons

seven years earlier. South River's high water mark of 18.8 feet at Harrison set in 1870 and matched in 1877 was not reached by the 1985 flood. The river crested then at 15.47 feet at Harrison.

Flood of 1896 — This flood came on Sept. 29-30, which was the 26th anniversary of the 1870 flood. The 6.3 inches of rain that fell Sept. 29 at Dale Enterprise still stands as the record 24-hour rainfall at the weather station west of Harrisonburg. The Rockingham Register reported that Dry River flowed higher in 1896 than it did in either 1870 or 1877.

May 1924 — The flood of May 13, 1924, severely damaged Harrisonburg's hydroelectric plant in eastern Rockingham County, but waters never reached the heights of the three 19th-century floods.

March 1936 — Shenandoah County apparently was hit hardest by this flood. The March 19 Daily News-Record reported that the Shenandoah River crested at 32 feet at Woodstock. That was 7 feet higher than in 1870 and 6 feet higher than in 1924.

Floods of 1949 — When Valley residents talk about the flood of '49, they are generally referring to the June storm that wiped out Stokesville and pounded Bridgewater.

However, an August flood may have

been the worst to ever hit Harrisonburg. At least, the Daily News-Record of Aug. 16, 1949, termed it "the most destructive flood in the history of the city."

A weather station at Madison College measured 8.44 inches of rain in 31 hours.

There were no deaths in Harrisonburg, but three people were drowned at Bridgewater by the June flood. Although the village of Stokesville was wiped out by torrents that roared down from the upper reaches of North River, there were no deaths there.

Hurricanes of 1954 and '55 — Hurricane Hazel brought widespread flooding to the Shenandoah Valley in October 1954, but the brunt of the storm remained east of the Blue Ridge.

In 1955, remnants of two hurricanes pelted the Valley in August. Connie went through first and caused little damage but left the ground saturated. A week later, Diane struck. One of the chief victims was Harrisonburg's hydroelectric plant, which had been repaired following the 1924 flood. The plant was abandoned after the 1955 damage.

August 1969 — The Shenandoah Valley got drenched, but Nelson County got devastated by the remnants of Hurricane Camille.

The storm left at least 113 dead in Virginia, and an additional 39 missing. Damages were estimated at \$116 million.

County and Bridgewater floods all have been blamed on storms that are supposed to occur once in a century. Even though the four storms occurred in less than 50 years, they still deserve their

"storm of the century" labels, Stenger said.

Only portions of western Rockingham and Augusta counties were hit hard by more than one of the storms.

The 100-year flood designation also is just an average, Stenger noted. That doesn't mean floods can't come in back-to-back years or be stretched several centuries apart.

THE FLOOD: Ten Years Later

Pendleton Hams Set Up Emergency Radio Network

By **JOAN ASHLEY**
Special Correspondent

FRANKLIN, W.Va. — During the days after the flood, four local hams (Doug Brown, Jim Brown, Ken Miller and Bob Tuckerman) were responsible for setting up an emergency communication network. Miller worked out of Brandywine; the Browns from Doug Brown's basement in Franklin and Tuckerman, who was stranded at his home in Smith Creek, kept a repeater going there.

Radio hams came from Virginia, Pennsylvania and other parts of West Virginia to help operate the communications that became the mainstay of flood rescue and recovery.

"We estimate more than 1,000 health

and welfare messages were sent during this time," Miller said recently at a 10-year anniversary gathering.

"Dad had a room in his basement that became the headquarters. We were the communications for the rescue squad, the State Police, Pegasus, highways — just everybody. We ordered drugs, portapotties, body bags and refrigeration for storage," said Jim Brown, whose call letters WD8PBG were designated as the call sign for the rescue operation.

"Bob and Ken were initially isolated at their homes, and Dad was in Lynchburg. I served 23 hours straight until the guys came over from Harrisonburg. State Farm even sent a regional vice president who took over my job so that I could stay on the radio," Jim Brown said.

Clinton Campbell, KB4OLM, of Stuarts Draft, was a newly licensed ham when he heard of the flood and came to Franklin to help.

"I arranged to get time off and printed about 100 message forms to bring along. I guess we sent thousands of messages. I was a seasoned traffic handler by the time it was over," he said.

"We look back on it and compare it with what we have now — we're really more prepared," said Jeff Rinehart, WB4PJW, from Churchville, who mentioned the new Spruce Knob repeater and digital operations. "We have things in place that help us now in time of disaster."

Ken Butler, WA8TOX, of Beverly, W.Va., was a radio operator in Vietnam.

"The State Police were very impressed with the network we were able to set up as hams. One officer said 'I can't believe what you can do compared to us. I'll have me one of those ham operator licenses . . . and he did get it,' Butler said.

That officer was one of more than 100 residents who later earned their licenses after seeing the communication operations during the flood, Bob Tuckerman said.

"On behalf of the town, we couldn't have done without the hams," said Bruce Minor who was the mayor of Franklin in 1985 and got his ham operator license afterwards. "When we were completely isolated as the town was, we couldn't have recovered as well as we did without the amateurs."

Hams Continue Training To Help In Emergencies

By **BETTINA TILSON**
News-Record Staff Writer

The ham radio operators who pitched in to send emergency messages during the Flood of '85 recently got together for a 10-year reunion.

"The Pendleton County (W.Va.) Amateur Radio Club invited us over and threw us a big party," said Jeff Rinehart, a "ham" who lives in Churchville.

Rinehart and more than 40 other ham radio operators provided an invaluable service during the flood that ravaged Virginia and neighboring West Virginia.

The West Virginia Office of Emergency Services called upon the amateur radio operators for help in communicating when traditional forms of communication were useless.

"Nobody had any communications at all and they couldn't get any communications," Rinehart said. "The state police repeater was out and all the radio communication was gone because there was no electricity to run their radios."

Right after the flood occurred, Rinehart and the other operators were unable to get through the devastation to help. "It was two or three days before they got the roads open to let us go through to the (Pendleton County) West Virginia area," which includes Franklin, Brandywine and Sugar Grove.

Finally, bulldozers cleared enough rocks from the roads so they were passable. "Sheriff (Glenn) Weatherholtz told us to go on, so we did," he said.

The ham radio operators worked for several days until telephones were back up. Local operators came from all over Virginia's Shenandoah Valley and they were joined by those who traveled from other states, including Ohio and Pennsylvania.

"Amateur radio is the official communications system for the American Red Cross in time of emergency," Rinehart said.

The most important messages passed along were for the Red Cross and the state police, he said.

Rinehart estimates that he sent about 230 messages. Most of them involved



News-Record File Photo

Richard Weaver, a ham radio operator in Harrisonburg, sends a message via radio shortly after the 1985 flood.

people who were looking for other people. The worst message was a call for more body bags. "That was a nasty one," he said.

But, there were highlights, as well. The happiest message was from the children of a couple who lived in Sugar Grove. "We were able to get a message to the grandparents that they had a new grandson," he said.

The amateur radio operators still use the Flood of '85 as a training tool. "It's great to be able to take your hobby and turn it into something that is useful and beneficial," he said. "That's part of the reason ham radio exists and why we have control of many radio frequencies that commercial interests would like to have to use for making money."

Rinehart said the number of frequencies ham radio operators have access to is amazing, but there is a reason for that. "The government can take our frequencies and use them during time of war," he said. In fact, that was done during World War II, he added.

Since the 1985 flood, the ranks of local amateur radio operators have grown. "And the technology of our radios has improved to the point where we could handle a whole lot more messages in a lot less time (and) more effectively and efficiently," he said.

One of the state police officers that Rinehart worked with during the flood was so impressed with how the ham radio operators can talk to each other all over the United States that he decided

to become a ham radio operator himself.

Although the big emergency has since passed, the operators continue to provide valuable services for the community, including reporting accidents during certain bike and walkathon events.

The hams also have weekly training sessions for operators in Rockingham, Augusta, Page and Shenandoah counties. "We meet on the radio and practice handling messages," he said.

"We don't pretend to take the place of the professionals that are in place to do their job, but we support them and we augment what they are already doing," Rinehart said. "We take the overload from them so they can do their really important jobs."

THE FLOOD: Ten Years Later

Flood's Effect On '85 Election Still Debatable

By PAT MURPHEY
News-Record Staff Writer

It's one of those issues that can be debated until the next great flood and never be answered: What effect did the flood of 1985 have on elections, particularly the outcome in what was then the 27th Virginia House of Delegates District?

The worst of the 1985 flooding occurred on Monday night before election day. By dawn on Election Day, many people were more concerned with salvaging their homes — and in some cases, burying their dead — than casting ballots.

There is no question that the flooding kept many voters away from the polls. In Rockingham County, only 10,127 votes were cast for governor in 1985. That is at least 4,000 fewer that were cast in either the 1981 or 1989 gubernatorial elections.

Rockingham voters cast 14,535 votes in the 1981 race between Marshall Coleman and Chuck Robb. In 1989, the county cast 14,471 votes in the Coleman-Wilder race.

In the 27th House of Delegates District, Democrat Paul Cline of Harrisonburg ousted Republican Phoebe Ore-

baugh of Broadway by 728 votes in 1985. Two years later, Orebaugh won the seat back by 1,230 votes.

A total of 11,420 votes were cast in the 1985 election, and 13,298 were cast in 1987.

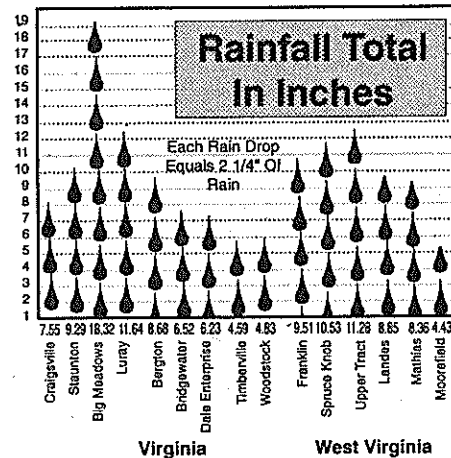
The 27th District then covered Harrisonburg and most of Rockingham County. Four northeastern Rockingham precincts were in what then was the 28th District, and six eastern precincts were in the 26th District. The remaining 13 precincts, which contained the bulk of Rockingham's population, were in the 27th.

Redistricting following the 1990 census split Rockingham four ways rather than three and completely revamped the House of Delegates alignment for the Harrisonburg area.

If the flood of 1985 cost Orebaugh her delegate post for two years, the redistricting knocked her out entirely.

Her home precinct of Broadway was moved into the 15th Delegate District, which is held by veteran Republican Andy Guest of Woodstock, and she stepped aside for him.

Harrisonburg, nine other mostly sparsely populated northwestern Rockingham precincts and nine Shenandoah County precincts were placed in the 26th



District, which was represented by another veteran Republican, Clinton Miller of Woodstock.

When Miller decided not to seek reelection this year, Orebaugh was again left stranded because she lives just outside the district.

Republicans turned to retiring Rockingham County Sheriff Glenn Weatherholtz as their candidate.

Orebaugh, who retired in 1990 from teaching history and government at Broadway High, said she is still interested in running for an office again, "if

the opportunity presents itself."

In the meantime, she remaining active in politics as 6th District U.S. Rep. Bob Goodlatte's representative in the Harrisonburg area.

Cline, who retired earlier this year as a history and political science professor at JMU, is the only Democrat to represent Harrisonburg and Rockingham County in the House of Delegates since the early 1960s.

He has no ambition to become a candidate again but "I continue to talk politics" and is still active in the Democratic party, Cline said.

He also does "a little research and writing" and collaborated with two other JMU profs on a book, "American Democracy," that was published earlier this year. It traces the federalist and anti-federalist movements through U.S. history.

Cline rejects the idea that the flood contributed to his 1985 election. The argument that he won because of the flood "presupposes that people who supported my opponent somehow were kept from the polls, and my supporters were not," he has said.

Orebaugh isn't persuaded. She bases her case on the 1987 election, in which there was a larger turnout of voters.

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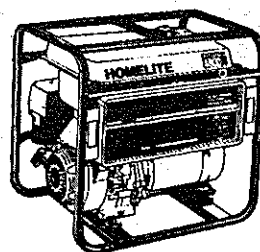
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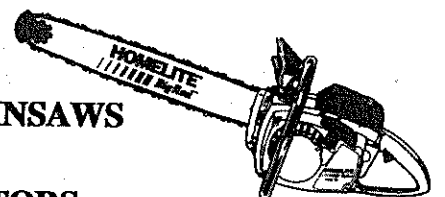
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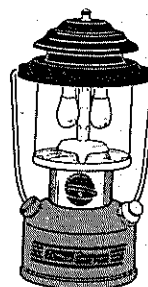
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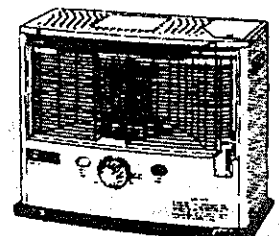
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THE FLOOD: Ten Years Later

Dams Did Job, Kept Flood From Being Even Worse

*Few Flood Control Structures
Expected To Be Added In Future*

By PAT MURPHEY

News-Record Staff Writer

As bad as the November 1985 floods were, they would have been worse if a series of flood control dams had not been in place.

The 23 dams in West Virginia and a dozen in Virginia held back billions of gallons of water that otherwise would have joined the downstream rush.

"The dams did exactly what they were intended to do," Bill Patterson of the Soil Conservation Service office in Harrisonburg said immediately after the flood.

The only problem with the dams is that more rain fell than they were designed to contain.

All but two of the West Virginia dams and most of those in Virginia overflowed. In some cases, water gushed through emergency spillways with such force, it ate away some of the base of the dams themselves.

Soil conservation officials said after the flood there was no serious threat of the dams giving away. However during the flood, there were some anxious moments about Switzer Dam, which is one of the largest and is a water source for Harrisonburg.

Deep ravines also were washed out at the Hone Quarry and Briery Branch dams in western Rockingham.

Repairs of the Virginia and West Virginia dams cost nearly \$2 million.

Most of the flood control dams were built in the 1960s and '70s with federal funds. At some dams, such as Switzer, local funds were spent to build larger dams and provide municipal water sources.

There has been little dam building since 1985.

In Virginia, only the Hogpen Run dam in northwestern Rockingham has been completed. It was about 40 percent done when it was washed out by the 1985 flood waters. It was so badly damaged that work had to virtually start from the beginning.

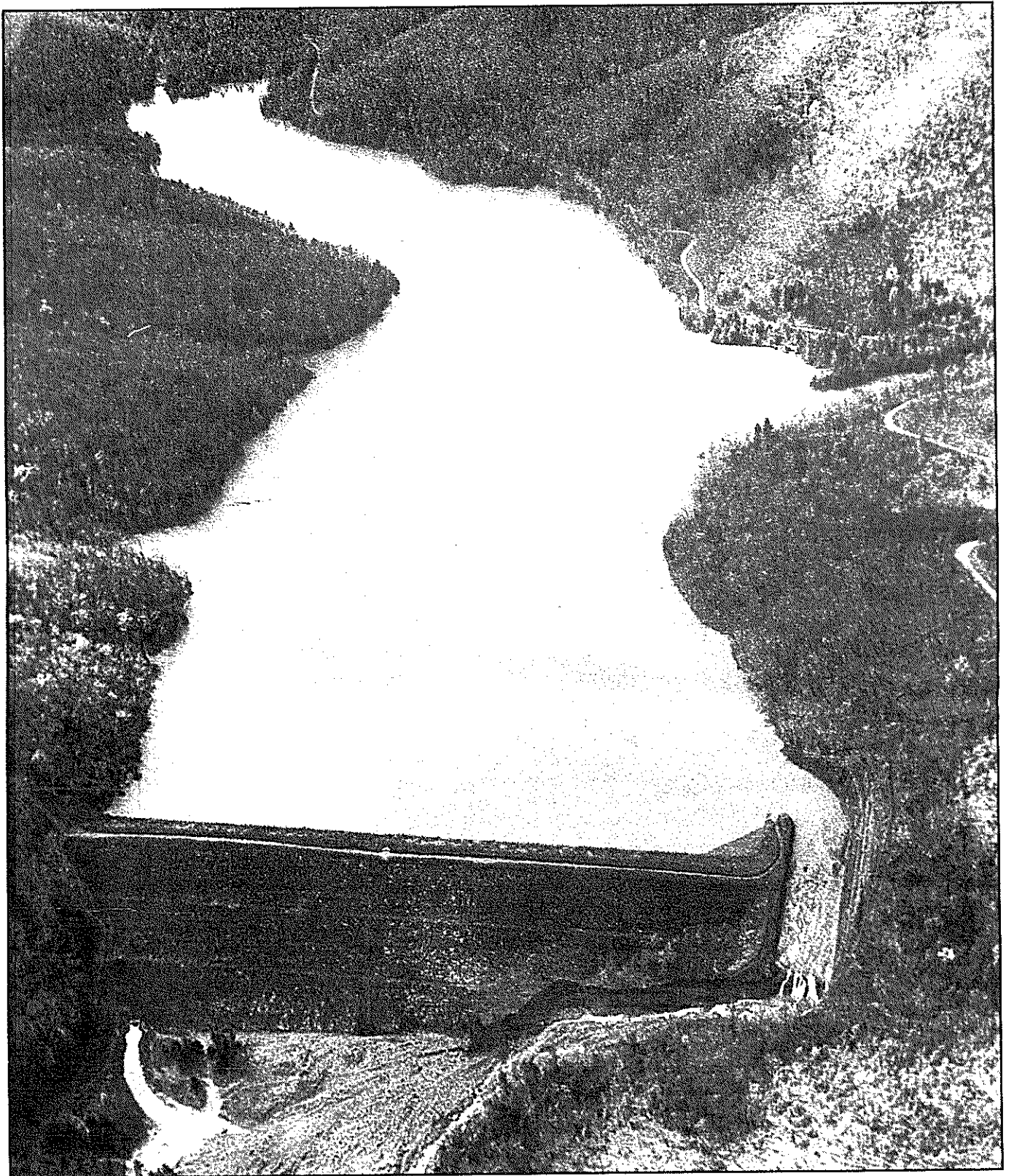
In West Virginia, two dams have been built and another is under way.

One of the completed dams is on Mill Creek, a tributary of the South Branch of the Potomac in Grant County. It will provide additional protection for Moorefield.

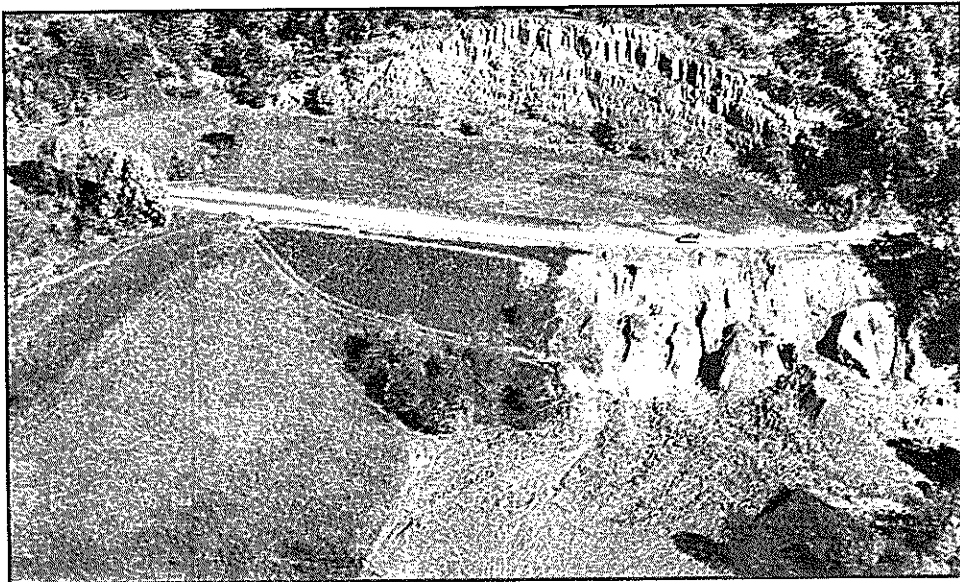
The other completed dam is the controversial Kimsey Run structure near Lost River in Hardy County. The other dam, which is nearly ready for construction, also is on Lost River in Hardy County.

Although additional flood control dam sites still are charted on old Soil Conservation Service maps, there is little likelihood they will be built.

The costs vs. benefits ratio is low for many of the remaining dams. Environmental impact approval also is more difficult for dams today than it was 40 years ago.



News-Record File Photo



News-Record File Photo

ABOVE:

Switzer Dam suffered some erosion damage at its base because of flood water rushing over the spillway.

AT LEFT:

Erosion below Va. 924 was caused by water from Briery Branch Dam, which is nearby but not shown in this photo.

THE FLOOD: Ten Years Later

Washouts: Flood Took Its Toll On Area Highways

By **STEVE SCHNEIDER**
News-Record Staff Writer

The flood of 1985 inflicted different levels of damage on roads in the central Shenandoah Valley.

In Shenandoah County, Interstate 81 was not hurt but U.S. 11 in the Meems Bottom area was shut for about 48 hours, said Bill Bushman, resident engineer in the Edinburg office. He said the road was in "right good shape considering" what happened, though some "minor touchup" work was performed.

However, Bushman said the county's secondary roads suffered a worse fate. Virginia Department of Transportation workers had to rebuild about 150 feet of Quicksburg Road and some of Va. 720, which was torn up.

While exact figures aren't available, Bushman said VDOT spent about \$500,000 on repairs in the county. He also said workers re-established service to "every part of the county within a few days" in the form of temporary repairs, though permanent work took longer.

The county also lost several foot bridges, Bushman said, though low water bridges built around 1900 were "tough" and survived.

In the city of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, about six bridges were washed out by the flood, according to Don Komara, resident engineer for the area. He said a majority of those bridges were truss bridges. All were replaced, Komara said.

Roads and bridges near Dry River, North River, the Shenandoah River and the Germany River were hit particularly hard, he said. Komara said Va. 826 near Bergton experienced "lots of problems" from flooding, though the repairs were made as VDOT crews worked from dawn to dusk.

The eastbound lane on U.S. 33 in Elk-



News-Record File Photo

Road crew fills in break in a Rockingham County road after the November 1985 flood.

ton was closed and the bridge over the Shenandoah River needed repair work, Komara said.

He said Briery Branch, in the southwest part of the county, suffered when water climbed over a dam onto Va. 924. The road was closed more than a week, and major repairs were made, according to Komara.

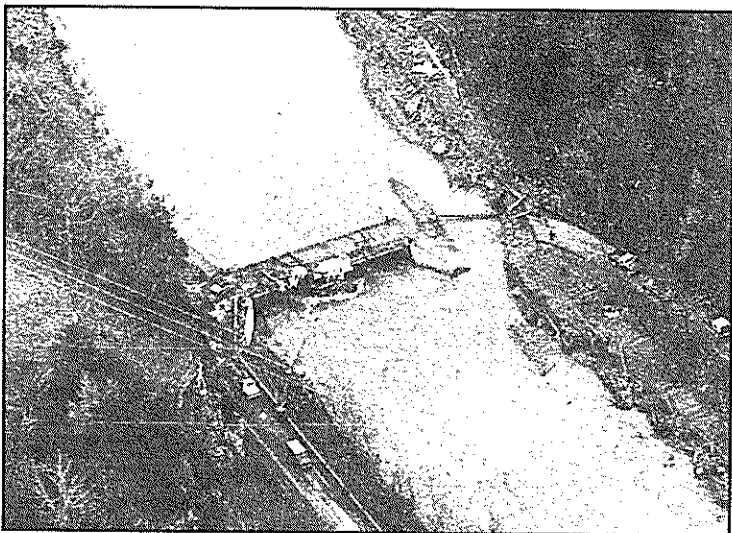
While he said water did not go over Interstate 81, it did travel within a foot of the beams and deck on the North River Bridge at the interstate.

According to VDOT spokesman Sandy Myers, the state had to repair 18 bridges in Rockingham and Augusta counties.

In Hardy County, West Virginia, about 75 yards of road washed away be-

tween Moorefield and Fisher, said Chuck Silliman, then a flood recovery coordinator with the county office of emergency services.

He also said the bridge at U.S. 220 and West Virginia 55 was washed away. But Silliman said the bridge, near the Grant County line, was rebuilt, as were the roads that were washed away.



News-Record File Photo

Aerial photo shows bridge on 220/12, south of Franklin, W.Va., which was heavily damaged by flood.

The rebuilt bridge (left photo) spans a considerably more peaceful river in 1995.



News-Record Photo by Allen Litten

THE FLOOD: Ten Years Later

THE FLOOD IN ROCKINGHAM COUNTY

Findings Were Grim On Day After Flood

By **RICHARD PRIOR**
News-Record Staff Writer

Some eight or nine people were stranded at Mac's Superette in Fulks Run when the flood of 1985 was at its worst.

They passed the time watching movies on the store's videocassette recorder. Among the selections in the film library was "The River." But no one was in the mood.

The high water dropped the next morning, and everyone left, anxious to see what the flooding had wrought at home. Business at the store was brisk, said co-owner Larry Thomas.

Crews traveled the roadways in Rockingham County the best they could, repairing roads and bridges, clearing downed electrical lines, restoring power, removing debris.

Information was collected on the losses in lives and land. The findings were grim.

Four county residents were among the 42 killed in western Virginia and eastern West Virginia.

Shirley F. Hamblin, 47, of Route 2, Timberville, died when her car was

swept off Va. 617 by the flooding North Fork of the Shenandoah River as she was trying to get to an evacuation center.

Charles L. Marshall, 67, of Elkton, drowned when the Jeep he was riding in plunged into a creek after a bridge on U.S. 340 collapsed.

Pamela S. Rankin, 35, of Crawford Manor, and Lowell Rogers, 44, of Route 1, Elkton, died when Rogers' pickup was swept off the U.S. 11 bridge over North River just south of Mount Crawford.

Rescuers, spectators and survivors found it hard to trust their own eyes. Water normally flows 40 feet below the U.S. 33 bridge over the South Fork of the Shenandoah River in Elkton. The bridge was under five to six feet of water the morning of Nov. 5.

Towns set up their own emergency systems, established evacuation points and organized cleanup efforts. There was plenty to clean up.

Damage estimates for Rockingham County came to \$5.0 million on roads and bridges, and \$9.5 million in crop losses.

Six bridges were destroyed; 35 others

had major damage. Over the months to come, repair crews did more than fix the problem. They also reinforced structures, making them more flood-resistant against the day it happens again.

The most severe problems in the county were along the mountains and any place near the North and South forks of the Shenandoah River. But few neighborhoods were immune.

Communities hit the hardest were Briery Branch, Bergton, Criders, Timberville, Port Republic, parts of Elkton and some areas in Bridgewater.

Residents pumped water for days out of buildings in Port Republic, which was almost completely submerged.

Grottoes became an island.

Riverside United Methodist Church in Fulks Run collapsed in on itself. Portions of the building floated away.

Within weeks, the 35-member congregation decided to resurrect their church on a new site, using the rescued pulpit, altar well and deacon's bench.

The levee in Bridgewater was on everyone's mind as water crept close to the top. It held, averting what could have been even more disaster.

Flood-control dams in the area did their job. Several of the earthen dams were eroded, but officials said there was never the threat of a break.

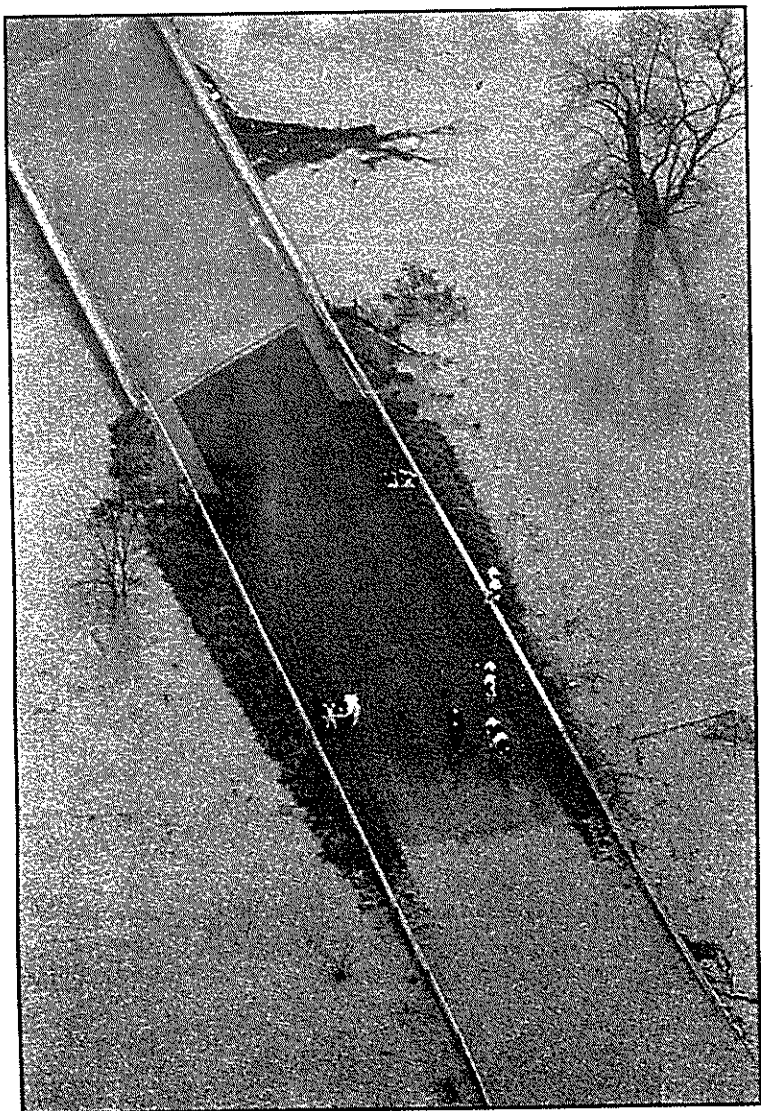
Repairs were made to Switzer Dam and those at Briery Branch, Hone Quarry, Dry River, Dry Run and Hog Pen.

Eleven months after the flood, a community support group met in Briery Branch to help survivors cope with the expected "anniversary effect." On the anniversary of special events — weddings, births, deaths, disasters — people tend to reflect on what they were doing, what they thought they would be doing in the future and how everything actually turned out.

Members of the group wanted to keep each other from becoming discouraged at the slow pace of emotional and physical recovery.

One member, Charlotte Craig, proposed putting lighted candles in windows Nov. 4 and 5, the peak of the '85 disaster.

They would serve, she said, as "a memorial to those who died, a tribute to those who helped save lives and a celebration for those who did survive."



News-Record File Photo

The flood stranded cattle on a bridge at Lynwood.



News-Record File Photo

Flood water isolates homes and cuts off vehicles in the village of Port Republic.

THE FLOOD: Ten Years Later

Chief Recalls Freeing Dogs, Saving Woman

RICHARD PRIOR
News-Record Staff Writer

The storm that brought on the Flood of 1985 saved some of its most intense soaking for the mountains, streams and rivers around Elkton. And Warren Pence was in the middle of it all.

One of the Elkton police chief's most powerful memories is of rescuing all those trapped dogs that couldn't run to safety. But it's not his strongest memory.

"The water came up so fast, and people were trying to save what they could, furniture and stuff," Pence said. "Some of them left to haul it away and left their dogs in the dog houses."

"There was an amazing reaction from the animals when I turned the houses upside down and let them out. There were a lot of 'Beware of Dog' signs. But we'd go up and unleash them, and the dogs were so terrified they made no attempt to bite us."

Pence and several other officers stood in the eye of the storm directing traffic, keeping drivers away from rising water.

"Route 33 was flooded at the Shenandoah River bridge," Pence recalled. "We had gone back to the off-ramp of (U.S.) 33 and (U.S.) 340, diverting traffic off 33."

"We were controlling the east side of the bridge; the sheriff's department had the west side. Barricades and flares were out . . . all kinds of devices set up to detour traffic."

An area woman was returning from a Christmas shopping trip. When she saw the barricades, she thought she had come upon an accident. So she drove around.

Pence and Rockingham County Deputy Don Smith gave chase. Before they could catch up, the car was in the river.

"There were no lights out there at all," Pence said. "I got in front of the car and walked on the road so Deputy Smith could follow. It was unsafe to go any farther, but we tried to use our lights to spot the vehicle."

"I hollered to see if anyone would answer. A woman answered. I looked out, and there appeared to be several people bobbing in the water. Actually, it was several of the Christmas packages."

As Smith backed his car away from the rising water, Pence and the woman "hollered back and forth," he said. "I had to go down in the water and get her. It was unreal . . . something like 35 feet above flood stage then."

"I got her and managed to get back to the embankment where the water was coming over. It was like going up a waterfall. I would get my footing and push her up as far as I could. We finally made it."

"She still sends me a Christmas card every year with a picture of her daughters."

Basements, Evacuation Took Fire Unit's Time

RICHARD PRIOR
News-Record Staff Writer

Most of Don Merica's time during the flood of 1985 was spent pumping water out of "a lot of basements."

"There was no way into Elkton," he said. "No way in, no way out."

"The only way you could get out of Elkton was across (U.S.) 33 east, go across the mountain and come back down and go (Interstate) 64 to get back on (Interstate) 81."

"And that's the way it was for about a day and a half."

Merica, chief of the Elkton Fire Department for the past five years, said he particularly remembers having to help evacuate people from the Elkton Manor Home "in the latter stages of the flood, when the rivers were crest-

ing."

"And I remember a lady standing at the trestle bridge," he said. "The railroad tracks came up and knocked her to the river bank. They knew it was coming. The river just got her in a bind."

If there is a repeat of the '85 flood, high water may cause the same amount of damage, but residents would at least have more warning, Merica said.

"When that happened, we'd only been on the central (emergency) dispatch about two years," he said. "That's the 911 system now out of Harrisonburg."

"With the 911 system, rainfall is monitored. They know when some areas are going to flood, and they give us warning."

The procedure of setting up incident

command, with improved communications, has also come a long way in the past 10 years, Merica said.

"In '85, we had one guy in charge of one incident," he said. "Communications are better now; setting up the command system is better now."

Times have changed in the last 10 years, said Merica, who expects he would pump fewer basements but evacuate more residents if high water returns.

"People are different now," he said. "The older people would sit in the houses and stay. And we have more people living in the low-lying areas now than there were in '85."

"But there are also others. A lot of people have moved in here over the past 10 years. And a lot of them come from places, when something is endangering their life, it's time to flee."

Elkton Officials Call It A 500-Year Flood

By RICHARD PRIOR
News-Record Staff Writer

Fifty-year flood.

Hundred-year flood.

Five hundred-year flood.

By any measure, there was a lot of water flowing over Elkton in 1985.

"According to our maps, when we go on a high area and see how high the water got, we figure that was a 500-year flood on the Shenandoah River," said Elkton Town Superintendent Gerald Monger. "The water was about where the study said it would be for a 500-year flood."

Monger said one of his most lasting impressions was the speed with which the waters changed everyone's lives.

"What got me about that particular flood," he said, "was how fast it came up and how fast it went down."

"I know it didn't seem that way to the people who were moved out; the water did stay up a while. But once it started dropping, it dropped real fast."

Foremost in officials' minds during the storm's peak was "trying to keep traffic from running into the flood," Monger said. "We had to protect property, move people out and set up shelters for them."

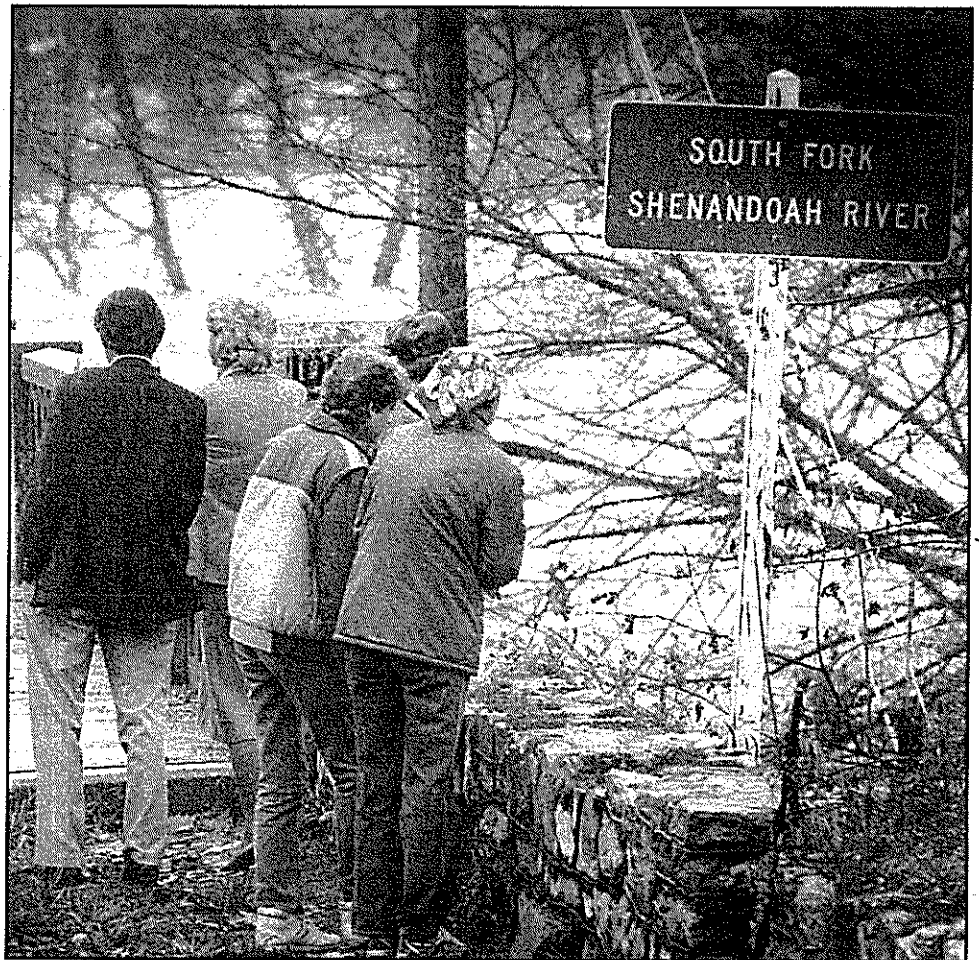
"Also, midway through it all, we met with FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency), trying to get organized on how to set up a place where people could register for help."

About 10 residences in Elkton were flooded out, as was the trestle, "which was a big loss for a while," Monger said.

If the town were to face a similar disaster soon, "I would say the effect would be just about the same," he said. "Maybe we're a little more organized about where to take people."

"But people moved right back into the homes that were flooded."

"Our waste treatment plant got some flood damage. And at this point in the



News-Record File Photo

Area residents check the level of Shenandoah River on Old U.S. 33 at Elkton during 1985 flood.

game we haven't been able to recoup enough money to build dikes to protect it."

As though he could ever forget the first week of November 1985, Monger said he occasionally watches a film of the event. "I have a television news tape of the flood that I still watch every once

in a while," he said. "And every so often I go back to the elevations I took from the flood levels."

"After the water went down, I went around with an instrument to take elevation levels so we would have it on record. I look at those, and I don't believe the water could ever get that high."

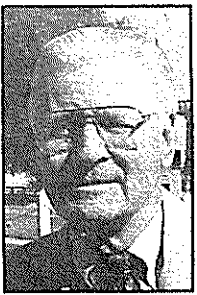
THE FLOOD: Ten Years Later

BC Rebuilt Flood-Damaged Sports Facilities

By **RICHARD PRIOR**
News-Record Staff Writer

Bill Swecker, director of planned giving at Bridgewater College, can point with pride to the school's modern layout for football, baseball and women's softball.

He can also remember when the whole area was under broad, churning waters created by the flood of '85.



Swecker

Swecker stayed around campus all day when the rain-fall was at its heaviest. He then returned home, near a dike that was built on North River Road after the flood of 1949.

"When I finally got home, I got up on the dike and watched the water come up," he said. "We have a two-story duplex, and everything had been moved up to the second story. But I was afraid water would go over the dike."

"When the water stopped rising, it was real early in the morning. Probably not even light yet. And the water was maybe eight feet below the top of the dike. A lot of water."

The power of the flood, he said, was apparent to anyone standing on the bridge at the south end of Bridgewater on Va. 42.

"I remember standing on that bridge," he said, "and I could feel it shaking from the water and the debris it was carrying."

More than 40 homes were damaged when the North River burst its banks and seeped into the East Riverside, Burlingtown and Wildwood Park sections of town.

An estimated \$40,000 to \$100,000 damage was done to town facilities.

"At school, the water was more than two-thirds the way up the embankment where the football stadium is now,"

Swecker said. "Spectators used to sit on the bank for football games. After the flood, we put in aluminum bleachers. 'Toward the visitors' side, there were stands made out of pipe and boards. Those were just wiped out. 'It sticks in my mind that one baseball dugout, made out of cinder block, was completely wiped away. The other was destroyed.'"



News-Record File Photo

Bridgewater College's Jopson Field was under water during the flood in November 1985.

Swecker said. "Spectators used to sit on the bank for football games. After the flood, we put in aluminum bleachers. 'Toward the visitors' side, there were stands made out of pipe and boards. Those were just wiped out. 'It sticks in my mind that one baseball dugout, made out of cinder block, was completely wiped away. The other was destroyed.'"

Standing on a bank at the rear of the campus, Swecker saw the football goal posts "bend over till they were under

water." "We had two or three portable Coke stands that were used for the ball-games," he recalled. "They were floating out there."

"An old rowboat got jammed in the scoreboard. It was still stuck there the next morning when the water started to go down."

Even "floods of the century" have an "upside," Swecker said, "and ours is the whole (sports) complex we have out there now."

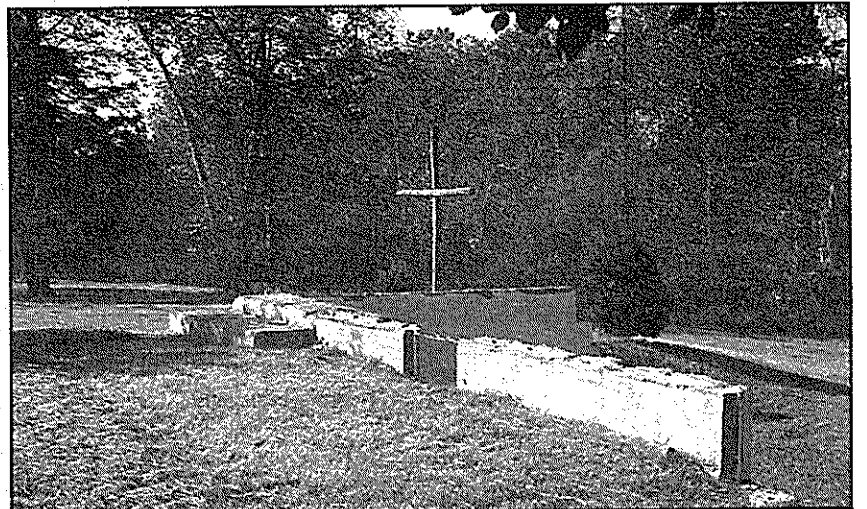
"We were able to put in Jopson Field

stadium with new bleachers, the baseball field and the softball field. Then the soccer field."

"The flood had just wiped out the football field, which had to be completely resodded," Swecker said. "I believe the same people who resodded RFK Stadium resodded our field."

And the last expense the school had to make to keep that new field growing?

"A new sprinkler system," Swecker said, with just a touch of irony.



News-Record Photo by Allen Litten

Riverside United Methodist Church was reduced to rubble by the 1985 flood. The congregation rebuilt the church on high ground and placed a cross on the original site west of Fulks Run.

THE FLOOD: Ten Years Later

Harrisonburg Lost Water Sources In Flood

By PAT MURPHEY
News-Record Staff Writer

Harrisonburg itself was unscathed by the flood of 1985.

However, the city nearly found itself in the same predicament as the Ancient Mariner: "water, water every where and not a drop to drink."

Harrisonburg's water system survived a three-punch combination from the flood.

First, Switzer Dam, the city's main water source in western Rockingham, was threatened by waters that roared across an emergency spillway, then cut across part of the dam's toe.

Although a canyon was eroded, the dam held.

However, Harrisonburg's water supply from the area was interrupted when pipelines were washed out by Dry River at Rawley Springs, noted Mike Collins of the city water department.

In addition to Switzer Dam/Dry River, the city draws water from two other sources, North River near Bridgewater and Silver Lake at Dayton.

The North River supply was also knocked out when the flood waters inundated Harrisonburg's pumping station.



News-Record File Photo

Volunteers at Harrisonburg Salvation Army prepare food.

That left only Silver Lake.

Although Collins did not join the water department until two years later, he said he understands the flood "caused a lot of hustling over here."

The motors for the North River pumping station were removed and hauled to

Ohio where they were dried out, he said. About two days later, they were returned and put in place.

Harrisonburg has a three- to four-day supply of water, which helped carry the city through the crisis, Collins noted. Most municipalities have only about a

day's supply, he added.

The demand for water also dropped because poultry plants were unable to operate after the flood, Collins noted.

Despite the supply and the lower demand, "I think they were running pretty short," he said.

Fortunately, there was no serious fire during the days immediately after the flood.

"That wouldn't have helped a thing, to say the least," Collins said.

In the days after the flood, the Harrisonburg Salvation Army became a center for flood relief efforts in the central Shenandoah Valley and neighboring West Virginia.

Volunteers recalled putting together some 12,000 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches that were taken from Harrisonburg to distribution centers in the flood areas.

Peanut butter and jelly were the staple because they would not spoil without refrigeration.

Donations of clothing, housewares and other supplies funneled through the Salvation Army.

"At one time, we had 21 big tractor-trailers sitting at the Salvation Army loaded with supplies," a volunteer reported after the flood.

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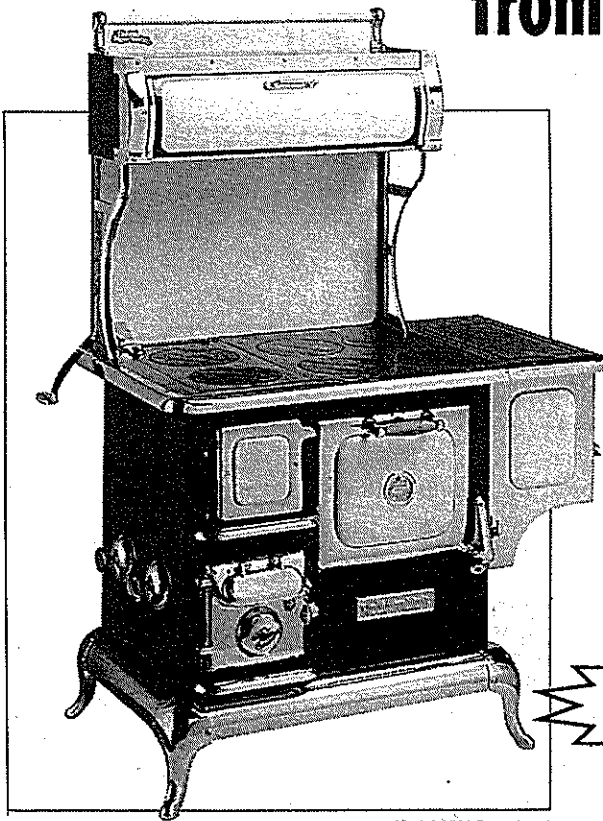
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THE FLOOD: Ten Years Later

THE FLOOD IN PAGE COUNTY

'There Were A Lot Of Heroes Out There'

By ERIC GORTON
News-Record Staff Writer

Page County applied for and obtained federal drought relief in the summer of 1986.

My how Mother Nature can twist things.

Seven months earlier, in November 1985, Page County and much of the central Shenandoah Valley was waist-deep in the worst flooding in the area's history.

It was one of the strangest weather patterns Arlis Frymyer can remember.



Good

Now retired from the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, Frymyer assisted then County Administrator Ronald Good with assessing the flood damage. Final estimates approached \$2.5 million, with about \$2 million of that being to private property.

"We've had some minor flooding, but the Shenandoah River has not been that high," Frymyer said.

"That's supposed to be a 100-year flood," he added. "Thankfully, maybe it'll be some time before we get another one like that."

The flood destroyed numerous homes and wreaked havoc with farmland, washing away the topsoil. It killed one motorist who tried crossing its path at the Page/Rockingham county line.

The flood waters were not particular about where they made an impact. "It was pretty well widespread from one end of the county to the other," said Good.

Good and Frymyer spent part of the time on Tanners Ridge east of Stanley keeping an eye on a pair of lakes in the Skyline Lakes subdivision. Fortunately the lakes held up or the Naked Creek area would have been ravaged worse than it was, Good said.

"They had some lakes that held water, but had we had a little more rain we could have had a lot of devastation," said former county Supervisor Charles I. Griffith, who also visited the area. "It just got to the point where it quit raining and we were lucky."

Observing dispatchers at the county sheriff's department was Good's most vivid memory: "Knowing that there were people on the telephone or the reports coming back from the deputies of people that were in trouble, that they were trying to get to ... just knowing that there were people out there that were just in real dangerous situations," he said.

"There were a lot of heroes out there at that time that got to people — deputies in the sheriff's department and those in the fire departments and the rescue squads," Good said. "And some of the dispatchers too. They were there hour after hour after hour in just very intense situations."

Griffith remembers looking in awe at the Shenandoah River rushing against the side of the Bixler's Ferry Bridge on Va. 675 west of Luray. The water normally is about 30 feet below the bridge, a state transportation official said.

Griffith said the water was about a foot from coming over it.

While 10 years have passed since the flood, Frymyer doubts the county is any more prepared to deal with a similar flood, and said it may be less prepared since the federal government has moved some of its conservation agencies out of the county.

Good said the county might be a little better off since a computerized stream monitoring system has been put in place.

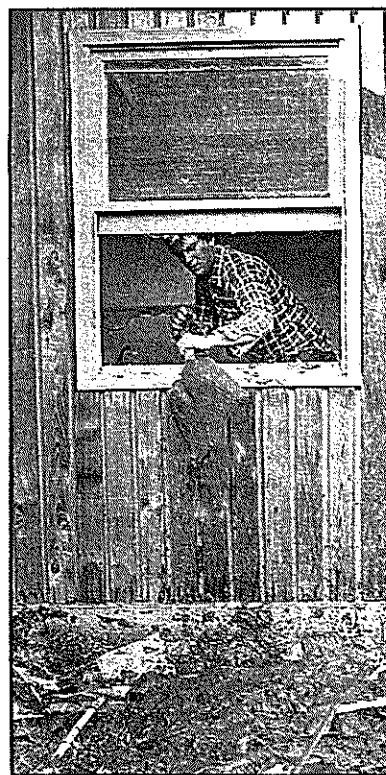


Top Photo: The Shenandoah River inflicted damage at Whitehouse Landing near Luray.

Middle: A friend helps clean mud from a home near Luray after the flood.

Lower Photo: An A-frame home in Page Valley Estates west of Luray was reduced to rubble when the Shenandoah River's South Fork crested at more than 27 feet there Nov. 5.

Photos Courtesy Page News & Courier



THE FLOOD: Ten Years Later

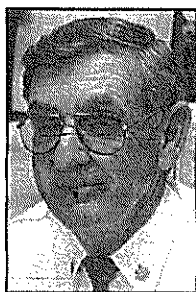
Flood Stretches Work Day For Page Deputy

By ERIC GORTON
News-Record Staff Writer

When Maj. Philip Mims arrived for work at the Page County Sheriff's Department the morning of Nov. 4, 1985, he had no idea how long a day it would be.

Rain was falling and water was rising, but no one figured it would turn into one of the worst floods in county history, he said.

"It was a whole new experience for me," he said. "I didn't realize the whole, total impact of what was going on 'til after midnight. . . . After midnight, we knew it was going to be a total disaster. And of course daylight came and then you see what you was dealing with."



Mims

by helicopter."

The Pegasus medical helicopter from Charlottesville assisted in the rescue, landing about 300 yards from the homes on some high ground. The pilot and a Page County deputy waded through neck-high water to get to the couples, Mims said. They also rescued a pair of dogs by putting them in plastic trash cans and floating them to safety.

One of the two houses washed away, Mims said. The other got 4-5 feet of water in it.

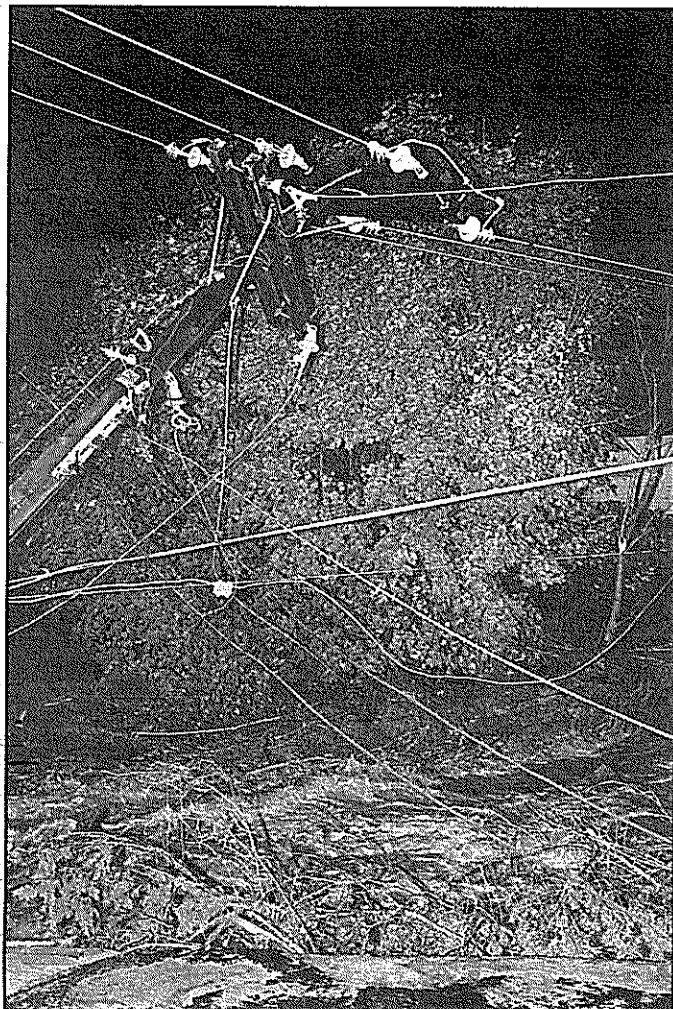
Rescuers could not be sent to everyone who called, Mims said. Dispatchers directed rescuers to the situations that appeared to be the most serious. Fortunately, Mims said, no one was killed.

The flood did claim the life of a motorist at the Page/Rockingham County.

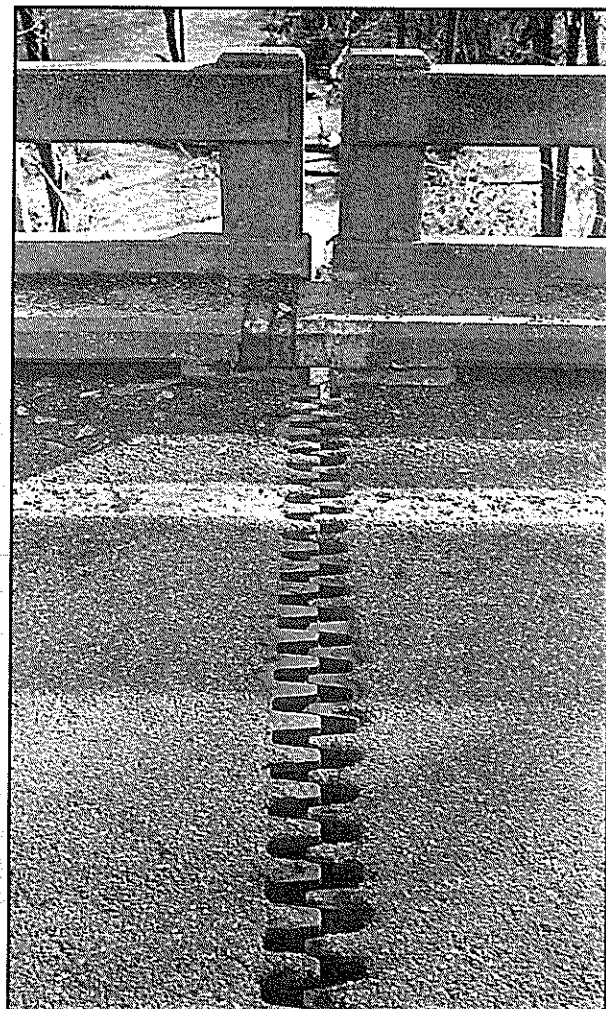
Mims' day ended about 48 hours after it started. He never had worked that long before, "and I hope never again."

Mims spent much of Nov. 4 assisting dispatchers answer emergency calls, he said. Among the people he talked to was a pair of elderly couples who lived at Fort Stover along the Shenandoah River northwest of Luray.

"I told them that I didn't think the flood waters would ever get to them because it never had before," Mims said. "At daylight I went to check on them and of course they had to be evacuated



Upper left: A power line downed near Marksville Bridge.



Upper right: An expansion joint in the Grove Hill Bridge over the Shenandoah River's South Fork was forced apart by the flood waters.

Below: Red Cross representative distributes food and other aid in the Dovel Hollow area.

Photos Courtesy Page News & Courier



Stanley Rescues, Evacuations Lasted Two Days

The '85 flood is not something people want to remember much about, but it's still there, says Stanley Fire Chief Terry Pettit.

Pettit was one of many rescuers who spent the better part of two days evacuating and rescuing people from the flood.

During the day of Nov. 4, the fire department spent most of the daylight hours monitoring the rising waters, Pettit said. Evacuations and rescues started that night and continued through Nov. 5.

The first evacuations and rescues took place in the Kite Hollow and Pine Grove areas east of Stanley, he said.

"We were very fortunate at getting the people out that were ready to go that evening. Once the largest part of the flood came, there was no chance of getting anybody," Pettit said.

The fire department was using four-wheel-drive vehicles to get to people, but when Va. 689 washed out on both sides of the Marksville Bridge, nothing more could be done, he said.

At one point, when Pettit was checking water levels, a house near the bridge washed into Little Hawksbill Creek, he said. The occupants of the house had already been evacuated.

After spending most of Nov. 4 east of

Stanley, the rescuers moved west to the rising Shenandoah River on Nov. 5.

A lot of the emergency calls were from people reporting that flood waters had gotten into their electrical boxes in their basements. The only remedy was turning off the electricity until the water receded, Pettit said.

The fire department received one fire call — for an electrical short in a barn that was in an unflooded area, he said.

One of the more ominous consequences of the flood was the way it cut off U.S. 340 in several areas, isolating all three county towns. Rescuers could transport people to Page Memorial Hos-

pital in Luray until about midnight, but not after that, Pettit said.

Rescuers were fairly well prepared to handle the emergency, except for their radio equipment.

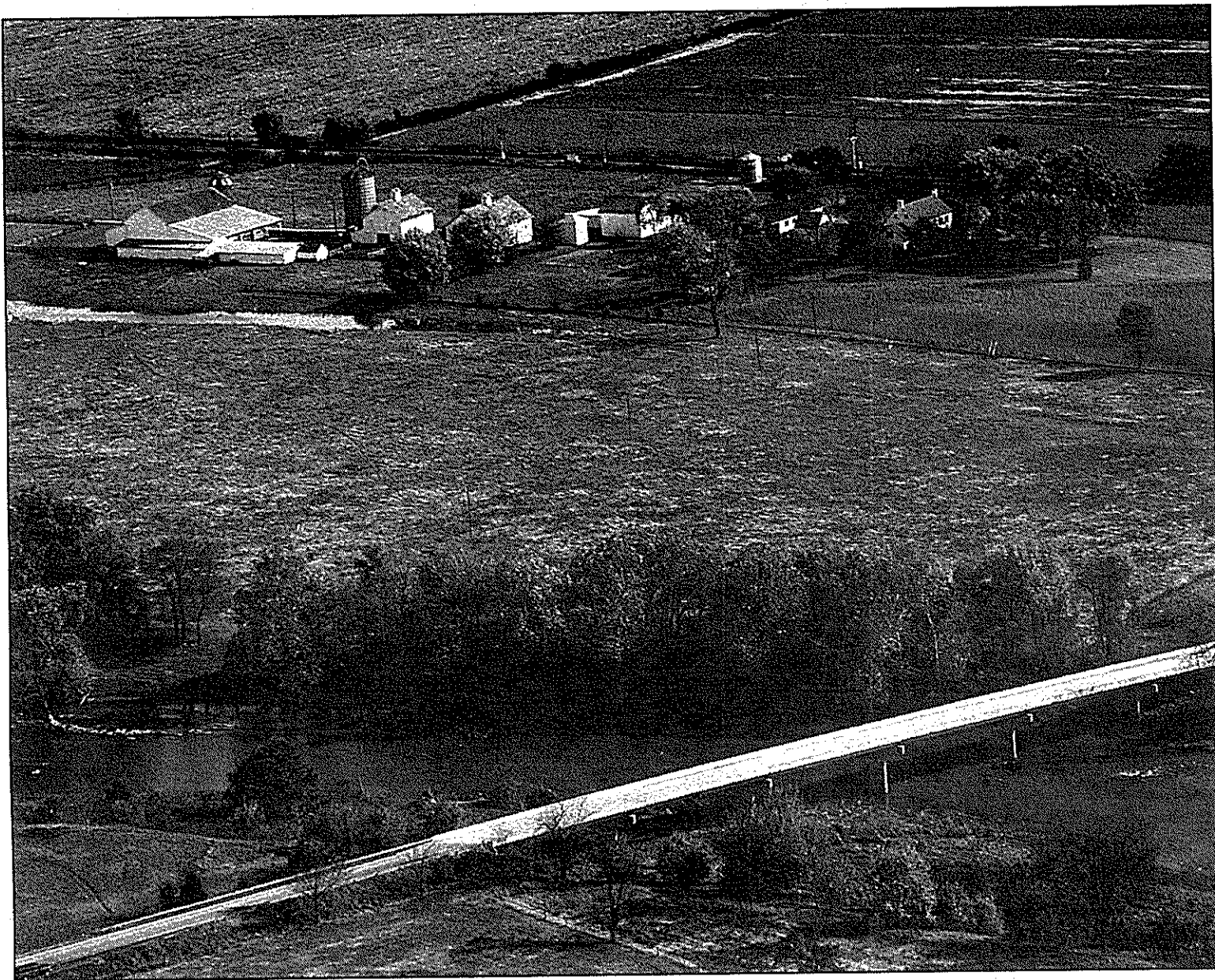
"Communications was a nightmare because we had all six agencies, all Luray, Shenandoah, (Stanley fire and rescue) — all communicating at the same time and the dispatchers were doing the best they could do."

The situation has improved somewhat with the addition of 911 emergency telephone service. It should be even better when the county completes its enhanced 911 system, possibly by April, he said.

THE FLOOD: *Ten Years Later*



News-Record File Photo



Then & Now

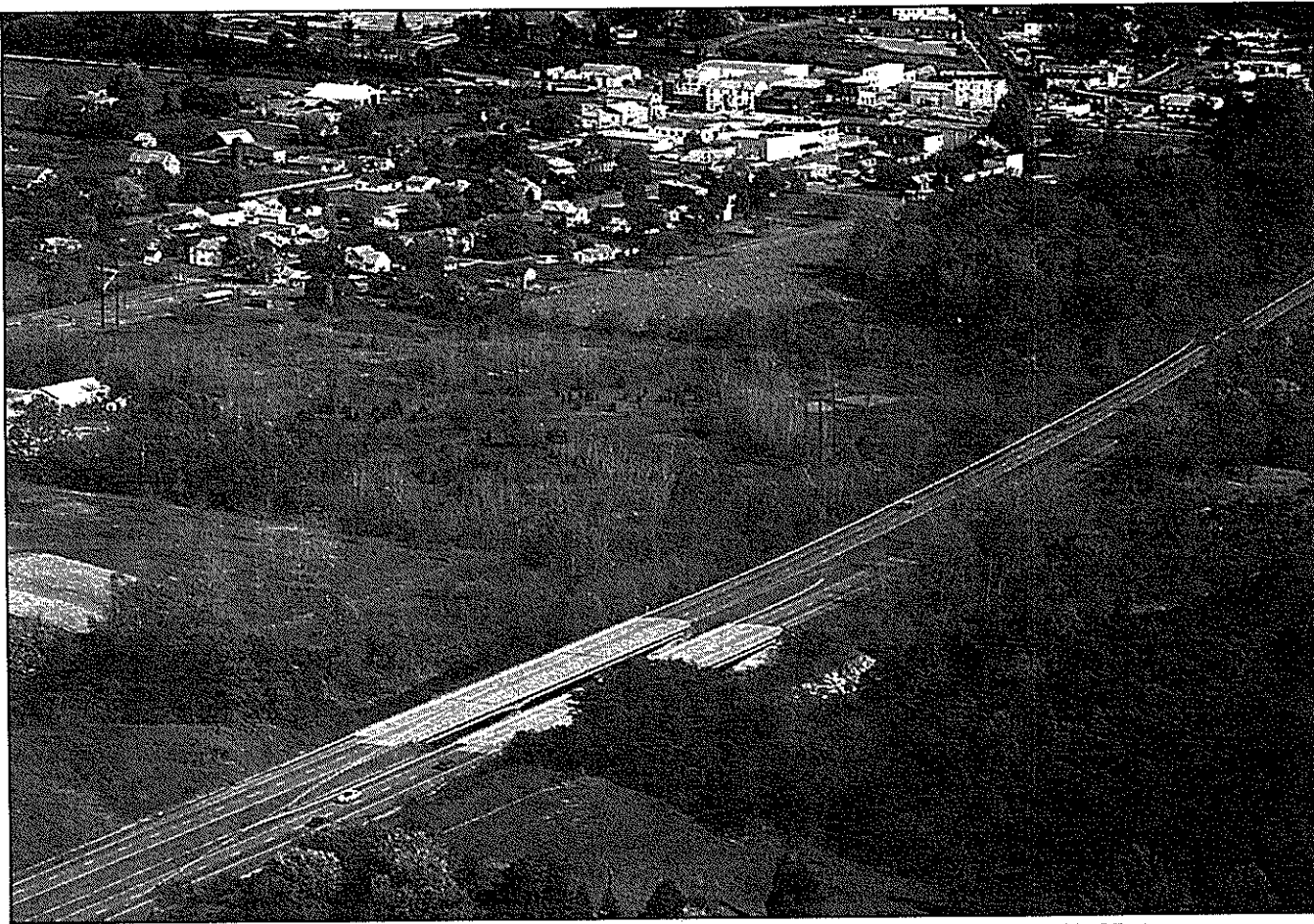
A farm at Lynnwood in Rockingham County was covered with flood water in 1985, making each building an island (top photo).

The farm buildings' distance from the river can be seen in the 1995 photo (bottom), which shows the river within its normal bounds.

THE FLOOD: Ten Years Later

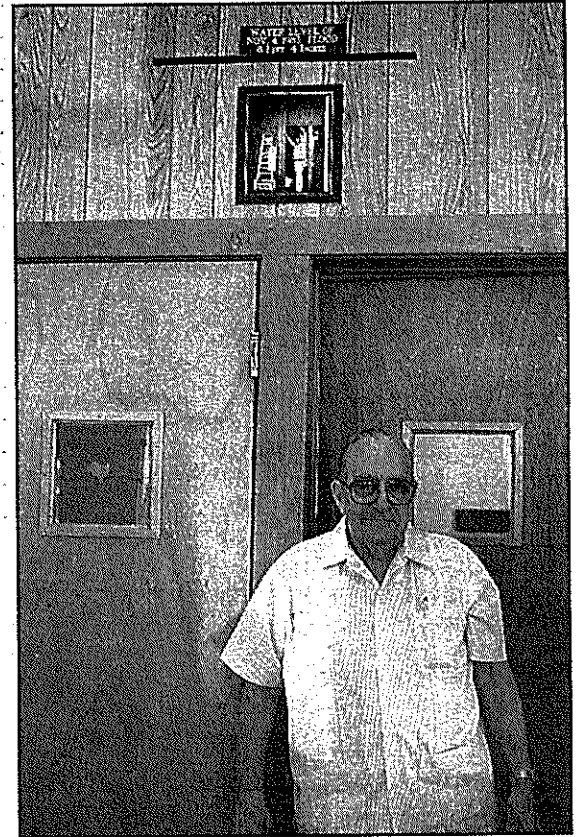


News-Record File Photo



News-Record Photo by Allen Litten

Water flows over the bridge on U.S. 33 at Elkton during the 1985 flood (top photo). The water level normally is dozens of feet below the bridge, as shown in the lower photo, which was taken recently.



News-Record Photo by Allen Litten

Paul Eskridge, owner of Sites Restaurant in Petersburg, displays a marker signifying the 8-foot-4-inch high-water mark that the flood left in the restaurant.

THE FLOOD: Ten Years Later

THE FLOOD IN AUGUSTA COUNTY

300 Homes Damaged; 3 People Killed

By BETTINA TILSON
News-Record Staff Writer

While the Flood of '85 did not wreak as much havoc in Augusta County as it did in some nearby West Virginia counties, three county residents died and damage was estimated at \$13.6 million.

The flood waters took the life of Augusta County resident Thomas M. Phillips, 57, of Deerfield, who died when his pickup was swept off the Va. 629 bridge over the Calfpasture River.

Douglas Knight, 22, and cousin Marvin "Junior" Knight, 28, both of Swoope, drowned when powerful flood waters wiped the car they were in off the Va. 703 bridge over Middle River.

Augusta County officials estimated the county sustained \$13.6 million in damage, including \$5.5 million in damage to roads, \$7.4 million to private property and \$731,000 to public property.

Nearly 300 homes were damaged by the flood and 1,500 people were evacuated with 200 housed in shelters provided at five schools in the county. About 500 farmers also were affected by the flood.

Damage to homes was listed at \$2.6 million; mobile homes at \$71,500; vehicles at \$113,500 and private bridges at \$222,100.

Industrial and commercial loss was estimated at \$394,800. Total damage to farms, including livestock, was reported at \$3.8 million.

Augusta was one of 17 counties in Virginia that were officially declared federal disaster areas by then-President Ronald Reagan. The declaration made residents eligible for low-cost loans and other aid to rebuild in the wake of the mess the flood left behind.

In addition to the five area counties, the city of Waynesboro also was declared a federal disaster area. Several businesses along Main Street sustained various degrees of damage. From two to five feet of water invaded many of the stores.

The emergency declaration for the five-county area — Augusta, Highland, Page, Rockingham and Shenandoah — came about a week after the worst flooding in the area in more than 40 years. Under the emergency declaration, area residents were eligible for loans and grants from such agencies as the Small Business Administration and the Farmers Home Administration.

The Farmers Home Administration has recently split into a farming branch called the Farms Services Agency and a housing branch called Rural Economic And Community Development. A spokeswoman for the FSA said only one loan was made by the local agency after the 1985 flood, and it was to replace a bridge on a farmer's property.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency also opened Disaster Application



News-Record File Photo

In 1985, North River flood the area in front of the Natural Chimneys at Mount Solon. Campers at lower left were damaged by the flood.

Centers in Augusta, Page, Rockingham and Shenandoah counties.

The state highway department's Staunton District covers the five-county area, locally, as well as Clarke, Frederick and Warren to the north and Alleghany, Bath and Rockbridge to the county.

Among all the area counties, Augusta

County had the highest damage estimate — \$5.4 million — from road and bridge damage. Augusta had six bridges either washed away or sustaining severe structural damage.

The loss of fencing also was a major problem in the county, reported Assistant Augusta County Administrator John McGehee who still serves in that

position. Damage estimates for fencing alone climbed to \$924,528.

Total damage to agriculture in Augusta County reached more than \$1.6 million, but that figure did not include the \$2.1 million worth of work the county did in stabilizing its streams through the Headwaters Soil and Water Conservation Commission.

THE FLOOD: Ten Years Later

Generosity Of Strangers Remembered

By **BETTINA TILSON**
News-Record Staff Writer

The generosity and kindness of dozens of Valley residents — many of whom Sam Phillips did not even know before the Flood of '85 — is what he'll remember most about the disaster.

After his house at 600 Brookside Cove in Waynesboro was ravaged by nearly five feet of water, students from Eastern Mennonite University, a group of Mennonites and, of course, friends and neighbors came to his family's rescue.

The Phillips family had always known their house was in the flood plain. During previous storms, water had crept halfway up their sidewalk and then receded. But November 1985 was different.

"This time, it kept raining and the water kept coming," Phillips said. "We were moving furniture up as high as we could get it in the attic. ... I was still down in the basement when water started coming in, and I knew it was time to get out of there."

The family of four — Phillips, his wife Patty, and their two sons, Marc and Adam, who were 13 and 10 at the time — tucked their cat named Kitty under their arms and vamoosed.

They stayed with friends and returned to their home a couple of days later to survey the damage. Phillips recalls wading across the street where, upon first glance, the house appeared calm.

But when he went inside, he was shocked. "The first impression (is something) you can't appreciate until you go through it," Phillips said. The power of the flood waters was "absolutely amazing and devastating" all at the same time. The water knocked down furniture, upturned file cabinets and reached items the family had hoped were out of reach.

"The feeling is that you'll never be able to get things back (the way they were)," Phillips said. "For a while, it was a pretty lonely feeling."

But then people began calling. One friend asked what he could do and Phillips handed him a garden hose and asked him to spray off the television in the yard. "That TV lasted for another year, but most things were ruined."

A lot of people worked many long hours for the family. "It just proves how nice this area and community are," Phillips said.

After months of work, the family finally moved back into the house in March. "We got the house back together in fine shape," he said.

Phillips is vice president of First Virginia Bank-Shenandoah Valley and Patty teaches at Stuarts Draft High School. Adam attends James Madison University and Marc was drafted by the Kansas City Royals and now plays in the minor leagues.



News-Record File Photo

A worker waded through more than a foot of water to Sangerville service station during flood.

Jeweler Acted Quickly When Flood Hit

By **BETTINA TILSON**
News-Record Staff Writer

James E. Rhames will soon celebrate 50 years in the jewelry business in Waynesboro and he's seen a few floods during that half-century.

Because of his own experiences, Rhames was able to advise a few of his fellow merchants during the Flood of '85.

"I've gone through several of them and I know what you have to do," said Rhames who owns Rhames Jewelers Inc., 323 W. Main. However, the "new

kids on the block" did not know what to do, he recalled.

When the flood struck, the jewelry store sustained about 2 1/2 feet of water — much lower than many neighboring shops.

Before the heavy water hits, Rhames and his employees quickly cleaned out the store's jewelry cases and placed the merchandise where it would not get wet.

The store sustained only minor damage, including some damage to the jewelry cases and to the store's carpet, which was mud stained and had to be

cleaned. "That was a lot of work," Rhames said.

One of the "new kids" tried placing sandbags in front of his department store, but Rhames told him not to bother. "I said you can't stop the water there," he said. "You've got to get (the merchandise) up high."

Naturally, the pouring flood water rose above the sandbags. The store manager should have taken everything to an upstairs portion of the store, but he did not act quickly enough, according to Rhames.

Store Flooded When Windows Shattered

By **BETTINA TILSON**
News-Record Staff Writer

The windows that used to grace the front of the Corner True Value Hardware in Waynesboro were bricked over after they broke loose and let in a torrent of water during the Flood of '85.

"It came up kind of slowly," recalls employee Pat Fenner, who was then 32. "We had windows on one side and the windows broke out. In some areas of the store, there was five feet (of water)."

The employees had installed flood gates in the doors and taped the windows, but a swirl of soaking water enveloped the store when the windows shattered.

tered.

During heavy downpours, portions of downtown Waynesboro occasionally flood because excess water pours out of over-worked storm drains.

"It's not that the (South) River has gone over its banks, but the water backs up because the river can't take any more water," Fenner said.

Fenner recalled floods from 1969 and 1972, but said the Flood of '85 was the worst.

"When we realized things were getting bad, we spent the last day trying to get expensive (merchandise) up to the high shelves," she said. "We got things up 30 to 36 inches high, but it turned out that

was not enough."

The store's 16-18 employees had just finished putting out much of its Christmas merchandise when the flood struck.

Where the hardware store now stands used to be two buildings and a street, and the area was enclosed into one building. Fenner said the water poured in so heavily that water heaters in one portion of the store ended up in the portion farthest away.

"(Water) rushed through the entire store," she said. "That's where we got the major portion of the damage. It was so strong when it went through, it tore everything off the shelves and pushed it all over the place."

THE FLOOD: Ten Years Later

Waynesboro Business District Severely Damaged By '85 Flood

By KAY FRYE

News-Record Staff Writer

WAYNESBORO — Waynesboro suffered about \$3 million of damage from the flood of 1985 when South River rose to 14.7 feet above flood stage.

City assessor J.L. Barksdale, who was assistant assessor then, said recently that the damage estimate was made the day after the flood by trooping around the central business district from store to store.

The flood waters had begun to recede by then. Barksdale said that is one thing about floods in Waynesboro — the river rises, but goes down fast.

Actually, much of the flooding is due to water backing up and the interaction with the storm sewers, he explained.

In 1985, water reached farther up the hill on East Main Street than

ever before, he added.

"The central business district really gets hit," he noted.

Among the businesses damaged in 1985 were Corner Hardware, Music City, Wayne Appliance Co. and Waynesboro Florist.

Barksdale said several residential areas were flooded but Club Court, a subdivision bordering South River in the southern part of the city, was the hardest hit.

However, the flood did not affect the real estate market there, he said. "After Camille and the flood of 1972, we made allowances in our evaluations, but the real estate market doesn't pay any attention to the flood. The houses sell like hot cakes — right in the same path," he noted.

The houses in Club Court, across South River from Waynesboro Country Club, were built in the early to mid-1960s, the assessor reported. Located on streets and cul-

de sacs with names like Brookside Cove, they now sell for \$100,000 and up.

Some of the Club Court houses are only about 100 feet from the river. While that may seem to be courting trouble, Barksdale said that other than a bad flood he remembers as a boy around 1940 or 1941, there was "not a hint" of disaster in Club Court until Camille and the flooding resulting from hurricane Juan.

But in 1985, the Club Court area "was really a mess — it was sad going through there," he remembers. Some homeowners were affected emotionally by what they went through in the flood, he added.

While a number of houses had water in the basement and on the first floor, a couple of homes had their foundations undermined. The river's current seemed to be stronger in some areas than in earlier floods, Barksdale said.

Pump Station, Dam Concerned Staunton

By KAY FRYE

News-Record Staff Writer

Staunton was relatively unscathed by the 1985 flood — only a pumping station at Gardner Springs near Franks Mill was flooded — but a spillway at the city-maintained dam at Elkhorn Lake was seriously damaged, causing concern about the dam itself.

Frank Wiggins, director of the city's public works, said the pump at Gardner Springs near Middle River northwest of the city had to be repaired after it was covered with water.

But water coming down the Elkhorn dam's spillway gouged deep channels at the end of the earthen structure, nearly washing out the spillway, according to Wiggins, who was acting director of public works in 1985.

The dam is located near Stokesville about 15 miles west of Staunton. It backs up water for the Staunton dam below, but the city dam is concrete while the Elkhorn dam is earth.

Other than these two situations, the city experienced only a few basements with water and some flooding in the Wharf area and along other areas of Lewis Creek, according to Wiggins.

Flood Commissioner Favors Removing Brush Along River

By KAY FRYE

News-Record Staff Writer

WAYNESBORO — One city resident who has served on the Waynesboro Flood Control Commission since the 1985 flood, believes that clearing brush and debris along South River along with other measures would minimize future floods.

Leroy Kelling said recently that several factors create flooding along in the city.

One is that landowners along the river have been raising their land level to gain more space. However, this reduces the capacity of the river to handle large flows, Kelling explained.

In connection with that, Kelling disagreed with the fear that speeding up the passage of flood waters through the city would send "severe problems" downstream.

Kelling, who is a retired electrical engineer, maintains that the city's flood water "is going through one way or another." He calculated that the amount of water which flooded the city during Camille in 1969 and again in 1985 "is about equal to the flow of the river in seven or eight minutes." Whether there is an adequate channel in the city does not really affect downstream, Kelling argues.

Kelling also cites the bridges on Broad and Main streets as spots which impede the river. The space at the river's edge has been built up with fill dirt, restricting about a fourth of the river's capacity.

The normal river bank would be tapered away from the water, but fill dirt restricts the capacity and the river cannot hold as much water, he explained.

Another factor is that over the years, the

area surrounding the city has developed — there are fewer forests but more homes, more roofs and more paved roads to create more runoff than before.

However, Kelling believes that clearing brush in and along the river channel would lessen the height of future floods by a few feet.

He does not envision scraping the river banks bare, but instead advocates removing some trees and trimming back low-hanging branches.

The work could be done in increments and would benefit certain areas of the city, particularly Arch Avenue and Club Court.

Kelling, who was chairman of the flood commission until recently, said he has done "a lot of electrical design. An analogy can be made between lines carrying current and the river carrying water."

The retiree, who lives on high ground, has been a resident of Waynesboro since 1955. He was among a group of 150 General Electric employees who moved here from Schenectady.

Kelling recalled that the flood commission produced a report recommending measures which would reduce the height of floods. The recommendation mainly was to re-work the banks to form a flood channel to move the water through the city without rising so high, Kelling explained.

The city government hired a consulting firm at a fee of \$12,000 to review the commission's proposal. Kelling said he was not satisfied with the review. There was the fear that downstream damage would result from clearing the river channel in the city.

The city also was mandated to provide services to the area annexed from Augusta County, leaving little money for flood control, Kelling explained.

Odor Of Soap Used In Cleanup Holds Intense Memories Of Flood

By KAY FRYE

News-Record Staff Writer

WAYNESBORO — To most people, the smell of Murphy oil soap simply means something clean or perhaps the aroma of leather.

But Hattie Carswell hates the smell. It reminds her of the flood of 1985. "The smell of Murphy soap was everywhere — everyone was using it to clean up," she recalled recently.

"I never use it now," she added.

Murphy's soap was used to remove the crusty mud that was deposited all over everything in the Carswell house after two feet of water receded.

Her husband, Milton, had to replace all the electrical receptacles. The mud infiltrated cracks and crevices — furniture drawers are coated with it, for instance.

On a recent fall morning, the nearby South River was very peaceful and benign and only about three feet deep.

But Milton Carswell thinks about the next flood. He moved into the house on Brookside Cove in 1985 — "just in time for the flood," he says.

He is critical of government

— federal, state and local. Carswell maintains that work could be done to minimize future flood levels.

He blames the federal government for environmental laws which seem to say that "fish are more important than we are." He charges that city government has been reluctant to support even volunteer efforts to clear the river banks.

Carswell lives near what is known as Baughers Island, across from the Waynesboro Country Club. It is often dry, but it flooded badly in 1985.

But Carswell is not just an outspoken complainer. He served on the city's flood commission after 1985. He supports the commission's recommendation to clear brush and trees that have grown up in recent years to narrow the channel even more. A huge tree stump with its widespread of roots remains as part of the debris from 1985.

While he is critical of the city's attitude toward minimizing flooding, Carswell said the city did a good job of cleaning up the flood damage.

And he likes Waynesboro. "I don't mean that I'm down on the city — I like the city," he added.