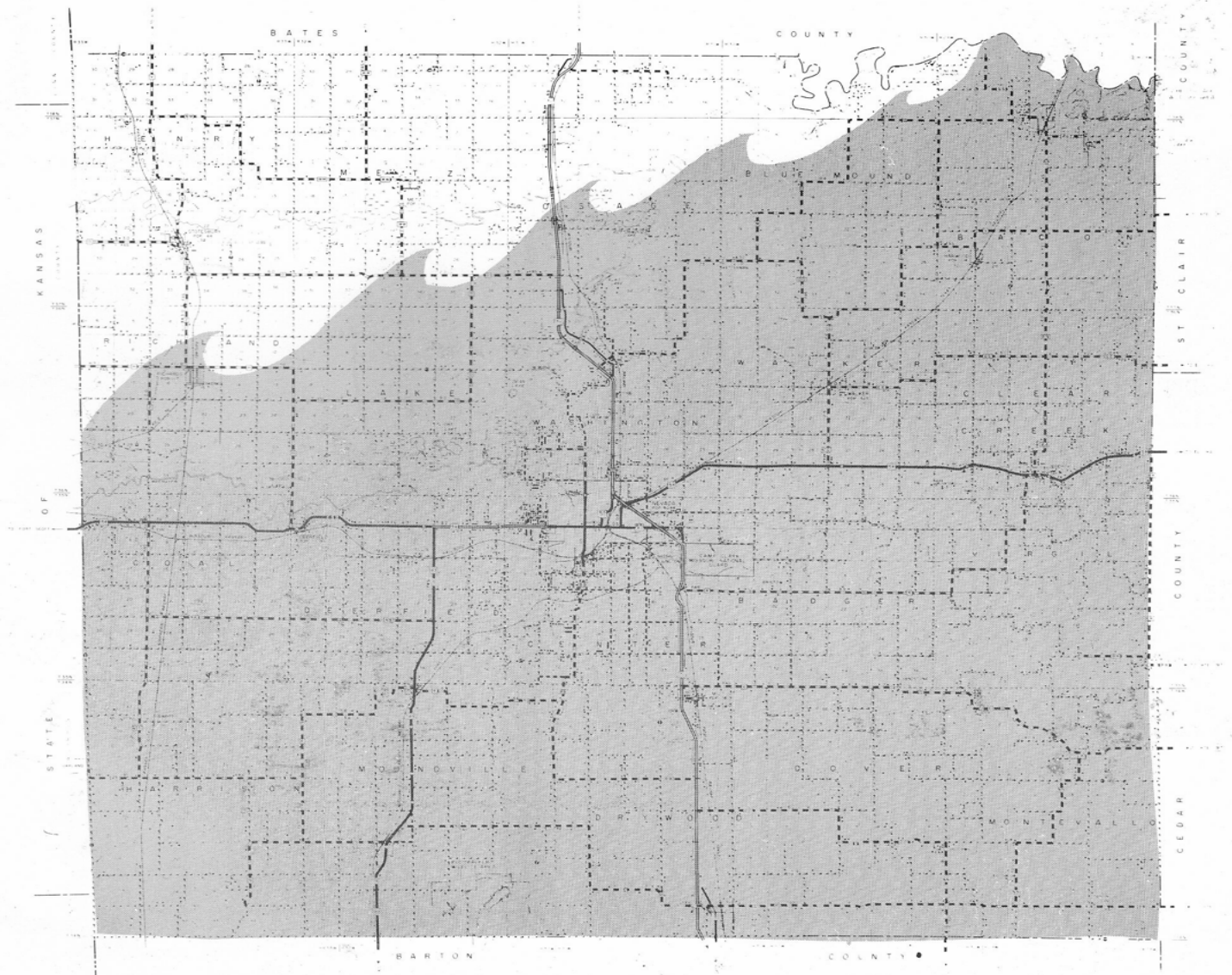


Vernon County Flood Book

"It's never been this high before!"



*A collection of photographs and stories by
Vernon County residents telling the story of the
October 3, 1986 historic, record breaking flood in
Vernon County, Missouri*

Introduction

Jim Bell

October 4th, 1986 - 3:30 A.M. - the phone rings - I mumble "Hello". Steve Dean here, the voice replies, I'm sorry to bother you, but we are rounding up cattle in a couple of boats and we wondered if it was ok to run all these cattle out here by Preston's through your milo field. We'll have to cut the fence, but we'll fix it back."

"My milo field?" I asked. He said "Yes, the water is already over part of it." By then I was awake. I swore under my breath as I thought about my best-ever milo crop. Even before the flood I just knew this one was a once in a life time, bin-busting yield. I said "Is it over my milo?" The anxious voice said "Yes, most of it and what isn't flooded has sprouted in the head. I replied, "Sure, take them through there. That's fine with me. Do you need any help?" A tired, wet voice replied, "You can't get out here. Both 54 highway and 71 highway are closed North, East and West."

I thought to myself - this has got to be a dream. - but it wasn't. As I hung up the phone, stumbled out of bed, got dressed, into the pickup, and started out to the farm, I realized I was witnessing and a part of the worst natural disaster to strike Vernon County, certainly in my lifetime, and perhaps in history. You couldn't get away from it. This infernal rain was everywhere and had penetrated everything. Things were starting to leak that didn't even have holes.

As we look back to the dreadful day of October 4, 1986 when the flood came to a mountainous crest, we all look for reasons of what caused such an event and why such a freak act of nature had never taken place before to this devastating degree.

Of course, Vernon County - located on the edge of the great plains where the conflicting northern and southern air masses collide and where much of this country's weather is formed - has anything but tranquil weather but this - this is indescribable.

As I drove to the farm, up Highway 71, I was stopped at Compton Junction, just north of Nevada, by the Missouri Highway Department. "Where are you going?" he asked partially in disbelief and partially in jest. I replied, "To the farm - I've got to help some neighbors move some cattle, they are about to drown." "Not in this

you won't," he answered as he slowly cast his flashlight from the front to back of my pickup. I defeatedly then asked, "At least can I drive down to the Marmaton River bridge?" He said, "O.K., but please be careful."

Still in a state of disbelief, anger and interest, I slowly drove to the bridge. I heard it before I saw it. The water was over the road, the bridge, everything. I fumbled open the door and got out. I don't remember what I said, but I'm sure it wasn't profetic - the sound was like an ocean, a train, a Niagara Falls. It was 3:59 A.M. - I sat on the hood of my truck and watched buildings, cattle, a deer, a boat and a skiff drift by within 100 feet of my truck. I got off the truck to pace around - the water had already risen 6" on my tires. I got in and backed it up - I was mesmerized by the noise - the cracking and crashing of trees and buildings into each other and debris into bridges and signs. I stayed until daylight. As I was leaving, a large bale of hay floated by. There was a rabbit on top. I thought to myself - this has been going on forever it seems - it has to stop soon.

As I returned home, I was exhausted, mentally and physically, it was simply unbelievable. The damage caused to adjacent and not so adjacent lands was mind boggling.

I don't know why this happened. I don't know why it was so much worse than ever before. I suppose the tremendous wallop of Mother Nature's rains compounded by man's interference or progress in the delicate flood plain proved to be uncomprehensible. Hopefully, this will never happen again.

As you browse through this pictorial history, please remember that without the help of public spirited citizens who contributed media coverage, photographs, essays, and interviews, this historical record could never have been published.

As the President-elect of the Nevada Vernon County Chamber of Commerce, we are indeed proud to present this publication to everyone that survived the flood and to future generations who may doubt their grandpas when they say - "It got this high in 1986" or "It never got this high before."



The approaching storm that led to the October, 1986 flood.

Vira Rule 32-5



David Chad's dog on hay at Marge and Wayne Pursley's place.

H & M Preston 4-29

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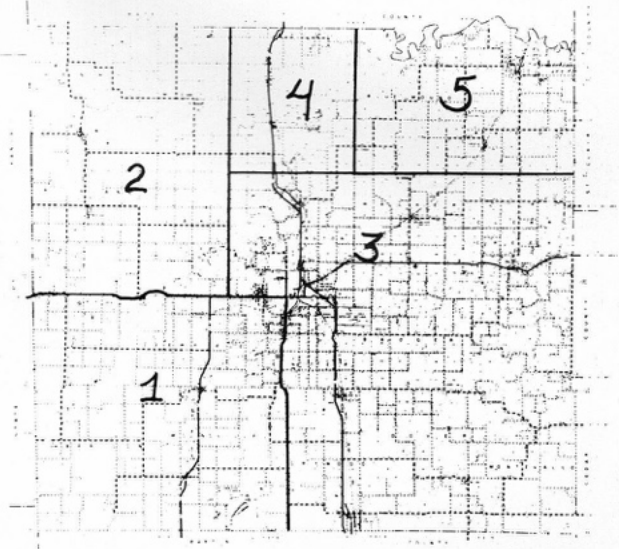
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A very special *Thank You*

To Evelyn Johnson of the Nevada - Vernon County Chamber of Commerce who coordinated the majority of picture collections and was of great assistance in many areas as the book was produced; to Pat Chambers of KNEM Radio and Bill Grey of the Nevada Daily Mail, for their publicity; to Jan Torontow and Jim and Camille Bell for their assistance and enthusiasm; to George McDowell for his guided tour of Section 3 that was affected by the flood; to Steve and Peggy Pyle for their special efforts to hustle more pictures and stories; to the 34 Missouri amateur and professional photographers for sharing their cherished collection of photographs (an index of the photographs is on page 56); to two super Schell City helpers, Ken McCoy of the Coffee Cup Cafe for collecting photographs and Sharon Sanderson for her help in many areas and for providing VHS tapes of the TV coverage; to the only television station that took note of the lengthy plight of the Schell City residents, Channel 3, Springfield, MO, who sent their helicopter and SKY-3 crew on two different occasions to portray the flood and interview the residents; to the writers of the Nevada Daily Mail and the El Dorado Springs

Sun newspapers for adding their reports to this collection of memories; to Richard and Terry Wiley and Lesa Bolhken for their assistance in my darkroom; to Jennie and Bonnie George for their typing; to Susan Brown and her "Mac" for typesetting the copy; and to Gilliland Printing for going the second mile as the binders of this volume.

It is my hope that this publication will help preserve the living history that otherwise might so easily become just another legend.

John Freed

Publisher

A Lengthy Plight



Jim says, "What the heck! Just as well take a vacation!!" Sunday, Oct. 5, 1986.

Grace Chitty 5-28

Preface

It is interesting to note that **man's body** is made up of approximately **65% water**, that the desirable humidity for his **happy existence** is between **60% - 70%** and that **2/3 (66.7%)** of the **earth's surface** is covered with water.

There is a great importance of water in our life . . . its presence or absence determines our climate; it has erosively carved out river beds; it formed harbors that have been capitalized by mankind; it makes plant life possible, without water, green plants that produce breathable oxygen would quickly brown and die.

The vegetation also aids in the prevention of erosion and the restriction of flood waters. Just as vegetation retards the flow of water, so man's dams, dikes, levies, **raised highways** and **railroad bridges** can bring the natural flow to a **damaging halt**. The latter appearing to be a **severe problem** for Schell City, MO. residents.

In **Fort Scott, KS.** the flood water on the west side of **69 Highway** was **6' higher** than on the east side; north of **Nevada, MO., 71 Highway** was at least **4' higher** on the west side vs. the east side. (See page 23, photo no. 21-5 to view an eerie, natural phenomenon.)

After two days, the water that flooded Fort Scott flowed to the **Deerfield, MO.** area, where it remained for several days, completely covering the power lines on the **Bob Beisly** property north of Deerfield; found it's way to the **Horton, MO.** area, staying **13 days** on **Marvin Diehl's** property; and then the **Marmaton River** joined ranks further down stream with the **Little Osage River** and together they headed for **Schell City, MO.,** picking up the **Marais de Cygnes River** prior to setting up residency in Schell City, where it drained away at **one foot per day.**

An awesome story unfolds on the following pages as you journey along the **path** the October 3, 1986 record-breaking **flood waters** took. Just a few pieces of this historic flood have been preserved in this book, via personal accounts of Vernon County residents through words and pictures. Some folks told their stories with tear-filled eyes, some could not tell theirs, others shared the humor, that often must be looked for in a tragedy such as this; however, nearly all were thankful that they were not as hard-hit as someone else.

Fort Scott had **cows on the roof**, Vernon County had a **dog on top of a car**, **chickens on the rooftops**, **pigs on fences and porches**, and unique designs that only a massive flood could provide.

Perhaps the tragedy you are about to review went unnoticed by the "rest of the world" because

it was a local tragedy, it only **destroyed crops and property . . . shattered dreams and hopes**, and nothing international resulted. With the increase usage of **volatile fuels**, i.e., propane, gasoline, diesel fuel, etc. the tragic flood of October 1986 had the **potential** of being a **devastating disaster**, lives could so easily have been lost, but for the Grace of God . . . *it could have been.*

It Was A Local Tragedy . . .



Everett Halken watches the flood waters *Grace Chitty 5-30*
approach the Georgia Frakes & Goff homes. Both moved out.

Second Edition

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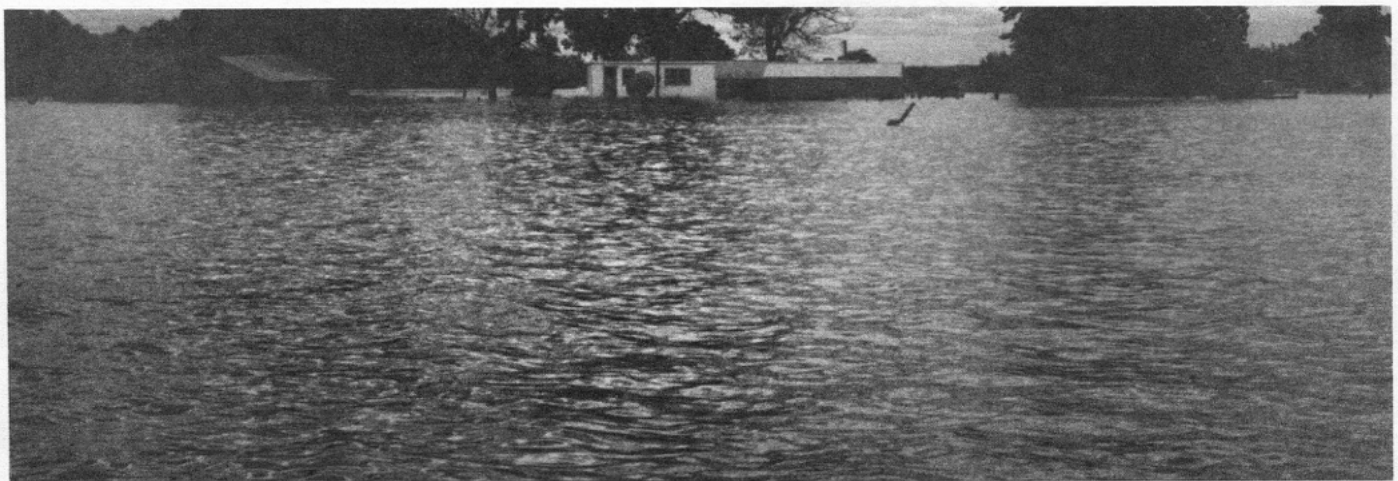
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Doug Pettibon's place taken from the Florence Fritz driveway looking down the road towards the pump house bridge over the Marmaton River.

Steve Pyle 24-6



Water was 2 ft. deep in the Kenneth and Eileen Chestnut trailer house.

K & E Chestnut 33-3

Kenny and Eileen Chestnut , 1 1/2 miles south of Deerfield (Deerfield Township - Section 18) had to replace their trailer home. They had cattle that they moved twice (with the help of neighbor, Bob Palmer and his boat). The cattle swam out and they only lost one small calf.

THE TOWN OF DEERFIELD, MISSOURI

The only way to get into Deerfield was by BOAT. The engineers that built the new road didn't think the water would go over the highway - but it did, 1/2 mile East and 1/2 mile west of Deerfield on 54 highway. Also 3/4 mile north toward Richards was under water and 1 1/2 miles south of Deerfield was under water.



Kenny Chestnut's place. The water has fallen 8 inches from the peak.

Ruth Kimmell 19-4



Florence Fritz 10-1



New Highway 54 bridge under water,
saving the hog shed.

F & K Pettibon 21-4



The pigs finally found dry land after *Bill Hickman 14-3*
being in the water 24 hours. The water has receded
approximately 3 feet. Oct. 4, 1986



Looking east of Emery's 66, water *Janice Gardner 12-1*
surrounds Bill Pettibon house on old 54 East, Deerfield, MO.



Ranch Road off of Highway 54 *Ruth Kimmel*
going south before Deerfield.



Looking east to west on 54 Highway,
Deerfield, Missouri.

Bill Hickman 14-2



Highway 54, looking west of
Deerfield.

Rachel Harmom 22-



The Hickman farm one mile west of Deerfield, Missouri.

F & K Pettibon 21-21



One mile west of Deerfield at The Twin Silo Farm the water has dropped 3 feet. It had been half way up on the light meter.

Bill Hickman 14-1



The traffic is just being allowed to go west on Highway 54 after being closed.

Stan/Mowry 18-2



The road leading to August Rasmussen's.

Steve Pyle 24-2



Highway 54 at Deerfield, Mo.

Bobby Hinds 30-1



Coming up the drive of Bill and Opal Wyckoff. Oct. 3, 1986

Diana Danials 17-5

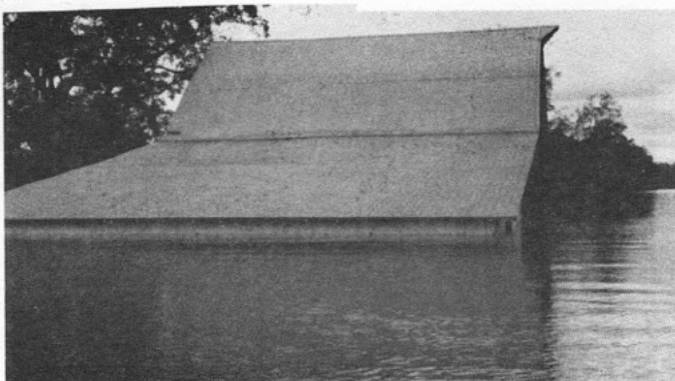
Bill and Opal Wyckoff (Located 2 1/2 miles south of Deerfield, turn east 1/4 mile, just after you cross the old bridge.) Deerfield Township, Section 19.

Bill and Opal never left their home - they moved upstairs, after the water got so deep that they could not stay on the first floor of their home.



Lawrence, Bruce, and Danial Weber pointing at the water line at the highest peak.

Diana Danials 17-4



Hay barn owned by Bill and Opal Wyckoff was full of hay that had to be hauled out after the water went down.

Diana Danials 17-9



The hog barn at the home of Bill and Opal Wyckoff. The silo was full of crawdads after the water went down.

Diana Danials 17-10



Diana Danials 17-1

AUGUST RASMUSSEN moved to Nevada after the flood. Their home is now standing empty since the flood. Located two miles south of Deerfield (turn in middle of Deerfield) by grain elevator and curve around with road south 2 3/4 miles. Section 24, Coal Township.



amping trailer that was flipped on its side. Located at Rasmussen's house.

Diana Danials 17-8



Rasmussen's place.

Ruth Kimmell 19-1



at the highest level - just the top of the car showed.

Diana Danials 17-7



Rasmussen's truck parked behind their home. The truck is being driven today after 3 days of being under water.

Diana Danials 17-6



Highway 54, looking west from Deerfield. Silo at Bill Heckman's farm.

Betty Preston 26-1



Raymond and Betty Jo Robinson farm. Over 400 bales of hay in the barn that they had to get out or it would burn.

Rachel Harmon 22-2



Water is coming up.

Betty Preston 26-1

Mrs. Robinson had never seen water this high, she was sure it wouldn't get any higher.



Neighbors parked their vehicles at the intersection (upper right of photo) during past floods, because the water never came this high before.

Rachel Harmon 22-4



Cross roads Judd Grover,

Betty Preston 26-10

Ruby's car where our truck and car were parked just behind it. Black top 1/4 mile of our house.



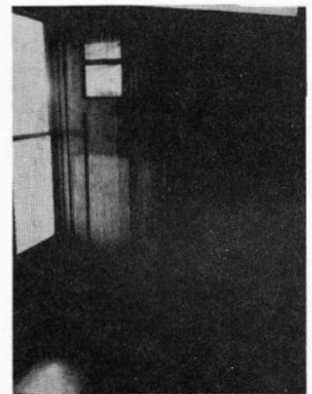
Robinson place. Barn across the road from former home of Betty Jo and Raymond Robinson taken from the north facing south.

Betty Preston 26-3

According to everything my parents and the old timers have told me, water had never ever been even close to these two houses. It had been in the *corner of the barn* in the big (ha!) flood of **1915 or 1916**. Some sources say 1915 and others say 1916.

I moved here in 1933 with my parents (**Joe and Gladys Dicks**) and in all these years it has never been this high.

We were not prepared for anything this disastrous. The water came so fast. We moved some things three times, including our mustang. We were hemmed in on three sides. We tried to walk to our pick-up and car that we thought were safely out of the water, but little did we know. At **one o'clock Saturday morning** water started



Betty Preston 26-11
Flood mark on door of Robinson's former home.



The highest flood water on Robinson's back patio. Water was still rising.

Betty Preston 26-12

to come in the house and there was no time to store small things in the attic. We walked for 3 hours around water to get to the car no-luck! We went back to the block barn and stayed until **Kenneth Hoenshell** came in his boat and said the water was not rising as quick. We went out the back way after loading our tractors with a change of clothes.

The next day the water started to recede and with the help of **Wyatt Hoenshell, Don Wagner**-(**Bill and Jo Jones** of K.C.) we started to clean house. We stayed with **Wyatt and Debbie Hoenshell** until we were able to get to our daughters house in Nevada (**Paula Edmonds**) then lived in an R.V. until Nov 11 (Left house one o'clock Oct. 4 in the morning)

Betty Jo Robinson

Summary Of The Story By

Verna M. Austin Polk

(Edited because of space.)

Floods have always held a fascination for me, being a native daughter of the river area and seeing floods come into the bottoms with their destruction. (The flood of 1986 destroyed the 2 flood record books that I had kept since 1967.)

There are many creeks and sloughs, including **Big and Little Drywood** that collect water and flow into the **Marmaton River** before or at "**Pumphouse Bridge**" northwest of Nevada, (creating potential flood situations).

The late **Ed Ridgeway** had told us of the big flood of **1915**, that came down the Marmaton in a 4' wall of water - roaring and crashing everything in



Just east of Deerfield, MO on old Highway 54. On the curve is an A-frame house. *F & K Pettibon 21-26*



Old Highway 54, after the water had gone down. 5:00 p.m., Oct. 5, 1986.

Steve Pyle 24-3

its path. Then, the telephone emergency line ring of nine rings warned the people of the approaching flood. Sad to say, "progress" prevented any such warning of the 1986 flood. **Mrs. Mina Sevan**, (past 91 years old) said the water was in front of their homesite in 1915 but not up to their house. (The house was flooded in 1986.) At no time in my life or my family's history of living in the bottoms had flood water been in the homesites or wells (before).

Two times since 1915, boats have been tied to porch posts of the **Stultz Club House** in preparation to boat-out but the water fell before that

was necessary. Three times since 1967 water has been within 3' of the Club house. This time the water got to the ceilings of the caretaker's cottage.

We have observed the river on occasions, watching the rise and fall. When it reaches its crest, there will be a 6 to 8 hour pause before the water actually starts to fall. The "progress" of the new highways and dams have changed the time table of the rise and fall of the river. Following the flood of October, 1986, there were floods of varying depths about every two weeks through the remainder of the Winter and Spring, up to the first of June, 1987.



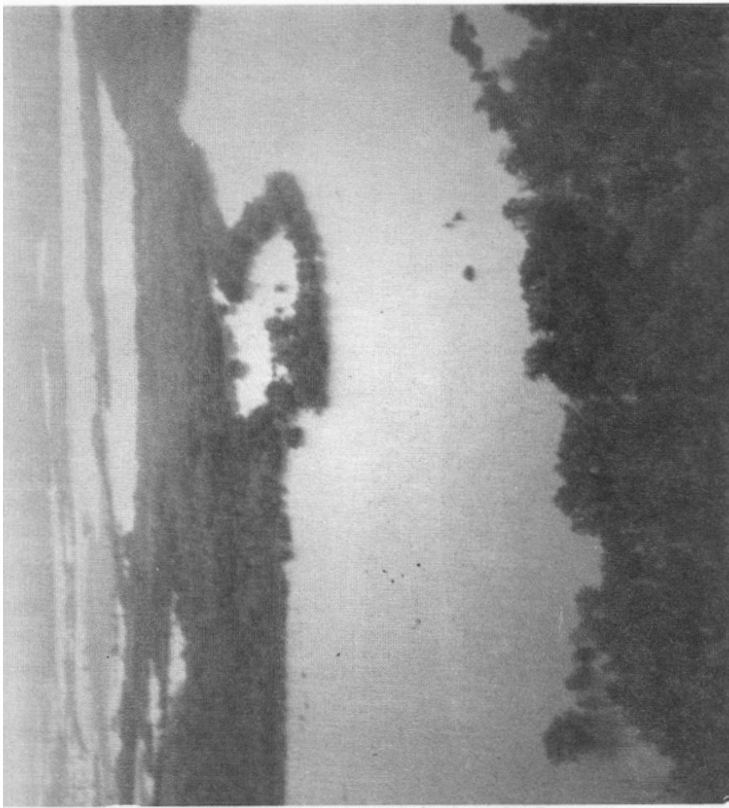
Deerfield, Missouri. "Lake Deerfield" Oct. 4, '86. *Bill Hickman 14-4*



Highway 54 1 1/2 miles west of Nevada city limits, four lanes of traffic - stopped. "Do Not Enter"!

Steve Pyle 24-1

Pecan, hickory and walnut trees seem to grow and produce fine harvests even though flooded and the timber land stays wet many months each year. Also many wild fruit bearing trees and berry vines survive. The wildlife adjust with a keen sense of survival to a flood. Squirrels build nests higher in the trees, black birds don't make nests so low to the ground. Snakes will cling to trees in large clumps during the flood and the spiders seem to tie the world together with webs. We have observed acres of spider webs while rowing around the Stultz Lake area.



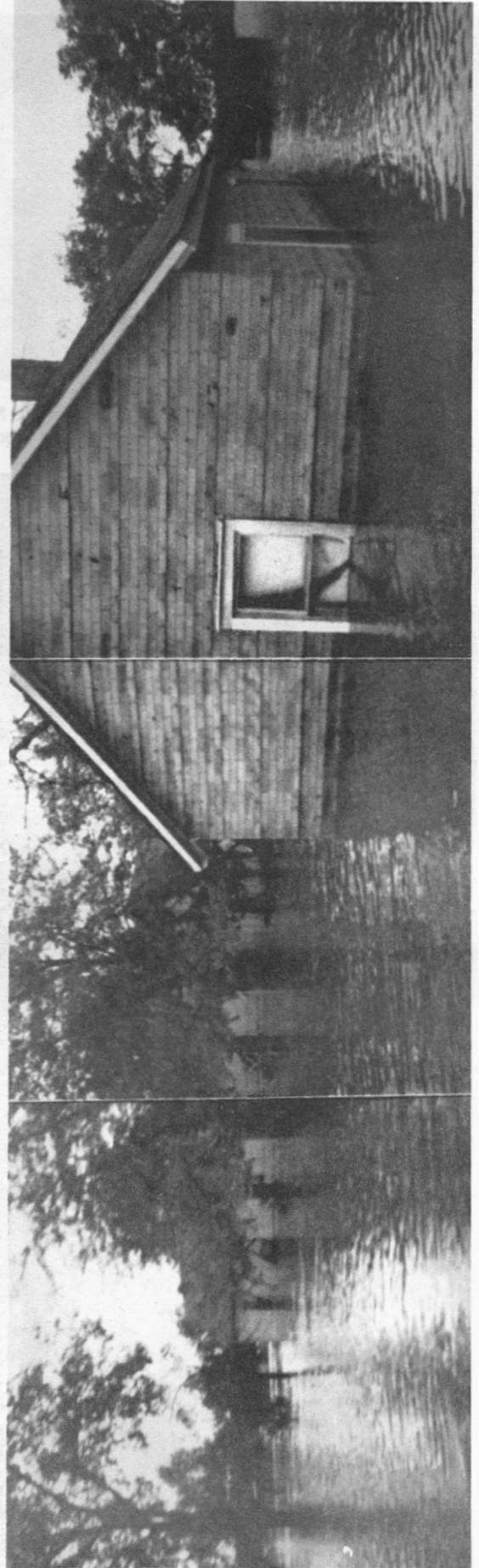
Looking northeast across the Marmaton
towards Stultz Gun Club.

Stan Mowry 18-4



First time this area was flooded in the past 50
years that we know of. Richard Lily farm northeast of Stultz Bottoms.

Rachel Harmon 22-6



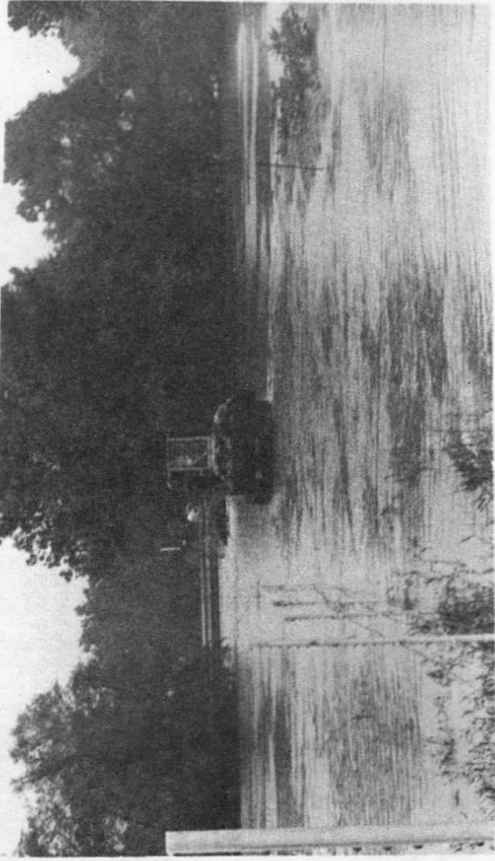
John Polk residence in front, Stultz Duck Gun Club in the back of the photo.

B & C Mowry 23-1,2,&3



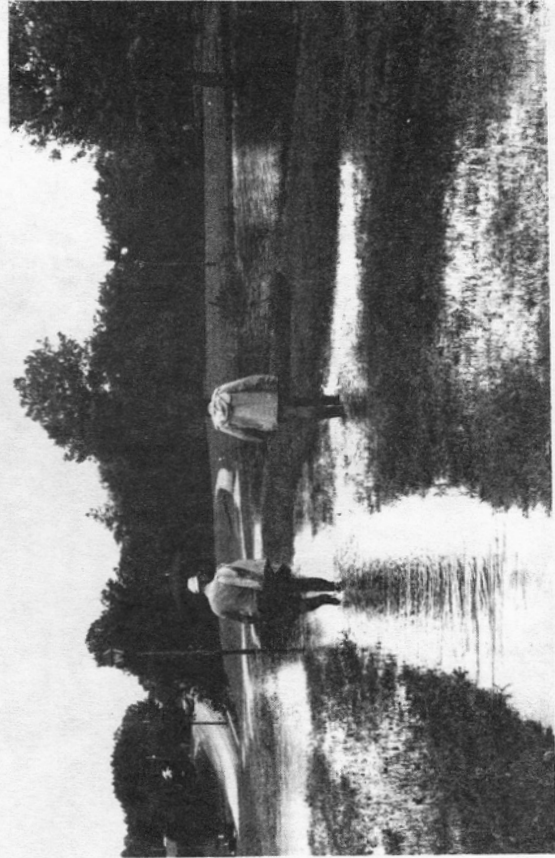
Walton's lake, Atlantic and Spring.

Nev. Daily Mail 20-2



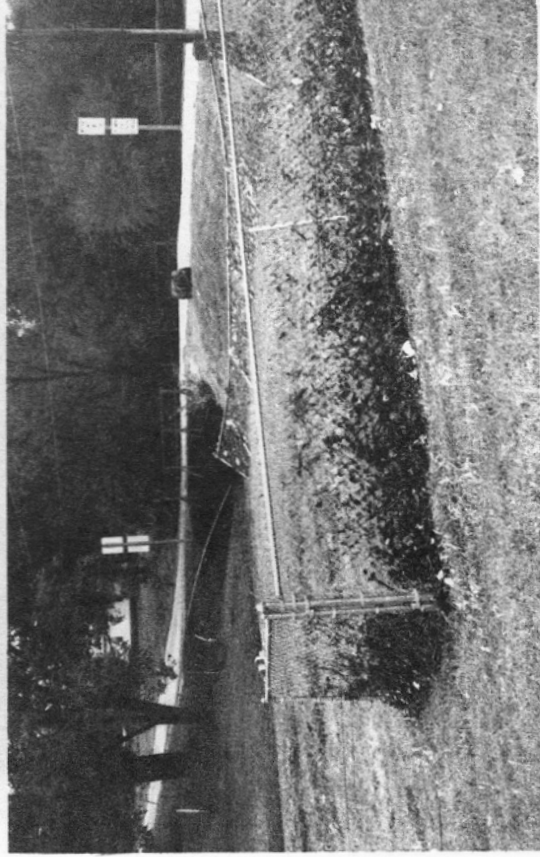
Sand bagging sewer.

Nev. Daily Mail 20-6



Walton's lake, Atlantic and Spring.

Nev. Daily Mail 20-3



Damage after the storm, Main and Park.

Nev. Daily Mail 20-4



Herbert and Raymond Preston and Jason Bond leave the Preston home to go shopping Oct. 5. *H & M Preston 4-30*

Herbert McDowell took me on a tour of part of the flooded area, introducing me to many of his neighbors. The following is a conversation between Herb and Margaret Preston and Gilbert McDowell.

GM - What ever happened to that yeller car?

MP - They came and got it.

HP - We drove it right up there, between them two posts. It was coming through here so swift, I left my pickup and Ford tractor, and that little cub tractor sittin' right there in front of the nut house so that we had them above water. It went plumb over the top of the cub tractor, shoved that (yellow) car backwards into my pickup . . .

MP - We didn't want to go, but about midnite that night we was ready. Why, who would ever of thought of it being up here?

HP - It got just to the top of the foundation.

MP - There were a lot of insecticides in the water, in fact we have a quart of Round Up floating around somewhere. The flood made him (Herbert) sick. They took him out of here in a boat, left me. The only time in my life I didn't have a way of going unless I drove down to the mailbox and come back. I had nowhere to go.

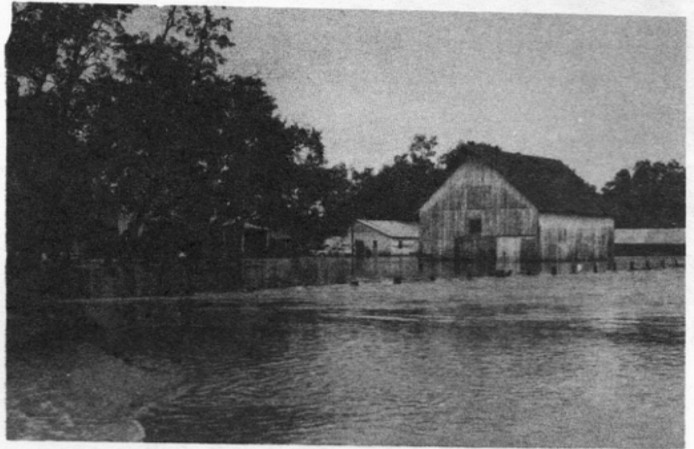
I figured that I would have to walk out there to the terrace (when they came in a boat to pick her up) but they pusehed the boat up on them steps and I stepped in it! The biggest thing to me was boating across that bridge down there! Now, I "come to" when they started boatin' across that bridge! They said it had to be four foot deep for the boat to run.

GM - That flood left driftwood 20' from the ground in my pecan grove.

MP - They said I'd get cold going across that water, I'm kinda warm natured, I like to have burned up going across that bridge (she got chilled later). Mildred had an afgan laying on the davenport, so I pulled that over me, so she knowed what was coming next. She'd worked in the hospital quite a bit, she knew I was worked up. And you know, things don't bother me, but I'll tell you, that there water did.



Herbert and Margaret Preston's dog Tippiie sits on top of the car outside of their home. *H & M Preston 4-28*



Preston home as seen from the east Oct. 5, 1986

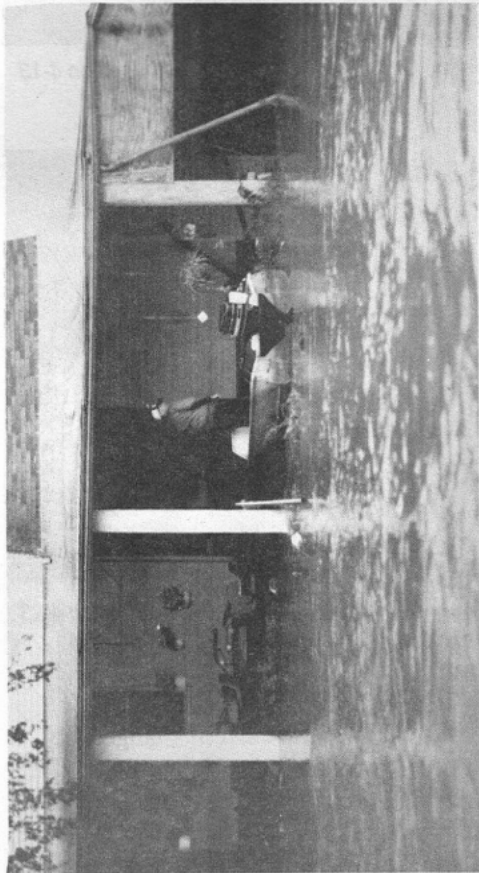
H & M Preston 4-13



Margaret Preston, Jason Bond, Herbert Preston and Penny on south side of terrace and house. *H & M Preston 4-23*

Somewhere south of here, the current changed, it come through here, and I mean it was comin'!

GM - You know, that's one of the things here, all these bridges and no trestles to let the water through. Its slowing everything down. Like Schell City added 22' on the railroad and only one hole for the entire Osage watershed to run through. It went right under the rails, between



Herbert Preston and Jason Bond came back to feed the cats and dogs.

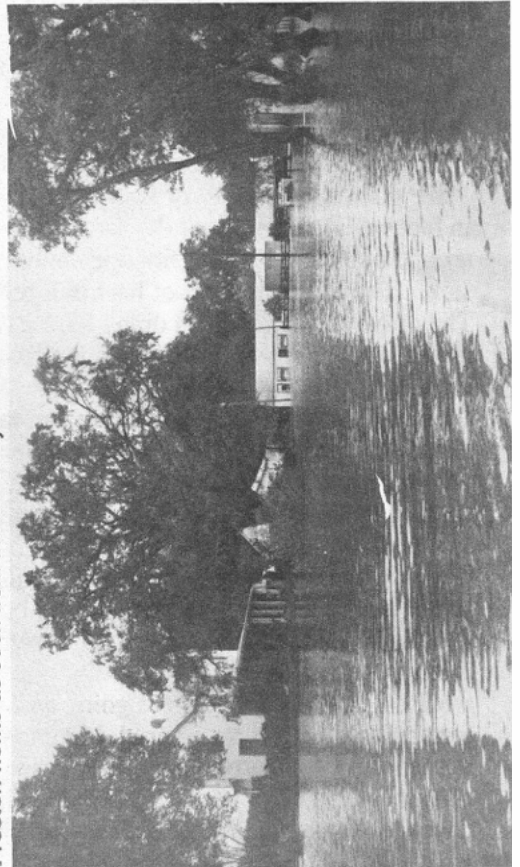
H & M Preston 4-31

ties and started washing the gravel, fell 70' on the other side, it washed gravel on the railroad right of way for a quarter mile.

MP - It dished that road out too, had a truck load (of rock) hauled, but don't know it was put out there.

GM - In Schell City, it got up to the top of the gas pumps.

Preston home as seen from the driveway.



H & M Preston 4-12

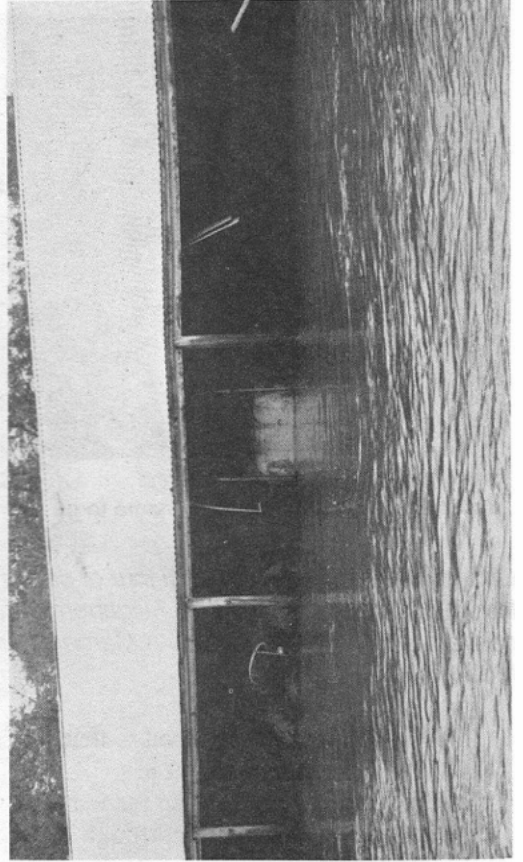


Herbert Preston's chainsaw shop.

H & M Preston 4-32

MP - They brought a whole batch of chain saws out of the shop and put 'em in a boat and pulled them up here to the dog house and put 'em on a table there at the north end, if they'd put 'em on the table at the south end, the water wouldn't got in 'em.

Herbert Preston's machine shed, Oct. 5, 1986.



H & M Preston 4-34



Mary Gastel and four kids went to the barn and stayed on the second tier of hay. *H & M Preston 4-1*

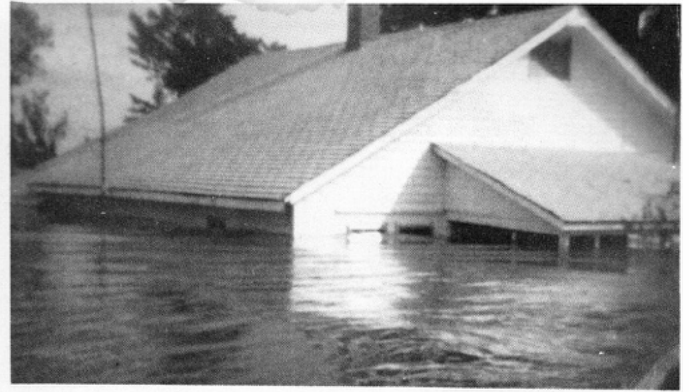
GM - Starting at the high water mark, going all round my whole place, north and east a ring of where that fescue quits, it just quit. I've got every kind of weed anybody ever seen. I've got weeds that I never heard of before.

MP - (Some of the equipment they lost) a Farmall, a Ford (tractor), a cub tractor, and a dozer, and a pecan bumper, all under water. They couldn't get it out, we were surrounded by water and could get up here to higher ground. If we could have gotten everything up by the fence, it wouldn't have gotten damaged. But heck, the water was too deep, couldn't get there. There's 80 acres just west of here that never had water on it, and there wasn't an inch of it out of water.

Mary Gastel and them four kids, she wouldn't go out, but when the water reached the door step, she went to the south barn. She and the kids went to the second tier of the round bales and stayed in the barn. They were later rescued by the fire department.

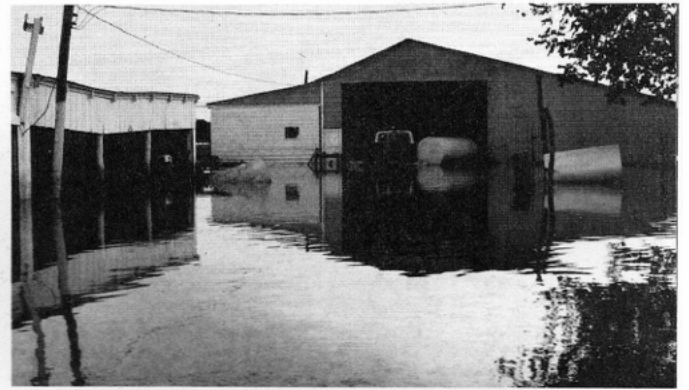
Have you been out to look at the pecans?

GM - Of course I have! They look pretty good, real good on the upper end, but the bottom's not as good as some years. That bottom 20' is not as good as it ought to be. Those trees weren't quite dormant yet when that flood came in early October. I had sticktites, and I'll still show you where they (pecans) were stuck in the trees. They had



Pohl place, Oct. 5, 1986.

H & M Preston 4-7



Mary Gastel was living on the Pohl place. Keith Gastel shop.

H & M Preston 4-18

some hick-ans (a special cross between hickory and pecans developed by Mr. McDowell) that died, hickories can't take the water like pecans.

Southwest of here the kids just got married, stayed one night, then the flood came (Grover Judd's daughter). I had a big ol' secretaries desk, and don't know whether it floated up or not, but that thing never did dry out. It had been glued, and it just fell all to pieces.

GM - Standard's house went plumb under water, just a cone in the roof stuck up. That's abandoned, now.



Bluff on lake of Harry Harner and Joe Pohl.

H & M Preston 4-2



Harry Harner and Joe Pohl cabin they built on the lake.

H & M Preston 4-4



Tom Heathman rental home on Pohl place at various times during the flood, all pictures were taken Oct. 5, 1986.

H & M Preston 4-20

HP - Jim and Kenneth wading in with the bulls. After they got about everything, they remembered these two or three bulls. They went down there and they had their noses stuck up. There was snakes and mice and bugs and everything on their backs, looking for higher ground.

GM - I saw two rabbits on a bale of hay that floated up to a pecan tree. They were still there the next day.

MP - They say there was coons and everything on those hay bales!



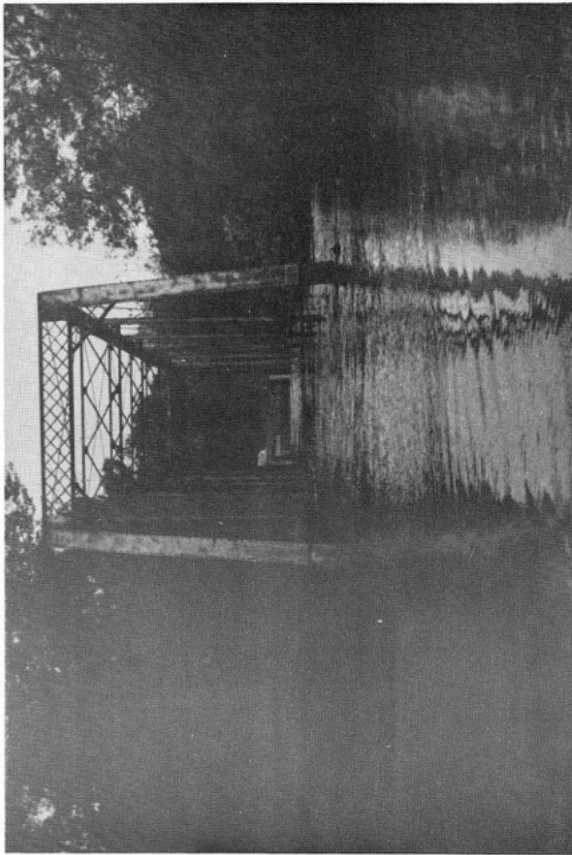
H & M Preston 4



H & M Preston 4-19

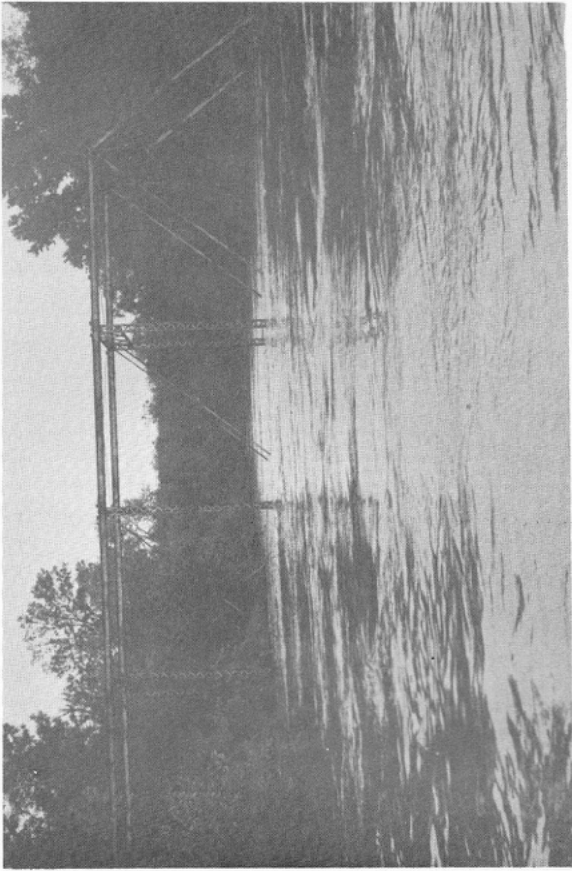


H & M Preston 4



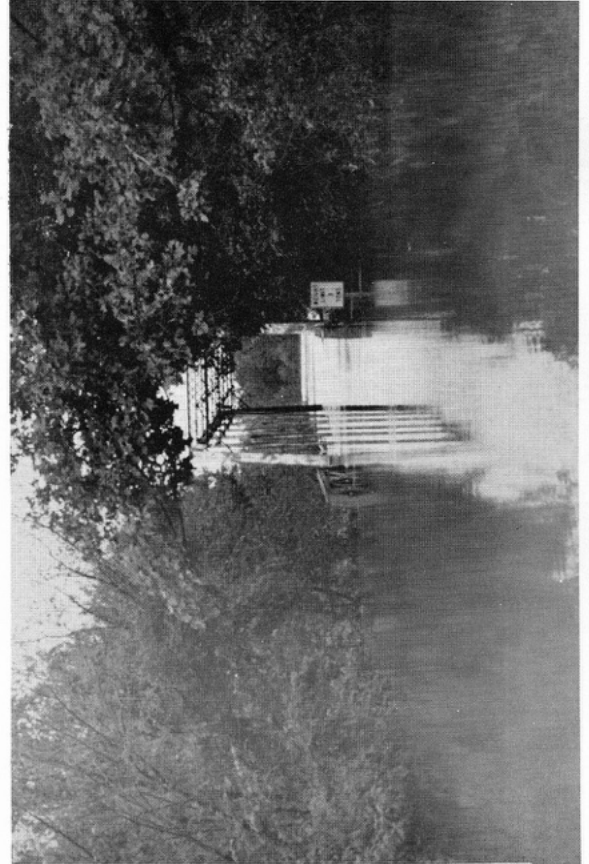
"I come to when we crossed that bridge in a boat!"
M. Preston

H & M Preston 4-25



Caton Ford Bridge north of Nevada, MO, looking south.

H & M Preston 4-33



Caton Ford Bridge. 4 1/2 miles northwest of Nevada.
Washington township. Section 7.

Steve Pyle 24-9



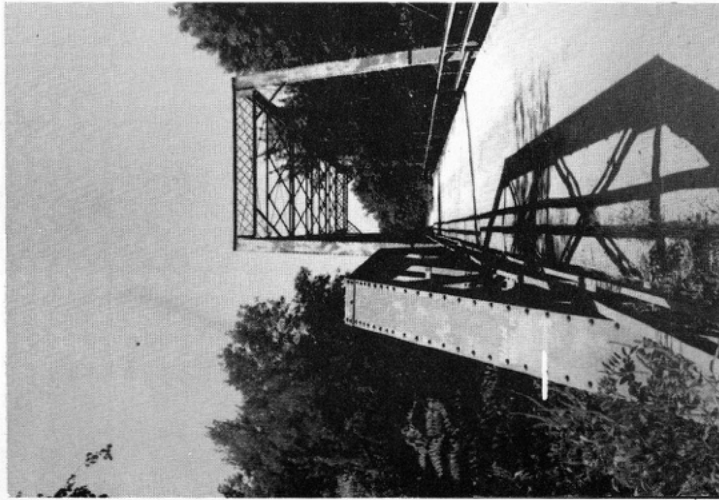
Caton Ford Bridge north of Compton junction.

F & K Pettibon 21-24

Historical Highwater Marks

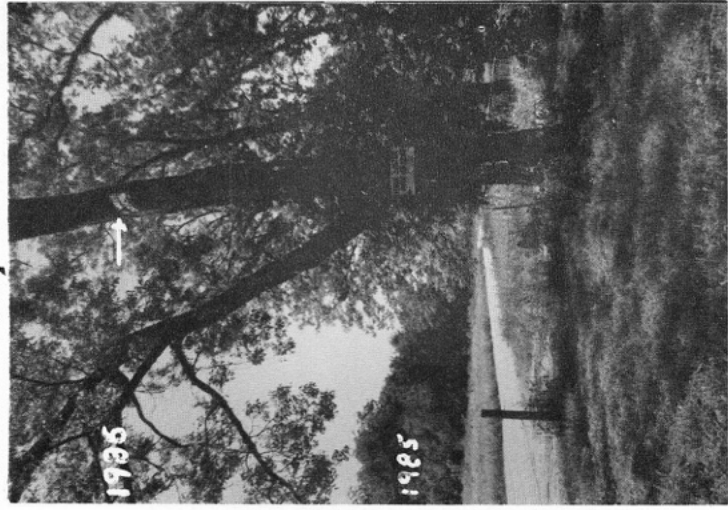


Caton Ford Bridge on Marmaton River. Steve Pyle 24-12



Caton Ford Bridge with paint marks showing high water of Oct. 3, 1986. Steve Pyle 24-13

Pecan tree just west of the Caton Ford Bridge, showing high water of Nov. 15, 1985 and Oct. 3, 1986





Marmaton River. Saturday, October 4, 1986, 11:00 a.m.

Steve Pyle 24-8



Marmaton River. North 71 Highway.

Steve Pyle 24-5

Crops Lost - Cattle Saved

Jim Bell

The only way Willie Bond and I could keep our 300 head of cattle from drowning was to run them through my milo field. He cut the fence and ran the cows through. I lost six head, he didn't lose any.

The milo started to sprout head and we finally combined it April 1987, just two days before we started to disk the ground to plant milo again. It was worthless though, we lost our crop that year.

Friday afternoon, I went out to the farm to check my cows, and the water then was already to the top of Highway 71. K.D. asked me where I was going, so I told him, he said, "OK, but you'd better get back in a hurry, or you'll not be able to get back."

I was out there for an hour and a half, and when I came back I was the last vehicle they let through there, and I still get scared thinking about it, because the water was coming through the door. I didn't think it was that deep.

Saturday morning back at the house, 3:00 a.m. when I went to help Steve Dean, I went to Highway 71, and could not get through. There was just no way to get through without a boat.

Right there across from Jim Wilson's house are some road signs where you turn to go back up through the river bottoms. The water was halfway up on that sign. I went back latter to measure that, and from there to the road bed is about 8 1/2 feet, so at 3:30 a.m. in the morning (Sat. Oct. 4, 1986) there was 8 1/2 feet of water going across the road.

Our farm, milo and the river bottoms area were completely covered. We have the records on our farm



Highway 71. We're in the northbound lane going south. Southbound lane closed. This is just east of the curve. *F & K Pettibon 21-4*

for the last 100 years, and never had the water come anywhere close to this location of this flood in 1986.

We've got a place on our farm, that the highest the water ever got up to was up to a ridge that runs through the river bottoms, in 1915 the water went right to the top of it, but it never went over it, this time it was about 7 feet deep.



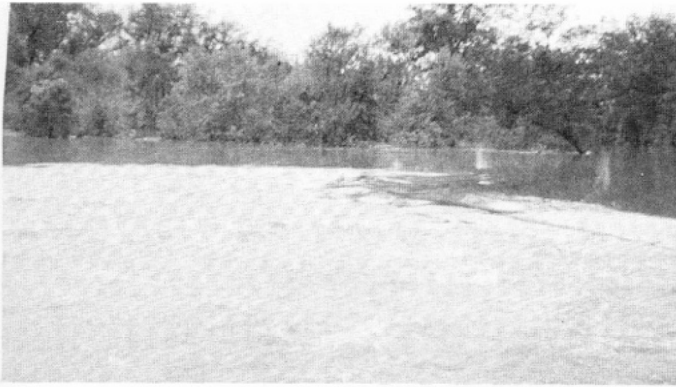
North of Nevada, 71 Highway. Wires are almost under water.

Lori Wood 16-1



North 71 Highway. Compton Junction.

Rachel Harmon 22-19



Pecan grove north of Nevada
on Highway 71.

Lori Wood 16-6



South bound on 71 Highway, just
north of Nevada.

Lori Wood 16-5



South bound on 71 Highway.
Finally letting traffic through.

Lori Wood 16-4



Tim Bond on 71 Highway,
north of Nevada.

H & M Preston 4-16

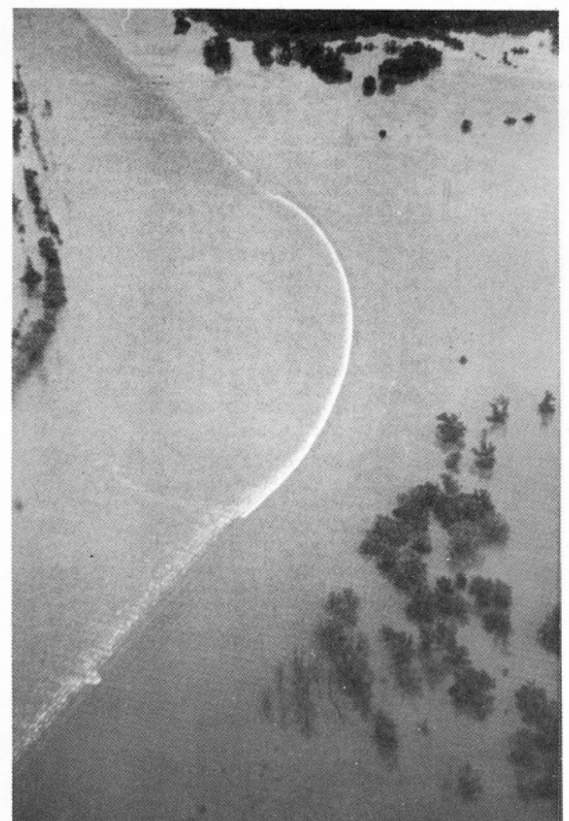


North 71 Highway curve near
Cecil Barber's hay barn.

Rachel Harmon 22-10

... A Natural Eerie Site

Made possible by the historic Oct., 1986
Vernon County flood.



The curve on north 71 Highway
out by Compton Junction.

F & K Pettibon 21-5



North 71 Highway. The Jim Wilson place. The Compton Junction.

F & K Pettibon 21-11



Jim Wilson property looking west before 2nd curve.

Rachel Harmon 22-7



Marmaton and Douglas

Rachel Harmon 22-8

Branch Bottoms. Jim Wilson property top corner of photo.



Jim Wilson home west of Marmaton, north of 71.

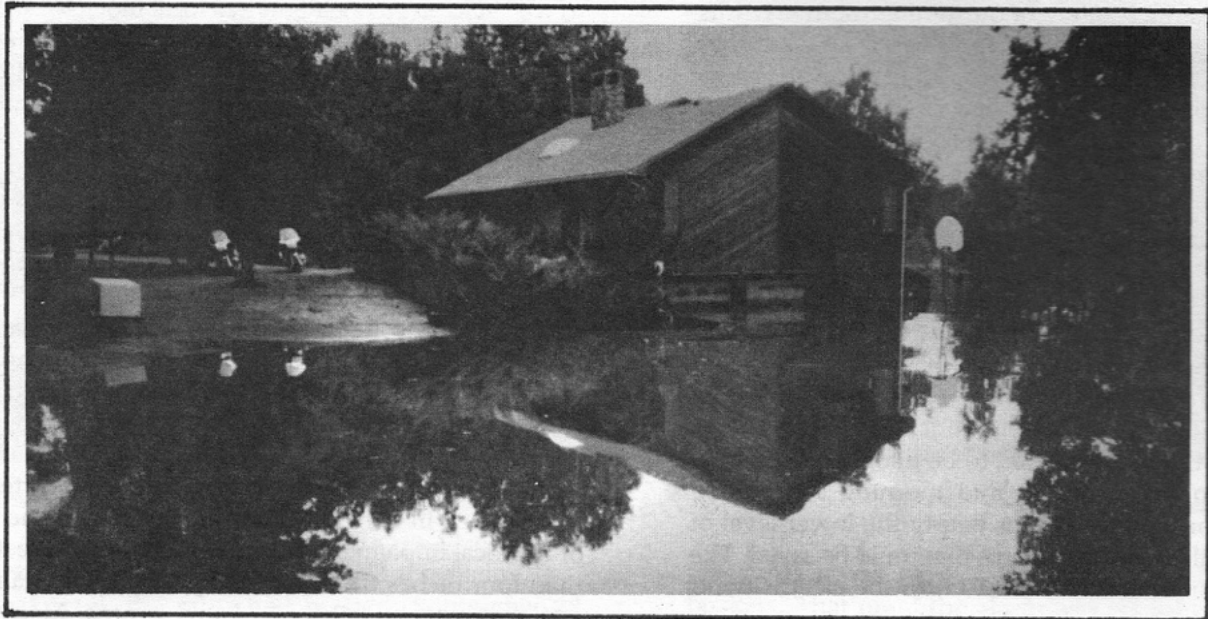
Nev. Daily Mail 20-7



Wilson place to the right side looking northwest.

Steve Pyle 24-4

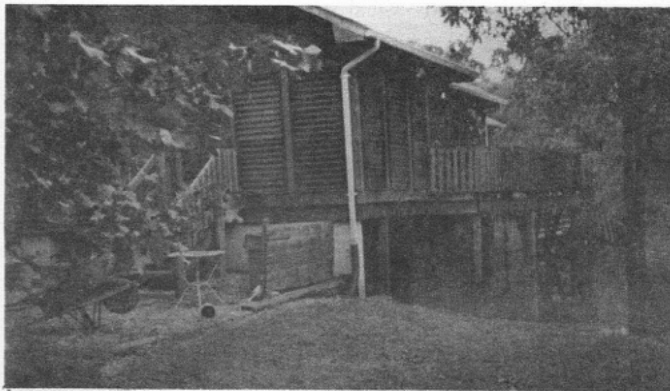
John and Jane Torontow



Chester Barrett and Keith Brown went on their motorcycles to survey the flood damage.

Jane Torontow 7-13

The week before the flood we had visitors from **Canada** and **New Zealand**. They made jokes about us *floating away* after the 25 or so inches of rain that had fallen in the coun-



You had to **see** it to believe it.
Two days later.

Jane Torontow 7-18

ty that week-never dreaming that after their departure on **Thursday AM**-by midnight that we would be *under water*.



Water, water everywhere.

Jane Torontow 7-3

But Norma Broome had to help water the house plants. At least it wasn't far to go to fill the bucket.



This pile of junk was once useful items. Most of it was destroyed.

Jane Torontow 7-6



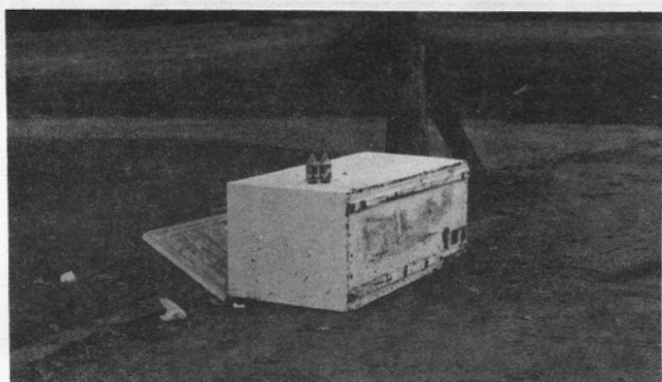
At the flood crest, water

Jane Torontow 7-10

covered the basketball hoop. Hose was left behind after it had floated through goal.

By 8 PM that evening I was getting a little nervous, water was lapping threateningly close to the garage door - my husband cheerfully reassured me and left to go back to work. Caution, however, prevailed and our son James and I moved all our smallest pieces of antique furniture up to the presumed safety of our dining room. My husband returned home at about 11 PM and the wet carpet downstairs convinced him of the need to remove the final pieces of furniture. We watched in disbelief as water seeped in and it was not long before we were sloshing around ankle deep. We could not really believe that we would end up with more than a few inches so that we simply put smaller articles of bedroom furniture on the beds to keep them dry. As it turned out, this was a futile effort.

By the end of a *sleepless* night the water kept rising slowly but surely. I took James to school and went to buy waders at a local farm store. I wasn't really into wading barefoot any time, especially not now. The smallest size was too big, the tie string had to be hooked around my neck to keep them up. By mid morning some good friends had arrived to help us empty the lower level of the house of the remaining items that could be saved. The utility company had come out to turn the electricity off



The family freezer floated to this spot on the driveway, where it was emptied. *Jane Torontow 7-9*

at the road. While we were wondering what to do with the **huge chest freezer** we realized that it was **floating**, we simply pushed it out of the garage up the driveway where it could be emptied into a car.



Susan Greenlund and John Torontow stare at the water all around them. Fortunately the weather was mild. *Jane Torontow 7-4*

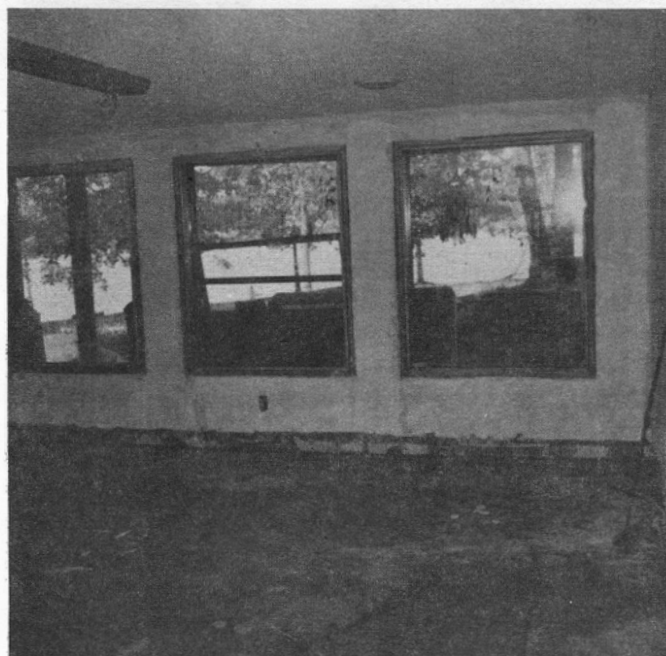
By Friday evening it was obvious we didn't want to sleep in a house that smelled rather badly. We calculated that the water had risen at a rate of one stair in five hours

"We were moved beyond words at such an incredible demonstration of how friends and neighbors pull together in times of crisis."

so we could sleep one night in a local motel for ten hours and the water would still not be a threat to the upper level of the house. How wrong we were. On our return at 9 AM Saturday the house was completely surrounded; water lapping at the front step. Neighbors were gathered anxiously watching. A call for help went out and pickup trucks, farm trucks and willing hands of all ages went to work to empty our home. The women packed china, glass and the contents of the linen cupboard. Complete strangers filed out with our household goods to the waiting trucks. The **Nevada High School football team** formed a sturdy chain of muscle and in 3-1/2 hours the house was **empty**. We were moved beyond words at such an incredible demonstration of how friends and neighbors pull together in times of crisis.

Shortly after the last piece of furniture was carted away to be stored in either a nearby barn, an airplane hanger or the local implement dealership, the water crested less than four inches from the floor joints of the main floor.

We were lucky, all we had was a mess. Many of our neighbors had lost everything. The water had completely destroyed many homes. After a week staying with friends, we moved back into the house. Miraculously all of our belongings were returned from the various places of storage with nothing broken or lost.



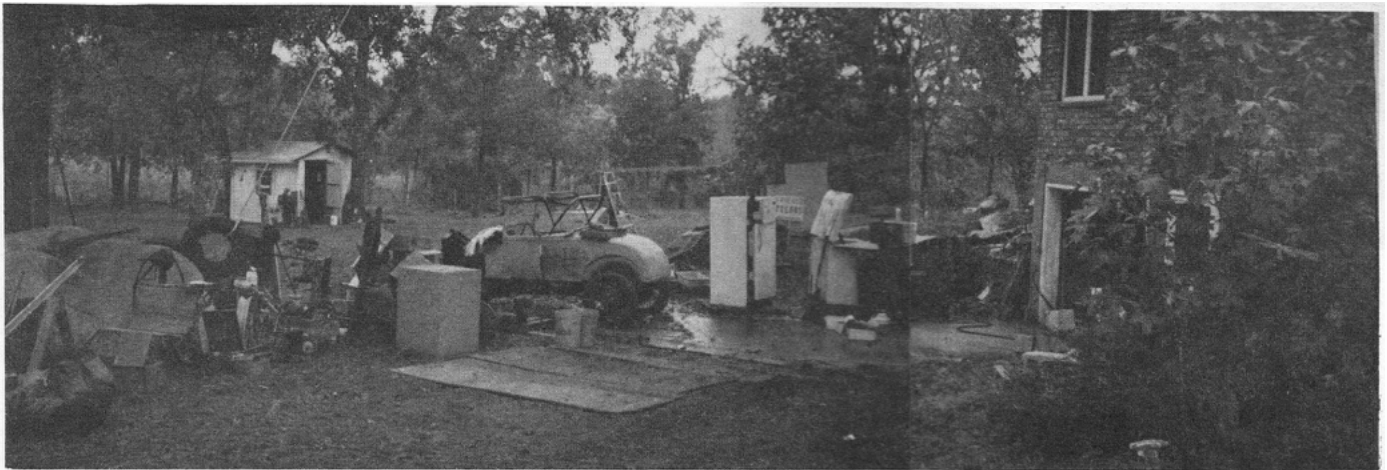
Lower level of Torontow house three days after the flood.

Jane Torontow 7-8

The lower level of the house was stripped to the studs, thoroughly disinfected and completely rebuilt. The household was returned to normal just before Christmas but it cannot rain for more than a day now, that we start to watch the level of the lake because we know that it CAN happen to us.

Priorities and Faith

Helen Barrow



Clean up at the Barrow Place Oct. 9, 1986.
1&2

M & H BARROW 25

It rained and rained.....flooded the plain!!!!

All that week the rains had poured. **September 29**, Monday and **September 30**, Tuesday, it rained. When I'd awake in the night, I'd hear rain. I wondered, "God, are you going to flood our land again?" Yes, at **week's end** we had **49-3/4 inches** in our basement. Then I thought, every cloud has a silver lining...I just had to find it! I'd read *"that our trials always bring us beautiful blessings in disguise; for God will refresh us with His mercy."*

I learned our flooding was not so bad, when I overheard a man at WalMart say, "The water is over the roof of my house." I determined not to ever gripe again. We lost much, but did not lose our house...nor did Nevada lose any lives.

October 1, Wednesday, my husband Marvin came in stating, "the water is covering the entire spit (into our pond) and is about 1 foot over the road East." At **10 AM** we walked to check the water level; a stake he had set earlier had disappeared, so the water rose 18" from 6 - 10 AM By 11 it was 18" higher yet.

Perhaps I better explain. I'm the last of my family going back to the "greats"...18 of them! While I have saved on my own, "plenty good and no good" according to my husband of 45 plus years, the possessions from all these relatives found lodging in our basement at the passing of my mom. We began to wonder how to save these "IF" the water rose higher and made plans accordingly. *"Your grace IS (not should be or may be) sufficient for me,"* II Cor. 12:9, began running through my mind. Also, I knew positive people keep looking UP for the rainbow!

October 2, Thursday, we set our alarm for 5 AM. Upon awakening, we heard sounds of a pelting, severe rain outside. With more rain predicted we canceled a KC doctor's appointment "as we may get water in the basement, not sure yet." Our youngest son, **Byron**, called to check on the rain and asked if we needed help. Not yet. Marvin had begun a barricade of 2 tiers of cement block with 2 x 6 boards propped in front of them. Covered with

plastic, this was held in place by sand filled 5 gallon buckets. That night the alarm was set for 3 AM. Before bedtime, we learned that since 11 PM, the water was rising at 1.7 feet per hour.

October 3, Friday, water still was coming up fast. **Marvin** and I tried strengthening the foot high barrier across the walkout and the drive-out doors, doubling its height. Now, at 24' it certainly did not look high enough! We called our two sons in KC to come help. Meanwhile, friends and neighbors helped set up boxes, furniture, books, etc. on a series of tables set on sawhorses. Little did that help at the rising of the water. As the first tier of boxes got soaked, they let the entire tier fall. I could hear boxes falling when I'd awake during the night!!! Our sons had to take the long way around, due to high water closing **71 Highway** in three places between **Nevada** and **Butler**. **Harrisonville, Clinton, Collins** and in from the East on **Highway 54**, caused them to take 4 hours instead of 1-1/2 hours. Arriving at 8:30 they tried to help raise the barricade, against which the water was now at 12-15' in depth and beginning to leak. Using a gasoline pump we were able to control the water level, briefly; as water became higher outside, the barricade had to be abandoned. Two reasons for the terrific rise in the water level was the breaking of the dam on **Mill Creek** at **Fort Scott** and the fact engineers apparently did not open the flood gates fully, until they were threatened with evacuating **Schell City**. Next, the men began to carry as much as they could to our double upstairs garage. At 3:30 AM (October 5th) they fell, exhausted, into bed for a few hours sleep.

During all this time, more scripture verses "flooded my thoughts. Such as *"be ANXIOUS for nothing, but in everything give Thanks"* "Thanks for water in my basement, Lord?" "Yes, in everything," He replied. I'd read somewhere that "God sends severe blasts of trials upon His own to develop their grace, and no anxiety should be found in a Christian. Then I thought of the plaque that



Attempts to use plastic and rows of sandbags failed. *M & H Barrow 25-15*
Charley Pursley, neighbor, asks if he can help. Later pumped out. Oct. 5, 1986.

hung on the wall of my grandmother's bedroom. "When God sorts out the weather, 'taint no use to grumble, just rejoice, for when God sends the rain, why rain's my choice."

Saturday, October 4, was my birthday!! I wondered about accepting this gift of rain and flood. Ps 37:7 "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Fret not thyself" flashed into my thinking. Hence, I checked the inky darkness, using my flashlight as the electric breakers had been pulled, and I saw water up to the 7th of the 13 steps to the basement! What to do? WAIT AND FRET NOT!

With no electricity to the stove, in order to feed two, tired, hungry sons and Marvin, we decided to eat in town. About 10:15 AM, we set up some bricks along the



Water going down. Leaving chaotic placement of possessions without any regard to the contents. *M & H Barrow 25-23*

water's edge, as it was approaching the East side garage apron. A neighbor had offered his garage to house the items they had carried up from the basement, and they discussed whether we should act on his offer. We decided to wait. However, when we returned from eating about 11 AM, we were encouraged by seeing that the water was beginning to fall. Our sons decided to return home, for nothing could be done as long as the basement was flooded.

Sunday, October 5, we went to church. Checking when we arrived home, the water level was at the 4th step. Pulling on high boots, Marvin walked over boxes upon boxes, and debris and as he walked he gave me a running commentary of what his flashlight showed. "The freezer it

tipped over, and all the food ruined; I found a paint bucket; the water about mid-basement measures 13-1/2 inches; I found the second bucket; the desk by furnace has moved; the water can be pumped out before too long; water up to back axial on "A", (a 1928 roadster he is restoring); water did not get up on our workbenches, nail cans still setting in place; water is 13' at West door." He opened the walk-out door by 11:15 AM, "but have to use a chisel and screwdriver it is so swollen." The force of the water had swirled a large portion of boxes to the Southeast corner. AT the West wall he measured 49-3/4 inches at the water level line.

I called our sons and asked them to come back to help. About this time a neighbor came and helped get the

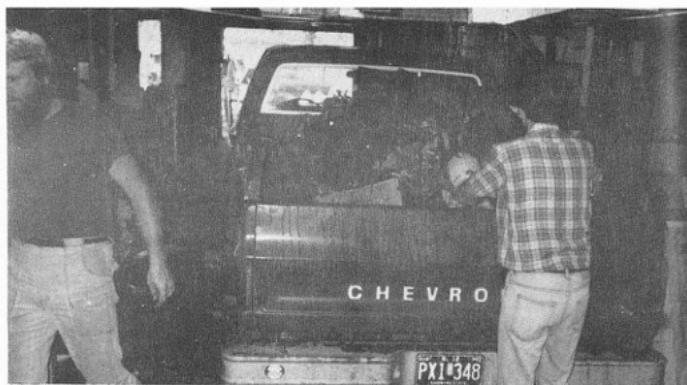


Several hundred dollars lost, *M & H Barrow 25-40*
when freezer chest tipped over, covered by the waters. Oct. 7, 1986.

pump going, so trapped water could be drawn out. Our sons arrived about 8:30 PM (using the long way around). Plans were made for the next day. Little did they know what awaited them during the next 3 days...once they could begin to sort through the "mess".

As the flooding began, neighbors and friends were here almost immediately to offer help and to do actual work. Some helped with setting up articles on tables on sawhorses outside; some the early erecting of the barricade, or pumping water out, or helping to sort then load both Byron's and Marvin's trucks until **14 loads** were **hauled** to the **dump**. Others took soggy clothing, curtains, pictures of our sons during school, postal cards, or an Ohio genealogical atlas (my grandparents moved to Kansas during the 1850's), Norman Rockwell Saturday Evening Post covers, craft materials, etc. to either wash or salvage. Some helped to clean and sanitize the floor and walls. One neighbor restored Marvin's 8-N tractor. An old friend of son Byron in KC dry cleaned clothing, quilts and comforters. We could truly say these "loved their neighbors (in trouble and need) as themselves." So..we are convinced we have the finest friends and neighbors in Nevada. Our son Byron came on October 12, to give further assistance, and they set up two large window fans to speed the drying. The Red Cross asked if we were in need of assistance.

Really, October 6-7-8 was sort of a "BLUR". Neighbors brought in food, and we ate a lot of time in town. The three men told me I should not go to the basement during cleanup, because I could "not handle, they feared,



Sons, Lynn and Byron, work on one *M & H Barrow 25-38*
of fourteen loads to the dump in Byron's truck.



Our son, Lynn, points out *M & H Barrow 25-5*
depth of water on his old '37 Ford.

the sad sight I would see." I gave complete authority to them to clean and discard as they saw fit. However, I did go into the basement some and was directed to feel that this was just a "message" from God. I'd had lots of trouble disposing of possessions not needed, "but they had been in the family for so long; someday my sons would want these items; plus other reasons I could come up with...really procrastinating.

As we sorted during the following days, many little miracles happened. I'm told that miracles are wrought by spiritual power, and it is proportionated to our faith. While cleaning in a desk drawer **Lynn** found his Southwest high ring, and later a God and Country tie tac showed up. One of the most unbelievable happened when Lynn tossed away Byron's skate board I had oil painted, because the water had caused chipping at the edge. I was heartsick and prayed "Lord, thy will be done." Marvin made the next trip to the dump. And the next load was taken by his sons, and imagine my joy when they came back and Lynn proudly held up the board, proclaiming "that right at the edge of the heap he found Byron's board!" The dozer had not yet covered it.



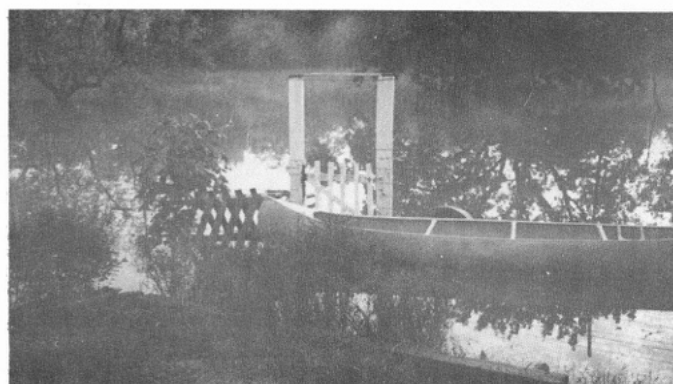
Old radio of dad's is ruined. *M & H Barrow 25-8*
Boxes of clothing and keepsakes are lost. Oct. 5, '86

One humorous situation resulting from our flooding (it's funny now, 10 months later), was that a large sack of sunflower seeds broke, letting those seeds permeate everywhere, even hanging to the walls. Later, after the flood water was gone, they sprouted!

God's Message

*As I stood in the midst of mud,
Trying to hold back tears,
Viewing the ravages of the flood
Confirmed my worst fears.
Cold, watery fingers swirled
Till at flood's height,
All boxes tossed and twirled
Made our basement a sight.
Oh, the trauma it brought to me
Recalling possessions lost,
In the 14 loads of debris
Taken to the dump and tossed.
It clearly came to me, you see
Reflecting on my life,
God's great message for me
"Unburden thyself of strife."
He'd helped me now to find
When I should have been in touch,
Instead, worldly things took my mind
From the God who loves so much
He wrapped His promises 'round my heart."
He'll be my Savior and defend,
So in obedience I did start
Applying these lessons from my "FRIEND"*

Helen Barrow



Gate east of the house. Flood *M & H Barrow 25-18*
floated the canoe up here from north of the home. Oct.5, 1986



Callaghan residence - Judd farm.

B & CMowry 23-12



Looking east, pump house north of Nevada, Mo.

B & CMowry 23-11



Highway M, north of Compton Junction at Mosley Low Water Branch.

Tom Blosser 11-4



West fork of Clear Creek, south of Walker corner.

Janet Hughes 8-1



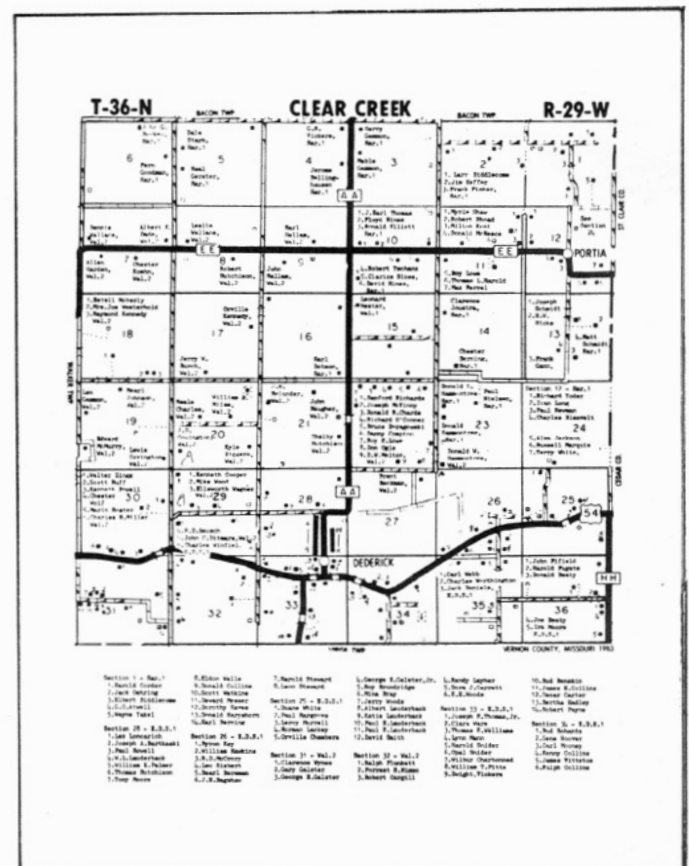
Oct. 4, 1986. Dederick.

Jim Phillips 31-8



Robinson Branch at 54 Highway east before Clear Creek. Twenty inches of rain. Ja

Janet Hughes 8-2





The flood turned a lot of Vernon County's world "Upside Down"!
Copeland's house. Marmaton River east of Horton.

Janet Hughes 8-



Looking south, the R. S. Corbon place is on the left, Osage township, section 8.

Rachel Harmon 22-15



Kelso's "House - in - the - lake.

Sandy Burns 27-1

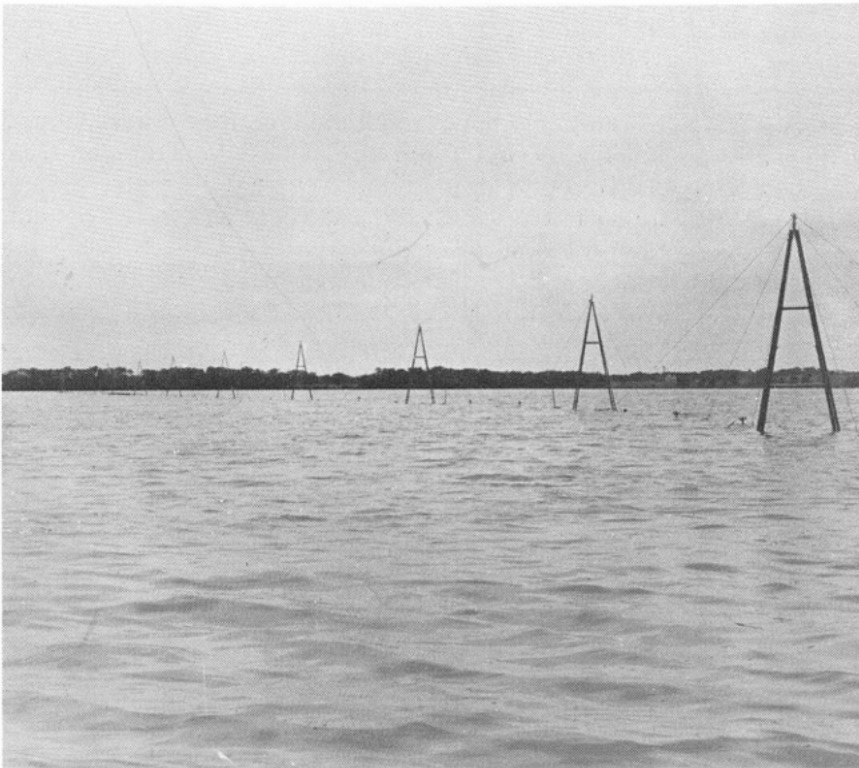
Judge H.A. Kelso Property

Our place is located in Sec.11, Twp 37, Range 32. It is about one-half mile below the junction of the Little Osage and Marmaton rivers.

In 1951 the water came up to the yard, but that was the highest it had gotten in the memory of the oldest residents. In October, 1986 the water was seven feet up on the side of the house and five foot deep in the house.

Almost all appliances and furniture was ruined and all inside walls had to be replaced. Considerable looting took place.

Another house that I own a mile east of my dwelling was completely destroyed. The young couple living there saved only one item - - their microwave oven.



Irrigation line west of Fred Loyd's house on Kelso property.
Oct. 6, 1986

Sandy Burns 27-3

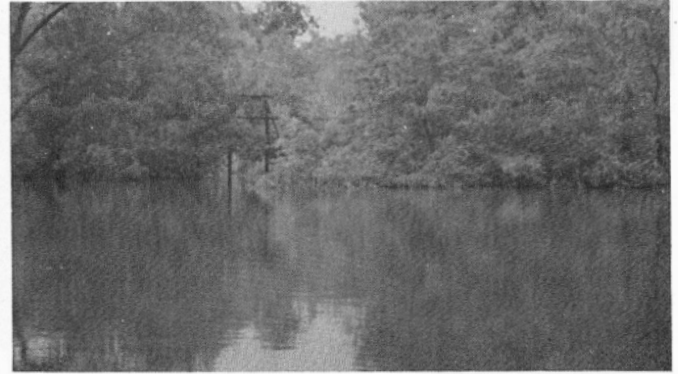


13-20

Just as the pet turkey kept an eye on the rising flood water, Silas Mistler studied the aftermath from the old Marmaton bridge near his home.



13-26



Silas Mistler 13-31

The old Marmaton Bridge, Highway M, looking northwest. Marvin Diehl's place is in the foreground, on the left, fully covered with water.

The Mistler Experience

What's it like to go through a flood? We never knew until **October 3, 1986**. Until then a flood was something that happened to someone else many miles away and we watched it on the T.V. News. We would often comment to each other after viewing a flood on TV news that we wouldn't live in a place like that, once would be enough. Well once is a gods plenty but after living here 60 years its home sweet home and no place else seems acceptable.

What's it like to go through a flood? Everything goes on the fritz at the same time, you name it and it doesn't work. All modern appliances desert you and the electric ones will kill you if you are fool hardy enough to attempt to use them.

All doors that were shut when the flood came could not be opened and all doors left open could not be shut for a long time after the flood receded, and then a hydraulic jack had to be used to push the door jams back enough for the door to shut and they still don't work as good as before the flood.

Since there was a slight current through the house and not enough room to set every bottle and floatable object above the water everything seemed to drift up against the screen door trying to get out and to get through the door one had to shove all the supplies out of the way and then the bottles and etc. would rattle along the walls till the waves died down.

Bathroom habits reverted back to pre-historic times. Modern plumbing refuses to work under water and the ancient out house was likewise. What's it like when the flood recedes? If you have machinery that went under like we did you find not all the water receded some stayed behind in gas tanks, gear boxes, transmissions, oil pans and bearing housings, not much water gallon wise but enough to require considerable time trying to get it out and some places you never think about draining till it dawns on you, that thing is bound to have water in it. We learned how to boil the *water out of sealed bearings* on power tools by heating a container of oil above

the boiling point of water and dropping the bearing in it. It resembled cooking french fries and when the bubbles stopped forming the bearing was put in cooler oil so some fresh oil would be sucked into the bearing. All bearings seem to work well so far.

A building with lumber stored in it makes an unbelievable mess. The lumber looks as if some one had stored it like you build a brush pile. To straighten things up every thing had to be thrown or pulled out a piece at a time.. Entering the building was next to impossible as a lot of the lumber layed crosswise to the door so it took considerable effort just to get started on the clean up.

That's just a few things on what its like going through a flood, something that used to happen to some one else.

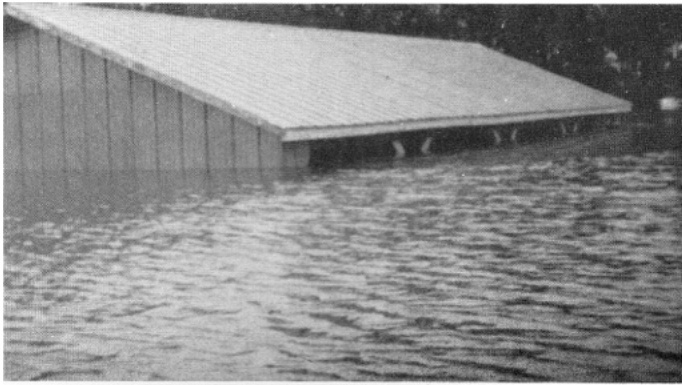
I can't help but to think the high road grades around **Schell City** and **Taberville** along with **Trumann Dam** played a part in the flood. Where flood water used to spread out for a mile and a half or so and carry a current. Now the only place the water can move is under the bridges and Truman Dam holds dead water upwards of **over 20 feet** deep over the river banks in the Taberville area.

Silas/Mistler



Worker's help to save items from the Don Strong's home. Strong is a neighbor to the Mistler's.

Silas Mistler 13-23



Oct., 1986. Water almost reached the eaves of the machine shed.

Silas Mistler 13-11

The early morning hours on Thursday, October 1, 1986, came the first of the heavy rains and flood. We got over 6 inches of rain and all county roads were flooded by headwaters. We waited until they went down so we could get to town and get supplies. Many creeks and branches had overflowed bigger than we could ever remember so we started to suspect the **Marmaton River** would get higher than the flood levels of 1951 and the record level in **February 1985**. Because we are on a small hill and the road gets cut off in both directions in larger floods, we took our vehicles out. We got some things in town including film and on the way back borrowed a boat. The water was really coming up late afternoon but we were not worried much. We heard **Fort Scott** had a little over 6 inches on TV reports. Forecasts were calling for more heavy rain but we figured we had nothing to worry about. As far as anyone knew, floodwaters had never been over the little hill our house sets on. We did take the precaution of parking our truck at the east end of our road instead of in front of our neighbors house which is also on a little hill a quarter of a mile east of us.

As it began to get dark, so did it begin to rain. Around 7:00 P.M. the **Marmaton River** reached the **flood level of 1985**. It finally got about 6 inches higher than where we had marked the 1985 flood level and seemed to stop there. But the rain did not stop and it was raining so hard. The rain gauge had ran over and was emptied so we could see how much more we would get. We caught the 10:00 P.M. news and listened to radio for reports of how much rain Fort Scott had got. There was no new reports and no major flood warnings other than it being mentioned of heavy rains throughout most of the night. As it continued to rain, we developed an uneasy feeling of what to expect. After the news we went out to empty out the borrowed boat and one belonging to our neighbor, **Shorty Diehl**, who lives west of us near the Marmaton River bridge east of **Horton, Missouri**. The boats were about half full.

Before going to bed around midnight, we went out and emptied the boats again and checked to see how fast the river was coming. It was only creeping up very slowly. Rain was falling so hard I had trouble falling to sleep because of the sound of it on the roof.

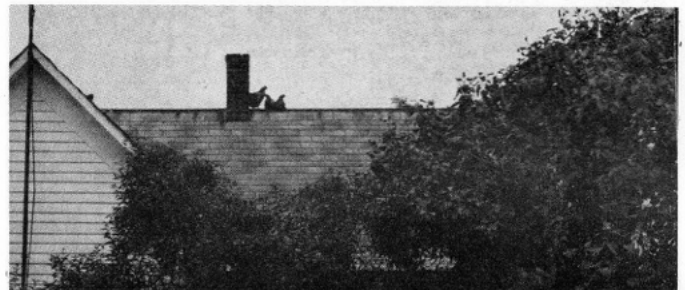


Feb. 27, 1985. This was the highest flood waters had ever come.

Silas Mistler 13-15

I finally did drift off to sleep only to wake up around 4:00 A.M. It was raining just as hard as when we went to bed and apparently had been all night. I excitedly grabbed an umbrella and flashlight and dashed out of the house to check the river. It was back to rising fast again and was surrounding the chicken house in the barn yard. The rain gauge had also ran over again and the boat was two-thirds full.

As it began to get light, **we threw chickens** out of the flooding chicken house and made efforts to start



We could have had eggs if they hadn't rolled off the roof. It was a good place for the chickens.

Silas Mistler 13-8

and move a tractor that was setting in 12 inches of water. It refused to start and while we were working with it, our neighbor, **Shorty Diehl**, came up. Water was in his house and over the floor of the nearby Marmaton bridge, the first time in its history since it was built. We gave up on the tractor as it refused all efforts.



Tractor below water, near center of picture. Thought to be on high ground.

Silas Mistler 13-9

Since our house has an upstairs, we decided. to start moving things. We jam packed the upper rooms with all we could. We also listened to local radio for

reports of rain fall. There was no mention of rainfall amounts. However, **Highway 71** north of Nevada was closed over the Marmaton River, making the first time for that stretch of road since it was reconstructed in the early 1960's and since being made four lanes. **The only thing we could learn on radio was that an area of town had a foot ball game up north and the coach was beside himself over his dilemma of missing a game.**

On noon Friday, our little hill had not much left sticking out to be seen. We didn't know what to expect only that water was going to get in the house. Things were starting to float out of storage buildings that had open fronts. When we saw things floating away, we would sink them. The chickens were staying ahead of the water except for a few that went the wrong way. They flew up in bushes which they had to be rescued from later in the day.

At 1:00 P.M. water had started in the utility room which is 12 inches lower than the rest of the house. The tractor we tried to desperately move was now half under water. The river was continuing to rise very fast and none of the yard was exposed. Most of the chickens left with a pet turkey keeping ahead of the water. Around 2:00 we evacuated **Lorna Mistler** to stay with the **Clyde Akins** family while we three men stayed in the upstairs of the house.

Shorty Diehl's house now had several feet of water in it. We invited him to stay with us upstairs. He did not get his truck moved from the hill to the east of us the night before and was stranded. He was able to keep it out of the water by driving it up in a fence row along the road.

The **Don Strongs**, our neighbors to the east, were evacuated by their family in **El Dorado Springs, Missouri**.



Silas Mistler 13-1
Mistler kitchen with 22 inches of water.

By mid afternoon water was starting over the floors of the house. We had taken the lower doors off kitchen cabinets and removed lower items damageable by water. At this time the rain had finally quit, but with the experience with the river there would probably be three more days of rising waters. Because of the excitement of the heavy rain and the rising river, we lost track of how much it rained. When we tried



Silas Mistler 13-2
This is the closest thing to a waterbed we ever had. It did prove to be a good place to save items.

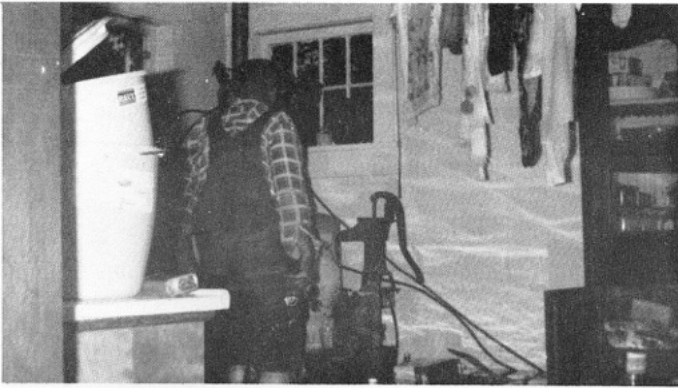
to go to bed on **Friday night**, we had about **10 inches** of water over the floors down stairs. It was impossible to go to sleep with the strange noises it makes. Also, we were in such an excited state that none of us could relax to sleep so none of us did that night.

Saturday morning found us with the decision to do something with a 23 cubic foot freezer full of food. Because of the large area the flood was covering the water was rising much slower. The **freezer was floating upright** in about 18 inches of water. We thought we would tie it shut but could come up with nothing to do it with since rope and wire were in buildings in which water was over our heads. We thought about emptying it in a boat but had no gloves and did not want to handle cold things with bare hands. We came up with the idea to **float it out** as it was. So we did just that and it seemed to work just fine until we were almost to shore. It began to **ride lower** in the water and developed **considerable drag**. Then we were no longer going with the current and that was all it took. It promptly sank and only the packages that any air was in them came to the surface. We were in two boats and we scooped up all we got our hands on. We managed to save quite a bit too. The exceptions were hams that sank along with other meats and frozen concentrate drinks.



Silas Mistler 13-5
This could be Davy Jones locker but it's not, it's our 23 cu. feet freezer that sank over a 1/4 mile from our house.

All of us were exhausted from no sleep and from running up and down the stairway the day before, so none of us went diving for the submerged meat.



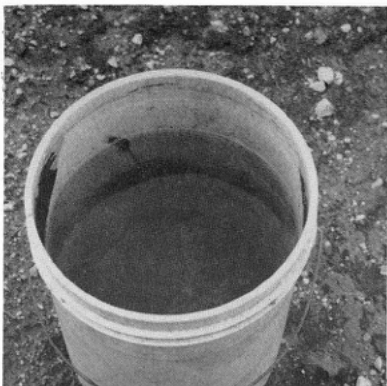
Silas putting a brick and cold chisel under the sump pump.

Silas Mistler 13-27

Most of what was in the freezer was in water tight plastic containers and the meat that was saved had not completely thawed. It was quickly cooked or taken to a locker. We had dinner with the Akins who were a tremendous help to us. They supplied our drinking water we used while at our flooded house each night.

Because of problems down stream of the Marmaton River from us, there was never really much of a current, only a slow lazy moving one. The water was being damned by improvements down stream which were a direct cause in our house and so many other peoples being flooded.

On Saturday night, the rise of water had nearly stopped. A few hours later the waters crested at 22 inches in the house. Sunday morning the water was going down. We were expecting company from Portland, Oregon, Philip Mistler and wife Marie. They had not been informed of floodwaters since they were on the road. Philip had spent his childhood here during the dry years in the 1930's and never saw much of floods. At the time there were no impoundments down stream in the river and it quickly emptied its self never flooding much like now during big rains. When Philip was turning west down the road to the house, there was no road to see but water. It caught him by great surprise and puzzlement. He thought the house was out of water and decided to find a way to walk to it but when he finally caught up with us he found out different. Philip



Janet Hughes 8-10

Water measured in bucket.



Part of Mistler's yard afloat over well watered flower garden. Flowers flourished on the water.

Silas Mistler 13-14

had came by way of St. Louis after visiting friends there. Some how he managed to find his way around flooded roads and made it to our area.

As the floods went down there was a great mess for people involved in it. Everyone who had neighbors and relatives who gave help really appreciated their support and help. A few days after the water had gone down out of the yard, the pet turkey returned from his retreat with a few chickens. Other chickens came from trees and four had been on the roof of the house where we tossed them.

Everything was left coated with mud. Where deeper flood water had been the grass weeds had died. They rooted and filled the air with an overwhelming stench. Many possessions had floated away and scattered cross the neighbors fields. It took several days to carry back the fire wood and other miscellaneous items like cans of paint and tires. During the flood we secured the propane tank to a tree. Somehow it got lose and we caught it at the neighbors in the road as we were returning by boat. We floated it back and rewired it. Other propane tanks had been seen down the Marmaton River.

The house was a mess, mud on everything the water had been in contact with. Doors would no longer shut, the floor distorted by swelling of the house, several pieces of antique furniture were ruined for value and are difficult to restore. Varnish on wood had turned white and walls had water stains. It took days to drain and clean the many machines that went under water. That included everything from washing machines to lawn mowers and tractors. However, after drying, all electrical motors worked. Only a light switch in the chicken house was the only thing that had to be replaced.

Many days have been spent repairing the house and cleaning up buildings. Many people are still working on their places after nine months and some have even moved away. A certain thing about floods, going through one is one time too many.

Kevin Mistler



"I took a speed boat right through there, between the trees and the corner of the bridge." - Marvin Diehl

Marvin Diehl 1-1



Two historic flood water marks, 1986 is 13' higher than the 1951 mark. This bridge will be torn down and replaced with a larger one.

John Freed 35-2

Marvin "Short" Diehl points to the mark he put on the Marmaton Bridge with a ball peen hammer. Later he returned to paint it.

John Freed 35-3



Freezer in the tree. The water had receded slightly.

Marvin Diehl 1-5



The flood rearranged the furniture.

Marvin Diehl 1-3



Little Osage river from east side of the northbound lanes looking west at 12:00 noon Oct. 3, 1986 *Roy Hill 34-7*



Little Osage river north of Horton at noon during the flood. Oct. 7, 1986 *Roy Hill 34-10*



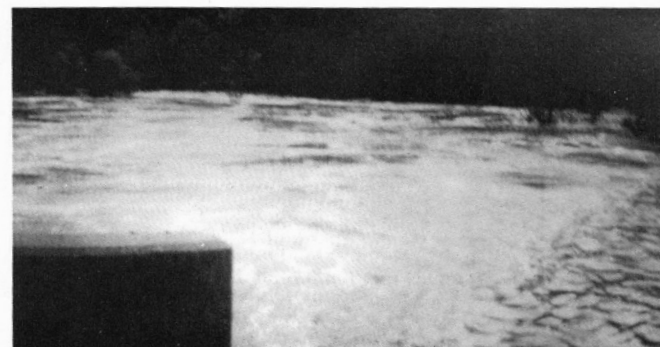
Leatherman's. Northwest of Walker. *Jim Phillips 31-4*



The fertilizer plant west of Highway 71 near Horton. *Roy Hill 34-19*



Near Little Osage river. Looking east to the railroad bridge under riffle of water. Oct. 3, 1986 *Roy Hill 34-9*



North railroad bridge over Little Osage river showing about 1 foot of bridge out of water at noon Oct. 3, 1986. *Roy Hill 34-8*

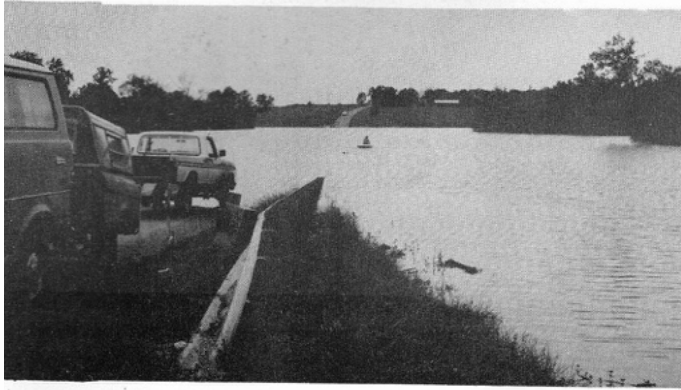


North of Horton. Note rusted rails. *Silas Mistler 13-18*



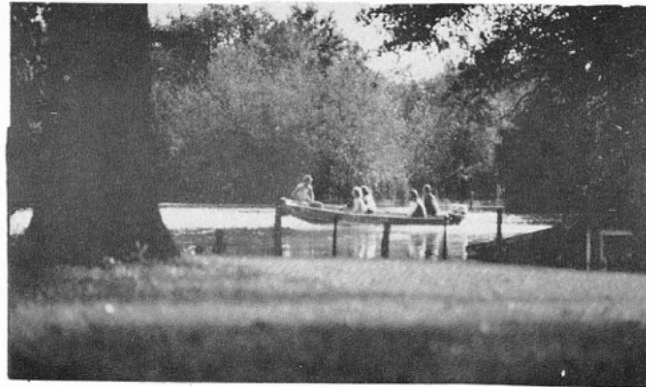
Highway 71 looking south from Kithcart orchard near Bates-Vernon county line. *Betty Preston 26-14*

Enter Schell City by boat . . .

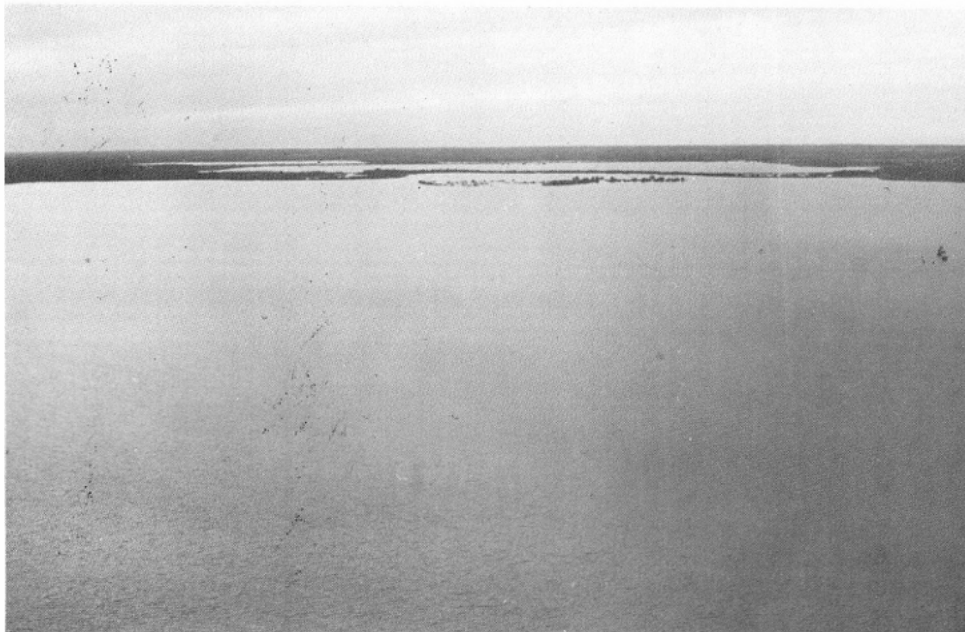


Lady Creek "Ferry": cars were parked everywhere. Oct. 5, 1986

Grace Chitty 5-16



Grace Chitty 5-38



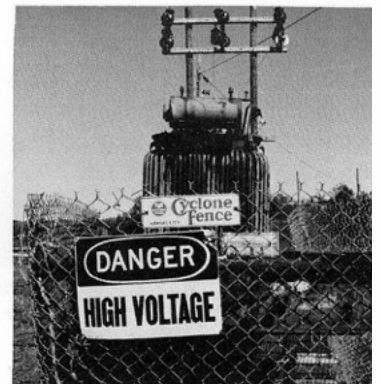
Looking east toward Schell City from Horton area.

Bobby Hinds 30-4



SKY 3 landed on the ball diamond.

Grace Chitty 5-4



The portable transformer used in Schell City.

Grace Chitty 5-44



Looking west at Lady Creek crossing M Highway. The bridge was completely under water.

Edith McCoy 3-1



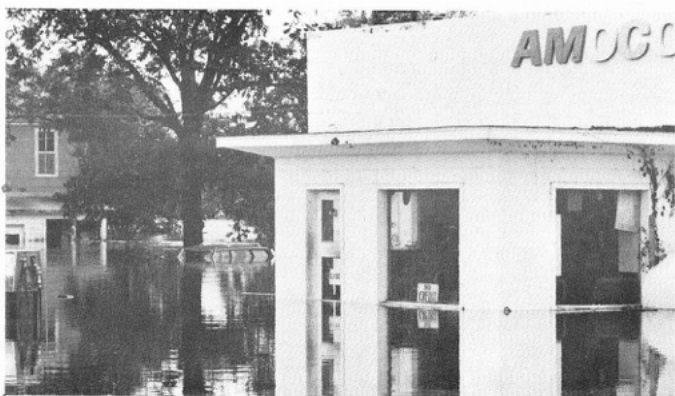
Lady Creek at M Highway

Grace Chitty 5-2



Schell City from the air, looking north.

Lobby Hinds 30-2



Jim is closed for the day.
Absolutely no credit!! Oct. 5, 1986.

Grace Chitty 5-27



A lot of sightseers came out to see the flood. Oct. 5, 1986

Grace Chitty 5-29



Standard Oil storage tanks on east side of Schell City.

David Maus 2-14



Schell City on Oct. 7, 1986

Grace Chitty 5-54



View of south Main Street in Schell City, from a boat.

David Maus 2-7/13



Lester Gough home
in Schell City.

Edith McCoy 3-5



Moving out with the help of friends.

Grace Chitty 5-36



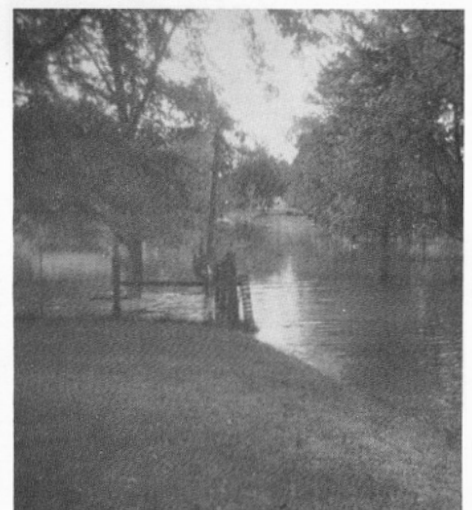
Sand bags kept
rising water out of the water plant.

John Hoagland 29-3



Taken from a
boat above the railroad tracks.

John Hoagland 29-2



Park Street in
Schell City. Robert Davis' family had
to move out.

Edith McCoy 3-4



Ruth Gresham moving out during the flood. Water peaked at 2 1/2 feet inside.

Nev. Daily Mail 20-17



Moving Ruth and Bob Gresham out in Gene Harris' truck.

Grace Chitty 5-37



Water was coming around and through the little dike, while we were moving Ruth and Bob Gresham out. Oct. 5, 1986.

Grace Chitty 5-32



Bob and Ruth Gresham's place. Water was in the house for 3 1/2 days.

Ruth Gresham 15-1



Bob Gresham's earth house in town. Piling up a dike couldn't save it.

David Maus 2-4



Schell City, Missouri

Jim Phillips 31-2



Dena and Sherry going "under" south on AA.

Grace Chitty 5-11



Looking south of Schell City on AA. Hilltop Cafe on right.

Grace Chitty 5-9



Highway AA into Schell City from south.

David Maus 2-12



Looking north after the water went down.

Grace Chitty 5-1

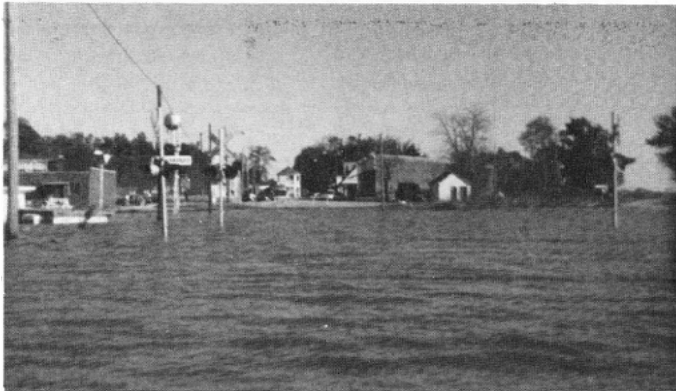


Taken from the Pagoda, Schell City.

Grace Chitty 5-21



Roy Hill 34-16



Looking north at Pagoda in center of Main Street. Taken from AA Highway south of town.

John Haogland 29-1



Park Street - The water over the road sign finally disappeared.

Grace Chitty 5-24



From the Pagoda. Oct. 5, 1986

Grace Chitty 5-23



Looking east in front of Ted and Jeanel's.

Grace Chitty 5-40



Railroad control box south of town.

Grace Chitty 5-26



Looking southwest from railroad station.

Grace Chitty 5-31



Schell City, looking north into town.
Taken from a boat.

Grace Chitty 5-43



South of Schell City on AA.

Grace Chitty 5-42



View of north side of Schell City from
a boat.

David Maus 2-10



View of east side of Schell City from a
boat.

David Maus 2-9



After a week of heavy rains, Truman Lake is expected to crest at a new record of 740.5 on Saturday, Oct. 11. Truman Lake has a normal pool of 706 covering 55,600 acres. On Monday of this week the water covered 192,00 acres and the Corps of Engineers had increased the flow through the spillway and power plant from 60,000 cfs (cubic feet per second) to 70,000 cfs as of 3 p.m. Tuesday, releasing the water into the headwaters of the Lake of the Ozarks.

The lake has taken flood waters from the Pomme de Terre and Stockton Lakes in Missouri and from Melvern, Pomona and Hillsdale in Kansas and has now backed up, swamping towns, fields, homes and highways.

In Schell City, 10 households were evacuated, starting in Saturday night and continuing through Sunday.

As of Tuesday, with the water at 752 feet above sea level, Schell City was surrounded by a lake on the east and north with water inside city limits at the corner of Main and First. "We never expected it to get this far," said Sharon Sanderson.

The city was without electricity for 12 hours beginning Saturday night and MO-Pub set up a portable sub station on Main Street.

The Red Cross from Nevada was in Schell City all day on Tuesday trying to get relief for the ones without homes.

—El Dorado Springs Sun



Northeast corner of Schell City. This
road goes to railroad trestle. Oct. 5, 1986

Grace Chitty 5-22



Sherry and Dena, almost to new bridge. Water was really moving fast. Oct. 4, 1986

Grace Chitty 5-8



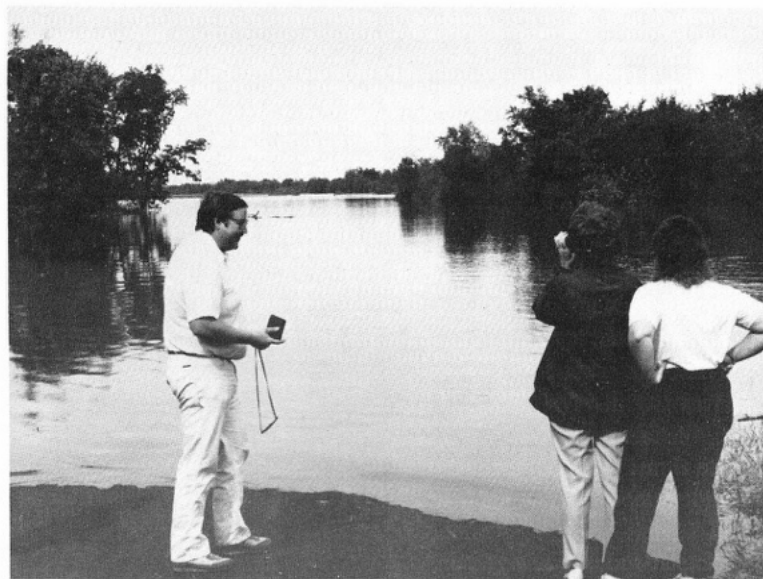
Approach to new bridge on north AA over Osage River.

David Maus 2-11



Boater's view of new river bridge on North AA.

David Maus 2-6



Pat and Karen and Mr. and Mrs. Tuttle from K.C. Oct. 5, 1986

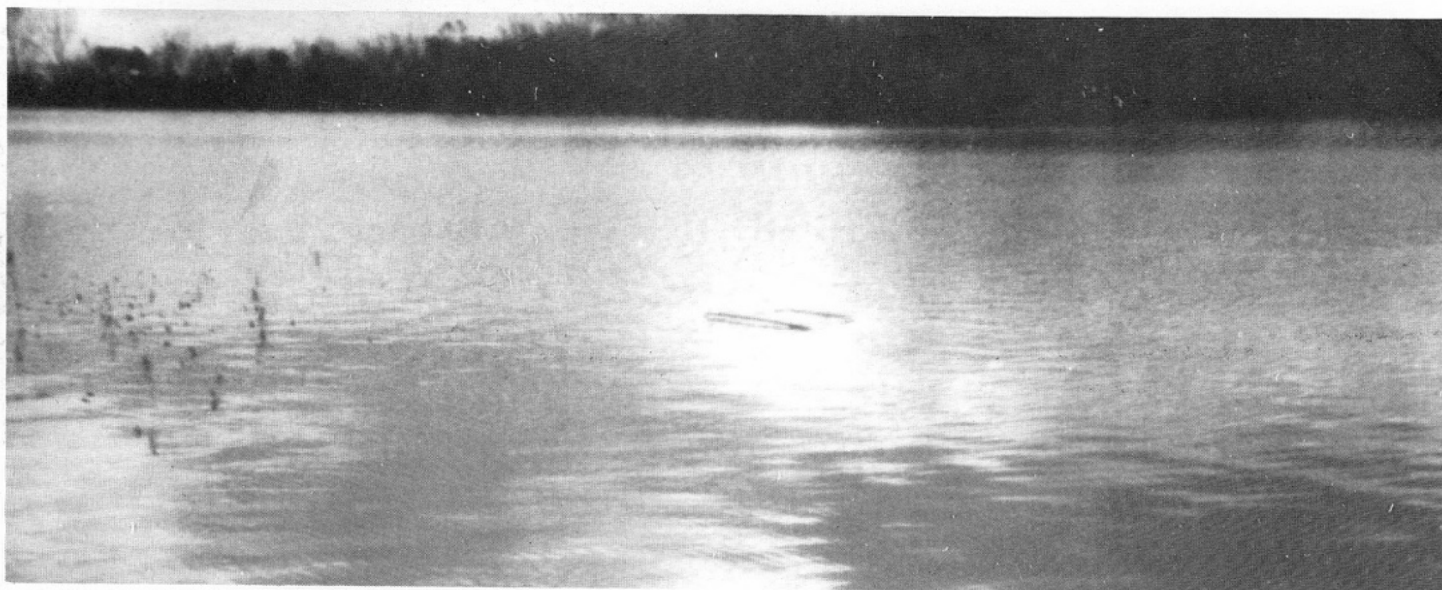
Grace Chitty 5-18



New river bridge, looking northeast. Last ones to cross before road closed.

Sharon Sanderson 6-5

Two Day Struggle for Tree People!



Car in center. People lived in trees for two days.

Sharon Sanderson 6-2



Water still coming about 8 inches per hour. Two people were saved from here.

Grace Chitty 5-19

Around noon Saturday, October 4 Joe Castaneda and his 16-year-old daughter, Alicia, tried to cross the high water a quarter mile north of the new river bridge. The water was at the stationwagon's door handles when they went into it but they tried to get across it anyway.

The car stalled and the two climbed out onto the car roof. As the water became shoulder deep they knew they had to do something, but their options were limited because Joe Castaneda couldn't swim.

According to Marla Applegate, Castaneda's daughter had him take off his jeans and tie them around his waist and she, laying on her back, used a leg of the jeans as well as his hair to keep him afloat and to drag him through the water. After fighting the swift current, they made their way to a tree where they spent Saturday night and Sunday until Tom Highfill and Larry Applegate rescued them.

"I heard some hollering on the north side Saturday and thought it was my neighbor moving cattle but Sunday when I was down there, I heard the same hollering and knew someone was in there," Highfill said.

He and his son went out into the river in their small boat and found the two. After reassuring them that he would be back he deposited his son at their pickup, got a hold of Applegate and the two took separate boats into the swift current to rescue the two.

Apparently the two California residents were on their way to Harrisonville to visit their family when they had to detour because of Highway 71's floods. Marla Applegate said the daughter had been through Schell City before because she used to live with her mother in Harrisonville.

"Apparently they hadn't checked the road conditions because if they had they would have found out even if they made it through there they couldn't get across farther up," she said. "They said the current was so fast that the tree they were sitting in swayed the whole time."

After the two were brought out of the river the Applegates bundled the pair up, took them to their house and fed them. They then, after they had rested, took them to El Dorado Springs to meet their family.

"The whole thing was quite an effort for everybody," Marla Applegate said. "But no one would have dreamed this would happen. We live 1 1/2 from the river and it is in our backyard now."

-- Nevada Daily Mail, October 7, 1986



Calvin Fox barn west of Schell City, Missouri.

Sandy Burns 27-6



Flood waters later rose above his fence.
Oct. 5, 1986

Jim Phillips 31-3



Calvin Fox barn.

Sandy Burns 27-7



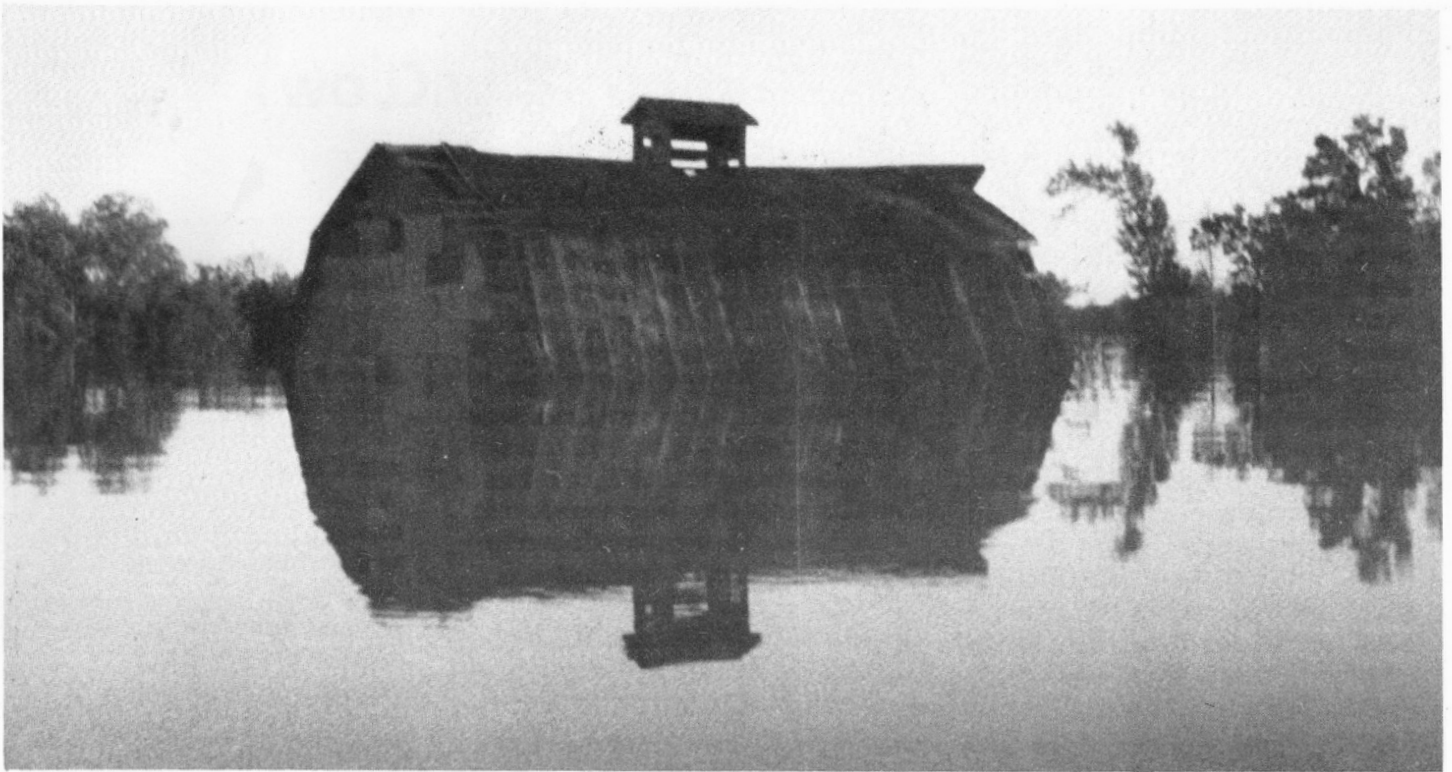
View of Calvin Fox's old farm on Highway M near Blue Mound. West of Lady Creek.

Edith McCoy 3-2



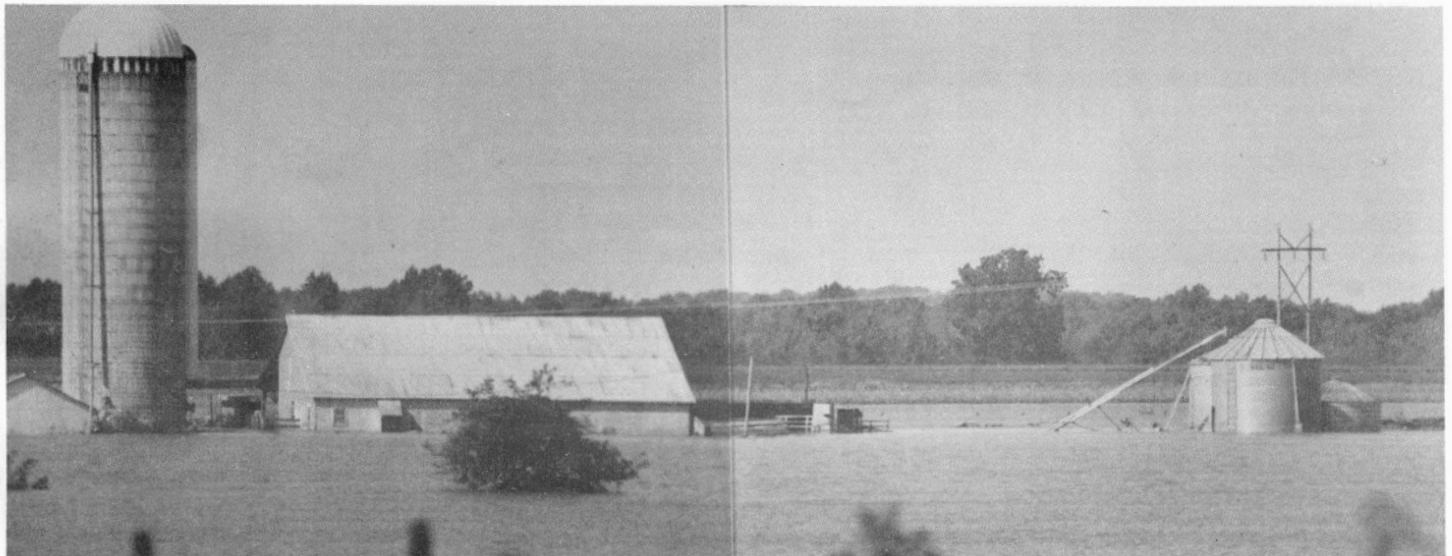
Highway M north from Calvin and Betty Fox's.

Grace Chitty 5-47



Alvie Bell's barn. A historic place.

Sharon Sanderson's 6-4



Leatherman's on Highway M.

Grace Chitty 5-3

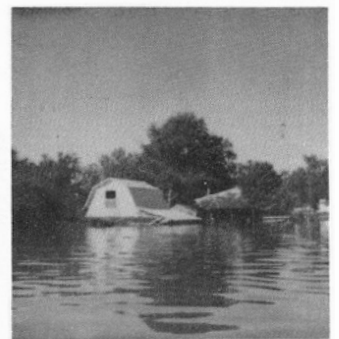


Roy Hill 34-20



Bowlder Fox house.

Sandy Burns 27-9



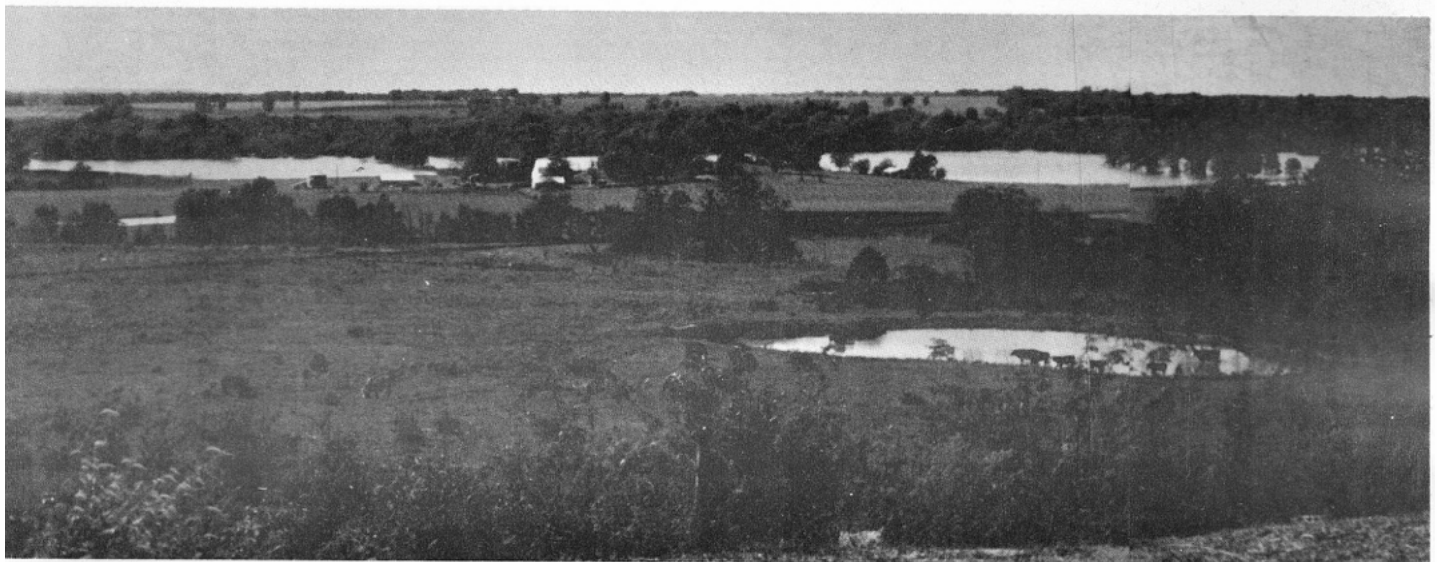
David Maus 2-16

Smith's barn at south edge of town. Water came so fast they had to rescue some cows from low trees.



Blue Mound School.

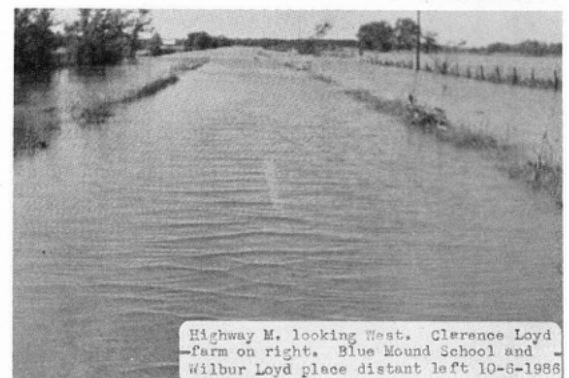
Roy Hill 34-21



Looking east from Blue Mound. Cecil's in upper left. The Pinker place barn. We were on top of the mound. Grace Chitty 5-5



After the flood, but before the water had all gone down. The Wilber Loyd house and our southwest corner. Roy Hill 34-3



Highway M. looking West. Clarence Loyd farm on right. Blue Mound School and Wilbur Loyd place distant left 10-6-1986

Roy Hill 34-4

Cressup Ranch - The Island



Cressup Ranch, Schell City area.

F & K Pettibon 21-17



West of Cressup Ranch.

F & K Pettibon 21-18



Everett and Cecil looking west from the top of Blue Mound.

Grace Chitty 5-50



Over a corn field. West
bins on Cressup Ranch.

Sandy Burns 26-1



Looking west to the
ranch from atop Blue Mound. Oct. 7, 1986

Grace Chitty 5-49



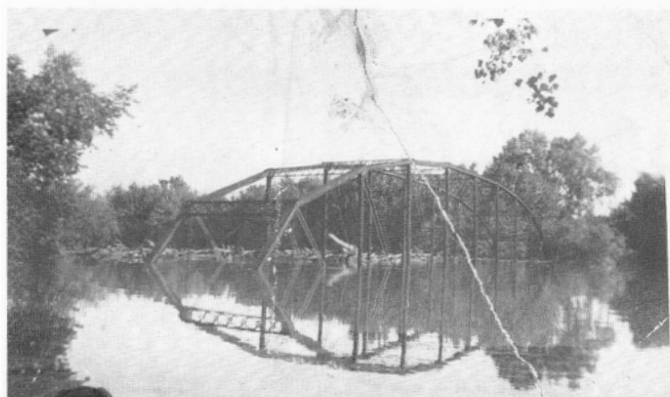
Line of trees east
levee on Cressup Ranch.

Sandy Burns 26-2



Old bridge north of Schell City.

John Freed 35-1



Old river bridge in flood of '51. Note *David Maus 2-1*
how high above the water the next girder is and compare with
the flood of '86.



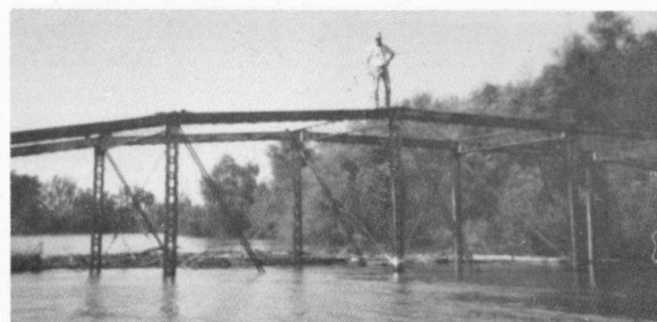
Boater's view of old river
bridge. Section 28, Bacon Township.

David Maus 2-5



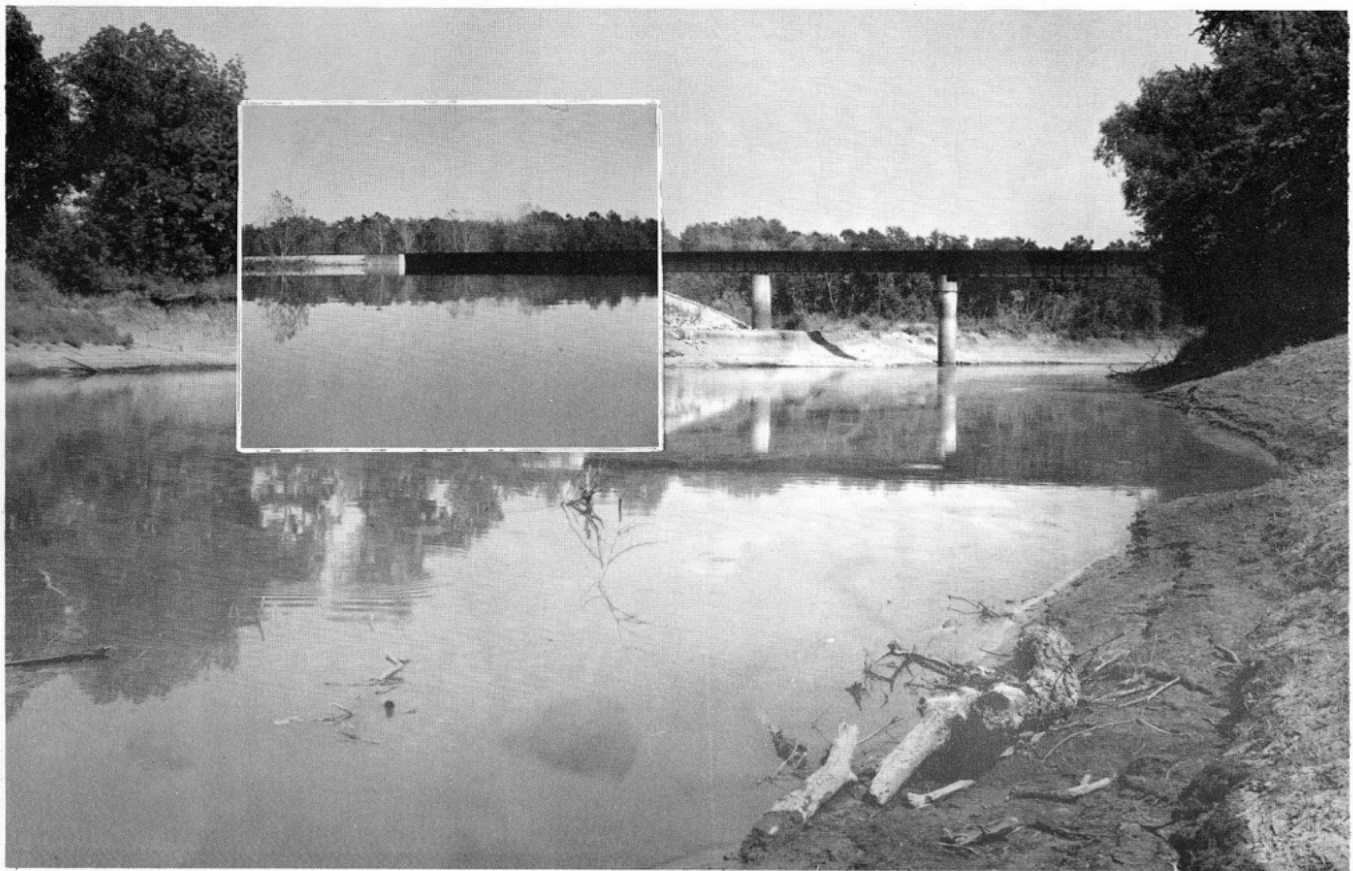
Looking north at old bridge.

David Maus 2-2



Jerry Heath standing on top
of old river bridge north of Schell City at the peak of
the flood.

David Maus 2-3



Inset: View of the new railroad bridge from a boat, *David Maus 2-17.*

John Freed 35-2



Schell City looking north.

Jim Phillips 31-1

Solitary Drain!

Five rivers combine and flow through this one solitary drain; then the Big and Little Drywood flow into the Marmaton, joins the Little Osage east-northeast of Deerfield, Mo.; then at the Bates/Vernon County line west of Schell City, the Marais des Cygnes joins in the flow.



Railroad tracks north of Schell City, Missouri.

Silas Mistler 13-22



Note the many levels of oil slick stain on the houses in Schell City. "The water went down at the rate of one foot a day," said Marvin Diehl, who lives in Horton, near the Marmaton River.

Grace Chitty 5-52

It rained and rained and rained It Drained One Foot A Day !



Looking east on 5th Street of Schell City. Note clean, still water.

Edith McCoy 3-3

Slow Drain Means Clear Water !

I can't help but to think the high road grades around **Schell City** and **Taborville** along with **Trumann Dam** played a part in the flood. Where flood water used to spread out for a mile and a half or so and carry a current. Now the only place the water can move is under the bridges and Truman Dam holds dead water upwards of **over 20 feet** deep over the river banks in the Taborville area.

Silas Mistler

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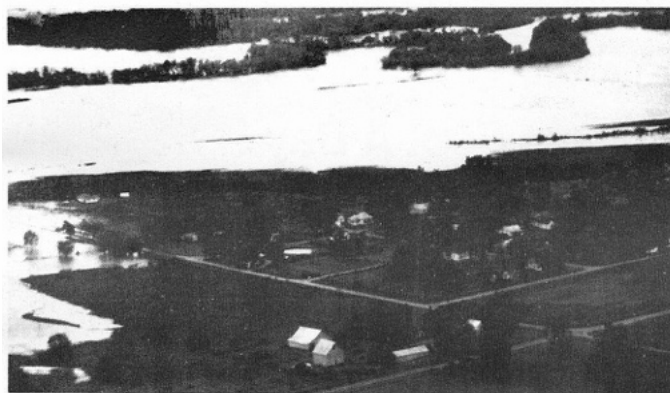
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Orville Wallace house.

Sandy Burns 27-8

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Metz, MO area.

Rachel Harmon 22-5



Osage River water on the old Pfister Ranch near Horton.

Rachel Harmon 22-17



North of the G.O. McDowell house, north of Nevada. Water had never been up to this cabin before.

Leon McDowell 28-1



Compton Junction. Road just east of 71 Highway.

F & K Pettibon 21-10



Jerry Simmons - Fort Scott, KS

Jerry was on the scene when the press photographers took the famous "cows-on-the-roof" picture in Belltown, October 4, 1986 and two weeks after the flood had his film developed then submitted this picture for the 86 flood book for Fort Scott, Kansas. The Press photographers photos were published throughout the world in newspapers, magazines, and on television.

Flood waters Take Their Own Time

When heavy rains fall in the Southeast Kansas, it takes about 12 hours for the water to reach the local area. For heavy rain on the Bug Drywood Creek it takes 24 hours to reach the local area, and an average 2' flood will take 48 - 50 hours to rise and same to fall, depending on heavy ground foliage. We've noticed in summer and early fall, at times a flood was muddy other times clear. At no time in my life or my family's life of living in the bottoms, had flood water been in the Home sites or the wells (before).

Betty Jo Robinson

Clippings from the
Nevada
Daily Mail



MOO-VE OVER - Remember, we told you last week and this call I'm about Richard Murray, who found a picture in a California newspaper of four cow stranded on a Ford Scott roof. Seems the bovines had swam to safety on the roof when the water was high then had become stuck there when the water receded.

Since then we have found that Mr. Murray was not the only one who had dealings with that photo Judge H. A. Kelso of Nevada received a copy of the photo in the mail from Richard S. Jones, Tennessee newspaper editor with the photo

"We were wondering how these cattle got the last 8 feet from the water to the rooftop. I said it was obvious they used the meter box for a tow hold, but Cara says they had to use a ladder."

"Could you provide any information on this?"

The letter was signed "Puzzled in Tennessee."

Kelso responded:

"In response to your inquiry as to how the cows got on the roof may I say that at my mother's knee I learned that cows could jump over the moon. I confess I never quite understood the part about "Hey Diddle, Diddle the cat and the fiddle."

"So if a cow could jump over the moon, it is obvious to me that I jump to a porch roof is easy stuff for a cow, and this is no bull."

"I trust this clears up the matter if

SURPRISE - Recently, Richard R. and Maxine Murray, Nevada, received a gift from California in honor of their 50th wedding anniversary.

While glancing through the California newspapers used as packing for the gift, Mr. Murray was stopped by a photo of three cows, perched on the roof of a home.

It seems the cows had swam their during flooding, and were stuck there when the water went down.

When Mr. Murray read the information with the photo, he was surprised to find that the photo had been taken in Fort Scott.

"It was some surprise, finding



LAKE SCHELL-OSAGE - The outskirts of Shell City were covered with water Monday morning. This view, looking east over Shell City, shows water backed up to the edge of the post office in Shell, just south of the business district. (near the center of the photograph). The water covered Hwy AA to the south of Shell. This photo was taken when the water was standing at about 752 ft. above sea level. The Core of Engineers predicted that the water would crest at Shell city on Tuesday at a level of 755 ft.

El Dorado Springs Sun photo

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