

**William T. Wilson, President
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March 31, 2015

Ms. Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street NE, Room 1A
Washington, DC 20426

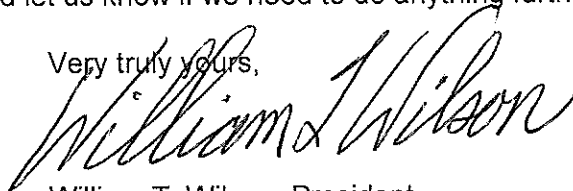
**Re: Comments and Motion Regarding Flood Issue
ATLANTIC COAST PIPELINE, LLC Docket No. CP15-554-000
DOMINION TRANSMISSION, LLC. Docket No. CP15-555-000**

Dear Secretary Bose:

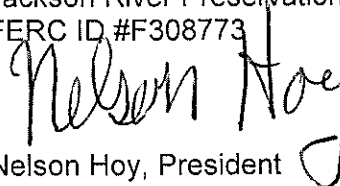
Attached are the "Comments and Motions" of the JRPA and the CRPA to the DEIS filed by FERC. Copies have been sent to all parties.

Please acknowledge this filing and let us know if we need to do anything further.

Very truly yours,



William T. Wilson, President
Jackson River Preservation Association, Inc.
FERC ID #F308773



Nelson Hoy, President
Cowpasture River Preservation Association, Inc.
FERC ID#

WTW/klc
Attachments

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
before the
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION (FERC)

In the Matter of

ATLANTIC COAST PIPELINE, LLC
and
DOMINION TRANSMISSION, LLC.

Docket No. CP15-554-000

Docket No. CP15-555-000

COMMENTS AND MOTION

I. **INTRODUCTION**

1. The Jackson River Preservation Association, Inc. (JRPA) is a §501(c) (3) (non-profit) corporation composed of citizens of the Alleghany Highlands (the counties of Bath, Highland and Alleghany in Virginia) and was organized for the preservation and protection of the Jackson River which flows through those counties.
2. The Cowpasture River Pasture Association (CRPA) does hereby claim standing in any and all public deliberations that deal with the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, LLC and Dominion Transmission, LLC. via-a-vis the construction and operation of the "Atlantic Coast Pipeline." The CRPA is a 501(c) 3 not-for-profit organization established in 1972 to engage in research and education on issues of water quality and quantity in the Cowpasture River Valley. The Association's purpose for being as established by the essence of its charter is to preserve water quality and quantity, both surface and ground water.
3. The JRPA and the CRPA have filed as "Intervenors" in the above styled case before FERC and, therefore, have standing to file these comments and motion.

II. **ARGUMENT**

4. JRPA and CRPA have reviewed FERC's DEIS and find it totally inadequate in a number of areas, some of which have, or will be addressed in other filings. The purpose of these comments and motion is to address the complete failure of Dominion and FERC to assess the probable impacts of major floods on the pipeline right-of-way and access roads where they are to be constructed, if a permit is issued.

5. Within the last 50 years the Alleghany Highlands has been devastated by major hurricanes and floods, including the following major events:
 - A. Flood of 1963;
 - B. Hurricane Camille 1969;
 - C. Hurricane Agnes 1972;
 - D. Flood of 1985;
 - E. Hurricane Hugo 1989 and
 - F. Summer flood of 2016.
6. The above referenced floods and hurricanes caused immense damage to the lands and rivers in the above counties and elsewhere, including massive amounts of erosion that polluted the Jackson River, Cowpasture River and their tributaries. Much of this damage was irreparable and evidence of that damage can still be seen today.
7. Dominion proposes to cut a swath through the above counties 150 feet wide, with connecting access roads, and then bury a 42 inch natural gas pipeline in a 10-foot-deep ditch using the same soil and material taken out of the ditch to refill it. This pipeline itself will be under great pressure in order to move the natural gas across Virginia and will be at great risk if uncovered by storm activity
8. Nowhere in the DEIS is there a science-based projection, analysis or evaluation of how floods and hurricanes, similar to the ones listed above, will affect the Jackson or Cowpasture River during the proposed construction and the further operation, and maintenance of the pipeline. In other words, there is no projection of how such floods and hurricanes would affect the pipeline, and consequently the Jackson River or Cowpasture River, at any of the following:
 - A. During construction;
 - B. During year one;
 - C. Between year one and year five;
 - D. Between year five and year ten and

- E. Between year ten and the life of the project.
9. The Jackson River is a beautiful, pristine trout stream which flows through the above counties. It is reported to be one of the finest trout streams in the eastern United States. Each year, thousands of people float this river and fish it for trout and other species. The Homestead, an Omni Resort Hotel in Bath County, regularly takes its guests on floats along this river. Just a few miles below where the pipeline is proposed to cross the Jackson River is the USFS recreation area known as "Hidden Valley." This area is regularly stocked with trout and is visited by hundreds of tourists every year.
 10. On the west side of the Jackson River, near the village of Bolar where the pipeline crosses, on the opposite side of a large mountain, lies Back Creek, also a beautiful and pristine, rural trout stream. This stream flows through pastures and forest until it merges with the Jackson River some ten miles downstream to form Lake Moomaw. Lake Moomaw is a 2540 acre lake set in the wilderness, with no development on its shores, and is stocked with bass, trout, pickerel, sun fish, and other species. The lake is managed by the USFS and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF). The dam itself (the Gathright Dam) is operated by the Army Corps of Engineers (C of E). The purpose of Lake Moomaw was, and is, threefold:
 - a. Flood control;
 - b. Recreation and
 - c. Water quality (all the way to Richmond, Virginia).
 11. The Cowpasture River begins its journey in northeastern Highland County. It joins the Jackson 84.4 miles later to form the James River. During this passage, it sinks underground for nearly five miles and is joined by many tributaries becoming navigable for the last ten miles or so.
 12. The Cowpasture River and two significant tributaries are crossed three times by the ACP and twice by access roads. Steep slopes characterize these crossings and are very susceptible to runoff and sedimentation during even modest rainfall activity.
 13. The Cowpasture River is designated as "scenic, recreational and historical."
 14. Water quality benefits were projected to reach all the way to Richmond, Virginia, which gets its drinking water from the James River. (The

Jackson River and the Cowpasture River merge in the Town of Iron Gate, Virginia, to form the James River.) The City of Covington gets its drinking water from the Jackson River.

15. Below the Gathright Dam, between the dam and the City of Covington, Virginia, is a stretch of the Jackson River of about 20 miles. This stretch of river has many aquatic creatures, including Brown and Rainbow trout. It is a beautiful, wild river which flows through farm lands, woods and fields. Landowners have homes and cabins along the river and it is a wonderful recreation and scenic resource.
16. The Jackson River continues to flow through the City of Covington and on about ten miles to the Town of Clifton Forge. From Clifton Forge, it is only a few miles, as the Jackson River flows through the beautiful Iron Gate Gorge, down to its merger with the Cowpasture River to form the James River.
17. The Alleghany Highlands is a very beautiful rural area. There is one large industry in Covington called WestRock, a papermill. Like so many rural areas of Virginia, the population of the Alleghany Highlands is declining and much of its future is tied to the Jackson River and Lake Moomaw.
18. It is more than likely that floods and hurricanes imposed upon new pipeline construction, or even older construction, would cause major erosion to the mountains and in other places where the pipeline would cross streams. Serious and irreparable damage will occur to the Jackson River, Back Creek Lake Moomaw and the Cowpasture River. Karst formations, springs and wells will be damaged in such floods. Many of the slopes are 80 degrees, or more, and could never withstand that kind of water volume. As an example, during Hurricane Camille, whole sides of mountains gave way and eroded into the valleys and streams below. The potential and probable damage to the Jackson River, Cowpasture River and their tributaries from such floods would be devastating and irreparable. It is not humanly possible to construct a pipeline, like the one proposed by Dominion, that would not be wrecked by floods and hurricanes like the ones referred to above.
19. Also attached is an article from the March 12, 2017, edition of the *Roanoke Times* entitled "Pipeline's Path Stirs Concerns for Water" showing that the City of Roanoke, Virginia, has serious concerns about sediment in the Roanoke River from the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP).
20. Also attached are letters, dated March 9, 2017, and March 13, 2017, from the JRPA to the "governing bodies" in the Alleghany Highlands expressing concern about erosion damage to the pipeline right-of-way from flood

waters thereby adversely affecting the Jackson River; Hidden Valley (USFS); Lake Moomaw by the (USFS) and the Corps of Engineers; and the Cowpasture River.

21. Attached to this comment are articles from the November 5, 2015, edition of the Highland County *Recorder*, showing some of the damages from the great flood of 1985, to Highland County alone. The remainder of the Alleghany Highlands suffered similar damages.
22. This pipeline jeopardizes the future of the Jackson River, the Cowpasture River, Lake Moomaw and the communities and businesses in the Alleghany Highlands. These comments and motion call upon FERC to make a thorough analysis of the environmental impact on Virginia's rivers, streams and lakes before a certificate is granted and the power of eminent domain is unleashed.
23. In the opinion of the undersigned, it is impossible to construct Dominion's proposed pipeline without causing serious and permanent damages that make building the project prohibitive.
24. For the reasons outlined above, it is clear that the DEIS does not include a scientifically based, detailed analysis of the impact of hurricanes and floods on the proposed right-of-way. The result of that omission is that the public and all contributing state and federal agencies cannot properly and meaningfully evaluate and comment on Dominion's proposed project. At the very least, FERC should gather that information and file a supplemental or amended DEIS (*Or. Env'tl. Council v Kunzman*, 817 F.2d 484, 492).


WHEREFORE, for the reasons stated above, the JRPA and the CRPA move FERC to require Dominion to project how the above referenced floods and hurricanes would impact the project, if built, and how such floods and hurricanes would impact the Jackson River, the Cowpasture River and Lake Moomaw, and all tributaries in the watersheds of those rivers and streams. In addition, impacts of such floods on Karst formations, springs, wells and other environmental elements should be considered.

Once this information has been collected, FERC must file an amended or supplemental DEIS for public and agency comment.

Having considered all those factors, JRPA and CRPA respectfully prays that Dominion's requested certificate be denied.

Jackson River Preservation Association, Inc.

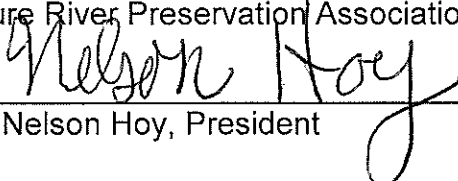
By:



William T. Wilson, President

Cowpasture River Preservation Association, Inc.

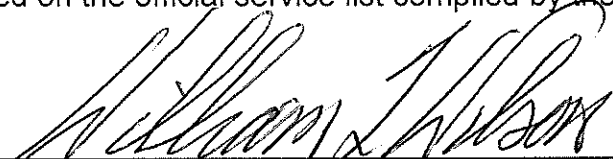
By:



C. Nelson Hoy, President

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

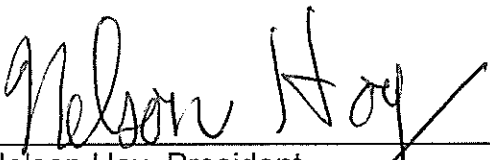
I hereby certify that I have on March 31, 2017, caused the forgoing document to be served upon each person designed on the official service list compiled by the Secretary in this proceeding.



William T. Wilson, President
Jackson River Preservation Association, Inc.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that I have on March 31, 2017, caused the forgoing document to be served upon each person designed on the official service list compiled by the Secretary in this proceeding.



C. Nelson Hoy, President
Cowpasture River Preservation Association, Inc.

Attachments:

"Pipeline's Bath Stirs Concerns for Water" Article dated March 12, 2017
Letter to Governing Bodies dated March 9, 2017
Letter to Governing Bodies dated March 13, 2017
"Swept Away" Article dated November 5, 2015

Carbon Copies:

Secretary Molly Ward
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Department of Environmental Quality
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Delegate Terry Austin
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Buchanan, VA 24066

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Virginian Review
128 N. Maple Ave.
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Pipeline's path stirs concerns for water

By Duncan Adams

duncan.adams@roanoke.com

981-3324 | Posted: Sunday, March 12, 2017 7:41 am

The Roanoke River needs love, understanding and attention and not a new source of sediment.

So says Bill Tanger, chairman of Friends of the Roanoke River.

"Sediment is now the biggest problem on the upper Roanoke River," said Tanger, who is also a member of the Upper Roanoke River Roundtable.

Dwayne D'Ardenne, stormwater utility manager for the city of Roanoke, agreed that sediment already is a worry for the upper river. Sediment that settles in streams can smother aquatic life and can transport bacteria and industrial pollutants like PCBs, he said.

Enter the proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline. Although the pipeline's current route does not pass through the city of Roanoke, city officials recently acknowledged concerns about how erosion and sediment linked to the infrastructure project could affect the Roanoke River as the waterway winds through the jurisdiction.

The 42-inch diameter, 303-mile buried pipeline would pass through the Roanoke River's watershed in Montgomery and Roanoke counties as it transports natural gas at high pressure from Wetzel County, West Virginia, to another pipeline in Pittsylvania County.

It would cross the river itself about 1.2 miles upstream from the intake for the Spring Hollow Reservoir, a regional source of drinking water whose withdrawals from the river are suspended when sediment levels are high.

The Western Virginia Water Authority operates the 3.2 billion-gallon reservoir, which stores water before it is treated for drinking. The authority has remained neutral about the pipeline, but it has voiced concerns about the project's potential to precipitate erosion and add sediment.

"Sediment in the river has a direct impact on the number of days we can pump out of the Roanoke River, and we do not want to reduce the number of days that we can pump," said Sarah Baumgardner, a spokeswoman for the authority.

"While the screens on the intake pumps minimize sediments coming into the reservoir, sediment can transport contaminants and bacteria and ultimately collect in the reservoir," she said.

No one disputes that the Mountain Valley project, if approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, will add sediment to the Roanoke River watershed.

That will be especially true during project construction.

First, a 125-foot wide construction right-of-way will be cleared of trees and other vegetation that serves to reduce run off into the creeks that feed the north and south forks of the Roanoke River at its headwaters.

"The relatively dense tree canopy in the head water areas intercepts rainfall so that it gently penetrates the ground as groundwater rather than flowing overland as runoff," wrote Pamela Dodds, a geologist whose report about the pipeline's potential impacts on watersheds in Roanoke County was submitted by the county to FERC in comments about the commission's draft environmental impact statement for the project.

As construction proceeds, there will be trenching to a depth of about 10 feet. There will be blasting. Heavy equipment will compact soils. The pipeline's route will take it up and down steep slopes where soil cover is already susceptible to erosion.

The pipeline itself, or new or altered roads designed to provide access to the pipeline, will cross Roanoke River tributaries, including high-quality streams like Bottom Creek on Bent Mountain.

According to a report by Environmental Solutions & Innovations, or ESI, a consultant hired by the pipeline company, increased sediment loads associated with project construction "are likely to continue downstream [in the Roanoke River] until the sediment is arrested behind the first dam (i.e. Niagara Dam) or is deposited into Smith Mountain Lake."

Mountain Valley plans to bury the pipeline five feet beneath the bottom of the Roanoke River after diverting water and cutting an open trench across the riverbed.

From the pipeline's crossing in the upper Roanoke River to the Niagara Dam is a distance of about 20 miles, Tanger said.

The ESI report analyzed potential watershed sedimentation tied to the Mountain Valley Pipeline's crossing of a total of about 3.4 miles of the Jefferson National Forest.

The Forest Service criticized the report when it was first released in June 2016, suggesting it understated how long erosion from the pipeline project would contribute added sediment loads and overstated how much sediment would be diverted or captured by erosion control barriers or structures.

Mountain Valley recently submitted to FERC a revised report by ESI that acknowledges sediment loads will remain elevated for several years after pipeline construction ends. The report notes that "it is expected that sediment loads and yields will reach a new sediment equilibrium approximately four to five years from the start of the project."

Tanger is among a host of others who worry that erosion and other sources of sediment tied to the pipeline threaten the ongoing recovery of the Roanoke River from abuses past.

In December, Rupert Cutler and Diana Christopulos — two residents of the region long recognized as knowledgeable environmental watchdogs — advised members of the Roanoke City Council that the pipeline could be a significant source of sediment for the Roanoke River.

Cutler said sediment from the pipeline could be a setback for expensive efforts to control storm water runoff and reduce contamination of the river. He said the sediment also could diminish the Roanoke River's appeal for canoeists and kayakers as the region continues to promote itself as a mecca for outdoors recreation.

The Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission recently received a \$5,000 grant from the Virginia Tourism Corp. to help promote the Roanoke River Blueway.

Cutler was a member of the city council when it helped create the regional water authority and was a member of the authority's original board of directors. He served as an assistant secretary of agriculture during the administration of President Jimmy Carter and provided policy direction for the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, now the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Christopulos, president of both the Roanoke Valley Cool Cities Coalition and Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club, emphasized that the pipeline's ascent and descent of steep slopes could yield an enormous amount of erosion.

And she encouraged members of the city council to learn more about the project. In February, City Manager Chris Morrill provided the council a preliminary report.

Morrill noted that the pipeline's traverse of steep slopes in Roanoke County suggests "there is a significant risk for erosion" and described as legitimate the concern of increased sediment flowing downstream into the city.

He said increased sediment could impact the city's "ability to achieve progress in reducing sediment, bacteria and PCBs" in the river.

James Golden, director for operations for the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, said the department is well aware that the Mountain Valley Pipeline project has the potential to be a significant source of erosion and sediment along its route in Virginia.

He said the department anticipates that Mountain Valley will soon submit detailed erosion and sediment plans for the project. Natalie Cox, a spokeswoman for the pipeline company, suggested the same.

"MVP has been working with the Virginia DEQ to develop erosion and sediment control plans that meet the requirements of their regulatory program," Cox said.

Golden said Mountain Valley has agreed to pay for additional staff or consultants that DEQ might need to review the erosion and sediment plans and to have inspectors in the field if and when construction launches in Virginia.

He said the erosion and sediment plans will be posted online for public review.

Cutler said government officials must be vigilant watchdogs.

"The protection of the quality of the water in the Roanoke River is a fundamental responsibility of government — protecting health, safety and welfare," he said.

FERC is working on a final environmental impact statement for the pipeline. Mountain Valley hopes to begin construction later this year.

**William T. Wilson, President
Jackson River Preservation Association, Inc.**

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March 9, 2017

Mayor Thomas H. Sibold, Jr.
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Covington, VA 24426

Chairman Richard Byrd
Bath County Board of Supervisors
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Chairman Stephen A. Bennett
Alleghany County Board of Supervisors
6800 Rich Patch Rd.
Covington, VA 24426

Vice Mayor Robert W. Daniel
Town of Iron Gate
P. O. Box 182
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Mayor Carl Brinkley
Town of Clifton Forge
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Ms. Rebecca Johnson
Communications Manager
WestRock
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Covington, VA 24426

Mr. Brett Schoenfield
Managing Director
The Omni Homestead Resort
7696 Sam Snead Highway
Hot Springs, VA 24445

Mayor Rich Holman
Town of Monterey
P. O. Box 460
Monterey, VA 24465

**Re: Dominion's Proposed Natural Gas Pipeline through Bath and
Highland Counties**

Dear Lady and Gentlemen:

The Jackson River Preservation Association, Inc. (JRPA) has become involved in the debate about whether or not to build a natural gas pipeline through Bath and Highland Counties. We have filed as "Intervenors" in the case before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and have gone on record against the project.

Early on, I did not think our governing bodies south of Bath County had much of a stake in the debate but as the facts developed, it occurred to me that they did. My

reasoning goes like this: The Jackson River is a precious jewel for the Alleghany Highlands and much of our future, as far as tourism is concerned, is tied to that river. It is reported to be one of the finest trout streams in the United States and has become a recreational Mecca for thousands of local people and tourists. The river parallels the Jackson River Scenic Trail, as you know, and together they act as a huge attraction to tourists.

Anything that seriously degrades that river is a blow to the area and to our economy.

FERC has filed a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) but has not seriously addressed the issue I believe to be of greatest importance - and that is the probable impact of floods and Hurricanes on the pipeline right-of-way and the pipeline itself. I am enclosing a draft of a filing the JRPA and the Cowpasture River Preservation Association (CRPA) plan to file with FERC regarding this issue. Dominion's plans call for the pipeline to go up and down steep mountains (some 70-80 percent) and under both Jackson River, at Bolar in Bath County, and under Back Creek, above Dominion's Pumped Storage lakes. Our argument, as you can see, is that floods like ones in 1985 and the summer of 2016 will ravage the pipeline and its right-of-way resulting in massive amounts of silt and pollution in the Jackson River, Back Creek, and their tributaries, and Lake Moomaw.

If the predictable occurs, the ripple effect will be downstream to Hidden Valley, Lake Moomaw and may even adversely affect WestRock's operation in Covington. I am sure the Homestead Hotel has a stake in keeping the Jackson River in good shape.

FERC has given notice that it will receive comments from the public until April 6, 2017. After that, it will issue a final EIS and may or may not grant Dominion a permit. As you can see, time is of the essence.


My hope is that each governing body, WestRock and the Homestead Hotel will examine the probable environmental impacts of this proposed pipeline and make comments directly to FERC. If you need contact information, please call 540-962-4986.

By the way, there are no proposed taps on this pipeline as it goes through Bath and Highland Counties.

May I suggest that we get a delegation together for a guided tour of the proposed crossings in Bath and Highland Counties? I think you will be amazed at the steepness of the mountains over which this pipeline proposes to cross. Please let me know if you will go.

Best to all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Wilson" with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

William T. Wilson, President
Jackson River Preservation Association, Inc.

WTW/klc
Enclosure

ccs: Senator Creigh Deeds
Senator Mark Warner
Senator Tim Kaine
Senator Emmett W. Hanger
Congressman Robert W. Goodlatte
Ms. Molly Ward, Secretary of Natural Resources
Mr. David Paylor, Director DEQ
Col. Jason Kelly, PMP, Corps of Engineers
Mr. Bob Duncan, Executive Director VDGIF
Mr. Mike Hayslett, Executive Director CRPA
Mr. Tony Tooke, Regional Forester, Southern Region, USDA Forest Service
Mr. David Sligh, Conservation Director, Wild Virginia
Mr. Nelson Hoy, CRPA President
Mr. Richard Brooks, CRPA
Mr. Rick Webb, Dominion Pipeline Coalition Group
Mr. Greg Buppert, SELC
Virginian Review
The Recorder
Roanoke Times

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March 13, 2017

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Mayor Rich Holman
Town of Monterey
P. O. Box 460
Monterey, VA 24465

Re: Jackson River Preservation Association, Inc. (JRPA) - ACP

Dear Lady and Gentlemen:

As a follow-up to my letter to you dated March 9, 2017, I am attaching an article, dated March 12, 2017, from the Roanoke Times entitled "Pipeline's path stirs concerns for water" which indicates that Roanoke City is waking up to the expectation of "sediment" coming from the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP).

We in the Alleghany Highlands have the same "expectation" regarding the ACP and we need to meet and act in concert on this problem.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



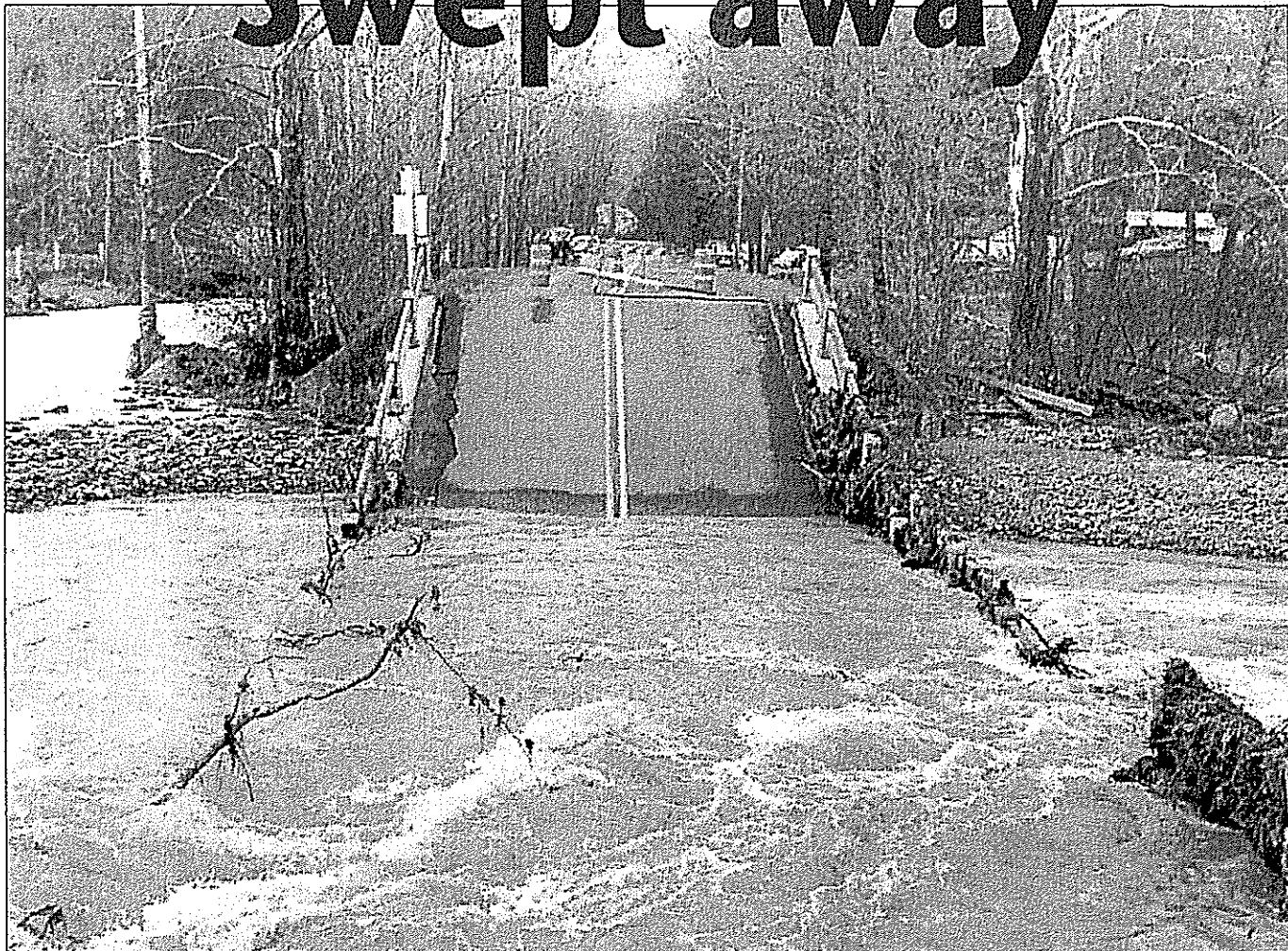
William T. Wilson, President
Jackson River Preservation Association, Inc.

WTW/klc

Attachment

ccs: Senator Creigh Deeds
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Senator Tim Kaine
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Ms. Molly Ward, Secretary of Natural Resources
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Mr. Richard Brooks, CRPA
Mr. Rick Webb, Dominion Pipeline Coalition Group
Mr. Greg Buppert, SELC
Virginian Review
The Recorder
Roanoke Times

Swept away



On Nov. 7, 1985, this was *The Recorder's* powerful front-page image of the bridge across Back Creek on U.S. 84, just east of Route 600, destroyed when high waters pulled the west end of the bridge from its supports shortly after noon on Monday, Nov. 4. It was captured by then news editor Winnie Richardson.

The Flood of 1985: Heroes, neighbors, survivors

There are events that shape communities forever. The flood of 1985 was one of them. It cemented neighbors and friends in a time of crisis. It changed our mountain landscapes and streams. Most agree it was the most frightening and devastating crisis to ever hit the Allegheny Highlands, and beyond.

Thirty years ago this week, the remnants of a hurricane settled over these ridges and dropped enough water to turn creeks into rivers, pastures into ponds, and rivers into raging torrents powerful enough to take out homes, roads, bridges, power lines — and strip any sense of safety from those who had lived here peacefully all their lives.

Why revisit those terrible days, from three decades ago? *The Recorder* chose to recapture that time — now generally dubbed the “Election Day flood” — for a few reasons.

Bath and Highland counties have new and young native residents who either know nothing about that flood, or were too little when it happened to have a sense of what happened and why. They should be aware of certain events in our area’s history, and this flood was a major marker of our community’s past.

Our area already held a strong bond, culturally and spiritually. But facing a trauma of this magnitude is the kind of thing that brings people even closer, and reminds us that we hu-

mans, despite all our modern advances, are not in control of our environment and its responses as much as we’d like to think we are.

Therefore, we knot together in the face of overwhelming forces more powerful than we, and recognize the unique relationship with our natural surrounds cannot be taken for granted.

We have a responsibility, also, to those who lost their lives — to honor, remember, and keep their memories alive before all who knew and loved them fade away.

The Recorder appreciates First & Citizens Bank for supporting its efforts to tell this story again, for the sake of those who never knew it, and in memory of those who perished.

Waters without warning

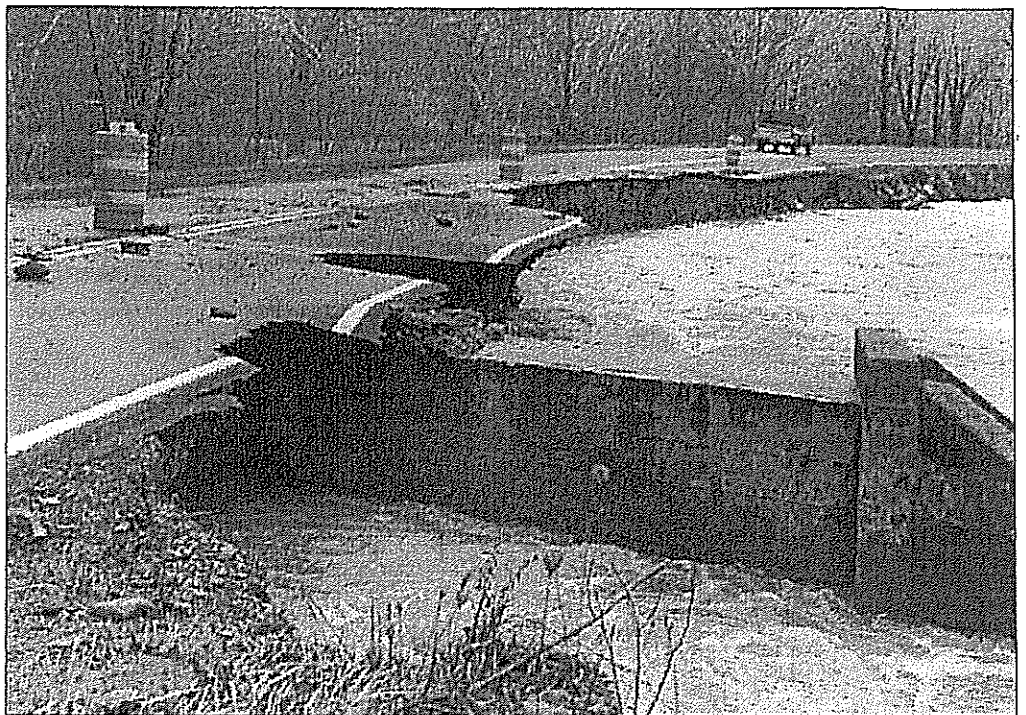
MONTEREY and WARM SPRINGS — Halloween in 1985 was a dreary, drizzly day, but children looked forward to the haunted house at The Highland Inn. There were fewer little ghosts and goblins about because of the rain, but no one thought much about the gloomy weather.

Bath and Highland residents were gearing up for the following Tuesday's elections. Gerald Baliles was running for governor and Emmett Hanger was seeking re-election to the district delegate seat. President Ronald Reagan was in office. Hunting season was kicking in, and it looked to be a good one for deer. The most exciting news was that after decades of construction, the world's largest pumped storage station was about to go online right here at Back Creek in Mountain Grove.

Little did anyone know then, but that facility would play a critical role by Monday, when the biggest flood to hit this area came without warning.

Over the next 48 hours, the rain picked up and continued — the confluence of a low-pressure system and the remnants of Hurricane Juan, which had twice swept ashore over Florida and Louisiana. What was left of the storm made its way north, running head long into another front. By Saturday, the ground was saturated; by Sunday, the whole mess stalled over the Allegheny Mountains and valleys.

Monday morning, Nov. 4, residents across the region awoke to rising waters. The creeks and rivers were swelling faster than anyone could imagine. "It was so un-



A large section on U.S. 220 about 12 miles south of Monterey was washed away by the raging Jackson River Monday, Nov. 4, 1985. The cement culvert, which controls the water from a creek on the other side of the road, sustained severe damage. (Recorder file photo)

expected," a Warm Springs resident said at the time. "It didn't really start raining hard until Sunday night."

By Tuesday — Election Day — homes were lost; dozens were dead; and Virginia and West Virginia counties were declared federal disaster areas.

With waters rising at an alarming rate that Monday, school officials took action quickly, closing Bath schools at 12:30 p.m. But road conditions had already deteriorated so badly the school board decided not to send out buses, and asked parents to pick up their children. Not all of them could be

retrieved, leaving about 100 students spending the night at Valley Elementary School and 30 at Bath County High School (see "A night at school," page 20).

By the time Highland schools closed at 1 p.m., water was running across many roads.

According to the Nov. 7, 1985 Recorder, "Most of the students were safely delivered home, but Albert Shultz had to bring some of the children on his bus back to Monterey because the bridge on U.S. 84 near Route 600, had collapsed into Back Creek. The children were later picked up by parents and friends."

Highland superintendent Dr. Jack Gold made plans to reopen the schools at the end of the week, but asked parents to bring children to the main road to catch the bus. "Some places, such as the entrance to Possum Trot, according to Gold, are passable by car, but there is not enough room to safely take a bus through," the paper reported.

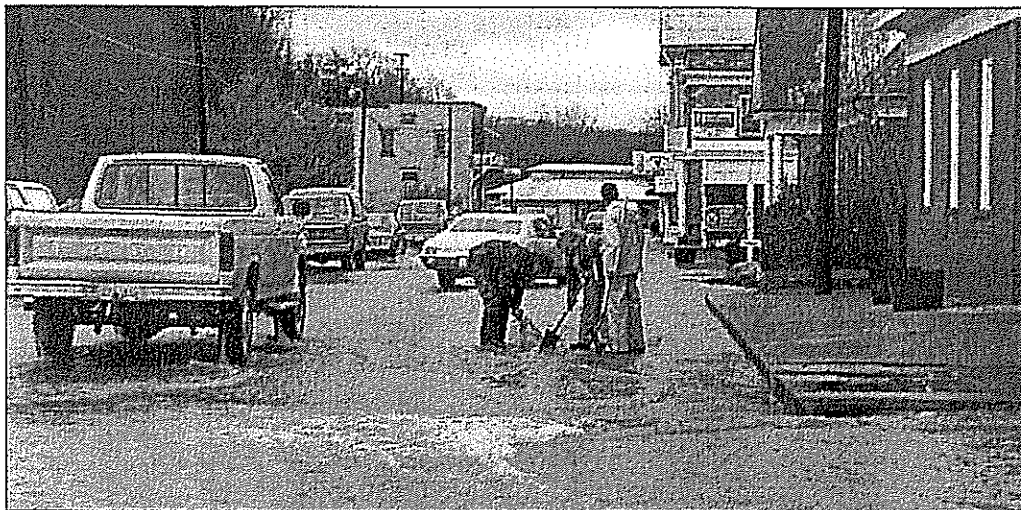
Word came that week of two deaths, and two people missing in the Highland area, but none in Bath.

A carload of people traveling to Highland County that Monday included Ruby Skeen, the wife of Bernard Skeen, a former McDowell minister. Mrs. Skeen was driving to Highland from Berkeley Springs, W.Va., with her sister and grandson when their car was swept away. Mrs. Skeen's body was located, but the others were still among the missing by Thursday.

Another family, the Spencers, suffered a similar fate, being swept away from their home along U.S. 220 despite the heroic efforts of a neighbor, Ivan Stone, who tried to save them. (See "A hero lost," page 30).

Rick Armstrong is retired from the Bath County Sheriff's Office and is now president of the Bath County Historical Society. He was a road deputy at the time of the flood. He recalled answering calls starting about 8 a.m. that Monday morning. One was to the Jackson River bridge on Route 39 in the Fassifern Farm area, to block traffic after the water rose over the bridge. "There were several trailers along the road in a low spot. That area was full of water. That is the most vivid memory I have of the flood," Armstrong said.

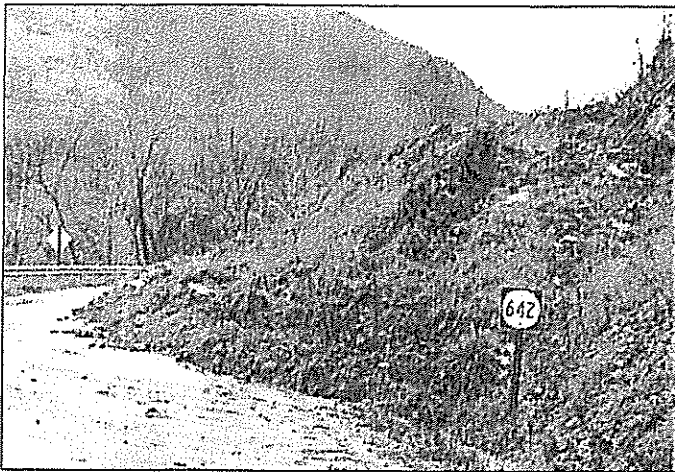
Rocky Phillips of Mitchelltown had just left a hunting camp on Back Creek in Mountain Grove when the water started rising. "I



Hot Springs residents jumped in to unclog storm drains to lower the water level on Main Street. The creek behind the businesses on the right overflowed its banks, and washed down the street and into most of the establishments during 1985's flood. (Recorder file photo)

See WATERS, page 20

Flood of '85 Sponsored by First and Citizens Bank



Route 642 between Forks of Water and Blue Grass was blocked by several mud and rock slides Tuesday after the flood. This one covered only half the road. The state highway department and local citizens had the road clear by mid-afternoon that day. (Recorder file photo)

From WATERS, page 19

was at Webb's Store, and the water started running across the parking lot into the store. Within 30 minutes, there was six inches of water in the parking lot," he recalled. "Charlie Lindsay and I put sandbags at the door to keep the water out of the store. We started grabbing everything we could put on top of each other to divert the water back to the parking lot."

Armstrong and Phillips agreed there was no hint that weekend of severe flooding. "I don't recall that it was forecast to be any big deal. I think it was one of those things that just unexpectedly escalated to a big deal," Armstrong said. "It just came on really quickly. It was a very rapid rise in a very short time."

After he left Webb's, Phillips headed toward Hot Springs. "Water was running down Bath House Hill. The ditches were full and the water was in the road and on the golf course. Water was in the street downtown. It was three-quarters up on the wheels of the cars that were parked there. The rescue squad had a boat going down the middle of the street. I thought, Lord have mercy, what are we into now?" he said.

At that time, there were only five or six deputies in the sheriff's department under Sheriff J.W. Bryan Jr. "Everyone was called out quickly once the flooding started," Armstrong said.

Armstrong was living on Mill Creek Road in Millboro at the time of the flood. He was building a home and was staying with his mother. Her basement had water in it, but escaped serious damage. Phillips was living in Mitchelltown and his home was not affected. "Some friends of mine had water in their basements," Phillips said.

Phillips remembered removing the debris from Warm Springs Run with the late Urban "Jake" Cleek. "We were just down from The Gristmill. We were trying to get the water to keep going down the creek," he said. "The foot bridge had washed away. We were worried about old terra cotta water pipes running across the creek and were scared the water and debris would break them. Thankfully, the lines didn't break. Stuff was just matted

up and piled up everywhere. It was unreal."

He was using a chain saw and Cleek was clearing debris with his hands. "We looked up and the wheel at The Gristmill was turning. Jake said it had been broken for eight or nine years, but that water was turning it. It had that much pressure," Phillips said.

Following a long day, Armstrong headed home. About one-half mile from his mother's house, a bridge on Mill Creek Road was washed away. "You could hear the boulders moving," he said. But Armstrong was determined. "I parked my car and started to walk home. There was a trail along the bank of the creek, and there was supposed to be a footbridge across the creek. The water was waist deep across the bridge, but there was a cable hand held. I held onto the cable and walked across the bridge. I went across the road and up a logging road. I then went through the clearing where I was building my house and through the woods to my mother's house. Looking back on all that, I was lucky, very lucky. For whatever reason, I had made up my mind I was going home.

"When I got to my mother's house, I took my gun belt off and dumped the water out of the holster. I had to walk to my car for several days," he said.

Communication was difficult. Most Bath and Highland residents lost power for a short time, but some were without electricity for days following. Long distance service was out most of those two days, making it difficult to get information. Highland Telephone Cooperative scrambled to have long distance restored by Wednesday. Mountain Grove-Williamsville Telephone Co. made many repairs, but awaited the restoration of a line from Staunton. Local phone service was back in Bath County by Tuesday morning but no one knew how long it would take to get electricity or water and sewage restored.

The water system for Warm Springs was under five feet of water Tuesday, leaving residents without drinking water. Cleek was a supervisor at the time, and got the word out that a hydrant at what was the County

See WATERS, page 21

'If there were any heroes, it would be everybody.'

~ The late Randy Stephenson, principal of Valley Elementary School in Ashwood

A night at school

ASHWOOD — While the surprise flooding made many fearful, there was a group who looked upon the whole event as an exciting adventure: Children at Valley Elementary School in Ashwood.

Jackie Stephenson, whose late husband Randy was principal of VES in 1985, recalled, "There were some school buses that could not take the children home because of the high waters in Hot Springs. Hot Springs is where the major flooding was." So, those bus drivers who could not finish their routes had no choice but to turn around, and bring the children back to the school.

"There were more than 100 or so children who were sheltered in the school overnight," Stephenson said. "Of course, they had to be fed dinner. Charlotte Jenkins was the cafeteria manager, and she stayed at the school. Charlotte was instrumental in getting dinner ready for those children. Her husband had a big old truck, so he made it through the water to get Charlotte and bring her home. My daughter Jessica was in kindergarten at the time, and I was working at the central office (Bath County School Board building). I asked Charlotte to bring Jessica to me at the office, since Charlotte lived nearby. When she got here, she was not happy. 'I wanted to stay at school with my friends, because that is where the action is!' she told me.

"There were a whole slew of kids there at the school, and a lot of teachers couldn't get home either. Others made arrangements to stay there to help supervise the kids. They made a plan and activated it: They showed movies and played games; the gym and the library were open. So, those kids were entertained royally until they could get them bedded down for the night," Stephenson said.

Somehow word of the situation at the school reached The Homestead, and someone there sent a truckload of blankets to the school. "I don't recall who the fellow was, or how he got there, or how many blankets — a truckload — and the kids slept on the floors, which were carpeted," she continued.

They needed breakfast the next morning, of course. So, even though school was closed, Charlotte Jenkins made her way back to the school and saw that the children were fed.

Stephenson also recalled, "There was one little boy who was diabetic, and he needed insulin. His parents couldn't get there to bring it, so Randy called the Hot Springs Pharmacy, which was also flooded. But, (pharmacist) Jack Williams was there. He told Randy he'd prepare the insulin, but that Randy would have to come pick it up."

The principal, always nattily attired, left the school in his car and managed to make it as far as the Watchbox, near the back entrance of the hotel.

"He said he took off his socks, folded them up, and put them in his pocket," his wife recalled. "Then, he put his good shoes back on, rolled up his pants above his knees and waded through water to get the medicine. He figured he'd at least have dry socks to wear when he got back to the school."

She said, "It's kind of funny, but some of those kids didn't want to go home the next day, they were having such a good time. Everybody pitched in; it was an emergency and Bath County is always good for that."

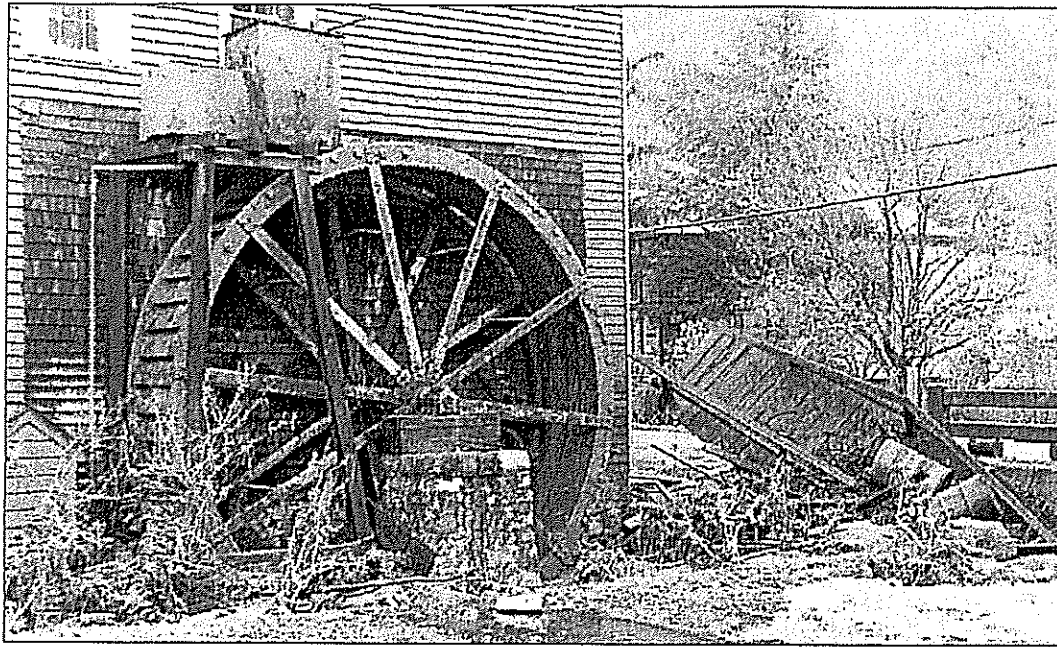
Randy Stephenson told the story himself, documented by the Bath County Historical Society five years after the flood. "The children took it all in stride. Some didn't want to go when their parents came for them — they wanted to stay for the festivities," he said. "The Homestead sent over blankets and pillows for everyone. We put the boys at one end of the school, in the library, and the girls at the other. We had no electricity or phones, only candles and flashlights.

"We even had some adults. Parents had come up to get their children and found they couldn't get back home. They spent the night, too."

Stephenson said he didn't realize how bad things were until he left the school to pick up medicine for a child in Hot Springs. "It was a very interesting ordeal, to say the least. The night was one I suspect that all of us will remember."

He stayed at the school, and cafeteria workers stayed late to fix hot dogs for the stranded students and arrived early the next morning to prepare breakfast.

Stephenson said he didn't feel he did anything heroic. "If there were any heroes, it would be everybody," he said.



'We looked up and the wheel at The Gristmill was turning. Jake said it had been broken for eight or nine years, but that water was turning it. It had that much pressure.'

- Rocky Phillips

The footbridge to the Gristmill Inn in Warm Springs was washed out. Managers of the inn said the damage to the square was not severe. The wine cellar was flooded but the wine was rescued. (Recorder file photo)

From WATERS, page 20

Seat Exxon Station was turned on for residents to get drinking and cooking water.

Roads were a mess, blocked with so much water and debris by Tuesday morning that many were impassable. Highway department crews got to work fast to open access, particularly to main arteries. By Thursday, U.S. 220 was opened from Highland to Covington, but only one lane in several places.

Travel to Franklin, W.Va., on U.S. 220 north, however, was nearly impossible. The Recorder interviewed one person who somehow made it from Franklin to Monterey Tuesday night. He said only four-wheel drive vehicles would make it. "At a few places, where streams are coming off the mountain, the water was up to the top of the radiator on his Jeep," the report stated. "He described the large chunks of missing highway as a jigsaw puzzle."

Route 600 and the Back Creek area was a big problem. The bridge crossing the creek on Route 84 was knocked from its supports, so highway workers made a few quick repairs to Route 600, from U.S. 250 to Route 84, to create an alternate route to West Virginia and Vepeco's Back Creek Pumped Storage Station. "The 12-mile stretch of Route 600 is passable but very slow," the newspaper said. "Creeks were still running across the road in a few places and on Tuesday evening, other spots were wide enough for a pickup truck to pass. The highway department has no estimate on road repairs at this time, because the long distance phone lines have been down."

That bridge, and a section of U.S. 220 south, were going to take the longest time to repair. "Local crews are working long hours to make roads in the county passable," The Recorder reported, but there just wasn't enough manpower to do the major work.

Residents were relieved to learn the new pumped storage station wasn't damaged; its dams were holding and showing no signs of stress, although there had been one mudslide into an interior road at the project.

Doe Hill couple stranded

DOE HILL — A Highland County couple was isolated on their Doe Hill farm for about two weeks as a result of last month's flooding. The fast moving creek washed away Mr. and Mrs. Owen Hiner's driveway bridge early Nov. 4, and they waited out the storm in their home of 43 years.

Mrs. Hiner said her husband slept that night but she didn't. The next morning their yard and fields were full of rocks and water. They said it looked as though three streams were coming toward the house rather than the one that normally flows by.

A plank was put across the creek as a footbridge a few days later when the water receded. The bridge and supports had been rebuilt two years ago, according to Hiner. The locust post bridge remained

'They worked all day long one day on the supports ... we are grateful to have such good neighbors.'

- Mrs. Owen Hiner

intact throughout the storm, Hiner said, but the rock and concrete supports were all washed away.

Neighbors made the ordeal much easier, Mrs. Hiner said. They helped their son

retrieve the bridge and build new supports. "They worked all day long one day on the supports," she said, and added, "We are grateful to have such good neighbors."

Hiner said he had seen floods in 1939, 1942, and 1949 on his family's Doe Hill farm, but this was the worst and the only one to affect the whole county.

Rocks and debris are still blocking the stream in places, Hiner said. He and his wife have spent days picking the rocks. When people ask why he is doing all the hard work, Hiner said he responds, "Tim hunting for a pet rock."

He continued that he has cleaned rocks out of the stream in the past and will probably do it again.

- The Recorder, November 1985

Because water covered Lightner's Bridge on Route 600 at the north end of the station's lower reservoir, most workers were unable to leave the facility Monday afternoon. Little Back Creek ran through the town of Mountain Grove there, preventing exit in that direction. Once waters receded Tuesday afternoon, roads were opened and workers were allowed to go home.

The project had controlled flooding downriver by allowing only one-fourth of the water entering the station to be released downstream, according to Robin Sullenberger, a spokesman for Vepeco at the time. (See "At the station," page 33).

The Dominion Power pumped storage project was preparing to go online at the time of the flood. In fact, the rain filled the reservoir and enabled the project to become operational sooner than expected.

"That project definitely saved parts of Mountain Grove," Phillips said. "Without that dam, the damage would have been much

worse up there."

Armstrong said by the next day, the water was still out of its banks in most places, but had receded considerably.

Phillips also recalled water remaining high for some time after the initial flood. When he saw water start running at Webb's, "I figured at that point it would flood. I knew we were in for it. That was something nobody here had ever seen before," he said.

Herb Lightner was a 24-year-old Highland County deputy in 1985; he recalls how different law enforcement operations were 30 years ago. The office was "kind of scarce," he said. "We only had two road deputies back then, and three jailers for the prisoners. Only three dispatchers. There was no 24-hour coverage at all."

Lightner said the office, under Sheriff Milton at the time, knew heavy rains were expected, but there was no advance warning system for sudden flooding. "We didn't have radar or that kind of technology then." But

Dennis O'Hearn of the office had designed a kind of makeshift reverse 911 system. "I remember when it started to get bad at New Hampden, we were able to call there and tell some of them to leave," Lightner said.

"We were working all the time and we kept patrolling; emergency services personnel and the fire departments were telling us when roads got impassable, and I remember we were hoping there wouldn't be any emergency because we couldn't transport to Augusta Medical Center and choppers couldn't fly in the rain. But we didn't have any major catastrophe like that. People helped each other."

The Highland County Volunteer fire Department was busy pumping basements. Several houses on the north side of U.S. 250 in Monterey had water and electrical problems when a creek gushed over its banks, filled basements, shorted out electricity and sparked a few small fires. The department

See WATERS, page 22

From WATERS, page 21

removed power boxes to insure the safety of the homes until the water receded to safe levels.

One couple in Doe Hill was stranded for two weeks after their bridge washed out. (See "Doe Hill couple stranded," page 21). "Things were already flooded everywhere so there wasn't a whole lot you could do," Lightner recalled.

At one point, Lightner said, local funeral director Bill Obaugh was beyond frustrated when the sheriff's office got a call from a woman who said her boyfriend had died. Lightner and Obaugh had to take a front-end loader to the place off Shaws Ridge because it was flooded from ridge to ridge in the area. "We got up there," Lightner recalled. "But he wasn't dead. He was drunk."

At the time, Sheriff Milton had what Lighter described as a "loose knit" emergency coordination system, but nothing formal.

"We called the National Guard but they couldn't get here until the roads cleared," Lightner said. "The whole county pretty much cleared their own roads. We had debris, mud slides, and rock slides for months. But it was just like when we have a big snowstorm, everybody helped out. Lots of people were stranded, you know, but they had groceries and canned goods, a wood supply," he said. "With the current being off they couldn't do much. At that time there were not many with generators."

Lightner said it was cold in the nights at the time, but then when it froze and temperatures really dropped, it became difficult to repair anything. "These contractors trying to do the work couldn't do it," he said. "And especially over Hardserabble and toward Franklin, there was stuff hanging in the trees everywhere."

Following the flood, Phillips went to places he normally hunted in areas like Mountain Grove, Jack Mountain, and Ramsey's Draft in Augusta County. "If I hadn't been there before, I wouldn't have known they were the same places. Trees were crisscrossed and boulders and rocks had been moved 500 or 600 yards down the hollows," he said. "There is still debris in Ramsey's Draft. There are still rocks to this day where they were moved by the flood."

At Back Creek, Phillips said a truck driven by a Covington man was taken about a half-mile down the creek. Fortunately, the driver was not injured. "It just floated him on down the river. He was OK, but he had to get another truck," he said.

Lightner also remembers emergency officials being concerned about whether the pumped storage station dams would hold. His wife, Theresa, was working there when the flood hit. "We only had two deputies so we didn't have anyone to send down there if they'd needed us, and they had a pretty big staff there."

Lightner couldn't reach his wife, "but last I heard they were just going to stay down there." Turns out, Theresa and Sarah Shiflett tried to make their way home, but only made it as far as Lynn Townsend's place and had to spend the night there.

Meanwhile, most of the time, crews went around unclogging culverts of leaves and debris. "A lot of places flooded just because the culverts were stopped up," he said.

After the flood, Lightner said the sheriff's
See WATERS, page 23



The aftermath of floodwaters in a mobile home at the Fassifern Trailer Court in Bath County was devastating. Observers said water was within two feet of the top of this home late Monday night. (Recorder file photo)

Trailer court residents lose everything

WARM SPRINGS — Three mobile homes in the Fassifern Trailer Court on Route 39 south of Warm Springs were total losses after the flood.

One home was completely submerged while the water came within one to two feet of the tops of others during the height of the storm.

"All three trailers remained on their foundations, but their interiors looked as though they had been picked up, shaken and replaced on the foundations after being sprayed with mud," The Recorder reported then.

"Norma Giles said a neighbor who works for the highway department told her to leave because the water was rising dangerously fast. She turned off the electricity and left her home of 16 years.

Upon return Tuesday, Giles discovered that she, her daughter and granddaughter had lost everything but some clothing that could be washed. Mrs. Giles also lost her dog in the flood, but a neighbor's cat found safety on top of a refrigerator."

Giles' memory of the time was on record with the Bath County Historical Society. "I was home with my granddaughter, who was two years old," Giles said then. "We left about 1:30 or 2 because the water was rising, Nelson Liptrap, a neighbor, offered to help us get out. I asked him to please cut the gas off. When we left, the water had covered the adjoining yards, but there was no water in our yard when we left.

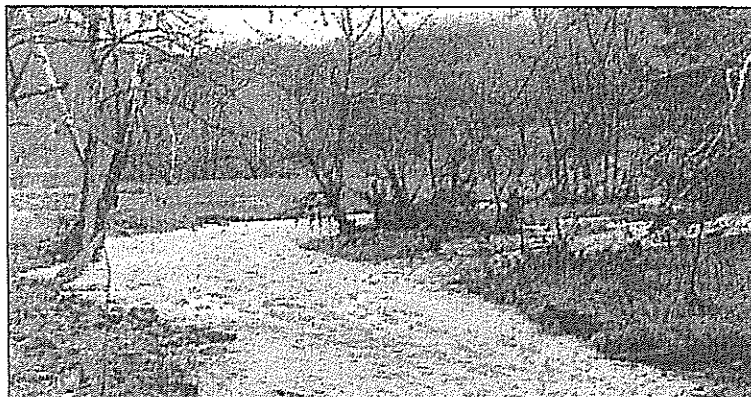
"They told me later that by 4:30, the water was up to the underpinning of our trailer. By the next morning, the water had risen to

within two feet of the top of our trailer. Nelson's trailer was covered."

"We went back in the afternoon. It was a mess. The couch, bookcase, chairs and TV were overturned. It looked like the water had lifted up everything and turned it over.

"The flood brings back lots of bad memories. We lost practically everything we owned.

"We got a government grant to help us set up housekeeping. They gave us a list of what we could buy with the money. On Thanksgiving Day, a man came out to assess the damage. We used the grant money to put a down payment on another house and to replace our belongings."



The Jackson River and other creeks in the area rose to the edges of their banks the Friday following the flood, when more than an inch of rain fell on Bath and Highland. No additional damage was reported but many residents waited nervously for the rains to stop. (Recorder file photo)

From WATERS, page 22

office began working in earnest on an emergency plan, and some standard operating procedures for emergency events. "We tried to think of who had what equipment, and make a formal list of contacts, like who had skidders or big tractors," he said. "I can't remember the first time we started using ham radio operators but it was soon after."

Election Day

Region-wide, not surprisingly, most counties reported a decline at the polls that Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 5.

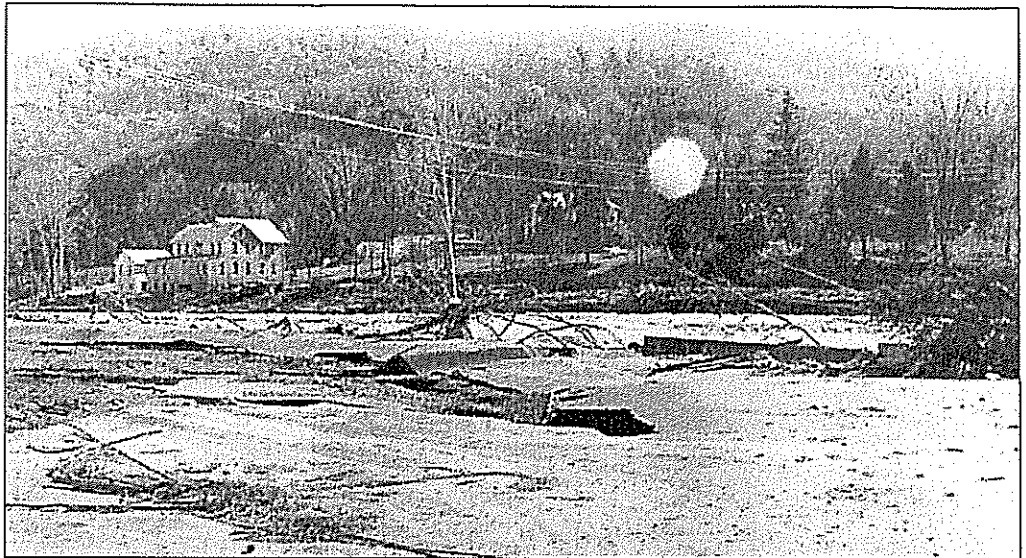
Mary Emma McLaughlin Hamilton, a woman who had voted in every election since 1920, when the 19th Amendment granting suffrage rights to American women was proclaimed, was unable to vote for the first time in 65 years. The road to the McLaughlin homestead washed out; Mrs. Hamilton was 91 that year.

However, her youngest daughter, a grandmother of five, upheld the family voting tradition when she set out from the family farm on Election Day, much the same as her mother did in 1920. Hiking the six miles over the mountain and washed out terrain, 59-year-old Norma Hunt reached the polls before they closed that Tuesday to cast her ballot.

Former Bath County registrar Louise "Lou" Plecker retired after more than 28 years in 2011. At the time, she recalled 1985 as being the most unusual Election Day in her career.

"The day before the election, the courthouse had to be closed because of the flood," she had recalled. "We had to change the Hot Springs polling place to the hardware store in Mitchelltown. I had to use lamps and candles in the office all day on Election Day. The current finally came back on about 7:30 p.m." That was just before results began coming to the office from the polling places. "Luckily, the lights came on in time for all that to be turned in," she said.

Courthouse records indicate, remarkably, that voter turnout here was still higher than



Most of the town of Franklin, W.Va. escaped damage from the rising flood waters. This road along the banks of the Potomac served Franklin Enterprises and Monongahela Power, two businesses that were the most heavily damaged. (Recorder file photo)

the state average in both counties.

West Virginia in dire straits

While Highland and Bath residents reeled from property damage, reports began trickling in from neighboring Pocahontas and Pendleton counties in West Virginia — and the situation was much worse there — 22 counties were declared a federal disaster area. Communication was limited to ham and police radios because of the downed power and telephone lines. All roads to Marlinton, Parsons, and Petersburg were blocked by floodwaters. As many as 800 people in Marlinton were completely stranded.

The Recorder spoke to Pocahontas sheriff's deputy Craig Doss at the time. "Half

of Marlinton is gone," he said, adding that "several people lost their homes, including me. Water took mine right down the river."

The Greenbrier River was expected to crest at 25 feet — eight feet above flood stage — setting a 100-year record. The highest levels would hit Marlinton and Alderson.

West Virginia would suffer some \$700 million in damages; 38 people lost their lives.

Williamsville blocked

By Wednesday, the rain was gone and power returned to most of the area. Clean up began, even in Mill Gap, though power didn't return to that area for seven days. Bath and Highland had been certified to get disaster aid; damage was estimated in

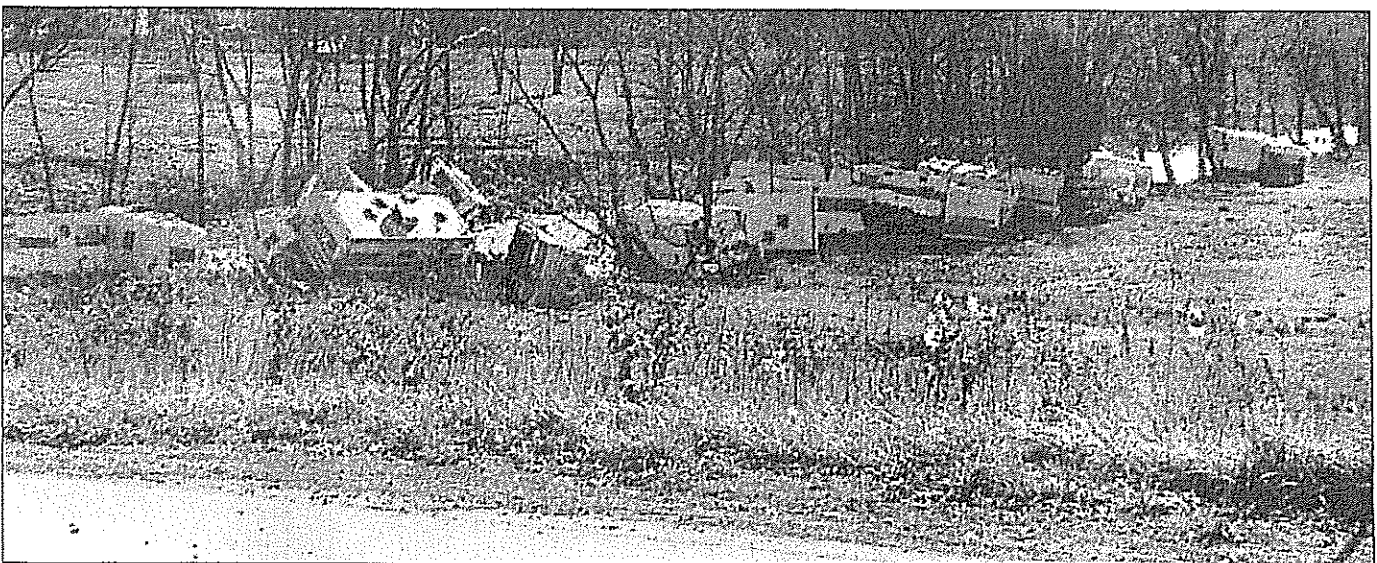
the millions.

Williamsville was particularly hard hit when the Cowpasture and Bullpasture rivers overflowed their banks and did substantial damage to the roads and farmland in that area.

The Cowpasture rose eight feet above Route 614 in many places and deposited tons of rock and debris in pastures and fields. The road was diverted through an alfalfa field until the highway department could clear rock and debris from the road.

Phillips recalled scenes from the area. "There were hay fields in Williamsville going towards McDowell that were full of river rocks. People got relief from the state

See WATERS, page 24



Recreational vehicles at the Cave Country Store camping grounds along U.S. 220 north near Franklin, W.Va., were battered about by the rushing waters of the South Branch of the Potomac River. Many of the RVs were swept down river and were total losses. (Recorder file photo)

The Recorder Thursday, November 5, 2015

From WATERS, page 23

to get the rocks out of their fields," he said.

Route 678 in the Williamsville Gorge was closed until Saturday afternoon, leaving one camper trapped but safe.

The only others trapped were the Adams family — Jim and Betti Adams, their four small children, and Jim's brother, Byron, who lived a mile down the road from them. They were trapped for two weeks.

The Adams brothers had a hunting guide business and it was the first day of fall turkey season. "One guy even showed up, ready to hunt," Byron Adams recalled. "We couldn't figure out how he'd gotten in there."

They had no electricity or water, but they had plenty of food because they had just stocked up for a group of hunting clients. For water, they used an old hand pump. "I remember it stunk, like sulphur," Adams said, "but for some reason, it made the best coffee."

He recalls walking that Monday to his brother's house. "When I left, the water was over my ankles; when I walked back, it was up to my knees."

After two weeks, he picked a spot that "looked good," and forded the stream in a Jeep to get out.

Assessing the damage

By Tuesday a week later, the only road still closed in Highland was Route 642 over Middle Mountain; residents had another way out, however.

A temporary one-lane bridge was built over Back Creek on Route 84 to replace the destroyed bridge, and the washed out area on U.S. 220 south of Mustoe was filled with rock and dirt to make it safe for traffic. Highway department supervisor at the time, Robert Marshall Jr., couldn't say when repair projects would be finished.

In Bath County, David Mead of the highway department reported no one had been trapped by closed state roads, but in some cases, people had to go about a half-mile out of their way to reach a main road.

Three Bath bridges had extensive wash-out, exposing their pilings and making them unsafe for heavy vehicles — Route 39 over the Jackson River, Route 620 over the Cowpasture River, and Route 614 over the Bullpasture in Williamsville.

Mead told Bath supervisors that week that 90 pieces of road repair equipment and the manpower to operate it were being used in Bath County alone.

The Homestead resort suffered the most substantial damage of area businesses. Flood waters left three inches of mud in many of the first floor rooms and the convention center. Both the Upper and Lower Cascades golf courses had new creeks, gullies and hazards. Four fairways on the Lower Cascades would have to be completely redesigned and reconstructed.

None of greens were severely damaged. Hotel spokesman John Gazzola said at the time that the "hotel is fortunate because greens are expensive and would take a great deal of time to rebuild." (See "Homestead suffers losses," page 29).

Major repairs and clean up were delayed because the ground was so soft that heavy equipment needed to move debris off would cause more damage. The hotel waited for ground to freeze or become firm.

At the Upper Cascades course, seven holes were damaged; sand traps were



The Cowpasture River deposited tons of river rocks on Route 614 north of Williamsville. The sudden force of the often dry river moved the road from the tree line on its banks into an alfalfa field and took an untold amount of fence and pasture with it. (Recorder file photo)



The tee and fairway of the 14th hole on the Lower Cascades golf course was covered over with rocks and other debris in the Nov. 4 flood, turning the well-kept greens into a moonscape. (Recorder file photo)

washed out on the 13th hole and were filled with rocks and boulders. Eight holes on the Lower Cascades were damaged, with the second and 18th holes completely ruined.

Then Homestead president Thomas Lennon estimated it would cost \$300,000 to repair both courses, but hoped they would be open by April the next year.

The Virginia Trout Company in Monterey could barely begin to assess the extent of its damages. Company president at the time, David Johnston, said the greatest

damage occurred when the Jackson River flowed into the spring fed raceways south of Mustoe.

The main hatchery north of Monterey was a dumping ground for mud from the fast running spring that feeds the facility. Johnston said they had found no dead fish but believed fish were out of the raceways and the river and stream were pretty well stocked.

Damages to area homes ranged from flooded basements to washed out porches

and foundations to total loss of mobile homes. Three mobile homes in the Fassifem Trailer Court on Route 39 south of Wann Springs were total losses. (See "Trailer court residents lose everything," page 22).

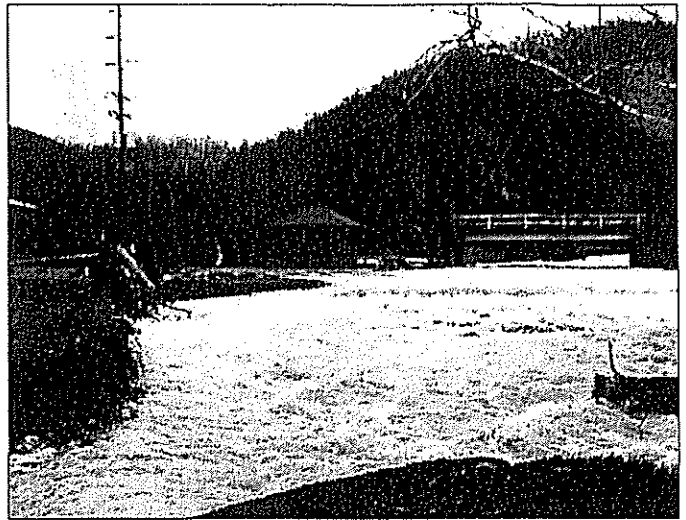
West Virginia devastated
Bath and Highland suffered a lot of damage, but neighboring West Virginia counties faced far worse. Most businesses and homes

See WATERS, page 25

Flood of '85 Sponsored by First and Citizens Bank



The road in front of The Homestead purchasing office was washed out. (Photo courtesy Bath County Historical Society)



The Lower Cascades golf course was ravaged. (Photo courtesy Bath County Historical Society)

From WATERS, page 24

in Marlinton were ruined and a large portion of Pendleton County was without water, sewage and other utilities.

The National Guard was called into Franklin to help coordinate a relief effort. The town was not damaged as severely as the western and northern areas of the county. Riverton, Circleville and Chery Grove were among the worst hit communities, but the flood control dams on the South Fork of the Potomac had helped lessen the damage in the Franklin area. Officials told The Recorder the loss of life there was remarkably low, all things considered. At the time, the latest official report said 10 people had died and six were still missing in Pendleton.

Utility service in the county was sporadic. Telephone and electric power service was available in scattered areas but there was no drinking water and sewage treatment facilities were not operational throughout the county. Pit privies were dug, but trucks could not travel to service them.

Many roads were closed; others were open for one lane travel only. All told, 708 bridges were completely gone and seven more on major thoroughfares needed repair and were unsafe for heavy vehicles in Pendleton alone.

State health officials began burying thousands of dead chickens and turkeys from poultry farms; livestock were posing a health hazard downstream if the carcasses were not disposed of properly.

The relief effort, however, was strong. Food, supplies, clothing and money were donated, including much from Highland. Blue Grass Ruritan's that month donated \$1,000 to the Franklin Ruritan Club, and one Blue Grass woman contacted South Carolina churches for assistance. (See "Carolina churches send aid," page 27).

In Pocahontas County to the west, the clean up effort was also in full swing. Marlinton had lost power, phones and water. Most utilities were operational a week later, but phone service was scattered. All businesses and most homes in Marlinton were damaged from the four to six feet of

water that flowed through the town. But most buildings downtown appeared to be structurally sound, and business owners were cleaning their establishments preparing to reopen. Many homes, especially trailers, were severely damaged. Porches, family rooms and garages were torn from many houses. Others were totally destroyed when the buildings were washed off their foundations.

"There is light at the end of the tunnel," one official told The Recorder. "We are going to rebuild the county to be as beautiful as it was before the storm."

National forest struggles
The flood hit just before rifle season was

See WATERS, page 27



Golf carts at the Lower Cascades were moved around like toy cars during the flood. (Photo courtesy Bath County Historical Society)



A Marlinton, W.Va. resident was found clearing debris Saturday after the flood. The Greenbrier River had washed over its banks and inundated much of the town. (Photo courtesy Zona Landes)

The Recorder Thursday, November 5, 2015



Main Street in Hot Springs was covered in rushing water during the flood of 1985. (Photo courtesy Bath County Historical Society)

The retaining wall and parking lot to The Homestead golf course were severely damaged during Monday night's flooding. The hotel suffered other damage but no injuries were reported and guests were reportedly taking the adventure in stride.

(Recorder file photo)



The Recorder Thursday, November 5, 2015

From WATERS, page 25

kicking in, and the national forest lands were a mess. The Deerfield District, like others, set up visitors' stations to provide information to hunters and campers who might not have known about the flood. Most of the damage was to forest service roads with culverts washed out, bridges, and ditches. The extent in Deerfield alone was estimated at \$450,000, but officials hoped to have main roads open by rifle season.

The Braley Pond area, Mountain House, Ramsey's Draft Road, Hodges Draft road, Jerkemight, Stone Lick, and the south end of Walter Mountain were all closed.

Forest supervisor George Smith gave an overview of the situation. "Dozens of forest roads have been washed out, with bridges and culverts destroyed in all six districts of the forest. Crews from the George Washington have been out every day since the rain stopped and we have workers and equipment from the national forests in Kentucky and North Carolina but we still don't even know all the damage," he said. "Large areas of the forest will be inaccessible by vehicle, including many recreation areas and campgrounds ... This will certainly cause inconveniences for many outdoors people, and ruin the hunt for many others this year, but it is really a small piece of the catastrophe as compared to the loss of lives, homes and possessions many area residents have suffered."

In the Warm Springs District, all roads usually open for deer hunting were opened, but most were much shorter. Astonishingly, it was one of the best hunting seasons on record.

Experts come to help

In Monterey, nearly three weeks later, a federal flood office opened as a Disaster Application Center for those who incurred damage to apply for help. Representatives from Farmers Home Administration, Small Business Administration, and Veterans Administration took applications for relief funds and grants for families.

Virginia Cooperative Extension agents issued warnings about the dangers of flood contaminated by floodwaters with high concentrations of disease causing bacteria.

Residents were instructed to drain water heaters to remove sediment and silt.

When the Federal Emergency Management Agency set up Disaster Assistance Centers in Bath and Highland to assist residents in finding temporary housing and financial aid for repairs, that's not what they discovered residents needed most. The majority of them wanted assistance for cleaning and re-channeling creeks in Highland. The manager did not know where to send the people, and made several calls to Richmond and the county courthouse until he found that county clerk at the time, Sue Dudley, was the right source. Dudley was compiling a list of people, locations and damage to streams for the Army Corps of Engineers.

The Corps was set to assess damage and determine if creeks need to be dredged to help prevent future flooding. Requests from area farmers had prompted the county to ask the Corps to come to their aid.

The Soil Conservation service was in charge of rechanneling streams if their new

See WATERS, page 28



Women from Highland County volunteered their time to sort hundreds of bags of clothing donated toward the relief effort in West Virginia. (Recorder file photo)

Carolina churches send aid to victims

BLUEGRASS — Floods have a way of stripping families of homes, land, livestock, loved ones and collections of worldly belongings. In the aftermath of such tragedy, human kindness and generosity help to rebuild and replace what was lost.

Members of several Methodist and Baptist churches in South Carolina recently showed such kindness to flood victims of nearby Pendleton County, W.Va. by delivering a rental truck full of clothing, diapers and 100 cases of baby food.

The long distance relief began with a phone call from Blue Grass resident

Mary Schooler to her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Charles D. Davis of West Columbia, S.C., on the Saturday following the recent flood. She told them of the need for clothing and food for flood stricken residents in nearby West Virginia. The Davises contacted several local ministers and asked them to announce the call for help during their church services the following day. The congregations of (more than a dozen) responded without hesitation.

By the following Thursday, Nov. 14, the Davis garage was full of donated items to be sent northward. The Davises and the Rev. Franklin Buie, pastor of a (South Carolina church) rented a 14-foot truck and drove

the goods to Blue Grass the next day. Members of the Blue Grass Volunteer Fire Department unloaded the vehicle on Friday evening and transported the goods to Franklin the following day.

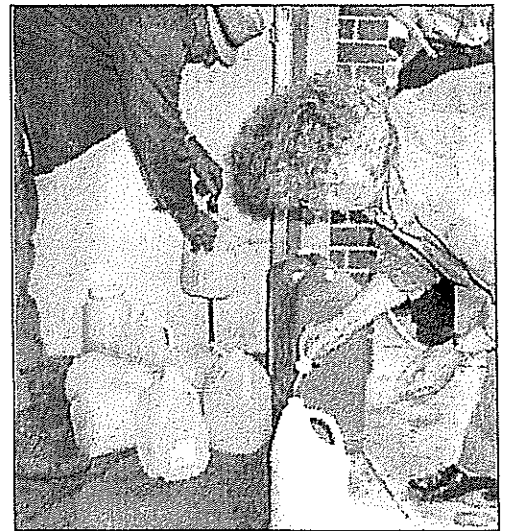
The call for help was particularly important to the Rev. Charlie Yoho of Oakwood Baptist Church in West Columbia — he was the former pastor of Wayside Baptist Church in Franklin.

"We could have done more if we had more time, but Mary said it was urgent," Davis said.

— From The Recorder, November 1985

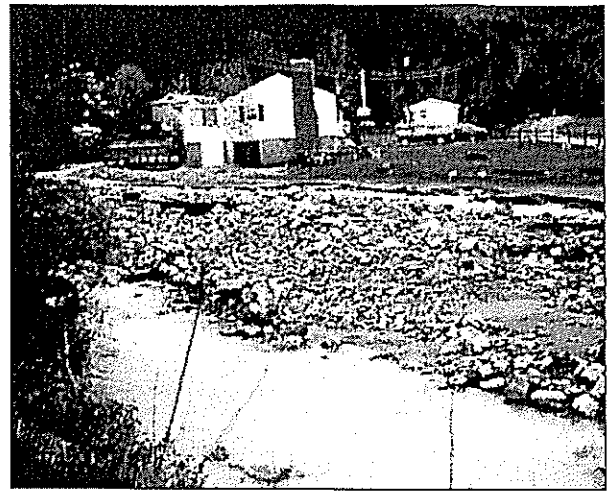


Left, Jim Tennant and the Rev. Rob Sherrard of Windy Cove Presbyterian Church pumped 340 gallons of water out of the church's fuel oil tank. Three feet of water stood in the Millboro Springs church that Monday night. At right, Homer Helmick and Lucy Varner of Monterey filled jugs with water at the Highland rescue squad building. Area citizens and Shenandoah's Pride and other dairies donated the jugs to transport safe drinking water to West Virginia flood victims. (Recorder file photos)





Floodwaters rushed past Mary McElwee's house in Crowdertown. (Photo courtesy Bath County Historical Society)



Water was very close to Don Ryder's house in Crowdertown, above, and piled debris right next to the home, below. (Photos courtesy Bath County Historical Society)

The flood was a terrible tragedy, a fierce reminder of the power of nature to overtake us no matter how prepared we think we are.
 ~ Congressman Jim Olin

From WATERS, page 27

paths posed a threat to life or property. The ASCS was in charge of removing debris from fields and replacing washed away fences.

The Bath County center averaged 35 people a day and more than 60 applications for temporary housing were taken in the first three days.

A FEMA representative told The Recorder, "In this rural flood situation it is very hard to cover everyone," and noted the difference between this event and a tornado disaster. "You know exactly where the twister touched down. Here, you don't know about the people back in the mountain hollows."

Life returns to 'normal'

Clean up and repairs following the flood lasted weeks, months, even years. To this day, in Pendleton, Pocahontas, Bath and Highland, there are residents who can point to the water lines forever etched into the walls of their businesses and homes.

But as Thanksgiving approached, the usual special events, dinners, and church services were held, and residents bonded with family and friends over the tragedies and frightening experiences of the storm's wrath.

Congressman Jim Olin, in his Thanksgiving message Nov. 28, summed it up: "For some people, it might be hard at first to think of the many things we have to be

thankful for this year," he said. "Much of the 6th District has just suffered its worst flood in recorded history. Many people have lost everything they've worked for all their lives ... The flood was a terrible tragedy, a fierce reminder of the power of nature to overtake us no matter how prepared we think we are. We will not fully recover for a long, long time.

"But I think the flood reminded us of something else. It showed how strong and good our people are when faced with an emergency, how willing they are to help each other."

Many creeks and streams now are routed differently than they were before the flood, Rocky Phillips noted. "Nothing like that had ever hit Bath County before. Water is probably the most powerful thing there is. The flood and the derecho are the two worst things ever to hit here." He recalled hearing people say a large flood would never happen in this area because the mountains would help hold the water back.

"It just goes to show, things can happen no matter where you are," Phillips said.

Herb Lightner, who after the flood went on to serve more than 30 years as Highland sheriff, gives credit to residents of the area for helping one another through the worst storm in the area's history.

"It was a community effort," he said. "It was then, and it always will be, a community effort back here."



Mrs. Ralph Shaver of Bacova described the location of her property damage to map reader Sam Guerrant at the Disaster Assistance Center in Hot Springs following the flood. (Recorder file photo)

The Recorder Thursday, November 5, 2015



Cottage Row at The Homestead was under water during the flood of 1985. (Photo courtesy Bath County Historical Society)

Homestead suffers damages to buildings, greens

HOT SPRINGS — John Gazzola was director of public relations at The Homestead during the flood. The resort suffered the greatest amount of property damage, but also made some of the greatest contributions to the community at the time. Damage to the interior of the hotel was estimated at nearly \$1 million.

Gazzola's recollections were preserved by the Bath County Historical Society as follows:

"Thanks to the foresight of Mr. Tom

Lennon, the interior damage was covered by flood insurance," Gazzola said. "Of course, we couldn't get insurance on the golf courses, and damage to our three courses and other parts of the grounds added another \$750,000 to \$1 million on top of that.

"The furniture on the first floor was severely damaged and had to be replaced."

Also damaged, Gazzola recalled, was all carpeting in the 1,500-seat conference center below the first floor of the south wing. He estimated there was three feet of water on

the conference center floor.

Water brought huge boulders tumbling down onto the Old Course. The Upper Cascades course had "very extensive damage" to the 12th, 13th, and 16th holes. The first hole of the Lower Cascades "looked like the North Sea or something," Gazzola remembered.

The retaining wall at the foot of Bath House Hill gave way under pressure and spilled out onto U.S. 220 in Hot Springs. Gazzola's car was in the golf course parking

lot near the retaining wall. When he finally made it to his car that evening, the vehicle had two or three feet of water inside.

"I decided to get the damage repaired and keep the car. That was very foolish. It never ran well after that. My advice to anyone whose car suffers flood damage is let the insurance company declare it a loss and be done with it.

"It was tragic for a lot of people; there were many unspoken heroes who chipped in."

About the storm

- Hurricane Juan was an erratic tropical cyclone that looped twice near the Louisiana coast. On Oct. 27, 1985, the storm became a hurricane, reaching sustained winds of 85 mph offshore southern Louisiana. Juan continued to the north and was absorbed by a cold front, its moisture contributing to deadly flooding in the Mid-Atlantic. Overall, Juan caused about \$1.5 billion in damage, making it among the costliest United States hurricanes.

- The 1985 Election Day floods produced the costliest floods in both West Virginia and Virginia in November 1985.

- In Virginia, rainfall peaked at 19.77 inches. The rains increased levels along rivers to record heights, including the James River, which crested at 42.15 feet. The Roanoke River rose 18.57 feet in 10 hours to a peak of 23.35 feet, considered a one in 200 year event. Considered the worst flood on record in the city, Roanoke sustained \$225 million

- in damage, with 3,100 damaged homes and businesses. Throughout Virginia, damage was estimated at \$753 million, making it the state's costliest flood at the time, and there were 22 deaths.

- In West Virginia, 27 river gauging stations were at one in 100 year events, mostly along the Potomac and Monongahela basins. High waters washed away topsoil and thousands of trees, and over 13,000 homes and businesses were damaged or destroyed. Damage was estimated at nearly \$700 million, making it West Virginia's costliest flood, and there were 38 deaths.

- The flooding spurred changes to warning practices by the National Weather Service and the Government of Virginia.

- In Highland County, the floods damaged 350 homes or barns, and deteriorated \$2 million worth of roads.

— Wikipedia and other sources



The Lower Cascades golf course was inundated with water during the 1985 flood. (Photo courtesy Bath County Historical Society)

A hero lost

FRANKLIN, W.Va. — Undoubtedly one of the first stories to surface when people recollect the events of the 1985 flood is the one about Ivan Luther Stone.

Stone, they'll tell you, was a hero. A man who would always go out of his way to help others. He lost his life that Nov. 4 doing just that — trying to help neighbors.

Just the week before the flood, Willard Randolph Spencer, his wife Mary, their son Willard Randolph Spencer II, and Mrs. Spencer's mother, had moved from Monterey to what was the old auction house, Haynes Mountain Treasures. It was located along U.S. 220, just north of the border between Highland and Pendleton counties.

As the waters of the Potomac began to rise, the family took refuge atop their home early Monday afternoon, but declined offers to be evacuated.

Ivan Stone, who was their neighbor, arrived on his tractor. "He went down there twice," recalled Herb Lightner, a Highland deputy at the time. "He had an International, a really big tractor, and he was trying to get them on the cab." They didn't go.

"Someone had a skidder," Lightner said, "but the holes were so big (under the water) he couldn't get there."

Apparently deciding they'd better leave, the Spencers called Stone once more.

It was getting dark, according to reports, and Stone couldn't tell the high waters were too much for even his large

tractor.

Glen Rexrode of Forks of the Water shook his head recently, remembering the awful day. "I guess he just couldn't tell how high the water was and it just floated the tractor up and off," he said. "They found him later a good bit downstream."

Lightner agreed. "He couldn't see it. It was dark, and it was a really big hole. The road had gone to stream," he said.

By Nov. 7, Stone, Mr. Spencer, and the Spencers' son had been found, but Mrs. Spencer and her mother were still missing at the time.

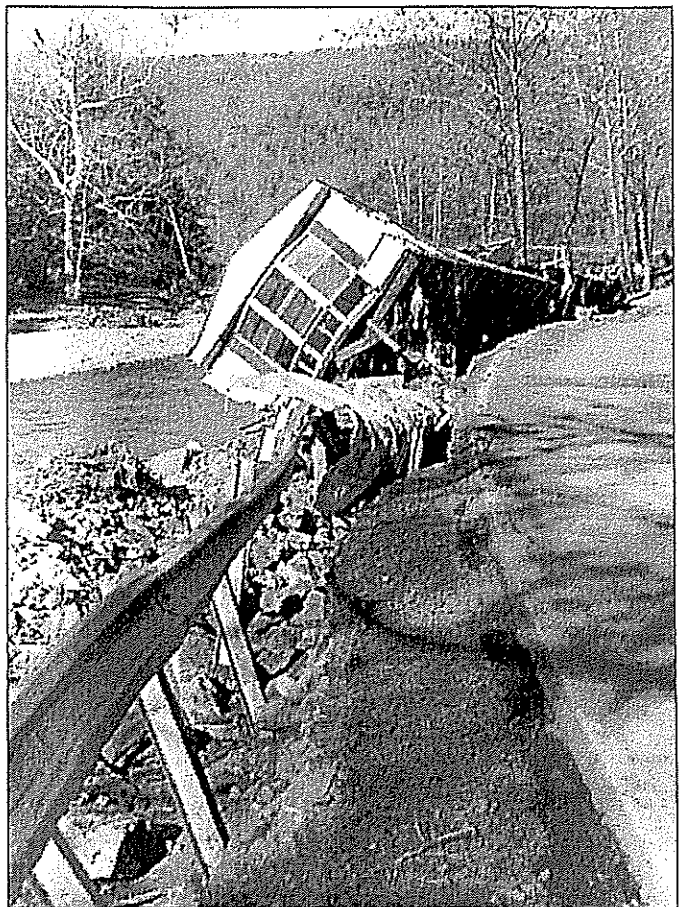
"He was the kind of man who if somebody needed something, he'd be there," Lightner said. "So, I wasn't surprised he tried to help that family."

No one could get to Franklin, W.Va., nor Obaugh Funeral Home in McDowell, so Mr. Stone's body was kept at the sheriff's office until roads became passable, Lightner said.

The heroic Mr. Stone was only 58 at the time of his death. He had been a self-employed farmer, a U.S. Marine who fought in Korea, and a member of Harper Chapel United Methodist Church.

He left behind his wife, Dorothea "Dot" Stone, a brother, and two sisters.

Mrs. Stone still lives in Franklin; she called on The Recorder recently, her pain still visible, saying she could not bear to talk about that awful day, but instead provided a lovely memorial about her husband, which is published on page 14 in this week's issue.



The fast-moving current of the South Branch of the Potomac carried this home down river about a half mile before it came to rest on the riverbank at U.S. 220 south of Franklin, W.Va. (Recorder file photo)



Pictured is the bank of the Jackson River being rebuilt after the flood. Plecker and Sons Excavating of Millboro dumped tons of fill rock in the area along U.S. 220 south of Mustoe that was washed out by the flooding. (Recorder file photo)

The Recorder Thursday, November 5, 2015

Walls of water pound Hot Springs

HOT SPRINGS — Clifford Williams was working at his garage that Monday, which at the time was down at Bacova Junction, south of Hot Springs.

"I went to work like a normal day. Along about 9 a.m., I got a phone call. I had the motors out of three cars, at once. The motors were on the floor, and the phone rang. It was a guy who had broken down near the intersection at Eden Church. He had run through a puddle and flooded out. I went down and got him going, and went back to the shop. That is when everything started breaking loose."

When Williams walked into his shop, "I'd no more than gotten in the door when I heard a big roar. I looked out the door and there was a wall of water running — I mean a wall; so much, I couldn't get the big garage door shut. The water came in through the front and out the back, and over the 27 cars I had there. The cars were banging around against each other — there was no place for them to go. The water finally knocked the wall down; it is still down to this day."

Williams decided he'd best try to head for home. "But I couldn't get home because the bridge at the Lower Cascades was washed out. The bridge at the falls was washed out, and one up at the Upper Cascades was washed out — couldn't nobody get in or out. So I came back up Route 615 to the (Hot Springs) firehouse."

The fire and rescue people who had made it to the station began picking up people at their homes and bringing them to the firehouse for shelter, Williams said. "I know at least one woman had to be gotten out by boat. We were busy, out rescuing people, all night long."

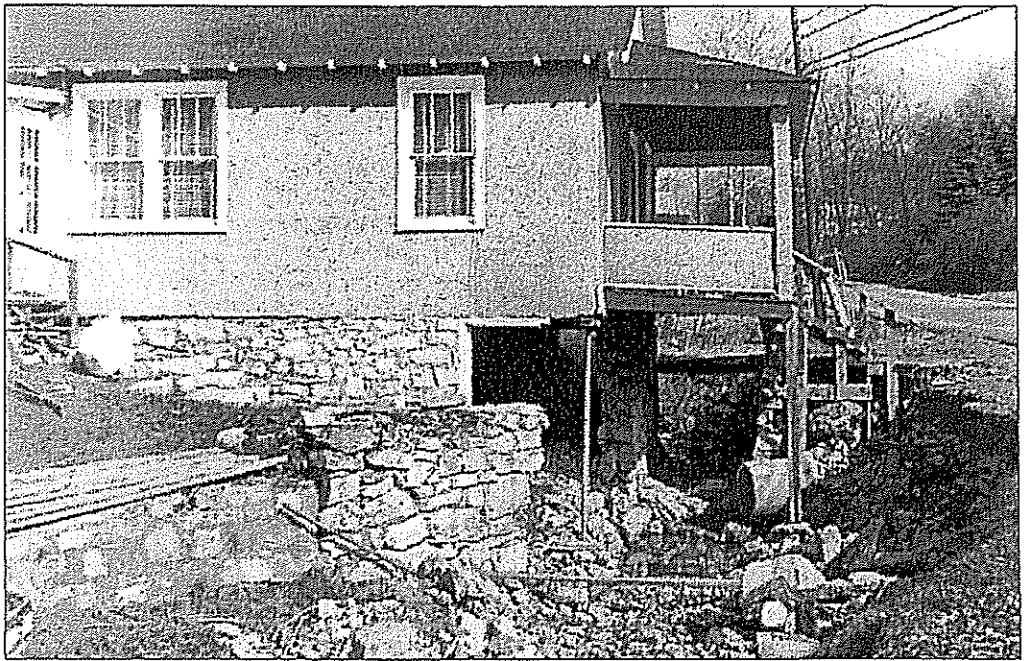
One of those people was his own sister, Darlene Carpenter. She was a deputy clerk of the circuit court at the time, and working at the courthouse. Most of the staff in the courthouse offices had already tried to make their way toward home. There was no electricity, no telephone service, and cell phones hadn't even made their way into Bath County yet. Carpenter's only contact with the outside world was the sheriff's office next door. They told her Hot Springs was complete flooded; she had no way to get home. Finally, Carpenter was the only person left in the courthouse. And then — her brother Clifford Williams shows up in a fire engine, and whisks her away toward home.

When Williams finally made it back to his garage days later, he was devastated.

"Those three engines I had on the floor? When the water rushed through, parts of them probably ended up in Virginia Beach. And, I had to make all those cars — 27 of them — run again. There's no telling how much that ended up costing me. No one had floor insurance back then, that I know of. I think it was almost a month before I got that place cleaned up down there; I had to borrow a front-end loader to do it."

Williams recalls several of the plights faced by residents whom the flood also adversely affected.

"The day after the flood, a wrecker was called from Covington to help out Lane Ryder. He had tried to drive up Falls Road. The bridge was washed out, and the water



The foundation and basement of Grace Simmons' home were washed away as fast-moving waters flowed through a culvert under U.S. 220 in Healing Springs. (Recorder file photo)

just dumped him right down there in the creek. It took two wreckers just to get him out of there, where he'd spent the night.

"Harold Fry went looking for his car and couldn't find it. It was in a big, deep hole behind the purchasing office" below the Hot Springs firehouse. Johnny Gazzola's car was washed away. When we heard that on the scanner, that is when we really knew it was very bad."

Three days after the flood, the Hot Springs fire and rescue personnel turned their attentions to neighboring locations facing even worse trouble.

"We got a crew together and went over to Marlinton. That place was really devastated," he said, shaking his head at the recollection of what he witnessed. "I actually saw a house floating down the river. It was unbelievable."

"It was very traumatic for everybody," said Clifford's wife Mary Ellen, who also had a flood tale to share. She was assistant manager of The Homestead, and on duty at the time.

"You could not get from the hotel to the other side of (Route) 220, there was just so much water running down; wherever you were, you were trapped by water. I was on duty in the lobby. It was raining, but that was it — raining. I looked down at some papers, and when I looked back up again moments later, the whole front of the hotel was just brown water, moving very fast. It happened in a split second. One minute it was just raining, and the next minute, there it was: a flood."

All hell broke loose shortly after 9 a.m., and by 11 a.m., Hot Springs was inundated.

"We had hundreds of Christian women

at a conference," Mary Ellen said. "Thank God many of them had already departed, but those who had stayed until that next morning went right to work helping people. Nobody complained; everybody helped if and where they could. The employees where were there had to spend the night; they couldn't get home, and they were needed around the hotel. Even Mr. (Thomas Lennon, hotel president) was there. The power was out. I was up in the lobby for 24 hours."

When the firehouse downtown filled up with refugees from the flood, "the firetrucks would bring the overflow up to the hotel for the night. One little girl came in with her hound dog. This was when no dogs were allowed in the hotel. I just looked at that little girl and her big hound dog and told her, 'Don't make any noise!' It was just so hectic, but everybody was doing what had to be done. The next morning at 8 o'clock, standing in the lobby reminded me of a big cruise ship, just surrounded by the water," Ellen Williams said.

The Williamses both recall that the power was out for several days. But, the hotel had generators, and so was able to feed guests and refugees. What did they feed them? No one remembers. "I didn't get to eat at all," Mary Ellen said. "Us neither," said Clifford.

Two other couples — Brian and Sue Puhle and Paul and Maggie Marian — were also on the hotel staff Nov. 5, 1985, although both couples have since retired.

Maggie Marian worked at the front desk. "That was the day they were giving us our 'years of service' awards, so I went in to get my award," she said. "I was wearing high

heeled shoes. When I went to leave the hotel to go home, I stepped outside and the water was terrible. You couldn't get across 220."

Maggie doesn't recall how she made it home to Natural Well through the gushing water. "There were big rocks in the road everywhere; it was just terrible."

"The water just broke loose," said Paul, who was home in Natural Well at the time, but scheduled to work in the hotel kitchen the next day. "I started to work and the bridge at the Lower Cascades was washed out. I couldn't get over there, so I decided well, I'll go down through the Falls and head up on 220. I got to the Falling Spring Road and that bridge was gone, too. So I came back on 687, planning to come in to Hot Springs that way. But there was a mudslide, and I couldn't get through. I finally made it back home and tried to call the hotel, but all the lines were down. So, I got a day off, but I spent it running all over the county trying to get to work!"

Sue Puhle was working in the hotel kitchen. She recalls, "My grandmother was in the hospital, so I had to leave work. My brother came by to pick me up. When I got outside, there was water everywhere. Walter Failes had to pick me up and carry me across the water to my brother's car." She was amazed at what she saw. "In back of the casino, cars that had been parked were just floating around!"

"It was just so devastating. Nobody knew it was coming," Clifford Williams said.

His wife added, "You just can't appreciate it unless you saw it. And I certainly hope it never happens again."

Lucky to be alive

HOT SPRINGS — A Bath County man suffered a concussion when the truck he was driving plunged into the rushing Falling Springs Creek during the height of the storm Monday, Nov. 4.

C.L. "Lane" Ryder of Ashwood, who was on his way to pick up his father in Covington, rounded a turn on Route 640 and saw a bridge and road were washed away. Ryder was unable to stop his vehicle and crashed into the water.

He says he cannot recall what happened next, except that the truck was beginning to fill with water and he had only a small pocket of air to breathe.

"I don't remember anything until I was hanging onto a tree," said Ryder, adding that he is unsure how he got out of the water.

Luke Meadows of Hot Springs apparently heard Ryder calling and rescued him. Meadows took his friend to Health Springs and the Bath County Rescue Squad transported him to Bath Community Hospital.

Ryder, who was suffering from hypothermia when he was admitted, remained in intensive care Monday night and part of Tuesday.

He was released from the hospital last week and has returned to work at Sam Sneed's Tavern. Ryder said he was in a lot of pain after the accident but felt "lucky to get out of there alive."

Ryder recalled the events for the Bath County Historical Society five years later:

"I spent most of the say around Bath County helping people out," Ryder recalled. "I ran kids home from school, things like that. I got in touch with my father that afternoon. He worked at the post office in Covington and told me he wasn't able to get home. I decided to go get him."

"I knew the road through Cedar Creek was washed out, so I decided to take 220 south. But, just past the falls, that road was blocked by the bank, which had given way.

I turned around, and headed down through the back road to Falling Springs. I know now, that was a mistake.

"I came around a corner near the bridge — I'd been down that road 100 times before. When I came around the turn, it looked like the road was there, but apparently it was completely gone.

"It's hard to remember just what happened next. I knew I'd made a pretty bad mistake. I recall realizing the truck was going down, and the cab was filling up with water. There was only a little air left in the top of the cab. I thought to myself, 'This is it.'

"I don't know what happened next. As near as I can figure, the force of the water broke the truck windows and washed me out. I remember going downstream with the rush of water. Then, I saw a tree lying in the water. I grabbed ahold of that tree and pulled myself out of the water.

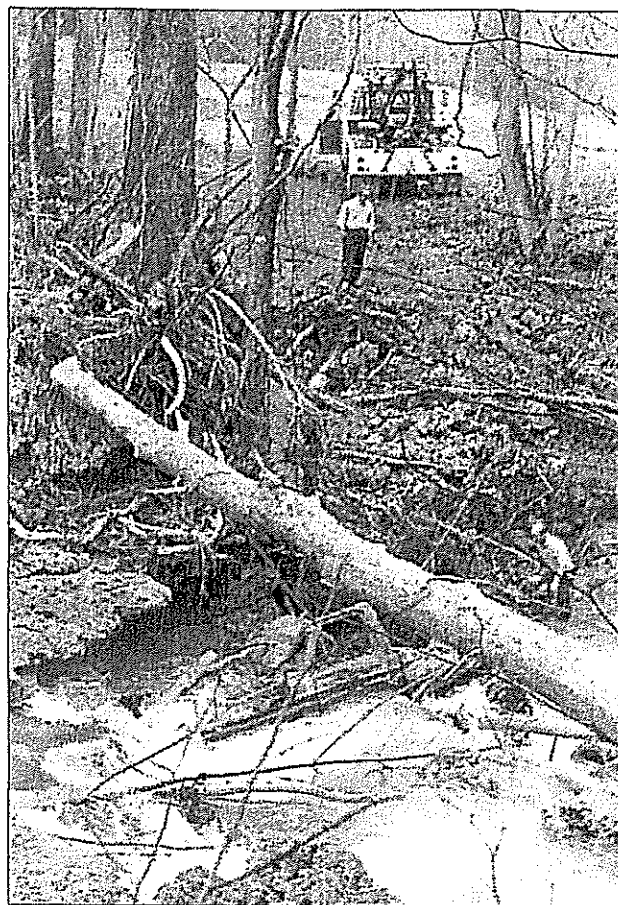
"I started walking through the woods. I know I was in shock. I didn't know where I was, or where I was going. The next thing, I saw some truck lights. I started yelling at the top of my lungs, and he heard me."

Ryder's rescuer, Jack Meadows of Mitchelltown, was someone he knew "vaguely."

"I'm sure he was leery of me at the time. I looked like a drowned rat. The next thing I remember, I was at Bath County Community Hospital. The worst injury I had was a cut eye, and hypothermia."

He said at the time his external injuries healed quickly, but the bad memories lingered on.

"I still think about the flood, especially on the anniversary and any time it rains. It was real hard to even go fishing the first year. I learned a great respect about the power of water. It was very scary. I'm glad it's over with, and I hope it never happens again to myself or anyone else."



Doug's Wrecker Service of Hot Springs made many attempts to pull Lane Ryder's 1977 Ford Ranger pick up out of Falling Springs Creek. One attempt resulted in broken towing cables. Ryder suffered a concussion as a result of the Nov. 4 accident. (Recorder file photo)

Couple faces scare on the Cowpasture

The late Tom Lobe and his wife, Dee, had an ordeal at their property along the Cowpasture River during the flood. They recalled their story for the Bath County Historical Society five years later:

"It was very bad. I saw the high point about 3 a.m., looking toward the Cowpasture. The fields were flooded with 25-30 feet of water," Tom Lobe said. "The bridge to our place was almost completely destroyed. I-beams 18 inches thick were snapped in two. The concrete top of the bridge was taken off. All that was left were four concrete stanchions."

"It's a long story. On Nov. 5, I started having chest pains. That went on for about two or three days. When I realized I needed to go to the doctor, there was no bridge. The only way out, we figured, was through the old Wallawatoola Farm, which abuts Briarcroft. They've got an old swinging bridge, high over the

'It really gives you a helpless feeling to have no contact with the outside world and to have a husband with chest pains.'

water. It was still there, but leaning at a 45-degree angle.

"We were able to walk a mile, and cross the bridge very gingerly. Just at the moment we got across, the fellow who owns the farm drove in to check on his property. Talk about luck! He took us to our car, which Dee had thoughtfully parked on the other side of the bridge, when the bridge was still there."

Mr. Lobe was taken to the Bath hospital, and from there by ambulance to U.Va., where he underwent heart surgery. Once he was released, the Lobes had to bring their supplies across the river from November to March, when the new bridge was finished.

"The river at that point was 200 feet wide. Thank God someone gave us a little putt-putt motor to put on the canoe. Still, it was tough. It was devastating."

"I have great respect for that little river," Dee Lobe said. "The ironic thing is, the entire time, the electricity was only out for about eight hours. The phones were dead the whole time. It really gives you a helpless feeling to have no contact with the outside world and to have a husband with chest pains."

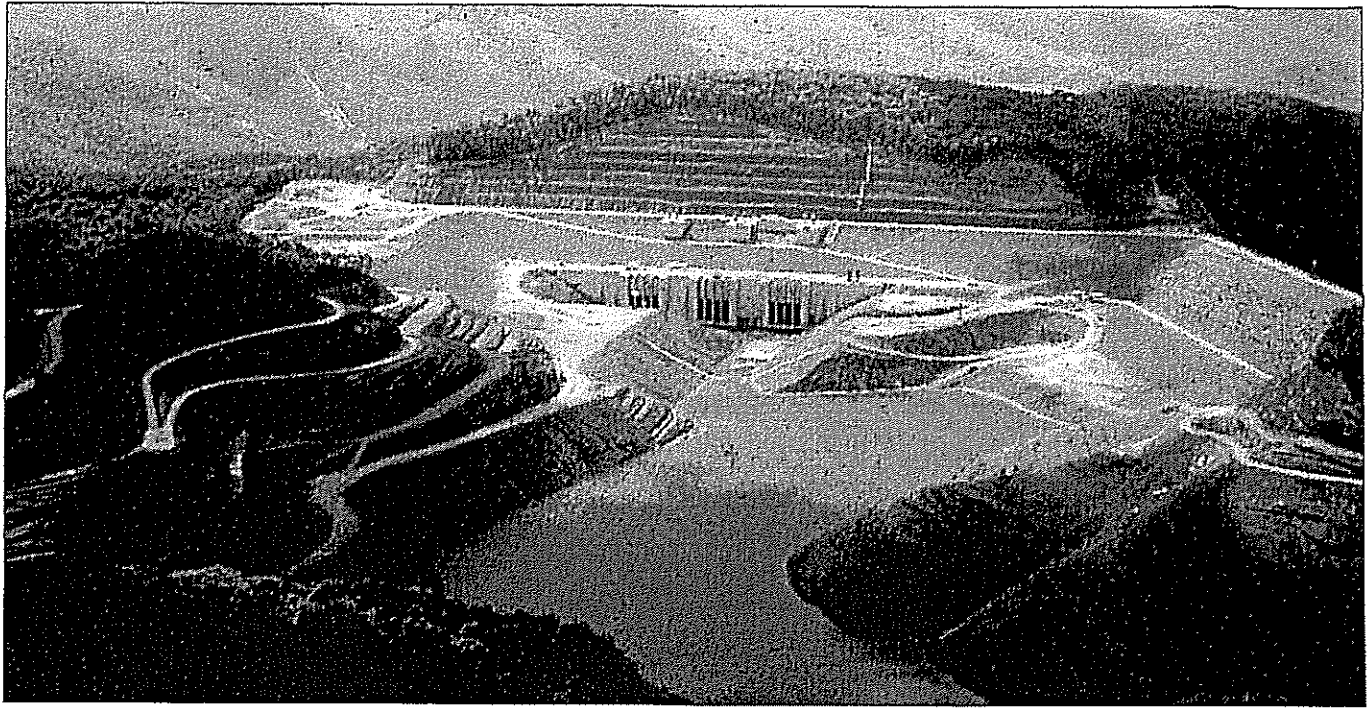
"I knew I wanted to save my husband, my animals and my pictures, in that order. It makes you feel very vulnerable and gives

you a great respect for Mother Nature. The river ran swift and high for a long time after the flood."

She had high praise for the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service and for Bill Bratton. "God bless them. They said, 'Don't worry. We'll come, and we'll bring machinery.' They rebuilt the ford. Bill Bratton was absolutely terrific."

"My husband is a West Point graduate. He worked rebuilding the bridge with John Mitchell, a VMI man. You know the traditional rivalry between these two! Well, here it worked in our favor."

"The happiest day going was the completion of that bridge. It's higher now than it was back in 1985. We should be OK now. God willing and the creek don't rise."



The Bath County Pumped Storage Station was very near completion in 1985, following years of construction and planning. Engineers tested the generators and pumps, and used them to fill the upper reservoir from below. Here, the water in the upper reservoir was still well below full height level prior to the flood of 1985. (Photo courtesy Robin Sullenberger)

At the station: Creeks did rise

Editor's note: The following story related to the 1985 flood was originally published in the Dec. 23, 2010 issue of The Recorder, in "The Project," a special section on the Bath County Pumped Storage Station.

MOUNTAIN GROVE — Experts called it a 500-year flood. For those in this region, it was an event they'll never forget.

In early November of 1985, Hurricane Juan hit these mountains and lingered, bringing more rain than the area had seen in centuries, and testing the stamina of thousands. People lost lives in raging water; power and phone lines were out for days; property damage was in the millions.

The flood put the nearly finished Bath County Pumped Storage Station to the test, too, though not the way its engineers intended.

The generators were in place; pumps were working, and the upper reservoir was nearly full. Back Creek Valley had been drier than usual that fall, and operators agreed the lower reservoir would take 10-12 months to fill completely. That was fine — they preferred to raise the level slowly so they could monitor the dam carefully along the way.

Everything had gone well, and Virginia Power didn't see any reason to wait. The company planned to put the station online Nov. 15.

But two weeks before they could flip the switch, Juan settled in.

That Monday happened to be Beth Armstrong's last day of work. It was the last day

for many employees who were being laid off, since construction had ended.

Beth and her husband, Michael, of Mill Gap, both worked at the project. They arrived at 6 a.m., as usual.

By 7:30 a.m., phones started ringing. Family members were calling to tell husbands or sons the water was getting high. "I mean, these were wives who were panicked, saying water's almost over bridges and he needs to come home now," Armstrong recalls. "Most all were from Pendleton and Pocahontas."

Pendleton and Pocahontas, in neighboring West Virginia, were two of the hardest places hit by the flooding, and nearly a third of the project workers lived in those counties.

Bath County schools closed at 12:30 p.m., but parents had to pick up their kids because the buses could not run. About 100 students spent that night at Valley Elementary, and another 30 at Bath County High School. Highland schools closed about 1 p.m., but most were delivered home safely by bus. Albert Shultz, one bus driver, had to bring a few back to Monterey after discovering the bridge out at Route 84.

U.S. 220 was open from Monterey to Covington, but only one lane in places due to rock and mud slides. U.S. 220 to Franklin, W.Va. was virtually impassible — large chunks of the road had washed away.

By 1:30 at the station, "the place was almost deserted," Armstrong said. "There had been a line of traffic going out all morning."

Finally, her husband was ready to go,

too, and they collected rain gear and boots before they got in the truck with friend, Susan Murray. "As we topped the hill where the visitors center used to be, the water was like a river. You say you can't imagine it, and you really can't. It was indescribable, scary," Armstrong said.

They hoped to get to Arlie Propst's house just up the road; there was a line of cars on both sides of the bridge, and water lapping over it. Murray mentioned her sister, Lisa Kodger, was still at the station. "Michael decided we had to go back and get her. Then it got even worse after that," Armstrong said.

They eventually made it to the Propst home, and parked on the hill, with no other option but to set out on foot.

Arlie Propst recalls the day. "It's the most water I have ever seen," he said. "They had made hay above the bridge, and those bales came down, hit the bridge, and just hung there." He remembers the Armstrongs arriving at his house. "I don't know how they got across those streams but they made it home."

"We just hit the mountain," Armstrong said. Michael hunted the area for years, and was familiar with the woods and terrain. "We'd get to one creek, find we couldn't cross it, and he'd walk us up to the headwaters ... we just kept doing that. We walked and walked and walked, we were worn out, in the pouring rain."

All the hiking was hard enough, but Beth was four and a half months pregnant with their first child at the time.

"The biggest fear was that the dam might fail, and you had all these people below it,"

Armstrong said. She felt better once they were up on the mountain, away from the project area.

"I had to stay the night at the man camp," recalls Sarah Shifflett of Monterey. "There was a rock slide down where the lower dam is and it blocked off the road. So we packed near the man camp and they shuttled us back and forth. They arranged for us to stay in empty rooms over night, and the next morning, they took us out on a shuttle to see if they could find open roads. The bridge at Mill Gap was washed out, and we had to go through Upper Back Creek to U.S. 250. The Lightner bridge was even damaged."

The night the flood hit, "We were a little nervous, thinking about what would happen if the dam broke," she said. "I know that was going through a lot of people's minds."

Robin Sullenberger stayed over, too. "It was a three-day party," he said. "We had lots of provisions, including cases and cases of Jack Daniels, and we just had a bash waiting for the roads to open up."

About 4:30 that Monday afternoon, the Armstrongs made it to Mary Smith's house in Little Egypt, and she gave the cold, wet foursome homemade bread and jam. Her son, Ralph Smith, attempted to drive them home, but came to another bridge that could not be crossed, so they walked again. When they finally made it home, "We had no phone, no electricity, but we had a wood stove," Armstrong said.

Susan and Lisa had set out for the apartment they rented from George and Peggy

See CREEKS, page 34

Flood of '85 Sponsored by First and Citizens Bank

From CREEKS, page 33

Bird in Mill Gap, Michael and Beth gathered up some food and candles to bring them. "We got about a quarter mile, but couldn't go further." They knew the sisters had made it home, but the Armstrongs could not reach them, so they came back to their house.

"For four days, we never saw a soul," she said. "We just holed up. Then, on the fourth day, I heard something outside. I looked out and saw this big old truck coming. It was my dad in his big red wrecker, getting over debris that was everywhere ... We were rescued."

And after the worst was over, Armstrong put her last paycheck toward a good cause. "I used my severance pay to buy a generator," she said.

Phil Stewart, an engineer for Allegheny Power, said, "We were sort of worried because that spring and summer had been pretty dry. We were ready to start filling the lower reservoir but Big and Little Back Creek were virtually non-flowing."

But when the rains came, the lower reservoir filled — fast. "I remember Back Creek was flowing at over 20,000 cubic feet a second ... normally, you could walk across that creek, rock to rock. Usually it flows about 5 cfs," he said. "We held back a lot of water ... There was a lot of concern, especially with all those people staying over below the dam ... you had to go through Marlinton to get home to Clifton Forge or Covington. There was massive flooding, but we had no problems with any of the facilities."

Station operator Mike Wilke had been working the night shift, but he didn't make it to work that night.

"I was at home asleep, and I woke up at 4 p.m. and it sounded like there were trains running outside," he said. "I looked around and couldn't get out the driveway."

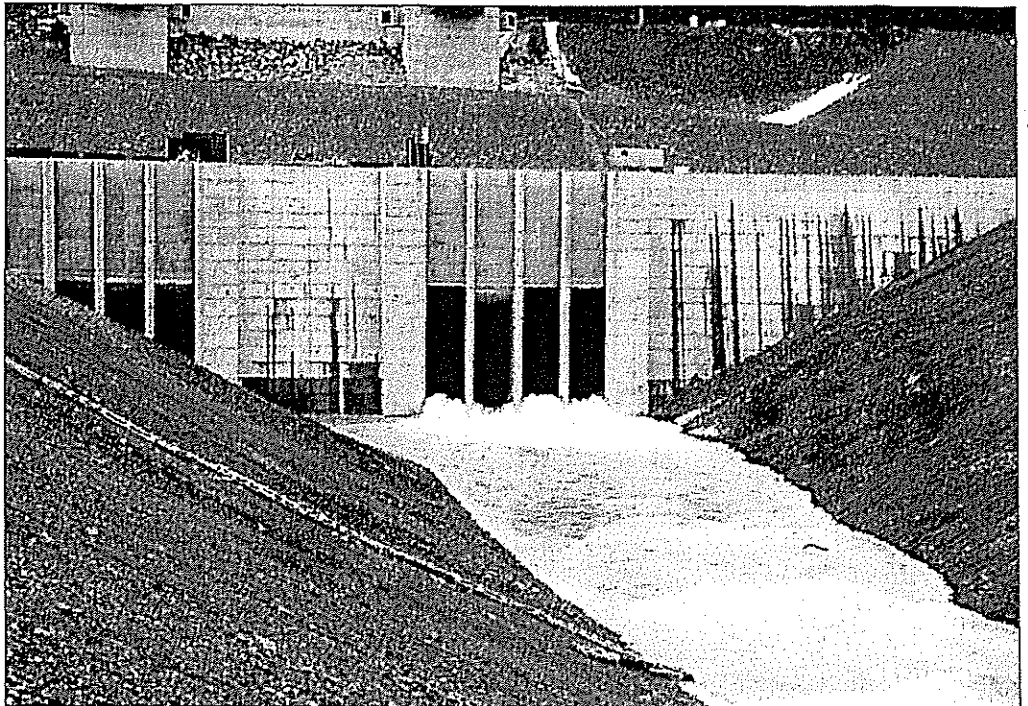
He made his way across a field to a bridge, but when he saw the water rising, "I knew then I couldn't drive to work," he said. "And I had no phone, no electricity." He walked to where he could see Route 600. Then he went to the bridge near Beulah Presbyterian Church, and it was gone. "I had no idea where my wife and kids were," he said. Eventually came across neighbor Charlie Burns, who had information about his family. "Charlie had heard them over the phone, which meant he was listing in; we had party lines back then ... he had heard they were up at Ronnie White's," where they stayed the night, unable to get home.

"That was a 500-year flood, according to USGS records, and we didn't even have to open the spillway," former station manager Mike Wood said. "At any other time, it would have been a different story, but there was no water in the lower reservoir. If it hadn't been there, I don't know where Mountain Grove would be today," he said.

"We only used the spillway once in the last 20 years and we've had the 500-year flood and at least two 100-year floods," he added. "That plant significantly mitigates water damage downstream; though it's not designed to be a flood control facility, it has reduced impacts."

Harza engineer Ralph Watt said, "That was a very nervous time ... With a dam, you like to bring the water up slowly so you can see exactly how the dam is responding. But we were very prepared. We had impound-

See CREEKS, page 35



Water arrives at the upper reservoir during a test on the generators as pumps. Engineers on the project were caught by surprise when the remnants of Hurricane Juan filled the lower reservoir in only 24 hours, instead of 10 months, as planned. (Photo courtesy Robin Sullenberger)

Vepco worker recalls washout

MOUNTAIN GROVE — In 1985, Bill McGirr was working at the pumped storage project in Mountain Grove, which was preparing to open at the time of the flood.

"We had reports the water was rising over Lightner's Bridge at the north end of the project. A lot of people left in mid-afternoon afraid the bridge would get washed out," he recalled later for the Bath County Historical Society.

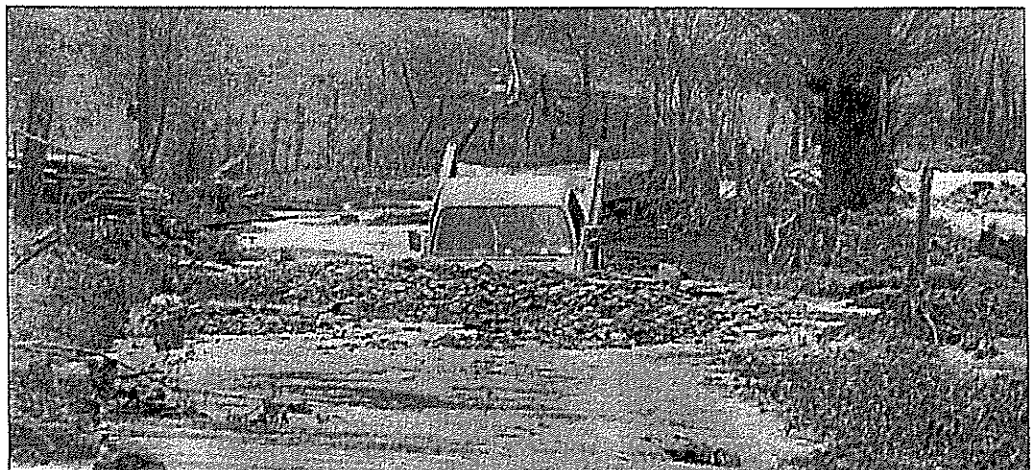
The bridge didn't wash out, but was completely under water.

"A large chunk of highway got washed away and caved into the stream. Our workers were able to construct an emergency roadway around this and keep the north end from being completely cut off," he said.

Roads flooded over Little Back Creek and on Route 84. McGirr said the lower dam helped offset some of the flooding. "It would have been a lot more serious if the

dam weren't there. It cushioned the heavy flows downstream," he said.

"The lower reserve was in the process of being filled. The water level was low, and we were hoping to get it filled and start producing revenue. As it turned out, Providence filled it up promptly. We had a big catchment of water. Because of that, the dam was in operation by the end of 1985."



This truck got stuck in Back Creek where Route 603 formerly crossed it. The driver was apparently trying to avoid the damage on Rt. 600. The accident occurred about 200 yards from Route 600.

From CREEKS, page 34

ment teams (dam experts) ... these were the best inspectors — trained how to manage the filling process — they were all over the project 24 hours a day during filling. We were prepared, but we did not expect that to happen."

Wait has built large dams all over the world for Harza, now MHW, but said, "I've never had a hurricane settle over one of my reservoirs like that. The catchment area is not that big, but it's very unusual to have a hurricane just sit over that valley."

Added project surveyor Pat Lowry, "I remember I walked out on the powerhouse roof after it was over and saw all these dead sheep in the reservoir. It filled too fast. They had to bring in tugboats with nets and gather all that stuff up ... Mountain Grove raised hell with Vepeco a lot, but Vepeco saved their ass," he said.

With a couple of weeks after the floods, Highland and Bath were approved for disaster aid by President Ronald Reagan.

Mill Gap, where the Armstrongs lived, went without power for seven days.

The Cowpasture River had risen eight feet. Enormous Lake Moomaw had risen 25 feet above normal.

A temporary bridge was put over Back Creek, and three other Bath bridges needed work — Route 39 over the Jackson River; Route 620 over the Cowpasture, and Route 614 over the Bullpasture in Williamsville.

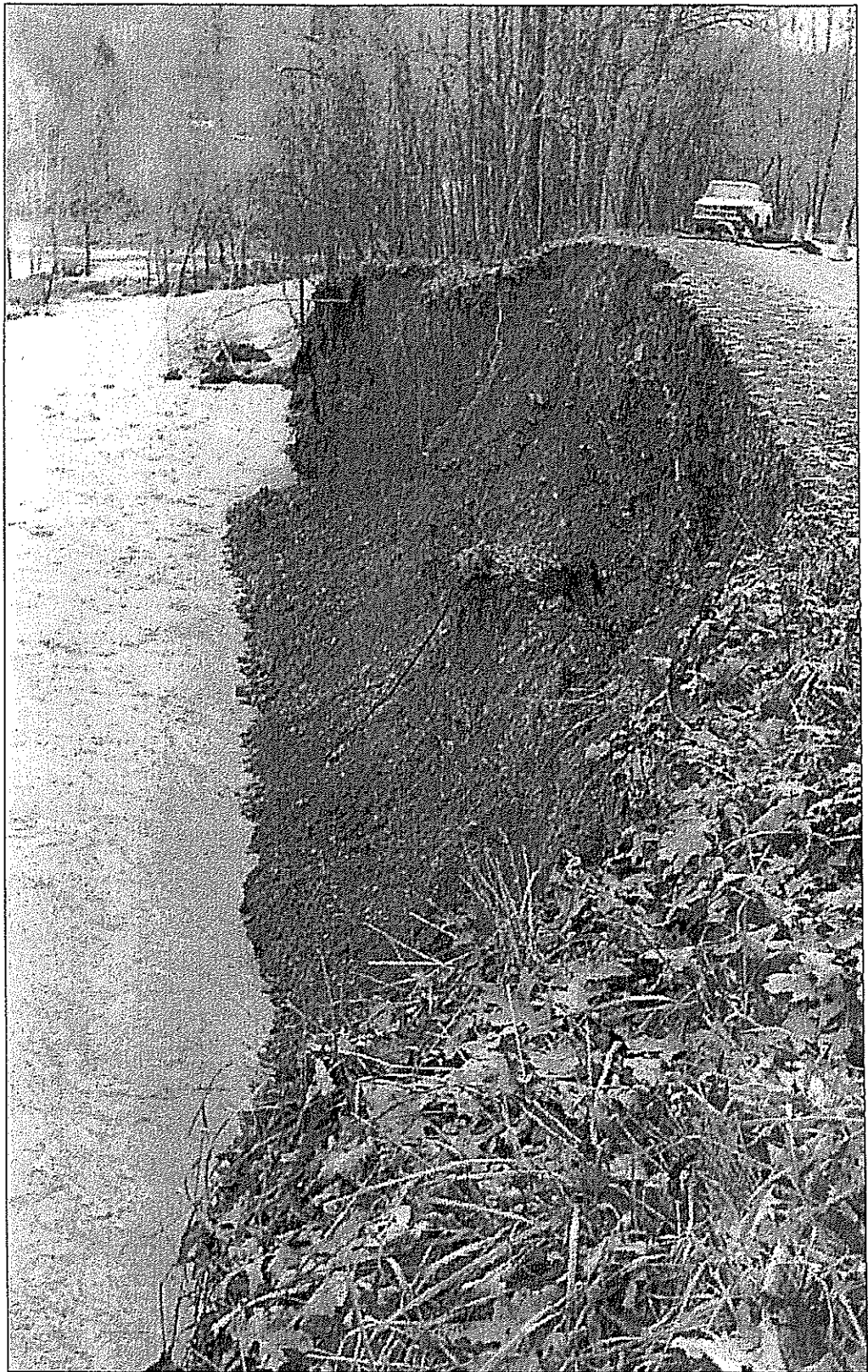
Highland had an estimated \$5 million in damages; Bath had \$6 million. The Homestead resort suffered some \$300,000 in damage to its golf courses alone.

Flooding is still a concern for some Mountain Grove residents, particularly after the one time the spillway was opened. "I was in my first or second year on the board and we had several meetings with Dominion," said supervisor Jon Trees, who lives in the valley. "They had had to open the flood gates. The residents say they saw a wall of water 3-4 feet high coming down Back Creek. It devastated a lot of farms. My daughter and I walked the project area to Mountain Grove and took photos ... the pastures were littered with rocks and debris.

"All the dams are controlled by the Corps of Engineers, and they are supposed to release the same amount of water that comes in. Apparently the aqua ducts or something were not operating and I was told ... they had to open the flood gates. When I asked why, and begged them to release water earlier when it's like that, they told me, 'We're not flood control.' The drainage area to that valley is huge and it all comes right down into that valley. They say had the dam not been there (flood of '85), there would be no Mountain Grove."

But, Trees said, "There absolutely are concerns, if that happens again. There aren't really so many fears about the dams failing. If a concrete dam fails, it breaks apart and it all comes down. But with an earth and rock dam, if the water comes over the top it just eats it down, erodes it and eats its way down ... I'm personally not concerned about that and I've never heard any others express that fear. The upper reservoir, which is above me, on the one side, it's opposite side is lower than the top of the upper dam. Water could never reach the top of the upper dam, it would just all dump into Back Creek.

See CREEKS, page 36



This section of Route 600 caved into Back Creek just north of the Virginia Power project property. The debris from the mud and rock slide blocked Lightner Bridge a short distance downstream, preventing workers from leaving the dam Monday afternoon. (Recorder file photo)

Flood of '85 Sponsored by First and Citizens Bank

From CREEKS, page 35

I watched Clemetric build that upper dam and I'm not the least bit concerned about it ever breaking.

"But yes, the flood gates — we're concerned about that. We asked Dominion about it before and they said it's not their fault, but yes ... it was. We'd gotten a lot of rain and they didn't get rid of the water soon enough."

'Robin Sullenberger said the amount of water that entered the lower reservoir through the Back Creek drainage system was measured to be almost twice the estimated hundred-year flood level. This means, statistically speaking, that the area should not see this kind of flooding for another 150 to 200 years.'

~ The Recorder, Nov. 7, 1985



This small section of Route 84 near Route 600 and Back Creek caused questions and complaints from Monterey landowners for the state highway department at a Highland board of supervisors' meeting following the flood. Residents were concerned repairs would not be handled quickly enough. (Recorder file photo)

Man saves neighbor

MILL GAP — A Mill Gap man has received the Award of Valor from Virginia Power, the highest award that the company bestows on its employees, after risking his life to save a neighbor during the November flood in Highland County.

John W. Wanless, 46, also received a letter of congratulations from President Reagan, who observed, "You displayed fortitude and exceptional skill in saving your neighbor in a time of urgent need. I am proud to commend your outstanding deed."

Wanless was on his way home Nov. 4 when he plunged into a flooded Highland County stream to rescue his neighbor, Bickley Wade, whose car had been swept off a bridge and carried downstream.

By the time he was able to extricate Wade from the submerged auto, the latter had stopped breathing.

Wanless held Wade's head above the waters and administered mouth-to-mouth resuscitation until Mrs. Wanless could throw him a rope and help pull Wade to the shore.

"How do you thank someone for saving your life?" Wade asked. "I'm not sure you can, but I'm glad he was there. My gratitude is complete."

Virginia Power President Jack H. Ferguson, commenting on the award, said, "Mr. Wanless's courage and commitment to his fellow man stand as examples to us all. He acted selflessly, quickly and intelligently."

Wanless, who had been a senior quality control inspector at the Veeco Back Creek project, has accepted a similar position with the company's Surry power station.

— The Recorder, Dec. 19, 1985



The lower reservoir as seen from the deck of the power station. There is also an upper reservoir, and Veeco built two dams, one for each body of water. (Recorder file photo)

Baby girl born week of flood

BLUE GRASS — Melissa Dowd remembers the year of the flood vividly — she was just days away from giving birth to her daughter, Molly.

That Monday, she was scheduled for a doctor's appointment in Staunton. "It was a story I never told my mother," Dowd said.

The rain was heavy that morning as she crept across the mountains in an old Mitsubishi. As she came to West Augusta, 5-6 cars were stopped, having been held up by a VDOT worker. The place was covered with water. The worker approached her vehicle and asked whether she knew where the road was. "I told him I did," she recalled, "and he asked whether I'd lead the other cars through."

The water wasn't too high yet, but the markings for U.S. 250 were covered where water had ponded. She called attention to her large belly and told the worker, "If I get stuck, are you going to come rescue me?" He promised he would.

He also mentioned the road had just been closed behind her; no other traffic would be coming through.

Dowd proceeded to lead the way. "I was like a mother duck leading ducklings one by one in a line," she said.

After her appointment, she could not reach her husband, Curtis "Corky" Seltzer, who was back home in Blue Grass helping neighbors. "Alice and Bill Will lived next door to us — Alice still does; Bill is deceased — but their house is on a low plain, considerably lower in elevation than Wimer Mountain Road," Dowd explained. "Bill and Alice couldn't swim and neither could their children, William, Jimmie, Jackie, Joy and Joe. Only Bill and Alice were in the house the day of the flood. Key Run, which runs behind our house and in front of Bill and Alice's house, overflowed its banks that day. The floodwater was almost in their house when Corky waded through the moving water to help walk them to Jimmie's house on higher ground."

All telephone communication was down in Highland, so her husband didn't know whether the baby was coming without him. "I found a drug store, picked up a book to read, and checked in at the Econo-Lodge for the night," Dowd said.

"And as I recall, the day after the flood, the one lane through Ramseys Draft was open for emergency vehicles only and during daylight hours only, but Corky managed to persuade them to let him through ... He knew exactly how to find me; he knew I'd be right where I was," Dowd said. "When Corky showed up Tuesday late afternoon at the Econo-Lodge, I was one relieved pregnant woman. We drove home on Wednesday when one lane of Route 250 was open again, and then went back to Staunton two days later to deliver Molly."

Mary Rebecca Wilkinson "Molly" Seltzer was born that Friday, Nov. 9, at seven pounds, 15 ounces. She celebrates her 30th birthday this year.

Was it the worst? A look back at historic storms.

BATH and HIGHLAND — In 1985, longtime residents of the area compared that year's flood to one that occurred in the mid-1930s, or the one that hit the area in 1949.

The Recorder searched its archives for reports of floods throughout its publication going back to 1877, and there were a few references to high waters and bridges washed out.

The flood in 1949, comparatively, was nearly as widespread as the one in 1985. However, considering the population and level of development in the region in 1985, more people had more to lose 30 years ago, and did.

The earliest reference to a flood in The Recorder was the issue of Feb. 13, 1897, when W.H. Matheny was editor.

He wrote, "For a short while last Saturday evening it looked as though Monterey — yes, Monterey! away up here on the great divide between the James and Potomac — would have a flood. The little stream that runs down from the mountain west of town was swollen by the rains of Friday night and was added to all day Saturday by the melting snow.

"Pieces of ice and snow collected under the bridge above town and turned the whole volume of water into the street, it came down with great force, here and there forming a dam with the loose snow it pushed before it, which changed its course from one side of the street to the other and caused it to spread out under houses and flood cellars. The people in the lower end of the town who were warned of the approaching flood prepared for it by making snow fortifications, thus confining it to the street.

"Mr. C.G. Cross, who left Staunton with the mail last Saturday morning, made very good time until he reached Shaw's Fork, where he met with an obstacle. The stream that flows through that valley was very much swollen and was bringing down huge blocks of ice, which rendered it impassible for horses and vehicles; so he spent the night there and on Sunday morning the waters had subsided sufficiently to permit him to cross. He reached Monterey without further hindrance, at noon."

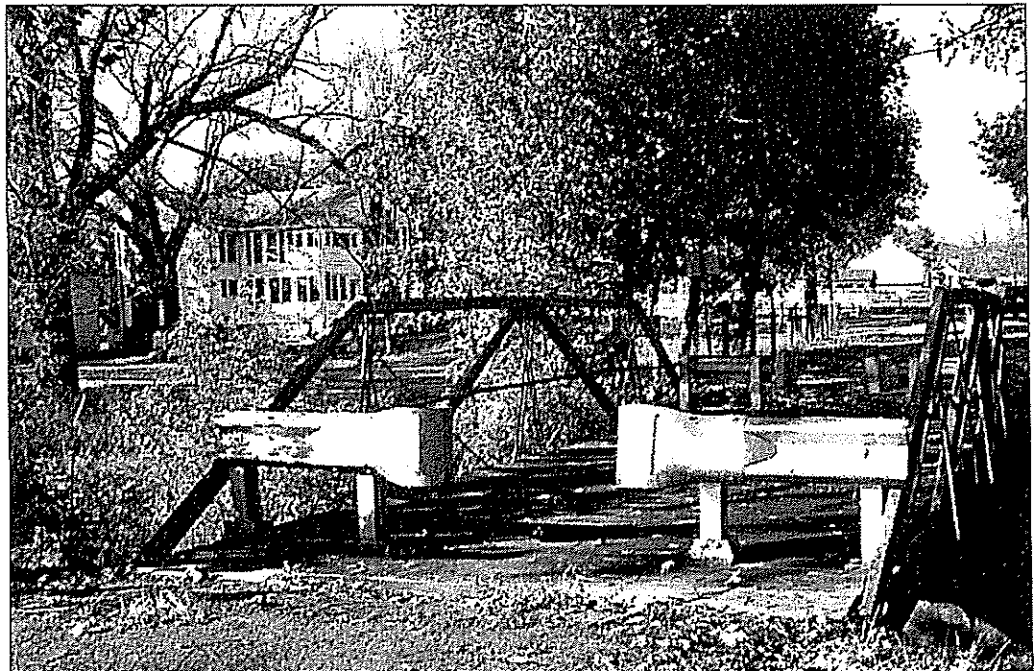
The next early reference to some short-lived flooding was found in The Recorder, Aug. 24, 1906. A report from Strait Creek in Highland noted, "A violent storm struck the head waters of our little valley Sunday, sweeping trees, fences and every obstacle before it, lasting about an hour, after which the sun showed its face and afforded people the privilege of attending public worship. The road from the crossing at Jones run to H.H. Seybert is almost impassible. It is said by the oldest citizens to be in worst condition than they have known for years. The storm mentioned in your columns last week did lots of damage, but the latter far excelled the former. It is said to be the most water since the Johnstown flood. The footbridge at Mr. Ephriam Gum's was swept away ... Rev. Mr. Brumbaugh floated the Creek at Asbury Chapel and reached his appointment at Thorny Bottom Sunday evening."

A report from Crabbottom (now Blue Grass) noted about the same time. "Highland postmasters this week received their

See STORMS, page 38



Above, a bridge at McDowell bridge pictured in a post card circa 1910-20. The house in the background above is the Edwin and Cornelia McNulty home. Edwin operated the McNulty general store at McDowell, which is Sugar Tree Country Store today, until his death in 1938. The post card has 1920 written on the back but the 1920 issues of The Recorder are not yet archived, so the flooding event information is unknown at this time. Below is how the same bridge looks today, 95 years later, closed to vehicular traffic. (Post card and photo courtesy Kent Botkin)



Flood of '85 Sponsored by First and Citizens Bank

From STORMS, page 37

annual shakeup, inspector Chas. E. Kelley making rounds early in the work. In company with postmaster, H.M. Slaven, he had a new experience with mountain streams during our little flood on Tuesday. Going from Crabbottom to McDowell, they were held up by the little stream at Mr. Ephriam Gum's, had to employ a pilot and get to Monterey by a circuitous route through big hills east of Strait Creek."

The Recorder next referred to a severe storm — again now the worst in county history — in its Aug. 7, 1931 edition: "Possibly the heaviest storm that Highland has witnessed in years occurred late last Tuesday evening. It ranged over the southern section of the county, hitting Back Creek, Jacksons River, and Bull Pasture sections mostly. One man reported the damage done to his farm amounted to a thousand dollars or more. Great gullies washed out, deep enough to hide a cow. The crops in these sections were greatly damaged, water gaps and fences were also included in the roads left bare of dirt, only rocks were left by the big flood of water."

But then in March 1936, a report from Doe Hill claimed, "The flood last week did considerable damage around here by washing roads gardens and meadows and fences away. It was the most damaging flood that has visited this section for a long time."

The flood in August 1939, however, was now the worst area residents had seen to that point, and affected a broader area. "Beginning about six o'clock Friday evening and continuing through the night and Saturday, one the worst electrical storms for many years visited Highland County." The Aug. 4 Recorder reported that year. "It was accompanied by intermittent down-pouring of rain. The storm, apparently heaviest in the Strait Creek valley, moved in a north-easterly course. The Lower Strait Creek and Doe Hill sections seemed to be the hardest hit. In the first storm Friday evening, Mill Gap section received but little rain. Jackson River and Big Valley came in for a big share on Saturday. Hence, all of the streams were overflowing on Sunday."

The paper listed the damage. "Jackson River spread until it covered many adjacent low-lying meadow lands," the report continued. "The greatest loss was reported from the Strait Creek and Forks of Water communities. Among the reported losses were: A garage and automobile belonging to Fred Wagner washed down stream; W.R. Hicklin of McDowell lost a hay stack by lightning; portion of the Crab Run macadamized highway received serious damage; a large quantity of choicest dressed lumber from G. Jesse Hiner's saw mill near Seybert Hills, washed down stream, was damaged; bridge near Seybert chapel destroyed, another one on Laurel Run; large oat field of J.M. Colaw on the McClintic place submerged; scores of minor losses to gardens, poultry and crops generally.

"Joe Rexrode lost a fine cow by lightning. The water main near J.H. Armstrong's place, McDowell, was damaged. McDowell was without electricity for a brief period. A motorist was returning from Staunton Friday evening when the first part of the storm overtook him on Jack Mountain, the rain being so bad and vision of the road so

See STORMS, page 39



The Grant County newspaper in West Virginia reported on terrible flooding in March 1936. In Highland, however, The Recorder's report was only from Doe Hill, the flooding there the most damaging that had visited the area in a long time. (Courtesy Kent Botkin)

DAMAGING FLOOD HITS FRANKLIN AND VICINITY

On Tuesday, March 17th, this section experienced the greatest flood known since the flood of 1889 and possibly it even exceeded that flood.

After a rain commencing about 11 o'clock p. m. on Monday and continuing during the night, the flood reached its highest stage about 10 o'clock Tuesday morning, after which the rain ceased and the water dropped about two feet. Early in the afternoon the rain commenced again and by nightfall the streams had again raised to about the highest mark during the day.

Practically all communication with the County seat has been cut off by the flood. Both the local and long distance telephone lines are out of commission, the roads have been blocked in every direction and no mails arrived or were able to get away from Franklin in any direction on Tuesday except by Harrisonburg. On Wednesday the Harrisonburg mail was able to arrive by being carried around a bad wash out on Trout Run and a slide at Clarence Blinnets near Oak Flat and this gave us the only communication with the outside world. The road to Petersburg is impassable at the Hog Trough on account of a bad wash out of several hundred yards.

The inset report on the Grant paper's front page reads, "On Tuesday, March 17th, this section experienced the greatest flood known since the flood of 1889 and possibly it even exceeded that flood."

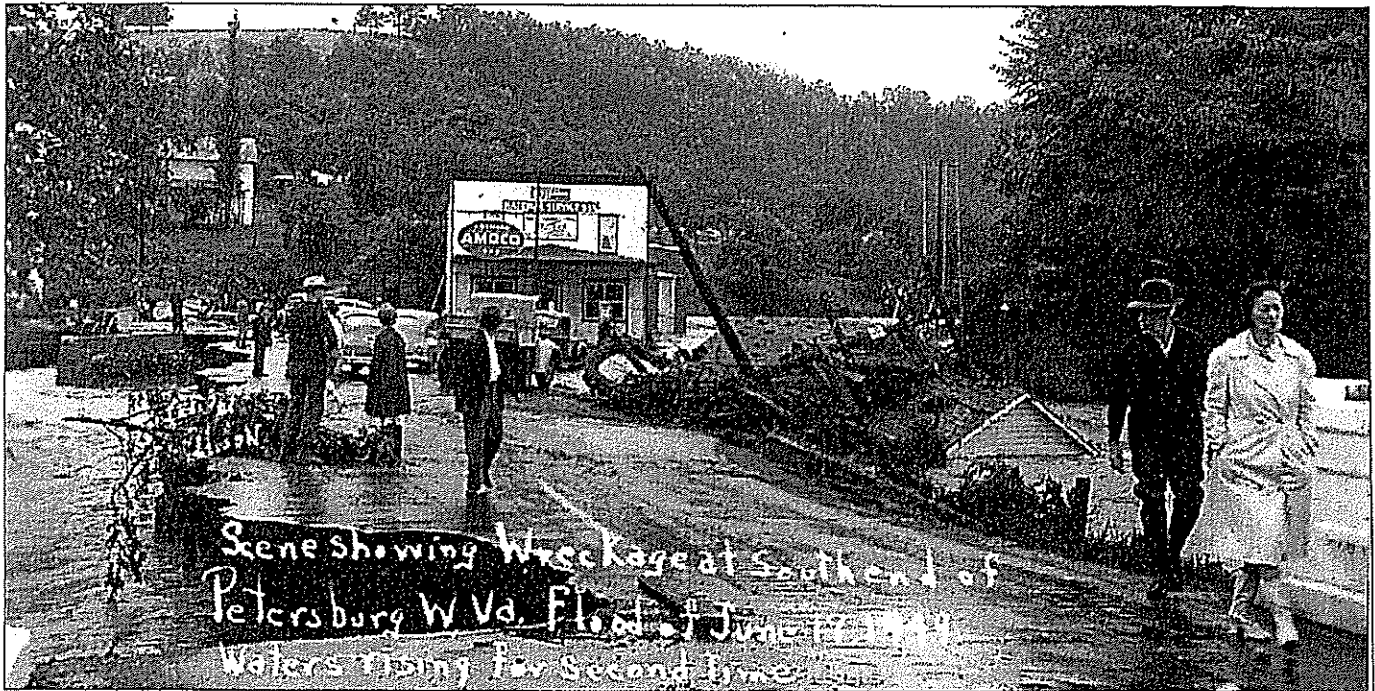
"After a rain commencing about 3 o'clock p.m. on Monday and continuing during the night, the flood reached its highest stage about 10 o'clock Tuesday morning, after which the rain ceased and the water dropped about two feet. Early in the afternoon, the rain commenced again and by nightfall the streams had again raised to about the highest mark during the day."

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The Recorder Thursday, November 5, 2015



The 1949 flood hit region-wide in Virginia and West Virginia, nearly mimicking the flooding that occurred in 1985. This photo, from the Kent Botkin collection, depicts the damage at the southern end of Petersburg, W. Va., following that storm.

From STORMS, page 38

poor that he was compelled to park by the roadside between showers. The Staunton mail arrived on time Saturday, but made a detour on return trip in the afternoon. No rain was reported in Augusta. Headwaters had a heavy one, the day before (Thursday).

"A party of young people, who motored to Franklin to the dance, were returning about one o'clock, when they ran into deep water stalling the motors, near Forks of Water. They found it necessary to remain there about two hours before their cars would turn a wheel. S.H. Moore, official reporter for the state, says that there was a rainfall of 4.03 inches during the twenty-four hours, while for the month there was an 8.94 rainfall recorded by him."

A heavy rain in the spring of 1942 caused high waters, but wasn't reported as the worst ever, this time. From the May 22 issue: "Water at flood stage — The flood of last Friday and Friday night did considerable damage in places in town and county. The little stream running through town overflowed its banks on Mr. Joe Gibson's garden, Moffett Hull's, and Mrs. E.B. Jones Sr.'s rock garden and other places in town and did much damage. It is reported that Brown Beard of Bartow lost ten cows and calves in the storm. Residents of the Extract section reported as much damage had resulted from the storm as the one we had two years ago along Jackson's River. Farmers suffered damages to such as fences, crops, etc. The Colaw land and Frank Stephenson land lost several miles of fencing. The farms along the Bull Pasture also lost some fence and crops. It is hard to estimate the loss sustained by this recent flood. At the same time, the rain was a real blessing to the meadows and farm crops."

Seven years, later, however, was clearly

the worst flood to date, in June 1949. It was similar to the 1985 flood in that it affected a wide region, from the Shenandoah Valley to neighboring counties in West Virginia, and Highland did not suffer the worst of it.

Two bridges at Head Waters and along the Cowpasture had been destroyed that Friday night. It was also the flood that washed away the old Liberty school building near Head Waters.

The headline June 24 was, "High waters on rampage in nearby counties; heavy rains in Highland," and excerpts were quoted from the Daily News-Record in Harrisonburg. The little town of Bridgewater, in Rockingham County, suffered mightily.

"Bridgewater, with the aid of people, food and water from all parts of Rockingham, plus 25 State Police, Harrisonburg's Co. M, National Guard, Red Cross workers and State and local sanitation officials, is slowly recovering from the raging flood that swept the town between Friday midnight, June 17 and dawn Saturday morning," The Recorder reported. "There are two known dead, Mrs. Margaret Frances Bricker and Mrs. C.R. Bowman, and Frances Bricker, 9, daughter of Mrs. Bricker, is missing. Another daughter, Betty, 12, was saved after a thrilling rescue half a mile from where the home was washed away and dashed to pieces by the flood. The property loss is great.

"At least 100 homes were damaged, one Bricker home swept away, and nearly every business house from Dinkle Avenue to the North River was damaged, numerous garages destroyed, 25 to 30 cars wrecked or smashed and some not yet found, and portions of the town's paving was torn to pieces. So far no accurate census of the damage has been possible. Estimates vary

from \$100,000 to a million dollars. From Saturday morning until Monday, Bridgewater has been blocked off from ordinary traffic ... But Friday about midnight Dry River, its roaring water swelled to cataract proportions as it swept down from Rawley Spring and higher in the mountains, tore through its banks northwest of Bridgewater and descended upon the town in a wall of water more than 15 feet deep ... the dwelling of Mr. and Mrs. C.R. Bowman on Broad Street is two-story home comparatively new. When the water hit the house, Mr. and Mrs. Bowman, instead of going to the second floor, tried to get out soon after midnight. A neighbor saw them open the front door and walk onto the porch hand in hand just as the porch was torn away, and Mrs. Bowman was taken with it. Her drowned body was found three miles away near Mt. Crawford. Searchers are still searching for the body of Frances Bricker. Many occupants saved their lives by remaining in the house atop tables and furniture or else crawling upon the roof."

In West Virginia, more were found dead due to the same storm, and the results were eerily similar to those of 1985's flood. The Recorder reported, "The twin towns of Petersburg and Moorefield watched flood waters gradually subside Monday, and began a grim search through the glue-like silt for their dead and missing. Two bodies have been recovered. Four others are presumed dead. Eight more are unaccounted for as late as Monday. Petersburg remained virtually isolated until noon Monday. This town of 2,000 was cut off from all outside contacts shortly after the first waves of the oncoming rampage Friday night.

"Moorefield was a little more fortunate. Although only 12 miles separate the

towns, Moorefield managed to maintain one telephone line and keep a back road approach open. The two bodies recovered were those of Cpl. Hurst, of W.Va. state police, and his 12-year-old son, Ronald. A third person, Paul Meek of Logan County, Hurst's brother-in-law, was trapped in the Hurst home with them but struggled to high ground before the house crumbled. Hurst could swim but he would not leave because his son wasn't able to handle himself in the water. Three other persons believed to be dead but whose bodies haven't been recovered are: Leo Redmond, 16; Nata Walker, 18; and Winston Beckwith, 2; all passengers in a car with Mr. and Mrs. John Gaither of Petersburg. Mrs. Gaither who was under treatment for shock said she grabbed a tree branch as she floated by and held the baby out of water until just before dawn when she lost her grip. She was rescued hours later by a boat after being spotted from air by a small search plane."

And as in 1985, Pendleton fared slightly better in the wake of the flooding. "Damages running into many thousands of dollars were caused also in Pendleton County by Friday's flash flood that sent the South Branch of the Potomac River on the rampage, J. G. Ashenfelter, editor of the Pendleton Times, reported to the News-Record.

"Although Franklin and Brandywine sections were both hard hit the worst damaged sections were Sugar Grove and the northern part of the county, where many homes, and poultry houses were washed away. Thousands and thousands of dollars worth of poultry and livestock were lost, and hundreds of acres of rich farming from which top soil was carried away and fields strewn with rocks. All highways were badly

See STORMS, page 40

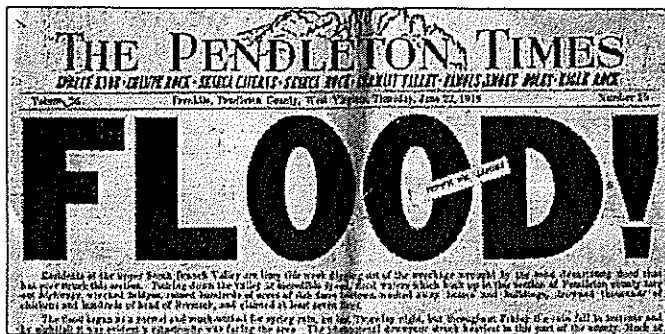
Flood of '85 Sponsored by First and Citizens Bank

From STORMS, page 39

damaged."

And as in 1985, Augusta County, particularly in the western portion, was inundated. "The rampaging waters of North River, tearing in a deluge out of the mountains of West Augusta, all but wiped out the little hamlet of Stokesville late Friday night and cut a path of unbelievable destruction in its wild course to its juncture with Dry River above Bridgewater," The Recorder reported. "At least eleven homes in the small community, once the terminus of the C&W Railway, were washed away. And yet with it all, no loss of life was reported. At Camp May Flather, one mile above Stokesville, several cabins and bunkhouses were washed away. Eight counselors who had moved into camp a week ago, in preparation for its opening, were finally able to get out Sunday after being marooned since Friday. Eighty-four Augusta County 4-H members at the camp located on the site of the old North River CCC Camp at North River dam were forced to evacuate and spend the night on Lebanon Ridge ... Harrisonburg did a noble piece of work, through her telephone and radio facilities in calling for trucks, cars, motor boats, planes, relaying messages etc."

Meanwhile in Highland, everyone survived the heavy rains, but there was plenty of physical damage. "Although Highland lost no lives by the recent heavy rains, there were great losses to highways, crops and property in general," The Recorder reported. "The Liberty school house on the South Branch of the Cow Pasture River, near Blair Armstrong's place was completely washed away, and the 100-foot-span steel bridge just below the schoolhouse was washed away; also three more bridges were put out of commission along this rushing stream. Roadside slides did considerable damage on the west side of Shaws Ridge, and possibly other hillside washouts caused heavy erosions. The State Highway force is still at work clearing the debris and leveling the roadbeds. From about eight



The front page of the Pendleton Times in West Virginia, covering the heavy flood of June 1949. (Courtesy Kent Botkin)

to twelve o'clock Friday night Route 250, from Monterey as far east as Jennings Gap, was closed to traffic going east; only a one-lane thoroughfare being used for the time. The Reynolds bus lost no runs by this temporary blockade. The estimated loss to the highway has not been ascertained yet, but it is believed to be heavy. Excepting for the time when the county had its cloudburst several years ago, perhaps this rainfall was the greatest reported for so short a period of time as the following figures will indicate."

Finally, rainfall is reported in measurements, and given as follows: "The local weather observer reported to Washington, Lynchburg and Huntington, W.Va., last Thursday morning a precipitation of .30 of an inch on Friday morning, 8 a.m., 1.65 inch; and again on Friday at 6 p.m., 2.00 inches; then on Saturday 8 a.m. .15 of an inch. Thus, for the 48-hour-period the precipitation totaled 4.10 inches. The maximum temperature recorded for the past week was on Monday when the mercury reached 86 degrees."

Following the deluge, observers in the area told about the damage. From July 8, 1949, a reporter wrote, "The H.L. Simmons family and Mrs. R.D. Folks drove down

to Petersburg, W.Va., Sunday afternoon to see their cousins, the Vosslers, who were hard hit by the recent flood. They say that no one can even imagine the damage done in that section."

Only a few weeks later, the report again came from Doe Hill on July 29. "Doe Hill suffers worst flood in her entire history."

It claimed, "On Tuesday, July 19th the worst flood in the history of Doe Hill came. Both rivers left the beds and spread over the roads and adjoining fields, taking fences and making roads impassable. Mr. A.I. Wooddell's garden was completely destroyed and a sweet corn patch damaged, also a stable washed away. John Moyers' garden was destroyed, a chicken house washed away, and 80 laying hens and fryers lost. Two other buildings on his lot were moved and water ran in part of the lower floor of his house. CR Wheeler's potato patch and garden were damaged also, Mrs. Lena Snyder's and Henry Hull's gardens were damaged. Miss Lou Jones' water pipes were washed out and she lost some chickens. A J. Blagg's water line was also washed out. All down the river, fences were washed away and meadows flooded destroying the hay. Rembert Moyers fell in

the water and was in danger of being swept away, but managed to get hold of the fence and saved himself."

An Aug. 5, 1949 note included that "Mr. and Mrs. C.R. Wheeler were in the Stokesville neighborhood Sunday looking over the flood area," and "Miss Lou Jones' rooster washed down to Mr. Henry Hull's in the flood and stayed till the water dried up, then walked back home."

Aug. 26, 1949, from Headwaters, came this report about June's flood: "Mrs. Blair Armstrong was hostess last Tuesday to the Headwaters Home Demonstration Club. A new road into the Armstrong home led us right up to the front gate. The gate to the old lane looked strangely alone without the schoolhouse which stood there for so many years. Flood waters, you remember, washed the building down the river in early July of this year."

Eleven years after the 1985 flood, significant flooding reached the Bath/Highland region again. A winter storm hit in early January 1996, dumping a record 72.9 inches of snow over the course of 46 straight hours, but what made it worse were the rains that followed toward the end of that month. Several areas were evacuated, including New Hampden, Mustoe, and Ashwood. Downtown Hot Springs was nothing but water for hours. Residents felt the flooding was similar to the flood of 1985, though the waters receded more quickly. The damage was extensive in both counties, and the waterlogged water table even caused a huge hole to open up at the Bath/Highland line, taking an enormous bite out of Route 600 that was 85 feet long and 25-34 inches deep. The flooding caused \$6.7 million in damages to Bath County and Lake Moomaw facilities alone.

It's tough to compare these flooding events over time — the region had evolved, and grown, such that by 1985, there was far more to lose. But given these descriptions, it appears no other storm carried a bigger impact to life and property.

Recorder editor documents history in news, photos

Much of the historical written and photographic record about the flood of 1985 in The Recorder was created almost single-handedly by one woman — Winnie Richardson. Now a veteran special education teacher, 30 years ago she was Recorder news editor.

She only worked at The Recorder for about a year, but she was instrumental in reporting on those affected by the flood, and providing critical information throughout the days and weeks that followed. And she did it without phone service or electricity, initially. This was plain old gumshoe reporting.

"We just got out there," she recalled. "We drove everywhere." She borrowed then publisher Palmer Stacy's four-wheel-drive pickup and hit the roads, often with her husband, Randy. "Gosh, we went out to Franklin, down to Hot Springs. We went to Burnsville, Williamsville. We just drove," she said.

In Monterey, the electricity and phone

lines were restored before other areas of the county, so by the time she was pushing deadline, Richardson could make a few calls, and the press crew could operate the press for Thursday's printing. "But there were a lot of weird things that happened," she said.

Richardson recalls an eerie vision in Marlinton. "There were lights on in places that were almost completely washed out. It was strange to see that."

She remembers the heroics of Ivan Stone, too. "He was the perennial tractor pull winner at the fair," she said. When he was washed away, "he was on his tractor-pulling tractor," she said.

Another strange thing was this: Everyone agreed they could tell precisely when the water started to go down. "Everyone was watching the water, of course," she said. "And they all said you could almost set your clock when it started flowing back down ... there was a visible rise and fall to it."

She remembers as she drove through the pastoral settings of both counties seeing cattle and sheep gathered tightly on dry knolls in pastures where they stepped up to avoid rising waters.

"And I remember everyone talking about the tanker truck that had turned over earlier, and how they felt all the water would wash away the spilled oil in the river ... and I remember the funny things like people talking about living up here with the water rising, rising, rising, then going back down ... people would say things about how their kids' toys would probably end up in Richmond," she said.

"The other funny thing is, still 30 years later, I'm driving around and I swear I'll see debris left over right where it was after the flood. Even 10-12 years later you could see that water line everywhere because the water never got high enough to wash it out again. Maybe it's a photographer's eye ... we drove all those miles, all those places, and years later I still see leaves and stuff

hanging from trees that I know was put there from the flood."

Like many residents, Richardson rarely passes the chimney of the Spencer home that now stands alone along U.S. 220 without thinking of the family lost that day, and Ivan Stone, who tried to save them. In fact, Richardson took a photograph at that chimney she'll never forget — there was a picture still hanging there, over its mantle. For Richardson, it remains a powerful image in her memory of one of this area's most tragic times.

This issue could not have been created without Richardson's work, and the collected remembrances stored carefully by the Bath County Historical Society.

Research and interviews were compiled by Recorder writers Anne Adams, Mike Bollinger, and Margo Oxendine, with support from First & Citizens Bank, which made it possible to publish this commemorative section.

The Recorder Thursday, November 5, 2015

Document Content(s)

2017 03 31 EFiling Comment Flood JRPA-CRPA.PDF.....1-41