

Charles City, Oelwein, Maynard Are Stunned by Killer Tornadoes

16 Die, Hundreds Injured in Storms

By GEORGE SAUCER, Assistant City Editor. Three northeast Iowa communities and scores of farms that lie broken after killer tornadoes stalked and stomped them...

90 miles an hour near Dike. Searchers for victims were hampered Wednesday night by the loss of electrical power in Charles City and Oelwein.

Charles City, Oelwein and Maynard will need months if not years to fully recover from tornadoes that tore into them Wednesday evening.

Help Sent Speedily. Help from most all northeast Iowa towns and southern Minnesota was sent to the disaster areas.

City in Shambles. Charles City's business district is virtually unrecognizable as such from the air as a result of the wind that left this city of 10,419 in a shambles.

National Guardsmen and contingents of Iowa Highway Patrol joined sheriff's deputies and police officers of various communities sent to aid in Charles City, Maynard and Oelwein late Wednesday and Thursday morning.

At Oelwein, some 60 air miles southeast of Charles City, where

The only way to compare the damage at Charles City, either looking at it from the ground or the air, is with that caused by repeated aerial bombardment of cities during World War II.

Additional pictures on pages 30, 31 tell area tornado story.

another tornado slammed in with the sound of an express train at 4:57 p.m., 90 per cent of the downtown buildings suffered damage and hundreds of homes were flattened or damaged.

Most buildings in an eight-block area downtown are demolished.

At least three persons died in Oelwein and more who are hospitalized may die. Others may yet be found in the wreckage.

Brick commercial buildings lay in heaps with their brick and heavy steel roof girders lying in a pile as though a block set had been kicked around by a child.

Maynard, a smaller community of about 600, eight miles north of Oelwein, also was picked out for freakish vengeance by the storm.

Homes Crushed. Houses at Charles City and Oelwein look from the air as though a giant stepped on them, crushing them like an egg shell, or in countless other cases, simply kicked the roof off or dumped them on their side.

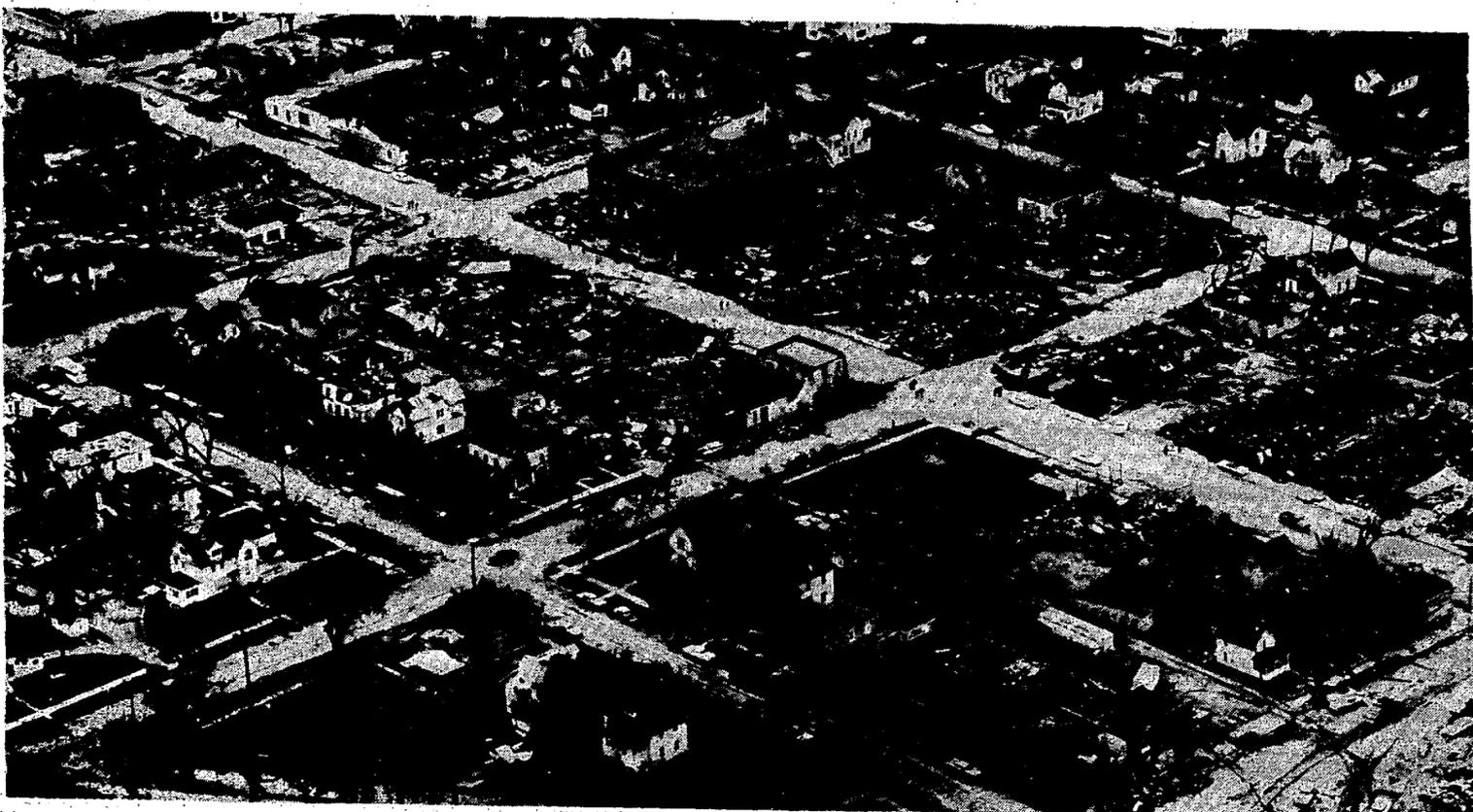
Two Die. Two persons in Maynard died. About five square blocks of the west part of town were virtually leveled and other buildings damaged there.

Structural damage to downtown Oelwein buildings is less visible, from the air but the main business district is virtually windowless and appears to have been burned out, although no fire was reported.

Scores of farm buildings were damaged or destroyed in northeastern Iowa in a widespread storm belt that saw winds up to

At Maynard, where more than 25 houses were destroyed, the funnel flattened the west section of town and destroyed a new \$120,000 Lutheran church.

See STORMS. Continued on page 2, col. 1



The 1000 Block of North Main Street, Charles City, Center, Part of North Business Area in Path of Devastating Tornado

Storm Ravages Charles City

Housing Units Destroyed

By JIM AVEY, Courier Staff Writer. CHARLES CITY—The tornado that ravaged Charles City came out of the southwest about 4:47 p. m., May 15, 1968. In the few short minutes it lived in the city it left death and destruction that will be remembered for years.

The downtown section and only workers were allowed in, but the reports were that almost all business establishments had been severely damaged or destroyed.

The situation was not much better in the residential areas. An 80-unit low-cost housing development for the aged was wiped out. One embittered resident, viewing the wreckage in a flashlight beam, said, "The damn place didn't even have basements."

There were many stories in the disaster. One man told of coming up from his basement after the tornado, and noticing an elderly man who had been

sitting in a lawn chair just before the storm. He still sat there, a cigar clutched in his fingers, but he had been decapitated.

Service stations, a shopping center, and churches were either heavily damaged or completely destroyed.

Cars Smashed

When the winds reached the new bridge across the Cedar River in Charles City, they left brutally heavy marks: Cars were lifted and smashed down on the concrete; heavy steel cables and guard rails were twisted and wrenched into junk.

By flashes of lightning, littered trees of the riverbanks could be seen. Even the river was full of scattered clumps of twisted steel, wood, and perhaps human wreckage.

There were a number of people killed by the tornado, and there were many injured. When Floyd County Sheriff L. L. Lane was asked about casualties about 11 p. m., he could only shake his head tiredly. No one knew for sure then how many were dead or injured.

As soon as Charles City officials called for help, people began to pour in, some from as far away as Minneapolis, about 150 miles away.

Service stations, a shopping center, and churches were either heavily damaged or completely destroyed. An emergency headquarters was set up in the Floyd County Courthouse, lighted by portable generators.

There were islands of calm. There were islands of calm. There were islands of calm.

See CHARLES CITY. Continued on page 2, col. 6

STORM TOLL IN 4 OTHER STATES

By the Associated Press. Here is a summary of the toll from tornadoes which hit areas of the midcontinent outside of Iowa.

ARKANSAS: At least forty-three killed in northeastern sections of the state, 34 in Jonesboro alone where more than 350 also were injured. Ten died in the community of Oil Trough, three at Mountain Home and two at Tuckerman, all within 100 miles of Jonesboro.

ILLINOIS: 10 died in a day-long outbreak of tornadoes and severe thunderstorms. Hardest hit was Freeburg, near East St. Louis, where a twister reduced a trailer camp to rubble. Four were killed and scores injured.

INDIANA: One woman was killed when a nighttime twister churned through a trailer court at Wabash, in the state's northeast.

MISSOURI: One man was killed near Joplin by lightning as tornadoes and severe thunderstorms raked western Missouri and adjacent sections of Kansas.

Suction Cup Twister Hits Oelwein With Sudden Fury

By VERYL SANDERSON, Assistant State Editor.

OELWEIN — Nature unleashed its tremendous fury here Wednesday afternoon, paralyzing this Fayette County town in a mire of uprooted trees, hundreds of broken windows, crushed autos, demolished businesses and homes and hundreds of injured.

Mrs. Grace Damon died of injuries in the tornado. Albert Heaton, 84, died of a heart attack and one other victim whose name was not released was found.

The tornado swooped down on Oelwein like a giant suction cup on the end of a plunger, giving only a few seconds' warning.

Terry Maddigan, 19, and Larry Joeger, 14, were in Phillips 66 Gas Station when the storm hit.

Maddigan, an employe of the station, said, "Our first warning was when I looked out of the station and saw the trees bending over."

"Larry and I ducked under the desk."

The station was nearly leveled. More than half of the office collapsed. "We could hear the noise, and

all of a sudden the roof went off the building and the bricks of the walls and shattered glass were flying all over. Next thing I knew, the desk was covered with bricks and debris," Maddigan recalled.

"We couldn't even see daylight. When it was all over, I dug a hole through the mess on top and around the desk and crawled out."

"I sure was scared."

The station's clock stopped running at 4:57 p.m.

Owner of the station, Michael Bennett, was returning from downtown Oelwein to the station, which is located on Hwy. 150, about 12 blocks south of the main business district.

"I saw it touch down as I was driving," Bennett said. "I headed for the nearest shelter."

"A truck, parked across the street from the station, was shoved through a garage wall," Bennett said. "My truck, parked next to the station, was blown across the street to the side where the other truck was parked."

behind a washer. A dryer crashed about a foot away from me.

"The whole thing couldn't have lasted more than five minutes," McFarlane said.

The entire laundromat building was uprooted from the foundation, leaving rows of washers and dryers.

Further south, past the intersection of Hwy. 150 and Hwy. 190, the screen of the Oelwein Drive-In Theater was wrecked.

The funnel continued north past the laundromat, using Hwy. 150 as its channel. Trees, which had taken years in founding their roots, were sucked from the ground with sod intact. Thick limbs snapped like brittle toothpicks.

The number of funnels varied on two or three.

Windows in the houses shattered. Autos and trucks were pinned underneath the felled trees.

Hwy. 150 was blocked with the wreckage. Ralph Hillard, construction foreman for the John C. Kaiser Co. of Dubuque, walked up the street from the Oelwein Motel.

See OELWEIN. Continued on page 2, col. 3



Force of the Tornado That Slashed Oelwein Is Shown by the Way Houses in This Residential Area Were 'Exploded.'

Ouster Affects Three Locals Of UAW Here

Three United Automobile Workers in the Waterloo area will be affected by the suspension of the UAW from the AFL-CIO. Story on page 26.

Table listing page numbers for various sections: Cedar Falls (15, 27), Classified Advertising (34, 35, 36, 37), Comics (39), Editorial (6), Feature Fare (18), Markets (29, 38), Northeast, Iowa (9, 10, 14, 16, 17, 25, 28, 29), Sports (21, 22, 23, 24), Television Schedule (39), Theaters (34), Waterloo Deaths (5), Women's Pages (12, 13).