Screams For Help Penetrated City As People Swept Away

Darkest time in the 100 year history of Rowan County came in the early hours of July 5, 1939, when three masses of air (storms) met and resulted in a cloud burst. The worry six inches of rainfall in less than two hours was the heaviest known in the United States, according to National Geographic Magazine. Historians report (as you will read throughout this edition) that 34 Rowan Countians lost their lives. Actually size of these were from adjacent counties. The Morehead Independent gave this account of the flood on its July 11, 1939 edition:

Death and destruction came to Rowan County early Wednesday morning when a smashing, irresistible wall of water snuffed out the lives of 23 people, made hundreds homeless and destroyed two million dollars worth of property.

Since no other persons have been reported as missing in the county, it is being assumed that the reported number of dead is complete.

In Breathitt County, which was flooded at the same time, scores were swept into the Kentucky River and the number drowned was still unknown Friday.

The flash flood, caused by a cloud burst near the Carter County line, came down the valley about 1:15 a.m., sweeping homes, barns, livestock and human beings in its wake.

Many were caught in their crumbling houses like rats in a trap, others took to the trees. A few were able to swim to safety. Families were separated.

The roar of the torrent, the screams of the doomed and the terror-stricken victims from the darkness will be forever remembered by those who witnessed the scene.

Wednesday morning Morehead was cut off from the outside world. The only road open was

C. J. Scores Scoop On 1939 Flash Flood

A Courier-Journal reporter, Douglas D. Cornette, and a photographer, George Bailey, were returning from an assignment in Eastern Kentucky when they rolled into Morehead on that fateful morning following the July 5, 1939 flash flood.

Bailey secured many pictures and Cornette wrote one of the biggest scoops of recent years. Mr. Cornette has, among other journalistic honors, since been elected President of the Kentucky Press Association while Mr. Bailey is rated one of the nation's top photographers.

Unfortunately the 1939 flood pictures have been discarded, but the Courier-Journal graciously used a new process to reproduce from their files the pictures that appear here and in the next page. Much clarity and detail have been lost because the original negatives were not available. These pictures are used with the courtesy and permission of the Louisville Courier-Journal.
A school and church near by Iroquois Teachers College, estimated the time crew, truck and equipment

THE WORST—Couriers snapped this tiny Triplett Creek was drowned in the 1939 Morehead flood in an ambulance. Norm

TINY TRIPLETT CREEK rose with such fury that automobiles were carried away, homes were overturned, and planters were washed out of foundations like matchboxes. This is not a picture but at Morehead last week. Cars and trucks were rolled 30 feet high and late patters barely saved their lives by getting to the nearby hills when the wall of water hit.

ONE OF THE VICTIMS—C. C. C. worker James Lee and Norman Barely, about the body of an unidentified woman who was drowned in the 1939 Morehead flood in an ambulance. The body was found in a field between Morehead and Bluestone.

Salvage... Mrs. Ethel Warren, salvaged what was left of her household goods. Part of her home lay sprawled across a highway.

More pictures of 1939 flood on next page

A pitiful scene—Recorder Noyelle Havens, center, and Barbara Lear, standing, find this an unpleasant task on the afternoon of July 6, 1939, but it is necessary they gather facts concerning the flood which killed several people. Mrs. Havens interviewed Mrs. Frances Salyers, second from left, who lost her husband, Mrs. Frances Salyers, 23, and three children, Alberta Mae, 3, and two children, Alberta.
1939 Flash Flood Took Lives Of 25

Six people who lived in one dwelling were drowned in Rowan County in the July 5, 1939 flash flood. They were Mrs. Mary Frances Salyers, 25, and three children, Ivan Eugene 3, Bobby Carl 6, and Alberta Mae 3; and Mrs. Salyers' mother, Mrs. Mahala Mae Ratliff, 49 and son, Lorn 6.

Coroner Lester Caskey listed the following 19 as the other flood casualties.

- James Elmer Sparkman, 9, and brothers and sister, Paul Edwin, 6; Bobby Everett, 7 months, and
- Thelma Lee, 4.
- Mrs. Minerva Boggess, 77.
- Albert Porter, 46, and wife, 45.
- Mrs. Minnie Carter, 38, and son, Junior Bays, 11.
- Mrs. Canna Amburagey, 46, and two daughters, 8 and 14.
- Mrs. Emma Tolliver, 77.
- Mrs. Lula Mae Perry Collins, 32, and daughter, Maggie Frances, 12.
- Miss Sylvia Lee Perry, 16, sister of Mrs. Collins.

"SIX FEET DEEP" was the answer given by Ralph Tomlinson, Fairbanks Avenue, when the photographer asked him how deep the mud was in his house.

THE MERRY-GO-ROUND and everything else broke down when the raging torrent of the 1939 flood swept through Morehead's downtown section, and demolished a carnival being sponsored by the American Legion. A few hours before all was merriment. The carnival was a brand new one and the flood resulted in bankruptcy for the company.

FLOOD MUD—Mrs. S. B. Mutters began shoveling the mud and debris out of her restaurant at Morehead as soon as the July 5, 1939 waters rolled away.

Hurt-Tippett Starting Sunday, May 20th at the Trail Theatre.
IN A MESS—Mrs. Hazel Reynolds, daughter of Bluestone's Postmaster, John W. Jones, is rehabilitating flooded mail, money orders and stamps in the combined postoffice and general store.

CAR SWEPT INTO CORNFIELD—This car, swept off the Owingsville-Morehead Road by the 1939 surging waters, contained seven persons, all of whom miraculously escaped death in the torrent.

Farmers History Dates Back To The Revolution

Farmers was the first settlement in Rowan County. The exact date is not known, but it has been estimated by a local authority to have been around the time of the Revolutionary War. Farmers was known at first as Confederate Cross Roads, later as Farmers Cross Roads and today as Farmers. Major Jim Brain, an aristocrat, of Virginia was probably the first settler. A little later Nick McIntyre, Jim Tabor and Vince Calvert brought their families and friends and erected homes and cleared the land. The first drug store was established here and the first physician located at Farmers. At that time timber was abundant in this section, water could be had from the Licking River and salt could be obtained at a short distance.

Marriage Was Kept Secret

(From Undated Newspaper Clipping)

After maintaining secrecy for ten months, the marriage of Mr. S. M. R. Hurt, an attorney of this city, and Miss Leah B. Tippett, formerly of Morehead, the daughter of Circuit Clerk Thomas Tippett, of Rowan County, was made public, through a telegram from Denver, where the ceremony was performed. The story is romantic to a degree that would delight a novelist. Three years ago Mr. Hurt was in Morehead, at a time when a murder case was being tried. Miss Tippett was near her father, assisting him in his work. Mr. Hurt was impressed by her and mentally resolved to win her hand and heart, if he could. He won and succeeded in gaining her consent to become his wife. She became ill, and her physician advised that she was on the verge of pulmonary trouble, and if she remained in Kentucky might succumb to its ravages. It was decided that she should go to Colorado where it was hoped that the high altitude would restore her health and strength. None of her relatives could go at the time and Mr. Hurt accompanied her.

When Denver was reached, they were married by the Rev. Kent White, President of the Gospel Mission School. They went to Pueblo where they remained about a week, thence to Colorado Springs and from there to Rye, a little mountain village in Pueblo County situated at the foot of Baldy Peak. Here she improved in health and strength till her weight was increased from 87 to 112 pounds. She is strong and robust now, but will remain in Colorado till every vestige of the dreaded disease has disappeared.

Proclamation Issued On Mayor Clayton Death

(From 1911 Newspaper Clipping)

Out of respect for the memory of our late mayor, the Honorable Claud L. Clayton, whose death occurred at his home in this city this morning, I proclaim Tuesday, Oct. 5, a day of sorrow in Morehead, and order all business of the city to stop and request all citizens to close their respective places of business from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m., during the hours of the funeral and burial service.

L. P. Haldeman Gave Name To Town

Haldeman was named after a man by the name of L. P. Haldeman. The Haldeman Brick Yard which employed about 300 men was constructed in 1917. There had been an old brick yard operated there before this. The General Refractories Company has been operating clay mines in Rowan County since 1919. Haldeman at this time was the society settlement.
George Bailey and I first saw the results of the ravaging torrents at Bluestone, where we came across pitiful scenes such as this one where Elwood Warren was removing ruined bedding from his flood-swept home. Little did we realize that it was to become worse as we went on toward Morehead.

We were amazed that such a tiny creek could rise to such might that it overturned automobiles as if they were toys, and tore houses from their foundations as if they were matchboxes. It still was hard to believe, even after we had taken this picture.

"Six feet deep" was the answer given by Ralph Tomlinson, Fairbanks St., Morehead, when George and I asked him how deep the mud was in his house. He wasn't losing time in getting rid of it, though.

We sympathized with Mrs. Hazel Reynolds, daughter of Bluestone's postmaster, J. W. Jones, as she began the task of rehabilitating flooded mail, money orders and stamps in the combined postoffice and general store.
I want to thank the folks who have been telling folks that I am going to be a candidate at some time or another. I have never known that we have so many good neighbors in our surrounding counties. It seems like that every place I go and everybody I meet have been life long friends. I am truly having a wonderful time and I surely do appreciate the courtesy that my neighbors and friends are showing me. After the election, and when I am senator, I am going to take the young couple and Tommy around and visit all the good folks that have asked me to eat with them.

It's wonderful to live in a country where you can visit with people and discuss any subject. I wouldn't give one acre of Kentucky for the half of any foreign country and be made to live on it. I have never known, after traveling in every state east of the Mississippi and several western states, any place like Kentucky. This is my birthplace; this is where I was raised; this is where I want to raise my family, and have them live here and devote their lives to Kentucky; this is where I want to die. No state or no people could be so dear to me.

I am for Kentucky first, (Continued on page 3)

Miss Hattie E. Hoffman, worthy grand matron, is honored at convention.