

# Flood Biggest News Event Of '55

## No. 1—Floods

Torrential warm rains enveloped Douglas County in December, bringing two severe floods in less than a week as they melted mountain snow and saturated the wet ground. The rains were cause of damage estimated at just short of a quarter of a million dollars, and all estimates are not yet in.

The floods were cause of the biggest news events for The News-Review for 1955. And, even as more than 460 stricken families, whose homes suffered heavy damage from the raging rivers, returned to repair the desolation, more rains came.

The floods were reason for President Eisenhower to designate Douglas as one of 10 counties in Oregon as part of a Western United States. Initial relief for the stricken has come already from the American Red Cross, which sent trained disaster workers to help alleviate suffering.

Civil Defense Director for the county Gen. J. T. Pierce, who compiled the quarter million dollar damage estimate, said the figure tallied reports from only nine communities besides Douglas County itself.

Rains pelted the county most of December. They filled mountain streams to the brim, then pushed them over their banks even as they raged down mountains to flush the North and South Umpqua.

Wednesday morning, Dec. 21, residents knew the waters would inundate much of the low lands. At noon Dec. 22, the flood crest in Winston reached a high of 31.55 feet and at 2:50 p.m. in Roseburg it registered 29.10 feet at the Oak Avenue Bridge. That same day it chalked a high of 19.8 feet at the Winchester Bridge.

Repair work started, but even as it was under way, the rains fell again. A second flood hit Monday, Dec. 26. Not quite so high, the rivers were not so destructive, but their tributaries, Cow Creek, Olalla Creek and others, caused heavy damage. In all, 15.74 inches of rain, a record for any month of any year since the Roseburg Weather Bureau started operation in 1878, was recorded in December, 1955.

EUGENE — City firemen this week started circulating petitions to win a place on the ballot for an initiative measure that would reduce their work week to 56 hours.

Eugene firemen now work a 72-hour week.

Fred N. O'Sullivan, president of the Eugene Firefighters, said the firemen and their wives will conduct a door-to-door drive in an attempt to collect about 5,000 signatures on the petitions.

The firemen estimate the shorter week will require about 22 additional men for the department at an annual cost of about \$89,000.

O'Sullivan said the firemen have been asking the city council to authorize the shorter week since 1952.

He said fire crews in Portland and Salem already have the 56-hour week.

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## No. 2—Remote Disaster

The Neal family of Remote had returned the night before from a Christmas day spent at the home of relatives at Riddle.

Torrential rains pounded at the unstable hillsides of the Coast Range along Highway 42.

As the family was sleeping at about 4:20 a.m. Dec. 26, a section of earth, loosened by a gush of water above the Neal home, smashed down a canyon and washed over the Neal home.

Five members of the family died. They were the parents, Mr. and Mrs. Marion Neal; a son, Tommy, 17, and two daughters, Mary, 15, and Becky, 20 months.

But three children survived.

Communications to Remote were practically lost, and the condition of the surviving children was a mystery. Aid from Coos County was out of the question because of high water and slides which covered the highway.

The highway was nearly clear to a point six miles east of Remote. A Camas Valley logger, Frank Kinman, 21, was summoned with his bulldozer.

For five hours, until about 9 p.m., Kinman shoveled his cat at slides which covered the highway. A mercy convoy of police, loggers and first-aid people followed. Radio "hams" were in the area to provide communications to Roseburg.

Finally, Remote was reached and two of the three survivors—Margaret Elaine, 13, and Billy, 6—were brought back to Roseburg for hospitalization. Alvis, 8, was injured.

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## No. 3—Pony Express

When the Southern Pacific Co. announced early in the summer that passenger train service on the Siskiyou line would be suspended, the hackles of Douglas County residents were raised.

Soon, with the backing of the Roseburg Chamber of Commerce, a campaign against the SP action was in motion. Part of the campaign was plans to race horses against the lone SP action train in Southern Oregon.

The race between the "Nightcrawler" and the "night mares" started July 30 in Eugene at about 11 p.m. Roseburg ranchman Johnny Spencer swung onto the back of his horse, "Sundance," and the race was on.

For a long time, the horses, changed every mile or so, led the train which was filled with reporters and photographers from several Oregon newspapers and Life magazine.

But near Drain, the train finally caught up and it was neck-and-neck for several miles.

The train pulled away on Rice Hill.

The "Nightcrawler" pulled into Roseburg about 3 a.m., right on schedule. Seven minutes later, Spencer, also riding the last lap of the 75-mile chase, spurred Sundance into town.

The attempt to prove the flesh-and-blood horse was faster than the iron horse had failed. But chamber members and riders from several saddle groups crowed they won a moral victory.

The "Nightcrawler" failed to make it to Roseburg on schedule again. A week after the race, the old, rattly passenger train went off the run as scheduled.

State Public Utilities Commission Charles H. Heitzel still has a suit against the railroad pending in Marion County Circuit Court. He charges defiance by the railroad of his order to keep the train running.

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## No. 4—Officials Resign

Next on the list of the top Douglas County stories in 1955 were the resignation of two top county officials — Commissioner Elmer R. Metzger and Sheriff Calvin Baird. Reverberations of Metzger's resignation in November are still echoing through the corridors of county government.

As of this date, remaining County Court members Judge Carl C. Hill and Commissioner Frank Ashley have not named a successor. Hill and Ashley have been the target of Metzger, who claims that the court is not being operated efficiently and that politics governs many actions.

The Douglas County Republican Central Committee has recommended the names of three men as possible choices for the post.

The committee also recommended a man to replace Sheriff Baird, but the court appointed Ira C. Byrd instead of following the recommendation.

The action came in April after Baird accepted a job with the federal prison board. His successor has had several years of law enforcement work.

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## No. 6—Sewer Systems

Growth invariably means a need for costly sewer services, and 1955 will be remembered as a year in which major steps were made in supplying those services.

In Roseburg, the hurdle of getting approval for construction of a new sewer system to replace the overworked present facilities was achieved. Work is expected to start early this year on the \$1,100,000 construction. Even before that, the city expects to institute service charges for both businesses and residences to pay off the necessary bonds.

But Roseburg's was only one phase of the sanitary picture over the county. Work was continuing on schedule for construction of a sewer system in Sutherlin and Drain, and the State Bond Commission has agreed to buy \$85,000 in bonds for construction of a system there.

These actions came off fairly smoothly, but one area is still in an uproar over sanitary facility measures. After a preliminary survey in Green, voters approved by a slight margin, formation of a sanitary district. Immediately after, petitions were filed, calling for another election. Another election was called next month, and again the measure passed. And again, like clockwork, a petition is in the hands of the sanitary board requesting another election. No date for the election has been set.

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## No. 8—Logs Crush Four

The most jolting single traffic tragedy in Douglas County during 1955 killed four persons and left two children orphaned.

Aug. 3, a load of logs flipped off the trailer of a logging truck south of Myrtle Creek, and the ensuing crash instantly killed Mr. and Mrs. John Victor Sheely of National City, Calif., and Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Lemen of Seattle, Wash.

The Lemen children, Peggy, age 6, and Jimmy, age 2, survived the crash and were released later from a hospital where they were reported in "good condition."

Officers said the Lemen car, which was pulling a house trailer. After the Lemen car collided with the log truck's trailer, the logs flipped off and crushed the Sheely car.

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## No. 9—Street Names

For several years, the Roseburg Planning Commission had agreed street names and house numbering in the city was little less than chaotic.

Late in 1955, it and the city came up with a plan to set up a systematic house, duplication of street names were eliminated, and practically every house number in the city was changed. Numbering was set up on a system starting from five base lines in the five delineated sections of the city. At the request of the Douglas County Planning Commission, the county adopted measures to dovetail the numbering system and systematize street naming in the peripheral areas of the city. The county commission also hopes similar actions to systematize other incorporated areas of the county will be carried out.

The new system met considerable opposition at first, primarily from merchants who professed great costs to themselves in changing addresses on stationary and advertising materials. The storm blew over, however, and the system is now generally adopted.

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## No. 10—Conventions

1955 was a big year convention-wise for Roseburg. Hundreds of delegates flocked to town to attend the many meetings and activities planned by their hosts in Roseburg.

Leading the list of conventions was the Oregon Fire Chiefs Assn. and the Oregon Rural Fire Protection Districts Assn. meet on June 12. The following day the Assn. of Oregon Counties held a semi-annual southwest district meeting in Roseburg.

June 17 and 18 saw members of the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Assn. convene. The ONPA convention sessions were closely followed by the 40th annual convocation of the Oregon State Aerie (Fraternal Order of Eagles) and the seventh convention of the Oregon State Eagles Auxiliary on June 23.

A new state-wide club, Oregon Arms Collectors, met at the Roseburg Rod and Gun Club building July 24.

Completing the list was the Oregon Assn. of Mounted Poets, Inc., that held its "shodoo" here Sept. 10 and 11.

Scheduled for Roseburg in 1956 is the state convention of Epsilon Sigma Alpha Sorority in April. Plans have also been made for a Veterans of Foreign Wars convalesce June 25 through 29.

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## Sherry Fong's Conviction Upheld

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## Traffic Fatalities Top List Of County Deaths In 1955

As usual, traffic accident fatalities led the list of 1955 violent or unnatural deaths in Douglas County, News-Review records show.

Out of 82 deaths, 29 came as the result of vehicle accidents. The number of traffic fatalities is two above the figure for 1954, but does not approach the all-time high of 43 recorded in 1951.

In the total number of unnatural deaths (the number is just under the 84 in 1954 and 1955), logging fatalities ran second. There were 15 wood deaths in 1955 compared to 16 the year before.

It was an especially bad year for water mishaps, with 12 drownings being recorded, compared to only six in 1954. Five of the drownings occurred in millponds, including two little girls playing near a pond at Loon Lake. One tragedy at the coast took the lives of four fishermen.

The number of suicides was down from nine to six in 1955. Three persons, including two Sutherlin youngsters, died in fires. Two men died in airplane crashes.

Three died in accidental shootings, including one during the hunting season. Two impeters who died of heart attacks in the county were not included in the total.

Three were killed by electricity jolts and three in falls. There was one verified case of a baby suffocating in its crib, compared to four in 1954. One man died of stroke. Miscellaneous accidents accounted for four deaths.

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## Library Well Used By Myrtle Creek Students

Reporting statistics for the month of December, Wilma Gore, Myrtle Creek High School librarian, has shown that the library has been well used by high school students.

The approximate 400 students in the school checked out an average of 99 books daily for the 15 school days in December, making per capita circulation virtually four books. Total circulation for the month was 1,493 books, Miss Gore reports.

While the state supervisor of secondary education recently wrote that the library is one of the best features of the school, it will be inadequate and have to be enlarged as high school enrollment increases, Miss Gore said.

Predictions based on elementary school enrollment will require additional building at the high school for the 1957-58 school year. Temporary plans at the high school call for the new construction to include library facilities with the present library area being released for classroom use, the report concluded.

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## No. 7—Polio

Young and old alike in Douglas County waged an impressive battle against infantile paralysis in 1955.

A week-long contest between Roseburg and Douglas high schools to determine which could best the other in a March of Dimes collection campaign ended with both winning recognition from the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis.

Collectively, they added \$12,127.28 to the MGD fund. The 437 Douglas students collected \$3,325.38 for the highest national student average — \$7.60 plus. At Roseburg High, the pupils raised the highest national single high school sum—\$5,801.98, or \$7.21 each of the 1,200 More recognition came when RHS senior Sharon Lander, 16, was named state "Teens Against Polio" chairman. She is recovering from a polio attack.

Younger residents received, officially, their first Salk anti-polio vaccine shots June 1. The turnout was not heavy.

On June 9, the work of senior county folk was lauded. Douglas had placed fifth, nationally, among counties of 50,000 population or more for its contribution of \$47,809 in Oregon. The sum was second highest in the state, surpassed only by Multnomah's \$261,000.

## 28,726 Families Affected By West Coast Floods

SAN FRANCISCO — The Red Cross said Friday 28,726 families were affected by the Christmas floods in California, Oregon and Nevada.

Cecil H. Davis, relief director, said the Red Cross plans to spend eight million dollars for relief. He predicted 10,000 families would register for long-term help.

In the three states, Davis said, 1,637 homes were destroyed and 14,424 damaged, 624 other buildings were destroyed and 2,432 damaged.

The floods, which covered a million acres, caused damage estimated at 150 million dollars.

The death toll was 73-61 in California and 12 in Oregon.



**TOPS IN NATION** — William L. Simpson, field representative division manager for Sears, Roebuck and Co. in Roseburg, is shown above proudly displaying a trophy he received for having top sales in the nation. Looking on with admiration are his wife, Christine, and L. K. Bye, a Northwest general manager of the organization. The award was presented in Seattle, Wash. It is called the National Sales Executives Distinguished Salesman's Award. Simpson was one of 13 Northwest to receive it from the National Sales Executives Distinguished Salesman's Award. Simpson was and has been connected with the local catalog store since 1953. Manager of the local store is Marion Kummer. (Vaughn W. Floyd photo)

**Grass Fire Flares In Rain-Drenched Town**

SUBLIMITY, Ore. — A grass fire flared briefly Thursday in this rain-drenched Willamette Valley town.

Asst. Fire Chief Delbert Ditter, said he didn't know how the blaze got started in a patch of dead grass on the property of Bernard Zuber.

But the wind-whipped flames dried out grass in their path and set it ablaze. An area 75 by 200 feet was burned before the fire was brought under control after threatening for a time a garage on the Zuber property.

**PLEADS GUILTY**

PORTLAND — Henry Clay Wyatt, an unemployed cabinet maker, Friday pleaded guilty to the \$1,019 holdup of the main office of the First National Bank of Portland.

Federal Judge Gus Solomon delayed sentence pending a probation officer's study of Wyatt's background.

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**Statement of Condition**

DECEMBER 31, 1955

**The United States National Bank OF PORTLAND**

**RESOURCES**

Cash on Hand and Due from Banks	\$ 149,802,394.07
United States Government Bonds	300,342,048.86
Municipal and Other Bonds	74,128,957.36
Loans and Discounts—Nat.	309,103,253.93
Stock in Federal Reserve Bank	1,080,000.00
Bank Premises (Including Branches)	8,891,928.35
Customers' Liability on Acceptances	93,654.00
Interest Earned	2,870,013.78
Other Resources	1,399,241.00
	<b>\$ 847,711,491.35</b>

**LIABILITIES**

Capital	\$ 18,000,000.00
Surplus	18,000,000.00
Undivided Profits	20,790,555.57
	<b>56,790,555.57</b>
Reserves for Interest, Taxes, etc.	4,238,685.49
Acceptances	126,439.50
Dividends Declared	585,000.00
Deposits	781,492,594.39
Interest Collected Not Earned	4,396,591.80
Other Liabilities	81,624.60
	<b>\$ 847,711,491.35</b>

**ROSEBURG BRANCH**

DIRECT BRANCH OF THE UNITED STATES NATIONAL BANK OF PORTLAND

**U.S. NATIONAL BANK OF PORTLAND**

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