

# Damage, Deaths Incalculable from Flood



Incalculable loss and an unknown death toll are resulting from the northwest floods. Damage estimates range to near-fantastic figures. Above is shown a few of the hundreds of volunteers who aided stricken Vanport residents in attempting to rescue their automobiles from the rampaging flood waters after efforts to reach others personal property had to be abandoned. (Oregon Journal photo).



Boats, not trains, were the only conveyances using Portland's Union station Monday as the waters from the roaring Columbia swept over seawalls and inundated the city's waterfront. (Oregonian photo).



Stranded but apparently safe while awaiting rescue were hundreds of Vanport residents such as those shown above atop their homes and on makeshift rafts. Picture below shows some of the scores of automobiles whose owners were not as fortunate as those whose cars were being pulled out by brute force as portrayed in the photo at the top of this page. (Oregon Journal photos).



## Coast's Worst Flood Breaks Minus Warning

PORTLAND, Ore., May 31—(AP)—Nearby Vanport, once the nation's greatest housing project and Oregon's second largest town, lay in complete destruction today. Only the water towers and one radio tower still stood on their foundations. The town's library, stores, schools and houses floated crazily, or lay in splintered fragments.

The worst flood in Pacific coast history broke without warning Sunday upon a town that had been assured its dikes would hold. While children played in yards and men and women chatted in the streets, the flood water tore a six-foot breach in the railroad fill that diked one side of the sunken town.

In waves two feet high, then five, then ten, the water roared through the breach. "Buildings seemed to burst as the water hit them," said an airplane pilot, Calvin Hulbert, who saw the disaster from the air. "I saw the whole wall of an apartment pop out like a balloon exploding."

**Sirens Give Warning**  
A warning siren—signal arranged by the Vanport housing authority in case evacuation was needed—gave the majority of the populace a chance to escape. Running, wading, climbing hand over hand on ropes and human chains, they clambered to the safety of the surrounding dikes and streamed to the elevated highway along the side of the town. But some residents distant from

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## Fliers View Swirling 'Lake' Of Columbia, Watch Water Power Sweep Through Dikes

By Matt Kramer  
PORTLAND, Ore., May 31—(AP)—The 100-mile stretch of the rich Columbia river valley from Portland to the Pacific ocean was a vast, muddy lake today, its winding course churned in the center by the surging river.

Normally a mile in width, the water in some places spread ten miles across Oregon and Washington farm lands. As viewed from the air, only farm rooftops and trees broke the expanse between the hills that form the lower Columbia gorge.

Our cruising airplane only occasionally found dry land jutting into the flood—land protected by dikes which had not yet given away.

**Saw the Dikes Break**  
We saw the dikes break at Woodland, Wash., then an island of green nearly surrounded by the dun-colored waters of the Lewis and Columbia rivers.

The worst break was a mile east of the city of 1,000. Water plunged through a 50-foot gap, boiled high in a wave of foam, then flattened out to race over farm fields toward the city. (The Washington national guard said the break will flood out the town.)

The break widened fast. A row of tall poplars, ranked in front of the funnel, helping stem the water's rush, temporarily. Then the pressure, became a broken door in a violent surge, the gap was widened and the row of poplars was swept through like match sticks. Within minutes half of the island of green was obliterated.

**Woodland Warned, Ready**  
The city, previously warned of danger, was nearly vacated. A few automobiles and pickup trucks moved slowly, carrying out household goods. Army trucks and buses also were lined up in the city center to carry away the last house-holders.

Roads, standing on fills between the break in the dike and the city, were expected to delay the onrushing waters several hours more.

At the far side of Woodland, a navy amphibious plane was landing on a clear-off highway to carry the news to the town. It had been patrolling the area for such an emergency. It landed safely and taxied up to state patrolmen at a road block.

The last few vehicles in town had a quick escape route. A bridge angled up from the low-lying town to the high farther shore of the Lewis river. Safety lay in the hills beyond.

**Kalama Inundated**  
Downstream from Woodland, the Pacific highway between Portland and Seattle was cut in three places. The worst was at Kalama, Wash., where the small town's business district was under water.

Upstream small boats and barges chugged over the large dairy island of Sauvie island, a long strip of dairy land now almost completely under water. The barges carried cows; the boats, farm families still on the island although rescue work has been carried on nearly a week.

The end is not in sight. Back at Portland we found the river up several inches and spilling into downtown streets. The city and the whole of the lower Columbia river valley must endure another 24 hours before the flood will begin to fall.

WASHINGTON—(AP)—Aviation engineers suggest that rockets at the end of World war II were in about the same stage of development as were airplanes at the end of World war I.

## Chalked Houses Show 'No Dead' - On 2nd Floor

VANPORT, Ore., May 31—(AP)—Rescuers rowed grimly past flooded second-story bedrooms today. They checked building after building, boating on the lake that was Vanport.

A rescuer went in to stare at tossed furniture, wash beds, piles of clothing stacked hopefully on a high chifferoni. He came back to the boat. "No bodies there."

A chalk mark was drawn on the house. The boat went to the next one. Through a broken door a rescuer rowed into the second-story room. A dead cat lay in it. No one else.

"No bodies there." Another chalk mark was made. On it went, house after house. The rescue boats dodged dead telephone wires, overturned buildings, a neatly tied bundle of clothing, the body of a dog. No humans.

**Little Hope of Finding**  
From the bank that surrounds Vanport a commercial diver worked, trying to get a line to sunken cars. "There may be bodies in them," said sheriff's deputies.

After a while he abandoned the attempt. He worked clearing debris from the path of search boats.

By afternoon the searchers had almost dropped any expectation of finding victims until the water recedes. Those seen carried away by the torrent must be buried in the invisible first floors or the submerged debris if they failed to reach safety.

But the boats chugged doggedly on. The mute testimony of disaster washed by: Chairs, tables, splinters of what were walls.

Apartments, their outer walls washed off, exposed their rooms like a child's playhouse. In a house floating evenly in the torrent dishes still lay, neatly, on the table. In another the furniture lay piled crazily against a door.

**Evacuees Being Collected**  
In the crowded evacuee centers of Portland, in thousands of private homes, refugees waited for news. They kept asking for missing relatives. They kept asking how many were lost.

No one could tell them. Vanport children who had been watching a Portland circus when the disaster struck were being collected in one place. The Red Cross tried to find their parents.

All evacuees were asked today to register on a master list, to speed identifications. They were scattered over all Portland. Today some were being moved to Guild's Lake, another housing project. But it could accommodate only hundreds. The others are homeless now.

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