

17 Perish, 25 Missing as Flood, Fire Strike West Virginia Area

(Story also on page one)

WEST UNION, W. Va., June 25 (AP)—Fire and flood struck a six-county area in north-central West Virginia last night, leaving at least 17 dead, 25 missing and property damage estimated in the millions.

Four bodies were recovered from the flooding waters of Middle Island creek five miles from West Union. State Trooper G. S. Knight said at least 16 others were missing in the little community of Smithburg, a rural community of 300 about four miles east.

A newsman who flew over the scene today said that creeks in an area 60 to 100 miles wide "were roaring from their banks."

Dallas Higbee, news editor of the Charleston Gazette, said that all of the city of Weston, 25 miles southeast of West Union, was under water except the hillsides. "In the town's lowest sections," he added, "the water appeared to be almost to the second floors."

Near Weston, the sudden high waters ruptured a 450,000-gallon gasoline tank. The gasoline ignited as it spread out over the muddy waters of the West Fork river, and a barn burned down. The rushing water soon dispersed the gasoline, however.

2 Towns in Flood Path

In the path of new flood threats were inhabitants of Cairo (pop. 500) and Berea (pop. 100) in Ritchie county southeast of West Union.

Sheriff H. A. Britton of Ritchie county informed state police there had been "several drownings" in his area.

Water reached a height of 35 feet in West Union but was receding, and Trooper Knight said roads would be open into the town late today.

At least 200 homes were washed away here, and about 1,000 made homeless. The community was without safe water, gas or electricity.

Bread Flown In

Bread was flown into the community by planes from Elkins, and a milk plant at Clarksburg dispatched tanks of pure water. The homeless were cared for in the West Union school building.

The skies remained overcast throughout the stricken area today. There was more rain.

Higbee wrote:

"All through the stricken area cars were standing in water from a few inches to several feet deep. It appeared that their owners had just abandoned them in fleeing to higher ground."

"They were particularly noticeable on the streets of Weston and Glenview, some of them standing with their doors open."

Travel Disrupted

Communication lines were down in the stricken areas and rail traffic was disrupted. A Baltimore and Ohio freight train was reported marooned in a tunnel, with the track washed out behind it and the waters rising at the tunnel front.

All roads to the north of Weston, county seat of 8,500, were cut off and roads east and west were reported closed also. Roads to the south were partially flooded.

All firemen were called out for emergency duty and the local radio station warned residents of the danger. Merchants began moving what goods they could about 3 a.m. (EST) when it was apparent that advancing waters would cover the business district.

Leaking gas mains added to the hazards and inhabitants were warned not to use matches.

Water Shortage

As a serious food and drinking water shortage periled West Union, Red Cross aid was rushed to the scene from Alexandria, Va., and Charleston, W. Va. Volunteer workers in boats were busy rescuing marooned inhabitants.

Mayor Edward Blair and Fire Chief Grey Marsh at Weston estimated damage there was \$2,000,000 not including losses suffered by the city's glass factories.

Philadelphia Police Return With Johnson

Charles Johnson, 19-year-old fugitive from a murder charge, will be on his way back to Philadelphia and the scene of the crime today and taking him will be two officers who have been on the case since its beginning.

Sgt. Charles Steinberg and Detective Joseph McGurk of the Philadelphia homicide squad arrived in Salem Saturday night by plane to return Johnson east for trial.

Johnson, a slender, light-haired product of Philadelphia's southeast section, was arrested by City Detective David M. Houser Wednesday on information provided by Philadelphia police and a tip from a Statesman reader who saw the description in a news story.

The two Philadelphia officers were amazed and pleased with the quick arrest of Johnson. He was picked up less than 24 hours after police here received a wire from the east giving the young suspect's description. McGurk and Steinberg commended the Salem police department for their actions in the arrest and questioning of Johnson.

The officers traced their actions in the case since the Sunday morning—May 28 at 4:30 a.m.—when the body of Thomas Rispoli, 31, was found on the pavement in front of his home at 102 Morris st., Philadelphia.

Cat and dog hairs and lint from upholstery led police to the Johnson home where they learned that Charles had not been seen since the crime. Johnson was then traced to West Virginia where the two officers learned that he had mentioned purchasing a car and visiting a relative in Oregon, probably Salem. Then came the tip to Salem area police leading to his arrest.

Detective McGurk said Saturday night that Johnson had waived extradition and signed the waiver and would be returned to Philadelphia by train Monday. He refused to travel by air, McGurk said.

3 Generations Of Brides Wed In Triple Rite

LOS ANGELES, June 25 (AP)—"I do," said grandmother. "I do," said mother. "I do," said little Darlene, and the minister pronounced them married—to their respective bridegrooms, that is.

Yes, three generations were wed in a triple ceremony last night. Miss Darlene Kelly, 16, was married to Ralph Lester, 17; her mother, Mrs. Merle Thomas, 34, to Spencer Ramsdell, 29, and her grandmother, Mrs. May Forgy, 64, to Jesse H. Taylor, 70.

Darlene met her husband in high school. Her mother met her new husband at a party. And grandmother met Mr. Taylor after they joined the same lodge.

BERLIN, June 25 (AP)—Two American soldiers were held briefly by Soviet authorities last night after one of them ripped down a communist banner in an East Berlin subway station. Officers said they were not subjected to mistreatment or interrogation.

U. S. officials identified the pair as Cpl. Alfred Romanczuk of Dupont, Penn., and PFC Thomas

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Truman Talks With Aides on Korea Issue

(Story also on page one)

WASHINGTON, June 25 (AP)—President Truman cut short a Missouri vacation to return to his desk at Blair house and confer with the nation's top military and defense leaders on the issues arising from the communist invasion of South Korea.

Indicating the interest with which the rapid developments were viewed in Washington, from 75 to 100 persons collected on the street outside Blair House where the president and his advisers were meeting.

These onlookers leaned on the iron rail fences of the buildings on either side, lined up against the railings of the old state department building across the street, and gave every indication of waiting all evening, if necessary, to see the affair break up.

Even before Mr. Truman sped back to Washington, a decision had been made to speed emergency arms aid to the embattled South Korean army.

The sequence:

Newsmen learned the U. S. has decided to send the embattled South Koreans as much arms aid as it can as fast as it can. That decision came out of a top-level diplomatic-military meeting at the state department.

Supplies on Their Way

Some military supplies were understood to be already on their way from Japan.

Another decision was to ask the United Nations security council—convened in emergency session—to order a cease fire in Korea and demand that the North Koreans withdraw from conquered territory. Russia, as expected, boycotted the meeting at Lake Success, N.Y.

State department officials have emphasized in the past that the instructions to the small U. S. military mission now in Korea are to advise and assist the Korean military forces. Now the emphasis appears to be on "assist."

The American government was reported determined to continue to send military equipment of the kind the Koreans have been trained to use in whatever quantities they require it. The existence of large stores in Japan—little more than 100 miles distant—means it can be furnished quickly. As a starter, it is a matter of building up Korean stocks of small arms ammunition.

"Concerned, Not Alarmed"

Mr. Truman was described in Independence, Mo., earlier today as "concerned but not alarmed" by reports from the capital where he was in constant communication.

But within an hour, the temporary White House abruptly changed signals, announcing that Mr. Truman would cut short his visit and fly back here as a result of telephone conferences with Secretary of State Acheson.

Eben Ayers, assistant White House press secretary, said in Independence that the president "has three or four important decisions to make and he feels that he should go back to Washington right away." Mr. Truman had been scheduled to stay over until tomorrow morning.

At the Kansas City airport where he boarded his plane for the flight back to Washington, the chief executive told reporters:

"I won't have anything to say until I have all the facts."

Mr. Truman asked the newsmen not to make the situation appear "alarming."

"It could be a dangerous situation, but I hope not," he said.

Before the top-level conferences at the state department, one high official of that agency told reporters:

"Things seem to still favor the North (Koreans). This seems to be a real attack."

Jefferson Man Faces Reckless Driving Count

One of two brothers whose cars hit head-on near Salem late Saturday was charged with reckless driving yesterday.

State police said James Valentine Wood, Jefferson route 1, was cited to appear in Marion county district court to answer the charge. Driver of the other car was Joe Wood, also of Jefferson route 1.

The wreck happened in front of Liberty cannery. James Wood told police that he slammed on his brakes when he saw children on the road. Police said his car went into a skid and collided with his brother's car.

Six persons incurred minor injuries in the accident.

Rene Pleven Suggested as French Leader

By Preston Grover

PARIS, June 24 (AP)—Rene Plevin, defense minister in the retiring Bidault government, became the most-discussed candidate today to lead a new cabinet. The old one, under Georges Bidault, was thrown

out of office by a negative vote in parliament yesterday.

President Vincent Auriol shelved the political crisis after talking to half a dozen leaders before lunch. He went to the races at Longchamps in the afternoon.

This attitude of the president seemed to reflect the general feeling of the French toward this latest crisis in their government, even though it came in the midst of negotiations on the Schuman plan and Indochina.

Not Taken Seriously

The French, accustomed to seeing the same men go in and come out in these recurring shakeups, seemed to have a difficult time in taking it seriously. The franc is relatively steady, there is no rationing, the export-import balance is improving and crops are good.

The French recognize, however, that the instability of their cabinets is the weak point in postwar recovery. This weakness was signaled when the socialists deserted Bidault yesterday and left his middle-of-the-road government fall on a vote of non-confidence, 352 to 230, over a relatively unimportant issue of increased salaries for government workers.

Pleven, the last political leader to see the president today, said he thought no one would be named before tomorrow to try to form a new government.

Small Party Member

He is a member of the small party called UDSR—Union Democratique et Socialiste de la Resistance—which stands between the Moderate socialists and the slightly conservative radical socialists.

Henri Queuille, interior minister in the departing cabinet, and Rene Mayer, justice minister, also were mentioned as possible choices for premier. Both are radical social-

Passenger Ship Hits Freighter On Lake Huron

DETROIT, June 25 (AP)—The Great Lakes passenger ship City of Cleveland collided with a Norwegian freighter on Lake Huron in a heavy fog early today.

At least two persons died in the crash, with two others missing and several others seriously injured. Coast guard reports also indicated some 25 or 30 other passengers suffered minor injuries.

The crash occurred five and one-half miles off Harbor beach, in the so-called Thumb area of Michigan, east of Saginaw bay. The ship was on a charter cruise carrying about 75 members of the Benton Harbor, Mich., chamber

ists, the right of center party which has been a consistent member of the ruling coalition with socialists and Bidault's popular republicans (Catholics) since communists were ousted from positions of power.

For at least a week France will not have to worry about the effect of her crisis on the Schuman plan, which promised to make her once again the leader of Europe. The delegates of West Germany, Italy, Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxembourg were at home comparing notes with their governments. They are not due back until July 3.

The Statesman, Salem, Oregon, Monday, June 25, 1950—9

of commerce. It was due at Detroit this morning, after which it was to go to Buffalo, N.Y.

The freighter smashed a large hole in the side of the passenger ship, along a line of cabins occupied by the dead, missing and injured.

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