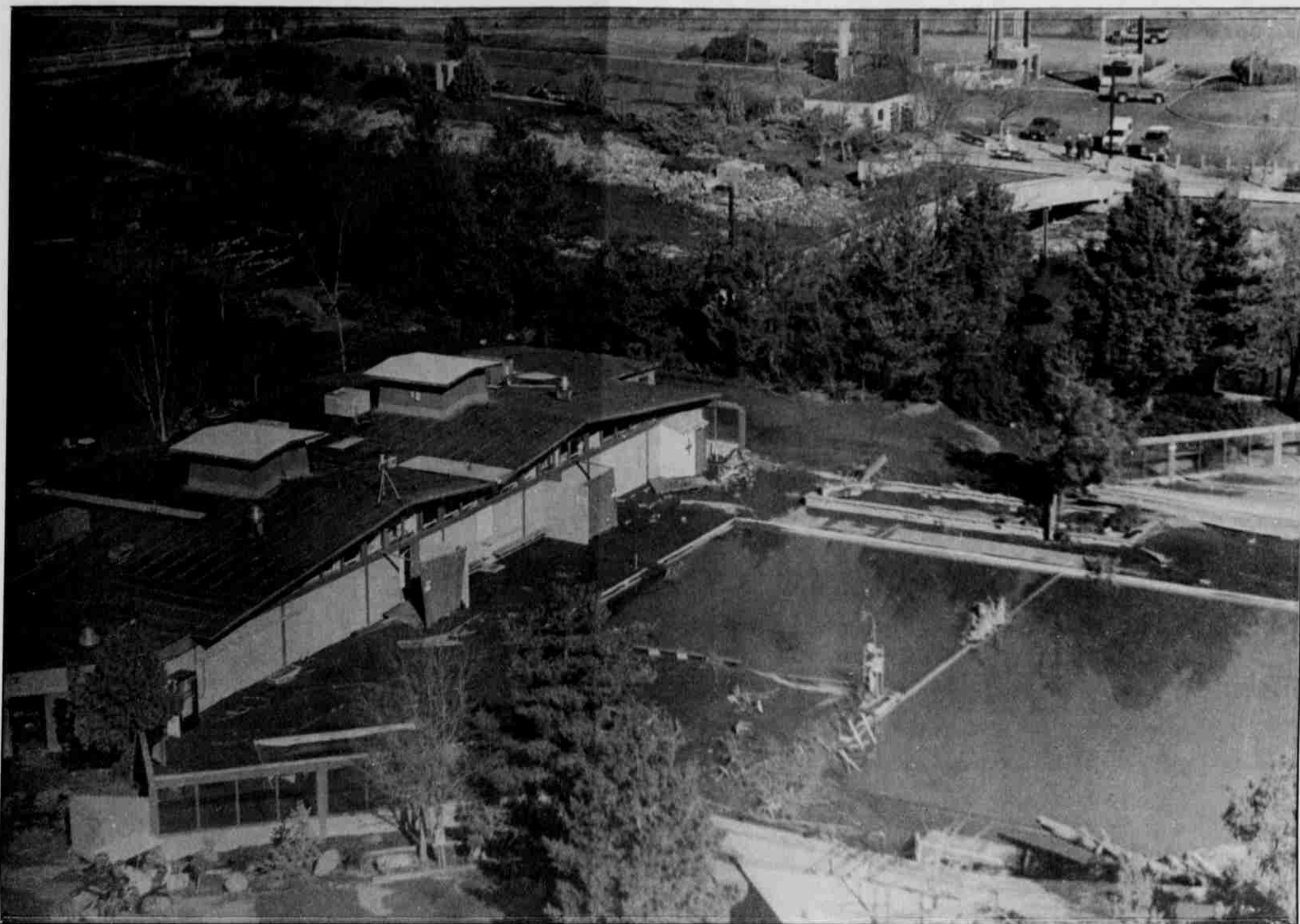


Flood of '96 creates havoc



Kah-Nee-Ta pool is now filled with cinder-colored mud, logs and other debris.

When Mother Earth gets on the warpath and does things destructively there's hardly anything anyone can do to stop her. Snow about a foot deep or more was lying on the ground and the temperatures were well within freezing or lower when there was a sudden change in weather. The weather turned from frigid cold to balmy warm. Coming with the change was a lot of rain which caused the snow to melt. The unseasonable runoff came gushing down the hillsides causing streams and creeks to rise dramatically above flood stage. After flood waters were running all over the countryside, there was an emergency stage here in Warm Springs which closed roads to through traffic. The emergency status caused the whole Tribal operation to close its doors and let employees go home at 10 a.m. Wednesday, February 7 before the real force hit the area.

Danny Martinez, the tribe's newest fire chief called an emergency meeting at 7:00 A.M., Wednesday, February 7, 1996, because of the conditions that were arising. At that time Kah-Nee-Ta personnel were monitoring the water flow of the Warm Springs river. Around 7:45 a.m. it was decided to evacuate the Kah-Nee-Ta Village. At 8:30 an emergency team was formed and a meeting was called among Martinez, Karmen Blake, Mike Gomez, Oswald Tias, Anita Jackson, and a few others who decided on some kind of plan for the crisis on hand.

Martinez contacted the Red Cross, out of Bend, at 8:45 a.m. The Red Cross came immediately and set up quarters in the Agency Longhouse. To get to the Simnasho Longhouse they had to go back to Madras and up Highway 97 to Maupin and come in through Walter's; Corner to set up operations in the Simnasho longhouse.

Fire Management was contacted to organize a plan for the disaster in the making. The Utilities department was called to open up the Longhouse for tribal sanitarian Nancy Collins so she could set up to provide shelter and meals for flood stricken victims and for those who volunteered their time during the flood.

Martinez, who was in command, called on Mike Gomez to be his assistant to relieve him of some of his duties which were piling higher and higher and from every direction at the minutes ticked by.

Members of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians who were holding their Mid-Year conference at Kah-Nee-Ta were isolated for a night. The next day attendees were evacuated while some had to spend another night before being taken out. The Resort lost power Wednesday morning. The Museum area was flooded and people from the Rainbow trailer court were evacuated. Around 11:30 a.m. Kah-Nee-Ta Village was under water. Resort security officer Kip Moris made his way down highway 8 to check on Benny Heath, the Moody Ranch and the Meanus family. Coast Guard was contacted as the problem worsened. The lower end of Warm Springs Forest Products Industries was under water by Wednesday afternoon.

Martinez said it was anticipated that there would be a big problem and made the decision to have all employees go home to prevent further tie-ups later on. Their concern was for the safety of local people and that was the reason for calling the closure of all offices and



A large Coke machine washed into the Village parking lot.

work during the week. He declared the schools to shut down and get the kids home before the real high waters arrived. Instead of unloading kids at the Community Center buses were directed to unload at the Agency Longhouse, because the Community Center was right in the flood path and it was safer at the Longhouse. At first, there was quite a congestion at the Longhouse because the Red Cross was there setting up quarters. Fortunately, things went smoothly.

Martinez said about 5 p.m. the decision was made that we are in a disaster position and called FEMA and OEA, of his decision, but both offices were already flooded with calls from other parts of the state on the same conditions. But at 7:45 that evening, they called back for a verbal confirmation of the declaration of the disaster position. Martinez said it was officially declared a disaster area at 8:30 p.m. ODOT was on hand monitoring the roadways. At 8:45 the Shitike Creek Bridge was declared unpassable. Highway 26 was closed. At 9:30 police released people from jail to help with the sand bagging.

Gomez and the Coast Guard flew over Kah-Nee-Ta Village to film the flood, showing the destruction the waters were causing. The Coast Guard went on to evacuate 11 people from along the Deschutes River, who were isolated there.

The emergency group began strategizing Thursday and at that time 18,000 CFS was released from the dam. Road closures of highway 3, 26. Highway 26 at mile post 82, was called the Badger Lake. The Deschutes River bridge near the cafe was closed at 10 a.m. as waves were splashing onto the bridge. The Pelton Re-Reg. was ready to let emergency traffic through. Residents advised people to stay at home. The Command post was set up at the fire management training Center.

On Friday afternoon things began to stabilize. The Red Cross was here all five days under the direction of Ralph Meves and David Gassaway.

On Saturday management was contacted to start making assessments of all damages caused by the flood and in the meeting of managers on Sunday Danny Martinez turned things back to Management.

There were some harsh feelings from many during the time of the crisis, but the decisions were made to protect the people from any kind of accident. This was a disaster that no accidents were reported because of the safety precautions taken by the emergency group. Also the management around here was so well organized like they were expecting something like this where everyone cooperated and things went smoothly as can be expected, said Martinez.