

SURVIVOR RECALLS

"Buildings Were Floating Down Main Street"

As Told by J. Orve Rasmus
On the Sunday afternoon of the flood, J. Orve Rasmus was working in Ed C. Ashbaugh's Pastime, now occupied by the Western Auto store. The owner himself was in Portland on a business trip. Mr. Rasmus' time off was at 5 p. m. and while he was waiting for the minutes to go by he glanced out and remarked on the intensity of the rain to the few customers who were playing solo.
The next time he looked out, buildings were floating down Main street. Rasmus gave the alarm and all the men raced out the back door to the Les Matlock house on Gale street where they stared for a moment

(This headline and a small portion of its following story which appeared on the front page of the Oregonian the Morning of June 16, 1903, shows how newspapers handled the stories.)

DEATH IN FLOOD

Wild Torrent Engulfs Hundreds

Survivors Are Helpless to Give Succor

HAD BATTLE FOR LIFE

SAFETY LAY ONLY IN FLIGHT

Women Torn From Babies, Fathers From Families

HEROISM OF LESLIE MATLOCK

Mounts a Horse and Speeds Down Valley to Spread Terrible Warning to Unsuspecting People—

PENDLETON, Or., June 15—The first news of the terrible disaster at Heppner was brought to this city this evening when A. P. Bradbury, R. D. Ball and J. J. Kelly, all traveling men, arrived in the city. They were guests of the Palace Hotel, in Heppner, Sunday evening, at the time the flood came on and assisted in rescuing many people whose lives were in danger.

trying to comprehend the situation.

"Then I noticed a whirlpool in the street by Mike Robert's saloon with Mrs. Lillie Cohn in the middle of it, balanced on a piece of whirling wooden sidewalk. She jumped into my arms when I ran out to get her and for a moment we stumbled around in waist-high water. The sidewalk also struck me a jolt in the side before I got her back to the safety of Matlock's lawn. She ran the millinery shop and was an aunt of Harold Cohn.

"Next I saw a big drift of mud and debris banked up against the Carrigus Implement store, now O'Donnell's Cafe, across the street. Two women were high on the drift and a Chinese down lower. The water was about knee deep then and I grabbed the Chinaman dragged him over to the old Post Office. Now Dave Wilson's store. He cried with pain and only later did I learn he was suffering with a compound fractured bone. Then I got the two women and carried them across.

"In all the excitement I had temporarily forgotten about my own folks and then suddenly I began to wonder about them. They lived on the west side of Court street in an eight-room house on the lot now occupied by Nate McBride. I ran up on the hill where I could look over to our place. There was a house with a dormer window at the top like ours lodged on our lot and I felt relieved that our house had stood. It was a few days before I learned that the house I saw wasn't ours at all, but another one that had swept down the creek and stopped there."

What actually happened at the home of his parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Rasmus, Orve learned later. Mrs. Rasmus had been ill in bed for two weeks. Another son had been working nights and was sleeping. Mr. Rasmus, noticing that the rain was increasing, decided he had better get his new milk cow and calf under cover. Getting up, he looked out in time to see the rain and water splashing over the house on the opposite side of Willow creek.

Losing no time, Mr. Rasmus called his son and together they carried Mrs. Rasmus through waist-deep water to safety on the hill before the water tore the house to ruins. They then stayed at Mike Robert's house on the road behind the court house. At the same time, Orve's sister was visiting in the upper end of town with Mrs. Alice Gentry. Deciding to leave, she walked out onto the sidewalk which broke and carried her a whole block down stream before she managed to jump off and escape to safe ground.

Later when the family looked over their lot, not a piece remained of house or belongings except a shiny object among the litter on the ground. It was John Rasmus' Masonic Lodge pin, now cherished by his son Orve and kept in the safety of his deposit box.

"About midway of the rain, the hail pelted down", Orve Rasmus said. "I was going up Main street when I met Les Matlock at Gilliam and Bisbee's store then located just below the bank.

Continued on Page 6



Not By Flood-- ... But By Fire! Remember When?

Less than four years ago, Heppner again faced the threat of at least partial destruction when these elevators of the Morrow County Grain Growers and another firm went up in smoke and threatened to take with them a big part of the town?

The Grain Growers loss was mighty big, in dollars and cents, yet we came back, as did Heppner after its much greater loss 50 years ago, to rebuild and to again continue to grow and expand. Both Heppner and the Morrow County Grain Growers have recovered, except for the memories.

TODAY ...

Your farmer-owned cooperative stands more ready than ever to care for the needs of the growers of the county's greatest crop—wheat. And we are now prepared to handle

2,000,000 Bushels of Morrow County Wheat in 1953

Morrow Grain Co. Growers

LEXINGTON, OREGON

WITH ELEVATORS LOCATED AT

HEPPNER — LEXINGTON — IONE — McNABB — RUGGS — SAND HOLLOW

TEST THE RIDE OF THE FUTURE TODAY...



COME RIDE IN THE 1953

Aero Willys

... future-styled, roomy Aero-Falcon-4-door Sedan
Start Your Test Ride of the 1953 Aero Willys From

Farley Motor Company
HEPPNER