

# Waited for Water to Come", The Visitor Remembers of Flood

The following article was prepared by Spencer Akers, now a resident of Aumsville, Oregon, and was originally offered to the Gazette for use in this issue. It was too late to be included in the special flood section, but printing it here just as Mr. Akers has written it.

By Spencer Akers

It was just fifty years ago that the little Heppner, Ore., was overwhelmed with the greatest disaster that befell any community in its population. One person was snatched by this demon. How well I remember in detail every incident within range of my time of the cloud-burst resulting flood my family

and I were visiting in Ione at the home of my step-mother and grandmother who were living near the bank of Willow creek. We having driven in from my farm in the Eight-mile country south of Ione. The first report of the flood we had came to us very suddenly when we heard someone galloping up to the front of the house and called out with a loud voice "Get to the hills; the flood is coming; Heppner is washed away." At that time my wife and I were preparing the two little girls for bed. I had Blanche age four on my lap with her clothes stripped down and just putting her nightgown over her head. Nellie, my wife was also attending to the preliminaries prior to putting Alma, age two to bed. I rushed to the door to learn more of the particulars but of course, like Paul Revere, the mes-

senger had gone like the wind to warn others of the impending danger. I learned later that voice was the voice of Bruce Kelly, a young fearless Irishman who along with Less Matlock had witnessed the flood at first-hand and having come out intact conceived the idea of attempting to warn the people down the valley, including the two small towns of Lexington and Ione 9 and 18 miles below Heppner. After supplying themselves with wire cutters they hurried to a livery stable which was spared, saddled a horse apiece and struck out over the hills, cutting wire fences as they proceeded in an attempt to get ahead of the wall of water and warn the unsuspecting people below. By super-human effort and with long-winded horses they out-ran the on-coming flood. By this act of heroism they no

doubt saved many lives.

I gathered up Blanche, clothes and all and rushed out the front door into the dark with Nellie coming close behind with her precious bundle. Not knowing there was a foot bridge across the creek near the back door which would have permitted us to reach higher ground with a few steps, we proceeded up town to Main street which is near the north foot-hills that comes down to the valley. This meant a run of about a quarter of a mile. Nellie soon gave out so I took both the girls and proceeded on the best I could with my added burden. Nellie being relieved of her charge was able to keep up with me. Soon a man came running by and relieved me of Alma which allowed me to make better progress. After reaching Main street we found Les and Bruce there calmly telling a bunch of excited citizens what they knew about the doomed city of Heppner. No one tarried long to learn details but rushed on to higher ground. Recognizing Bruce I rushed up to him and told him that my step-mother and grandmother were not coming and asked him if he would lend me his horse so I could go back and see what had become of them. This he kindly did. I mounted and hurried back and called to them and they answered from the other side of the creek. They had rushed out the back door and crossed the foot-bridge thinking of course we would follow. It did not take me long to deliver the foaming steed to his master. I could imagine the flood swallowing me up at any moment.

After getting the family settled with the rest of the people of the town we waited for the flood to arrive. It was very cloudy and pitch dark. We could hear the blood-curdling sound of the water as it plowed its way through town. There were no lives lost in Ione, thanks to Les and Bruce, but many would have hurried out into the dark and drowned if they had not been warned. No houses were washed away but the whole valley was flooded.

After the water had subsided somewhat and it had begun to get a little light my brother Med, the village blacksmith and I waded through water and slush to his barn to get my team and hack and try and make it to Heppner. We were anxious about our sister and family there. The horses stood in water up to their bellies all night and we found the hack turned up side down in the barn lot but intact. We saw on our way to Heppner many bodies that had been carried out to the road by searchers. Arriving at the stricken city we found it a shambles. At the depot below town we saw a great drift of parts of houses box cars, trees, barbed wire entanglements, etc. ect. We first went to find out about our

sister and family. We found her in bed at a neighbors house on higher ground suffering from shock. After finding they were surrounded with water they called for help and someone threw them a rope and it was tied around my sister and she was dragged ashore. Her husband, August Lundell with super-human effort climbed a tree with three small children in his arms. This happened to be one of the few trees that withstood the surging water.

We worked till dark helping to remove a number of bodies from the drifts, then started back to Ione. On our way back we met a hack load of prominent men from Portland who had come as far as Ione on the train but could go no further as the road was washed out. Among them was Ed Ashbaugh, a county commissioner who had gone to Portland to order furniture for the new court house. Ed stopped us to inquire about his wife and eight children. It was very hard for me to tell him they were all drowned. To those who might be interested to know what became of the man who lost his family while doing his duty toward the county, I will say he is an invalid and living in Portland.

After taking my family home I came back and helped for several days to bury the dead. I remember I had a grave about half dug when they brought old blacksmith, Mr. Gunn in a rough pine box and put him in it.

A number of years ago I made an attempt to obtain a full list of the names and number of victims and was able to obtain the names of 203. The flood district is all built up now and we are hoping that a disaster like that will never happen again.

## Ione News

The Leo Crabtree family of Salem are moving on the Lewis Halvorsen place below town. Mr. and Mrs. Noel Streeter who lived

there moved to the A. E. Stefan farm near Morgan.

Fossil defeated Ione in a baseball game here Sunday.

The Garden Club made a garden tour in cars Friday June 5. They first visited the yards and the city park in town and then went in the country where they inspected the yards of Lee Beckner and G. Hermann which are noted for their many variety of roses. The Wm. Melena, Garland Swanson and Delbert Emert grounds have some fine landscaping. They went to the Marion Palmer home on Rhea Creek and found a very picturesque yard. Then the trip was made to the Gooseberry country where

they stopped at the Charles Carlson place to see the creeping fescue lawn and the caragana hedge the rockery and shrubs at the Oscar Peterson yard, the wind break at the Wm. Bergstrom's and flowers and fruit at the Carl Bergstrom's.

A pot luck dinner was served at the Valby Lutheran Church at noon. Several Alanthus trees have been set out around the church. A business meeting was held after the dinner with installation of officers. Mrs. Omar Rietman was installing officer. Mrs. Fredrick Martin the new president will attend the Garden Club State Convention at McMinneville this week.

## BILL JONES DIDN'T . . .



TOM SMITH DID

**SAVE... Sure, Tom Smith saves at First.** Like his neighbor Bill Jones, he hated the chore of pushing a lawn mower. Now, Smith has a power mower. . . and SAVINGS did it. You too can buy many of the things you want and need if you save regularly, every payday.

**1st FIRST NATIONAL BANK OF PORTLAND**  
HEPPNER BRANCH  
"LET'S BUILD OREGON TOGETHER"  
MEMBER FEDERAL DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

**BEAUTIFUL, CLEAN-EASY FLOORS AT LOW COST**

## ARMSTRONG'S QUAKER FLOOR COVERING

- Top Value In High-Style Decoration For Every Floor
- 9 and 12-foot Widths Offer Seamless Floors For Large Rooms

Style leaders in easy-cleaning smooth surface floor coverings. Carved carpet designs, hollow square and geometric effects, hooked rug and shag effects, hooked rug and shag effects, tiles, florals, Mellow tones. Styletones. Exclusive K-99 finish increases beauty and wear.

9-ft. Width \$1.00 Sq. Yd.  
12-ft. Width \$1.05 Sq. Yd.

**Case Furniture Co.**

*In all these things you want...*

# Chevrolet's farther ahead than ever!

**in Fisher Body Quality!** It's the only body by Fisher in the low-price field. And it's even more outstanding in styling, comfort and conveniences, in quality.

**in High-Compression Power!** Most powerful engine in its field with 7.5 to 1 compression ratio—the new 115-h.p. "Blue-Flame" engine with Powerglide.\* Advanced 8-h.p. high-compression "Thrift-King" engine in gearshift models.

**in Powerglide and Power Steering!** Powerglide is the newest, most advanced automatic transmission in its field. Power steering—another Chevrolet exclusive in its field—lets you steer with finger-tip ease.

**in Economy and Value!** You go much further on every gallon of gas (regular gas, that). You save on over-all costs of operation and upkeep. Chevrolet is again the best-priced line in its field!

**in Popularity Leadership!** Again this year—as in every single postwar year—more people are buying Chevrolets than any other car. For the first 3 months alone, Chevrolet was over 20% ahead of the second-choice car. Nearly 2 million more people now drive Chevrolets than any other make.

Optional at extra cost. Combination of Powerglide automatic transmission and 115-h.p. "Blue-Flame" engine available on "Two-Ten" and Bel Air models only. Power Steering available on all models.

The striking new Bel Air 4-Door, one of 16 beautiful models in 3 great new series.

**CHEVROLET**

**MORE PEOPLE BUY CHEVROLETS THAN ANY OTHER CAR!**

## Fulleton Chevrolet Company

# GRAND OPENING

of our new **BOYSEN PAINT DEPT.** featuring the famous **COLORIZER** line with 1322 colors in all finishes. Come in and see our new department and receive

# FREE!

**1/2 PINT CAN OF Amazing BOYSEN PLASOLUX ENAMEL**

**VALUE 80c**

Come in and visit our store and receive absolutely FREE (to adults while supplies last) 1/2 pint of Boyesen's famous Plasolux enamel with the amazingly beautiful mirror-like finish that resists boiling water, grease, alcohol, and even ACIDS! Plasolux is America's finest gloss enamel.

**NOTHING TO BUY. NO OBLIGATION JUST COME IN AND GET ACQUAINTED**

**In Addition**

**THE FIRST 100 LADIES** to visit our store will receive a piece of genuine **FIRE KING** Oenware. This famous oenware, which comes with the Good Housekeeping Seal of approval, has a two year guarantee.

**COME EARLY. LADIES. AS THE SUPPLY IS LIMITED TO THE FIRST 100!**

## TUM-A-LUM LUMBER COMPANY

PHONE 6-9212 HEPPNER  
WE LIKE TO HELP FOLKS BUILD

**--SATURDAY, JUNE 13, ONLY--**