

Ione flood night recalled

Community pitches in to mop up in wake of high water

By Eva Hamlett

Tuesday morning, Feb. 6, started out like any other day. It was fairly warm and light with an occasional glimpse of the sun.

As we sat at the breakfast table we remarked that someone was keeping check on the creek as pickups were driving in and out all night. I was hurrying around getting my work done before going to a birthday party in the afternoon. At the party someone called and said Blackhorse Canyon was running and flooding Lexington. When we left the party, Mildred Morgari and I drove down to the Gooseberry bridge to look at the creek, which wasn't as high at that time as it had been. We then drove down to Ladds Farm as we heard they had been isolated for a couple of days. Their lower fields and the bridge into their place were covered with water.

We went to the store and on the way home I drove back to the creek and it had raised about 2 feet and looked like it had about a foot to go before reaching the top of the bank. There was quite a crowd over at the school parking lot and more driving in and out. Some people were taking pictures and everyone seemed apprehensive. I came home and started supper.

Creek rises

Adon came home from Heppner and said he had never seen Clark Canyon running like it was, and that fields were flooded around Palmers, Jepsens, McElligotts and Emerts. There is an old creek bed that starts above Fetch's place and comes through all the back yards on Third Street, football field, swimming pool and back into the creek on the other side of the high school. In the '64

runoff we didn't get any water from the creek, except from the old creek bed, however this time it came from all sides. About 5:45, Sharlene came in and said the water was coming across the back yards. We looked out and it didn't look like the large puddle of water we had in the back yard was getting any bigger so I proceeded to put supper on the table. I looked up and a stream of water was headed for the house. Someone had gone around and left bales of hay where they saw basement windows, so Adon and I dashed out to get the bale of hay in our one window. Already the water was going in, so we hurried to the basement and turned off the water heater and the furnace, and started putting things up as high as we could, then went on the backyard and put the lawn mower and other garden tools up on a picnic table.

Water enters homes

We decided to sit down and eat, however we found out we weren't hungry. By this time Crowells, Anna Ball and Charlie O'Connors had left, so I put the food away, the dishes in the sink, turned everything off but the porch light and left. At this time there was about four feet of water in the basement and was pouring in all sides of the house; between the foundations and the house, it looked like someone had a garden hose forcing it in. We had to wade through a couple of feet of water to get to the pickup. We went by to pick up Sharlene but she said she was staying, "If her house went she was going with it." We drove around looking the situation over.

Joe Halverson had moved the furniture out of his house and the water was running

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through it. Water was two to three feet deep on the football field with all sorts of things floating around. You couldn't get through to Fourth Street, as the water was too high, and we didn't try to go by the school as there were a lot of cars and people trying to help block the water away. We went down to the tavern where others who had left were waiting.

Flood crests

Adon went out to find some of the Columbia Basin Electric men to cut the power to our place as all our fuse boxes were in the basement. Someone said that wasn't necessary, that when the water hit them they would blow either in the basement or at the pole. I've got news for them—the water line was 5 inches above the boxes and they never did go out. Thursday evening we blew a fuse, and the plug Adon brought up was full of dirty water.

Back at the tavern as we sat waiting, someone called in and said more water was coming, and would probably crest about 11 p.m. We sure didn't need that kind of news as it was only about 7 p.m. then. Gene and Evelyn Lancaster came in, and said they had just come home and couldn't even get to their place. Their tool shed and tools were gone, the skirting on the mobile home torn loose, and his motor home was surrounded with water. Pretty soon someone looked out the window and said the water was coming down Main and Second Streets. Water had been running all day from Rietmann Canyon and those businesses in the west end of town already had bales of hay around them. All reports

were, "it's still rising" until about 8:15 when they said the water had dropped a couple of inches.

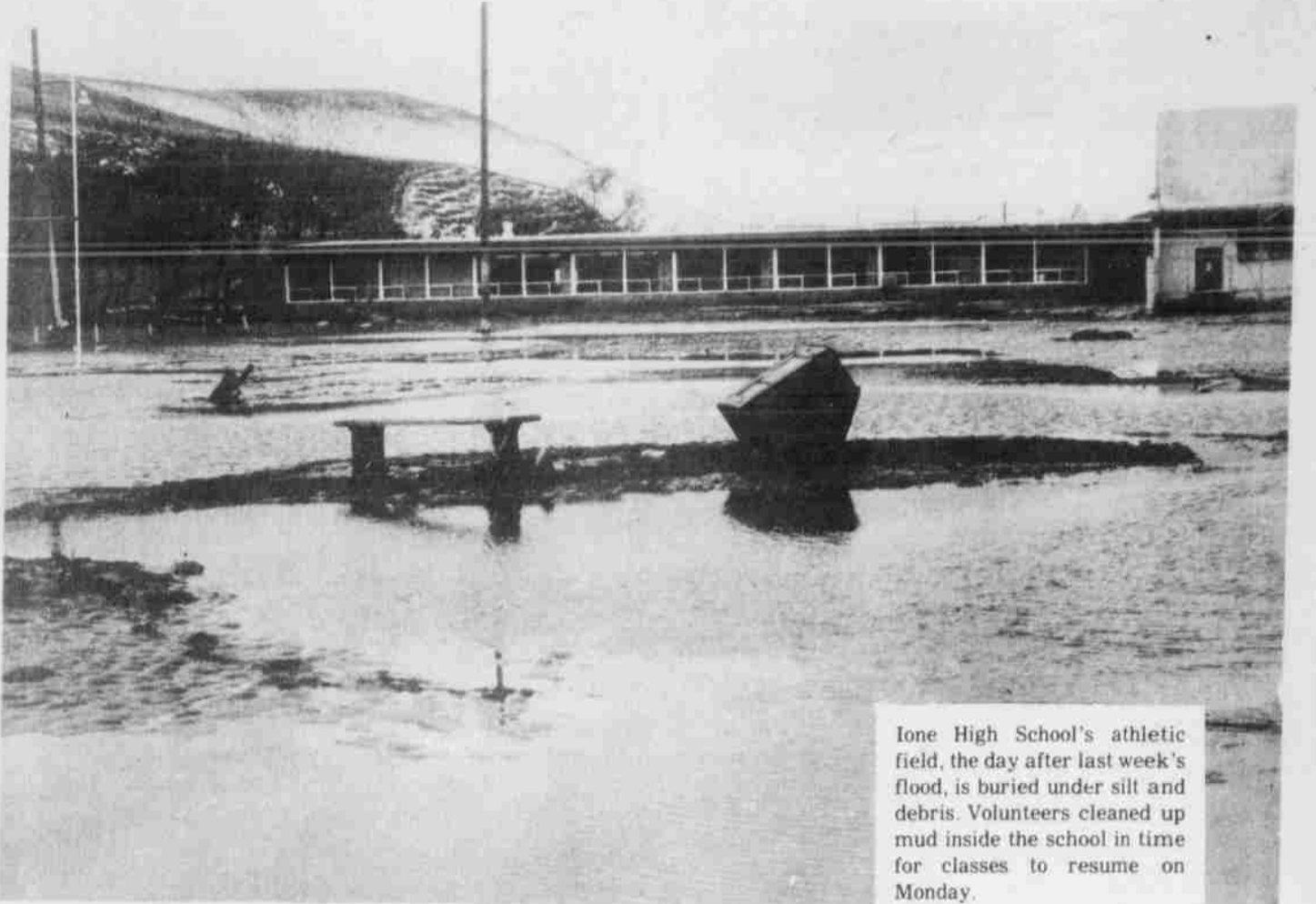
Clean-up starts

That was the best news we had heard all evening. From then on the water began dropping pretty fast. About 10 p.m. we went over to Sharlene's and came home about 11:30 to find seven feet of water in our basement. All my fruit cupboards were up-ended, jars, canned goods, paint cans and everything we had in the basement was floating on top of the water. (Learned the next day that Charlie O'Connors deep freeze full of meat was turned over.) We shut the door and went to bed.

By morning some water had seeped out and left only about four feet. We sat listening to the radio, and it was announced Ione had a flood and Beechers Fine Food Restaurant had water in it even with the grill; a little later they announced the same thing only this time it was half way to the ceiling. My brother, Norman, from Portland called having heard on the Portland stations that 3½ feet of water went down Main Street in Ione. Eventually I guess, all the reports were corrected.

Wednesday, crews were working all over town. Paul Pettyjohn had his men pumping water out of the residence basements. They started with Charlie O'Connors, then ours, Wilsons, Martins and Rietmanns that I know of. Thursday morning they dug out some of the mud in front of the

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Ione High School's athletic field, the day after last week's flood, is buried under silt and debris. Volunteers cleaned up mud inside the school in time for classes to resume on Monday.

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