

# Oelwein People Tell of Twister

Special to The Gazette

OELWEIN--There were many stories within the story of the tornadoes which smashed into Oelwein and Maynard Wednesday afternoon.

Four persons were killed, many were injured and property damage was estimated in the millions.

Here are some of the Oelwein stories of that tragic afternoon:

## Quick Reaction At Hospital

Mercy hospital at Oelwein reacted quickly to the emergency.

After the twister struck, hospital officials sent home as many of their patients as they could to make room for anticipated storm victims.

As it turned out, the 61-bed hospital was not full Thursday morning. Fifteen persons were admitted and at least 70 others were either transferred to other hospitals or treated and released.

Sister Jeanne D'Arc said many of the storm victims were "terribly stunned." She said many suffered bad cuts and fractures.

Sister Jeanne said she heard a report of tornadoes sighted in Bremer and Chickasaw counties on the radio, and shortly after that the storm hit Oelwein. The hospital was on the edge of the heavy storm damage area.

She said the hospital was able to handle the load all night. Doctors and nurses came in from as far as Cedar Rapids and Iowa City.

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## Siren

"Tornado! Tornado!" screamed Oelwein residents as the dark funnel cloud whirled toward the city.

Fireman Wallace Rundle heard the cries and pushed the civil defense siren button at the fire station.

"The siren went about 15 seconds before the electricity went off," said Rundle. "Then all hell broke loose."

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## On Job

Dean Meyer, an engineer with Radio Station KOEL, was broadcasting a tornado warning when the funnel struck. "God help me!" cried Meyer as the station tower came crashing down. He was not injured.

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## Hung On

Jim Black, a sports writer for the Oelwein Daily Register, said

the funnel moved through the center of the city and into a residential area.

"I saw the roof of the Masonic Temple lift right up and float away," he said. "I dove underneath a bush and hung on for dear life."

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## Leaped Hospital

Gary Mossman, working in an office building, said there was "a tremendous roar and a great vacuum. It also looked like two funnels."

"It jumped over our hospital, by the grace of God, stepped down again and started walking a path right through town," he said.

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## Rugged

Mrs. Palmer Wall of Oelwein said the tornado came "real fast. The fire whistle blew just before it came over."

"We had windows blown out in our apartment and the power is out," she said. "This was rugged."

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## Belmond Mayor's Advice: Keep The Faith

BELMOND (AP) — The former mayor of Belmond, which was ravaged by a tornado 19 months ago, says Charles City and Oelwein can be rebuilt if their residents keep the faith.

"People will be vomiting and walking around with glassy eyes for two days," said Dr. Robert Misner.

"Those two days are the toughest any town can have. But no matter how hopeless it looks, no matter the human hurt, they can whip it. Right now, their first job is to keep faith with each other and in God; then start digging people out. Help's on the way."

Six persons were killed and 172 were injured in the Oct. 14, 1966, Belmond tornado. Most of the town has been rebuilt.



—Gazette Aerial Photo by John McIvor

## West Part of Maynard Leveled

This was the scene of devastation in Maynard early Thursday after a tornado smashed through the west part of the community, about 8 miles north of Oelwein, Wednesday afternoon. Oelwein also was hit by a tornado. Two Maynard persons, Mrs. Louis Ponsor and Glenda Kelly, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Kelly, were killed. All communications with Maynard were cut off after the twister hit Wednesday afternoon. Twenty-five houses were destroyed in Maynard. Also destroyed was a new \$250,000 Lutheran church, at which first services were to be held Sunday. No school was held as faculty and students helped with clean up work.

## Angels with Long Hair, Sideburns

By Mark Brown

CHARLES CITY (AP)—Many of this city's angels of mercy had long hair and sideburns.

Responding to the plight of the tornado-stricken town, nearly 100 students from high schools, junior colleges and universities deserted their studies to offer help.

"When you hear about something like this, you just can't sit around and do nothing," said Dianne Rottinghaus of Nora Springs, a 19-year-old freshman at Northern Iowa Community college at Mason City.

"I'm not sure they know what they can do, but they came anyway," the Rev. Perry Brown, assistant pastor of St. John's Lutheran church, said of the young volunteers. "I'm awfully proud of them."

The students helped the injured and homeless, assisted in the clearing of rubble and offered support to Red Cross and civil defense officials.

Two 19-year-old pre-medical students, John Wilson of Colfax, and Jim Shum of Iowa Falls, made countless ambulance runs to bring injured persons to the hospital or Red Cross headquarters.

Barry Moen, Frank Wood and Tom Peterson, 18-year-old seniors at Clear Lake high school helped unload Red Cross supplies.

"It's rough," said Moen. "People are coming in crying, not knowing what to do — boy, it's sad — especially the older people."

Asked why he came to Charles City, Peterson replied tersely. "They need us here."

## Two More Iowans Die In Vietnam Combat

Special to The Gazette

Two more Iowans have been killed in combat in Vietnam, the Defense department reports. The latest victims are:

Army Cpl. John E. Swason, jr., 22, of Davenport, who had been stationed with the 25th medical battalion at Dau Tieng, South Vietnam. He joined the army last July and had been in Vietnam since December.

Army Pfc. Donald D. Pickering, son of Mr. and Mrs. Donald Pickering of Hastings.

Details are not available.

## Boys State

Special to The Gazette

STRAWBERRY POINT — Ricky Weig, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ray Weig, and W. Robert Kennedy, son of Mr. and Mrs. Bill Kennedy, will attend Boys' State at Camp Dodge June 2-8.

They will be sponsored by the Legion and the Lions club.

Details are not available.

## People Rally From Shock At Oelwein

Oelwein was a book of nightmarish tales Thursday, but there was a chapter on hope.

Cedar Rapids Red Cross officials, returning for more disaster supplies Thursday morning after spending the night in the stricken town, reported the people of Oelwein were slowly emerging from their shock.

"People are rallying beautifully," Marie Clancy, executive director of the Linn County Red Cross, reported. "They are beginning to come to Red Cross headquarters."

The Red Cross, mostly volunteers from Cedar Rapids, have set up emergency headquarters in the Oelwein fire station.

A 100-bed shelter has been set up in the Catholic church, and a 50-bed shelter established in the partially destroyed Presbyterian church.

Two Cedar Rapids disaster units — some 22 volunteers all together — are in Oelwein. Primary objectives are to give first aid, provide shelter to the homeless and feed displaced workers and volunteers.

Red Cross volunteers reported they were treating many persons who suffered minor injuries — not serious enough to require hospitalization.

C. Max Widmer, disaster chairman for the Linn Red Cross team, said it was difficult working through the night. The city was without electrical power and communications.

Meanwhile, other Cedar Rapids Red Cross personnel worked late into the night receiving several hundred inquiries from persons across the nation worried about relatives in Oelwein and Charles City.

However, there was still little communication to the stricken areas Thursday morning. Some messages were being transmitted by short wave radio.

The best informed Eastern Iowans follow the news scene on THE 10 O'CLOCK NEWS — Monday through Friday on Channel 9.

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