

Proctor Recalls Being Tossed Through The Air In His Truck During Storm



OELWEIN'S BEN PROCTOR experienced flying through the air in his service truck when the twin twister hit Oelwein on its way to Maynard on U.S. 150 near the Meadow Mist Motel where he and his electrical crew had been working. He lived, and is in good condition today at Mercy Hospital after being slammed to the ground while the truck continued to bounce across a farm field east of the Meadow Mist. Ben is reported to be a real good patient by nurses aide Mrs. Harriet Tegmeier, as well as the rest of the Mercy staff.

By Earl Davis
Register City Editor

"I'll never forget it; it came over the hill as a swirling mass of wood and trees . . . and the next thing I knew the truck was beginning to lift in the air, and that's all I remember," commented quiet-speaking Ben Proctor from his hospital bed in room 414 at Mercy hospital in Oelwein.

Ben and his electrical crew had been working at Meadow Mist Motel at the bottom of the hill just north of Fred's Super Valu on Highway 150. They were completing a wiring job contracted by Ben's Electrical firm which he operates out of his home on City Park Road, Proctor Electric Service.

Thirty-three year old Ben and his assistant said they looked over the hill toward the city and noticed all the rain heading their way, so they decided to call it a day.

"John Steinbronn, my helper, and I jumped into my truck and

drove to the front of the work area; I let him out at his car and then started up the hill," Ben said.

"We saw a lot of smoke rolling up from the roller rink as we headed that way. I thought it was a fire, but then that's when I saw the swirl of wood and trees and the truck lifted," Ben said.

What actually happened, according to what Ben said in the hospital interview, was that Steinbronn watched Ben's truck lift from the ground as it headed south up the hill. It was virtually picked up and slammed down some 30 yards east of the highway, bounced up an down several times and then came to a halt on its top. By some miracle, Ben was thrown clear of the truck at some point during the bouncing of the truck.

"I woke up to find myself looking at trees on the devastated Wait Halstead farm, and that's when John came walking toward me and I more or less went under," Ben said. He was semi-conscious until he reached the hospital and then passed out and did not come to until the next day.

Unknown by Ben at the time was a rather odd occurrence involving a third person, still unidentified; John noticed that a third auto was following the truck and his car, and when the driver saw the tornado coming over the hill, he turned west on a county road and outran the twister.

The unknown person returned to find John climbing out of his wrecked auto (also slammed across the highway), headed toward Ben, and he halted.

"The unknown person must have assumed what was going to happen to us," Ben commented thankfully, "because he actually did come back to help us."

Ben, the father of five children, Steve 7, Doug, 5, Edith, 3, Cindy, 2, and Loretta, 1, lives with his wife on City Park Road across from the trailer courts that were so drastically demolished:

"We didn't receive a scratch, but the court was knocked out. The kids never even knew there was a storm—my wife took them to a basement where we have a closed-in block bathroom. They didn't even hear it," Ben said.

"I slid on the ground a lot, that much I can remember, but how long or how far, I can't say. One thing I can say for sure, I'll never forget that swirling mass coming over that hill, nor will I ever forget that silence before the thing picked up my truck," Ben commented.

Ben is in good condition today. He received a cracked wrist bone, deep cuts . . . and a black eye, but he's alive and that is the miracle.

Reconstruction Underway In Both Communities

CHARLES CITY — If you think anybody is moving out of Charles City and neighboring Oelwein because the two cities were wrecked by tornadoes last week, think again.

The mayors of the two communities said Tuesday they don't know of anybody who is planning to pull out of the tornado ravaged cities 50 miles apart in northeast Iowa.

"Not a person!" exclaimed Oelwein Mayor Sam Mazzotti, when asked if anyone was planning to leave his town of 8,200.

"No I haven't heard anyone say they were going to leave," said Mayor Harry Brenton of Charles City, a city of 10,000 which the Weather Bureau said suffered the worst death toll from a tornado since 1913 in Iowa.

Twin tornadoes cut a swath through both cities and the town of Maynard, population 500, just north of Oelwein, Wednesday.

The twisters left 16 dead—13 at Charles City, two at Maynard and one at Oelwein—hundreds injured, and property damage estimated at more than \$38 million.

Oelwein Mayor Mazzotti said rebuilding of the first home in his city was started Tuesday.

He said there is "still a great deal of work to be done but added:

"Progress is ahead of schedule with the complete cooperation of all the help that we have received here. It is unbelievable that the debris has been hauled away so quickly. Our labor supply is holding out real good. We

are having wonderful cooperation from the surrounding area. "Morale here has been real great. People have accepted this and now they're ready to go to work to rebuild."

Mayor Brenton of Charles City said a couple of tornado-wrecked businesses are reopening in quaint huts and "we're going to go."

He said he "wouldn't want to make a guess" on how long it will take to clean up so that major rebuilding can start. He said the main problem is "a place to put" the debris, which has overloaded city dumps.

Insurance adjustors and inspectors met with the City Council in Charles City Monday to try to line up plans for inspecting damage making adjustments.

The Charles City mayor said a delegation from Albert Lea, Minn., hit by a tornado last year, met with city officials Monday and "gave us some advice" about avoiding mistakes Albert Lea made in the tornado aftermath.

In Oelwein, Mazzotti said a route for tourists to view the tornado damage will be established Sunday. Both Oelwein and Charles City were sealed off to tourists last weekend to facilitate the work of crews clearing the wreckage.

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Require City Building License; Close Schools For Rest Of Year

by Mike Mahoney
Register Managing Editor

The Oelwein City Council passed a resolution Monday evening requiring a city license and building permits for all construction and working units making repairs in the city.

"We have taken the action not only to protect the residents, but also the contractors themselves," comments Mayor Samuel Mazzotti.

City licenses will be \$15.00 each and may be obtained at the city clerk's office. The license is required for all construction, repair, roofing and tree service work in the city.

Building permits are required for all reconstruction or repair. The permits will be obtained at the city hall also.

The contractors or working units will be required to furnish their name, address, reference from a banker, and three other references.

City officials directing the clean-up program and security work expressed concern for the elderly Monday night. Welfare officials will be asked to provide information with a list of residents who may be too old to handle clean-up work by themselves.

Schools Are Closed

The Oelwein Community School Board moved Monday afternoon to close all public schools for the remainder of the school year. Officials met in the Junior High Building.

Baccalaureate services and commencement exercises will be held at the regular times. The senior prom will also be held. Officials are working on a date to hold the prom.

Charles Hutchison, service representative of Interstate Power Co., opened up the 69KV line at the Hazleton sub-station plant when he noticed the storm Wednesday evening. All power of the city failed when the sub-station was hit by the storm in Oelwein.

Phil Suchy, manager of Interstate Power, praised his repair teams in the city for their quick recovery. All businesses and homes needing electricity were being serviced today (Tuesday) according to Suchy. Interstate officials estimated it would be two weeks before service would be restored when they looked at the damage Wednesday night.

"It has been amazing how fast we have been able to restore service," says Suchy. "I never thought we could do this fast."

Robert O. Link, manager of the Northwestern Bell Telephone Co., revised his schedule for complete phone service to the community. Link estimated that all service should be restored by Thursday unless further difficulties come to the surface.

William Hemphill reported all leaks were repaired by Saturday morning. Hemphill is the manager of the Iowa Electric Light & Power Co., Gas Division.

Officials planning the annual June Festival program for Oelwein have announced the event has been cancelled due to the major cleanup program facing the city.

A group of Oelwein ministers are discussing the possibility of a united church in the city to replace several damaged buildings. The church could either be a temporary or permanent basis and could possibly include one building and a consolidation of efforts by the ministers.

The Episcopal church (St. Mary's) was completely destroyed and the First Christian Church building has been condemned by officials. Extensive damage was inflicted to the Methodist church.

One minister reports plans are only in the talking stage at this time.

Move Headquarters

Officials are planning to move disaster headquarters from the basement of the Northwestern Bell Telephone Co. back to City hall.

City security is being reduced slowly to restore the area to normal progress. The curfew will be in effect tonight (Tuesday) again and officials will determine further action at a later time.

City fathers are planning for a major assault of tourists this weekend. A special route of the city is being planned to handle the traffic problems. Members of the Iowa Highway Patrol and National Guard are being phased out of the security lock.

Officials hope to open the city as soon as possible for the regular and routine business.

Over 900 inquiries have been handled by Red Cross officials since the disaster hit. Residents throughout the country and several overseas areas have been notified of safe relatives.

One Oelwein man Dieter Erdeldt, who lives northeast of the city, was informed by a wire through Red Cross Disaster Emergency Phones of the serious illness of his father in Germany. The telegram was mailed in German and translated by a Menonite volunteer who was having dinner at the Red Cross center in the Presbyterian church.

Erdeldt, with a major assist from Congressman John Culver in Cedar Rapids, was cleared through government officials, obtained his passport in Chicago and was enroute to Germany Monday afternoon.



THE VIOLENT STORM twisted a number of corn cribs north of Maynard beyond recognition and spread the metal units throughout the countryside in Wednesday's storm. Maynard suffered extensive damage in the storm.

Everyone Wants To Be A Delegate, Demo Convention

By Harrison G. Weber
Iowa Daily Press Association

DES MOINES — (IDPA) — It's very difficult to take the "political pulse" of the 4,045 delegates to the Democratic state presidential convention to be held at Des Moines this weekend.

However, it does appear that: —Sen. Robert F. Kennedy has strong support in both the second and fifth congressional districts.

—Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey is doing well among farmers and labor leaders.

—Sen. Eugene McCarthy's main support comes from the colleges. It all adds up to perhaps the most exciting state convention in years.

Art Small, state coordinator for the McCarthy organization in Iowa, summed it up when he said, "It seems everyone and their brother wants to be a delegate to the Democratic national convention."

The list of prospective delegates continues to grow with more than 50 names being banded about by leaders in the Iowa headquarters of the three presidential hopefuls.

The list is by no means complete.

These people will be vying for 30 "district" delegate seats. In addition, 22 delegates "at-large" will be picked. The only Iowans assured of a place at Chicago are the party's National Committeeman Donald Mitchell, Fort Dodge, and the National Committeewoman Alberta Metcalf Kelly, Nichols.

The Democrats are expected to follow tradition in naming party leaders, such as State Chairman Clark R. Rasmussen, Des Moines, and State Vice-Chairman, Mrs. Evelyn Hood, Fort Dodge, and elected officials, namely Governor Harold E. Hughes, as delegates at-large.

Presumably Paul Franzburg, who is the party's nominee for governor, could be a delegate, but Franzburg has turned aside such suggestions.

It's not customary for Congressmen, such as Neal Smith, Altoona, and John Culver, Cedar Rapids, being selected as delegates.

U.S. Governor Robert Fulton, who has publicly announced his support for Kennedy, is expected to not only give it a whirl at becoming a delegate to the national convention, but probably will be seeking the post of national committeeman.

Democrats are in the process of changing the method of electing their committeeman and committeewoman. If the change is approved, and all indications are that it will be, the state convention delegates will elect these two national officers instead of the 52 delegates to the national convention.

Mitchell has just been released from the hospital; he's been ill for some time and it's doubtful that he will be present at the state convention this weekend. Fulton may have some opposition. Mitchell has not made known his plans, and T. J. Mulgrew, Dubuque, is said to be thinking about entering the race.

And there may be a lively scrap for the post of committeewoman. Mrs. Elizabeth Richards, Red Oak, has announced she is a candidate for national committeewoman. Miss Kelly has not announced whether she will seek re-election. There is an outside chance that Mrs. L. L. Vidal of Hampton might enter the race.

However, the four-year terms of the national committeeman and committeewoman do not start until after the national convention at Chicago is concluded.

The problem faced by their presidential hopefuls and their campaign people in Iowa is how to turn state delegates into national delegates.

Many of the delegates to the state presidential convention say they are uncommitted. The campaign leaders say this is hard to believe, but one of the political realities they must face.

Patrol Told To Get Tough

DES MOINES — Iowa highway patrolmen have been instructed to "get tough" with traffic violators, Public Safety Commissioner Jack Fulton said Tuesday.

"In the past they have merely patrolled our highways," Fulton said. "But beginning immediately, they will not only patrol, but seek out violators as well."

Fulton announced adoption by the Department of Public Safety of doubled periods of license suspension for drivers convicted of serious traffic violations.

Beginning May 30, Memorial Day, the suspension period will jump from 30 to 60 days, Fulton said and license suspensions will be ordered for persons speeding more than 16 miles an hour over the posted limit, whereas suspensions previously were only ordered for violations of more than 21 miles an hour over.

The actions embody recommendations made by Gov. Harold Hughes last week to "stop the senseless slaughter" on Iowa highways.

Fulton said 277 persons have died in traffic accidents so far this year, the highest traffic death rate in the state's history.

"As you will note, we are imposing heavier restrictions on those persons who choose to flout the law," Fulton said. "We are attempting, in this manner, to weed out those drivers who have demonstrated on a disregard for our traffic laws and others who are using the highways."

9 Cars Derailed

BETTENDORF — Nine cars of a 100-car Milwaukee Road freight train derailed in Bettendorf early Tuesday, causing damage a railroad spokesman estimated at near \$100,000.

Special Relief Offering To Oelwein, C-City

DES MOINES — Iowa's 322,000 United Methodists shared in a special tornado relief offering Sunday. The call for the offering was issued here today by Bishop James S. Thomas, Des Moines, leader of the North and South Iowa United Methodist Conferences, and Bishop Paul W. Milhouse, Kansas City, Mo., head of the Iowa Conference.

A similar offering following the Belmond tornado produced more than \$50,000. This morning Bishop Thomas received a \$5,000 check from Belmond Methodists for use in the Oelwein-Charles City area. In presenting the check to Bishop Thomas, the Rev. Maurice L. Jones of Belmond said, "We are remembering today the tragedy that struck our people in October, 1966. One of the things that gave us courage and hope was the way the church came to our rescue."

The Methodist funds will be used to repair extensive damage to churches and parsonages. At Charles City, the \$261,000 Central Methodist church is completely demolished; First Methodist's \$280,000 church and \$16,500 parsonage damaged beyond repair. The \$404,200 Oelwein Grace Methodist church suffered about \$100,000 in damages.

Library Open 1-5 P.M. Daily

The Oelwein Public Library will be open 1-5 p.m. daily as long as the curfew is in effect. Summer hours will be established as soon as the curfew is lifted.

Library officials are asking residents who had library books and lost them or had ones that were damaged as a result of the storm to contact the library as soon as possible. Residents may phone 233-1515 or 233-2088.

Other residents may return books by leaving them in the box on the front steps if the library is not open.

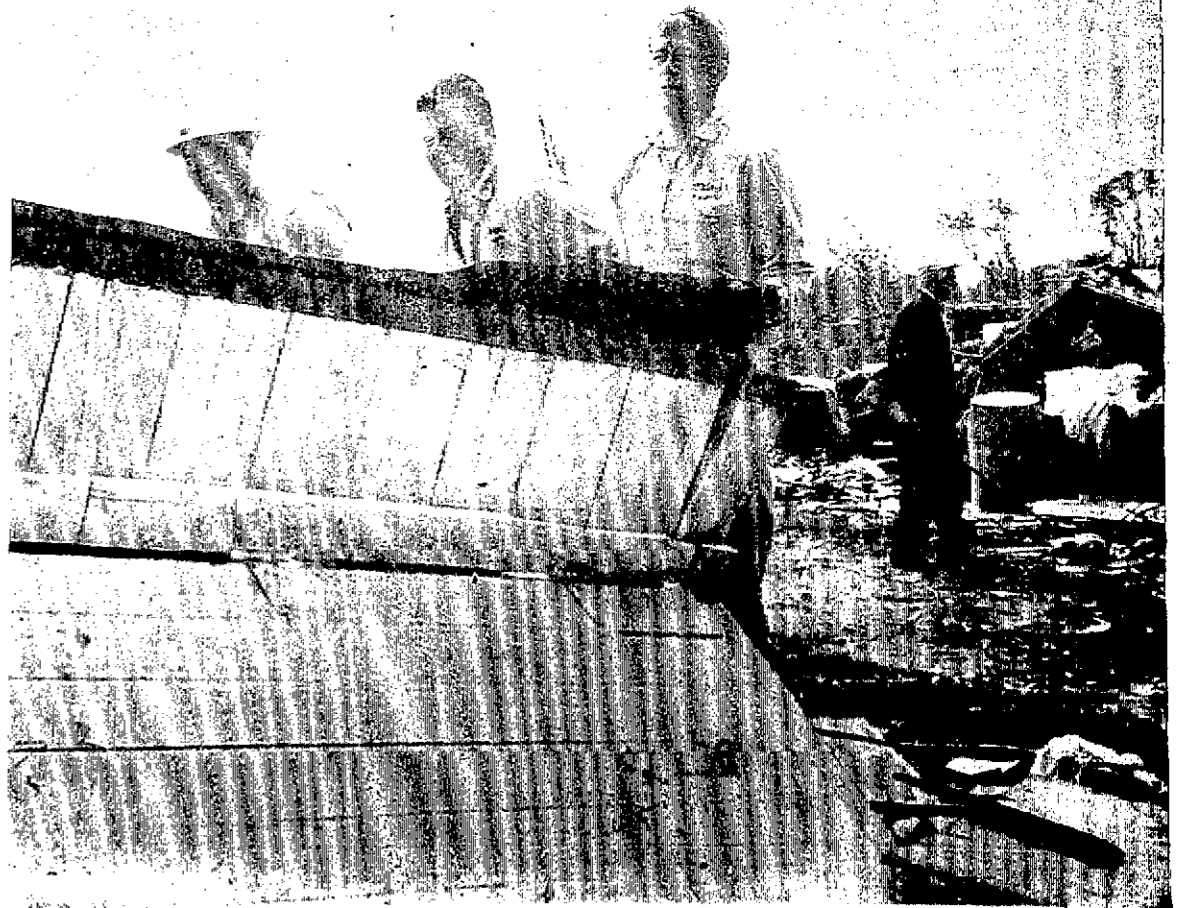
Officials have to contact an insurance company concerning the loss of books.

Fuel Dealers Given 30-Day Extension

DES MOINES — Motor vehicle fuel dealers in tornado stricken parts of Iowa will be given an additional month to file their monthly fuel tax returns for April, State Treasurer Paul Franzburg said Tuesday.

Franzburg said the April returns normally due by May 30 may be delayed as late as June 30 by fuel licensees in the Charles City, Oelwein and Maynard areas.

In a letter to licensees Franzburg cited the May 15 tornadoes and offered the deadline extension because, "I am sure that either directly or indirectly these tornadoes have affected the normal procedures in your business."



STATE CONSERVATION, STATE PRISONERS HELP OUT—Prisoners serving sentences at the Yellow River Forest out of the Men's Reformatory at Anamosa were rushed to Oelwein to help in the cleanup operation throughout the city. Using chainsaws, arm and back muscles, the men dug right in to cut trees up for hauling away and then moved parts of building for further cleanup. Included, I to r, are Larry Segebart, Denison; William Payne, Waterloo; and Bruce Koepp, Decorah. The men volunteered their help to alleviate the situation and give someone else a chance to work elsewhere.