

Janice Hastings (interview2)

Pete James (Interviewer): Alright, this is Janice Hastings. Tell me what you remember about the 1952 tornado.

JH: Oh, it's quite vivid in my memory, and I suppose it always will be. I was working at Wright's Florist down on South Main and was in the back office talking on the telephone, as a matter of fact, to my dad. The basketball tournament was going on in Winchester at that time, and I was asking about using the car to drive to Winchester that night. And he was at the old municipal building on East College at that time and looking out the window and he said, "My goodness, the weather's bad!" He said the sign down at the Largen Hotel has just blown off. He said, "You better wait, and let's see what the weather does before we decide about going to Winchester." And with that just behind me was a solid glass wall and behind that was the greenhouse we used there at the florist to grow the plants and what have you. Behind that, you looked over the hill to the hospital. During the time that I was talking to him, the wind – you could see it and hear it, and it was picking up particles and looked like huge things up in the air. And then it came, and just rolled the top of the greenhouse toward me. And I pitched the phone down just before it hit and started down into the basement and Henry Wright, Jr. was there and pushed me back into the other room where his mother and his father were at that time. They were both very elderly. We pushed them down under the counter, but the glass had already hit. And from there, that night, I went up to the hospital and stayed and helped with the people up there, and they were picking glass out of my hair quite a bit of the night. But, it was quite memorable.

Pete James (Interviewer): What do you remember up at the hospital that evening?

JH: Well, the darkness, I suppose. We only had some auxiliary lightning there, and the hallways were dark, and the sirens were where the fires were. The sirens sounded even worse in the dark probably than they would have in the daylight. And the people crying, and of course, numerous people were coming trying to get there to see if any of their relatives and all. And the phones were ringing, and it was quite hectic – something I hope we never have to go through again.

Pete James (Interviewer): Did you see the actual tornado itself?

JH: Yes. I was saying over and over, or so my dad said. I don't remember much about that, but he said I was saying over and over cyclone funnel, cyclone funnel. And it was truly a funnel cloud.

Pete James (Interviewer): What do you remember seeing about it? About the path it took.

JH: It was coming straight from across the hill there at the hospital, straight toward where we were at the downtown area.

Pete James (Interviewer): What did you think when you finally came out and looked around?

JH: Oh, it was horrible. There was a quiet and a yellow. The sky was yellow looking, and then, of course, the rain came. And that night, the power lines were down. It was just devastating. And of course, we

had some lives lost, and that was the worst part of the whole thing. Material things you can replace, but those things you can't.