

15 Nov 89 Tornado Story

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I had come home at noon to get some Honey-Do's done. I was sitting at the table installing a new band on my wife's watch near the time the tornado arrived. . Our mother cat (part Marquee, 7 lbs) jumped in my lap, and her baby (17 pounds) jumped on the table. I soon heard a noise like a train or jet in the distance, so I looked outside and saw that the weather was bad. I took the cats to the bathroom in the center of the house and stayed until the noise was gone. I received a call from our daughter asking if we were OK. I said yes, but that our fir tree (that "Y'd" off about 4 foot off the ground) had split and that one side was on the ground.

At noon, my wife (a native of Wichita, Kansas) was at work and had remarked to her fellow workers that the sky looked as though there was a lot of instability in the atmosphere. Later that afternoon, they were told to go to the basement. She had been trying to reach me by phone, but couldn't. However, our daughter was able to reach her by phone and reported that I was OK and that the house was intact. We found out later that the tornado did lift the NW corner of the roof a little. She arrived home that evening, finding me peering out the garage door windows. I had started the motor home generator to supply electricity to the TV, refrigerator, and freezer inside the house since we had lost Huntsville electric utilities.

We received a call for help from a neighbor through the block. She was at the hairdresser's shop just south of Airport Rd when she saw the tornado coming. She told everyone to go to the bathroom at the back of the shop. However, she didn't make it to the back. The roof of the shop lifted up and fortunately a mattress came through the opening and landed on her. She escaped without serious injuries and had walked home as her car was badly damaged. She received small pieces of glass on her body and was able to remove most of them on her own. However she needed assistance in removing remaining particles in her feet and hair. We then drove down to retrieve personal items from her car and met her husband, who was carrying several items in a pillowcase. He entered our car and related that several items remained in the car that he needed. We got within a block of the shopping center and had to walk to their car. Windows were broken and the trunk was peeled back over the roof that was somewhat crushed. We observed all the destruction of buildings immediately South of Airport Rd. and saw water gushing skyward from a water main. We then retrieved items from the vehicle and returned to our friend's home to relax a little, ending the day.

We recall there 20 some people killed (one, an acquaintance of ours) and many injured along the path of the tornado from Memorial Parkway over into Jones Valley. We also learned that several friends barely missed being in the tornado path.