

Bible Words Prophetic Of Tornado Fury Here

By ALDEN McLACHLAN
Fargo Forum Staff Writer

"I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more."

Those words in the book of Ezekiel, Chapter 21, Verse 27 of the Bible, were the first I saw as I took one of two Bibles from the pulpits of the American Lutheran Church at 12th Avenue and 10th Street North in Fargo.

I had been asked by Mrs. R. I. Sjothun, 1011 7th St. N., to run into the church and get two Bibles standing in the pulpits of the building which shortly before had been struck by a tornado.

Mrs. Sjothun was one of several persons standing in the front entrance of the church, as rain lashed the area through which the twister had cut a destructive path.

Those standing in front of the church were among hundreds of dazed Fargoans who stood in the wreckage of their homes, schools and churches Thursday evening.

Most had little to say, except, "What can we do; where can we go?"

The American Lutheran Church was one of hundreds of buildings which had been in the slashing path of the twister.

Gaping holes were smashed in the roof of the church; the cross atop the building had been snapped; rain poured through the roof; windows gaped.

"Look," Mrs. Sjothun said, "Only the nursery is undamaged."

She was right, a cursory examination indicated. Only a few pews in the main section had been damaged, however.

Block upon block of streets in the tornado area were a mass of wreckage.

I walked from house to house.

Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Tegeder, 1208 11th St. N., stood in what was left of their home. The roof was gone. The home was a shambles.

"I was uptown, when I heard the tornado was coming. I walked home," he said.

Furniture piled in a smashed heap in the living room.

"Where are my rings and my watch," Mrs. Tegeder said.

"I found your big diamond," he said.

"I found your watch," cried their young son from another room.

"Somebody's got to get guards here to protect our property," Tegeder said. "The next thing you know, people will be looting."

Hundreds of sightseers from undamaged areas of Fargo were attempting to enter the stricken section. But Fargo police, the Civil Air Patrol, reserve units, and volunteers, including many young

men from NDAC, had stepped in and were doing a magnificent job of helping the injured, routing cars away from the area and guarding residents of the area from "hot" wires.

The home of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Crowe, 1229 10th St. N., was a complete wreck.

Mrs. Frances E. Sjöberg, 1249 10th St. N., who lives next door to the Crowe residence, said she and other neighbors had run next door when the tornado passed.

"They were in the basement," Mrs. Sjöberg said. "Mrs. Crowe was lying across her children to protect them."

The three Crowe children are Arthur, Gary and Jimmy, ages about 6 to 11, a neighbor said. None of the Crowe family were believed injured.

"And they had their dog, cat and two turtles in the basement too," someone added.

"The tornado sounded like a swarm of bees just before it hit," said Mrs. D. G. Askland, 1236 11th St. N.

Dave, 16, son of Mr. and Mrs. Leo J. Kraft, 1235 11th St. N., said their house lifted up three or four times from its foundation.

"And we just got moved in, after looking for a new place to live," he added.

One man leaned against the wall on the second floor of a house at about 10th St. and the 13 hundred block. One side of the house had been sheared off, exposing oroms.

I stepped over the wall of the home of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Uthus, 818 13th Ave. N.

Mrs. Uthus, a slight, grey-haired woman, stood in the kitchen of what had been their home. She was holding an umbrella over her head, with her arms about her young grandson, Paul Hanson of Henning, Minn. She was protecting him from the pounding rain which poured through the house.

"Paul was visiting us for a few days," she said. "Now look at us."

Residents of the area said they had heard the tornado warnings, and most had huddled in basements.

They came upstairs, those whose homes had been struck, to find ruin.

One unidentified woman walked sobbing between her two homes.

"We have nothing left," she said. She was correct. Her home had been smashed, as if by a giant paw.

For at least half an hour after the tornado struck Fargo, its great funnel was in sight.

Victims stood between trees which had been whipped across the streets. They watched as the snake of wind moved slowly away.

The funnel's head was high in the black clouds. It appeared to stretch for miles, a thin light

Hundreds Flee As Funnel Approaches

By TOM LUCIER
Fargo Forum Staff Writer

As though threatened by an A-bomb attack, hundreds—perhaps thousands—of Fargo - Moorhead residents evacuated the two cities as tornado funnels appeared over the western horizon Thursday night.

With wife and baby, I joined a stream of nervous motorists that sped north out of Moorhead along Highway 75. There were scores of cars parked along the highway and congested knots of vehicles at every crossroad and intersection.

Shortly after 7:30 p.m. we left our south Moorhead home. To the west, seemingly directly over Fargo, we saw the massive funnel forming and revolving. Great gulps of ragged clouds were being sucked from all directions into the vortex as the gigantic funnel moved toward us.

From under the terrible blue-black storm head, small funnels dangled like teats from an udder. Then two solid, almost perpendicular funnel columns formed side by side, seemingly reaching to the ground. We said a silent prayer for anyone who might be under these black brooms of potential sudden death and moved on to the north.

By this time traffic was converging onto Highway 75 from all avenues and we joined the caravan. Many of the evacuees had

stopped along the highway and gotten out of their cars to watch the huge formation move over the city with deadly majesty.

The wind seemed to be coming from all directions and as we watched with the rest, the great column began to veer toward the northeast—straight in our direction.

With a chill sensation of danger, I joined the cars that began now to move north at increasing speed.

Now the great black cloud was directly over us—we could no longer determine the location of the funnel, if it was still active.

Suddenly the countryside was swept with a pounding, blinding rain. The wind howled, lightning ripped the sky and hail stones—some nearly as big as ping-pong balls—pelted the car. Traffic came to a stop.

When it was over, we saw a thunderhead moving west over Dilworth. Although still funnel-shaped, it did not look so dangerous as before and did not touch down. It seemed to be breaking up.

As we waited to start back to Moorhead, a long gray-white tube snaked down from the swirling skies above and touched down on the momentarily flooded fields east of the highway about 500 yards away.

This tube, of relatively small diameter, seemed to curl thousands of feet into the air. Moments later, it was sucked up into the atmosphere and disintegrated.

'Fitz' Waits At Ball Game, Finds Home Hit By Storm

By EUGENE FITZGERALD

Sports Editor, The Fargo Forum

About 100 of us were at Barnett Field Thursday evening awaiting the start of the Fargo-Moorhead Twins baseball game with Duluth-Superior.

We watched the tornado form in the west. We had no idea the thing was only four blocks away.

We went into the clubhouse to get out of the rain.

At about 8:15, assured that there would be no game, I left, heading for home.

Traffic on Broadway was blocked at 15th Ave., N. I was directed to go east on 15th Ave.

At John D. Paulson's home at 14th Avenue and 2nd Street North was the first damage we noticed. Gerald Redmond's garage at 1363 Second St., was gone.

Then we saw the Ken Collins home, facing El Zagal bowl on 14th Av. and First St. It looked like it had been shelled.

That was the first intimation

we had that my home might have been in the path of the wind.

What had been a normal home at 1301 Second St. N., only a little more than an hour earlier when we left for the game, was a shambles. My garage, attached to the house, was gone completely.

In the front room, which runs the length of the house facing the street, the floor was bare. Two big chairs, the davenport, a piano, the television set and even the rug had been swept through the north side of the house, where the wall had been blown off.

The piano was on the television set just outside the house. The rest of the furniture wasn't in sight.

The sight of your home almost totally destroyed is a sickening sight. But I had a more serious worry.

I forgot it quickly when I saw my 15-year-old son, Phil, left at home alone when we went to the baseball game, in the street with a flashlight. He spent the period of the storm in the basement.

We had just finished spring housecleaning Tuesday. I don't believe we'll call the cleaning woman back right away.

Not that the house doesn't need cleaning. We have too much air conditioning. Every window in the house has at least one pane of glass broken.

Holes Addition has been a proud neighborhood. But it looks like the destruction the armies must have inflicted on villages in World War II.

So far as we could learn last night, there were no casualties in our neighborhood. There could have been. So there is some consolation in the thought that it could have been worse.

Forum Editor Describes Rush To Basement As Tornado Hits

By JOHN D. PAULSON

Editor, The Fargo Forum

When a newspaperman is caught directly in the path of a tornado, he does just like everybody else. He gets his family into the southwest corner of the basement, stays there himself and prays that no one is hurt.

At least that's what I did.

Minutes before the tornado struck, I was sitting in the kitchen after dinner telling the youngsters that a tornado warning didn't necessarily mean that it would hit our house. Then came a phone call from The Fargo Forum office, with night editor James Acton reporting that a terrific tornado had been reported on West Main and that it was heading for downtown Fargo. As I talked, I looked out of the west window of our home and saw the trees beginning to shake as the winds swelled to a terrific blast. I told Zoe and the four youngsters to head for the basement. The lights went out. In another half minute I told Acton, I, too, was headed for the basement.

Down there in the southwest corner we just sat and waited for what was going to happen to happen. I peeked upward out of the

small basement window and saw all kinds of debris sailing through the air in a northerly direction.

Then the debris began to swirl and I knew we were in the virtual center of the tornado's funnel. There were sounds of windows popping upstairs and some more solid thuds.

Then in a minute or two it was all over.

On the way upstairs for a look the first thing we saw was a back door smashed in. The kitchen was a mess, with dishes, utensils, food and broken glass scattered all around. Throughout the downstairs more windows were smashed, and rain came spitting in. A glance at the backyard showed that our two-car garage had disappeared. On the roof of the car that had been inside the garage was a two-foot square chunk of brick chimney.

There was nothing to do but get the family into the car and take them over to my parents, and report for tornado duty at The Fargo Forum.

There editors, reporters and photographers were already swinging into action, so back I went for

a closer look at my own neighborhood.

We had been fairly lucky. My house stands at the corner of Second Street North and Fourteenth Avenue. Two or three houses south of me completely demolished homes showed that the apparent center of the tornado had passed only 150 to 200 feet away.

All the neighbors were out surveying damage. No one reported any injuries, even though there must have been nearly 20 homes almost completely destroyed between 13th and 14th Avenues on 1st and 2nd Streets.

Everybody I talked to said they had headed for their basements. Mrs. Warren Diederich and her three children, Mike 10, Laura, 8, and Don, 5, had been trapped in their basement at 1321 N. 1st, and had been rescued unharmed by neighbors led by Jack Charbonneau. An hour after the tornado Charbonneau was still looking for a panel truck which had been parked in front of his home. His own home was standing although virtually all the shingles were off. The seven houses directly north of his place were demolished.

It's a miracle that more people weren't killed or badly hurt.

Many Homes Wrecked As Funnel Roars In On City From West

A tornado struck Fargo about 7:40 p.m. Thursday, killing at least seven persons and injuring scores.

With a roar that could be heard through the city, the deadly twister cut a swath three blocks wide from the west city limits to the east city limits on the North Side.

Witnesses said the huge funnel touched down about a mile west of 29th Street North.

It blasted east between 7th and 10th avenues to about 24th street, veering north and then east again.

It smashed through an area between 12th avenue and 15th avenue from 13th Street across the Red River.

Hundreds of homes and cars were damaged.

Shanley high school was virtually destroyed.

The American Lutheran Church was a shambles.

The Golden Ridge area, west of 24th Street, was virtually destroyed.

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Most of the homes were without basements and the residents huddled inside catching the full force of the brutal wind.

Three of the known dead are known to be from that area.

The identified dead are three children from the same family—that of Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Munson, 818 25th St. N.

They are:

Phyllis Louise, 6.

Jeanette Irene, 5.

Mary Beth, 1.

They were identified by their mother who was in a state of shock at St. John's hospital. Another Munson child, Lois Ann, 2½, was hospitalized with undetermined injuries.

The children's bodies were taken from the ruins of their home. Mrs. Munson could not say what had happened and Munson could not be located immediately.

Also at St. John's were the bodies of an unidentified man and woman, found in the same general area.

The body of an unidentified man was taken to Hanson - Runsvold Funeral Home.

The body of a boy, about 8, was brought to St. Luke's, where injured were laid on mattresses and cots in the hospital cafeteria as the emergency room became jammed with patients.

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As of 11 p.m. injured still were trickling into the hospitals, brought by private cars and by ambulances, some which came from other towns to help.

A priest was on hand at St. Luke's, and was seen administering last rites to at least one of the injured.

Forty seven injured had been treated at St. Luke's by 10:30 p.m., and about 35 at St. John's.

Six of those in St. Luke's were in critical condition. The number hospitalized was not available.

Twelve persons were admitted at St. John's. Their conditions were not available.

All doctors in Fargo - Moorhead were called and reported to the hospitals for emergency duty.

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Firemen, many of whom turned to searching the debris after small fires caused by live power wires had been doused, said it would be hours before a count of the dead and injured could be made.

They went from house to house, crawling through the debris, shouting for persons who might have been trapped inside.

Helping them were police, Civil Air Patrol members, and other volunteers.

Northern States Power Co. had six crews of four to five men probing the stricken area for live wires.

Donald Healy, superintendent, said it was impossible to say exactly where power was off and where it was on.

He warned residents to treat every wire as if it were a live wire.

He said emergency crews were enroute from Minneapolis and other points. He said it will be days before the damage can be repaired.

As they worked through the dark, wet night, from 300 to 800 National Guardsmen rolled toward Fargo in Army trucks.

They were summoned from encampment at Camp Grafton at the request of Mayor Herschel Lashkowitz.

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The stricken area was a twisted mass of trees, bent and battered automobiles, bricks, branches, power and telephone wires and fallen house and buildings.

Bulldozers, summoned by radio and television appeal, were at work on the tangled mass attempting to clear a path for emergency vehicles and for traffic on 13th Street, which carries U.S. 81 through the city.

Telephones were dead and long distance service to the west was severely curtailed.

James DuBols, Northwestern Bell Telephone Co Manager said a large cable on Broadway was torn out and all phones north of 9th Avenue North were dead. He said he had no estimate of when the damage could be repaired.

At 8:30 p.m. Mayor Lashkowitz called for help from the

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North Dakota National Guard, training at Camp Grafton.

The state police radio was used to call the police chief at Devils Lake, who was asked to call for at least two companies of guardsmen. The chief said he would do it immediately.

The police station, nerve center of the rescue effort, swarmed with officers and volunteer workers, most of whom arrived in response to radio and television appeals for heavy equipment and operators, mechanics, welders, truck drivers and trucks.

All Fargo police and firemen were called to duty.

Mayor Thornley Wells of Moorhead mustered all Moorhead police and firemen, leaving standby crews in Moorhead and sending the rest to Fargo.

Ambulances from several communities arrived and were put into action, dispatched from the police station.

The Casselton fire department was on hand.

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Men and women from service clubs and veterans organizations responded to an appeal for volunteers and were pooled in the Main fire station where blood donors were typed and sent with police escorts to hospitals as needed.

Women rolled bandages and made armbands for volunteer men who were sent out to direct traffic and try to keep throngs of sightseers from the disaster area.