

15 Dead as Tornado Hits Milton

100 Injured, 125 Homes Damaged

THE PENSACOLA NEWS

SEVENTY-FIRST YEAR—NO. 2714 PAGESPENSACOLA, FLORIDA, SATURDAY AFTERNOON, MARCH 31, 1962 * STREET SALE PRICE 5 CENTS

By WILLIAM PRIME AND CHARLES DAW

MILTON—A killer tornado, small but vicious, gouged holes out of humanity and residences here this morning, taking at least 15 lives and injuring more than 100.

Stewart Funeral Home reported it had five white bodies and Wolfe-Lewis Funeral Home reported 10.

Santa Rosa Hospital in Milton was overflowing with the injured, some seriously. About 15 had been transferred to Escambia General Hospital by noon.

Most of the dead, Sheriff Wade Cobb said, were adults and included five Negroes who apparently were killed in the same house.

The twister peeled a section a quarter-mile wide and three miles long through the residential district of Milton. Sheriff Cobb estimated that 125-130 homes had either been destroyed or badly damaged.

Electrical power went dead at 9:04 a.m. Residents near the affected area said the high wind fell upon Milton with "the roar of a freight train passing."

Most of the injured were taken to Santa Rosa Hospital in Milton where doctors and nurses worked in the darkest lobby, operating rooms, hallways and any where else a body could be laid down.

Candles flickered dimly and the medical people had to peer closely to work on the mangled, injured people.

The entire city of Milton was still without electrical power by noon today. Nearly all telephone communications were out.

Some phone lines worked momentarily and then failed again.

Small Children Injured

Many of the injured at Santa Rosa Hospital were small children. Some laid crying for their parents, many of whom also had been brought with injuries of their own for medical treatment.

All available ambulances in Milton were still carrying injured by noon today and other ambulances from Whiting Field and from NAS Mainside, Pensacola, private ambulance concerns in Pensacola were assisting in getting help for the injured, many of whom appeared critically hurt.

Doctors and nurses worked frantically in the crowded and darkened facilities to pump life-giving blood back into many of those who had been found bleeding in the wreckage of their homes.

The injured were still being brought to the hospital at noon and hospital authorities appealed to Sheriff Cobb for more blankets and bed covering.

Gov. Farris Bryant, advised of the disaster, ordered the state highway patrol commander, H. N. Kirkman, and the state civil defense director, Hiram Tarkington, to render all assistance possible to the city.

The governor ordered the Florida Highway Patrol to make as many men as necessary available to "maintain order and render what other assistance they may be able to provide."

Civil Defense Director Ben Henry Pooley estimated 30 to 35 injured persons had been sent to Pensacola hospitals after being given emergency treatment in Milton.

Temporary Shelters Set Up

Temporary shelters have been set up at the Santa Rosa County Courthouse and the Ford Motor Co. in Milton. The sheriff's office in the courthouse is providing food for survivors and additional supplies have been ordered.

The Florida Forest Service is sending in cuts for the homeless.

The Sheriff's Department, the FFS and the Escambia County Search and Rescue Unit are making a foot-by-foot search of the devastated area for dead and injured.

High winds, believed to have been a tornado, hit near Beulah, a Pensacola suburb, destroying a house trailer but apparently causing no serious personal injuries.

The tornado struck without warning, hitting first in the Hamilton Bridge area of Milton and striking at homes near the Oakhurst School. The twister dealt its lethal blow northwesterly hitting the College Park area, sweeping along Park Avenue destroying or damaging 75-80 homes.

Raised Off Ground

The twister appeared to have raised off the ground after hitting the College Park area and then dipped down again along Highway 67, Cedar and Spruce Streets to the Munson Highway where it apparently was last seen.

Gulf Power Co. went on an emergency basis and repair crews were being rushed in from all neighboring areas to assist in restoring power.

Southern Bell Telephone Co. officials said they also were attempting to restore facilities immediately for the Sheriff's Department and other emergency agencies.

One of the first communities to respond to an appeal for help was Crestview, itself struck by a tornado earlier this year.

As at Crestview, the Milton tornado struck without any warning of approaching severe weather predictions from the United States Weather Bureau.

Okaloosa County Sheriff Ray Wilson, his deputies and many volunteers were in Milton asking Sheriff Cobb in a house-to-house search in the ravished area to see if more dead or injured were still lying helpless.

The National Guard of Pensacola was standing by to send help if requested.

The Escambia Search and Rescue Unit and volunteers arrived in Milton within three hours after the storm hit.

The Navy sent huge electrical generators and crews to restore power at the hospital and sheriff's office.

The City of Pensacola, the Highway Patrol, the Navy, the Escambia Sheriff's Office and other agencies rushed men to the

(Turn to HIGH WINDS—Page 3)

'It's a Baby... Billy' -- Mother

By GAYLE NORTON
News Staff Writer

MILTON—The tornado winds which crushed a wide area of Milton this morning caused damage unlike any seen by those of us who covered the Crestview disaster Jan. 5.

Pulverized piles of automobiles, homes, stores and trees laid hundreds of rescuers or rescue workers who searched through the rubble looking for bodies.

I heard a young, married woman about 18 years old screaming: "It's a baby, Billy," over and over again.

Then I saw what she had seen. The twisted body of a small child lay in a heap near what had once been a frame house.

The woman's cries drew the attention of two stretcher bearers who quickly picked up the child's body and put it in an ambulance.

The woman's husband tried to

comfort her as she kept repeating over and over again: "I thought it was a doll. I thought it was a doll."

Ensign Paul H. Hill, 23, of Chicago, stationed at Whiting Field, stood across the street from his home which was not touched by winds which swept a path within 15 feet of the place where he and his pregnant wife, Ruth Ann, lay sleeping.

Hill said he heard what he thought was the rumbling of thunder. "I kept getting louder and louder."

Then it sounded like hail began hitting against the side of our house. "My windows blew in. But my vacation blinds had been pulled closed and very little glass came in the house."

"Suddenly it got quiet. I opened my front door and looked out. I could not believe it. As far as I could see in front of me no buildings were standing. I heard nothing."

"I took my wife next door to

the neighbors and when I came out of the house there was a woman standing in the middle of the street screaming: "My baby, My baby..."

Another person who lived on the edge of the area hit by the tornado was Mrs. Earl Nowling of 1510 Stewart St. said "I had just put the breakfast dishes in the sink and was standing with a jar of syrup in my hand suddenly I heard what I thought was an airplane."

"My son, Cleveland, 10, was in the kitchen with me. Then I saw out the window what I thought was smoke. The wind began to blow harder."

"My husband ran to the front door to hold it shut and at that moment a gust of wind passed through the house, tearing the syrup jar from my hand and tossing it across the room. None of us was hurt."

As I walked south on Stewart I ran into George Whitehurst, Crestview's mayor. Whitehurst

shook his head in amazement. "This is much worse than we had in Crestview," he said. "The people of Crestview extend our sympathy to the people of Milton. We know how they feel."

Whitehurst said most of the Crestview business district was flooded by water this morning caused by heavy rains. He said a young boy had been struck

by lightning and had been taken to Okaloosa Memorial Hospital.

When I got to the Wolfe-Lewis Funeral Home, 19 bodies had already been brought in. None had been identified at 1 p.m. today. Included among the dead were two white females, three Negro babies, one Negro female, two white males and one Negro male.

said. "The people of Crestview ed four bodies, two men, a woman and a baby, all white. Funeral Director Avis C. Lewis said that Milton had experienced no disaster like this in the 23 years he had lived in the town. At 1 p.m. today a long line of emergency equipment began streaming into Milton from Pensacola."

'Loud Rumble' -- And It Hit

By GENE FULLEN

"When I got to my house all I found was a big jumble of mess and destruction," said Ted M. Childers at Escambia General Hospital Saturday morning in reference to his home after the tornado in Milton.

Childers, 36, who was not injured in the tornado accompanied his two daughters—Bonnie Jo, 8, and Linda, 11—to Pensacola via ambulance.

Childers was not at his 1785 Stewart St. home when the tornado struck, but both daughters were.

Childers, who said he was visiting a friend about three blocks away, said he heard "a loud rumble, the door flew open and I knew a tornado had hit even though I didn't see the funnel."

"The first thing I did was jump into the car and go home to see about the girls," Childers continued. "When I got there, Linda was in the yard trying to find Bonnie."

"We finally found her buried under a pile of dirt and rubbish. I knew she was hurt, how bad I didn't know, but I knew I had to get her to the hospital."

"I jumped into the car and tried to reach the nearest doctor but the roads were blocked. I finally bulldozed my way through the traffic," said Childers.

Bonnie was treated for a broken leg and Linda for cuts and bruises.

Victims Treated Here

Milton tornado victims were rushed to Baptist and Escambia General Hospitals in Pensacola today.

Reported in "serious condition" at Escambia General Hospital, suffering from injuries received in the Milton tornado, are 18-month-old Deborah Helms and her father, Ronald Helms, both of Milton.

Conditions of 10 other Milton

(Turn to VICTIMS—Page 3)

FORECAST

Winds occasionally to 40 knots this afternoon. Small craft warnings for southerly winds 15-25 knots, shifting to northerly this afternoon. Cloudy. High this afternoon 72-74. Low tonight about 55.



They Get the Message

Eagle Scout Mike Jarina shows scouts Lawrence Kurylo, Bruce Clements and Michael Meharg the proper method of lashing two poles together for a scaled model signaling tower for the Boy Scout Exposition underway today in Municipal Auditorium. They are members of Troops 5, one of many scouting units displaying exhibits in the auditorium.

Result: Disaster

Cooler Air Hits Vacuum

By EMORY LAVENDER

Pensacola weather forecaster Joe Pope said today the Milton tornado came about when warm, moist air, moving south off the Gulf of Mexico in tremendous volumes moved in under cooler atmosphere blowing eastward across Northwest Florida.

"As the cool air descended and the warm, moist air rose a vacuum formed near the earth's surface," Pope said. "The tornado was created as the cooler air moved into the vacuum."

"As cold air filled up the vacuum it formed into a twisting motion which soon used up the air system's extra energy... that accounts for the single tornado."

A line of thunderstorms from southern Illinois to southern Louisiana moved eastward Friday afternoon, passed through Mississippi during the night and lined up from West Virginia to southern Alabama this morning.

The thunderstorms began moving across northeast Florida at 8 a.m.

Tornado warnings were issued at 3 a.m. today for the area 50 miles either side of the line from 30 miles south of McDonough, Miss., to 30 miles north of Montgomery, Ala., until 10 a.m. today.

Tornadoes this morning reportedly struck near Jackson, Miss., and at a point immediately northeast of Montgomery.

A tornado unroofed a house and destroyed a garage this morning near the Jackson Gap, Ala., community, the Weather Bureau and Tallapoosa County sheriff's office reported.

Both agencies said there were no injuries. Jackson Gap is about 10 miles southeast of Alexander City.

A tornado struck the Milton community about three miles from Elberta, Ala., and caused an estimated \$50,000 damage to summer homes and a fishing camp. The Highway Patrol said the twister fattened several of the homes and did severe damage to the camp. No injuries were reported. Most of the homes were vacant.

Inside News



Queen Barbara Williams Reigns

Pensacola High Senior Barbara Williams reigns as queen of Maroon and White activities. Jay Henry's School Page column Page 2 Bandmen battle for prizes in district musical festival. Carole Ann York's column Page 2

NEWS INDEX

Amusements 5 Obituaries 3
Comics 8 Sports 7
Crossword 8 Jumble 8
Drew Pearson 4 Television 5
Editorials 4 Weather 3

Guido Opposition Mounts

Army Rule Hangs Over Argentina

BUENOS AIRES (AP)—Argentina's anti-Peronist political parties showed signs today of rallying to the new president, Jose Maria Guido. But the shadow of military rule hovered over the nation.

The diminutive 51-year-old former Senate president set about to assemble a Cabinet to deal with the confusion created by the military's ouster of President Arturo Frondizi. In this, Guido is expected initially to get support from almost all political parties. But he faced formidable opposition ahead, both at home and abroad.

Angry and possibly violent opposition was expected from the followers of exiled dictator Juan D. Peron, who drew more than 2.5-million votes—35 per cent of the total—in the March 18 elections that touched off the crisis and from the powerful confederation of labor, with more than 3-million members.

The military wants Guido—they apparently consider him under their thumb—to once again drive the Peronists underground and shambles curtail the powerful labor unions, largely Peronist

Saturday, March 31, 1962

The Pensacola News

High Winds Rip Milton

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE)

scene to help control traffic and to prevent looting. There was no looting reported.

All communications were out and power lines down after a small twister hit the Valparaiso-Niceville area early today. The Florida Highway Patrol closed Highway 85.

Five or six persons were believed injured in the Okaloosa County area as high winds damaged two businesses and several houses.

Sam Love of Southern Bell Telephone Company said the twister caused a complete break in some long distance circuits between Milton and Pensacola.

He said he was unable to estimate extent of damage to telephone equipment.

"Apparently the tornado went through our principal long distance lines and we lost all circuits in the storm area, including several special government circuits," Love said.

The Navy at Whiting Field has made available some housing at Owens Court which is under the jurisdiction of the Navy for those whose homes had been destroyed by the tornado.

R. L. Pulley, president of the Gulf Power Co., reported at noon that electrical service had just been restored to the northwestern area of Milton. Service to remote areas is expected to be restored by late this afternoon.

Interruption of service resulted from the tornado-destruction of main electrical feeder lines coming into the Milton area from Pensacola, Crestview and Panama City, Pulley added.