Canadian Press Clipping Service
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Winnipeg Free Press, Man.
Circ. 138,822
June 28, 1978 103
CANADIAN PRESS CLIPPING SERVICE

C14-92

LEGISLATIVE BRIEFS

Premier **Sterling Lyon** announced Tuesday the appointment of **Elswood Bole,** a former executive director of the now-extinct Metro corporation, to assess damages left in the wake of tornadoes which struck the Aubigny-Ste. Anne area last week.

Bole had investigated wind damage at St. Malo last year for the NDP government, Lyon noted.

Replying to Opposition leader **Ed Schreyer** in the legislature, Lyon said once the damage is assessed it will be possible to say if the federal disaster assistance program will apply. The damages covered by insurance must also be determined before decisions can be made on compensation, he said.

He added that should be known within the next month.

• • •

(204) 944-3050
Dept of Gov Services
assessed. Total damage. $1.5 million
Home.
(204) 253-4123

claims totalled less than $100,000

RM OF MAN
(204) 944-3744

BROKENHEAD R.M.
(24) 268-1624

Reynolds Local Gov Dist
(204) 426-5305
Haddashville.

~~OSTENFELD~~

(204) 426-5313
Ken Ulrich, Man Natural Resources

32

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Winnipeg Free Press, Man.
Circ. 138,822
June 20, 1978
CANADIAN PRESS CLIPPING SERVICE

a1492

Cold air clashing with hot blamed

Weather officals say the storm and ensuing tornados that ripped northeast across Manitoba from Morris to north-western Ontario Monday night were spawned by warm moist air from Minnesota meeting cold air in the Red River valley region.

By 1 p.m. Monday the Winnipeg weather office issued a severe weather watch from 4 to 10. p.m. for southeastern Manitoba, the Red River Valley and Winnipeg regions.

By 5 p.m. the weather office warned of intensifying thunderstorms with wind and hail in a 160-kilometre belt between Morden and Gimli. A spokesman said the storm appeared to develop near Morris, about 43 miles southwest of Winnipeg.

At 5:15 weather officals heard of the first tornado sighting, from just north of Morris. Weather watchers saw it again at Ste. Elizabeth, about 12 miles east of the town.

Moving northeast, the tornado struck again near Niverville, downing hydro poles and causing extensive damage to buildings. The weather office said three-quarter inch hailstones were reported.

At 5:50 p.m. the weather watch was offically upgraded to a tornado warning based on confirmed reports of the twister accompanied by severe thunderstorms.

From Niverville the tornado continued northeast and was sighted about half a mile west of St. Anne at 6:20 p.m.

The weather office said this area was hardest hit, as travel trailers were tossed into a ditch and "serious damage to lives and property" resulted.

Tornados were seen in a 20-kilometre belt between Niverville and Lac du Bonnet and the weather office said the worst passed about 30 miles southeast of Winnipeg.

At 6:30 weather watchers reported serious damage and possible injury to people around Aubigny. Hailstorms were reported in Ste. Agathe, about 10 miles from Aubigny.

A tornado, spawned by continued intense thunderstorm activity, touched down in Ostenfeld at 6:55 p.m.

A severe thunderstorm warning was extended north and east of this area in advance of a severe thunderstorm line through the Whiteshell park area.

"Funnel clouds" were sighted in Pinawa and the Whitemouth-Seven Sisters area about 8 p.m.

The storm passed through Bisset and into Ontario about 9 p.m.

Weather office officals cautioned southern Manitobans to expect thunderstorms with strong winds until Wednesday morning.

A

TORNADO PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET

F = MAN

1. DATE AND TIME MON JUNE 19, 1978. 1615 CST

2. LOCATION OR PATH (attach map) VENTY MORRIS TO VENTY NIVERVILLE

3. PATH LENGTH ☐ NOT KNOWN ☐ <1mi; ☐ 1-4mi; ☐ 5-10mi; ☐ 11-50mi; ☐ LENGTH IF>50mi

4. PATH WIDTH ☐ 5. TORNADO PART OF SQUALL LINE? ☐ YES; ☐ NO; ☐ UNKNOWN:

6. ANY UNUSUAL COLORATION? ☐ YES; ☐ NO; ☐ UNKNOWN

7. ANY UNUSUAL SOUND? ☐ YES; ☐ NO; ☐ UNKNOWN

8. IF ANSWER TO 6 OR 7 YES, ELABORATE; 7. The noise was deafening, like a huge roar.

9. LIST ANY ASSOCIATED PHENOMENA (Such as hail, vivid lightning heavy rain, no rain, etc.) Baseball sized hail.

10. TOTAL DAMAGE ESTIMATE $ 11. TOTAL DEATHS

12. TOTAL INJURED 13. TOTAL HOMELESS

14. LIST ALL REFERENCES

WINNIPEG TRIBUNE, JUNE 20, 21, 24, 28, 29, 1978.
WINNIPEG FREE PRESS, JUNE 20, 21, 23, 1978 JULY 3, 1978
STEINBACH CARILLON NEWS, JUNE 21, 28, 1978, JULY 12,
THE DAILY GRAPHIC, PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE, JUNE 29, 1978
ALTONA RED RIVER VALLEY ECHO, JUNE 28, 1978.

15. SUMMARIZE REMARKS PERTAINING TO (a) FUNNEL; (b) INTERESTING OR CAPRICIOUS EVENTS.

(a) Photo taken by Leon Palud shows double funnel.

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Winnipeg Free Press, Man.
Circ. 138,822
June 20, 1978
CANADIAN PRESS CLIPPING SERVICE

Aubigny bears brunt of devastating twister

By PHILIP RODGERS

Monday's tornado appeared to centre on the small, predominately French-speaking community of Aubigny, near Morris, Man., where about three-quarters of the buildings, including the church, a post office, a store and credit union, were damaged or destroyed.

Witnesses said the tornado appeared suddenly, about 5:30 p.m., giving the 100 townspeople little, if any time to take refuge.

At least 17 people were injured and had to be taken to Morris Hospital. Most were treated and released but seven were detained. A hospital spokesman said six persons were in good condition and one was in fair condition.

One resident said a child on a bicycle had been thrown through a window and was badly cut but the hospital could not confirm this. Police were not releasing the names of the injured or the nature of their injuries.

"It was a miracle no one was killed," a farmer from south of the town said later. He was working in his fields and saw his barn collapse under the impact.

Damage, estimated in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, was heaviest around the church, which lost its bell tower and steeple, and in the south and east part of the town, where at least two buildings were completely flattened.

Not one building in the town was left untouched by the tornado and debris was scattered for hundreds of feet.

Several houses lost all or part of their roofs. On others entire walls were ripped away exposing the interiors. Other buildings were battered and hit by flying debris and almost no building was left with all its windows unbroken.

Leon Palud was outside on his farm when he saw the twister. He said he yelled to his mother to get inside her house and into the basement.

As he ran to his own, three-year-old house nearby, he called to her to telephone his wife to tell her to get their children and take refuge in the basement.

When he got to his home he called to see if his family were in the basement but refused to join them until he had taken four or five photographs. Half a minute after he reached the safety of t h e

—Continued
See AUBIGNY page 6

Most damage in tiny Aubigny

CONTINUED

basement the tornado hit, ripping off the roof of his house.

He said the noise was incredible.

With his family were also other children. No one was injured although a pole carried by the tornado smashed through one of the basement windows.

Like other Aubigy residents, the Palud family spent the rest of the evening salvaging furniture and personal belongs. The family transferred these items to the garage.

Palud said a neighbor had a trailor parked beside his house before the tornado but it couldn't be found after.

A house opposite was completely flattened but the occupants, warned by Hydro workers working nearby, had also taken refuge in the basement and were unharmed.

A school bus, parked on the street, was picked up and thrown about 200 feet into a back yard, landing on its roofs. A number of cars were completely flattened.

Almost immediately after the tornado moved out, the dazed and shaken residents began to try to restore some order to the town. A Mennonite disater group went to the town to offer assistance and uninjured townspeople and persons from nearby farms and communities were organized to do emergency work.

Persons made homeless were give accommodation with more fortunate neighbors and friends.

To control curious sightseers, police, with the help of local citizen band operators, set up barricades on the roads leading to the town.

Police said everyone was co-operating and the Morris Hospital spokesman said everything had gone smoothly when the injured were brought in.

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481 UNIVERSITY AVE
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Winnipeg Tribune, Man.
Circ. 100,949
June 21, 1978
CANADIAN PRESS CLIPPING SERVICE

'I think that God saved us'

By Patrick Flynn
Tribune Staff Writer

AUBIGNY — This tiny French-speaking village of 150 Monday probably came as close to experiencing a miracle as it ever will.

That, at least, is the feeling of many of the residents of this predominantly Roman Catholic community where a savage tornado caused massive damage, yet took no lives.

Tuesday, many residents described how they and their families survived the devastation; the word "miracle" was in everyone's story.

"I think that God saved us," said Maurice Vermette, an Aubigny farmer. "God saved the whole community."

More stories and pictures Pages 4 and 5

As he spoke, the young farmer watched relatives and friends remove his family's possessions — everything that wasn't destroyed — from the 1½-storey wooden home he'll probably never move back into.

"It's finished now," Mr. Vermette said of the old house which had taken a heavy pounding when the tornado touched down. It had been moved off its foundation "like a box of matches."

Weather officials are still compiling information on the tornadoes, but they believe there were at least two, one forming in the Morris area and moving northeast to Aubigny and St. Pierre, and the other moving from Niverville to Ste. Anne and then to the northeast.

One person was killed when the second tornado touched down near Ste. Anne. David Waller, of Portage la Prairie, died when the Canadian National Railway bunk car he was in was

See GOD, Page 5

God saved community'

(Continued)

tossed violently from the tracks.

At least 20 persons were injured by the twisters.

Aubigny was hit just as Mr. Vermette was returning from the fields about 6 p.m.

"I saw the top of the church go down. That was a terrifying sight."

Mr. Vermette pulled his truck into his driveway but by that time, the winds were so strong he dared not leave his vehicle. "I went right down to the floor and stayed there."

The worst part of his ordeal were his fears for his wife and children in the house.

"That was the most frightening part. They were alone in the house and I couldn't get to them. It lasted only two or three minutes, but to me, it seemed like half an hour."

When the winds subsided, Mr. Vermette found his family unhurt in the basement. But the tornado had tossed a school bus on a small car behind his house, and a combine in the backyard had been lifted and dropped upside down.

"In spite of this, we were fortunate," said Mr. Vermette. "We here have a strong devotion to the Virgin Mary, and I think she was close to us Monday."

The safest places for most people in Aubigny when the tornado hit Monday were their basements. Connie Bouchard knew that, but for some reason, she and her daughter Maryse, 16, remained in the living room when the winds began to pound the family's stucco home.

Strangely, it turned out that the basement of the Bouchard home may have been a deadly retreat, because when the tornado hit, it threw the house about 15 feet off its foundation.

The powerful winds then tossed debris into the basement. When the wind died down, Mrs. Bouchard discovered her neighbor's deep freeze among the debris under her house. The neighbor's garage had been destroyed and the freezer — weighing hundreds of pounds — had been tossed 30 yards into the Bouchards' small basement.

"We didn't go down there," Mrs. Bouchard said Tuesday as she pointed to the huge concrete opening in the ground.

"I knew we should have, that the basement was the best place to be. But for some reason — and I don't know why — we didn't. And I thank God we didn't."

Mrs. Bouchard and her husband Phil were among the village's hardest hit. Besides their house, they lost two cars and Mr. Bouchard's store, the only store in the community. The store's roof was heavily damaged and the entire building pushed off its foundation.

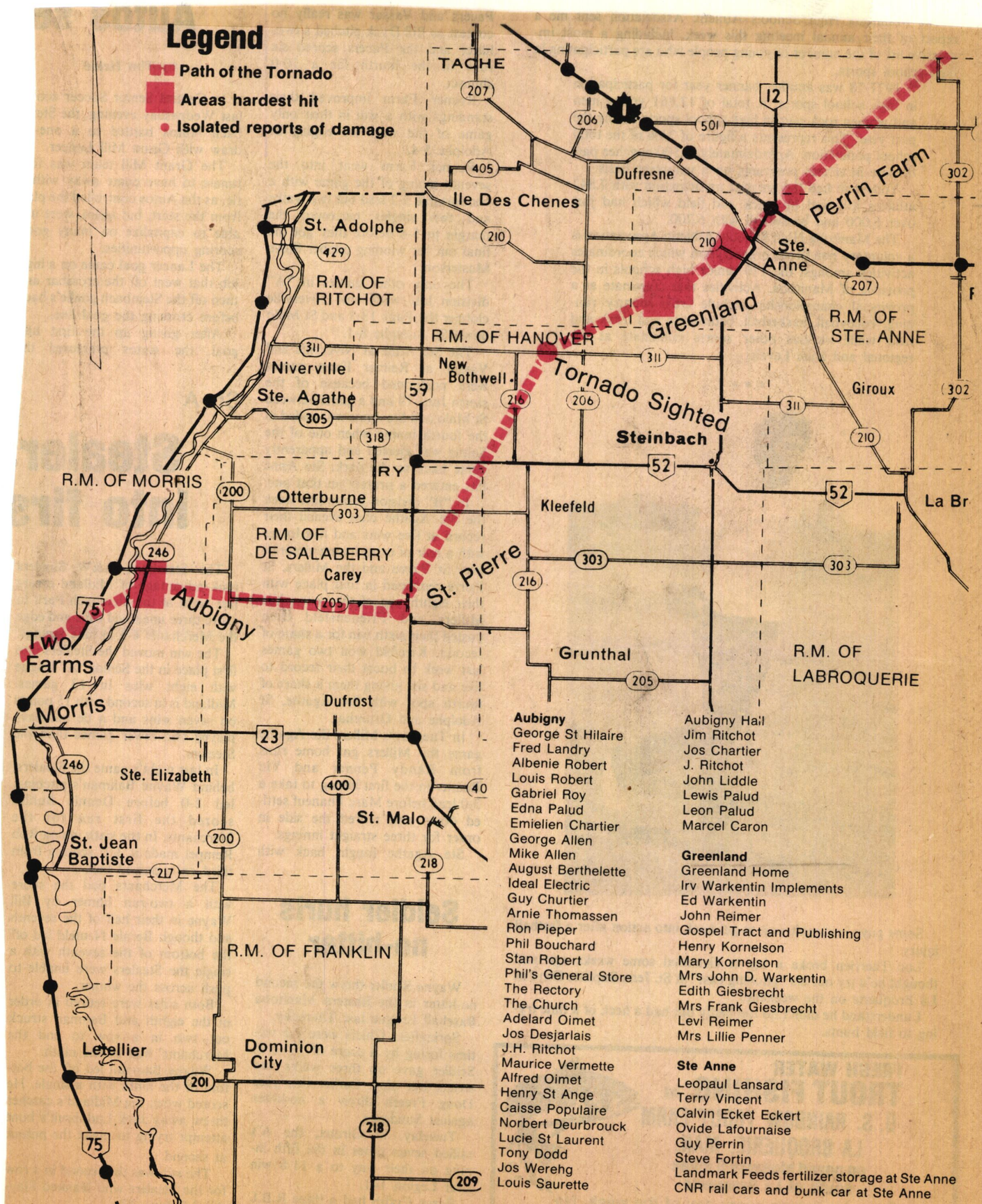
"The house is a write-off, the store's a write-off and the two cars are write-offs," Mrs. Bouchard said.

As she spoke, a small, neatly-dressed man who had just stepped off a helicopter, approached the devastated Bouchard home.

Premier Sterling Lyon, who visited the tornado struck area Tuesday, looked down into the Bouchard's basement and asked: "What about insurance?"

"We don't worry about that," Mrs. Bouchard replied. "We just thank God we're all alive. That's all that really matters."

STEINBACH CARILLON NEWS
JUNE 28, 1978



Aubigny
George St Hilaire
Fred Landry
Albenie Robert
Louis Robert
Gabriel Roy
Edna Palud
Emielien Chartier
George Allen
Mike Allen
August Berthelette
Ideal Electric
Guy Churtier
Arnie Thomassen
Ron Pieper
Phil Bouchard
Stan Robert
Phil's General Store
The Rectory
The Church
Adelard Oimet
Jos Desjarlais
J.H. Ritchot
Maurice Vermette
Alfred Oimet
Henry St Ange
Caisse Populaire
Norbert Deurbrouck
Lucie St Laurent
Tony Dodd
Jos Werehg
Louis Saurette
Aubigny Hall
Jim Ritchot
Jos Chartier
J. Ritchot
John Liddle
Lewis Palud
Leon Palud
Marcel Caron

Greenland
Greenland Home
Irv Warkentin Implements
Ed Warkentin
John Reimer
Gospel Tract and Publishing
Henry Kornelson
Mary Kornelson
Mrs John D. Warkentin
Edith Giesbrecht
Mrs Frank Giesbrecht
Levi Reimer
Mrs Lillie Penner

Ste Anne
Leopaul Lansard
Terry Vincent
Calvin Ecket Eckert
Ovide Lafournaise
Guy Perrin
Steve Fortin
Landmark Feeds fertilizer storage at Ste Anne
CNR rail cars and bunk car at Ste Anne

*Names of homes, businesses and other buildings heavily damaged in the Aubigny area were provided through the efforts of the Mennonite Disaster Service. An Emergency Measures Organization spokesman said the list including major damages in the Ste Anne-Greenland area was complete as far as he knew. Other isolated occurrences of damage were reported along the path of the tornado and a complete assessment of damage is expected shortly.

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481 UNIVERSITY AVE
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Winnipeg Tribune, Man.
Circ. 100,949
June 21, 1978

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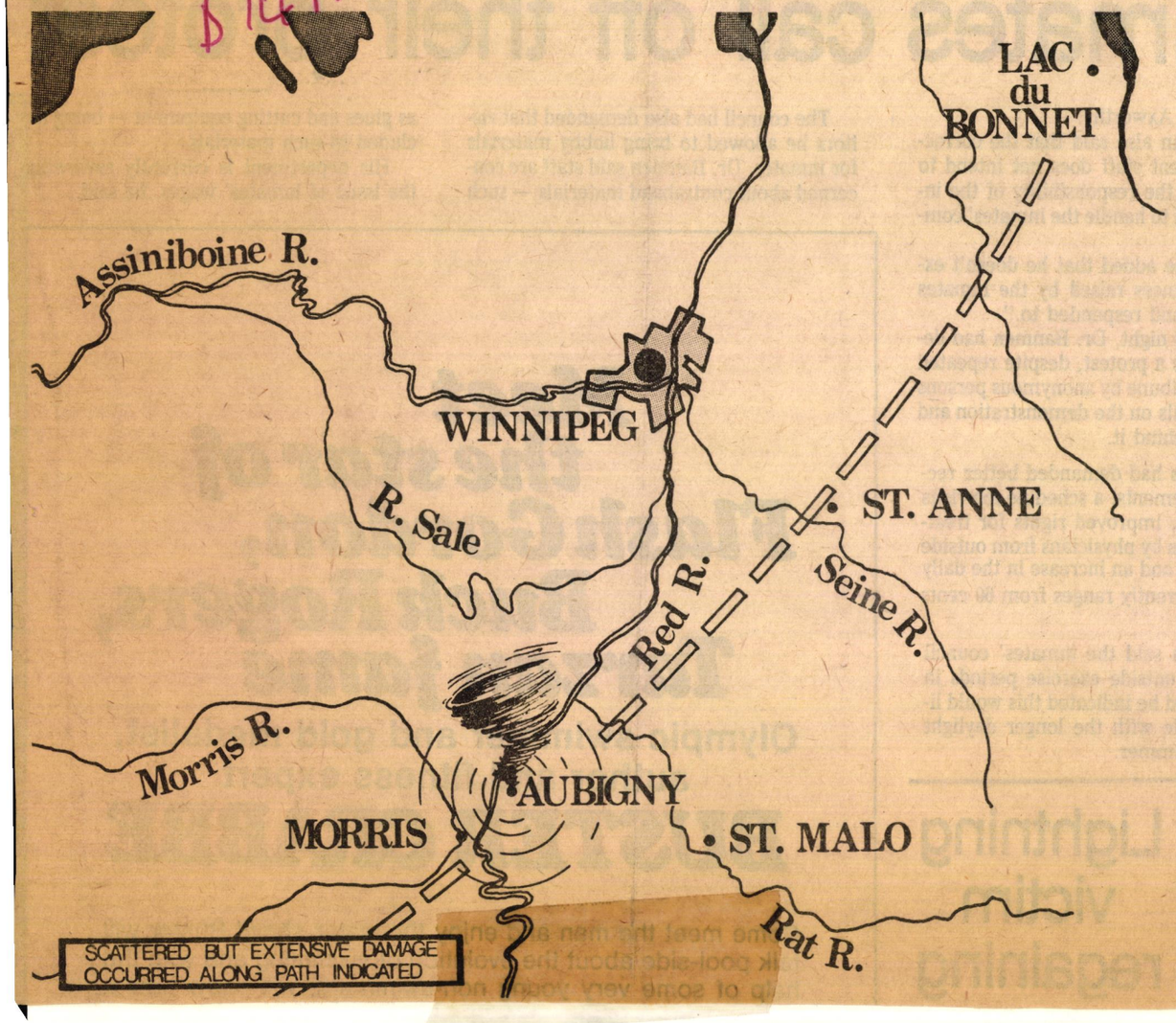


Volunteers move in to start rebuilding

AUBIGNY — A small army of volunteers began pouring into this southern Manitoba village Tuesday to start rebuilding what is left in the wake of Monday's ravaging tornado.

The volunteers, many of them members of the Mennonite Disaster Service, face a formidable task.

Frank Dueck, a disaster service representative, said 20 homes and buildings were destroyed by the powerful winds, and another 20 homes were heavily damaged. Another MDS representative unofficially estimated damage at between $1 million and $2 million.

But by about 1 p.m. Tuesday, more than 250 volunteers — most of them farmers with trucks and tractors — were already clearing away the rubble of houses, garages and trees that had been destroyed when the tornado hit about 5:30 p.m. Monday.

"We just made an appeal over the radio and look at them," said Syd Reimer, an MDS official. "The response has been tremendous."

While the tornado that struck Aubigny levelled much of the town and injured several people, it surprisingly did not claim any lives. However, a Portage la Prairie man, David Waller, was killed when another tornado touched down near Ste. Anne, blowing a Canadian National Railway bunk car he was in from the tracks.

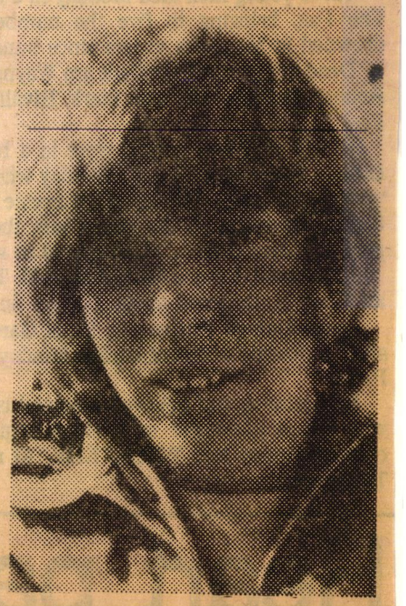
In Aubigny, as the farmers worked to clear away the debris, many of their wives cooked meals in the village's community hall, one of the few structures in the village to escape heavy damage.

Mr. Reimer said some of the volunteers came from as far away as Portage la Prairie, about 70 miles to the northwest.

Volunteers worked side-by-side with Aubigny residents who began early Tuesday to salvage what was left of their homes and businesses.

"I'm amazed at how these people are taking it all," Mr. Reimer said. "It shows a lot of good things about this community."

Mr. Reimer, of Rosenort, said MDS volunteers would continue work in the tornado-hit area "for the rest of this week." But he said repairs to homes would be made over "the next couple of weeks."



Tornado victim David Waller

He said the disaster service hadn't been called on to care for families left homeless by the destruction. "They're all taken care of locally," he said.

Winnipeg Tribune : Tuesday June 20 1978
Storm Date : Monday June 19 78

Killer twister levels town

One dead, 20 injured

AUBIGNY — Two tornadoes swept across Manitoba Monday evening, killing one man near St. Anne and nearly destroying this small community 30 kilometres south of Winnipeg.

Dead is David Waller of Portage la Prairie. RCMP said he was in a Canadian National Railways bunk car when one tornado tossed the car violently off the track near St. Anne.

At least 20 others were injured, most of them in Aubigny. Seven people were admitted to Morris General Hospital and four were admitted to St. Boniface Hospital in Winnipeg. The rest were treated for minor injuries and released.

Stories by John Drabble

Premier Sterling Lyon flew to Aubigny this morning in a helicopter provided by the Emergency Measures Organization. He said he would view the damage and make a statment to the Legislature this afternoon.

Alexander Willett, of Perris, Calif., and Mrs. Vera Regent, of Winnipeg, were injured when their car was blown off Hwy 75 six miles north of Morris at about 5:30 p.m.

Also in hospital is 11-year-old Miles Desjarlais, who was believed to have been seriously cut by flying glass when the storm ripped through his Aubigny home.

Scattered but extensive damage has been reported on farms stretching from Morris to Lac du Bonnet, wherever the tornadoes touched down. There are also reports of extensive damage caused by hail the size of baseballs.

However, nothing compares to the devastation in Aubigny. At least 20 families in the farming community of 200 have been suddenly left homeless.

Residents estimate between half and three-quarters of the buildings have been destroyed.

They say the tornado took less than a minute to reduce the town to ruins. The massive steeple of Aubigny's Roman Catholic church has been reduced to wooden splinters. The town's only store, its bank and post office have all been severely damaged.

Scores of homes stand ruined and at least one house has disappeared without a trace.

Automibiles lie upside down in yards and gardens, like toys casually tossed by some giant hand.

As Manitoba Hydro crews worked to restore broken power lines early this morning, townspeople tried to describe the terrifying minute that began shortly before 5.30 p.m. Monday.

"We were having supper, me and my two daughters, when all of a sudden, kaboom," said Doris Chartier. Gathering her two daughters, she rushed for the basement as windows shattered around her.

Although the tornado descended on the community "like a bomb," most of the residents managed to flee to their basements. It was the basements, they say, that saved their lives.

The tornadoes moved in a northeasterly direction, about 20 kilometres on either side of a line starting at Morris and moving toward St. Anne.

See ONE, Page 5

More pictures on Page 14.

Winnipeg Tribune: Tuesday June 20 '78
Storm Date: Mon. June 19 '78

Continued

The roof of the Greenland Home senior citizens residence was ripped off by a tornado which demolished two homes, a garage and a farm implement dealership nearby.

"It was a miracle none of the residents were killed," said Ted Isaac, whose parents, both in their 80s, were among the 18 senior citizens living at the home.

"Dad was in the living room when they told him there was a storm coming. He said he didn't have time to be afraid, it came so suddenly and then was gone."

The clock at the residence stopped at 6:15 p.m. when the power lines came down.

"One lady was badly cut by glass," Mr. Isaac said. "A few of the residents were taken to hospital in Steinbach, but I believe they have all been released."

The only senior citizens kept in hospital were those who, like Mr. Isaac's mother, were bedridden before the storm, he said. The rest are staying with relatives who were called by the home staff immediately after the tornado hit.

The tornado apparently bypassed or hopped over the Greenland Home because buildings on either side were ripped apart by the winds.

A home to the right was missing, with only a bit of concrete and the basement left, a new combine was overturned next to a pile of rubble that had been a farm implement dealership.

A half mile south, the tornado had shorn away the front wall of a house and sucked out most of the furniture. The owner, a widow, had been in the basement when the home came apart.

This morning, more than 100 area farmers moved into Aubigny with trucks and tractors to help clean up the tons of debris scattered about the community.

Frank Dueck, a spokesman for the Mennonite Disaster Service, which is co-ordinating the clean-up, said 20 homes and buildings have been destroyed and another 20 have been badly damaged.

He said that once the clean-up is finished, workers would begin repairing homes to allow residents to return home.

"With the amount of help coming in here it's not going to be too bad," he said.

Streets in the village were crowded with vehicles and RCMP set up roadblocks to keep the curious away.

Manitoba Hydro crews were called out to the Aubigny and St. Anne areas to repair downed power lines. Manitoba Telephone also reported that telephone service was cut to at least 300 customers in the same area.

The tornadoes were the second in one year to claim life in southeastern Manitoba. Last July, a twister touched down near St. Malo, killing two adults and a child.

As a result of that incident, the weather office expanded and upgraded its weather watch program, designed to warn of tornado activity.

Weather office spokesman Mike Balshaw said the tornadoes started innocently as "possible" thunderstorms about noon. About 1 p.m. the weather office issued a weather watch for southeastern Manitoba, the Red River Valley and Winnipeg.

But it soon became clear that the disturbance was gaining momentum and four hours later the weather office issued a severe warning of "impending hazard and dangerous thunderstorms."

Mr. Balshaw said that only minutes later the office began receiving several calls about a twister near Morris. A small vortex was sighted near St. Elizabeth, about 20 kilometres east of Morris and heading northeast.

The reports of hydro poles being snapped in half and building damage began to flood into the weather office. One caller told meteorologists that ¾-inch hail was spotted near Niverville.

"On the basis of these reports the weather office upgraded the weather warning at 5:50 p.m.," Mr. Balshaw said. "A tornado warning was now in effect."

Mr. Balshaw said the tornadoes were probably moving at a speed between 30 and 40 kilometres per hour but the vortex that caused so much damage could have been spinning up to 300 kilometres per hour.

"A tornado is like a ropelik[illegible] funnel of erratic and unstable wind," he explained. "It develops during a thunderstorm and in moist, humid air."

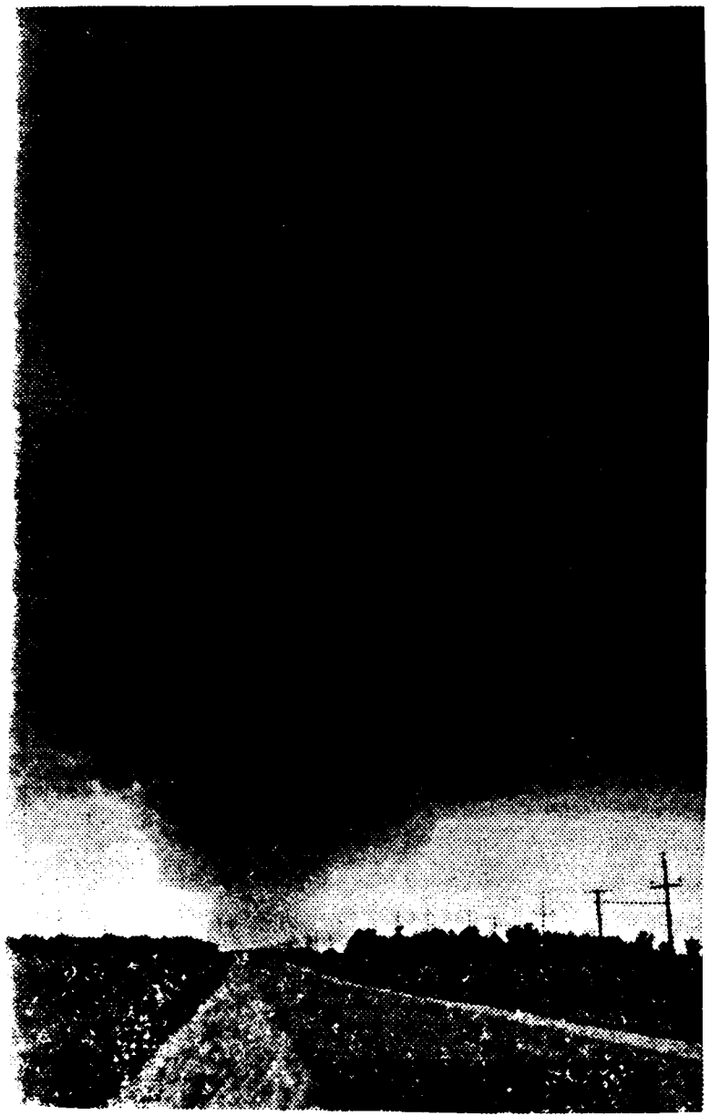
"The wind currents and other forces have to come together just right for a thunderstorm to trigger a tornado. Everything came together almost perfectly in this case."

Mr. Balshaw said the weather office believes there were actually two tornadoes developing out of the severe thunderstorm. He said the first one started in the Morris area and the second began near Niverville.

"The patterns of damage indicate that there must have been two tornadoes," he said. "We have a crew in the area today that is taking a series of aerial photographs that will give us more information about the speed and size of these tornadoes."

Mr. Balshaw said the tornadoes moved out of southern Manitoba about 8 p.m. and the disturbance headed toward the Pinawa area. He said there wre sightings of a funnel in the sky but no damage was reported.

Winnipeg Tribune
Sat June 24 78
Town Date Mon June 19
78



AUBIGNY, Man. (CP) — This small community about 30 kilometres south of Winnipeg was almost destroyed Monday evening by a tornado that killed one person and injuring at least 14 others.

RCMP said David Waller of Portage la Prairie was killed and another injured near Ste. Anne. They were in a Canadian National Railways bunk car on a siding when a tornado lifted the car from the tracks and threw it back down.

The tornado destroyed a fertilizer plant beside the train.

Most of the 14 reported injuries were minor, many of them cuts from flying glass. However, two people injured when their car was thrown out of control by the tornado on Highway 75 are in guarded condition in hospital.

All is in ruins

But in Aubigny, all is in ruins. The predominantly French-speaking community of about 300 bore the brunt of the tornado which destroyed nearly 75 per cent of the town.

Jack Murray, the mayor of Morris, about 10 kilometres to the west, was one of many people who went to the community Monday evening to try to help. He said the damage was "horrendous" and only the hand of God prevented any Aubigny residents from being killed. Nine were injured.

"In a situation as horrendous as this there's very little you can do except make sure the people are warm and dry," he said. "Tomorrow when the sun shines, we'll do our best to help out.

"The village had services, a store, post office, credit union, caisse populaire," said Murray. "But that's all gone now. The only thing left of the caisse populaire is the safe."

The actual number of tornado touchdowns has not been confirmed but houses, stores and other buildings were flattened; trees, hydro and telephone poles and automobiles were thrown through the air like leaves.

About 400 Manitoba Telephone System customers were without service this morning in the storm area.

Tornado toppled a church steeple and carried a bus more than 60 metres before it was dumped less than three metres from the side of a house.

Many residents escaped injury by hiding in basements as the houses above them were destroyed.

A Winnipeg man on his way home emerged from a bush to see a tornado touch down in a large farm yard.

"I'd say there's thousands and thousands of dollars of damage there," he said. "There were machines, sheds, barn 200-300 feet long, just flattened. There was a house (foundation) with a television beside it. The house was gone I don't even know where it was."

The reeve of the rural municipality of Morris, Alvin Remple, said the residents of Aubigny could possibility rebuild many of the homes.

"They're too much in a state of shock now to discuss any future plans," he said. "But I would say there's no problem rebuilding. But many of the homes will probably have to be demolished and rebuilt."

Seniors' home hit

In nearby Greenland, a senior citizens' home suffered extensive damage and a number of residents suffered minor injuries.

Manitoba Hydro reported that transmission lines were down in the Ste. Anne area and many residents were without power.

The tornado moved in a northeasterly direction, about 20 kilometres on either side of a line starting in the Morris area and moving towards Ste. Anne.

The tornado missed heavily-populated areas. By 9 p.m. the Winnipeg weather office said the tornado danger was past but thunderstorms continued into the early morning.

MAN

STORM DATE!

Canadian Press Clipping Service
481 UNIVERSITY AVE. TORONTO 2

Altona Red River Valley Echo
Manitoba
June 28, 1978
CANADIAN PRESS CLIPPING SERVICE

268

More about

E1493

Tornado hits Aubigny

Volunteers worked side-by-side with Aubigny residents who began early Tuesday to salvage what was left of their homes and businesses.

"I'm amazed at how these people are taking it all," said Syd Reimer, MDS co-ordinator. Mr. Reimer, of Rosenort, said MDS volunteers would continue to work in the tornado-hit area, with repairs to homes being made over the next couple of weeks.

He said the disaster service hadn't been called on to care for families left homeless by destruction. "They're all taken care of locally," he said.

By Wednesday, MDS workers were cleaning up debris from ditches and roadsides, as well as fanning out in cropped fields to clear them so crops may be harvested in fall.

Among the buildings damaged or destroyed was the church, the post office and store, and the credit union. Residents had little time to take refuge.

Damage was heaviest around the church, which lost its bell tower and steeple, and in the south and east part of town with several buildings flattened completely.

Not one building was left untouched by the tornado and debris was scattered for hundreds of yards. Several houses lost all or part of their roofs.

On others, entire walls were ripped away exposing the interiors. Other buildings were battered and hit by flying debris and almost no building was left with all its windows unbroken.

The Day After

"I've started over again four or five times in my life, but not again," says 69-year-old Peter A. Robert, as he points to the devastation on his farmyard. A steel granary is grotesquely twisted around a utility pole, and Mr. Robert debates (with himself) whether it would be worthwhile to salvage some broken lumber and shingles from several buildings now lying in a single heap.

Of some sentimenal loss is a barn, now standing roofless, which Mr. Robert built himself many decades ago with lumber hauled from over 100 miles away. His wife agrees," "we can't start over again. . . not at our age."

Leon Palud was outside on his farm just south of Aubigny when he saw the twister. He warned his mother, then ran to his own three-year-old house on the community's outskirts and after ensuring that his wife and family had taken refuge in the basement, delayed going downstains to take several photographs. Half a minute after he reached the basement, the tornado hit ripping the roof off his house.

He described the noise as incredible. A total of nine persons, including other children, huddled in the southwest corner of the basement. No one was injured, although a pole smashed through one of the basement windows. Even next day, the southwest corner of the basement was clear while the rest of the basement was laden with debris.

A school bus, parked on the street, was picked up and thrown about 200 feet into a yard, landing on the roof. A number of cars were completely destroyed. And a combine in the backyard was lifted and dropped upside down.

The safest place for most people was the basement, but for two — Connie Bouchard and her daughter — who remained in the living room when the high winds began to pound the family's stucco home, it could have been a deadly retreat. The house was pushed off its foundation, and powerful winds tossed debris into the basement.

When the winds died down, Mrs. Bouchard discovered her neighbour's deep freeze among the debris under her house. The neighbour's garage had been destroyed and the freezer — weighing hundreds of pounds — was tossed 30 yards into the Bouchards' basement.

Mrs. Bouchard and her husband Phil were among the village's hardest hit. Besides their house, they lost two cars and Mrs. Bouchard's store, the only one in the community, which also served as the post office. The roof was heavily damaged and the entire building pushed off its foundation.

A woman at the community centre Tuesday said she lived just outside Aubigny and had seen the funnel coming. "Its width varied," she said, "but I could see it was headed right at Aubigny." She warned persons in town, and then told her daughter-in-law on the telephone "this may be the last time I'm talking to you . . . there's a tornado coming right at us." She escaped without injuries.

Former Altona residents — Mr. and Mrs. Frank Claes — now residing at Aubigny, also escaped without serious injury.

This week MDS relief efforts continue as they assist residents to rebuilt their badly damaged community and in some cases help to reconstruct their homes.

204 882-2126

Winnipeg Free Press! Fri June 23 78
Storm Date: Monday June 19 78

Twister alert 'not possible'

By ALLAN WILSON

A tornado warning was not issued by the weather office until 5:50 p.m. Monday, at least 25 minutes after it swept through the town of Aubigny, Man.

Mike Balshaw, officer in charge of the Winnipeg weather office, said a tornado warning is not issued until one has been sighted and confirmed.

Since the tornado only formed a few kilometres away from Aubigny the town was hit well before the tornado warning was issued.

He said "prediction of where a tornado will occur is not possible in advance."

The weather office has not evaluated the effectivness of its warning in Monday's tornado yet but Balshaw said a few people were interviewed in the storm area, and some said they had heard the earlier warnings.

Other areas were hit by the tornado after the tornado warning had been issued, he said.

Two other warnings had been put out during the day as part of the weather watch program which has been in operation here since May 1.

A severe weather watch, the first in the series of three warnings, was issued at 1 p.m.

It said severe thunder storms could occur between 4 and 10 p.m. Monday.

"We hope if there is a warning out people will watch."

The weather watch program has 1,750 registered watchers throughout the province. They are "public employees from organization such as the RCMP, highways and renewable resources departments, and telephone and hydro."

These people have been issued pamphlets showing what severe weather looks like. When they see it, they telephone a special number at the atmospheric environment service (weather office).

The weather office evaluates the reports, cross-references them with their own charts and radar and then issues a warning.

The severe weather warning is the second to be sent out. Monday it went out at 5 p.m.

With this warning people can expect damaging winds and severe thunderstorms.

The first report of a tornado was phoned in at 5:15 p.m., the second shortly after. These were evaluated and a tornado warning issued at 5:50 p.m.

Since it has been in operation the weather watch service has issued 40 messages, 11 of them severe weather watches or higher on the scale, including one tornado warning.

In the past 13 years there were 47 registered tornadoes in Southern Manitoba, which works out to three or four a year.

These are generally confined to the Red River Valley, and generally die out before they get to Winnipeg.

The weather watch program has been planned for the past year with this year being the first it has operated.

Lifesaver

The damage done by Monday's tornadoes in southern Manitoba was great — but only one person died as a result of the storm. Some of the credit, at least, for this remarkable fact can be given to the weather watch system instituted this year.

A couple of weeks or so ago, the watch fell down when it failed to predict the severe thunderstorms that hit Winnipeg from early evening until after midnight and that also caused some property damage. But there was no faulting the weather office on Monday. A severe weather watch was issued early in the afternoon to take effect starting at 4 o'clock. The storm area was pinpointed later that day, and a tornado watch issued immediately the first one was sighted and reported, giving warning to the immediate area.

If one were listening to the radio or watching television, one knew what to expect. The weather watch system proved its value. The only proviso that can possibly be entered against it is the possibility that, having had one tornado experience, people may expect the worst every time a severe weather warning is issued. On the other hand, it is better to be forewarned, even if the warning comes to nothing, than to be caught unaware.

Free Press, Fri. June 23/78

Winnipeg Tribune
Fri June 23 '78
Storm Date! Monday
June 19 '78

Full speed ahead for Aubigny repairs

By Patrick Flynn
Tribune Staff Writer

AUBIGNY — Maurice Vermette has a wife, six children and no home.

His 1½-storey wooden home was heavily damaged Monday when one or more tornadoes ripped through this southern Manitoba village.

He had no insurance on the house and now is temporarily living in a dwelling provided by local friends.

Syd Reimer, an official of the Mennonite Disaster Service, said the Vermettes aren't alone in their predicament.

"There were several homes that weren't insured for one reason or another," he said.

"And the majority of those that were covered were vastly under-insured for replacement value."

Ron Piper's 1½-storey house was badly damaged by the powerful winds that came last Monday afternoon.

He moved into the house earlier this month and hadn't taken out insurance.

But he's luckier than the Vermettes. His house wasn't beyond repair and, Thursday, Mennonite Disaster Service volunteers were rebuilding the home.

See AUBIGNY, Page 5



Workmen are busy repairing one of the many homes damaged by the tornado on Monday.

Aubigny repairs going quickly

(Continued)

Mr. Reimer said 100 volunteers, some from as far away as Boissevain in southwestern Manitoba, came to Aubigny Thursday to help get the village back on its feet. About 350 farmers — some with their wives and children — turned out Tuesday to help clean up after the tornado struck.

Mr. Reimer, who is a Rosenort insurance agent, said no claims have yet been settled by insurance companies, but added there have been no indications Aubigny residents may encounter difficulties on insurance claims.

"It's been going slower than we'd like to see," he said, "but in our anxiety to get things fixed up, we've been ahead of the adjusters."

In many cases, the Mennonite Disaster Service is paying for material needed to make repairs to houses and other property. But Mr. Reimer said the service expects individuals to give some or all their insurance settlement — when it's finally made — to a general fund to help Aubigny residents who weren't covered by insurance, or who were under-insured.

The disaster service also is receiving donations to help the Aubigny residents. "I've got $100 in my hip pocket right now from a man who wanted to help," Mr. Reimer said. As he was being interviewed, a member of the Morris Lions Cub told him the club had raised $500 for the relief fund.

Individuals wishing to donate to the fund may send contributions to the Mennonite Central Committee, 1483 Pembina Hwy.

MDS volunteers clean up after tornado

Residents from Gretna, Halbstadt, Altona and points west were among a small army of volunteers who began pouring into Aubigny, a small village northeast of Morris, Tuesday to start rebuilding in the wake of Monday's ravaging tornado.

Volunteers numbering as many as 250 and coming from as far away as Portage la Prairie descended on tiny Aubigny, a French-speaking community, to begin the clean-up while Premier Sterling Lyon, MLAs Albert Driedger and Bob Banman toured the town to assess the damage.

A tornado swept through Aubigny early Monday evening affecting all of the approximately 150 residents in this farming community. At least 20 families were suddenly left homeless.

The tornado that struck Aubigny, one of two that touched down that night, is believed to have formed in the Morris area and moved northeast to Aubigny. Hail and rain was experienced in the Lowe Farm and Riverside areas west and northwest of Morris as the thunderstorm that resulted in the tornado moved through.

Heavy winds resulted in serious power line damage along Highway 75 and a California couple travelling north in a station wagon were knocked off the road, and hurled upside down in the ditch. At St. Anne, an employee of Canadian National Railways, was dead after the tornado lifted the bunk car of a work train on a siding and sent it crashing to the ground.

Nineteen people were taken to the Morris Hospital, most from Aubigny. Two were transferred to St. Boniface Hospital, but only seven were detained overnight. None was believed in serious condition.

Harold Derksen, of Derksen's Trucking, told The Echo he'd been coming back from Winnipeg about 5 p.m. when he spotted the funnel in St. Agathe vicinity. After he realized that it was a twister, he turned around and drove north for a number of miles and waited until it blew over. The California car had not been that far away from him, he said.

Mennonite Disaster Service personnel were in Aubigny Monday night to assess the damage and issued an appeal for assistance (volunteers). And Tuesday morning they started coming and by noon some 200 persons were at work. Even the re-shingling of a roof of one of the less damaged homes was started before noon.

Some 20 homes and buildings were destroyed by the powerful winds, and another 20 homes were heavily damaged. Unofficial estimates placed the damage at over $1 million.

Red River Valley Mutual Insurance Company, with offices in Altona, estimates that its loss from the June 19 tornadoes in southeastern Manitoba alone may be anywhere between and quarter and half a million dollars.

MDS volunteers, many of them farmers with trucks and tractors, started immediately to clear away the rubble of houses, garages and trees that had been destroyed when the tornado hit about 5:30 p.m.

While the tornado levelled much of the community and injured many, it was considered surprising — a miracle by others — that no lives were lost here.

In Aubigny, as the farmers worked to clear away the debris, many of their wives cooked meals in the community hall, one of the few structures in the village to escape heavy damage.

ALTONA RED RIVER VALLEY ECHO. MAN. JUNE 28, 1978.

Winnipeg Tribune: Sat June 24 1978
Storm Date: Monday June 19 78

Manitoba

'I think that God saved us'

Two tornadoes swept across Manitoba Monday evening, killing one man and doing great destruction to the small community of Aubigny, south of Winnipeg. The dead man, David Waller, of Portage La Prairie, was in a Canadian National Railways bunk car when one tornado tossed the car violently off the track near St. Anne.

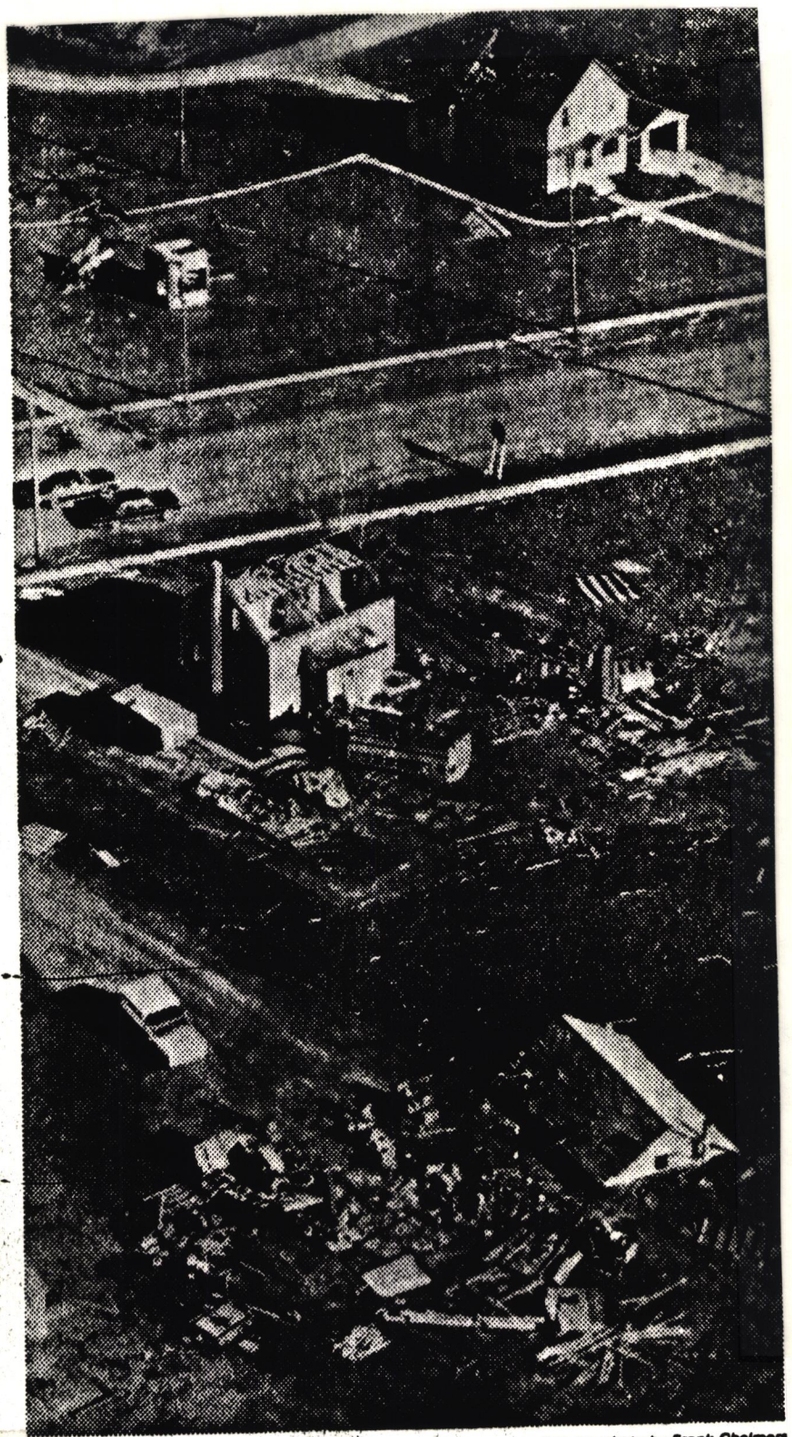
The tornadoes were the second in one year to claim lives in southeastern Manitoba. Last year a twister touched down near St. Malo, killing two adults and a child. As a result the weather office upgraded its weather watch program, designed to warn of tornado activity. The program paid off this time, for there was plenty of advance warning of Monday evening's blow.

At least 20 people were injured, most of them in Aubigny. At least 20 families in the farming community of 200 were homeless. Residents estimated between half and three-quarters of the buildings were damaged or destroyed. Two tourists from the U.S. were hurt when their car was swept off the highway by the wind.

There were many minor miracles. One man went to sleep in his house Monday and woke up in his neighbour's garden. A statue atop a church steeple crashed down in the ruins of the steeple, but was unscratched itself. A bathtub ended in a front lawn. A freezer ended up in the basement of another home. One Aubigny family unable to make it to the basement in time sat in the corner of the living room and watched their house as it was sloowly torn apart by a howling black cloud.

Perhaps the greatest miracle, citizens of Aubigny felt, was that no one in the community was killed. "I think that God saved us,'" said one Aubigny farmer.

Adversity brings out the best in people and by Tuesday a small army of volunteers had moved into Aubigny and the twister-ravaged district to help start the job of rebuilding. The damage was unofficially estimated at between $1 and $2 million. Premier Sterling Lyon flew over the area by helicopter and Tuesday made a report of what he had seen to the Legislature. He expressed sympathy for the victims but stopped short of promising any financial aid for the devastated area. "It would be premature at this time" he said, referring to any commitment of provincial or federal cash assistance. There was no provincial plan as such to cover aid for that kind of emergency. But he intended to look into a provincial-municipal scheme developed to aid the victims of last year's St. Malo twister. Mr. Lyon had high praise for the "absolutely first rate work" done by the Mennonite Disaster Service.



Tribune photo by Frank Chalmers

Some of the tornado-damaged houses at Aubigny.

Winnipeg Tribune: Tues June 20 '78
Storm Date: Mon. June 19 '78

Many minor miracles

AUBIGNY — Emil Pelland, 75, went to sleep in his house Monday and woke up in his neighbor's garden.

Although shocked by the devastation around them, many of Aubigny's residents marvelled early today at the minor miracles left in the wake of the killer tornado.

Houses stood undamaged 20 metres from buildings which had been destroyed beyond recognition.

A statue atop the steeple of the town's Roman Catholic church came to rest without a scratch, although the steeple was in ruins.

Perhaps, most miraculous of all, no one in Aubigny died in the storm.

Doris Chartier said she emerged from the basement of her house to find Mr. Pelland sitting dazed in a neighbor's garden.

"All he had was a scratch on his head."

Mrs. Chartier's possessions, however, suffered a worse fate. "My freezer ended up in the basement of another house," she said. "It was full of meat, but there wasn't a thing in it after."

Other items found peculiar resting places. A bathtub ended up on a front lawn. A school bus rolled into a neighbor's back yard.

Many miracles in ruined town

(Continued)

"The last time I saw our bathroom (outhouse) it was going down the front street as fast as you please," said Bernice Richot.

Property damage in the town can not be estimated yet. One resident guessed it would be at least $1 million.

"I know it would cost me alone $10,000 to replace everything I have lost," said Joe Richot.

As they wandered about the devastated town many residents expressed fear that their insurance won't cover tornado damage.

Many have lost everything.

"You just get everything paid off and something like this happens," said one resident. "It's tough to take."

House slowly torn apart in howling black cloud

AUBIGNY — When the tornado descended on Aubigny Monday evening, the Desjarlais family couldn't manage to reach their basement in time.

Crouched in the only safe corner of their living room, they watched in horror as their house was slowly torn apart by a howling black cloud.

"I wasn't frightened," said Larry Harris, one those in the living room. "All I cared about was protecting my baby girl."

Larry, his wife Sandra, and their daughter had been eating dinner with Sandra's parents when the tornado struck. Also in the kitchen was Sandra's sister Karen, 18, and her brother Miles, 11.

"At first it started hailing really hard," said Mr. Harris. "And then the wind started to get up. Suddenly it came, bang, just like that."

First, the living room picture window blew in. Everyone made a dash for the basement, but only Karen made it. The rest jammed into the nearest living room corner, except one. Miles was too late.

"He was caught in the middle of the living room," said

See FAMILY Page 5

Family watches home destroyed

Continued

Mr. Harris in an interview Monday night. "There was flying glass all over the place."

He said there was never time to think what was happening, never time to realize they were in the middle of a raging tornado.

"The noise was deafening, like a huge roar. It was just awful," said Sandra. "I didn't know what to think."

Slowly, bit by bit, the house started to break apart. Frist the east side of the house was torn away. Then one living room wall collapsed into the bedroom of the small bungalow.

"The whole house began rattling," said Mr. Harris. "I could feel the wall against me fluttering back and forth."

He tried once to raise his head and try to see what was happening amid the swirling black dust.

"I saw this board. It was a big board, maybe four by eight and it was flying around the room like matchstick."

An instant later, the board shot through a wall into the bedroom.

As suddenly as it had begun, the horror ended.

The family raced to aid Miles who was lying on the living room floor badly cut across the chest and the face. He is believed to be in satisfactory condition in Morris General Hospital.

Outside, Mr. Desjarlais found his late-model station wagon in his neighbor's yard, a complete wreck.

The house itself has been destroyed, but the family considers itself very lucky to have survived.

"I think if we had gone to any other corner we wouldn't have survived," said Mr. Desjarlais.

STORM DATE:
SAT JUNE. 24/78.

Steinbach Carillon News
Manitoba
June 28, 1978
309
CANADIAN PRESS CLIPPING SERVICE

T.S. #1492

Hope replaces despair as Aubigny residents rebuild

by Carol Talbot

A child's rubber boot rests in the dust a few feet from a faded blue bottle of hair dye. Straggly twigs are all that remain of a lawn hedge. Shards of glass are strewn through fields and backyards. Eavestroughs twisted like pipe cleaners hang at right angles from what were trim houses several days ago.

The two tornadoes that swept across southern Manitoba last Monday evening took more than rooftops and trees in the wind. They temporarily drained the small town of Aubigny of happiness and hope.

"Gee, it is just unbelievable," sighed a dark haired woman as she rested on a pile of rubble next to the house she and her husband had been in the process of remodelling. Apparently she had been busy all morning carting wheelbarrows of debris to a pile in the backyard. She gestured to the foundations of two buildings that once stood adjacent to their house and toward a patch of dirt, the large garden she had just planted a few days before the tornado struck.

Somehow she managed a smile and said she is much more fortunate than many other people. The general store, next to this woman's home, was moved four feet off its foundation. A few loose wires, cement cinder blocks and wooden crates are scattered in the basement of the store but Syd Reimer said most of the debris around the building had already been cleaned up by his crews.

Every few moments someone is asking, "Where is Syd?" Syd Reimer, Canadian representative of the Mennonite Disaster Service, is indisputably one of the most popular men around the Aubigny community. Although he is from Rosenort, about five miles west of Aubigny, he chats with everyone he meets and invites the occasional person for refreshments.

It seems people just can't say enough good things about the MDS (Mennonite Disaster Service). Aubigny residents call them "amazing" or "wonderful". Cam King of the Red Cross says they are doing a "super clean up job" and Ben D. Penner, local coordinator of the Emergency Measures Operation, comments MDS organized quicker than they did.

One woman is sure many Aubigny residents would have just picked up and moved if it had not been for the efficient and prompt MDS aid they received. Faced with the task of rebuilding their homes, shock and depression could have forced families to run away.

Mr Reimer explains the MDS was organized 25 years ago in Kansas aand has over the years grown into an international group with headquarters located in Akron, Pennsylvania. MDS is strictly a volunteer organization. Mr Reimer terms it "low-key practical evangelism." It operates on the philosophy that actions speak louder than words.

Mr Reimer reports he had crews moving furniture and boarding up houses "before the tornado winds had died down."

The radio announcements Monday night brought about 340 volunteers to Aubigny the following morning, despite the fact some MDS crews had barely returned from tornado clean-up in Emo, Ontario.

Volunteers were registered by qualifications. Teams were arranged and assigned tasks that suited their abilities. Jobs included cleaning debris from fields and buildings, repairing and painting buildings, electrical and plumbing repairs, tearing down condemned buildings, arranging credit and negotiating with insurance companies.

Mr Reimer says one of the primary goals of MDS is to reach out to neighbors in need.

Vi Stoesz and Kathy Sawatsky, both 19, Altona residents and very energetic, say they have gained a feeling of unity working with tornado victims through MDS.

"The spirit around here has really changed a lot from what it was yesterday," Kathy said. "People seem more hopeful and they can joke around. They are friendly and make us feel appreciated."

Vi felt her crew was doing a good job because they were doing it for other people. "It feels good to work hard."

Neither Vi or Kathy have summer jobs but are presently looking for them. Vi's father suggested the girls help out with MDS and so far they have cleaned up shingles, pieces of wood, bedding and clothing from fields and around houses.

Vi said although she and Kathy had never before worked on an MDS crew, they would be willing to do it again.

Life goes on

Life goes on for Aubigny residents. Laundry hanging on a clothesline attests to this fact.

Aubigny is alive with the activity of rebuilding. Saws buzz, CB radios crackle, men shout to one another over the banging of hammers, trucks rumble toward the dump where a haze from burning debris hangs in the hot air.

Determination replaces the shock of loss. Decisions are being made about rebuilding, repairing, tearing down and starting over again.

Alfred Landry, his wife and one of his four children were huddled in the basement of their house when the tornado passed over their property, taking with it part of their roof, windows and most of their farmyard.

Mrs Landry said the noise of the storm was so loud she could barely stand it. "It was like being in a vacuum. My husband turned to me and told me he thought this was the end."

She mentioned she could barely believe the house was still standing when they finally emerged from the basement.

Mrs Landry said she couldn't begin to describe the damage done "down there", indicating the farmyard. "The big barn went down," she started. The barn was indeed big and had more than "gone down". Half of the structure had been sucked up, leaving rafters and hay where the roof and hayloft once were. Other sheds and granaries were destroyed. Farm machinery was damaged. Miraculously the Landry's 40 head of cattle were uninjured although they now have no place to put them. Their pigs were sold because they had nowhere to shelter them.

The Landry family, as most others, suffered shock at first. "You never think it will really happen to you. Twenty-five years of building up is taken in one second."

STEINBACH CARILLON NEWS. WED JUNE 28 '78

"We are just now beginning to think about how we will rebuild. Maybe we can repair the big barn . . . somehow." She said it would not be possible if not for MDS, the prompt response of Manitoba Hydro crews and other volunteers.

Hydro and phone crews began repairs almost immediately and kept at the job around the clock. For several days following the tornado, men and machinery continued to replace splintered utility poles. Broken wires and new spools of wires were to be seen at every corner.

The Aubigny Community Hall is the hub of the small town's activity. Food and drinks prepared by volunteers and local women are served. Miscellaneous furniture is piled in one corner.

Teresa Walsh sits at the end of a long table interviewing people from families who require Red Cross help. Cam King, spokesman for the Red Cross, said both Mrs Walsh, director of emergency services, and Dan Bernaerdt, director of volunteers, spent the week of the tornado in Aubigny and planned to continue their work the following week.

The Red Cross primarily provides bedding and clothing and some medical aid in the form of "health kits". Apparently Aubigny residents had already taken care of food and housing by the time Red Cross had arrived.

The two Red Cross representatives were in Aubigny the morning after the storm and although it seemed at first people were reluctant to ask for aid, it wasn't long before people opened up and Mrs Walsh and Mr Bernaerdt were busy recording sheet and clothing sizes and filling orders.

Mr King explained initial reluctance is not uncommon "because people basically don't like to ask for help. We don't look on it as a hand-out though. These people are entitled to it."

Another organization involved in aiding the Aubigny community was the Emergency Measures Organization (EMO). Ben D. Penner, the EMO local coordinator, said EMO does not have the actual equipment to operate but instead "helps get labor" and "stay in connection with headquarters in Winnipeg, advising them and keeping them posted on how clean-up is progressing."

A doctor from the Eden Mental Health Centre in Winkler also assisted victims of the tornado. The people's shock had to be dealt with before building repair could begin. One person related how a man had been running through his field frantically searching for his wallet. He demanded Premier Lyon to search the area by helicopter to find his orange cat. The shock of the tornado and the damage it left affected people in various ways.

"God talked to us through the tornado"

Father Thibault, Aubigny priest, is a small, soft-spoken man. He reported the church bell and steeple were torn down by the tornado, stained glass windows were shattered. He mentioned the parish roof and windows were damaged. The wrought iron porch railing lay in sections near the front stoop.

Father Thibault explained the reason "morale was strong" was because people accepted the tornado "as their fate".

"God talked to us through the tornado. He gave us a message." He went on to make sure it would not be misunderstood that because some houses had been hit and some had not, "God was punishing the black sheep." Instead Father Thibault felt "God was calling everybody to be nearer to Him."

Father Thibault also mentioned what he considered to be a miraculous sign from heaven. The tornado winds had left untouched several sacred things in the church. A statue of Jesus was unaffected, the rosary in the statue's hand intact. A plant at the feet of the statue was also unharmed. The tabernacle (holy eucharist) was passed over by the tornado, only the veil over it slightly shifted.

Violence of storm "unbelievable"

The violence of the tornado can only be left to one's imagination. Dirt and debris was embedded in wood siding of homes. Vehicles were blown away or overturned. A two-storey house, home of a family with six children, was left in total ruin.

"If there's one word to sum it up, the word is unbelievable," one woman said. "What made it bad was it took the whole village."

And yet amidst shattered homes and lives, a certain hardiness remains within people, encouraging them to rebuild. The general attitude of almost everyone seems to be although they may have been wiped out, there is someone else who is worse off than themselves.

At least they lived to tell about it.

WINNIPEG FREE PRESS. JUNE 21, 1978.

(60)

Big cleanup job under way

Clock stopped as twister hit

By ALLAN WILSON

The electric clock in Madeline Liddle's kitchen stopped at 5:25 p.m. Monday at the height of the tornado which swept through the village of Aubigny.

That moment found the Liddles huddled in their basement under a heavy table.

Mrs. Morris Vermette and four of her children were in their basement while her husband was trapped in his truck outside, not knowing if the family was safe.

Joseph Desjarlais and his family clung together over the baby's cradle in a corner of their living room. They watched as Miles Desjarlais's bicycle flew though the front room window and crashed into the back wall, breaking in two.

Moments later the back wall was blown from the house leaving the family with little protection from the storm.

Yet no one was seriously injured.

"I am just amazed no one was killed," Dr. Fred Taylor, chief of staff in Morris Hospital, said.

Even Mrs. Connie Bouchard's budgie survived the house moving six feet off its foundations — he was found cowering behind the chesterfield.

It was a 10-minute disaster followed by calm.

"First there was incredible noise, then after absolute calm," Mrs. Liddle said.

By eight Monday evening half a dozen area contact men from the Mennonite Disaster Service were in the town assessing the damage.

At nine the next morning 250 people had arrived in the town, some from as far as Portage la Prairie and registered with the service. They brought 25 trucks and a front end loader. A caterpillar tractor soon followed.

By 2 p.m. most of the debris was removed and one house had most of a new green shingle roof.

Syd Reimer, co-ordinating the operation, said the service will continue work on a smaller scale for about month.

"We will stay 'till everybody is looked after."

Most buildings in the French-speaking, Roman Catholic community of about 100 were damaged: 25, including the church, general store, credit union and post office.

Miles Desjarlais, 11, in Morris Hospital with cuts on his head and right sholder, described how the tornado hit his home.

"When I was going down to the basement a window blew in and hit me. I didn't feel anything, but I couldn't get down the stairs.

"The wind pulled me back so I grabbed a chair and pulled myself towards them (the family) and I made it over.



Desjarlais' son Miles, recovering in hospital.

"The walls were moving. Everything was flying, tables, chairs, everything.

"A chair broke the mirror on our wall."

One of the few pieces of furniture to survive was Mrs. Desjarlais swivel chair, a mother's day present just a few weeks old.

"It took our car to the next door neighbors yard and it was all smashed."

Miles's sister Karen was the only one to make it to the basement.

"She saw the bathroom window smash so she jumped downstairs."

Two other sisters, Leslie, Sandra and her husband Larry, their 10-day-old baby and Miles' parents Joseph and Elizabeth Desjarlais were trapped by wind in the living room.

"The baby was in the crib and my father put himself over it to to keep out the glass."

Lynne Charlesworth, director of nursing at Morris Hospital said, "his (Joseph Desjarlais') back looked like a cat had scratched it all over from the flying glass."

Miles said the tornado lasted about 10 minutes.

"I didn't find out I was cut until after the storm. I had shut my eyes."

"When it stopped my mum went out and flagged down a car. Ten passed before a truck with two men stopped."

He was taken to the hospital in the truck, the family followed later, was treated and released.

Joseph Desjarlais said he will find a place to live in Winnipeg where he works for the city while the damage is sorted out.

Leon Palud described his experience.

"I was at the farm, about a quarter mile from town. I went to my mother's place first and told her to go down the basement, then I phoned my wife and told her to take the kids to the basement."

There were seven children at the house, including two Vermette children from down the street.

"I walked home, got the camera out of the bedroom and shot four or five slides. It was very black on the horizon with white clouds around. Then I went to the basement with the others.

"It was very calm, then bang, it hit."

The roof of Palud's three-year-old home was ripped off. In spite of this a hanging flower pot was left hanging undamaged from a beam, though the flowers were thrown across the room.

"My brother-in-law and I built the house, we'll just have to start over again."

He said the damage is covered by insurance.

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TribManitoba

Car hurled into ditch

'Fury' turned trip into silent terror

By John Bertrand
Tribune Staff Writer

Vera Regent sat in silent terror as the coarse gravel lining the highway suddenly swirled into the air and pelted the side of the car.

A wave of dirt and flying debris engulfed the car in a murky haze and poured into the front seat through an open window. Mrs. Regent, 70, felt sick, stunned and confused. Nature was going berserk and she couldn't understand why.

Mrs. Regent and her brother-in-law, Alexander Willett, 69, were in the middle of a deadly tornado that left one man dead and at least 20 people injured.

Only minutes before, the Winnipeg woman had been at a Morris phone booth to call her son. They were finally coming home, she said, and would be together for a family supper.

They were on the last leg of a gruelling 2,000-mile trip from Perris, Calif. and they were anxious for a home-cooked meal and a good night's sleep.

Mr. Willett was coming to spend the summer in Winnipeg and Mrs. Regent had flown to California last week to keep him company during the long ride.



Vera Regent recovers in hospital from her ordeal

Mrs. Regent told her son she had some reservations about leaving Morris until later in the day. The clouds were black and high winds had reduced visibility to a dangerous level.

"We had gone through several dust storms that day," she explained from her bed in St. Boniface Hospital. "When you looked at the fields you could see the dirt being lifted into the sky. Nothing happened and we thought they were harmless."

Mrs. Regent's son assured her nothing would go wrong and the couple pulled out of town.

But those words of assurance had a hollow ring as a "wind blowing like a fury" rocked the car. Mr. Willet had to fight the steering wheel to keep the vehicle from veering into the ditch.

Suddenly, the car began to turn in a circle in the middle of the highway. Mr. Willett tried to hold the car on the road but it was hurled upside down in the ditch.

Mrs. Regent could feel herself being tossed around the inside of the car like a piece of old luggage. When the vehicle finally stopped skidding, the woman was wedged on the floor behind the front seat.

Her clothes were covered in blood and every muscle in her body ached. She managed to struggle to a side window that had been smashed and pull herself out of the car.

"All I could think about was Alex," she said. "I was too weak to pull him out. I had no idea what had happened but I was terrified."

Within minutes a doctor and an off-duty RCMP officer had stopped and rescued him. The men smelled leaking gas, they told Mrs. Regent, and the car could have caught fire.

The couple was taken to Morris Hospital and later transferred to St. Boniface Hospital.

Predicting tornado 'a hell of a job'

Predicting tornadoes in Manitoba is "one hell of a tough job" and weather officials must be commended for giving any warning at all, University of Manitoba geography professor J. D. Milton said Tuesday.

"We live in a very complex area as far as weather forecasting is concerned," said Dr. Milton, whose specialty is severe storms. "It's very difficult to predict these things with any kind of accuracy."

Weather officials issued a weather watch at 1 p.m. Monday, several hours before two tornadoes swept across southern Manitoba killing one man and injuring at least 20 other people.

This was updated to a warning of "impending hazard and dangerous thunderstorm" at 5 p.m., about 15 minutes before the first tornado was sighted near Morris.

While meteorologists know what weather conditions can precede and trigger a tornado "we don't know where or when these things are going to occur," said Dr. Milton.

"It's a problem of 'cry wolf,' " he said. "You can have all the tornado weather conditions and then have no tornado."

All the weather bureau can do is warn people to be on the lookout for funnel clouds and to be prepared to take refuge, preferably in a basement, he said.

Tornadoes are preceded by humid, "generally uncomfortable" weather, said Dr. Milton. In Canada they are triggered by a cold front which encounters this weather, forcing the warm air "very rapidly" upwards, he explained.

Many Manitobans seem more aware of the dangers of such weather since last summer, when three people died in a tornado near St. Malo, he added.

Once a twister touches down, survival becomes a matter of luck, said Dr. Milton. The three who died last summer would probably be alive today if the funnel had shifted about 10 metres either way, he said.

Lyon at site; no vow of aid

By Robert Matas
Legislature Reporter

Premier Sterling Lyon expressed sympathy Tuesday for the victims of the two tornadoes which swept through southeast Manitoba Monday evening, but stopped short of promising any financial aid for the devastated area.

"It would be premature to make any statement relative to federal or provincial cash assistance at this stage," he told the Legislature shortly after returning from a three-hour tour of the disaster-stricken area.

"What we are involved in at the present time is clean-up, assessment of damages and bringing to bear on the damaged areas the necessary resources . . . ," he said.

In response to questioning by Opposition Leader Ed Schreyer, Mr. Lyon said he intended to look into a provincial-municipal scheme for compensation, developed last year to provide assistance to victims of a tornado in the St. Malo-Rosa area.

But the premier cautioned that he did not want "to raise any hopes falsely" with respect to compensation. "There is no provincial plan as such under which this kind of emergency, in terms of cash assistance, can be treated."

The first step in deciding if government assistance should be made available will be to pinpoint the extent of the damage, estimate the cost and then determine how much is covered by private insurance, Mr. Lyon said later in an interview

If the estimated damage exceeds $1 million, then the province may qualify for federal disaster relief funds. If the damage is below the $1-million mark, the government will then have to consider if a provincial program is advisable, he said.

Mr. Lyon estimated the government process to determine the cost of damages will likely take "several weeks."

He added that the residents of Aubigny and St. Anne "were not standing around with their hands in the air, waiting to see what the government was going to do."

"It really was heart-warming to see how everyone was pitching in, cleaning up."

In the Legislature, Mr. Lyon commended the "absolutely first rate work" done by the Mennonite Disaster Service and neighbors were working together to repair torn roofs and shattered walls.

KILLER TWISTER LEVELS TOWN ONE DEAD, 20 INJURED.

THE TRIBUNE WINNIPEG, JUNE 20, 1977

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AUBIGNY — With the fury of a "slowly-exploding bomb," a tornado swept across southeastern Manitoba Monday evening, killing one man near St. Anne and nearly destroying this small community 30 kilometres south of Winnipeg.

Dead is David Waller of Portage la Prairie. RCMP said he was in a Canadian National Railways bunk car when the tornado tossed the car violently off the track near St. Anne.

Stories by John Drabble

At least 20 others were injured, most of them in Aubigny. Seven people were admitted to Morris General Hospital and four were admitted to St. Boniface Hospital in Winnipeg. The rest were treated for minor injuries and released.

Among those in hospital are two California tourists, injured when the tornado threw their car off Highway 75. Their condition is believed to be guarded.

Also in hospital is 11-year-old Miles Desjarlais, who was believed to have been seriously cut by flying glass when the storm ripped through his Aubigny home.

Scattered but extensive damage has been reported on farms stretching from Morris to Lac du Bonnet, wherever the tornado touched down. There are also reports of extensive damage caused by hail the size of baseballs.

However, nothing compares to the devastation in Aubigny. At least 20 families in the farming community of 200 have been suddenly left homeless.

Residents estimate between half and three-quarters of the buildings have been destroyed.

They say the tornado took less than a minute to reduce

See ONE, Page 5



Telephone repair crew work on downed telephone poles and damaged wires

Many minor miracles

AUBIGNY — Emil Pelland, 75, went to sleep in his house Monday and woke up in his neighbor's garden.

Although shocked by the devastation around them, many of Aubigny's residents marvelled early today at the minor miracles left in the wake of the killer tornado.

Houses stood undamaged 20 metres from buildings which had been destroyed beyond recognition.

A statue atop the steeple of the town's Roman Catholic church came to rest without a scratch, although the steeple was in ruins.

Perhaps, most miraculous of all, no one in Aubigny died in the storm.

Doris Chartier said she emerged from the basement of her house to find Mr. Pelland sitting dazed in a neighbor's garden.

"All he had was a scratch on his head."

Mrs. Chartier's possessions, however, suffered a worse fate. "My freezer ended up in the basement of another house," she said. "It was full of meat, but there wasn't a thing in it after."

See MANY, Page 5

House slowly torn apart in howling black cloud

When the tornado descended on Aubigny Monday evening, the Desjarlais family couldn't manage to reach their basement in time.

Crouched in the only safe corner of their living room, they watched in horror as their house was slowly torn apart by a howling black cloud.

"I wasn't frightened," said Larry Harris, one those in the living room. "All I cared about was protecting my baby girl."

Larry, his wife Sandra, and their daughter had been eating dinner with Sandra's parents when the tornado struck. Also in the kitchen was Sandra's sister Karen, 18, and her brother Miles, 11.

"At first it started hailing really hard," said Mr. Harris. "And then the wind started to get up. Suddenly it came, bang, just like that."

First, the living room picture window blew in. Everyone made a dash for the basement, but only Karen made it. The rest jammed into the nearest living room corner, except one. Miles was too late.

"He was caught in the middle of the living room," said

See FAMILY Page 5

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Family watches home destroyed

Continued

Mr. Harris in an interview Monday night. "There was flying glass all over the place."

He said there was never time to think what was happening, never time to realize they were in the middle of a raging tornado.

"The noise was deafening, like a huge roar. It was just awful," said Sandra. "I didn't know what to think."

Slowly, bit by bit, the house started to break apart. Frist the east side of the house was torn away. Then one living room wall collapsed into the bedroom of the small bungalow.

"The whole house began rattling," said Mr. Harris. "I could feel the wall against me fluttering back and forth."

He tried once to raise his head and try to see what was happening amid the swirling black dust.

"I saw this board. It was a big board, maybe four by eight and it was flying around the room like matchstick."

An instant later, the board shot through a wall into the bedroom.

As suddenly as it had begun, the horror ended.

The family raced to aid Miles who was lying on the living room floor badly cut across the chest and the face. He is believed to be in satisfactory condition in Morris General Hospital.

Outside, Mr. Desjarlais found his late-model station wagon in his neighbor's yard, a complete wreck.

The house itself has been destroyed, but the family considers itself very lucky to have survived.

"I think if we had gone to any other corner we wouldn't have survived," said Mr. Desjarlais.

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— Photo by Paul Deleske

Joseph Desjarlais and his wife Elizabeth outside their ruined home.

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June 21, 1978

CANADIAN PRESS CLIPPING SERVICE

MPs urge speed on disaster relief

e1492

By PAUL WHITELAW
Staff Correspondent

OTTAWA — Members of Parliament have called on the federal Emergency Measures Organization to determine as quickly as possible whether the area of southeastern Manitoba struck by two tornados is eligible for disaster relief.

The two twisters claimed one life, injured at least 14 people and did heavy property damage. Hardest hit was the town of Aubigny, where about three-quarters of the predominantly French-speaking town of 100 people was destroyed or severely damaged by the high winds.

MPs unanimously adopted a resolution Tuesday calling on the federal government to co-operate with Manitoba officials in assessing damage.

The motion was proposed by MP Jake Epp, whose riding of Provencher encompasses the stricken area.

If property damage exceeds approximately $1 million, Ottawa will pay up to 50 per cent of the repair bill under a federal-provincial disaster relief agreement. The federal government will cover 75 per cent of the value of damaged property and crops if damage is in the $3 million to $5 million range. Ottawa provides compensation for 90 per cent of the cost when damage exceeds $5 million.

Most private property insurance does not cover "acts of God" such as tornados.



Helpers and townspeople clear debris before undertaking rebuilding operation. — Photo by Paul Deleske

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Barrier cuts off Aubigny

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RCMP had to put up roadblocks around Aubigny, Man., Tuesday to turn back sightseers who were interfering with Hydro work crews replacing poles.

An RCMP spokesman for the Morris detachment said that many curious sightseers flocked to disaster area to see the result of the tornado which ripped through Ste. Anne and Aubigny Monday night.

Aubigny is located at the junction of provincial roads 205 and 246. The traffic was turned away at Highway 75 and Provincial Road 205.

The roadblocks were taken away at 6 p.m. Tuesday and normal traffic allowed through the area.

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Unknown doctor from Fargo credited with saving man injured in tornado

e1492

Shortly after the station wagon driven by Alexander Willett, 65, of Paris, Calif., was ripped from Highway 75 and hurled 25 feet by the tornado Monday, landing upside down in the ditch, an unknown doctor from Fargo, N.D., was on the scene.

Lynne Charlesworth, director of nursing at Morris Hospital where Willett and his sister Vera Regent of Winnipeg were taken, said the doctor may have saved his life.

"He was bleeding heavily. They were very lucky he (the doctor) was there."

The doctor, who left after the two were safely delivered to Morris Hospital, was headed for the Canadian Medical Association conference in Winnipeg.

Bill Harder, a volunteer ambulance attendant, was on the scene shortly after the accident.

"The RCMP called and we went out to the accident. The woman was already out of the car, but the man was still inside lying on the roof.

"We pried the door open and got him out, then put a tournequet on his head to stop the bleeding.

"There was a doctor, a nurse from the hospital, a policeman and myself."

After primary treatment in Morris the two were taken to St. Boniface Hospital where they were reported in good condition Tuesday.

Robert Regent of Winnipeg, Mrs. Regent's son, said his mother and uncle had been driving to Winnipeg from California.

She had just visited California for a week, while Willett was coming to Winnipeg for a visit.

Regent said, "they were almost home."

Twister damage near $2 million

Volunteers flock to Aubigny

By ALLAN WILSON
and CECIL ROSNER

More than 250 volunteers from across the province descended on Aubigny, Man., Tuesday to rebuild the town, heavily damaged by a tornado Monday.

While helpers from as far away as Portage la Prairie cleaned up the massive debris in the predominantly French-speaking community, Premier Sterling Lyon toured the town to assess the damage.

More coverage on page 8

In meetings with relief workers, the premier was told damages could run as high as $2 million in the town alone.

After a full assessment of damage is made, Lyon said he will be contacting Ottawa to determine the possibility of federal relief assistance.

Syd Reimer, spokesman for the Mennonite Disaster Service, which is co-ordinating the cleanup, said the work was going rapidly and successfully.

He said at least 25 buildings in the town were badly damaged or destroyed, but not one structure escaped some form of damage.

Reimer said the disaster service, which has been doing relief work for 25 years, broadcast an appeal for volunteers Monday evening, which brought a tremendously successful response.

But he stressed the Aubigny operation "is not just a Mennonite thing. We will register anyone who is willing to work."

"We've just been overwhelmed with volunteers," he said. Men and women from the surrounding area were coming in all day and registering at Aubigny town hall then dispatched to help in the relief work.

"Initially we will do cleanup, then repairs. We might be here several weeks, even a month, before it is done.

"We will stay 'till everybody is looked after."

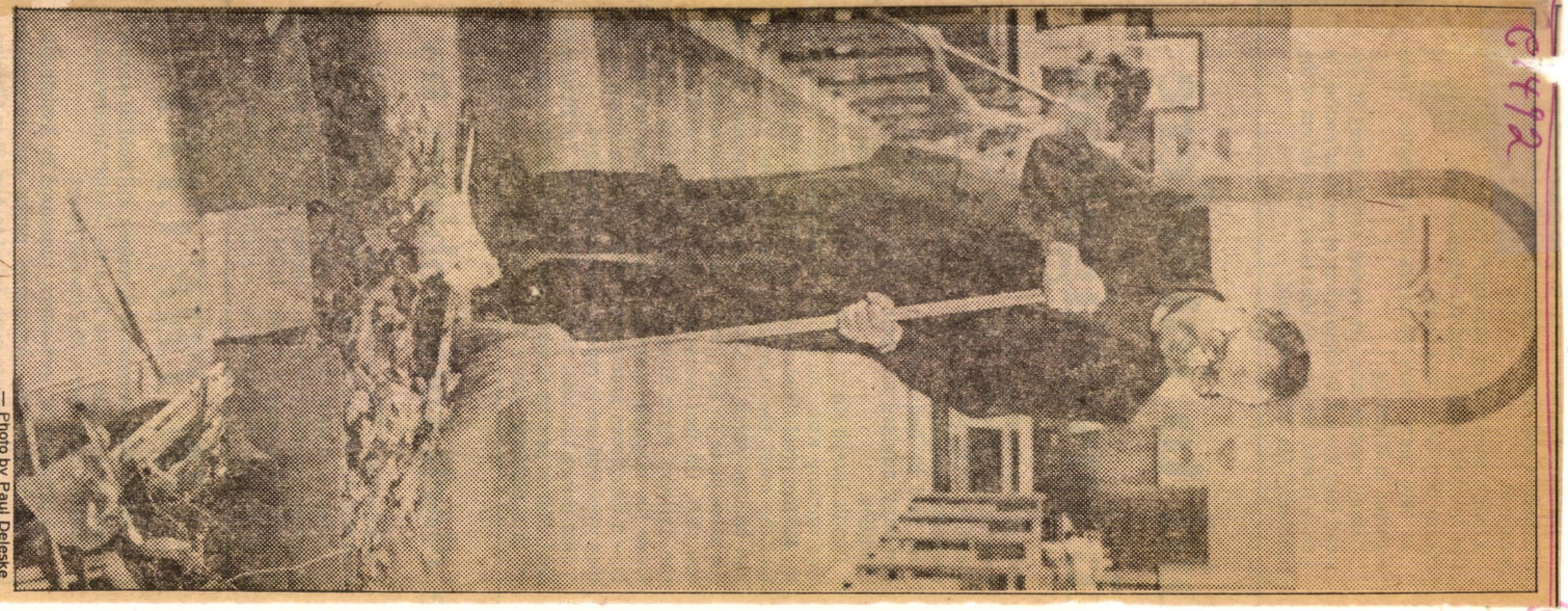
He said six to 25 will remain up to a month.

One house which was badly damaged already had a new roof shortly after noon Tuesday, thanks to the volunteers and efforts of the townspeople.

At the same time, the ladies auxiliary of the Mennonite service and local women cooked food for everyone in the community hall.

"We (the Mennonites and the Catholic community) have a very definite ethnic and religious difference, but

—Continued
See **HELPERS** page 4



Father Aurele Prefontaine of St. Lazare aids cleanup.

— Photo by Paul Delieske

WINNIPEG FREE PRESS, JUNE 21, 1978.

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A helper repairs a damaged roof. In the background, the church, with steeple and bell tower ripped off.

— Photo by Dave Bonner

Helpers flock to Aubigny to aid rebuilding of town

when it comes to an emergency, we work together," Reimer said.

Mrs. Madeline Liddle's house was cleaned and organized by volunteers before noon.

"That's Christianity in action for you," she said. "And they are so thorough. They know what they're about.

"I can't say enough good things about them."

Reimer said the biggest problem his men were encountering was the reluctance of some residents to touch their damaged homes before insurance adjusters could assess damage.

The service obtained permission from local officials to come in and help Monday night.

Tuesday morning Reimer said he told Premier Lyon, "we have the people and the time to do something now, but we have to think about the insurance and other problems."

"He (Lyon) said, 'don't worry, just work.' I assume this means he will do something about money," Reimer said.

Damage was heaviest around the town's church, which had its steeple and bell tower ripped off. The town's post office, credit union and store were also destroyed or damaged.

The service includes 125 Mennonite churches in Manitoba. In an emergency, the local representatives first visit a disaster area and assess the damage, then call for volunteers.

"We could have lots more people here, from Minnesota, North Dakota, Saskatchewan and Ontario, if we needed them," Reimer said.

Last year the service built an entire new house, with donated materials and labor in Carlowie.

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Axworthy urges EMO to gather data on twisters

Liberal MLA Lloyd Axworthy suggested Wednesday that Manitoba's Emergency Measures Organization should compile information on what action to take when a tornado hits, but an EMO official said later they are already doing just that.

Spokesman Nils Stavenjord said the EMO staff has been gathering information from United States sources accustomed to dealing with tornadoes and are preparing a public information program in co-operation with weather officials.

The weather-watch system wouldn't be in effect without information garnered from the United States, he said, adding that officials feel the system prevented even more injuries during Monday's tornado.

He said EMO staff has also prepared a brochure on tornadoes for distribution in municipal offices, and hopes to work with weather officials to provide information through television, radio and newspapers.

Stavenjord also rejected suggestions that EMO wasn't available to supply information or provide assistance the night of the storm.

Axworthy said some residents of the area affected had complained they couldn't reach EMO to get information on what to do when the tornado hit. They were also upset, he said, because EMO officials didn't visit the scene until the next day.

Stavenjord said the EMO phone is manned 24 hours a day, every day of the year. The officer on duty at the time of the tornado answered calls almost continually from 4:55 p.m. Monday to 6 a.m. Tuesday, he said, adding that he manned a second phone for part of that time.

Many callers were provided with information on what to do if the tornado came to their area and where to get help, he said. He noted that some people might have got the impression no one was answering the phone if they called several times and got busy signals.

A third EMO official called the municipalities and asked them if they required assistance, Stavenjord said. All replied that the people affected had been looked after and there was nothing EMO could do that night.

The next morning, he said, EMO sent one official to tour the devastated area with Premier Sterling Lyon and a ground crew to take photographs and talk to municipal officials. They also supplied the community of Aubigny with a communications unit.

Stavenjord also noted that, in addition to dealing with the tornado Monday night, EMO officials were organizing assistance for a search for a 14-year-old boy in the Carberry Hills.

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Weather hazards not confined to winter

Expert hopes lesson learned from tornadoes

By DEBBIE LYON

It's a hard way to learn a lesson — but J. D. Milton hopes the experience of Monday's storm will make Manitobans more aware of nature's hazards and more ready to heed weather warnings.

Milton, a lecturer in the University of Manitoba's geography department, said in an interview people pay close attention to blizzard warnings in winter.

"But they don't appear to perceive a severe weather warning in summer in the same way . . . There isn't the feeling of danger associated with a summer weather watch as there is with a blizzard warning in winter."

Yet, summer storms have killer potential — tornadoes and lightning just two of the dangers. Only 1½ weeks ago, a man was killed and another injured during a lightning strike at their Whiteshell camp.

Milton, who has been involved in teaching a course on natural hazards, admits he gets worried when a summer weather warning is issued. He's amazed at those who fail to take at least some precautions.

Why don't they?

Milton can't offer definite answers, but he said the lack of response isn't peculiar to Manitobans. It's a problem that has been identified in a large, interdisciplinary study at the University of Colorado on people and natural hazards.

"A lot depends on the credibility of forecasting," Milton said, adding he thought weather officials did a good job warning about Monday's storm.

Some individuals, farmers as opposed to urban dwellers, for example, seem more attuned to weather dangers. Another factor influencing people's responses is the number of, and time span between, deaths associated with similar conditions.

"The surprise of people last year to the Rosa deaths (three people died when a tornado went through the Rosa-St. Malo district last July) shocked me.

"But those were the first deaths (in Manitoba from a tornado) in some time. Now people are more aware of the danger.

"But let's presume that as time goes on, there are no deaths, although tornadoes hit certain remote areas. Then people will get blase again."

On the basis of preliminary information, Milton suggests the tornadoes which struck the Morris-Aubigny and Niverville-St. Anne areas Monday weren't as severe as the one at Rosa last year.

"This one just now appears to be fairly normal for Manitoba, whereas the Rosa one appears to have been as severe as some in the United States," he said.

As a safety precaution, Milton advises that people remain in touch with media bulletins during a weather warning. They should also keep their eye on environmental conditions. In the case of tornadoes, they should look out for funnel activity at the base of clouds.

House dwellers are advised to seek shelter in storm cellars or their basements and to use tables, pillows and mattresses for further protection. People should keep windows on the leeward side of their houses open. Closing all the windows could cause the house to explode when its hit by differences in air pressure during a storm.

If caught outside, people should seek shelter in a deep ditch or ravine and hold on to something firm. They shouldn't seek shelter in large, spacious buildings like halls or arenas as these tend to be hardest hit during a tornado.

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CANADIAN PRESS CLIPPING SERVICE

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The tornado caused extensive damage but it took EMO nearly a day to respond, says an MLA

Tornado: EMO response rapped

Liberal MLA Lloyd Axworthy charged Wednesday that it took the Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) 16 to 20 hours to react to Monday night's tornado.

"It would seem to me that's a serious time lag under the circumstances," especially since EMO is supposed to be "the primary agency to respond" to such disasters, he complained in the Legislature on Wednesday. He urged an investigation of the government agency.

EMO couldn't be contacted after 5 p.m. Monday and Manitoba Telephone System operators couldn't locate EMO officials, said Mr. Axworthy (Fort Rouge), who added his information came from area residents.

"Restraint, restraint," heckled Larry Desjardins (NDP—St. Boniface).

Premier Sterling Lyon, who toured the Aubigny region Tuesday to view the damage, said he hadn't heard the charges being made by Mr. Axworthy, but promised to check.

"In the heat of the moment . . . no such information was relayed to us," the premier said. "My understanding" is EMO staff are on call 24 hours a day.

Mr. Lyon reminded the House that EMO's main function is to co-ordinate government services, and commended the RCMP, Manitoba Hydro and Manitoba Telephone System for being "Johnny on the spot" after the tornado hit.

He again stalled efforts by Opposition Leader Ed Schreyer to find out if provincial relief will be made available and said he didn't know when the cost of the damage would be determined.

Mr. Axworthy proposed a public information campaign be launched to tell people what to do when there is a warning of a climatic disaster.

Information is required on how people should conduct themselves and "what people should do under those circumstances," he said.

But he didn't get much support from the premier, who said it's easy to sit back afterwards and enumerate the things which should have been done.

The advance weather warnings were "excellent information for all citizens of Manitoba to have" and some took protective action.

There can't be a universal rule applied for what to do under such conditions and even experts are reluctant to say what should be done, the premier said.

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AES director Jack Labelle



EMO's Nels Stavenjord

In tornado's wake

EMO denies charge it reacted too slowly

By Patrick Flynn
Tribune Staff Writer

An Emergency Measures Organization official has rejected allegations that EMO staff were slow to react to a tornado Monday that ripped through southern Manitoba.

EMO deputy director Nels Stavenjord told a news conference Thursday the organization has staff on service 24 hours a day, and that at least one EMO worker was answering telephone calls late Monday afternoon.

At the same news conference, officials of the Atmospheric Environment Service said they were generally satisfied with the performance Monday of the Province's new Weather Watch alert program, even though the final level of warning was issued after at least one tornado had touched down and caused damage.

They said a tornado warning can't be issued until there has been a "confirmed sighting of a tornado funnel" and that residents in the area had been alerted to the possibility of a tornado well in advance.

The news conference was called jointly by EMO and AES officials to detail the province's new Weather Watch program, which went into effect May 1. The program, aimed at providing better advanced warning of severe weather, now has 1,750 "weather watchers" — all public employees including RCMP and hydro, telephone and highways workers who have received some instruction in identifying and reporting hazardous weather.

Mr. Stavenjord, in his defence of EMO's performance immediately after the tornado, was replying to criticism from Liberal MLA Lloyd Axworthy, who charged Wednesday that the organization took between 16 and 20 hours to react to the disaster.

Mr. Axworthy also told the Legislature that EMO officials couldn't be contacted after 5 p.m. Monday. He called for an investigation of the government agency.

Mr. Stavenjord said Thursday that although EMO offices close at 4:30 p.m., "a duty officer takes over on the same telephone line to the office."

"We have a 24-hour response," he said, adding that "on the night in question, we were there."

He said it was possible all four lines manned Monday evening were busy at times, preventing some calls from coming through.

He stressed that EMO is "only a co-ordinating and planning agency" and that all emergency personnel were on the scene almost immediately after the tornado.

AES officials came under fire at the news conference from reporters who said television and radio stations weren't informed of the tornado warning until about 5:50 p.m. Monday, although the first tornado damage report was made at 5:30 p.m.

Mike Balshaw, officer-in-charge of the Winnipeg weather office, said a severe weather warning had been issued at 1 p.m. Monday, and that at 5 p.m., "based on observation . . . a severe thunderstorm warning was issued for the area."

He said it wasn't until 5:15 p.m. that "the first reports of possible tornado activity" were received from weather watchers.

He said AES doesn't issue tornado warnings until there has been a confirmed sighting of a funnel.

AES regional director Jack Labelle said that considering the province's Weather Watch program didn't start until May 1, he was satisfied with its operation Monday.

Mr. Stavenjord said no inquiry has been made to discover how much advance warning the residents of Aubigny had before the tornado hit. But he said such an investigation is planned.

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WINNIPEG TRIBUNE JUNE 23 1978

Full speed ahead for Aubigny repairs

By Patrick Flynn
Tribune Staff Writer

AUBIGNY — Maurice Vermette has a wife, six children and no home.

His 1½-storey wooden home was heavily damaged Monday when one or more tornadoes ripped through this southern Manitoba village.

He had no insurance on the house and now is temporarily living in a dwelling provided by local friends.

Syd Reimer, an official of the Mennonite Disaster Service, said the Vermettes aren't alone in their predicament.

"There were several homes that weren't insured for one reason or another," he said.

"And the majority of those that were covered were vastly under-insured for replacement value."

Ron Piper's 1½-storey house was badly damaged by the powerful winds that came last Monday afternoon.

He moved into the house earlier this month and hadn't taken out insurance.

But he's luckier than the Vermettes. His house wasn't beyond repair and, Thursday, Mennonite Disaster Service volunteers were rebuilding the home.

See AUBIGNY, Page 5

Canadian Press Clipping Service
481 UNIVERSITY AVE. TORONTO 2

Winnipeg Tribune, Man.
Circ. 100,949
June 23, 1978

CANADIAN PRESS CLIPPING SERVICE



Workmen are busy repairing one of the many homes damaged by the tornado on Monday.

Aubigny repairs going quickly

(Continued)

Mr. Reimer said 100 volunteers, some from as far away as Boissevain in southwestern Manitoba, came to Aubigny Thursday to help get the village back on its feet. About 350 farmers — some with their wives and children — turned out Tuesday to help clean up after the tornado struck.

Mr. Reimer, who is a Rosenort insurance agent, said no claims have yet been settled by insurance companies, but added there have been no indications Aubigny residents may encounter difficulties on insurance claims.

"It's been going slower than we'd like to see," he said, "but in our anxiety to get things fixed up, we've been ahead of the adjusters."

In many cases, the Mennonite Disaster Service is paying for material needed to make repairs to houses and other property. But Mr. Reimer said the service expects individuals to give some or all their insurance settlement — when it's finally made — to a general fund to help Aubigny residents who weren't covered by insurance, or who were under-insured.

The disaster service also is receiving donations to help the Aubigny residents. "I've got $100 in my hip pocket right now from a man who wanted to help," Mr. Reimer said. As he was being interviewed, a member of the Morris Lions Cub told him the club had raised $500 for the relief fund.

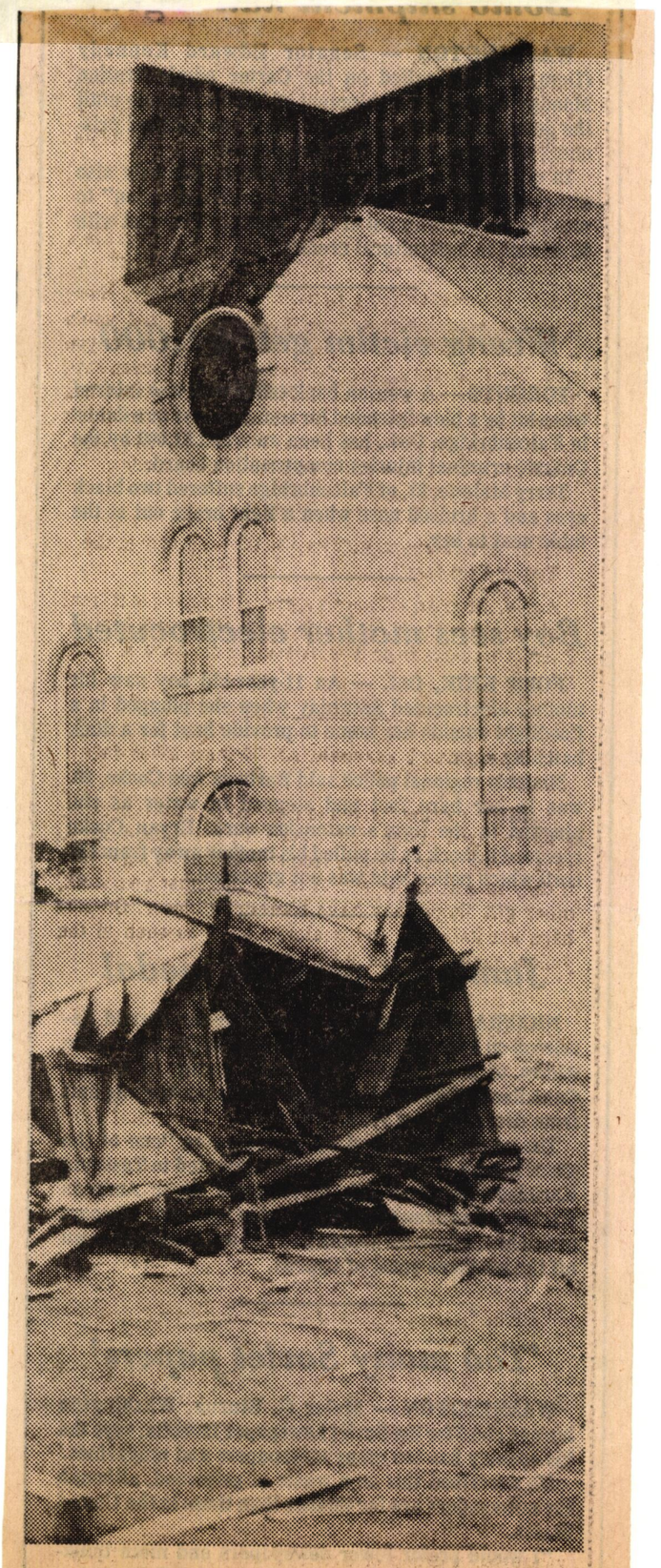
Individuals wishing to donate to the fund may send contributions to the Mennonite Central Committee, 1483 Pembina Hwy.



Photo by Art Carter

Three South Carolina journalists were travelling in the Aubigny area Monday when they photographed this funnel cloud at about 5:30 p.m.

Twister leaves trail of death, destruction



The wood and brick clad steeple and bell tower of Aubigny's church was toppled by the tornado.



— Photo by Dave Johns

The tornado that hit Aubigny, Man., Monday afternoon picked up a school bus parked on the street opposite the school and threw the vehicle about 200 feet into a back yard beside a crushed Volkswagen and a house that lost its roof. Seventeen people in the tow were injured and treated in Morris Hospital and released. The twist flattened several buildings and badly damaged others.

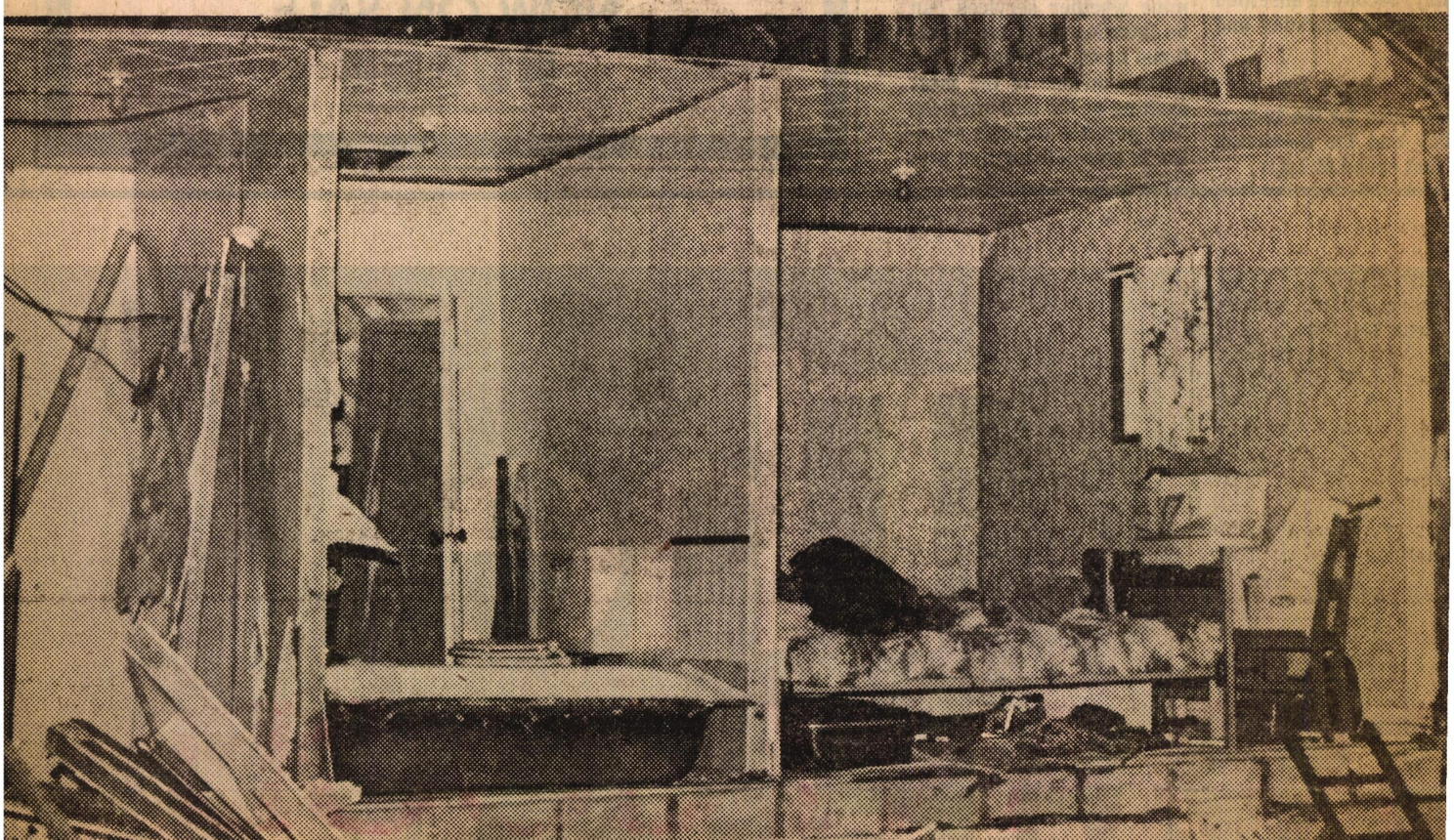


The Aubigny community hall became the town's nerve and emergency centre after the storm subsided.



Miraculously the people who lived in this house which was totally destroyed, who'd taken refuge in the basement, were not injured.





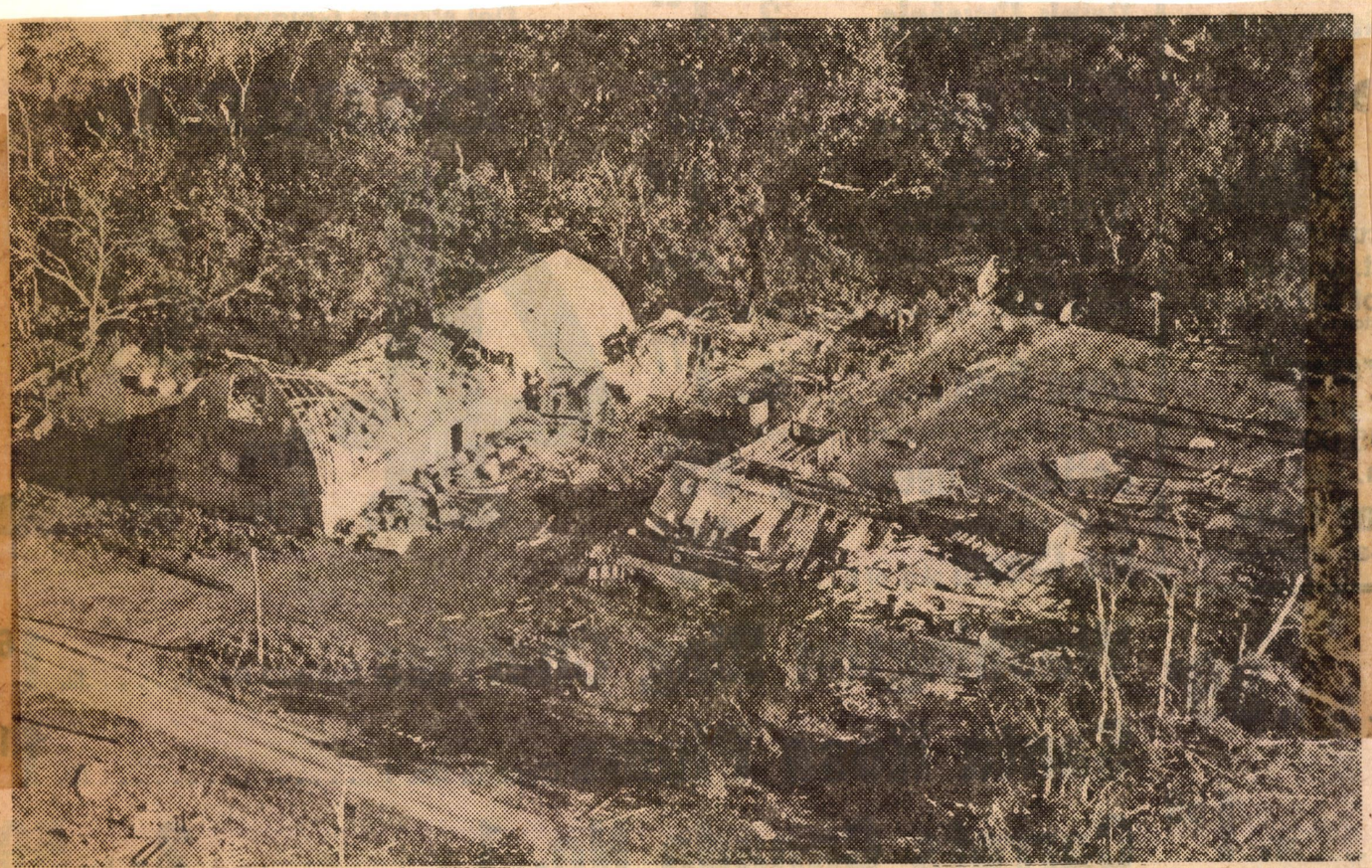
The tornado ripped off the back wall and roof of this frame house (top) but hardly disturbed the contents. Four hours after the storm had passed (bottom), the family's dog stretches out on a b unconcerned about the lack of a wall.



Tribune photos by Jeff Deboo

Aubigny house in foreground was ripped from its foundation. Roof is missing from house in background. The tornado, which struck Monday evening, has left 20 families homeless.

Tribune photos by Frank Chalmers, Gregg Burner and Jon Thordarson



The tornado struck rural areas too, levelling these farm buildings and littering the land with equipment



These Aubigny houses were destroyed or heavily damaged

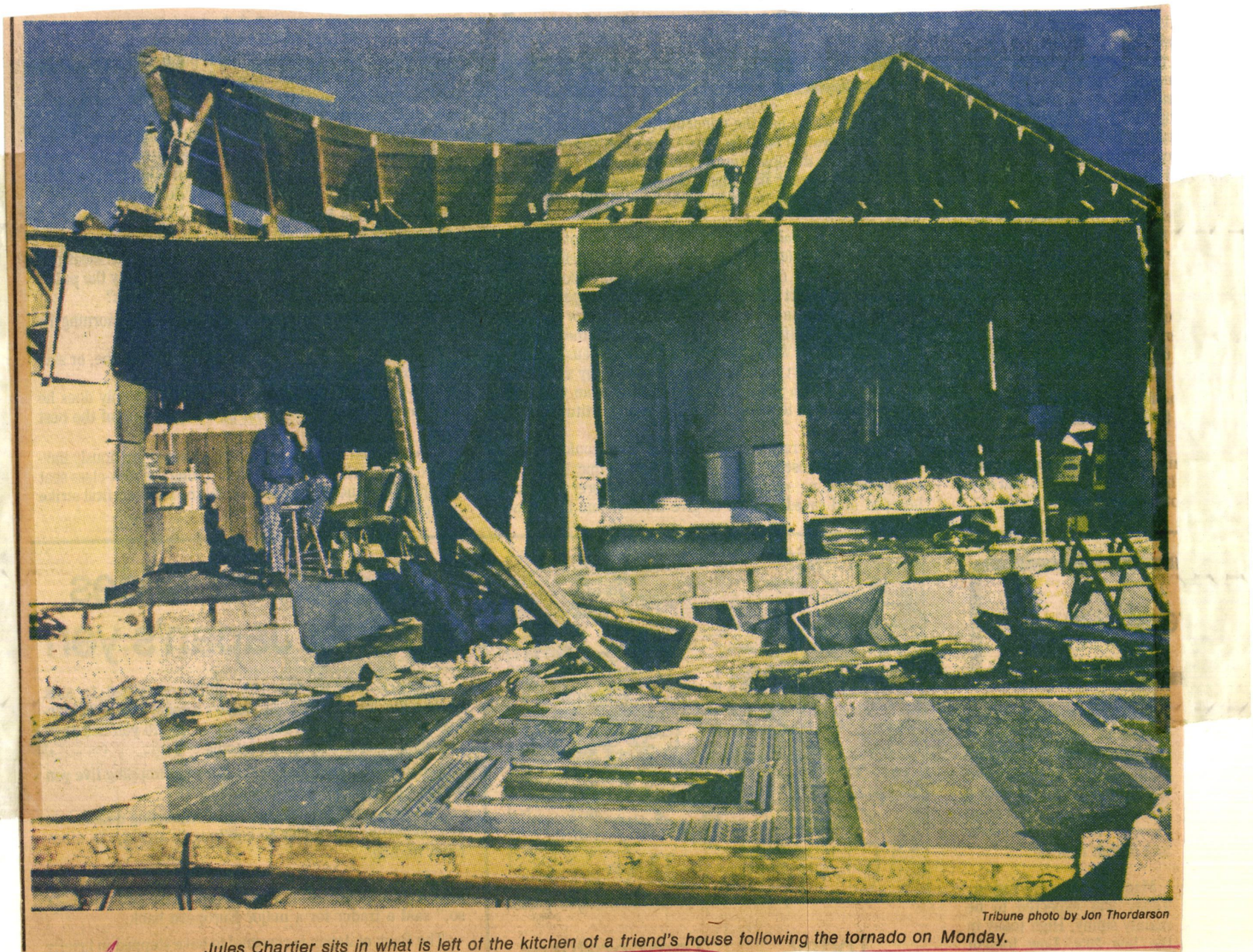
Tornado ravages Aubigny



Heavy vehicles overturned and the roof blown off this house are stark evidence of the ferocity of the tornado



Connie Bouchard and her daughter Brigitte, in window, survey their home, blown off its foundation



Tribune photo by Jon Thordarson

Jules Chartier sits in what is left of the kitchen of a friend's house following the tornado on Monday.

STEINBACH CARILLON NEWS JUNE 28 1978



The roof of every house in Aubigny was damaged by tornado winds. Workers help reshingle the roof on this house. The owner and his wife were in the process of remodelling the house and fixing up the yard before the tornado damaged their property.



Picking up debris and taking it to the dump was one of the first tasks for clean-up crews. This man from Morris, working with the Mennonite Disaster Service, rakes up wood scraps that were once part of an old blacksmith shed.



This two-storey house, once the home of the Vermette family with six children, was completely destroyed, leaving the family without a house. Four days after the tornado, crews began to tear down the condemned building.

STEINBACH CARILLON NEWS
JUNE 28, 1978



The debris in this aerial photo clearly shows the path taken by the tornado as it swept through Aubigny, the hardest hit by Monday night's storm.

Canadian Press Clipping Service
481 UNIVERSITY AVE.
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Altona Red River Valley Echo
Manitoba
June 28, 1978

CANADIAN PRESS CLIPPING SERVICE
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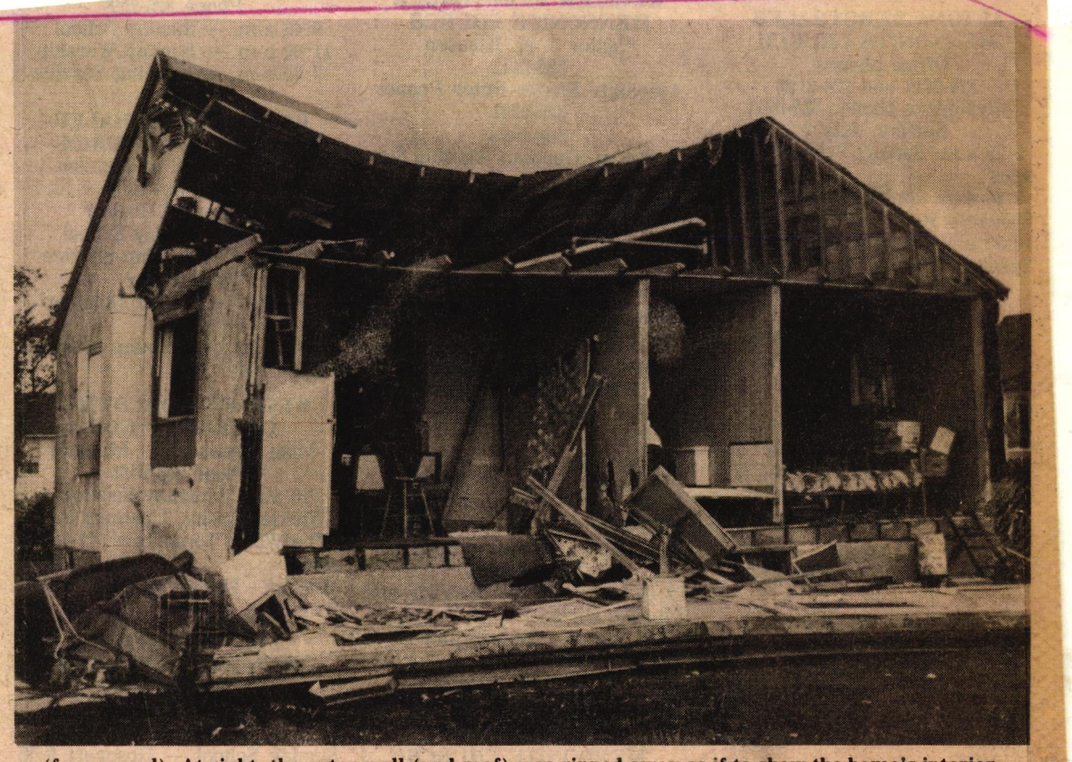

The tornado that formed not far from Morris and then moved northeast, striking the small community of Aubigny, left many homeless, several hospitalized, and many homes damaged. At left, half the roof is ripped off a house, with a flattened car and debris littering the backyard (foreground). At right, the outer wall (and roof) was ripped away as if to show the home's interior. The table and chairs in the kitchen, where the family had been eating supper, was in the living room after the storm hit. (Echo Photos)

STORM DATE:
MON JUNE. 19/78

Canadian Press Clipping Service
481 UNIVERSITY AVE. TORONTO 2

Steinbach Carillon News
Manitoba
June 21, 1978

NADIAN PRESS CLIPPING SERVICE
270

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At Aubigny

Village hardest hit



The school bus was hurled from across the street where it was standing in front of the school, to this person's back yard where it landed beside a combine battered by the tornado.

STEINBACH CARILLON NEWS
MANITOBA
JUNE. 21/1978

STORM DATE:
MON. JUNE. 19/78

CARILLON **feature** Second Section
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 21, 1978



Aubigny was hardest hit by the tornado Monday night which toppled the steeple on the community's Roman Catholic Church. Tuesday morning clean up crews were at work cleaning up the mess.

STEINBACH CARILLON NEWS

MANITOBA

JUNE. 21/78

STORM DATE:

MON. JUNE. 19/78



Area residents wonder at the power of a tornado to pick up a house and move it several feet on its foundations.

STEINBACH CARILLON NEWS
MANITOBA
JUNE, 21/78

STORM DATE:
MON JUNE. 19/78



A roof and a school bus deposited in someone's backyard testify to the power of the tornado.

STEINBACH CARILLON NEWS
MANITOBA
JUNE. 21/78

STORM DATE:
MON JUNE. 19/78



Tuesday morning, volunteers were helping to clean up the mess left at the Aubigny Roman Catholic Church.

STEINBACH CARILLON NEWS
MANITOBA
JUNE. 21/78

STORM DATE:
MON JUNE. 19/78



Rubble is all that remains of a building in Aubigny struck by the tornado Monday night.

STEINBACH CARILLON NEWS
MANITOBA

JUNE. 21/ 78.

STORM DATE:
MON JUNE. 19/78



Although some houses were damaged more severely than others, few in Aubigny area escaped damage completely.

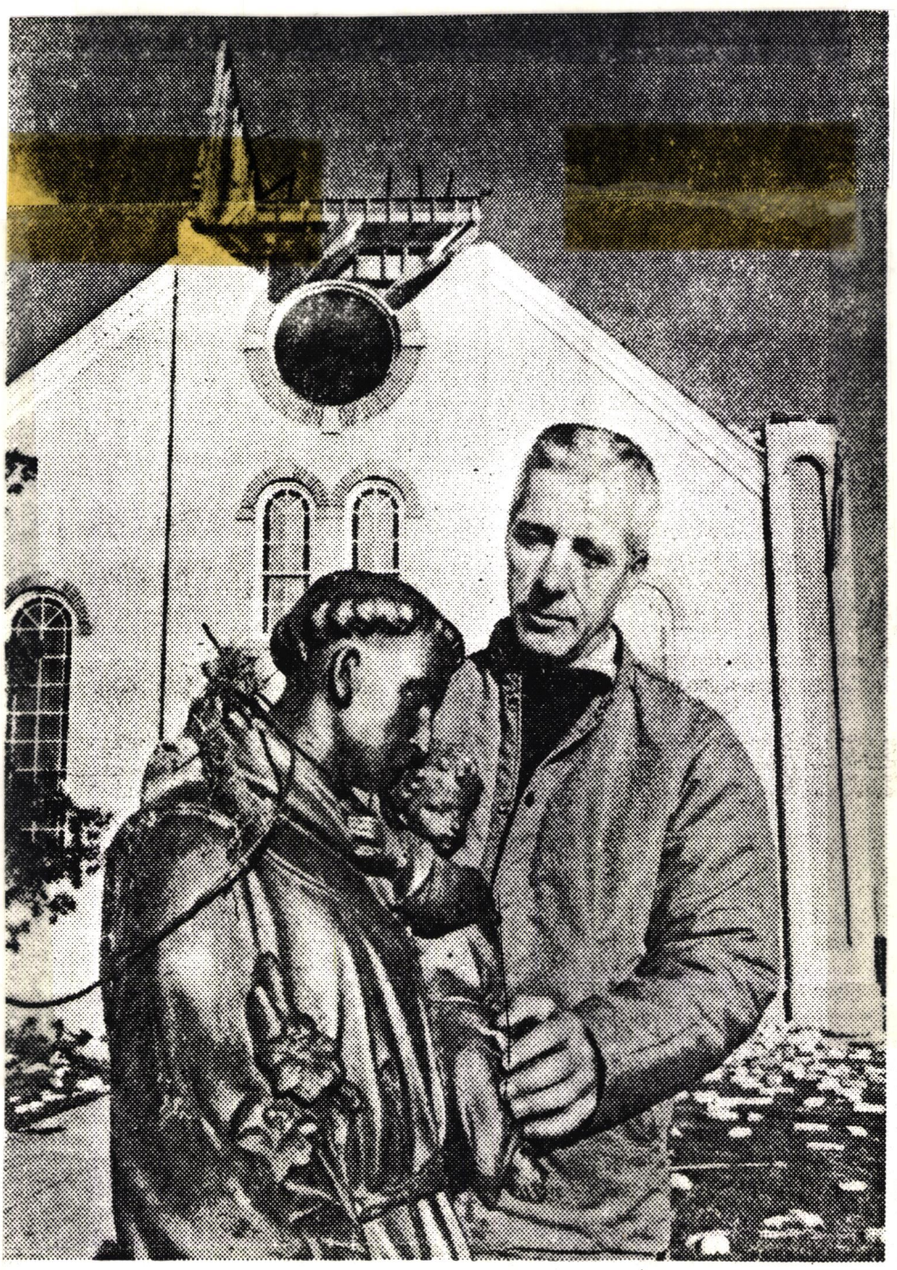
Winnipeg Tribune: Tues June 20 78 Storm Date: Monday June 19 78



Tribune photo by Frank Chalme

Aerial view of devastated village shows damaged church tower and other building wreckage

Winnipeg Tribune: Tues. June 20 '78
Storm Date: Monday June 19 '78



Tribune photo by Jon Thordarson

Pastor Lionel Thibeault holds statute from Aubigny Roman Catholic church bell tower.

Winnipeg Tribune : Tues. June 20 '78
Storm Date: Monday June 19 '78



Tribune photo by Jeff Debooy

House demolished

This Aubigny house was destroyed Monday evening by a tornado which left one man dead and at least 20 others injured. The tornado swept across southeastern Manitoba nearly destroying Aubigny, a small community 30 kilometres south of Winnipeg. Wherever the tornado touched down on farms stretching on a line from Morris northeast towards Lac du Bonnet extensive damage has been reported. At least 20 families in Aubigny, a farming community of 200, have been left suddenly homeless. Extensive hail damage has also been reported [illegible] same area.

Winnipeg Tribune
Sat. June 24 '78
Storm Date: Monday
June 19 '78



The power of the storm tossed a heavy school bus around like a toy, smashing a small car and winding up beside this roofless house, as the storm rampaged through the area. In the foreground, a house is left totally demolished while its roof remained relatively intact after landing atop a camper vehicle.



The force of the storm tumbled this late model station wagon over and over across the ground before it came to rest near these badly damaged houses. No government assistance for the victims has been announced.



A killer tornado funnel swirls to the ground near Aubigny in this picture, left, taken by Art Carter, a South Carolina journalist travelling in the area Monday evening. The funnel, one of two to strike the area, left widespread destruction. One person was killed and at least 20 persons were injured. The effect of the vicious swirling wind can be seen in the picture at right where trees are stripped in an area surrounding the wrecked barn, house and outbuildings. A dwelling on the far left of the picture was left standing.

Winnipeg Tribune : Sat. June 24 '78
Storm Date: Mon. June 19 78