



# *Historical Weather*

## Family History of the 1978 Blizzard

January 26, 1978, I went to work at 1:00 a.m., the temperature was 49 degrees and raining. I worked as billing clerk at a meat packing plant in Richfield, Ohio. My job was to add the bills for each truck driver. The drivers delivered to the Akron area, Cleveland, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia.

As the drivers came into the plant to pick up their runs, they would tell me about the weather report. I didn't pay that much attention because sometimes the reports are wrong. This time the weather report was on target. Some of the drivers left on their deliveries, other drivers had their deliveries cancelled due to the storm. All the trucks were loaded. The trucks had refrigerated Therma-King units so the loaded trucks would be safe for a few days.

By 8:00 a.m. the storm reached our area, the rain changing to snow and ice, the temperature dropped to 18 degrees so fast it was unbelievable. The winds were so strong the rain turned to snow and ice immediately, leaving the roads, sidewalks, and cars covered with thick ice.

The Highway Patrol urged everyone to stay off the roads unless it was absolutely necessary. I did not want to go out onto the slippery roads, but I had very little choice. I had to get home to let my poodle out and feed her.

I left Richfield at 10:00 a.m. I had to take a different route home. I took route 21 south to West Market Street going east to 80 south, there I headed north driving about 15 miles an hour. I wasn't paying much attention to the time. I just wanted to get home safely.

I was very tense because there were times I could not see the road because of whiteouts. The roads were very treacherous. I saw one accident; the car could not come to a stop at a side street. It went onto West Market Street going east, hit the curb and shrubs, then back on West Market Street without any damage to his car or injuries to himself. I was going slowly enough that I didn't hit him. It seemed like I was real close to him.

It was about 1:00 p.m. when I reached my home, about three hours over those treacherous roads. I thanked God for my trip home without an incident.

The blizzard lasted through the night. The temperature remained near zero and the wind chills near 100 degrees below zero. Fifty-one people died.

Ice remained on the roads for about a week to ten days because we were in a deep freeze so the salt would not melt the ice. The ice on the roads was two to three inches thick. Once the temperature began to rise, the salt melted the ice slowly. The blizzard was behind us but not forgotten. What an experience!

*-Ethel M. Lambert*

Compact ABLE

## Life In a Small Town USA

This story begins in the small village of Georgesville, Ohio, in February, 1959.

It was the coldest winter that I could remember. I had come to the village four years earlier as a bride. My husband told me at the time that the village had been founded in the early 1700s up on the side of the hill where the park is now. The village was surrounded by the two Darby's — Big Darby River and Little Darby River. Originally there were two old covered bridges that made it possible to cross these two rivers. However, they were washed away during the flood of 1913 and were replaced by two new iron bridges.

It was a quiet little community then, and it still is now. It is the kind of community where people looked out for each other and came together during hard times - but I am getting away from my story.

During the cold winter of 1959, the ground was covered with snow and it was frozen hard. The two rivers — the Big Darby and the Little Darby — had both frozen over. In fact, they had frozen so hard and thick that they had become favorite skating spots for the children in the village. It was great fun to watch them on the frozen rivers skating back and forth, yelling to one another and having a great time.

One day it started raining. It was one of those rains that you don't think will ever stop. In fact, it continued raining all that day and through the night. Because the ground and the rivers were frozen so hard the rain water had nowhere to go. It began to pool on the ground and on top of the ice. This pooling on the ice caused the ice to begin to break apart. I will never forget the sound of the ice breaking up. It sounded like loud claps of thunder. I could hear it all the way up where I lived. My husband and I walked down to the river in the pouring rain to see what was happening. We were amazed to see the huge chunks of ice that were beginning to break apart in the river. They were at least eighteen inches thick.

The river itself was beginning to overflow its banks. No longer were we looking at the peaceful rivers that surrounded our little community. The rivers were beginning to swell and overrun their banks. It looked as if everything was going to be washed away. The waters were so deep and had spread so far over their banks that you could not tell where one river began and the other one ended. Some of our neighbors had to be evacuated from their homes. I remember they had to use a boat to rescue one elderly woman who lived by herself. One home was completely destroyed by the flooding waters. Others had a lot of water damage in them due to the water covering their ground floors. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

As a community we watched with horror as the waters took over our village. The school had to be closed until the water completely receded back into the confines of its banks.

The water rose to the bottom of the new iron bridges that had been built because of the flood of 1913. When the bridges were built, it was thought that they would withstand anything. But that was before the flood of 1959.

The state tore down the old iron bridges just as they had the old covered bridges. The roads themselves had to be rerouted so that two new bridges could be built. Bridges that are even bigger and stronger than the old covered bridges and the old iron bridges.

The bridges have been moved and many of the people are no longer there; but the two Darbys — both Big and Little — are still there meandering their way through Darbydale and Franklin County.

-Ida Osborn

Southwest Community Center

## Bridges focus of scientific 'shake-up'

**By Mary Stephens**  
*Dispatch Staff Writer*

If a pair of old steel-truss bridges over Big and Little Darby creeks could talk, they would have few kind words to say about Emin Aktan.

The bridges have lost the jobs they've held since 1914 — carrying Akron Road traffic over the crevices at their junctures near Georgetown — and have been replaced by two concrete bridges.

But Aktan, an engineer from the Cincinnati Infrastructure Institute at the University of Cincinnati, has cast the bridges in a new role: test subject.

Starting with the Little Darby span, he has vibrated it until it visibly shook and weighted it down until a stressed-out steel beam started popping out bumps of hidden rust "like knots on wood," he said.

Aktan and a dozen or so of his co-workers want to find out just how much punishment the old bridges, and the \$29 like them in Ohio, can take.

So far, test results suggest the bridges are a lot stronger than anyone knew.

The cost of the research — more than \$1 million — is being paid with grants from the Ohio Department of Transportation, the National Science Foundation and the Federal Highway Works Administration, plus some help from the Franklin County engineer's office.

It involves tying the bridges free with hundreds of electronic sensors.

With cables anchored 30 feet or more deep, hydraulic machines set the pull up on the cables, in effect, pushed the bridge, with a force of up to 300 equivalent of what engineers call dead load.

As the pressure increases, the information is a trailer full of computer-processed data, which displays screens and the bridge shakes.

"It's like a CAT scan," Aktan says, "watching the structure feel its beating heart."

Please see BRIDGES Page 2C.

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we want to know is how much it hurts."

The point is to learn how strong steel-truss bridges, most of which were built between 1870 and 1940, really are.

Opportunities for the sort of testing Aktan is doing are extremely rare because most old bridges are torn down to make way for their replacements.

The Akron Road bridges are available because their requirements aren't in the same place. Neighbors wanted their alignments changed to allow a safer, 90-degree intersection of Gardner and Akron roads. County Engineer John Circhi said.

Mari Sherman, an engineer in Aktan's office, knew of previous deterioration testing by the Cincinnati office and suggested they have at the Akron Road spans.

Aktan gladly put together the grant proposals. "The opportunity of doing a bridge like this all in your own backyard is incredible," he said.

The old bridges will be cut up and hauled away in the spring by the company that built the new ones.

Although the four other steel-truss bridges in Franklin County are all scheduled to be replaced, many of the others around the country are in poorer condition that can't afford to build new bridges until absolutely necessary, Aktan said.

The Darby bridges tests are revealing a much clearer idea of the bridges' strength than has been available before, he said. "We want to conduct research like a brain surgeon, not a butcher."

Thursday was the day to stress the Little Darby bridge and something gave.

The engineers expected something to fail at a pressure level of eight trucks — about 250 tons. But the bridge held until the pressure reached 12 trucks, which was when the diagonal braces started popping out the rust spots.

Apparently the old wire-hung braces that stay hidden until the rusty spots could not withstand the pressure on the steel, Aktan said.

"Suddenly, we saw the true face of the deterioration. It was like watching a percent age 60 man in front of your eyes."

That knowledge is invaluable to engineers that still rely on steel-truss bridges, Aktan said.

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Columbus Dispatch article

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## e-up'

the bridges from road to road traffic.

chined 30 feet beneath the machines on the bridge deck is, in effect, pushing down on the span of up to 300 tons — the equivalent of about 22 trucks.

intrusion. The sensors send the full of computers, whose display screens are equipped as 7' span," Aktan said. "Every-freak is being recorded. What

Page 2C

## The Flood of 1998

The word "history" indicates something that has happened in the past. However, not all history is beyond our memory. In Noble County, Ohio, on June 27 and June 28, 1998, more than eleven inches of rain, accompanied by high winds and severe thunderstorms, bombarded the area. Seven people lost their lives and hundreds of people had damage to their properties as a consequence of the storm. Water reached the hundred year flood plain mark — a height that nobody could remember occurring before.

The following are eye-witness accounts of Caldwell ABLE students:

### *Shirley's Story*

I was with my family in Virginia on vacation. Once I was back in Noble County, it was so unreal what had happened. I didn't lose anything, but the reality of what I could have lost would have been terrible. Realizing how lucky my family was you began to see how precious life is. It's so hard to believe it's been two years since this has all happened.

My father-in-law next door was home all by himself; my mother-in-law was also on vacation in California. He went to bed early Friday night. Around four o'clock a.m. his niece called. Water was coming in his sister's garage, so he got his tractor out and went over. The water was a foot deep, so they began to carry everything out. When it began to get light enough he picked up the branches in the yard, along with other things that got blown around. He began to see how bad it really was, and it wasn't over yet. A tree fell near the house later that day; also as the storm got worse, one fell on the garage that night. Once again the next day, looking at the damage all around was unreal. My father-in-law is a trustee for Buffalo Township, so he had his work cut out for him. He worked for a solid week clearing roads, keeping generators running, anything anybody needed. He had lost ten pounds during all of this.

## *Sarah's Story*

I did not lose anything from the flood. At the time on June 28, my husband and I, along with the kids, had gone to my aunt and uncle's house for the evening to play cards. We had a cook-out. The wind started to pick up and the sky got very dark. Then the rain started to come down very hard and hail was hitting the windows. As we watched out the window, the trees started leaning way over. We all were joking that there was a tornado in the area. When the electric went out, we kept on playing cards by candlelight. It was fun.

We decided to go home at 1:30 AM My two boys stayed with my aunt but my daughter came home with us. When we left we had to move pieces of wood out of the driveway so we could leave. We turned to go to Mt. Ephraim on our way home, but we could not get through because there was a big tree in the road. So we had to turn around and go back the same way we started. We went down 564 to try to get to Senecaville, but we could not get through that way either because the water was all over the road. So we turned around again and decided to go across the dam. We made it through that way. We drove to Buffalo, Ohio, and got on the interstate to continue home. We got to the Belle Valley exit when a bolt of lightning hit and lit up the whole area. There was water everywhere! All you could see was roofs off all the buildings, cars floating in the water and people on top of some of the buildings. We knew we could not get home that way, so we went on to the Caldwell exit. We could not get off there either. We continued south and crossed over at a turnaround, got on SR 821 and made it home - 2 hours after we left our family's. At 3:00 AM SR 821 was not flooded yet, but by 3:30 A.M. they were knocking on our neighbor's door to get them out.

The next morning when we got up, all you could see was water everywhere. That was the first time I had ever seen water that high in Caldwell. We could not get out for a long time that day. We all walked around the neighborhood to see if everybody was all right. The water was all over. We walked down on 821. I saw something bobbing up and down in the water. I walked through the high water to whatever was bobbing up and down. Then I saw it was two baby raccoons. They swam right up to me, so I picked them up and helped them up into a tree standing nearby. I stood there for awhile to see if they could stay in the tree. They made it up in the tree on a limb where they stayed for a long time. I went back to the tree later after the water went down, but the raccoons were gone. About 5:00 P.M. we started for my aunt's house to pick up my two boys, Shawn and Paul. On the way over we saw how much damage had been done. People had lost their homes, cars, animals, and a few people lost their lives. It was so amazing to see what Mother Nature had done to our community and our neighbors.

The only thing I could say is thank God my family was safe. I'm glad it's all over with. I would not like to go through that again. But if we have to it will only make this community stronger and stronger.

## *Patty's Story*

The night of June 27, 1998, was the most terrifying night I have ever had to live through. I stayed fairly calm early in the evening. It was raining extremely heavy, and the lightning seemed continuous. My first shock came around midnight when my neighbor knocked on my door. I opened it only to discover about three feet of water surrounding my house.

Within a matter of minutes I was walking through water in my house, so I went upstairs for safety. Probably fifteen minutes later, I heard a crash in my kitchen and came down to discover my refrigerator flipped over in front of my front door. After the refrigerator was pushed away from the door, I finally got the door opened where my neighbor and a fireman were waiting with a boat. I cannot swim, which made this rescue even more fearful. They did, however, get me to dry land where I told my neighbor, "God bless you."

I sat awake the rest of the night in a parking lot, watching the water continue to rise but never reaching me. Those two days of June were like a dream to me, one I pray never happens again.

There is so much that has been lost including living room furniture, family pictures, antiques, my car, etc.; but most important to me, I lost my feelings of home being my "safe place".

My life has changed so much since this ordeal. When you lean on other people for help, then all of a sudden they're leaning on you, it's different. You learn to help yourself and others around you. It was a tough change for me, but after two years it strengthened me to make decisions and do things I could never have accomplished before the flood.

Things are pretty well back to normal, only some aspects are even better. I am a much stronger person knowing I can handle most of life's battles, including the flood of '98. After two years, I still think of those two miserable days every day of my life. I now watch warnings and watches closer than ever, taking them more seriously now. This storm left my home surrounded by about ten feet of water, nothing I ever want to see again.

## *Millie's Story*

The dates of June 27 and 28, 1998, were terrible for us. There was a tornado that passed over our house. It killed a lady who lived just a few miles from us. My stepdaughter called and told us about it.

At our place we had lots of water. It came down the hollow. That was the first time that had ever happened since we lived there. We had to drive through it to get to the main highway.

We didn't have as much damage as some people did. We lost all of our fruit trees. They were uprooted from the ground during the tornado. But we didn't lose our home or any of our belongings. And nobody in our family was hurt.

Next time I'll be more prepared when the weather looks threatening. But I sure hope it never happens again!



## *Judy's Story*

June 27, 1998, was a busy day for me. My partner and I were catering an alumni reunion in Woodsfield, a town about 30 miles east of us. We spent the day getting everything ready to go. There had been some heavy rains, so I was worried about flooding on SR 78 near the county line. I took along our cell phone when we set off, just in case we had to have assistance.

The catering went well and the sky looked dark and stormy as we left the reunion. My husband called us and said a tornado had passed through Caldwell and was heading east toward us. He advised us to find someplace to stay until the storm passed.

My partner and I headed for McDonald's and enjoyed a lightning display of great intensity. However, I was getting antsy to get back home. After 20 minutes the worst appeared to be over, so we set out for Caldwell. There was still thunder and lightning, making it a tense trip. When we had successfully made it past the point where I had worried about flooding, I was relieved. Finally I could relax.

Five miles down the road my thoughts of getting home quickly were dampened by the sight of several cars stopped along the highway. The road was flooded in a location that it normally doesn't occur. I thought it was too risky to try to drive through the water because it was rising so quickly. We realized one of the other people there was a friend who knew some back roads. We decided to follow his lead and seek a different route home.

As we tried the alternative, rain, wind, thunder and lightning continued to surround us. I felt like I was in a commercial for an SUV. We dodged trees that had fallen into the road, were polluted by small limbs and leaves, and observed what definitely looked like the path of a tornado. Every road we tried had something to block our path.

Finally, we gave up and went to our friend's parents' home. Unfortunately, it was a mobile home sitting on top of a high hill. There was no electricity, but the phone worked. We were able to reach my husband and tell him we would not make it back to Caldwell that night.

For what seemed like an endless night, we were bombarded with one storm after another. A total of 11 inches of rain fell in just a few hours. Water was in places that no one, not even the old-timers, had ever seen. All roads into Caldwell were blocked by Mother Nature.

Early the next day, I called my husband and told him we were going to again set out for home. As we made our way off the hill we could see much evidence of high water. There was debris everywhere. Power lines were lying beside the roads. Water marks could be seen on the side of several buildings. Streams of cars were looking for ways to get into and out of town.

About 15 hours after we had left, we were once again home. It was wonderful! Even though we lost 2 trees and had no portable water for 2 days, we felt lucky.

One benefit of this disaster was the sense of community it created. People went out of their way to help others. Churches combined efforts and fed and housed those who had lost their homes for several weeks. Many volunteers assisted in any way they could to aid with the cleanup and rebuilding. Friendships were formed between stranded motorists and the local folks who gave them shelter until the interstate was opened once again.

There are still some who have not fully recovered from the Flood of '98. Many decided it was a great time to make a new start someplace else. Others lost loved ones and will never be able to undo that loss. I, for one, am glad it is now just a memory. That was enough adventure to last me for a long time.

## *Mike's Story*

June 27-28 were rather interesting for me. Still married, my wife and I were staying in Sarahsville at my sister's. My wife was expecting our second child, getting those outrageous cravings. I decided to get something for her from the store, so I left for Caldwell.

After being in Caldwell no longer than five minutes, I started back towards Belle Valley on the interstate. Needless to say, while driving down the off ramp at Belle Valley, I had nowhere to go.

It is against the law to go backwards up an off ramp, but who is going to argue with me unable to go anywhere else? Returning to Caldwell, I stayed at a friend's house for the night, unable to be with my wife during this terrifying ordeal until late the next evening.

Fortunately, I did not lose anything out of these two miserable days. However, it has changed my life. I watch the weather and storms more closely now. For me, everything is about the same. I'm coping pretty well, meanwhile, I'm also staying alert.

## *Gary & Pat's Story*

It was a terrible, shocking night. We live in a house that has been in my family for years. My mother grew up in this house. Water had never been an issue. The field behind our house flooded once in a while, but our house sits up on a bank and a flood just never entered our minds. The telephone woke us up at 3:00 am. Rick Starr, an employee of the water plant where Gary is superintendent, was calling to let him know of the situation at the plant, which was grim. When Gary got off the phone, he said, "I'm going to take a look outside." He was gone only a few minutes. He came back inside and told me to hurry and get dressed because we had to leave. He had tried to walk out to the back yard to get his backhoe and tractor, but he was already in water up to his waist. The water had broken all our basement windows and was gushing in. I still couldn't believe that the water would get that high and come into our house. But when we stepped off our front porch step, reality set in.

We managed to get our pick-up and car out of the garage and drove them over to the next street. Then we came back and stood across the street from our house and watched with flashlights. The electric had been off for hours and it was still raining. All the neighbors were up and concerned about their belongings. We watched the water rise and come upon our porch and into our house and there was nothing we could do. We ended up with a full basement and one foot of water in the house. After the water went down, we had nothing but mud left behind. The carpet was like a sponge when you stepped on it and everything smelled awful. All of our shoes, photo albums, books, anything that was on a shelf close to the floor was gone, nowhere to be found. The water had been a foot up on our furniture and it was all slimy. The refrigerator had mud left on the inside. The kitchen cupboards on the bottom shelf had mud on them. The oven was ruined. In our basement everything was ruined, furnace, hot water heater, all of our Christmas decorations had floated out the windows, even our Christmas tree.

But Gary still had more problems. The water plant had to be dealt with. People were without water too, besides electric. He put everything aside here at home and the water plant became the number one priority. Gary and the rest of the men who work there worked tirelessly for four days until the plant was back in operation. The community is to be commended for coming together and helping each other in this hard time.

Gary and I may have lost material things, but so what. We still have each other and some families were not so lucky. While this whole mess was going on, I also lost my mother who was a patient at Summit Acres Nursing Home. We were coping with quite a lot, but thank God, our son and his wife came here to our home and helped clean up everything.

Gary and I thank and praise the Lord everyday for our blessings. I think this whole situation and problems that come along with and after the flood have had made us stronger and more aware of how lucky we are. If you give your problems to the Lord, he will help you get through them.