

## ROVING REPORTER

BY R. L. SHIRLEY

It is Friday morning as I write here, and that's too late in the week to begin a long, newsy column so this one probably will be short and uninteresting. However, I will try to put in a few words between my other work. What threw us off stride, of course, was the terrible tornadoes that hit our areas, in both Winston and Marion counties. Although communities were hard hit in Winston County with five dead and as least 20 more injured, what really touches the heart was the vast destruction in Guin--a neighboring town almost completely wiped out, with at least 19 dead. The utter waste in Guin, and other nearby areas, makes one feel so helpless. Tornado winds are so terrifyingly powerful, a mere human cannot cope with its devastation. But in all areas neighbors, agency officials and many strangers were helping the storm victims clean up. It is a slow and almost hopeless task, but as another night approached, people HAD to make out the best they could, and salvage what they could and seek shelter somewhere. Wednesday night April 3, 1974, will go down as one of the most destructive times in local history. There is no telling how much money and effort it will take just to get back to normal, and personal belongings were lost that can never be replaced. The human life lost,

and the suffering among those hurt, was the most terrible thing.

Thursday, following the storm, I visited most hit areas in Winston County--and it was awful. Wednesday night, as Civil Defense coordinator wife Kitty went on full-time duty at her office in Haleyville, I spent the time (hours) at Burdick-West Hospital, watching as rescuers brought in the dead and injured. I saw pure shock--as well as pain--on the faces of so many people. One in particular, Mrs. Marvin (Rachel) Tidwell, was brought in suffering many lacerations and bruises and she pained in a different way--because she did not know the fate of her husband, her mother, her son, his wife and baby--all were in the Tidwell home when the tornado winds smashed it to bits. Her husband, mother, and married son were killed. In talking with her the next day in the hospital, it was so pitiful to see her grief. The Tidwell home was a beautiful brick house, and the tornado sent it in small pieces across a pasture. A car and pickup truck were blown a hundred yards, and huge trees were blown on them. I saw a rusty yard rake, which anyone could have bent with their hands, blown with such force into a 4X4 piece of timber that it merely imbedded itself in the wood partially, and the rest of the rake wasn't damaged much. You can believe it or not, Lonnie Cummings,

Troy Suitts, others and I at the Tidwell home scene saw straw imbedded in large pine and oak trees.

Mrs. Idella Berry, 69, was killed. I visited her home, and the storm did very little damage to it. She had gone a short distance to her son Parnell Berry's home to wait out the storm, and in spite of being in a cellar, she died from injuries received. Parnell's home was literally blown away, leaving only some of the basement walls. A nearby broiler house was demolished. What made it so terrifying for these and other storm victims, all this happened at night, there was no light for the uninjured to search the area for their injured loved ones. And, there was no immediate help in getting them to medical assistance, so the situation in most cases was indeed terrible. A. C. Densmore of Delmar, had gone to bed early, because he didn't feel good. His wife retired also, and the storm swept their home away. Chimney brick showered down upon him, and his wife was pinned under a section of wall. He couldn't see her, but he could hear her praying, and he managed--despite numerous cuts and bruises--to get her out. Across the road his son, Jerry, wife Jane and small daughter Denise, were in bed when the tornado struck. Their concrete home was shattered, and blocks fell on their bed, as well as the roof sections, etc. The baby bed, where 2-year-old Denise normally slept, was filled



with concrete blocks. Their being uninjured was truly one of the many miracles that occurred.

All of A.C. Densmore's buildings, including his son's home, their home, their store, barn, several other buildings, etc., were destroyed. He told me that during Wednesday afternoon he and his wife discussed the odd behavior of their cattle in a nearby pasture. The cows held their tails up over their backs all evening, he said, with the ends twisted. It is his opinion that the cattle knew, in some unknown manner, that a storm was coming. I visited the homesite of Garvey Elliott and wife on Highway 129. They moved into their beautiful new home--which surely cost in excess of \$50,000--in late December. They went to their basement only moments before the tornado ripped the house and furnishings to shreds. I talked with young Donald Lee Dodd and wife Dianne, as they looked at their demolished concrete block home. They left for a relative's home just before the tornado. They lost everything, as did the Ray Cagles (he was killed), the Junior Fells, the Roy Buchanans, the Leon Wards, the Troy Farrs, and so many more I could name. One of the worst things I could do would be to try and commend people who did so much work during the tornado aftermath in Winston County. But I don't want to let the opportunity slip by without recognizing such people who volunteered their time and means, such as Haleyville



firemen, nurses off duty, OEO getting hot meals to workers on the scene, to one group (especially) of ladies who prepared sandwiches and carried them to disaster areas, Bro. Ronald Sartin and his clothing store, National Guardsmen helping with sleeping quarters and generators for watering chickens, milking cows, etc., to telephone and power company men, and especially to CD Rescue Squad people. There were hundreds of others, but I don't have a list.

Burdick-West Hospital Adm. Tillman Hill has expressed thanks to the general public who volunteered their services, to the many who offered to donate blood, the doctors and nurses who came back, etc. to help in the Wednesday night emergency. Haleyville Chamber of Commerce new brochure is now printed, and should be distributed soon. Double Springs Neighborhood Facilities building open house and dedication has been set for Saturday April 13; more details later. Hank Aaron has hit his 714th homerun to tie Babe Ruth's record, and before this gets to print he may have broken the long record; isn't that something? I received a call Friday from a woman subscriber in West Virginia, who likes our paper. She has noted the nice articles on Rankin Fite written by Emmett Oden, and she "demands" we do similar articles on two "outsanding Haleyville citizens," Dr. W. K. Wilson and former mayor V. H. Albright. She wants this done while they

are living; a tribute for the "many, many" progressive things they have done for Haleyville these many years. You know, I agree with her 100 percent. These two--and many others--deserve "roses while they live" and I sincerely hope we can do this soon.

Donnie Alsup, 20, of Delmar, has an ad in this issue wanting someone to take up payments on a 1973 2-bedroom mobile home, since he is going in the Air Force April 14. Sounds like a good deal. His wife Elane (Buchanan) and their young son Bryan will stay behind, in Haleyville, until Donnie gets settle. Soon it will be time for the Haleyville High Alumni celebration, and two grads are trying to get a party set for the class of 1969. They want classmates to call, if interested, so plans may be made. Call Sonya Knight Holdbrooks at 6-9317, or Clint Baggett Jr. at 6-2140. We have spoken about our area tornado damage, and we certainly hate the toll was so heavy in other areas. Jasper's tornado damage, in the main part of the city, has been estimated at \$60 Million. I talked with Mrs. Rachel Tidwell in Burdick-West Hospital Friday, and she wants me to take a picture of her and sisters while they are all together now, the first time in 26 years. Mrs. Tidwell had one of the greatest losses in the Wednesday tornado, she lost her hunband Marvin, her son Jim, and her mother Mrs. Guined.

Let me go back to the tornado damage briefly. We made an attempt to get correct and up-to-date information about federal, state and local agencies, who can help storm victims, and where they will have offices. Most will begin actual help Monday, so please check with Civil Defense, or other officials on what to do. Mayor Paul Guin, in spite of major damage to his own home, went into action in tornado-ravished Guin to get things going again. He said local damage was \$3 Million, 29 of 30 business houses are <sup>e</sup> destroyed, and the storm left Guin without water, lights or telephones. In Alabama the storm toll was 76 dead. In 11 states, 310 storm dead and 4,000 injured. In Haleyville, Guin and other stricken areas, rescue work~~kers~~ers from over the South are coming in to help with repairs and rebuilding. Some Tennessee communication men are at the Imperial Inn. Wife Kitty's Civil Defense report shows 22 houses and 11 mobile homes destroyed in Winston County, five chicken houses, two stores, four barns, dozens of trucks and cars; eight homes damaged. CD had seven generators in use (by Rescue Squad) to water chickens, save <sup>f</sup> deep breeze food, etc. OEO will feed <sup>s</sup> disaster area workers another hot meal Monday. Winston County public health nurses helped in emergency. The South Haleyville Church of Christ Clothing Center was about cleaned out; if YOU have good used clothing to spare, please carry the clothing and shoes there.

Until later...



APRIL 3, 1974

A  
N I G H T  
T O  
R E M E M B E R

By Charles Jordan

A person to person report on the tragic events of the natural disaster that occurred on the night of April 3, 1974, from the citizens of North Alabama to Charles Jordan.

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By: Charles Jordan  
Moulton, Al. 35650

Thanks to all Rescue Squad, Civil Defense Units,  
American Red Cross, U.S. Army, Air Force, National Guard  
and Civil Air Patrol, National Weather Service of  
Alabama, and all people of the surrounding area who  
showed their love and affection for people caught in  
the storm.

## FOREWORD

This book by Mr. Charles Jordon<sup>a</sup>, is concerned with the strife, despair, destruction, and depression that prevailed in the hills of North Alabama during the blackest night in the history of this area, April 3, 1974, when a series of tornadoes unparalleled in our times, took seventy-eight lives and inflicted millions of dollars of property damage. It is a historical and factual book that is both interesting and informative. This story follows closely the pattern of living of Puritan people of this area. It is based on the most pains-taking research projects that has ever been witnessed by the writer of this Foreword.

Mr. Jordon has made a real contribution to history by giving the incidents of this tragedy. He has talked with many of the survivors, as well as with the federal, state, and local officials who have united to permit this writer to record the courage and action of a group of people who were trampled down by one of nature's disasters, but arose from it very quickly.

A Night to Remember is a book well-worth reading by all who are interested in the loss and the rebuilding of one's world.



IT WAS THE BLACKEST NIGHT IN THE  
HISTORY OF NORTH ALABAMA

Unseasonable sweltering heat for early April. The humidity sent sweat trickling down the small of your back; your clothes stuck to your body. Everything had begun innocently enough as thousands of North and North Central Alabamians returned to their homes that sultry Wednesday afternoon.

Folks joked about having mid-July weather on April 3, but the heat still made you restless, irritable as you gazed into the skies where thunderheads were building up to the southwest. It had been freezing weather only days earlier, but the muggy heat had everyone grumbling and looking for a breath of fresh air in any air conditioned building.

Reports had persisted since mid-day about tornado watches, but Alabamians had become accustomed to that over the years. And for a couple of years now, folks had been talking about "tornado alley" shifting into the southeast, or so it seemed, from its Midwest corridor.

In metropolitan Huntsville, hub of Madison County and the birthplace of the U. S. Space Program at Redstone Arsenal, the day had been business as usual.

Well, almost as usual, except for cleanup work under way at the Sherwood Park housing area where an undetected tornado had smashed through on, of all days, April Fools' Day. Residents were picking up debris and looking over a number of shattered homes where \$850,000 in damage had occurred. One trailer occupant in the county area had been killed by the twister and six others injured.

Huntsvillians talked about the tornado in November that virtually leveled the Huntsville-Madison County Jetport. Now another in the Sherwood Park area. Enough is enough.

Now here were the reports for tornado watches again, a scant 36 hours after the Sherwood Park incident. The heat, the humidity was bad enough, but to worry about those new weather reports was adding insult to injury.

A Huntsville business executive knocked off from work an hour early, drove home and kept reminding himself that he'd have to get the back yard barbecue going in less than an hour if he was going to make his regular Wednesday night bowling league.

In the rural areas of North Alabama, farmers slowed their work pace because of the heat; some quit early and headed home for an early supper. For some, there would be the routine of Wednesday night prayer services.

In towns like Jasper, Decatur, Huntsville and Athens, in small sleepy towns across the central and top of Alabama, the reports of new tornado watches went relatively unnoticed--for a while.

Time out for the television news.

My God! They're opening the broadcast with the weather and they're talking about tornado warnings--not watches. One has been spotted just west of Decatur! "On the ground, destroying everything in its path....!"

Thus began six hours and 49 minutes of unbelievable nightmares throughout county after county in North and North Central Alabama. At least six mammoth twisters were to wreck death and destruction, devour everything in their path in what will go down in history as an unparalleled natural disaster in modern Alabama.

Nothing quite like it had ever happened before, at least not in the magnitude that left at least 77 persons dead, 838 injured, 223 hospitalized, 895 homes destroyed, 898 others severely damaged; and 203 mobile homes blown to splinters and perhaps a quarter billion dollars in damage across 18 Alabama counties.



No one could comprehend what was about to take place.

The first twister, spawned in the vicinity of Russellville in Franklin County, was initially tracked at 5:22 p.m., racing with reckless abandon across Lawrence County, ravaging portions of Moulton and adjacent areas.

In Lawrence County, Phillip and Althea Owens and their four children were among the dead when the twister struck with unbelievable force, howling, swirling winds of destruction.

Still on the ground, it roared into Morgan County near Hillsboro and Trinity, leveling everything in its path, and then careening just south of Tanner in Limestone County before it reached the western edge of Madison County.

All along its path, it struck farms, homes, businesses with the strength of an atomic blast before continuing its devastation in Madison County south of Harvest and heading toward Fisk while swatting Hazel Green. The killer twister kept gaining strength.

At Decatur, the tornado had slammed into the 200-foot tower of Amoco Chemicals Tennessee River plant, crumpling it with tornadic winds. At the Browns Ferry Nuclear Plant, the largest nuclear power plant in the world, reactors automatically shut down as the tornado ripped power transmission

lines miles away.

Gathering strength and leveling structures like a steamroller, the tornado raced on. "I was in a shallow highway ditch and watched what I thought was sure death pass near Tanner," Bob Dunnavant, a news reporter, said. "It was like something out of the Old Testament, a pillar of clouds, black, majestic and ominous moving across the farmlands of southern Limestone County."

"We were listening to a radio reporter just south of us at the trailer park saying he was heading for the ditch, and about 15 seconds later our house exploded," survivor Grady Swanner of Tanner said.

Marvin Moore had just returned to his Harvest home from a church meeting and had taken his shoes off in his living room to relax. His wife and four children were in the bedroom.

"I knew the alerts were out, but I hadn't really been keeping up with them," he said. "I saw it coming out the picture window. An ugly thing. I don't remember anything else."

The twister smashed the Moore home into kindling, throwing the Moore family from the home and scattering their bodies for 100 yards. Moore's wife was dead: his baby girl was dead; three of his other children were injured; and Moore received critical wounds. He woke up in a muddy field with rescuers standing over him.

At Harvest, the killer twister snapped telephone poles and century-old trees like matchsticks, exploded homes and trailers as if made of cardboard; blew barns, bodies, farm machinery, cattle, livestock across the landscape in a half-mile path.

Total devastation!

Almost unbelievable, the mammoth twister had remained on the ground for two hours and 23 minutes over a 75-mile course. Still packing the fury of a nuclear blast, the twister chewed and snarled its way through most of Franklin County, Tennessee.

Sweeping into Lincoln and Franklin counties in Tennessee, a Church of Jesus minister was killed when the tornado ripped through the Vann Town Church where he was delivering a sermon. The Rev. Baxter Holt, 62, was killed



and several members of the congregation injured.

Even while rescuers tried to dig through the rubble of shattered homes and farms near Harvest, yet another unheard of occurrence was ahead. Another twister! The second in less than 30 minutes and only a half mile away from the path of the first. Rescuers kept working to save injured, pull<sup>ed</sup> the dead from the wreckage of their homes. The second twister was bearing down on the same Harvest-Hazel Green area although electrical power was out and only transistor radios could provide warnings.

Mrs. Howard Truitt thought the storm was over when the first twister plowed a path to her home, then leaped over the house at the last minute. ↑

Before she could recover, the second twister demolished her home. Neighbors found her crawling across the street, deep in pain and bleeding.

Moving on a parallel course, the second tornado had been spotted at 7:23 p.m., west of Tanner in Limestone County and continued its savage destruction through northwest Madison County to the Tennessee border, tracked for 57 minutes for a distance of 36 miles.

The county was in virtual panic: Calls for blood at Huntsville Hospital, calls for assistance, power out, injured, dead. Ambulances needed immediately. Radio and television stations became more emphatic where electrical power could still get the message through for everyone to take shelter.

A third tornado was cutting a destructive swath through North Central Alabama, striking a hospital at Jasper, roaring through Cullman County, across Morgan and finally into Madison County before it leaped back into the sky near Paint Rock in Jackson County after 70 miles on the ground and one hour and 18 minutes of stark terror.

At Jasper, the scene appeared as though the town had been struck by a week-long artillery barrage. Damage estimates were over \$175 million.

There couldn't possibly be more!

The most destructive of all the tornado<sup>s</sup><sub>R</sub> was yet to come.

Spawned near Columbus, Miss., the twister growled its way into Marion County, Alabama, destroying almost everything

in the town of Guin and kept moving on the ground to the northeast through Winston County and Morgan County before advancing into Madison County south of the Huntsville-Madison County Airport.

"There's nothing left of Guin but its name," reports  
came in.

Sirens blared at Huntsville Manufacturing Company in Huntsville and Civil Defense. Loud speakers carried warnings throughout sections of southwest Huntsville for residents to take cover. The twister was taking dead aim at southwest Huntsville. Homeowners, weary of the night-long vigil, found it inconceivable that yet another twister would roar through the county.

Three was enough for one night!

WAAY-TV, Channel 31, zeroed in on its radar scope and the twister was cutting a savage path into the county. There were those who were becoming convinced that the television station was over-dramatizing and that the situation could not possibly be as bad as reported.

Again, Huntsville Manufacturing sirens and loudspeakers

blasted out warnings. An eerie stillness prevailed outside. How, some wondered, could another be on its way when the clouds appeared scattered, the winds calm?

It was 10:50 p.m. in Huntsville when soldiers at the Army Missile and Munitions Center and School looked out through the blackness to the saddle of Wheeden and Madkin Mountains to the west.

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A mammoth twister was working its way through the saddle, bearing down on the troop area where more than 1,000 U. S. and foreign troops were housed for missile training. There was little more time than to move to the bottom floors of the multi-story barracks and drop to the floor.

Cutting a swath a quarter of a mile wide, the twister virtually shattered the barracks area, flattened the new gymnasium, tossed cars around like toys, demolished other buildings and snapped telephone poles at the base. Air defense training equipment was picked up by the twister and smashed into an outdoor storage area. The headquarters building at MMCS was smashed, windows blown out and equipment thrown around inside the building. More than 98 buildings were either destroyed or severely damaged. Miraculously, no one was killed.

Mammoth trees with bases 20 feet across were ripped from the ground like twigs.

Catapulting off the federal installation, the twister struck again near the Patton Road and Drake Ave. entrance, ripping Montecello Apartments and carrying portions of its roof into an adjacent housing area. The twister's destructive path was obvious: Everywhere it moved it brought monumental destruction. McDonnell Elementary School was demolished and adjacent housing areas ripped to shreds by the tornadic winds.

Chewing its way across the landscape, the twister whirled on its destructive path and smashed Glenn'll Trailer Court in southwest Huntsville. Roads were blocked where mammoth trees were uprooted. Dazed residents scrambled from the wreckage of their homes in the darkness, still unable to comprehend the full impact of the damage around them. Relatives, trying to come to the park to check on damage to the homes of loved ones, were to be turned back a mile away.

The tornado moved on a northeast path on Leeman Ferry Road where it cut down everything in its path, including businesses, storage houses, everything. At Sterling Cadillac, the twister gutted the building, taking out the west wall



first, portions of the roof and then the east wall. Almost 200 yards south, the fringe of the same tornado ripped other buildings, flipped cars on Memorial Parkway and bent utility poles to the ground.

The killer slashed into the International House of Pancakes at Drake and Memorial Parkway where about 20 customers huddled on the floor. The windows exploded and the roof was bombarded with flying debris from as far away as a mile at Glenn'll Trailer Park.

The twister kept gathering momentum, then ripped Parkway City Shopping Center apart and leveled businesses in adjacent areas before moving into Thorton Acres where it ripped roofs, toppled trees and smashed homes before lifting just east of Whitesburg Drive in Huntsville. Then it jumped to the top of Monte Sano Mountain, destroying and severely damaging more homes, before moving down the eastern slope of Monte Sano where it slashed along the landscape for another 18 miles, demolishing woodlands all the way to Madison County fishing lake.

It was the same tornado that destroyed Guin at 9:02 p.m. and then struck Huntsville at about 10:50 p.m., a span of one hour and 46 minutes over a distance of over a hundred miles.

Yet another and another tornado were to roar through the area before the night was over: One was tracked first north of Madison County Airport and then skipped across parts of northwest Huntsville before ending near Chase, a 37-mile run. Twice Huntsville Hospital was alerted for the worst while it was trying to treat more than 100 victims of the first tornado.

At 11:20 p.m., another was sighted on radar east of Double Springs in Winston County, moving about 42 miles through Valhermosa Springs and Owens Cross Roads before fading from the screen near Gurley.

At least six tornados<sup>e</sup> had moved across Madison County, and other counties, during the six hours and forty-nine minutes of terror that Wednesday night. The tornadoes, produced by thunderstorms that reached heights of over 65,000 feet, resulted in what weather experts say is an almost unheard of occurrence: Two tornadoes striking within a half mile of each other within a 30-minute period, as in the Harvest area of Madison County.

Ambulances screamed throughout North Central and North Alabama all through the night, seeking injured, carrying injured to hospitals and digging out the dead.

But it would be during the first rays of dawn that the devastation would become apparent in these places. Madison, Lawrence, Jackson, Limestone, Cullman, Morgan, Winston, Walker, Franklin, Marion, Fayette, Pickens, Cherokee, Tuscaloosa, Lamar, Colbert, Marshall, and Calhoun Counties.

In Madison County, 16 were dead, 191 injured, 94 hospitalized, 268 homes destroyed, 96 heavily damaged; 121 mobile homes destroyed and 72 heavily damaged.

In Limestone County, at least 16 more were dead, 101 injured, 26 hospitalized, 49 homes destroyed, 9 heavily damaged; 26 mobile homes destroyed and 1 heavily damaged.

In Morgan County, 33 injured, 6 hospitalized, 28 homes destroyed; 16 heavily damaged, 7 mobile homes destroyed, and 3 heavily damaged.

In Lawrence County, 16 dead, 50 injured, 15 hospitalized, 67 homes destroyed, 32 heavily damaged; 21 mobile homes destroyed and 2 heavily damaged.

In Cherokee County, 20 injured, 4 hospitalized, 10 homes destroyed, 3 heavily damaged; 16 mobile homes destroyed.

In Fayette County, 2 dead, 35 injured, 9 homes heavily

damaged; 12 mobile homes destroyed and 3 heavily damaged.

In Franklin County, 3 injured, 1 hospitalized, 9 homes destroyed, 3 heavily damaged; 4 mobile homes destroyed and 4 heavily damaged.

In Walker County, 90 injured, 7 hospitalized, 3 dwellings destroyed, 65 heavily damaged and 3 mobile homes destroyed.

In Cullman County, 1 dead, 34 injured, 10 hospitalized, 108 homes destroyed, 500 heavily damaged; 3 mobile homes destroyed and 12 heavily damaged.

In Winston County, 5 dead, 22 injured and 25 homes destroyed.

In Pickens County, 5 injured.

Experts baffled by the destructive string of tornados<sup>e</sup> that stretched from Alabama to the Canadian border, sought to explain the onslaught in scientific terms.

A massive cold front moving down from the Midwest coupled with a warm, moist front moving up from the Gulf of Mexico and the instability caused when the thunderheads pushed to a height that invaded the jet streams produced the deluge of twisters that plagued 11 states, killing at least 314.



Scientific or not, Alabamians knew the fear of a night of terror, the worst natural disaster in modern Alabama history.

Ref. enc J

4-11-74

P. 4

"AND GOD WITH HIS INSTRUMENTS SHOWED THE WAY"

"877th Agnir Bn. 9th Mo. Cn."

In the Desert of Jordan Co."

By: 877th Engr. Bn. Information Service

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"

was accepted with thought, as the people of the Guin and Yappertown area of Marion County began at 9:30 p. m. Wednesday, April 3, only 28 minutes after one of the series of tornadoes that spread over the area had taken 21 lives, injured some 300 others and inflicted 3 million dollars of damage, began to put some pieces of their existence back together.

Mayor Paul Guin, after coming out of the basement of his own home that was destroyed, walked past the debris of the storm and caught a ride with an unidentified person to Winfield and called the Governor's office.

Machinery was set in motion to get the injured to hospitals in Winfield and Hamilton and to look for other injured and missing persons.

Major Jack Christian, Executive Officer of the 877th Engineer Battalion, immediately alerted units in Guin, Hamilton and Winfield. Within minutes SFC Albert Johnson, AST for Company D in Guin was at the National Guard Armory with portable lighting and generators. The National Guard Armory in Guin was to become the focal point of the disaster services. Within a short period of time some 100 Guardsmen were on duty in the

area. A radio network was set up at this time between the remaining units of the 877 th at Fayette, Sulligent, Vernon and Reform. Wednesday through Monday some 300 Guardsmen from Winfield, Sulligent and Guin were on duty in the area.

Mayor Paul Guin, who stood like the "Rock of Gibraltar"<sup>9</sup> during the ordeal, Major Jack Christian of the 877th Engr. Bn., Fred Johnson, Marion County Civil Defense Director, SFC Albert Johnson, Alabama State Troopers, Marion County Sheriff's Department, local police and supporting police set up a temporary morgue in the Guin Armory which had the only lights in the city and also began to receive the shocked, stunned, and homeless people.

State Troopers, under the command of Sgt. A. D. Wheat, along with National Guardsmen and other law enforcement agencies had already begun to furnish security for the ravished area. By daylight Thursday State Troopers supervised by Capt. W. O. Nichols, Lt. M. P. Braswell and Sgt. Wheat came from all over the state. At mid-morning Thursday the area was well secured by National Guardsmen, State Troopers, Marion County Sheriff's Department, Local Police, Civil Defense Rescue units from as far away as Florence, Tuscaloosa, Hoover, Alabama and Tupelo, Miss.

Before daylight Thursday care-giving agencies from everywhere were coming to render whatever physical, material and religious help that was possible.

Major Stidham from the Salvation Army in Tuscaloosa approached Mayor Guin before daylight and simply asked, "Where can we set down to help you?"

Thursday through Monday the Salvation Army averaged serving 4,000 meals daily, distributed 15,000 articles of clothing and counseled 4,200 persons.

By midday Thursday, Alabama Adjutant General Charles A. Rollo along with Colonel Lou Blankenship flew into the area to survey the situation. They left and shortly returned with Governor Wallace.

Governor Wallace repeatedly told the people he talked to, with tears in his eyes, "I'm glad you are safe and alive," and also told LTC Orval D. Proctor, Commanding Officer of the 877th Engineer Battalion and all other Guardsmen, "I'm glad you are taking care of our people."

Through Monday, National Guardsmen along with Alabama Power Company Tombigbee Electric, Alabama Telephone Company, other private companies and individuals that came to help were



slowly moving the debris for the determined Mayor Paul Guin and his spirited people to rebuild their lives and homes.

All Federal, State, and Local agencies are now at the National Guard Armory in Guin to assist in any way possible to bring this major disaster area back to as near normal as possible.

On Tuesday, Mayor Paul Guin resumed his duties with his city forces to furnish security. The National Guard, State Troopers, and Civil Defense were on standby in case of emergencies.

The U. S. Corps of Engineers from Mobile were in the area along with the Marion County Engineer's office to survey the damage. Much of the cleaning remaining to be done and some of the rebuilding was contracted by the Corps of Engineers to private contractors.

Mayor Paul Guin had high praise for all people who came to help, all of the area and out of the area churches, the American Red Cross, other cities, clubs and just plain American people who wanted to help.

Mayor Guin had special remarks for the 877th Engineer Battalion, the Salvation Army, Civil Defense and "The Mennonites,"

along with MC Charles A. Rollo, LTC Orval D. Proctor, Major Jack Christian, Mr. Fred Johnson, SFC Albert Johnson, Major Stidham of the Salvation Army, and Mr. Lloyd Hiebert, Harvey Miller and Jonah Dyck of the Mennonite Church.

Capt. W. O. Nichols and Lt. M. P. Braswell of the Alabama State Troopers stated that they had been involved in several disasters, but that this was the best efforts in relief that they had ever witnessed.

It will be a long time, if ever, that Guin, Alabama will be the same, and it will not be, because some precious souls are missing, but you can truly say that the people of this area have obtained strength from God and their fellow man, and an observer can say "that out of the mouths of babes and sucklings has thou obtained strength."

I N M E M O R I A M

To those who died and the hundreds who were injured during the Alabama tornadoes of April 3, 1974, this publication is respectfully dedicated.

To the thousands whose heroic deeds saved further suffering and more deaths, we salute you.

To the bereaved, we pray that you will look forward to a better tomorrow.

Disasters are never pretty pictures; and nature running wild is the most awesome of all.

The dead did not ask for their fate and the catastrophe that snuffed out their lives will long be remembered.\*

Among the dead listed by the American Red Cross were:

✓ MADISON COUNTY: (118)

✓ MRS. (MINNIE BELL) SMITH  
✓ MRS. LINDA LAVADA GURLEY  
✓ ANNA LAVADA DURHAM (infant)  
✓ DEBORAH SUE BRASWELL  
✓ MRS. NANNIE MOORE  
✓ RUTH MOORE  
✓ MRS. RUBY WILLIAMS  
✓ MATH BEVILL  
✓ MRS. EDGIE BEVILL  
✓ HOWARD BEVILL  
✓ MRS. GOLDIE FLETCHER

✓ HERMAN EDWIN JONES  
✓ LONNIE PAMPLIN  
✓ BENJAMIN GIBBS  
✓ ARNOLD BATES  
✓ WILLIE MCCRARY  
✓ MRS. MARY ELIZABETH SMITH  
✓ MRS. HATTIE RUTH MCGLOCKLIN  
✓ WALTER JAMES MCGLOCKLIN  
✓ SANDRA MCGLOCKLIN  
✓ MRS. MOVIE RUFFIN  
✓ MRS. ROSIE MACLINE

Gautney  
Gautney  
Gautney

\* Clifford Smith child (line)

\* Personal book

MRS. LILLIAN GREEN (line)  
 WILLIS ALVIS CARTER (line)  
 (line) MRS. HELEN CARTER (Mrs. Willie Alvis)  
 TERESA CARTER (line)  
 TONY CARTER (line)

MRS. LOUISE CAIN (line)  
 THOMAS L. CAINE (line)  
 AMOS GREEN → Annaise Green (line)  
 HERMAN LAMBERT

LIMESTONE COUNTY: (17)

Mrs. Louise Cain  
 Thomas Lee Cain  
 MRS. PATSY LOVELL

Mrs. Willie Alvis (line) Carter  
 Tony Carter  
 Teresa Carter

Willie Alvis Carter  
 Mrs. Novie Ruffin Ellison  
 Mrs. Lillian Green  
 Mrs. Annaise Green

FAYETTE COUNTY: → Walker Co.

REV. HOUSTON BRAND  
 MRS. SALLY BRAND

Mrs. Hattie McKelochlin  
 Sandra Ruth McKelochlin  
 Walter James McKelochlin  
 Mrs. Rosie Maddine  
 Mary Elizabeth (Mrs. Clifford) Smith  
 Clifford Smith's child

CULLMAN COUNTY:

CARL C. PRESSLEY

MARRION COUNTY:

24  
 TREVOR THOMPSON  
 MRS. MARY LOU HARP THOMPSON  
 MRS. JIMMIE SUE BALLARD  
 MARK TODD  
 PAUL TODD  
 MRS. LEM BAIRD, SR.  
 JIMMY HERON  
 BILLY JOE BROWN  
 MRS. VIRGINIA BROWN  
 MISS JANET BROWN  
 JOSEPH EMMET SHIREY

PRESTON MARTIN  
 MRS. ROBERT PENNINGTON  
 MRS. WINNIE ELLEN GILMORE  
 HOWARD CALVERT  
 MRS. ORVILLE J. HESS, SR.  
 RAYMOND RAIFORD EDWARDS  
 MRS. ROSIE BELEE BURLESON  
 MAGGIE LEE FISHER  
 MRS. JOSEPH EMMET SHIREY  
 MRS. VIRGINIA CALVERT

LAWRENCE COUNTY

BILLY BLANKENSHIP  
 MRS. LOVINIA BLANKENSHIP  
 AUDREY SUE LATHAM  
 PHILLIP OWENS  
 MRS. ALTHEA OWENS

PHYLLIS OWENS  
 JERRY OWENS  
 LINDA OWENS  
 BUDDY OWENS  
 WINFRED GLOVER

James Kirby\*



MRS. MARILYN BRACKINS  
ELLA MAE POKE  
SHARON LETSON

BERNARD LETSON  
RICKY LETSON  
MRS. BERNARD LETSON

WINSTON COUNTY:

JIMMY HENDERSON  
LIZZIE GUINETT  
IDELLA BERRY  
RAY CAGLE  
MARVIN TIDWELL

*James Earl Henderson?  
Martha Elizabeth Guinett*

JACKSON COUNTY:

*The Rev. Baxter Holt  
James Hazelwood*

FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL OFFICIALS RESPONDED  
TO THE TASK OF KEEPING THE DECORUM OF THE  
SYSTEM OF SOCIETY TOGETHER.

Federal and State officials quickly responded when a savage barrage of tornadoes left more than 70 dead and hundreds injured on Black Wednesday.

Governor George C. Wallace, moved to tears at times by the scenes of death and destruction, made a two-day tour in the counties most severely struck.

The governor traveled across some 16 Alabama counties, assessing damage and helping to plan state and federal assistance.

A group of congressmen and other Washington personnel flew into Huntsville and other storm centers to assess storm damage and map help.

The Washington group included Congressman Bob Jones of Alabama, Ray Roberts of Texas and John W. Davis of Georgia. Others included Walter Kallaur, with the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration, Robert Bartlett with the Small Business Administration, Dorli Van Lengen with HUD, and Aubrey Wagner, chairman of TVA. They were met by Huntsville Mayor Joe Davis and County Commission Chairman James Record, later conferring with other city and county officials of the

storm ravaged region.

For Governor Wallace, a casual remark he had made earlier in the evening that fateful Wednesday proved to be quite prophetic...

Preparing for a busy day on Thursday when he would start a weekend campaign tour, the governor had made plans to retire early in the governor's mansion in Montgomery.

But, as the news of the North Alabama disasters started to filter through, the governor and his press secretary, Bill Joe Camp, realized that a major disaster was in the making.

By midnight, the gravity of the situation had been confirmed, with reliable reports of at least fifty dead and millions of dollars in damage already totaled.

By 3. a.m., the governor had got <sup>sen</sup> word to the White House emergency office and asked for federal assistance, including a presidential decree declaring the area a disaster area.

The next morning, as cloudy skies threatened additional problems, the Governor and his staff finally were able to fly into the storm area, landing at Decatur.

That Thursday afternoon, Wallace visited a trailer park which had been severely damaged in Limestone County, then toured parts of Decatur and the Baker's Store area on Danville Road in Morgan County by car. He then boarded a helicopter for stops in Guin, where he visited the National Guard Armory, by then converted to a disaster center.

Later, in Jasper, he saw the almost total destruction in that area. The party flew to Birmingham, then boarded the executive jet for the trip back to Montgomery.

The next day, accompanied by Mrs. Wallace, the governor and other state officials made a more extensive survey in Madison, Lawrence and Cullman counties.

"I can hardly believe that nobody was killed here," the governor remarked as he looked over the ruins of a once impressive Huntsville trailer home area.

"God Bless All of You," the governor repeated time after time... "and Thank God you're alive."

To one survivor, the governor said: "I'm not minimizing your problem, but you're still young yet. You'll come out of it all right."

"I know about things being fine one minute--and something altogether different another," he said.

In Huntsville, he told officials and other, "Huntsville will come back. I just wish there was more we could do from the state level. We're doing all we can for now..."

Residents, forgetting their plight for the moment, seemed to get a sincere lift from the governor's visit and expressions of concern.

Later, he made a tour of rural areas, stopping here and there to speak to survivors still seeking to salvage their soaked and damaged belongings.

"You've lost an awful lot. But you are lucky. You have your lives...Keep your chin up...and God Bless Y'all," he told a group in the Harvest area.

At times the governor left his motorcade, got into his wheel chair, and accompanied by his wife, Cornelia, made close-up inspections of the devastated homes and businesses.

It was during the second day's tour that two of the more heart-touching scenes occurred involving the governor's party.

During a visit to a Red Cross Center, the governor and his wife were told of a 16-year-old boy who had lost three members of his family and was searching for them at the Center.



Mrs. Wallade<sup>c</sup> poured him some soup and offered her sympathy.

A short time later, the governor was attempting to console a woman who had lost all her possessions in the storm. She clasped the governor's hand and said: "And you know, I pray for you, too. I pray you can walk again some day."

Wallace smiled and answered: "You just keep praying for me and I'll keep praying for you."

Wallace alluded to his own fight for survival following the assassination attempt on his life two years ago on more than one occasion.

To one man who pressed close to his helicopter and told the governor how he had lost everything he had in the storm, the governor said: "You can overcome anything as long as you're not hurt."

A total of 102 tornadoes were reported in portions of 11 states April 3, 1974, and the nation's chief storm forecaster said the figure may go down in the record books as "the greatest one-day total we ever had."

Allen Pearson, director of the National Severe Storm Forecast Center in Kansas City, Missouri, said at least 10 of the tornadoes were classed as major ones.

He said the 10 were of "the same severity" as one which hammered Lubbock, Texas, on May 11, 1970, killing 26 persons, injuring hundreds and causing \$135 million in damage.

That twister, 1 1/2 miles wide and packing fringe winds of 200 mph, stayed on the ground for 8 1/2 miles, making a wasteland out of a 25-square-mile area. At the time, it was believed to be the largest single tornado in history.

He indicated the worst of the storms to be at Xenia, Ohio; two near Huntsville, Alabama, Monticello, Indiana, one in southern Tennessee and another near Champaign, Illinois.

Pearson said the latter went over the Illinois State Water Survey, near Urbana, where a sophisticated radar unit was being used. "It isn't often you can get a tornado to go over a particular hunk of real estate, especially right

over a radar unit."

He said that although the "data doesn't read out immediately," officials here "are pretty excited about it."

Pearson contends the April 3 barrage of tornadoes were a "once in a 20 or 30-year storm. It wouldn't surprise me if it turns out to be the design storm."

"We're still trying to put the jigsaw puzzle together," he added.

Pearson said that several teams were in the field checking the damage and tracking paths of the various tornadoes.

Pearson said the storm system was massive.

"The barometric pressure in the center of the major low, 200 to 300 miles long, reached about 29 inches. It was a major weather system that the parent low dropped below normal while it was crossing Illinois," Pearson said.

"It started south of St. Louis in the early afternoon, with mostly hail damage reported. The preliminary damage from hail alone was \$45 million in St. Louis.

"It continued across Illinois and one very major storm went from eastern Illinois all the way through Indiana and darn near to Detroit," he added.

"There was evidence that one thunderstorm produced

six or seven tornadoes along a 200 to 300-mile path," he added.

"All together, the Miami Valley area had three different squall lines--which is very unusual," Pearson pointed out.

Pearson said the first line hit Xenia.

"If that tornado had been two hours earlier, the death toll would have been in the thousands. It hit several schools--but school was out."

Pearson said Brandenburg, Kentucky, to the south, was hit about the same time from the same squall line. It was the first tornado there in 25 years, Pearson noted. Xenia and Greene County, Ohio, have had seven tornadoes in the past 25 years, the weatherman said, but none of those caused any fatalities.

Pearson said there was one big difference in the timing of the storms.

Those that struck in the north hit in early or mid-afternoon when it was hard to reach people because they were at work, with only a few watching TV or listening to the radio.

However, the storms in the south happened much later, Pearson said.

"If you're going to have them, it's better to have them

in prime TV time," he said.

At least three tornadoes menaced Huntsville on April 3, and two of those were "major", according to Pearson. The Alabama town had three earlier scares in the past 11 months.

The storms ranged to extreme western North Carolina, where one struck at Murphy, killing four persons and destroying two million board feet of trees in a forest. That area also had another tornado scare during the same week.

The twisters killed more people in six to eight hours "than in the last three years comined." Twenty-seven died in 1972 and 87 in 1973.

The previous worst outbreak was on Palm Sunday, April 11, 1965, when 271 persons were killed by tornadoes, according to Pearson, who has been the chief storm forecaster for the National Weather Service for nearly a decade.

The 1974 outbreak was monstrous.

"The jet stream acted like a giant pump, pulling air out of the top of the atmosphere so that any thunderstorms that formed in the lower level of the atmosphere got a free ride up to around 55,000 feet, where it got caught in a twisting motion caused by strong differences in the wind currents.

"When a critical speed was reached, another tornado



was born," he explained.

Pearson said an unusually deep low pressure system began building over Wyoming and a day later was in southeast Colorado, "always a very dangerous sign." That's when the trouble stated.

The forecaster said the Kansas City storm center was 80 percent accurate in predicting areas where twisters would strike during the turbulence.

Pearson said the storm tended to support a growing belief that twisters are more likely to prey on small towns rather than on large cities.

"In a sense, a big city tends to provide its own barrier because buildings and acres of concrete and asphalt add heat which discourages tornado activity," he said. "We're beginning to think that large towns may never have tornadoes that go all the way across them."

In many areas ravaged by the April 3 tornadoes, the sky turned nearly black, with a strange and eerie greenish hue, a familiar sight to many in "Tornado Alley."

Two hours later, scores of towns were counting their losses.

And in the middle of it all, the Midwest was shaken

by an earthquake.

Although earthquakes technically are not weather caused, that fact was no comfort to residents in western Indiana and Illinois when they were shaken by a quake which caused damage at St. Louis and registered 4.5 on the Richter scale.

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The Nation's top weather officials say the public storm warning systems generally worked on "Black Wednesday", April 3, 1974, despite the high loss of life.

Robert M. White, head of the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, made that observation during a tour of some of the storm-ravaged states while many of them were still digging from the debris of the worst series of tornadoes in almost half a century.

"Enormous numbers of lives may have been saved," White said, as a result of the local storm weather warning systems and their coordination with National Weather Service alerts throughout the Midwest and nearby regions.

"We can't stop acts of God," White said.

White made his tour with John W. Townsend, Jr., associate administrator of CDNOA, and National Weather Service Director George P. Cressman.

The officials termed the destruction the "worst they had ever seen from tornadoes..."

The group visited local weather agency officials in Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio for talks with local officials.

As many as 100 twisters were reported to have been spawned in the massive storm system which began forming

Tuesday, April 2, in Wyoming. It then moved into Colorado--the "nest egg" of many such storms systems--then took off on its deadly march early Wednesday.

As a result, the National Severe Storm Forecast Center in Kansas City had alerted state and local NWS offices throughout the vast area to be on the alert.

As the turbulent thunderstorms developed in various parts of the country, local offices took over and Midwest and Southern region issued "alerts, warnings and watches..."

As the Louisville tornado boiled into being west of the city, one meteorologist, John Burke, was reportedly talking to a newscaster for a radio station:

"My God, it's right here. I've got to go..." he told his listeners...

For the most part, cities and areas in the path of the savage series of storms did appear to have warnings of advancing trouble, although persons living in North Alabama in some instances were caught by surprise.

In that section, most of the twisters struck at night, in some instances after residents had retired for the night... In others, local siren systems failed to give adequate warnings for one reason or another...

But in Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana storm areas, most of which were "under fire" during afternoon or early evening hours, the story was somewhat different.

During White's tour of the Louisville area, a woman in a heavily battered residential section, told the visiting officials that she heard the weather service warning and took shelter in her basement. The winds took the roof off her house. Nearby homes were demolished.

White told newsmen in Cleveland, following his tour:

"My impression, after talking to people in Kentucky, Indiana and in Ohio is, that the warning system performed very well, that the warnings were in time. We talked to many citizens in other states who had heard the warnings and had taken cover as a result of the warnings."

White told newsman that he was sure "that quite a few lives were saved as a result of the warnings, but that does not say that we still can't do better, and we intend to continue to investigate the action of the warning system throughout the country... to uncover any deficiencies that might exist and seek remedies for those that do."

The Washington official took note of another factor, which also was due considerable attention as a result of the storms. He said there was a need for various communities



to take a look at their own preparedness and local warning systems with a view to educating the public on what to do in tornado situations.

This is a rundown on the homes and property in Lawrence County, Morgan County, Limestone County and Madison County.

LAWRENCE COUNTY

The tornado was 45 miles long; four thousand three hundred and twenty acres were damaged.

On thousand nine hundred and forty-four acres of forest land damaged.

There were sixteen deaths and sixty-three injuries.

Forty-four homes had major damages.

Forty-six mobile homes were destroyed.

Eighty-three farm buildings were destroyed.

Farm buildings with major damage, thirty-three.

Two hundred and thirty-eight family losses.

MORGAN COUNTY

The tornado was ten miles long.

One thousand one hundred and twenty acres were damaged.

Four hundred and fifty-nine acres of forest land were damaged. There were no deaths.

Ninety-six homes were destroyed.

Fifty-three homes had major damage.

There were fifty-six injuries.

Thirteen mobile homes were destroyed.

LIMESTONE COUNTY

The tornado was thirty-nine miles long.

Four thousand three hundred and sixty-eight acres were damaged..

One hundred head of cattle were lost.

Five thousand poultry were lost.

There were seventeen deaths.

Sixty-eight farm buildings had major damage.

MADISON COUNTY

There were eighteen deaths.

Two hundred and nineteen homes were destroyed.

There were a hundred and ninety-one injuries.

One thousand and twenty-five families suffered losses.

"THE NIGHT TO REMEMBER"  
MINUTE BY MINUTE

Place	Date	Time	Length of Path in Miles	Length of Path in Yards	No. of Pereons		Estimated Damage		Character of Storm
					Killed	Injured	Property	Crops	

#### ALABAMA

In terms of monetary damage, Alabama, by far experienced the most costly tornado disaster ever during the late afternoon and evening of April 3, 1974. It was at least three times more costly than the outbreak of May 27, 1973.

Before the tragic night was over, 86 persons were killed, 938 injured. Fatalities/injuries by counties: Marion 23, 250; Madison 21, 220; Limestone 18, 121; Lawrence 16, 63; Winston 5, 22; Morgan 0, 56; Franklin 0, 6; Cherokee 0, 20; Jackson 0, 4.

There were a number of tornados, with five distinct paths, including 4 powerful long paths.

The main events of the night are listed in chronological order below, however, it should be noted that numerous other reports of hail, high winds and in some cases funnel clouds and

tornados and damage occurred over the northern part of the state and the night's statistics looked like this:

Dwellings destroyed 1075, dwellings with major damage 299; small businesses destroyed or heavily damaged 205.

The night went like this:

Birmingham	[ 3	[ 3:30p.	[ 1	[ 8 00	[ 0	[ 0	[ 4	[ 0	[ Tornado,
Area	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[ hail
Jefferson	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[
County									

Tornado on ground briefly in the Concord area some 8 miles west of Birmingham. Moved northeast, 1 building demolished, 1 house and 1 mobile home damaged. Numerous reports of hail to 1 inch west and northwest of Birmingham.

Calera,	[ 3	[ 3:45p.	[	[	[	[	[	[ Funnel
Shelby	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[ cloud
County	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[

Public reported funnel cloud 5 miles north of Calera moving northeast. No indication that it touched ground but hail and high wind reported in the area.

Calhoun	[ 3	[ 4:21p.	[ 1	[ 8 00	[ o	[ 0	[ 3	[ 0	[ Tornado
County	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[

Public reported tornado on ground 12 miles north of Anniston moving northeastward. Trees and power



lines down 8 miles west of Jacksonville on  
route 204.

Centre,	[	3	[5:30p.	[	6	[	800	[	0	[	20	[	5	[	0	[	Tornado
Cherokee	[		[		[		[		[		[		[		[		
County	[		[		[		[		[		[		[		[		

Tornado touched down in southwest Cherokee County  
and moved northeast passing 5 miles east of Centre  
then across the eastern part of Weiss Reservoir.  
5 buildings and 6 mobile homes destroyed, 1 house  
heavily damaged.

Eastern	[	3	[5:30p.m]	[	85	[	800	[	55	[	408	[	7	[	°C	[	Tornado
Franklin	[		[		[		[		[		[		[		[		
County across	[		[		[		[		[		[		[		[		
northern																	

Lawrence,  
southeast  
Limestone  
Northwest  
Madison Co.  
into Tennessee

Powerful tornado apparently formed aloft 3 miles  
north of Hamilton at 4:54p.m. First touched  
ground near Newbury in eastern Franklin County at  
5:30 p.m., and moved rapidly northeastward. In-  
coming reports while the tornado was on the ground  
described it as "big and powerful and taking every-  
thing in its path." Severely damaged were such  
communities as Tanner, Harvest, Capshaw and Hazel  
Green plus the rural path through northern Lawrence  
County. When the tornado passed into Tennessee  
from northeast Madison County it had been on the  
ground continuously in Alabama for 85 miles. It  
passed between Athens and Decatur at about 6:05p.m.  
near the spot where the second major tornado would

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touch down 30 minutes later (see below).

Limestone,	[	3	[6:35p.	[	27	[	800	[		[		[		[		[Tornado	
Madison	[		[		[			[		[				[		(included in totals	[
	[		[		[			[		[				[		(above)	[

Second vicious tornado formed near Tennessee River southwest of Athens in almost exact path that major tornado had passed 30 minutes earlier. This one also moved rapidly northeastward at times only a block away from earlier path and never more than 2 miles apart. It ended just west of U.S. routes 231-431 near Hazel Green. Thus, many communities were struck twice 30 minutes apart. In some cases, rescue units enroute to help victims of first storm were destroyed by second. It was impossible to determine how many deaths/injuries occurred in 2nd storm--thus death, injuries and damage totals are combined in first tornado listing above. In both storms, more than 800 buildings were destroyed and about 360 heavily damaged, some 155 mobile homes destroyed and 63 heavily damaged. Numerous motor vehicles were destroyed and damaged.

Carbon Hill,	[	3	[5:58p.	[		[		[		[		[		[		[	Funnel
Walker	[		[		[			[		[		[		[		[	cloud
County	[		[		[			[		[		[		[		[	

Police reported funnel cloud at treetop level just northeast of Carbon Hill moving northeast.

No indication that it touched ground.

Pickens,	[ 3	[ 6:00p.	[ 120	[ 800	[ 3	[ 178	[ 7	[ °C	[ Tornado
Tuscaloosa,	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[
Fayette,	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[
Walker and									
Cullman									
Counties									

Tornado began 5 miles north of Aliceville, Pickens

County, and remained on ground almost continuously

reaching downtown Jasper at 6:58p.m. It then con-

tinued on a skipping path to northeast Cullman

County. It passed through Moores Bridge in north-

west Tuscaloosa County at 6:30p.m. and a 4-block

area in the southeast edge of Cullman was severely

damaged about 7:40p.m. One fatality in Cullman and

2 near Berry, Fayette County. There were 36 injured

in Cullman County and 102 in Walker. Downtown

Jasper hardest hit. Numerous stores/commercial

buildings damaged and several destroyed. The Walker

County Courthouse was severely damaged and may be

totalled. The modern new fire station was demolished.

Along the entire path, 436 buildings were destroyed

and 381 suffered major damage, 56 mobile homes

destroyed and 13 with major damage.

Lamar,	[ 3	[ 7:50p.	[ 135	[ 800	[ 28	[ 332	[ 7	[ 6	[ Tornado
Marion,	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[
Winston,	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[
Lawrence,									
Morgan,									
Limestone									
and Madison									
Counties.									

Tornado touched down north of Columbus, Mississippi

and moved rapidly northeast. First strike in

Alabama was 6 miles north of Vernon at 7:50p.m.

destroyed or heavily damaged.

Selfville,	[	3	[8:48p.	[		[		[		[		[		[Funnel
Blount	[		[	[		[		[		[		[		[ cloud
County	[		[	[		[		[		[		[		[

Civil Defense unit reported funnel just off ground moving northeast at 65 mph. No indication that it touched ground.



North-	[	4	[	1:00a.	[		[	0	[	0	[		[		[	Funnel,
Central	[		[	6:00a	[		[		[		[		[		[	hail
Alabama	[		[		[		[		[		[		[		[	

Numerous reports of funnels, roaring aloft, high winds, hail, severe lightening as lines and clusters of severe thunder-storms moved across areas--mainly Jefferson, Blount, St. Clair, Calhoun, Etowah, Shelby, Talladega, DeKalb, Marshall, Fayette, and Walker Counties. No significant damages.

Concord,	[	4	[	5:00a.	[		[		[		[		[		[	Funnel
Jefferson	[		[		[		[		[		[		[		[	
County	[		[		[		[		[		[		[		[	

Public watched funnel for several minutes just southwest of Birmingham. Moved Northeast. Several reports of hail in area but no indication that funnel touched ground.

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Childers-	[	4	[	7:00a.	[		[		[		[		[		[	Funnel
burg,	[		[		[		[		[		[		[		[	cloud
Talladega	[		[		[		[		[		[		[		[	
County																

Funnel reported by public moving northeast 30-40 mph.

Lake Jordan,	[	4	[	8:40a.	[		[		[		[		[		[	Funnel
Elmore,	[		[		[		[		[		[		[		[	cloud
Coosa	[		[		[		[		[		[		[		[	
Counties																

Public reported funnel moving northeast at 50 mph.

Apparently did not touch ground.

Tuskegee,	[	4	[	11:25a	[		[		[		[		[		[	Funnel
Macon	[		[		[		[		[		[		[		[	cloud
County	[		[		[		[		[		[		[		[	

Pubilc reported funnel 10 miles northeast of



Tuskegee moving northeast at 40 mph. No indication of touching ground.

Midland	[ 4	[ 3:25p.	[	[ 0	[ 0	[ --	[ 0	[ Tornado
City,	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[
Dade	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[
County								

Public reported tornado moving northeast at 45 mph.

Apparently minor damage.

Houston	[ 4	[ 5:00p.	[	[ 0	[ 0	[ 4	[ 0	[ Tornado
County	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[
	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[

Public reported tornado 15 miles east of Dothan

moving east-northeast at 40 mph. Apparently minor damage.

Ft. Rucker,	[ 4	[ 5:30p.	[	[	[	[	[	[ Funnel
Dale	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[ cloud
County	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[

Public reported funnel near Ft. Rucker moving northeast

at 40 mph.

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Enterprise,	[ 4	[ 6:55p.	[	[	[	[	[	[ Funnel
Coffee	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[
County	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[

Public reported funnel near Enterprise moving

northeast at 40 mph.

Tembleton,	[ 8	[ 3:25p.	[	[ 0	[ 0	[ 4	[ 0	[ Tornado
Haleburg,	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[
Henry	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[
County								

Tornado moved northeast. Church unroofed and mobile homes destroyed in Templeton. Several homes and mobile homes damaged in Haleburg.

P. 11

Tuscaloosa,	[ 14	[ 8:45a.	[	[ 0	[ 0	[ 5	[ 0	[ Wind
Tuscaloosa	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[
County	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[

High winds uprooted trees throughout the  
Tuscaloosa area, ripping down utility lines.

Several trees were blown across houses. Severe  
thunderstorms moved rapidly northeastward. Wind  
gusts to 58 mph. at Tuscaloosa Airport.

Millers	[ 22	[ 12noon	[	[ 0	[ 0	[ 4	[ 0	[ Wind
Ferry,	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[
Wilcox	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[
County								

Line of severe thunderstorms moved through area.

Most of the damage was to mobile homes.

Marion,	[ 22	[ 12:35p	[ 2	[ 800	[ 0	[ 0	[ 5	[ 0	[ Tornado
Perry	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[
County	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[	[

Tornado struck radio station WJAM and nearby area.

Station unroofed. Transmitter tower demolished.

Tornado at rooftop level.

These were the routes that the many tornadoes that struck North Alabama on the night of April 3, 1974, and the following pages depict the U.S. Department of Commerce's minute by minute report.