



Anna District
Historical Society
Anna • Kettlersville • McCartyville

Skipping Village Gazette

Remembering the Great Blizzard of 1978!

Written and compiled by Carol Wentz

Photos from the archives of the Sidney Daily News and the ADHS

Even though community and church activities went on much as normal on a warm and somewhat rainy Wednesday winter evening 45 years ago, every media weatherperson warned us that it was coming. Two low pressure systems would collide in the Midwest to bring us snow, cold, and high winds sometime after midnight on Thursday, January 25, 1978. It had the makings of a monster storm. And it was.

Most of us were awakened during those early morning hours to the howling of the wind. It often reached 70mph with sustained high winds of 50mph - 60mph along with heavy snow. Our part of Ohio received a foot to a foot and a half of snow before the storm finally blew itself out on Friday, January 27th.

Over half of the residents of Shelby County (some 7000 families) were without power--some for as long as 36 hours. The hurricane force winds cut the visibility to near zero and downed power lines across the area. Wind chill during the storm dipped to 50 degrees below zero.

Shelby County officials called in the National Guard on Thursday after Governor James Rhodes asked

Our newest ADHS Lifetime Members...

Marvin and Judith Schmiesing

Joel and Ashlinn Naseman

New ADHS Yearly Members...

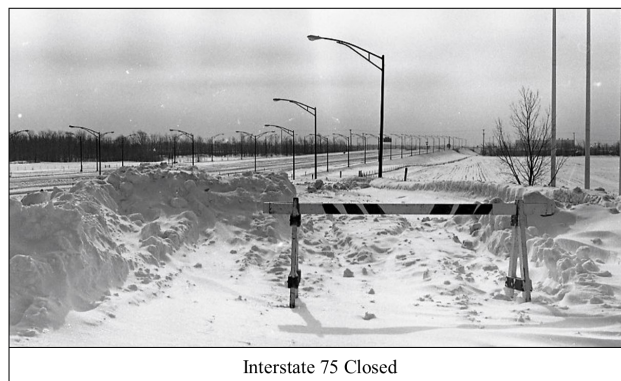
Mick and Sue Althausser

Joe and Michelle King

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National guardsmen helped airlift food via helicopter to those in need.



Interstate 75 Closed

President Carter for a federal emergency declaration. A contingent of guardsmen equipped with more than 25 trucks and other heavy equipment arrived in our county on Friday of that week. Two National Guard helicopters also transported stranded families to safety and took others to the hospital.

About 500 motorists stranded on Interstate 75 during the blizzard were housed at the school in Anna alone. The travelers were forced to remain until the interstate was re-opened on Sunday.

The following memories from the blizzard were shared by three Anna School District residents: Cindy Wilt Naseman (high school student at Anna in 1978), Jeanne Barhorst (R.N. working at Wilson Hospital), and Gerald Maurer (Kettlersville Dairy Farmer).

“My first memory is looking north out the window of our house towards the high school and seeing these large National Guard dump trucks with snow blades on the front pull in front of the west side of the school. It was snowing very heavily sideways, and the lights on the trucks were the first thing you saw. People were being unloaded out of the back of the dump truck and entering the school. These trucks were rescuing people who had vehicles stuck on I75 to the east of town. It was dark but fairly early in the evening. Someone came to our house and was asking for blankets for the people.

The next day these trucks brought cots and supplies to the school. At one point a helicopter airlifted a skid of food supplies to the school.

The second floor of the school was used for sleeping purposes. The old gym (now Milliette Auditorium) had cots set up in it for sleeping. If you had a family, the classrooms were divided up so your family could stay in them. They kept this floor very warm.

My neighbor, Doris Smedley, went to the school and organized the kitchen cafeteria supplies and workers to feed those stranded at the school. Many residents helped cook, clean, and whatever else was needed.



A lone pickup truck, a man, and a farm tractor are dwarfed by the massive drifts rising like walls along this Shelby County road. The scene is typical of man in the county, where most roads are still reported impassable.



Intersection of McCartyville Road and SR29

Since we lived across from the school, my family went over and helped in various ways. I was a junior, and my sister was a senior in high school. We were asked to sit in the library where people were allowed to sit and read during certain hours.

Bob Anderson, teacher, coach, and athletic director provided balls to play with in the gym. He played a huge role in organizing everything at the school.

On Saturday night, several musicians, Dale Locker, Sr., Larry Gratz, and Paul Reed, to name a few, played music in the gym for entertainment. I remember them asking the crowd what they would like to hear, and one gentleman said, ‘Show Me the Way to Go Home.’

On Sunday morning several of the musicians and one of the local ministers held a church service in the gym. By Sunday afternoon many of the people that were stranded were getting anxious to find their vehicles and leave, but the area was in a state of emergency, and you were still not allowed to be on the roads. I vaguely remember cars being towed from I75 yet on Sunday and Monday. A load of pigs was brought from the interstate to the school, and Jim Brandt helped to get feed for the animals.

After the stranded people left, residents were asked to help clean the school, from restrooms to classrooms. I just remember everyone in town being so caring and giving to those stranded by trying to provide for them whatever and whenever asked.”

As remembered by Cindy Wilt Naseman

“I was a young 24-year-old nurse and went to work at Wilson Memorial Hospital for the 11pm to 7am shift on Wednesday, January 25th in the Intensive/ Coronary Care Unit. During the night is snowed non-stop, and the wind was excessive. I watched the

storm from the 2nd floor ICU window. Frightening!

Our head nurse lived across the street, and even she could not come to the hospital. We cared for our ICU patients plus helped the 2nd and 3rd floor nurses with their patients.

The dietary staff could not come to work either. Some of the visitors who had stayed with their spouses overnight went to the kitchen and cooked what they could and brought trays to patients' rooms.

We nurses worked 12-14 hour shifts, then slept 3-4 hours, showered in a vacant patient room, and changed into patient gowns and scrubs. Then we worked 12-14 hours again.

When Friday evening came, luckily Dr. Ned Smith came on a snowmobile to provide care. More snowmobiles brought other essential workers, and nurses finally came to relieve us.

A good friend, Frank Ratermann, came to get me in an old pick-up truck on Saturday afternoon. Even though no one was supposed to be on the roads, he bucked snow drifts and brought me home. The snow was up to the roof of our house!

My husband had shoveled a path so I could get into the house. I was so happy to see Glen and our 13-month old baby boy, Nathan! Glen had cared for him the entire time.

I was exhausted but did my part to care for the patients at Wilson during the Great Blizzard of 1978.

What an experience!"

As remembered by Jeanne Barhorst, R.N.

"When we got up on that Thursday morning, it was snowing so hard, and the wind was so strong that I couldn't even see the barn. So I got my work clothes on and just started walking south thinking I would eventually run into it.

Once inside the barn, the wind had forced in so much snow that I felt more like I was outside than inside. The cows were all lying down in the free stall barn with 6-10 inches of snow piled on their backs. I worked by myself since our hired boy, Bruce Kettler, couldn't safely get to our place. The first thing I did was feed the cows hay right in the front of their individual stalls.



Looking south on Easy Street in Kettlersville

Of course, snow had to be shoveled off the hay bales stored upstairs before I could even feed it.

We kept the cows in the barn both during and right after the storm because they could easily walk right over the fence rows since the snow was drifted to the tops of the fence posts. We did have about a dozen cows get out after the storm passed and had a heck of a time getting them back into the barn. The snow was packed so hard that a full-grown cow could walk right on top of the drifts.

Thankfully, we never lost power and only had to dump one tankful of milk during the storm. Easy Street runs right into our farm lane going south. On Friday after it had calmed down, I walked down to the street and saw that it was going to be a while until that street would be passable enough to accommodate the milk truck to pick up our milk. The only solution was to cut the fences from McCartyville Road to our barnyard and make an alternate lane that the milk truck could negotiate.

My brother Dale got in touch with Ed Wreede who owned the farm implement store in town to see if we could use the large snowblower he had. Ed told us to go ahead and use it if we could get it dug out of the snow. Dale, who also ran a dairy operation, had a smaller utility tractor that he drove into town from his farm out on Lucas-Geib Road. Again, the snow drifts were packed so hard that he could

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drive the tractor, and later both the snowblower and his tractor right over the drifted fence rows between our two farms. I can remember shaking my head at Dale and asking him if it was really a good idea to drive right over the fence rows. For any of you who knew my brother, his response was typical for him, 'Watch me.' So until the roads were cleared during the next couple of weeks, the milk hauler would let Dale and me know when the tanker was coming, and we cleared out the lanes with the snowblower to get them into our farms.

Some of the drifts and snow piled up stayed until spring that year. The manure had to be hauled out of our barns and onto the surrounding fields, but we couldn't get our equipment out there. I finally called Don Sommer, and he brought out his bulldozer to run it back and forth on one of Dale's fields and also one of mine to make it possible to use those fields.

All I know is that I never worked so hard during that storm and the days following it to accomplish so little."

As remembered by Gerald Maurer, Dairy Farmer

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Packer Historical Center Hours

Sundays 1-4pm

Or call 937.646.0011 to schedule a private tour.



Les and Karen Fogt digging out on Easy Street in Kettlersville