

Tornadoes Send Shock Waves In Somerset Ag Community

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an access through the 1/2 mile of uprooted trees and limbs that covered the roadway.

"We worked and worked and worked because you could keep hearing them," said the farmer.

Later, when the dairyman tallied the numbers, about 24 head of his prime stock had perished. Those that initially survived were too badly injured to save for any reason.

"The ones that I lost were some of my best ones," Millard reported. "We lost some 2,000 pounds of milk a day right off."

His heifers, however, were at a rental property near Berlin. Since an unused milking parlor came with it, the Millards have moved their entire operation to the site on Lichty Hill Road.

As far as dairy animals, the Millard's loss was probably the heaviest of those reported, although the vortex also demolished countless barns and out-buildings of belonging to his farming neighbors.

Like Wendell and Darlene Yoder who still have a house but also the stress of decision-making.

On the lighter side, Yoder expressed a strong wish that in addition to his barn and various storage sheds, that the tornado did likewise with lots of starlings that had hung around the property.

Bill and Sylvia Mast never dreamed their Piney Run Farms would survive not one, but two

disasters withing 48 hours.

Combine, the tornadoes lasted mere seconds, which considering their violent vorticity, make the resultant destruction and devastation that remains, seem even more frightening to area residents. They will never be the same.

"It's usually very calm here," Mast reported, "but the first tornado hit the west side of the farm and the second hit the east side."

Thirteen years ago, the barn had burned down, now it was gone again. The destroyed machine shed was only 10 years old and the heifer shed was also gone. Worst of all, the prized stand of timber and his maple trees that were under forest management were gone.

The economic losses he sustained from the mutilation of the maples and hardwoods were greater than the sum of all the rest, including the four dead cows.

"It probably wasn't as hard on me at first as after the second tornado hit, then it was hard on me," confessed the man who puts God first in his life.

Gone were the dependable 4,400 taps from which the sap, in late winter and early spring, drips for evaporation later, into precious maple syrup.

Gone were the tender new maples that Mast knew were ready to enter next year's production potentially, 2,000 more taps.

What sealed the heartbreaking loss for Mast was the discouraging, official report informing him that regrowing a stand of timber such as the trees he lost, will take 40 to 60 years.

He related how he and his wife have generously donated to their church whatever they can supply, such as oak for the trim around its new addition, and their time.

"When I saw the losses, I had to ask, 'Why?'" he said. "Sometimes, we just don't understand."

But despite all, when the waterways cleaning crew began removing debris from Piney Run which flows not far from their house, and exhibited very small forbearance for the Mast's situation, Mast responded with an attitude that was consistent with his faith.

Mennonite Disaster Service, (MDS) and the Salvation Army sent food for all victims and volunteers so with Christian hospitality, Mast invited the surprised men to share the abundant meal. They accepted.

Among the souvenirs dropped on his land by the vortex were business signs from two restaurants in the nearby town of Salisbury.

Mast's wasn't the only timber ravaged by the disaster. Its path over a long line of forested ridges is extremely obvious.

Joseph Kinsinger, his wife, Lovina and their six children, ages 8 years to 3 months, were

just finishing the evening milking when the unexpected tornado touched down on their property in Greenville Twp. He was in the engine room of the barn.

"It's an inexplorable feeling," he reported. "The worst thing was I wasn't with the rest of the family."

Although, at first the generator blocked the sound of the fast approaching twister, it soon out-roared the running motor of the generator.

"It sounded worse than any freight train I ever heard," the young farmer said.

Kinsinger sustained heavy losses, as well. Like Mast he lost 1,200 maple taps and estimates 200 may have survived.

The barn was flattened, four sheds, and two horses gone.

MDS sent food to every farm for volunteers and the MDS support of hands and food will continue until very farmer can return to normal operations.

Edwin and Catherine Lee of Warren's Mill Road, Meyersdale, lost a new horse barn that was under construction and were very thankful that her parents from Kentucky had, 20 minutes earlier, arrived safely to visit their daughter and her family.

One person died as a direct result of the Sunday tornado and 15 injured persons were treated and released from local hospitals.

Bunny Miller's family found

that, although the tornado compacted her refrigerator, it spared the dozen eggs that were inside. These were found unbroken, on the ground.

And someone else discovered a Bible. The center was gone but at the end and beginning, pages were still intact.

Perhaps God is affirming that He is the Alpha and Omega. the Beginning and the End. the First and the Last.

"We were singing until we couldn't sing anymore," reported Darlene Yoder, mother of four children. "Then we prayed. 'At least we didn't have things flying at us.'"

"For days we were so dazed we couldn't make decisions. Finally, somebody started making decisions for us." Mrs Yoder said

"We have gained so much out of it," she added. "Both spiritually and from the friends who are taking care of us."

Figures from MDS indicate that in the entire area following both disaster, 55 houses were lost; at least 20 main barns and numerous other shed and storage buildings.

Seventy-four houses received major damage and even greater numbers received minor damage. It is possible the economic and ecological losses will far surpass the rest and be felt well into the future.

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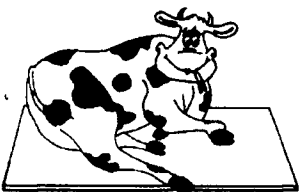
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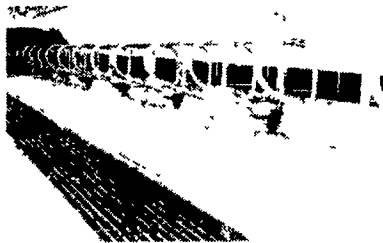
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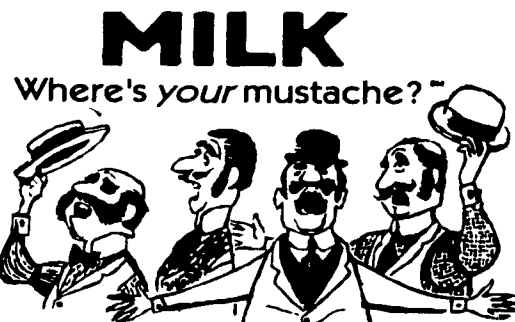
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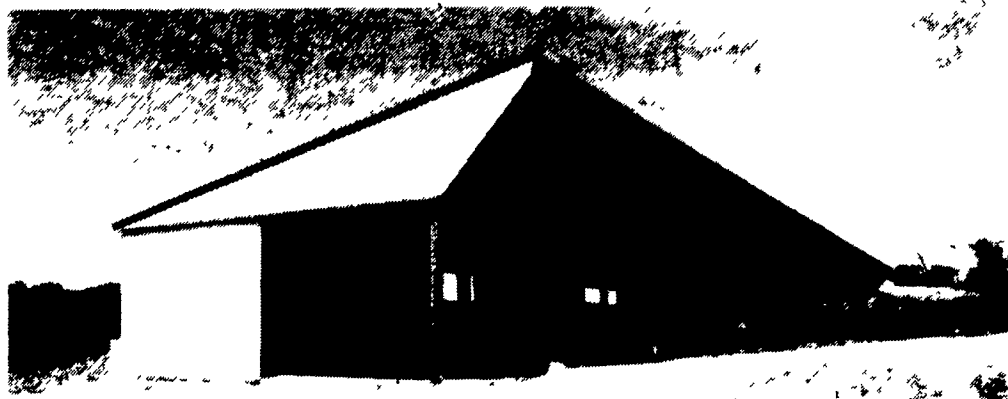
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