

Wake of destruction left by hurricane unparalleled in the annals of Honduran history

My head flushed. At first I wondered if we had yogurt, vegetables and bread. But those food-stuffs had long since perished and if we couldn't cook the pasta and rice, our cabinet looked depauperate. Without gas I reasoned, we don't eat. Corn flakes and rainwater milk won't do. I felt my face tighten as I mumbled.

Residents say that during the dawn of Saturday (Oct. 31), flood waters forced them to higher ground three times before they could climb no further. From this final high point they decided to abandon the area, cutting across a coffee field to find access to El Chile Bridge that leads into Tegucigalpa.

Unfortunately the bridge was also covered with water and several people were washed off. The timely arrival of Boy Scout Leader German Rivera and his troop of scouts proved a godsend.

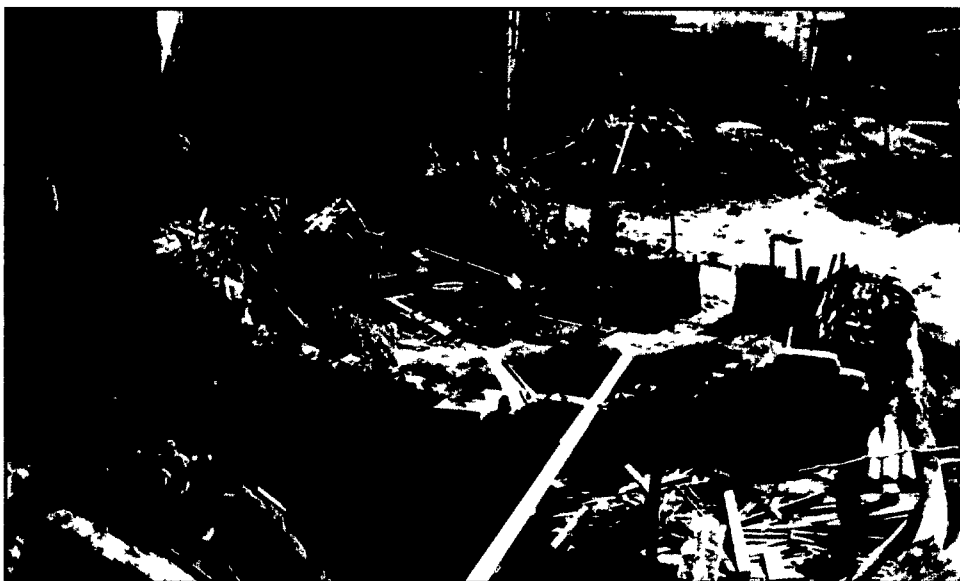
Damage to infrastructure, agriculture estimated in the billions

The scouts were able to pull out the people hanging on the bridge and no one perished.

Arriving in Tegucigalpa, the damage took my breath away. Streets—where not long before I had gone walking—were a mess of smashed houses, tons of sludge

twisted and tossed about like bits of scrunched-up paper.

Nearly everyone had their Hurricane Mitch story. One friend, returning from Tegucigalpa (normally a journey of about 4 hours) was marooned by a river for 2 nights and took 3 days to reach



and small rivers. It was hard to remember where the river had originally been. There was a huge lake in the center, half a hillside collapsed, and the walls of houses

home. Another saw a destroyed container park in the south, the containers scattered like a schoolboy's marbles, smashing into houses, killing many.

It was the worst natural disaster in the history of the country in terms of the amount of area affected.



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