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THE POST

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SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF THE DALLAS AND LAKE-LEHMAN SCHOOL DISTRICTS

BACK MOUNTAIN FLOODING

HUNTSVILLE CORNERS AND HILLSIDE ROAD HIT HARD



A section of Hillside Road near the five-way intersection at the Huntsville Reservoir was completely destroyed.

POST STAFF PHOTO/DAVE KONOPKI

FROM THE EDITOR:

Last week's heavy rainfall and flooding not only prompted the evacuation of approximately 200,000 people in Luzerne County, it also played havoc with this week's edition of The Post. In addition to creating several production problems, the weather also forced the cancellation of our two biggest stories for this edition – an important Back Mountain COG meeting and Back Mountain Relay For Life's annual cancer survivor dinner.

That's why this week's issue of The Post is a smaller than usual. But not only did we work hard to produce an eight-page paper under less-than-desirable circumstances, we also produced a 12-page special section for the 60th Back Mountain Memorial Library Auction. We hope you enjoy it.

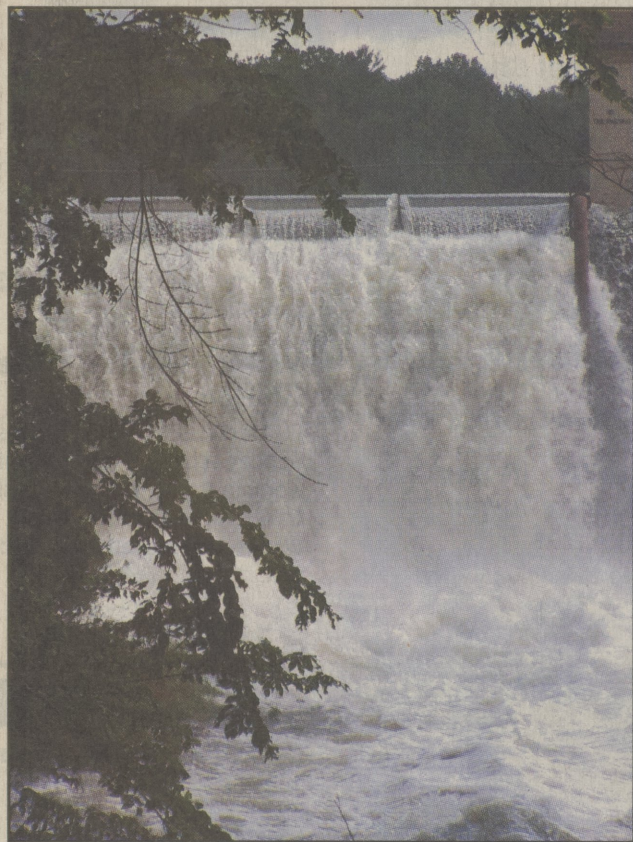
When the COG meeting and cancer survivor events are held, we'll be there. And we'll also be back to normal for next week's edition.

Thanks for your understanding and we apologize for any inconvenience.

- Dave Konopki

Rip-roaring water

By DAVE KONOPKI
Post Editor



POST STAFF PHOTO/DAVE KONOPKI

Water flows over the dam at the Huntsville Reservoir in Jackson Township.

JACKSON TWP. – Jay Wilkes and Al Fox were astounded by what they saw Wednesday morning, when the township supervisors visited the five-way intersection near the Huntsville Reservoir. And both well-spoken men were at a loss for words.

Overflowing water from the reservoir tore apart sections of roadway, destroying a section of Hillside Road. A nearby creek roared alongside the intersection, with the water reaching heights of more than five feet.

"I've never seen anything like it," said Wilkes, chairman of the township board of supervisors. "Maybe on CNN. I can't begin to describe what it looked like. I can't even compare it to anything."

There was no damage to the dam itself, said Fox. Officials from American Water were at the scene most of the day, he said. And like Wilkes, Fox was stunned by the extent of the damage.

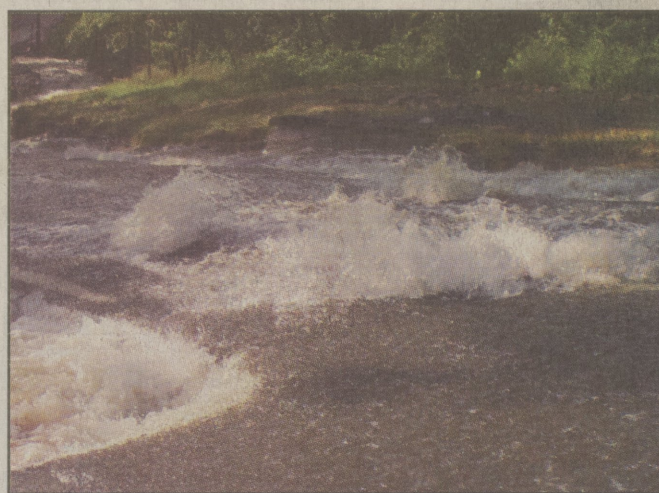
"I've absolutely never seen anything like that," he said. "I've lived here my whole life. It's amazing to see how much damage can be done by the force of water."

It could take several weeks, perhaps more than a month before the intersection can be repaired. Wilkes won't even guess at when the intersection will reopen.

"That's between the Lord and the engineers," he said. "There is so much damage. As the water went down, we got to see extent of damage. 'Shocking' is the only word I can think of to describe it."

In the meantime, cars traveling portions of Huntsville Road, Old Route 115, Hillside Road, Chase Road and Sutton Road, are being rerouted. That means new driving patterns for many township residents – as well as people traveling to parts of Dallas, Lehman Township and Jackson Township. Many people travel through the intersection on their way to the Penn State Wilkes-Barre campus and the State Correctional Institute at Dallas.

"I think it's going to be a terrible inconvenience," said Jackson Township resident Rob Seeley. "There are a lot of people from different locations who go through that intersection to go different places. Now, not only will you have to take a route that is out of your way, that traffic route



POST STAFF PHOTO/DAVE KONOPKI

A portion of the Huntsville Corners intersection is ripped up by water.

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will be much more congested."

The rushing water forced township officials to declare a state of emergency in the township at 4:55 a.m. Wednesday. More than 300 people were evacuated from their homes and taken to Dallas High School. Township officials and members of the National Guard set up a command center at the township municipal building. The residents who were evacuated were allowed to return to their homes late Wednesday afternoon.

Wilkes said an "unscientific" measurement recorded seven inches of rainfall in one hour on Tuesday.

"At first, we thought we dodged a bullet," he said. "But a call came into 911 early Wednesday and reported there was water in the intersection. At first, we didn't realize the magnitude of what was going to happen. Once the water started rising near the bottom of Hillside (Road), we knew it was time to get the people out."

Wilkes had high praise for township employees, members of the Luzerne County Emergency Management Agency and the 109th National Guard.

"I think it was one of finest moments in Jackson Township," he said of the response. Our police, fire and ambulance members did a great job. The county EMA was terrific and I can't say enough about the National Guard. Those guys were great. It was a very well-coordinated effort."

Rain doesn't put a damper on GOH bazaar

By CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK
Post Correspondent

DALLAS – Weather tried – but failed – to dampen the spirits of the hundreds of people who attended last week's Gate of Heaven Church bazaar. The entertainment and food was fabulous at the 11th annual event. And just being able to hold the three-day event was almost miraculous.

"There was rain all around us Friday, in Lehman and other towns, but amazingly, it wasn't a wash out," said co-chairman Bill Martin.

Marilyn O'Connell agreed.

"It rained from 5 until 6:30 on Friday then it stopped and the kids came out,"

said the coordinator of entertainment. "They were wonderful."

Headed by Maureen Hozempa of Dallas, a newly organized group of Wilkes Conservatory and Wilkes University students called the "World Players" sang Broadway numbers to charm the audience. The night before, entertainment was provided by a band called "Ripple Effect." Bob and Chris Oberst's Back Mountain Dance School students also performed, as did the Emerald Isle Dancers.

And then there was the food – haluski, porketta, potato pancakes, pierogies, funnel cakes, ice cream.

A free basket was a very popular event. The kids were entertained in the

school gym with games and prizes. The "Oo-la-la" café gave adults some quiet relief, offering coffee and desserts.

The bingo board and roulette wheel rounded out the entertainment.

"It all went very well," said Martin. "Our parish people showed up and they all know their jobs. Many went beyond their own responsibilities, even staying until the wee hours of the morning to clean up. It's a lot of work but fun."

The final revenue figures for the three-day event will not be available for a few weeks, said Martin.



FOR THE POST/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK

From left, Tyler Shetlock, Stephen Zapoticky, Spencer Youngman and Jake Simon play a game of chance at the Gate of Heaven bazaar.