

# From a Trickle Start in Montana, the River Gained Power Fast

The inexorable ways of the river call for residents of the tributaries to undergo their trial by water before a flood hits the main stream.

In the flood of 1952, first targets were the people along the valley of the Milk River in Montana.

Although the Milk's watershed looks impressively large on the map, it normally isn't much of a stream. In time of flood it, like other prairie streams, can become a terror.

Effects of a flood hit people more directly in the upper valley than they do in the southern reaches. The thin population is concentrated along watercourses, where water, timber and shelter are available.

The Milk, in its flood course from Glacier National Park to its confluence with the Missouri River a few miles below Fort Peck dam, hit a large percentage of the residents along its course.

The ranchers fled. Then as the flood went on they returned in planes to shoot from the air livestock huddled on hummocks and facing drowning or starvation.

Havre, where martial law was declared, was a quick victim. An estimated 1,200 persons were driven from their homes. Damage was estimated at 300 million dollars.

Chinook, named for the warm winds that brought the community its trial, waged a valiant battle. Half the town worked against a tide that came within six inches of topping the levees on which they worked. As they toiled, workers kept an ear cocked for a siren that would warn of a break.

The Milk roared into the low-water stream bed of the Missouri below Fort Peck. Eighty thousand cubic second feet of water flowed into Fort Peck; the outflow was choked down to 4,500 cubic second feet. This knocked two feet off the flood crest at Omaha. It saved Williston, N. D.

Mandan, located near the confluence of the Missouri and Heart Rivers, squeaked through for the second time in three years. The

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A Dam in the North Broke—When the Frenchman Creek dam near Hinsdale, Mont., gave way, it sent new flood waters storming into the Milk River and thence into the flooding Missouri. This spectacular photo was snapped by a Corps of Engineers photographer.

## Thank You!

### GOOD NEIGHBORS

We, at the Omaha Municipal Airport, perhaps more than anyone else, owe an extra measure of warm appreciation to the thousands of men and women who labored to keep the old Missouri out of the airport.



To Civilian Defense, the Army Engineers, Strategic Air Command, Civil Air Patrol, National Guard, Coast Guard . . . and the VOLUNTEERS from everywhere who held the line against all threats—we send our humble thanks. Because of them, the virtual destruction of the airport was averted and damage has been reduced to a minimum.

We believe that people have never responded more quickly and whole-heartedly to a call for help. Our undying thanks, and the deep admiration of the whole community goes to these "Good Neighbors."



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# A Buoyant Hope: That This May Be Last Great Missouri Flood

Below Omaha, the bottomlands of Iowa caught the full blast of the Missouri's power.

Despite a last-ditch stand by two thousand volunteers, the Plum Creek Levee near McPaul, Ia., crumpled. A murky wave bore down on Hamburg, Ia., 15 miles to the south.

Half that town of two thousand persons seemed destined for a soaking. Water topped an incomplete ring levee and buried 10 blocks. Another yard higher and the whole business district would have gone under.

Army Engineers cheated the flood of some victims. They dynamited a main-stem levee near the mouth of the Nishnabotna River. Water threatening Hamburg drained back into the Missouri.

Nebraska river cities like Plattsmouth, Peru, Brownville and Rulo were perched above the danger line. But they had to fight to protect their riverside utilities.

Co-eds from Peru State Teachers College filled sandbags in the rain. The college gym was a bedroom for 450 troops from Camp McCoy, Wis.

All bridges between Omaha and St. Joseph, Mo., were blockaded. The flood backed deep into the



Ax-It Exit—The owner of this house five miles southwest of Council Bluffs stored his belongings in the attic when he abandoned his house. When he returned to salvage some furnishings he had to chop a hole in the roof to complete his mission.

Platte and Nemaha Rivers.

In the state of Missouri, Atchison and Holt County towns such as Langdon, Corning and Fortescue succumbed. Rosecrans Field at St. Joseph became a dirty lake.

Troops at Fort Leavenworth, Kans., lost a heart-breaking battle to save Sherman Air Force Base.

Kansas City worried briefly about a rain-fed Kansas River colliding with the Missouri torrent. But the new super dikes were more than adequate.

Long before the crest reached Kansas City, Omaha and Council Bluffs were bouncing back to normal.

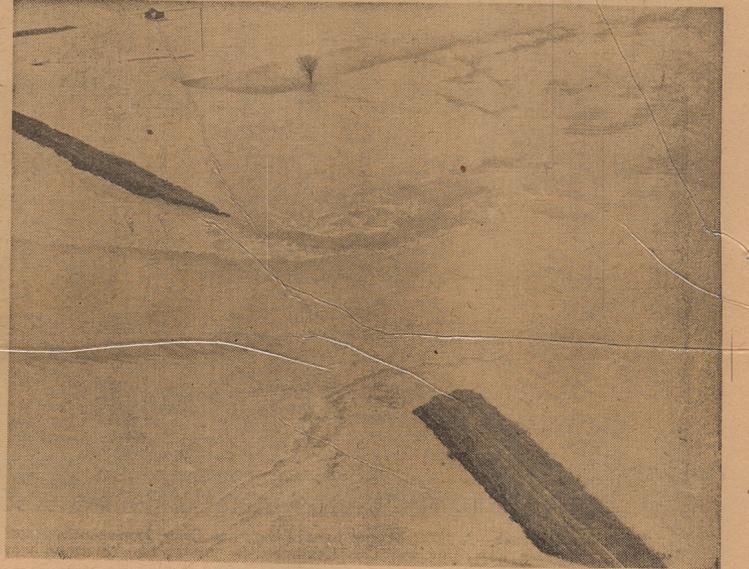
Even before the "all-clear" signal sounded, lowland industries were hauling back machinery. Evacuees, weary but thankful, carted back their refrigerators and beds.

Normal life was still a long way off for many homes in the huge basin. The stinking silt would eventually disappear. But the financial wounds would take years to heal and the broken dreams might never be repaired.

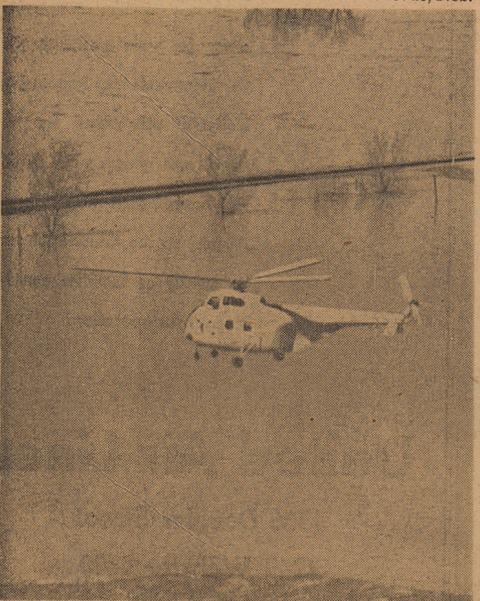
One hope buoyed everyone in the valley: That they might have witnessed the last great flood of the mighty Missouri.



Rescue Ship—This "sea-going" tractor was pressed into flood duty long before the crest reached the Omaha area. It helped evacuate 20 families south of Bellevue, Neb.



Headed for Pacific Junction—When this levee broke, a lot of water took off for Pacific Junction, Ia. Valiant work on dikes closer to town held down damage.



Bird's Eye View—A Coast Guard helicopter took Army Engineer Col. Delbert Freeman over the area east of Nebraska City. Just beyond the helicopter are Burlington tracks.



End of Road—Highway No. 2 east of Nebraska City on the Iowa bottoms lost chunks of paving and bridge approaches. This picture was made 10 miles east of the river.