

The Great Flood of 1965

The winter of 1964-65 had record amounts of snow and the Great Blizzard of 1965.

Spring and melting snow brought the Great Flood of 1965.

Sister Pat took most of these photos with help from brother Jim.

Some were taken from horseback.

My involvement in fighting the flood began on Friday night when I was recruited to handle sandbags to protect the Millside Tavern and bridge.

There were a lot of strong men and boys helping. Perhaps forty.

Sand and gravel were continually dumped from near-by pits.

We filled gunny sacks, contributed from the feed mill, as full as we could carry.

Every sack contained at least 200 pounds of wet sand.

A certain unspoken competition developed quickly as the smaller and weaker among us found less demanding jobs, such as holding sacks or shoveling.

We carried each sandbag between 10 and 30 feet, then flung them into the swirling raging water.

For hours the bags simply disappeared, and the river gained on us inch by inch.

The river was not simply taking the raw banks, that had happened hours ago.

Now it was consuming the thickly paved parking lot.

About 1am.

the river reached the high line power pole which was formerly many yards from the river.

The pole started to lean.

There was a lot of snapping and sparking until the power lines went dead.



About then, huge chunks of river ice started to come.

That same ice flow had taken the much newer Hanover Bridge just hours ago.

It did that by creating an ice jam at the bridge that caused millions of gallons of water and millions of tons of ice to accumulate behind the bridge.

Although the water is lapping on the bridge in Pat's photo, the water level was two feet lower when the ice came down.

Many times, ice chunks crashed into the bridge, and several times they started to back up, but every time the ice cleared.

The heavy ice passed in less than an hour.

With the passing of the ice, the river but slowed considerably.
Now the only danger was the relatively slow rise of the river and flooding.
Most of us went home totally exhausted.

Flooding in Dayton.

I got to bed around 4 a.m.
About midmorning Mom
woke me up to say some
men were here to see me.
It was Al Corrow and at one
other man from Dayton.
Maybe Melvin Rouillard, but
I can no longer recall.
The men were rounding up
dike builders.
I drove to Dayton.
I did not return home for
three days.



Pat took the picture to the
right, while facing north,
from the east end of the Dayton Bridge.
The ice-free Mississippi River is in the distance.
Both rivers are at flood stage but slow moving.
The ice chunks were melting and rotten by the time they reached Dayton.
The bridge was high and was never in danger.
But the town of Dayton was in extreme danger from flooding.
The dikes were started too late.
Several homes and buildings were already flooded and left outside the dike.
In fact, most of the town was built on an ancient flood plain.
The dike building was easier at Dayton.
We used regular sandbags which held no more than 100 pounds of wet sand.

They were a delight to
handle.
The amenities were better
too.
They fed us well.
Mostly sandwiches, but hot
food at times.
Langer's Bar supplied us
with free beer with our
nighttime meals.
The photo from the east
bridge approach to the
northeast shows Ammie



Morin's quaint barber shop and several other buildings that were left "beyond the pale".
Ammie cut my hair in that shop many times.
Al Corrow had a brand-new red dump truck.
At one point somebody said that Al put the first 500 miles hauling sand from the Crow's Nest pit.

This picture is from the east end the bridge to the southwest. I believe it shows the Holton and Talbot homes. It also shows the discharge of a large trailer mounted pump that drew



water from a six foot deep about 100 feet away. That engine was loud and ran continuously. Within 24 hours the rivers crested. Thereafter, those of us that stayed patrolled the long and winding for leaks and erosion. A couple of times we called in equipment. Most of the time we could handle the problems with our shovels and bags. We did not sleep much in the nights because of dike patrolling. When we did sleep, we slept outside except when it as raining. Then we slept on the floor in Hofmeister's house which was evacuated.

These last two photos were taken by Pat and Jim from horseback, Nevada and Cherokee.

They are along the winding road that connects Dayton and St Micheal, on the north side of the Crow River.

Across the water, the buildings are a small house and a detached garage, both white.

Beyond that, slightly to the right, are Kenny Zachman's farm buildings. Also, mostly white.

You should be able to recognize the farmstead by the dark silo in front of the barn. Both the homestead and the farmstead are built on high spots above the floodplain.



One ancient riverbed of the Crow crossed to the right, then made the depressions that currently hold Foster and Rice Lakes and reached the Mississippi via the gap west of Rabishau's hill.

An alternate, but higher branch formed the ponds of our Lakeview Farm.

Tom

