

# ELWOOD

Est: 1856 ~ Floods of 1881 ~ 1952 ~ 1993  
First Anniversary  
Flood of 1993

Historical Past  
Promising Future



## OUR HISTORICAL PAST

Elwood was originally established in 1856 as Roseport by a man from 'back east' who called himself Richard Rose. He obtained financial backing from several St. Joseph investors and purchased the property from Henry Thompson, "for \$10,000 and not a penny less." Mr. Thompson had been deeded the north east quarter section of what is now Elwood, and was granted permission to operate a ferry across the Missouri river at this point from the U. S. Government through the Indian Agent Major Daniel Van DerSlice, representing the Iowas, Sax, and Foxx Indians.

Most of the land was quickly cleared and lots were for sale immediately. By the following spring there were several homes and even the promise of a grand hotel. Mr. Rose had envisioned it as being an inducement to draw people from the east to this promising little river town. Mr. Rose's past was to catch up with him, however, and he was forced to sell his interests and move further westward. It was later learned that his real name was George Ingraham. He had assumed the name of Rose to conceal a penitentiary record.

Another townsite company, named for it's principal backer, John B. Elwood, Esq., from Rome, New York, purchased the town and re-named it Elwood. A stipulation of their contract was that they would finish this hotel that Mr. Rose had hoped to build. It was named the Great Western Hotel and for it's time it was a 'grand hotel', stretching 100 feet in each direction from the corner of Fifth and Douglas streets. It had a depth of 75 feet and there were three stories to the wooden structure, which made it an imposing sight. Construction began that same year and was finished the following summer. The furniture arrived by steamship on August 5, 1858.

In December 1859 Mr. Lincoln spoke from the porch of this hotel when he visited Elwood on his journey to Leavenworth. This was the year before he first ran for the presidency. The sheriff of Doniphan County was married there in the spring of the following year. He hosted a great ball in his bride's honor. Our first organized school classes were held in the west wing of the Great Western before moving to our first school building located on the corner of 7th and Douglas.

In the spring of 1863 the Great Western was torn down board by board, to keep it from going into the flood waters of the Missouri River. There are some homes in Elwood still standing that were built with lumber that was saved from the Great Western Hotel.

Elwood's early history was very promising and many thought it was to become a St. Louis of the west. At one time there were three doctors

in residence, a general store that boasted as having 65 tons of merchandise delivered by boat during one season. We once sported a bowling alley, several saloons, a couple drug stores, and several lawyers, one of whom, T.A. Osborn, became the governor of our state. The first railroad to operate in Kansas was in Elwood. The locomotive 'Albany' was ferried across the river on April 23, 1860, and the next day took many sightseers on a trip to Wathena.

## FLOOD OF 1881

### WEST ST. JOSEPH

An area now in south Elwood was formerly called west St. Joseph, according to a St. Joseph newspaper. The following was taken from the April 13, 1881 edition of the St. Joseph Gazette. "Yesterday afternoon a Gazette reporter mounted one of J. Kate Burgess; superb saddle horses and struck out for the water-bound city of West St. Joseph.

"On arriving at the bridge he stopped long enough to gaze upon the mad rushing waves as they leaped like demons at play, then spurring the frightened horse, he crossed the bridge and looked upon the liquid guarded houses as they stood at irregular intervals about the submerged ground.

"Here and there some low frame dwelling, from whose windows frightened children were peeping, frowned down upon the unwelcomed invader.

"Enos Craig's house and stable were both circumscribed with the water, and the gentleman was compelled to go from one to another by means of a gondola or, in the vulgar tongue, a raft. It was really romantic to the looker on, but doubtless not so to those who saw it in its true light.

"By keeping on the railroad track the reporter was enabled to reach Elwood.

"Arriving at the post-office, the reporter called upon the portly post master - A. Dyske - and asked his opinion of the stage of the river.

"'Well,' said he, ' I don't think we will be hurt. This river is not as deep now as it was in '54 or '55. Now I noticed the papers speaking of the great freshet of '44. The truth is, the river was not as high then as it was ten years afterwards. I remember old man Joseph Robidoux coming over here during the rise of '54 or '55 and remarking that it beat '44 all hollow.'"



## DIKES USED TO BE

"At this place Henry Pillow was found setting his fence back several feet so as to give a new road in place of that which has been washed out, Mr. Pillow stated that within the last eight days the water had cut inland a distance of one hundred and thirty-three feet, and seemed determined to join Peter's Creek and donate a handsome tract of land to Missouri. The gentleman thought that Surveyor Hotchkiss had the correct idea of how to hold the Big Muddy within her bounds and pointed out the remnant of his work. He was confident that the river would cut through in the course of time.

"A little further on John Siutor was found had a work moving his house to a place of safety.

"While the reporter was talking the angry waves fell heavily at his feet and cast the spray in his face -- they seemed to contend for the ground on which he stood -- far away towards the Missouri shore they seemed to grow more docile -- but 'twas not the case. 'Distance lends enchantment.'

"Chief Church, of the United States surveyors, is having brush and rock hauled preparatory to adjusting the old dikes and constructing the new ones.

"While affairs across the line are in a bad condition they have been greatly magnified and highly colored.

"Between Elwood and Wathena the river is cutting. Elwood is all right. West St. Joseph is inundated. The bridge is in no danger whatever -- 'tis as firm as the rock of Gibraltar."

"There was a rise of only one inch reported yesterday, but the danger comes when the tide goes down. The river rose eight inches, however, Monday night.

**April 18, 1881**

"The news that the river is resting will be hailed with a hearty 'thank God' by thousands of homeless men and women. At half past nine last evening the highest point was obtained--twenty-three feet and one-half an inch above the low water mark. Up to the hour of writing the tide had not begun to recede. The rest may be only for the present. Another wave may come and with youthful vigor climb still higher on the gauge. If so there will be no pen, however graphic, able to describe the terrible scenes that will undoubtedly follow. One half of the sad story has not been told. It will never be. The damage can not be measured by mathematical rule nor reckoned in dollars and cents.

"At Elwood there is still a number of families living in houses, which have not been invaded by the water, but the cellars are

flooded and all around them the tide is eddying and rushing. Upon its bosom is borne the wrecks of houses, great piles of lumber and an immense quantity of driftwood. Postmaster Dyske remained at his post.

He was assisting others to leave. Workmen were still engaged about St. Joseph & Western shops yesterday, corralling the floating lumber in 'booms'. (These were the railroad shops that were located on either end of Pacific Avenue, along the railroad tracks.)

April 28, 1881

"The river is still rising. The gauge at twelve o'clock last night showed the depth above the low water mark to be twenty-two feet and nine inches, with an increase of one-half inch per hour. The reckless ruin of property continues. This is a dark day, and without promise of a bright tomorrow. Only the sufferers fully realize the extent of it.

"At Elwood affairs are in a deplorable condition. There is scarcely a house in the village but what is surrounded. The inhabitants were compelled to vacate the place. Many of them came to this city in skiffs. An elderly couple, Mr. and Mrs. John Cannady, were found in their house standing in water three feet deep. They were old and helpless and doubtless would have drowned had they attempted to save themselves. W.H. Stone moved his family to a place of safety and then worked like a beaver to rescue his neighbors, all day long he worked at the oar. The sight of the water hemmed village and the knowledge that so many were in danger gave courage to his heart and strength to his arm.

The same might be said of Ed Uran and many others. It is thought that every resident escaped, but 'tis doubtful.

## THE FLOOD OF 1952

"The mighty Missouri River climbed to 27.2 feet here between 8 and 10 last night to equal the all-time peak flood crest recorded in 1881." This was the news as printed on April 23, 1952. "At 10 p.m., the level fell back to 27.1, where it had rested since two in the afternoon. At 1 a.m. the gauge again read 27.2 reading was the official weather bureau revised crest prediction, but observers earlier has seen the unpredictable Big Muddy surge previous crest forecasts.

This statement was retracted three months later when the Corps of Engineers reported their measurements were off and the crest was actually 26.8. The record was never equaled

"Elwood took the biggest bath. On April 14 evacuation there was nearly 60 % complete and reports of looting began to spread, along



with stories of 'movers' charging exorbitant rates to help folks get their belongings to high ground.

"Within a few days, Elwood was a ghost town, patrolled only by boating law enforcement officials and some of the 3,000 Army and National Guard troops on hand to help handle the emergency.

"Meanwhile, on the Missouri side of the river, sightseers jammed Wyeth Hill and created unexpected traffic problems for police. Estimates of 100,000 spectators outdistanced the best Apple Blossom parade and attracted some of the same sort of vendors, including a balloon man who made the rounds on Wyeth.

"The river was changing course, digging a new channel between Elwood and Wathena and carrying away chunks of U.S. Highway 36. The Missouri was also threatening to abandon St. Joe, leaving the city without a sewage terminus."

#### FALSE FLOOD NEWS THE AIR

##### FULTON LEWIS TELLS NATION ST. JOSEPH IS GOING UNDER WATER

St. Joseph is not going under water from the Missouri River flood.

Confidence of St. Joseph followers of some radio news commentators was badly shaken shortly after 6 last night when Fulton Lewis Jr., announced that "St. Joseph, Mo., will be totally flooded by nightfall." The statement was broadcast over the Mutual Broadcasting System. KFEQ is the St. Joseph station affiliated with that network.

Lewis made an apology at 10 last night to KFEQ for broadcasting misinformation on flood conditions here.

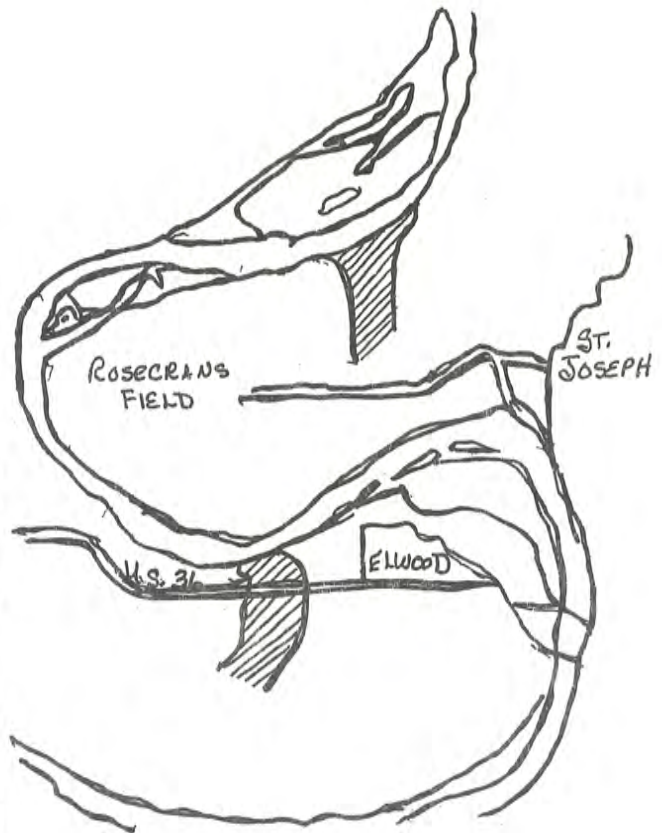


ELWOOD as it appeared during the flood of 1952. The Missouri River reached the western edge of Wathena.



### NEW CHANNELS

Shaded areas on this map of the Missouri River valley immediately west of St. Joseph show the approximate location of channels the unruly stream has gouged into French Bottoms, threatening transportation to Rosecrans Field, and into lowlands west of Elwood, Ks. The Kansas cut, about 30 feet deep, severed highway 36 and the Union Pacific railroad tracks. Although water continues to surge beyond the shaded portions which indicate serious cutting by the water. They said the water fans out over a wide area at the south tip of both channels before re-enter the river.



"Then to make matters worse and the ground muddier, it started to rain, further swelling river until it filled the six-mile channel between St. Joe and Wathena. On Thursday, April 24, without deliberate irony, 'Singin' In The Rain' opened at the Missouri Theater.

### RIVER GAUGES TO BE CHECKED HOURLY

Nearly 1,000 soldiers are slated to arrive here tonight to assist in battling the surging Missouri River, E. Browning, area engineer announced last night.

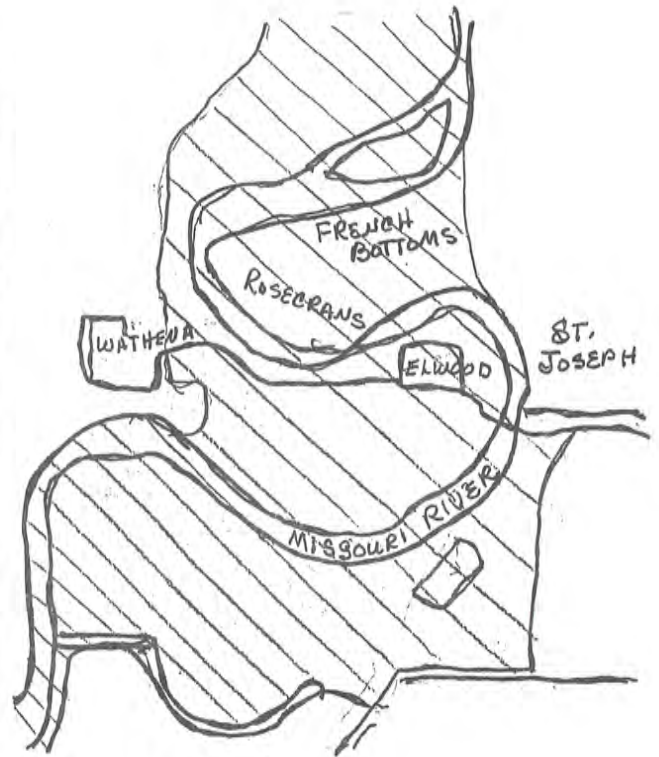
Several hours later, area river workers who were warned of one and one-half foot revisions in the crest prediction for Nebraska City, stepped up their close scrutiny of the huge agricultural levee chains in this district as the Big Muddy pounded southward only a scant three days ahead of the expected crest here Sunday.

On April 19, 1952 river engineers, who have staged a relentless week long battle here against the Missouri River's terrific onslaught, struck an optimistic note last night as they indicated the peak of flood damage may already have been reached.

The greedy Big Muddy, surging upward gradually toward a predicted near record 27 foot crest here Sunday, has ripped through or over all private farm levees bordering its channels from Rulo, Neb. to Parkville, Mo., inundating 65,120 acres of lowlands.

## BLUFF TO BLUFF

Full scope of the Missouri River flood in the St. Joseph vicinity is depicted graphically by this map, which indicates the vast expanse of water stretching across the valley bounded by the Kansas and Missouri bluffs. As the Big Muddy surged to a 27.2 crest, it swept over Gladden Bottoms, Rosecrans Field and French Bottoms, washed over Elwood, broke through the narrow levee separating Lake Contrary from the river, and spread westward as far as Wathena, inundating highway 36. A levee around the southeast portion of Wathena kept the river from doing more damage. The flood was contained on the south at Contrary creek and the Halls levee line.



## BROWNING LAKE FORMED

During the last week, Browning and the Army engineers debated back and forth between returning the river to its original channel around Rosecrans Airport or cutting a new channel further to the east, just under the line of bluffs below Wyeth Hill. Money eventually decided the issue, when the engineers determined it would be too expensive to rebuild the one and one-half miles of shattered banks that once turned the river westward above St. Joe.

During the rest of the summer the engineers dug the channel we have today, a nearly straight run from north of town to the South Side. The new channel would move fast, but it promised stability. The new cut also created an oxbow lake around the airport, which is now called Browning Lake in honor of the engineer who not only oversaw the great flood, but who pulled a few strings to get a bridge built over the oxbow so St. Joseph folks could get to their airport, but they had to go through Elwood to get there. Gaping holes in highway 36 between the Pony Express Bridge and Elwood, Ks. block the return of the bulk of furniture and equipment to homes and business establishments. "You can't haul anything into town until the highway gets fixed," the mayor



commented, "and it may be pretty tough walking in."

He said the water was dropping gradually from the houses, but that it was still pretty deep where the railroad tracks had been undercut west of the grade crossing.

Calls were sent out to the Kansas Highway Department yesterday morning by the mayor in an effort to hasten repairs to the roadway.

Mayor Blum said he was obtaining 12 to 15 pumps to pump water from basements in the town.

"We can't take out more than a foot or two daily," he estimated. If the water was pumped out suddenly the walls might collapse.

Boat travel into the north portion of Elwood had to detour under the railroad bridge after launching from the Kansas approach of the highway bridge.

Although the water had uncovered all the concrete paving from the Pony Express Bridge to the railroad tracks, two feet of swift current still surges across the road near the port of entry building.

## FLOOD OF 1993

### ELWOOD COVERED BY 9 FEET OF WATER

Elwood, Ks., was hit by the flooding Missouri River early Sunday, closing U.S. Highway 36 and leaving up to 9 feet of water over the evacuated town.

Water surrounded almost every home or business, tipped over a service station's fuel tanks, and left about 9 feet of water near the Happy Rest Motel in Elwood, just over the river from St. Joseph. Sunday's damage came when the Missouri River levee failed northwest of the waterworks as the river crested at 32.78 feet.

But weather forecasters warn that after a slight drop during the day, a new and higher crest of 32.5 to 33 feet is expected this morning. That would be almost 7 feet higher than the crest of the 1952 flood.

Floodwaters could cover the region for days or weeks until the Missouri River drops below 20 feet, enabling levee floodgates to be opened. That is 13 feet lower than the river stage forecast this morning.

The Missouri River bridge to Kansas remains closed to all traffic, and



no one is allowed back into the town of 1,275 people until the water goes down.

### **ELWOOD IS GONE, TEAM SAYS**

#### **TOWN IS NOW A PART OF THE MISSOURI RIVER**

Flooded Elwood, Kan., may no longer exist as people knew it, U. S. Coast Guard authorities warned Tuesday after touring the evacuated community of 1,275 residents.

Petty Officers Vera Daniels and Trent Clark of the Leavenworth Disaster Response team said their jobs are to keep boaters off the water.

"This is now the Missouri River, and the river is closed. No one is allowed on the water around Elwood," Clark said. "It's completely gone."

He explained that while dozens of homes and businesses are still standing with water up to their roofs, the real damage will occur when the water recedes, probably in the next month.

"When the water goes down, the water inside the houses will smash windows and wash the contents away as it recedes. It will get a lot worse.

Daniels said the flooded area is treacherous for people in boats because of strong currents and pollution from chemicals.

"Our concern is the safety of people in the area," Daniels said. "The river is completely dangerous right now."

Both the Happy Rest and former Skyline motels have water on their roofs, and the Herzog Asphalt plant is flooded. The south wall of the huge asphalt storage building collapsed. And Elwood Bank is flooded to the second floor.

Above-ground gasoline storage tanks at the Circle M service station floated up and tipped against each other. One of the huge tanks, bearing a cigarette ad, was carried across flooded U.S. 36 and is on its side a half mile south. Authorities are unsure what became of the fuel inside.

At 4th and Libel, the Lonnie Young home proudly displays the American Flag on a pole while water laps at the top of the garage door. Further west, Holiday Motel and Kountry Kitchen are flooded with 30 inches of water.

Payless Cashways, initially spared when the levee broke Sunday, now has about 24 inches of water throughout the store, while across the



highway and only a block west the K & B Service Stop is completely dry.

At Affiliated Foods, a huge diesel generator which has been hauled in before the water hit was fired up and tested to get the grocery supplier's coolers and freezers going.

While the main facility was apparently spared, some of the food will have aged beyond its expiration date by the time trucks can get in to remove it, workers said.

Throughout Elwood only the metal tops of flooded cars were visible. Three dogs there awaited rescue by boat.

#### **ELWOOD IS NOT GONE YET, RESIDENTS SAY AT MEETING**

Elwood, Kan., residents say the death of their town has been greatly exaggerated.

About 500 townspeople rallied Wednesday at the Ramada Inn to raise their spirits and rage at the front-page headline that announced the vanishing act the Missouri River has played on their town.

"We are going to rebuild," Mayor Sue Bartley said to a rousing ovation.

For many residents, the town meeting gave them a chance to chat with their friends and neighbors for the first time since fleeing their homes last weekend. Local officials and a spokesman with the Federal Emergency Management Agency fielded dozens of questions concerning disaster relief and where to pick up their mail.

They also gave to vent their frustrations.

With their daily routines turned upside down and the Missouri River showing no signs of retreating from their homes and businesses, many Elwood residents awoke Wednesday to see a News-Press headline saying, "Elwood is gone, team says."

#### **ELWOOD STUDENTS TO ATTEND SCHOOL AT ST. JOSEPH CHURCH**

Elwood School students, who were flooded out of their facility last month, will begin classes this semester at Wyatt Park Baptist Church in St. Joseph, the school principal said Sunday. Church leaders met Sunday night to approve the decision, Principal Pat McKernan said.

Cleanup work at the one-story school is under way, McKernan said, but it won't be completed for at least two months. When the Missouri



River levee broke last month, the school was swamped with 2 to 3 feet of water. Computer equipment, textbooks and other learning materials were spared, McKernan said.

Beginning August 19, students will use Sunday School classrooms and the gymnasium at the church at 28th Street and Mitchell Avenue, the principal said.

Last year, 250 students were enrolled from kindergarten through 12th grade. McKernan hoped most of those students will return this year.

Registration for kindergarten through eighth grade will be held from 9 a.m. to noon today at the Ramada Inn, 4016 Frederick Blvd. High school students will register from 9 a.m. to noon Wednesday.

#### **COUNTERPART IN INDIANA TRUCKS AID TO ELWOOD**

Most residents of Elwood, Ind., had never heard of Elwood, Kan., before the Great Flood of 1993.

But when the Hoosier city, with a population of 9,400, heard about the Kansas town's dire straits, its residents went right to work.

On Monday morning, a tractor-trailer truck carrying 22 tons of relief items arrived in St. Joseph for delivery to Elwood. The trailer was accompanied by Elwood, Ind., Mayor Denny Robinson, who brought a check for more than \$4,600.

An Indiana vegetable processing plant, the Red Gold Corp., got the charity ball rolling with donations from its employees. Red Gold also donated the truck that would be used for hauling the items to the sister city.

"When residents of our city heard about the disaster here, they went to work immediately, Robinson said. "They contributed canned goods, clothing, insect repellent."

Robinson came to the flood site to view the damage firsthand. He boarded a boat to take a guided tour of the city.

"It's a bad situation," he said, as he climbed ashore after the boat tour. Waiting to meet him on shore was Elwood, Kan., Mayor Sue Bartley.

"It's unusual," Robinson said. "The two towns have probably never heard of one another, but the name of our school athletic teams is the Panther. We seem to have a lot in common."

Phil Brown, economic development director of Elwood, Ind., coordinated

the Indiana relief effort with Robinson. The Call-Leader newspaper of Elwood, Ind., and Brian Reichart, president of Red Gold.

"I had never heard of Elwood, Kan., until I saw the evacuation on the news," Brown said. "A lot of us here in Elwood (Ind.) saw it, so we thought it would be a good idea to make a community relief project. Nearly everyone in town either donated money or goods.

"It makes you kind of proud. It's a good little community." Pride was abundant.

Along with relief supplies, residents of Elwood, Kan., will receive 200 newspapers telling the story of the relief effort, 200 Red Gold T-shirts and an Elwood Panther sign.

Some months later Mayor Bartley was to learn that Mayor Robinson was lucky enough to win one million, twenty-three thousand dollars in their state lottery's television show.

#### **HIGH WATER KEEPS U.S. 36 CLOSED**

High water on U.S. Highway 36 near the Wathena, Kansas, interchange is keeping the important link between St. Joseph and Wathena closed, according to the Kansas Department of Transportation. Harold Lane, maintenance superintendent for Northeast Kansas, said Wednesday that no serious washouts have been found on the five-mile section of highway.

"There's still quite a bit of water west of Wathena, from one and one-half to two feet deep," Lane said. "That's the holdup. We can't open the road until the water goes down."

#### **ELWOOD ALIVE WITH RESIDENTS CLEANING UP**

##### **TOWN 'DOWN BUT NOT OUT' RESTAURANT SIGN PROCLAIMS**

Parts of Elwood were like a ghost town Sunday--quiet, empty and in ruins.

But in other parts, it was a town teeming with life and vigor as residents continued their cleanup efforts and tried to return life to its normal routine.

For blocks along Vermont Street, a mirror of streets across town, people shoveled muck from inside their homes onto their already mud-covered front lawns. There's not much green grass left in Elwood.

They grabbed the trash bags and filled them to the brim with their belongings. Those, too, ended up on the front lawn to be carted away with their neighbors' debris.



"It's pretty shocking," Mayor Sue Bartley said. "There's a lot of work to be done."

Joe Scott watched as his wife, Zola, carried flood-ruined items from their home. Wet and muddy sandbags sat at the base of the home. The blades of a fan placed on a ruined kitchen chair spun in the breeze. A sign that said "Grandma and Grandpa's House" lay discarded.

"It's worse than I thought it would be," Scott said. "We just got in there yesterday, and we've already taken a load to the dump. A lot of this stuff will go to the dump, too."

#### **WORKING AT THE SCHOOL**

At the Elwood school, crews worked for the third day. A sign at the front of the school showed a high-water mark, but the water hadn't carried away the black letters spelling out pre-flood information about physicals and football practice.

Craig Sheppard, director of buildings and grounds for the Elwood School District, said he would not comment on the damage the school had suffered. He said workers had been ordered not to talk to the press and not to allow any photographers inside the building.

Although no one would confirm it, what appeared to be the school's wooden gym floor filled a trash bin and lay scattered in pieces on the ground. The building's chairs were stacked outside and dehumidifying pumps snaked through the windows to help dry it out.

Even though the water has receded in much of Elwood, the town isn't dry yet. In addition to the water, some areas of town are buried under feet of sand deposited by the raging river; in spots the sand has been plowed to the side of the street much like snow is in the winter.

The streets also have taken a beating, with sections washed away.

At the Holiday Motel, the rooms had moved outside. Sheets and bedspreads hung to dry out on makeshift laundry lines, while mattresses, lamps and chairs sat piled just outside the rooms.

Next door, at Ralph's Kountry Kitchen, the owners put their views on display on a sign outside the restaurant that read "Elwood--the community that's down but not out."

#### **ELWOOD PLANS TO REBUILD**

Responding to reports in Missouri last week that the City of Elwood was 'gone', Elwood residents have announced plans to rebuild the small town. Citizens of Elwood residing temporarily in St. Joseph gathered last week for what turned into a rally to keep Elwood alive.

Mayor Sue Bartley was blunt with Elwood citizens and informed them that they would not begin reconstruction of the city until the levee is fixed. "We have no water, no sewer and no levee, and until the levee is repaired, we are on hold," she said before a large crowd.

Mayor Bartley said she feared they would experience a second flooding as did the community of Pattonsburg, Mo.

On Monday of this week the National Guard began to ferry Elwood landowners into the city. Only one member from each household was permitted and no one was allowed to enter the homes.

"I believe most of them are feeling better after seeing their homes from the outside," she said.

The water level in Elwood has dropped to about 4 foot., down from the 10-plus ft. in portions of the city during the flooding. The southern part of town along K-238 seems to be the deepest. It is reported about 7 - 8 homes in Elwood did not sustain water damage to the main living portion of the home. Affiliated Foods, Dean Machinery and Fermenta were also reported dry.

#### **ELWOOD GETS PRIORITY**

Elwood residents will sleep a little easier next week now that the Army Corps of Engineers has approved emergency repairs to the levee.

Airport Manager Brian Weiler, who is coordinating the repair effort, said corps officials Friday approved the building of a temporary levee. Construction could begin early next week.

Although it was announced earlier that levee repairs wouldn't begin until October, after the Missouri River went down, it became apparent to corps and city officials that something had to be done sooner. With one of the two major breaks about 46 feet deep, a river stage in the 20's could flood Elwood.

#### **HOMES WERE DEMOLISHED**

The destruction of the 1993 flood will leave scars on Elwood for years to come. There were approximately 125 homes that had to be demolished, The Clark Memorial Methodist Church was damaged so that the cost of repairing it was prohibitive. There were well over 100 mobile homes in three trailer courts, E.D.C.. Ellsworth, and Sunflower Village, as well as another 30 or more on private property around town.

Costs of demolition ran around \$2,000 per house with the federal government picking up 75%, the state 10% and the remaining 15% was local funding which was received as a grant.



FEMA travel trailers and mobile homes dotted the whole town and Sunflower Village was almost filled with them. But they were a dry place to sleep and were very welcomed by almost everyone. The Federal Emergency Management Agency furnished each displaced family with somewhere to live, whether it be in your own back yard or in the trailer court. Travel trailers were furnished for single or two person families, and the mobile homes for families with children. Some people, who's homes were completely destroyed, have purchased the mobile homes from the government, and will live in them permanently.

### **RAILROAD TRACK DESTROYED**

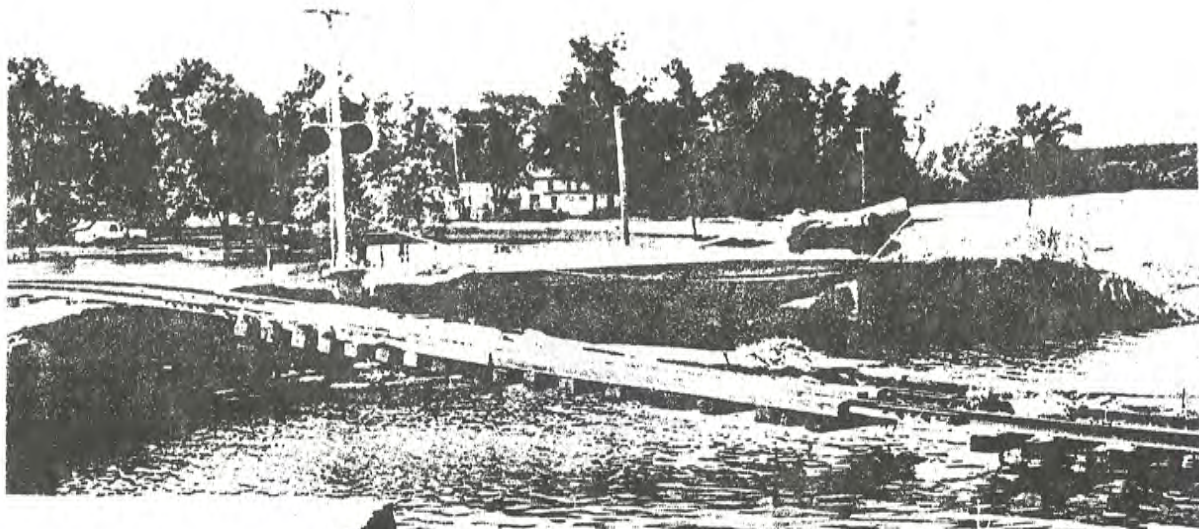
The Northeast Kansas and Missouri Railroad was out of business for over seven months. The track was destroyed from Wathena to the Missouri River bridge at St. Joseph, leaving no way for customers to ship by rail between Missouri and Kansas.

The rail line to Wathena more closely resembled a roller-coaster than a railroad track, with dips and occasional stretches of unsupported tracks extending over water holes.

Bob Thompson took over as manager of NEKM just two days before the flood. He had the job of getting the railroad back in service, and was granted about \$1 million in federal assistance to rebuild.

The 1873-vintage Missouri River bridge at St. Joseph, owned by KEKM, suffered only minor damage as floodwater swept the bottom of the revolving span for almost two weeks.

The bridge was back in service right away, but trains had nowhere to go. At the main Elwood crossing, 'Elwood Lake' had replaced the roadbed.





Rev. Stan Hughes



Julie Pohl



Clarence Douglas

**VOLUNTEER HELP**

Rev. Stan Hughes has dedicated himself to the task of Elwood's recovery since before we were able to come back to our homes. While still in St. Joseph, he and Julie Pohl began setting up the work groups to get our houses cleaned out and then the process of repairing them.

They set up a volunteer headquarters and are still working from the church offices, coordinating the workers and overseeing church donations for materials.

One of our most loyal volunteers is Clarence Douglas from Hiawatha, Kansas. Clarence has been here every week day since our recover process began, doing all kinds of work. Clarence is accomplished in many areas and has used his skills in many homes in Elwood.

**MAYOR SUE BARTLEY**

Elwood Mayor Sue Bartley, because of her loyalty to the town and her efforts to safe guard its people, became a well known celebrity across the country. Her face wan on newspapers and T.V. sets from coast to coast. Many, many hours of her time during the flood was spent trying to see to the people's needs. After the flood waters receded then came the monumental task of rebuilding Elwood.



Mayor Sue Bartley



## MANY NEW HOMES IN TOWN

Many new homes are popping up around town, however these are not mushrooming, there is a lot of hard work going into them.

A couple of these new homes belong to Ms. Pat Huffman and Ms. Hazel Massey. These homes were build entirely with volunteer labor, from the Mennonite Disaster Relief Teams. Monies these people received from their FEMA grants purchased the largest part of the materials, with help from senior citizen grants and some church donated funds.

### 'HOME' FIRST TIME HOMEBUYERS PROGRAM

In August, 1993 The First State Bank initiate conversations with Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing in an effort to develop a special flood related program under the "HOME" First Time Homebuyers Program. Their directors and officers committed significant time, resources, and energy making telephone calls, writing letters, and even attending a Department of Commerce and Housing meeting in Hays, Kansas. With the assistance of Janice Walker, Executive Director, Doniphan County Economic Development Commission, First State Bank Officials hosted nine (9) Department of Commerce and Housing employees for a post flood tour of Elwood. In short, the efforts paid off as a special flood program was announced in January, 1994.

To qualify for this loan program, applicants must meet a number of criteria including, but not limited to, the following:

- Must have been affected by the Flood of 1993 and have a valid FEMA number.
- Must meet specific income guidelines.
- Must meet the criteria for obtaining a bank loan (good credit history, repayment capacity, etc.)
- Must personally provide as much down payment as is reasonably possible.
- Must commit to residing in the home for at least five (5) years.

Construction and permanent financing is being provided by the bank on a fixed interest rate basis and without points, origination fees, lender's inspection fees, etc. Upon completion, the "HOME" program supplements the homeowners' down payment with a 'soft' second mortgage. A local appraisal firm is providing appraisal service at a reduced rate and the primary, general contractor is working on lower-than-normal profit margins. The homeowner must commit to living in the home for at least five (5) years, to properly maintain the home, and to pay their mortgage loan as agreed. This is not a grant program! You might say that the "HOME" program is "people helping people helping themselves."

Already, a number of projects have been approved. One family has purchased an existing home which was financed under the "HOME" program and which is being thoroughly renovated with the assistance of volunteer labor and grant programs. One manufactured home has recently been delivered, is in the set-up phase, and will soon have a masonry foundation. One site-built home has just been completed and the family is ready to enjoy their new home. Two site built homes are "framed in" nd construction of another has just begun. Other homes have been approved and should be under construction as the summer progresses.

Every site-built home is being built to meet stringent specifications and energy guidelines. It is expected that the homes will qualify as "five-star" energy rated homes; among the first such homes to be built in Kansas. Similarly, manufactured homes must meet stringent specifications.

It is easy to get lost in the details and to overlook the real reasons our bank has allocated time, energy, and money to the "HOME" program. Directors and Officers of The First State Bank of Elwood are committed to assisting in Elwoods' ongoing development. Affordable, quality homes are part of the "American Dream" and critical to the re-building of Elwood. The First State Bank is happy to be helping families realize their dreams and excited about the future of our community.



Mr. & Mrs. Koehn of Christian Public Service working on the sidewalk at Hazel Massey's new home.



Bulldozers working at the break.

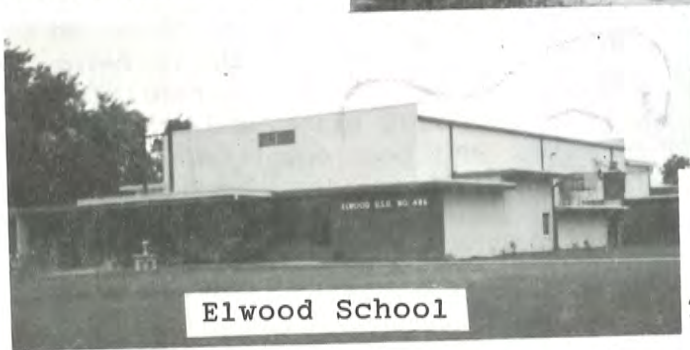
Levee & Lake formed by break.



Empty Spaces!!

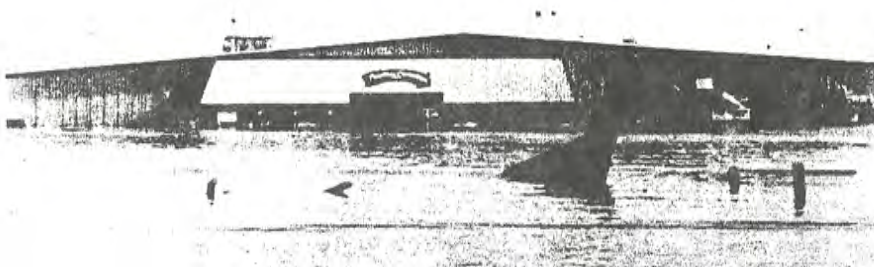


Sandy farm land.

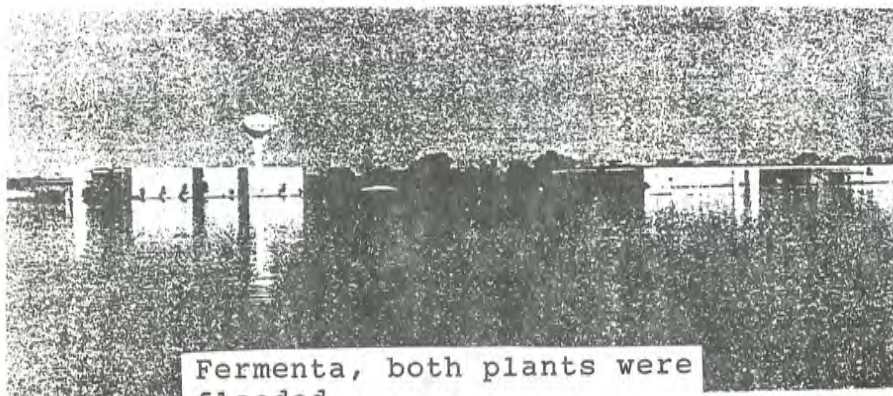
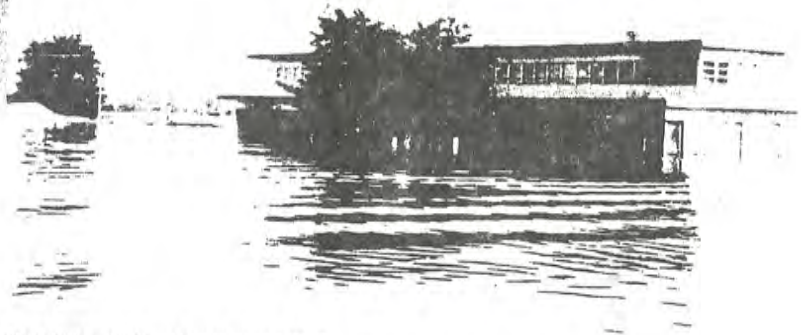


Elwood School



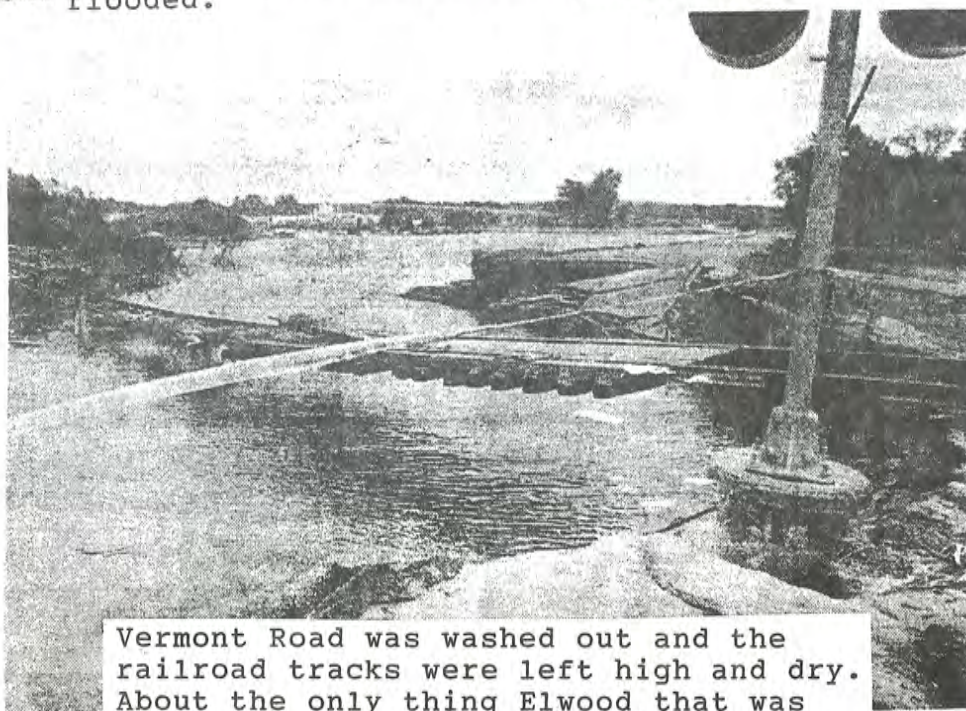


Payless Cashways recieved  
2½ to 3 feet of water.



Fermenta, both plants were  
flooded.

Snorkel, underwater



Vermont Road was washed out and the  
railroad tracks were left high and dry.  
About the only thing Elwood that was  
dry at the time.





Levee break & 40' to 45' lake formed by the river.



Farm land turned into a desert.



Where homes used to be.



'Elwood Lake'  
Formed when water under-cut  
railroad tracks.



Ellsworth Trailer Court  
All trailers were completely destroyed.





Elwood students began their 1993 fall semester in St. Joseph

and the spring term began back home in Elwood.



Elwood City Hall, East!

During the flood the city business was conducted out of the temporary offices in the east wing at the Ramada Inn.



National Guard Armory in St. Joseph, which housed the Red Cross during the flood emergency.

## A MESSAGE FROM MAYOR BARTLEY

1993 will be remembered for one thing in Elwood - the flood of all time that presented the biggest challenges of our lives. The greatest challenge might have been having the courage to make decisions that would affect hundreds of lives and determine if there would even be an Elwood after the water went down.

Early in July the Missouri River was rising creating a high water table and sewer problems that required the city crew to work 18 hour days to keep the system operable. But the river had never topped the levee in 25 years and so we thought we were fighting a serious, but temporary problem. The temporary problem extended into three weeks and eventually into a lifetime.

The Mighty Mo continued to climb up the side of the levee and it was evident by July 22nd that the citizens should be informed what procedures would take place if the city had to be evacuated to protect lives. A round the clock vigil began at city hall. My crew distributed fliers to every home and business in Elwood at 10:30 p.m. July 22. At noon on July 23, the Army National Guard arrived in town to help with evacuation if it became necessary. Their presence added a feeling of security and preparedness as July 24th began with black clouds and a downpour of more rain.

At 9 a.m. on the 24th the river stage was reported to be 30 feet and rising. Thirty feet had been established as the point when the alarm would be sounded to start evacuation of the city - evacuation of the city where I grew up, where all my family, friends and all the people I care about live. I didn't want to flip the switch and sound the siren. I wanted to be wrong about my feeling that the city and people were in imminent danger. If it didn't flood, I'd be laughed at for evacuating. If it did flood and everyone was still in town, there could be fatal results. I could take being laughed at, but I couldn't live with myself if there were injuries or fatalities. The siren sounded.

The sun came out in the afternoon, but it didn't stop the water from topping the levee. Volunteers attempted to sandbag the levee, but it was futile. For their safety they left the area. Electricity to the town was cut and the city evacuated. Through the night water poured over the levee and on the morning of July 25, the levee breached about three miles north of Elwood and the Missouri River's swift current gushed through Elwood and became several miles wide. The town was isolated on all sides. Highway 36 was closed. It looked and felt like the end.

Every ending can be a chance for a beginning. Elwood's new beginning would take unending energy, patience, perseverance and a whole lot of help from everyone. That help started with Ramada Inn's accommodations for a temporary office and making rooms available for staff and Elwood residents. The Ramada staff made their facilities available and offered help wherever they could. Direct telephone lines were installed and answered 24 hours a day.

A command center was set up on the Missouri River Bridge. The only way into town was by boat. The local "River Rats" volunteered their time and boats to transport the guard, city and other agency officials. August 2, 3 and 4, citizens were car



pooled from the East Hills parking lot to the bridge where they were put in boats three at a time to be allowed the first look at the devastation to their homes and property.

The school and the bank experienced special problems of continuing operations across the state line. Authority was granted from appropriate officials for them to continue business on the Missouri side of the river. Wyatt Park Baptist Church provided facilities for school to be held.

It was August 12 before the water had receded enough to allow people to visit their homes by car. City Hall reopened for 12 hours a day, seven days a week. It would be Thanksgiving before the hours went back to normal. Over 100 port a potties had to be brought into town. Potable water was restored August 24.

Good things began to happen. Volunteers flooded the town to help with clean up. Donated goods arrived the truck loads. The Corp of Engineers assisted with sewer repairs and clean up. FEMA and the State sent personnel to provide leadership and assistance to provide for the people's needs. The State helped cut through red tape to provide housing grants. The nationwide response not only provided goods and services, but it provided hope, and everything is a little easier to cope with if you know you're not alone.

A year later, there is still a lot to be done, but a lot is behind us. The one best thing is that no lives were lost. I am grateful for the volunteers, the contractors that helped us and all those offering support. And Bobby, Wayne, Vern, Doug, Gary, Bill, Darrell, Scott, Pam and Phyllis, my staff through the past year, I say thanks to you. The city employees worked endlessly to help everyone.

And a special thank you to my family, Jack, LaShonna, Kellie and Kim. You shared me with the city I love.

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### A WORD ABOUT COURAGE

Webster's definition of courage is the quality or state of mind or spirit enabling one to face danger or hardship with confidence and resolution. The July 25, 1993, flooding and events thereafter certainly challenged everyone affected to dig deep and find Webster's kind of courage and begin again.

I am very proud to know the Elwood people that have shown their resilience and fortitude. I feel privileged to work with a crew that addressed their own needs, both before and after the flood, after the needs of the other residents, Bobby, Wayne, Doug, Vern, Gary, Pam, Darrell, Scott and Bill all had damage to their homes, but they worked long, hard hours from the first of July right on through the flood until the town was substantially back on its feet. Their dedication to the city goes beyond just being employees.

With a Mayor like Sue Bartley, it would be difficult not to be dedicated to the city. Leadership during and after a disaster divides those that care from those

that are just there. The last year has been an experience for me. I had never seen anyone work with such compassion, determination and yes, courage. Sue's unselfishness and love for Elwood and its people kept her going when anyone else would have given up. Working with state and federal agencies is trying and frustrating, but for the sake of Elwood, she was unrelenting. I look at and read about the other flooded cities, and I know Elwood has rebounded better than the others. It is indeed a pleasure and privilege to know someone with her knowledge and giving personality. Making decisions that affect other people is not ever easy, but making decisions during a disaster takes broad shoulders. Sue fulfilled her obligations as Mayor and then some. She always takes the time to help those that will let her and need it.

Great people like these along with the volunteers, the contractors that did a little extra, and a lot of help from the state, made my job a little easier. I thank you all.

Phyllis McCrory  
City Administrator

This booklet, made for the people of Elwood as a remembrance of the "Great Flood of 1993", was compiled from copies of clippings and articles with permission of the St. Joseph News Press and the Wathena Times, and original materials from Dorrene Mitchell and Juanita Simpson. VISTA Volunteers.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ELWOOD SCHOOL LIBRARY U.S.D. #486: Eugene Field School, River Bluffs Library, Truman Middle School, Besse Ellison School, Veterans of Foreign Wars of St. Joseph, and Kay & Mike Ford, Lee's Summit, Missouri

Shawnee Heights U.S.D. #450, Tecumseh; Econo-Clad Books, Topeka; State Department of Education, Topeka; St. Francis Academy, Atchison; Washburn Rural Middle School, Topeka; Overland Trail Elementary, Overland Park; Shawnee Mission School District, Shawnee Mission; Inman Elementary, Inman; Royal Valley Elementary, Hoyt; Stevens County Library, Hugoton; James White, Golencraft Books, Geneseo; and Unified School District #480 of Liberal, Kansas.

Kachina Kennel Club, Phoenix and Veterans of Foreign Wars, Prescott, Arizona. Rotary Club International District 5718, Doubleday Book & Music Clubs, Inc., Virginia Winkler, World Book Encyclopedia, Don Farmer, Grolier Incorporated, Scholastic Book Fairs, Reading Circle, Kansas-National Education Assoc., Follett Library Book Company, Bob Blumenheim, Social Issues Resources Series, and Mike Dennison, Permabound.

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ELWOOD SCHOOL U.S.D. #486: Ms. Eleanor L. Harrison and First congregational Church of the United Church of Christ, Battle Creek, MI.

Kansas State Grange, Meridan; McLouth U.S.D. #342, McLouth; Business Manager U.S.D.#207, Ft. Leavenworth; Outcomes Education Team, Kansas State Board of Education, Topeka; KAY Club, Ellinwood High School, Ellinwood; Lenexa Lions Club, Prairie Village; Joe McGraw, Jasper Deloatch and D.J., Resource Maintenance, Manhattan, Kansas.

Nuway Rental Services, Mr. Bob Kessler, Moila Temple, Sisson Co. Realtors, American Family Insurance, Affiliated Foods, Bradley J. Gaul, M.D., Friends of the River Bluffs Regional Library, Steele Audio Visual, E.L. Crawford Construction, St. Joseph; First Baptist Church, Lathrop, Missouri.

King Kaunuali'i Elementary School, Lihue; Kauai High & Intermediate School, Lihue; Koloa School, Koloa; Waimea Canyon School, Waimea; Kauai Schools, Lihue, Hawaii. James H. Boyd Elementary School, Huntington; Elwood Middle School, East Northport; Elwood Teacher's Alliance, East Northport, New York.

Enfield Middle School, Orelan; Uwchlan Hills Elementary School, Downingtown; and PTO, Oley, Pennsylvania.

Mr. Robert Schaeffer, Consel General of Luxembourg and the People of Luxembourg. Oakview Baptist Church, Madille, Oklahoma. And the American Red Cross.

CITY OF ELWOOD: : Robert & Janice Barendsfield, Vito & Vilma Bellssimo, Catherine Bintrim, Audrey Borrison, Cresop Creamics, Elizabeth Cardne, First Baptist Church, Richard De Loia, Ellwood City Chamber of Commerce, Ellwood City Lion's Club, Herman Petti Jr & Sr, Joseph & Dorothy Powell, Prints of Pennsylvania, Alton Ripper, Ben & Anna Rocco, Rotary Club, R.J. Schill Manor, Residents of R.J. Schill Manor, Lawrence Shapiro, D.D.S., John Smith, William & Elsie Scullion, Chris & Linda Thompson, George & Helen Ungham Trust, Michael Williams, Raymond Wilson from Ellwood City; Linda Desanzo, Koppel; Integra Bank Customers & Employees,



Titusville; Jared & Nancy Leacock, Mars; John & Jean Marshall, Wampum; Betty L. Neal, Castle Rock; Joyce Simpson, Mars; Linda Spooner, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. Countryside Homeowners Assoc., Westminster Christian Church, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Richard & Ria DeFrancesco, Rotary Club, Westminster Progressive Homeowners, Donald & Nancy Zimmerman, Matthew Lutkus, Westminster; Randall & Nancy Alberts, Arvado; Kelly & Leigh Dinatale, Boulder; Kelly Nadale, Boulder; Scott & Debbie Schlosser, Broomfield; Boy Scout Troop 360, Jamestown, Colorado.

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Martin Hanson, Deward & Judith Hubbartt, City of Elwood, Trimble Oil Co., Michael Williams, Elwood; International Diaster Em. Service, Kempton, Indiana.

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ELWOOD SCHOOL MUSIC DEPARTMENT; Due to circumstances beyond his control Mr. "B" was unable to be here when this booklet was being written. On behalf of Mr. Burmont and the music department of U.S.D. #486, we gladly entend their appreciation to the many, many people across the country that donated instruments and/or money for the replacement of those lost in the flood.

There have been far more Church Work Teams that have come to Elwood then anyone can count. More than a thousand United Methodist from New York to Hawaii have brought church Mission Teams to Elwood. There have been Presbyterians, Baptists, Episcopalians, Catholics, Lutherans, The Reformed Church, United Church of Christ, German Baptist, United Brethern and of course Mennonites.

Especially generous were the Churches in Kansas, Texas, and Colorado. They have come because we are their neighbors and we had a need. They have come from everywhere. They have carried out mud, refrogeratprs, carpets, and everying else. They donated food, electrical wire, building materials and flowers. They have huing sheet rock, scraped, painted, nailed, wired, plumbed, and cleaned. They have lifted our spirits while they helped us rebuild our homes and community. We will never remember all of their names or even where they came from, but their example of love for neighbor will live with us for as long as we remember the flood of '93.