

The Chickens Survived - Community & Cooperation

Offerle Citizens and the Flood of 1965



Around the table from L to R: Rachel Harmon (videographer), Kermit Froetschner, (behind the camera), Jay Schaller, Bob Hattrup, Ray Wetzel, Galen Boehme, Wilma Lancaster, Becky Hornung, and Marilyn Kersting. Not pictured but in attendance were Jerome Froetschner and Joan Weaver.

“A helicopter lit in the yard and told Dad, ‘You’d better get in here. We’d better get you out of here.’ He said, ‘Well, there’s a two story house here. You’d better get everybody out of Kinsley if I’m going to get wet.’ It didn’t even get within three or four hundred yards of the whole yard out there at the farm. But I know we were cutting wheat north of there at the creek, and when we come around that curve, oh, I’d say it was about as high as this table, just rolling. A wall of river almost half a mile wide, just trash and stuff. That was really a weird scene.” *Jay Schaller*



Army Reserve unit helicopter on patrol

Lewis Press, , June 24, 1965

“I remember the highway patrolman came in there and wanted me to get off the combine to get the horses out of there. I said, ‘Oh, they’ve been through a flood before. They’ll be all right.’ I think that upset him. Mom was there, and she said, ‘I’ll give you permission to get them out.’ They went over there to get them out, but they never did. They found a high spot.” *Bob Hattrup*

“Bill Leith’s folks lacked eight inches of it going into the house. The whole foundation was all water underneath. As a kid I had little baby chicks out there and I forgot about them. Then all at once it dawned on me, ‘Oh, my chicks are right out there.’ So we had an old washing machine wash tub, and I floated it out there and put them in it and floated them to the barn and got them out of there. Of course, as kids, we had a couple cousins there at the same time and that wash tub the next day, it worked pretty good. You’d get up there at the one end and hop in it, and you could float on down through the yard.” *Galen Boehme*

Offerle residents met at rural Zion Church on March 29, 2014 to share memories of the 1965 flood. Rachel (Lightcap) Harmon of Sagebrush Video Productions filmed the event for use in producing a film entitled, *“The Chickens Survived” Community & Cooperation - Offerle and the Flood of 1965.*

“Everybody knew it was coming. My brother J. D. took that old Willy’s Jeep down south of Mom and Dad’s house just about a quarter mile. That’s where the water was, but it was a big mess of real slow moving straw. It looked like it was all solid out there, and just real slow moving across the field.... We sat and watched the river coming up about an inch a minute. Then pretty soon some trash started coming down the river. I remember a Mallard duck decoy and an oxygen cylinder went floating by. Then pretty soon, here comes a dead steer rolling down the river. A few minutes after that, a helicopter flew over, and the loudspeaker came on and said, ‘Get the heck out because the crest is just up the river a little bit!’ It was a 3’ or 4’ foot crest, I guess. We got out.” *Jerome Froetschner*



The Coon Creek, south of Offerle

June 1965, Lancaster Photo

“The water went through our house....My three girls were at home with me and Brent was only five, so he was just a nuisance. But they took all the furniture upstairs. Of course, we couldn’t move the deep freeze, so it went through the flood. But it’s still running!.... The only thing we didn’t take upstairs was a china closet that belonged to my mother. I’ve never refinished it because you could tell how far the water was. It shows, so I’ve never refinished it.” *Wilma Lancaster*

“The next day we came into the place with a little Massey Harris Tractor, and it was over the top of the front tires. That’s how deep it was in the yard. For days afterwards down there (we were a couple miles from the river) but you could hear that water rushing down there. You could hear the noise, the water running down there all the time two miles away.” *Ray Wetzel*

“I remember all the combines coming up the road from the south and the water was just coming behind them.” *Marilyn Kersting*

“I do remember there were four sets of us down there cutting wheat. The last time we went the round, there were four combines making the rounds and the next time we went around the water was right there.” *Galen Boehme*

“My dad, Harry Froetschner, called on that Friday morning and said, “Have you got your combine ready?” And I said I did....Then Jack Kersting brought his combine down and Dad had one and I had one. Harry Wetzel, came home with a brand new “C” Gleaner and helped us. So there were four combines going on that ground right south of town. Everybody just kind of helped everybody else. Over to the Co-op, they took wheat wet that Friday and Saturday and Sunday, helping everybody else.” *Kermit Froetschner*

“I can just remember lots of machines, but we were short on trucks. There was one high spot on the whole farm, and they road the combines up there and just dumped on the ground so they could keep cutting. That wheat was piled there and it stayed dry. “ *Becky Hornung*

Harvesting before the flood

Kinsley Mercury , June 24,

