

HIGHWAY PATROL ACTIVE IN RESCUES DURING FLOOD

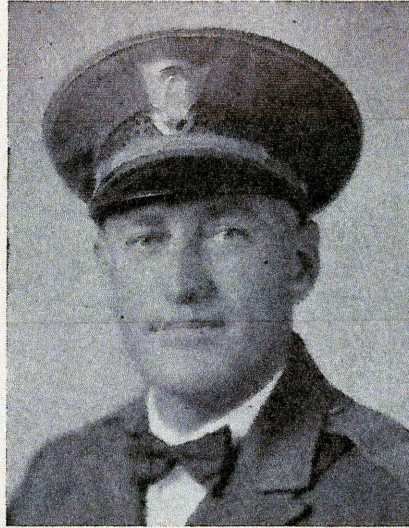
Lives Are Lost as Santa Ana River Overflows

By **LYLE SANARD**
District Inspector,
California Highway Patrol

THE tranquility of the life of mankind is very often interrupted when Mother Nature becomes infuriated and unleashes her destructive forces against the puny efforts of man. When in a displeased mood she will do more destruction in one moment than insignificant man can rebuild in a lifetime; and no spot on the face of the earth is completely hidden from her occasional outbursts of wrath.

My district comprises San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. The mountainous sections of these counties afford delightful playgrounds for vacationists and sportsmen of the surrounding metropolitan areas. Nestling in the fertile valleys are world famous citrus orchards, vineyards and ranches which abound in agricultural richness. Many of the streams of Southern California find their origin in these mountainous sections, and in the summer months they are fed by melting snow which, when on its seaward journey, supplies the valleys with life-giving water.

On March 1, due to previous snowfalls, these mountains were covered with an unusually thick cloak of snow which promised a plentiful supply of water for the forthcoming summer months. At this time a rain began falling in the valleys and it appeared that an even greater supply of snow would fall in the mountainous areas. The ranchers rejoiced at the prospects of a prosperous agricultural season; but that which appeared as beneficial soon became a destructive force of unbelievable proportions. The rain that ordinarily would have produced snow in the mountains at this season became a cloudburst of warm water which rapidly melted the vast storage of snow. This accumulated force was sent raging to the sea, carrying in its uncontrolled and destructive course, bridges, houses,



uprooted trees, livestock and human beings.

Captains at School

The Captains of my district had been called to the California Highway Patrol Training School at Sacramento. Acting in their places were Sergeant Tripp in San Bernardino County and Sergeant Hastings in Riverside County. The rank of sergeant had been created but a short time before and the ability of these officers to cope with an emergency had not been tested.

On the morning of March 2, I left on an urgent trip to Indio. At that time rain was falling hard. Streams were rapidly swelling and endangering the bridges over which I passed along the route. On my arrival in Palm Springs I learned that it was impossible to continue my journey. Upon telephoning Sergeant Hastings I was informed that he had been warned of an impending disaster, due to a cloudburst in the San Bernardino Mountains. On attempting to return to Riverside I found my retreat cut off by washouts. I was completely isolated and soon without any means of communication. Sergeant Hastings and Sergeant Tripp were thrown entirely on their own responsibility. I hoped for the best and was not disappointed.

Bridges Washed Out

When flood waters became a threat to the safety of motorists in San Bernardino County, Sergeant Tripp detailed officers to the most endangered areas to safeguard against the loss of life. Bridges were being washed out in wholesale lots

and miles of highways were becoming inundated. Towns and villages were rapidly becoming isolated without communication, domestic water, heating or lighting facilities.

A number of motorists were marooned in their cars, in the outskirts of, but within the city, of San Bernardino, when Lytle Creek overflowed its banks and swept across the highway, leaving several cars stalled in the raging current. When the water began sweeping their cars away these people sought refuge in nearby trees. Officers of the California Highway Patrol assisted in effecting the rescue of these stricken people. However, four of these unfortunates were swept from their temporary places of safety before a rescue could be effected.

No Warning

In the Barstow area, on the banks of the Mojave River, destruction came almost without warning. The water rose rapidly, overflowing its banks and changing its course. Whole blocks of homes were completely wiped out. The northern half of Barstow was isolated when sections of U. S. Highways 466 and 91 were obliterated. When the isolated section became inundated and human lives were endangered, officers of the California Highway Patrol, assisted by volunteers, rigged up ropes and cables and very effectively hauled the stranded victims from the turbulent waters to a place of safety. About thirty automobiles were swept into the river at this point, but due to the initiative of our officers, not one motorist's life was lost.

There was an auto court on the outskirts of San Bernardino which was completely demolished. A stream which had been a mere creek flowing not far from there, soon became a raging river which broadened until its course enveloped the entire court. This same creek moved a two-lane bridge downstream about a block, leaving demolished in its wake a foundry and a lumber yard. In many places highways adjacent to usually dry washes were completely washed away or so undermined that they later crumbled and caved into the void below.

Camp Baldy

In San Antonio Canyon is the famous Camp Baldy resort, the main approach to which was by a highway paralleling a small stream on the canyon floor. This canyon was heavily wooded with wild undergrowth, but it is now completely void of all vegetation. The turbulent water destroyed the highway

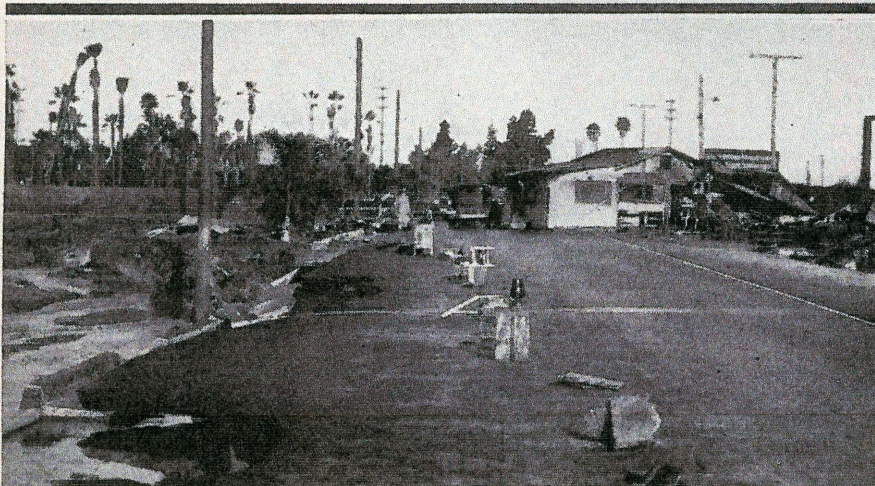
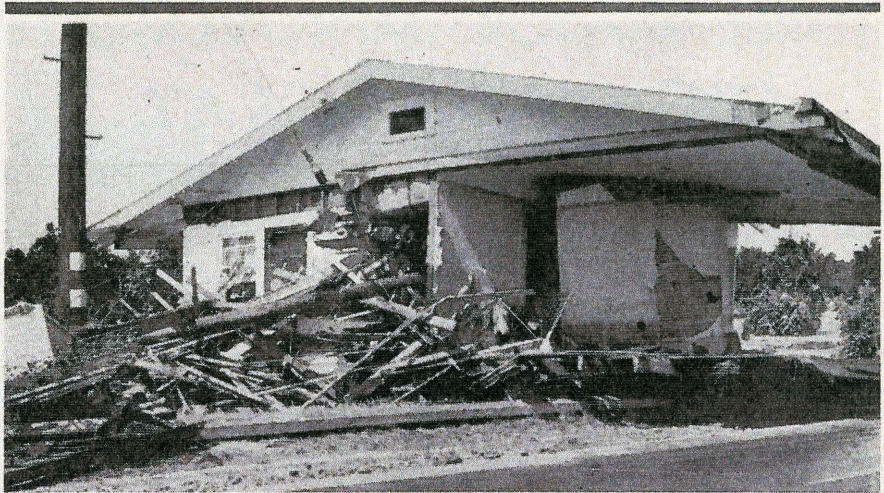
of this canyon to such an extent that it is now necessary to enter the resort from the opposite side of the mountain. Many homes were washed away and the contour of the canyon is so changed that owners are unable to locate their lots. Gravel refining machinery weighing hundreds of tons was washed away like driftwood. The force of a current of water unleashed on the steep slope of a mountain side is unbelievable.

In Riverside County most of the destruction occurred in the West Riverside area along U. S. Highway 60, just west of the Santa Ana River bridge. This river forms the west boundary line of the city of Riverside. For a distance of about one-half mile the highway, which serves as the west approach to the bridge, is about seven feet lower than the bridge's deck. The east approach is on higher ground, winding down to the river around historical Mt. Rubidoux. On the south side of this highway was the Riverside Airport, while on the other side was a number of auto courts, camp

SCENES IN ANAHEIM and VICINITY

Upper right: This house floated for several blocks with two persons on the roof.

Right: At Broadway and Los Angeles streets.



grounds, gasoline stations, vegetable stands and restaurants. At about 5 p. m. on March 2 the river had swollen out of its banks and the overflow was sweeping across this low half-mile stretch of highway.

Motorists Trapped

A number of automobiles had been trapped between Riverside and a highway washout near Mira Loma and Sergeant Hastings was on duty with all available officers assisting the stranded automobiles across the half-mile stretch of water to safety on the higher ground of Riverside. At this time the water was about one foot deep and there appeared no immediate danger in driving across this inundated section, inasmuch as the State Highway crew was on hand assisting officers in the removal of vehicles which occasionally became stalled by shorted motors or by debris lodging under their wheels. Without warning the waters started rising rapidly, due, it was later learned,

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Upper left: On 101 Highway near Anaheim. Three children were drowned leaving this house.

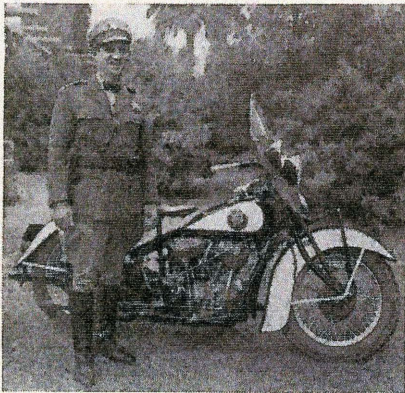
Left: Flood area in Anaheim.

(Pictures by Betzold Studio, Anaheim)

Flood Activity

(Continued from Page 5)

to the breaking of the dam which impounded the waters of Lake Fairmount, an artificial lake, located to the north of Mt. Rubidoux. When the waters of this lake emptied into the river, an additional volume and current was forced to flow across the west approach. This sudden on-rush of water entrapped a number of cars along the half-mile stretch. With



SGT. A. R. HASTINGS
California Highway Patrol

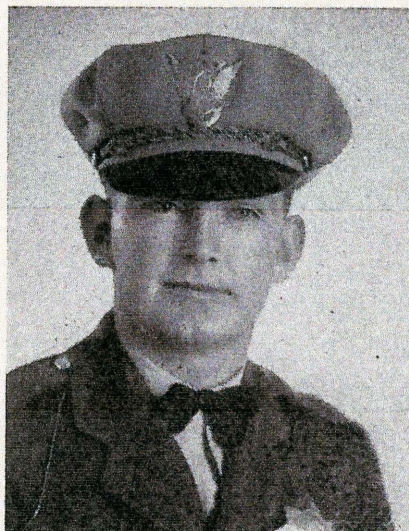
the exception of the occupants of about ten cars stalled within 400 or 500 feet of the bridge, all of the motorists were able to leave their cars, some of them being carried to safety by the State Highway crew and others who were working from the west end of the inundated area.

The waters continued to rise and Sergeant Hastings reasoned that the most expedient method of rescue would be in the taking of a life line to the marooned victims. About 600 feet of rope was immediately secured and made ready, but this method proved futile because of the current which was so swift that men were swept from their feet on every attempt. Darkness had fallen and people were desperately clinging to their cars, trees, or any substantial object which they could find, calling and pleading for help.

A State Division of Forestry fire truck, heavily laden with a ballast of water, was then dispatched into the raging waters, but it, too, became stalled before reaching its goal. On this fire truck was an officer of the California Highway Patrol. Assisted by the others, after the truck had stalled, he rescued a number of stranded victims by using a fire hose for a life line, hauling them to the comparative safety of the fire truck. In one instance an automobile containing six passengers was emptied of its human cargo just before it was swept from the highway to deeper water and oblivion below. The cur-

rent was so swift that even the fire truck was eventually swept from the highway. After the dismal failure of another large truck and a tractor, Sergeant Hastings made a direct appeal to the U. S. Army for assistance. Two large, high-wheeled army trucks and a detachment of soldiers, under the command of Major Casseday, were immediately dispatched from March Field to the scene of disaster. In the face of imminent danger, Major Casseday and his men drove through the mad rushing waters where other motor vehicles had foundered. They succeeded in pulling the stranded victims, together with the other rescuers, onto their truck, and brought them back to safety without one motorist having lost his life.

The primary duty of the California Highway Patrol is to safeguard the motoring public against any hazard which might endanger their safety on the highways. I believe that our officers very thoroughly fulfilled this obligation during this recent catastrophe. Work was carried on even after the flood had done its worst and the waters had receded, when it became necessary to establish one-way shuttle



SGT. C. D. TRIPP
California Highway Patrol

controls over numerous sections of highways. To insure absolute safety, our officers remained on duty 24 hours of the day. The work of recovering from the damage done is still in progress. In many places metal detectors are being employed to locate cars and machinery which was left buried so deeply that not even the tops are visible.

We are very fortunate in having no loss of life by motorists using any of the highways under my jurisdiction, in either Riverside or San

Bernardino County, as a result of this devastating flood. The situation reflects very highly on the



SGT. GEO. PETERKIN
California Highway Patrol

the California Highway Patrol personnel and the efficient manner in which they functioned during this crisis.

Radio Saves Day

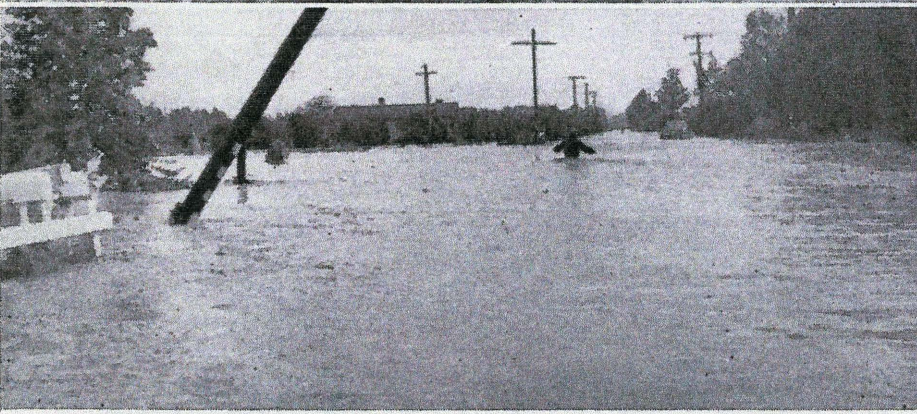
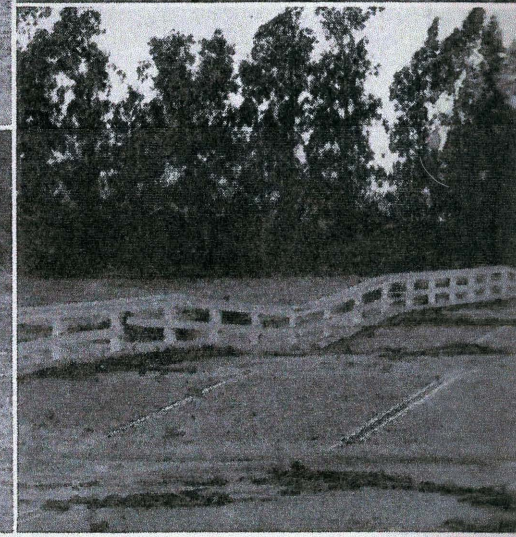
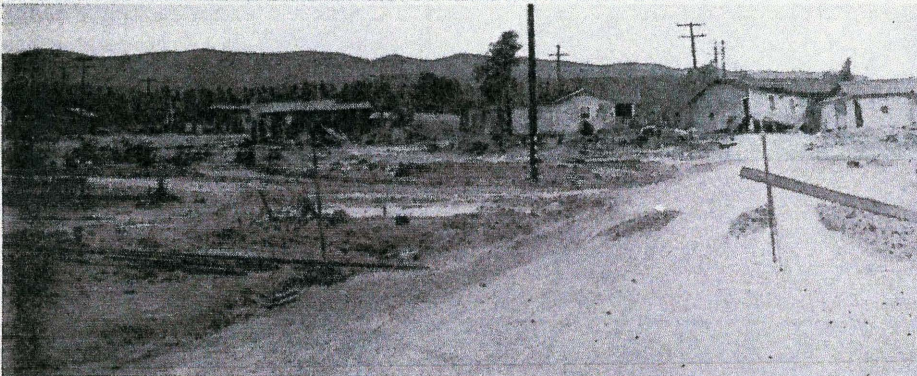
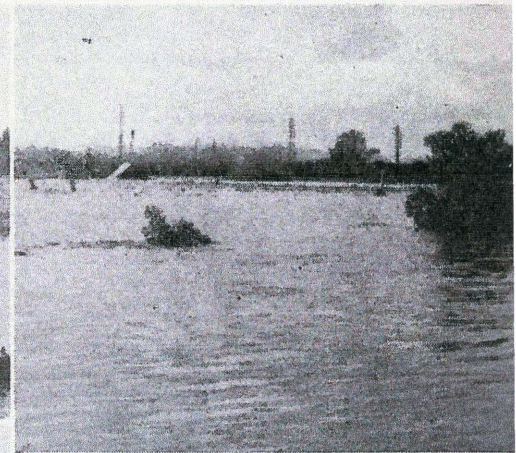
With all telephone lines paralyzed by the floods and thousands of frantic calls being received by the Los Angeles headquarters and substations of the patrol from anxious relatives and from trucking and other business concerns, the radio was called upon to save the day.

Radio station KFI utilized its special short-wave facilities and contacted amateur operators in surrounding counties to secure accurate road information from the patrol offices. When this information was received by KFI, it was in turn relayed to the patrol headquarters and given to scores of officers who worked at high speed answering phone calls and put in long, tiring hours during the emergency. Each of the three substations was kept busy every minute and while the waters made use of motorcycles impossible, officers used their private cars in answering calls for assistance and in performing scores of heroic deeds.

Numerous trucks were marooned and as these were carrying needed merchandise for the city, the patrol did excellent duty throughout all the southern counties in getting these vehicles through.

Scores of commendatory letters have been received by Chief Cato.

RAGING WATERS LEAVE DISASTR

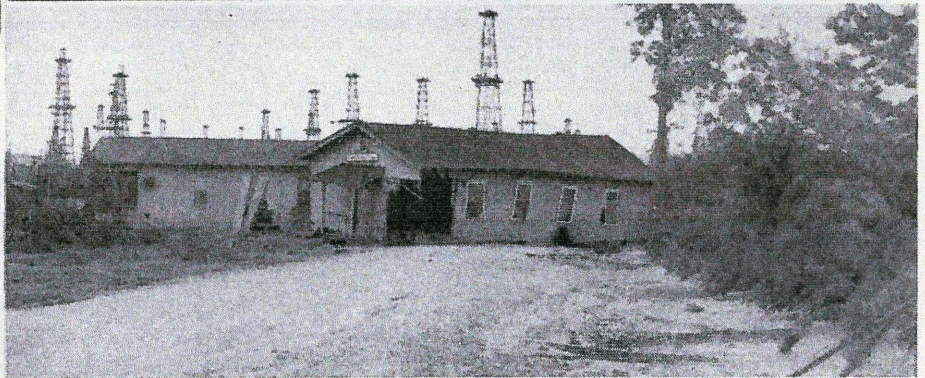
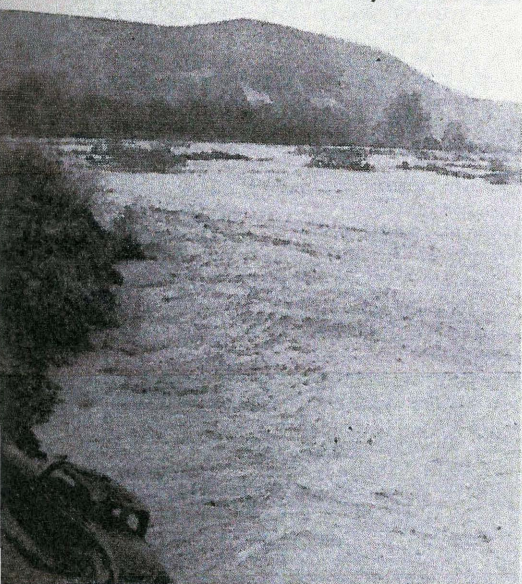
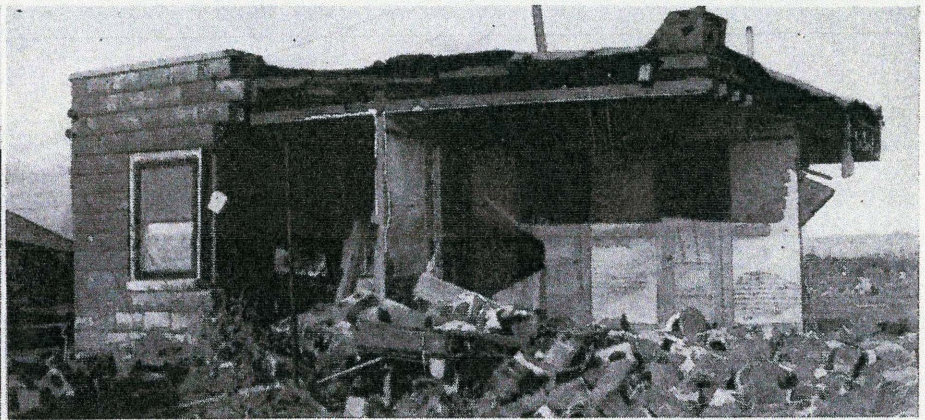
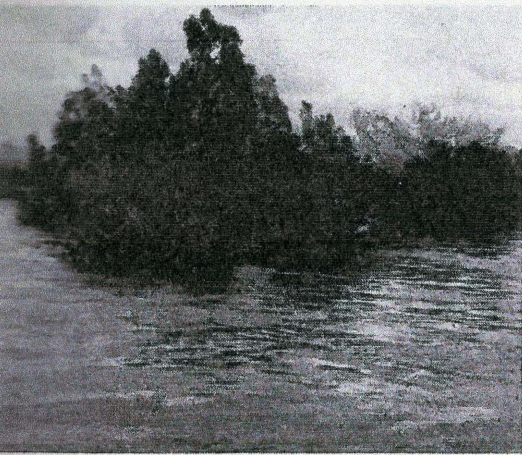


Left (top to bottom): 1. Methodist church and private home in Atwood district in Orange County. An eight-foot wall of flood water swept through this district, causing death and destruction. (Picture by Sergeant Geo. Peterkin, California Highway Patrol.) 2. Atwood Mexican settlement. All homes in this picture have been carried down the street from their former location on the left. (Picture by Sergeant Geo. Peterkin.) 3. The buildings in this picture were carried down the street and into the orange orchard shown in the background. (Picture by Sergeant Geo. Peterkin, California Highway Patrol.) 4. On Orange Grove Boulevard, Orange County. (Picture by Officer Ben Craig, California Highway Patrol.)

Scenes in Southern Cali

Center (top to bottom): 1. Many of the homes in the Atwood district were destroyed. (Picture by Officer Ben Craig.) 2. This car was driven into a hole in the pavement in the Atwood district. The driver knocked a hole in the pavement and a cable after being dragged to the edge of the hole. (Picture by California Highway Patrol.) 3. Bridge on Santa Ana River.

AND SUFFERING IN THEIR WAKE



ia During Recent Flood

oves near Garden Grove were washed away. ose-dive into Santa Ana River in Santa Ana swam to safety. The car here is attached to t. (Picture by Sergeant Geo. Peterkin, Cali- oulevard after waters have receded.

Right (top to bottom): 1. Home near La Jolla settlement. Rush of waters was so strong that it destroyed even homes made of cement. (Picture courtesy Santa Ana Register.) 2. In Atwood, where buildings were moved and many lives lost. (Picture by Sergeant Geo. Peterkin.) 3. Refugees fleeing with their possessions from La Jolla settlement near Placentia. In this district about 100 homes were moved or washed away. (Picture courtesy Santa Ana Register.) 4. La Jolla district. The space in the foreground of this picture was occupied by a solid row of homes before the flood. (Picture by Sergeant Geo. Peterkin, California Highway Patrol.)