

Recollections of the 1965 Flood

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The night before the flood, my family and I spent the night at my in-laws farm next to the Little Plate River, north and east of Plattsburg, Missouri. It rained fifteen inches that night.

I knew that Smithville would have a major flood when all that water reached them. I had my wife and children go home, in Gladstone, after taking me to Smithville. Having grown up in Smithville and helping to fight floods every summer, I knew my parents, Adrian and Mable Carver, were going to need help.

They owned a grocery store, frozen food locker plant, a house and small duplex all next to the Little Platte River on Bridge Street across from the Christian Church. We worked carrying store products from the basement to the store. When the warning came about the height of the flood we moved as many store products to counter tops and some furniture to the second floor of the house.

When the water started to come into the front door I went to my seventy-eight year old grandfather's [illegible] in the duplex beside the locker plant. I tried to get my grandfather to go to the house which had a second floor. He refused saying everything he owned was in the duplex.

We put his TV on top of the kitchen table, but he still refused to leave. I stayed with him to try and take care of him.

When [the] flood water was running about three feet deep through the yard it broke the front door open. At this time my grandfather wanted to go to the house but the current was so strong no one could have stayed on their feet.

I got my grandfathers hammer and stood on the couch and broke a hole in the ceiling between the ceiling joists. My grandpa was portly and didn't think he could get through the hole. I physically pushed him up and into the attic.

A short time later my father had gone out on the roof of the grocery store to the refrigeration shed [where] he had a ladder stored. He came back to the roof of the locker plant and yelled down to us to kick the access door to attic open. I was able to do that.

My father slid the ladder down with base in the attic and the top on the locker plant wall. He held the ladder at the top and I held the bottom while my grandfather climbed to the roof of the locker plant. I followed up the ladder. The current was so strong below the ladder that had either one of us fallen we would have been in the main current of the flood within seconds. That night we heard houses across the street breaking up. We were saved by the house next to the Christian Church coming off it [sic] foundation with the back of the house lodging against the church and the front lodging against large trees in their front yard. The house next door floated off its foundation and lodged against the other house and trees.

The church and the houses blocked the current away from my parents buildings.

The water ran about twelve deep through the house. It was to the top step below the second floor. The next morning they came by with a boat and we stepped off the roof of the store building into the boat. They had to raise the stop light on Bridge Street with an oar to allow the boat to pass under the cables.

That was the last flood we tried to ride out.