

# Flood's Ironic Aftermath...Dust Clouds

By LAURENCE E. KEEFE

Elmira — There are some effects you might overlook if you were planning a flood, things which occur naturally that even the most rational mind would not foresee.

Most noticeable, perhaps, is the dust. Everybody knows that a flood leaves acres of mud behind as the waters recede. What few realize is that when the streets are clear enough for traffic, the mud dries, and the constant grinding of wheels as emergency vehicles scurry by raises large clouds of dust.

The dust rises and hangs in huge palls above the street. It shrouds the National Guardsmen and soldiers who direct traffic, and who must stand in the midst of it, with the dirt in their hair, their eyes and noses and gritting

between their teeth.

Another thing which makes the dust so appalling is the monumental traffic jam which accompanied the disaster. So insulated from the elements are many Americans, it seems, that when nature is unleashed they will attempt to make their way into the heart of the maelstrom.

It is a well-known, if ironic, fact that after a flood there usually occurs a shortage of (potable) water for human consumption, but in the massive traffic tie-up around the Lake Street bridge in Elmira the first day after the flood another kind of water shortage developed.

In the space of half an hour, this reporter counted five cars whose radiators had boiled over from the idling that came from being caught in the slow moving traffic. It was a typical case

of "Water, water everywhere, but not a drop" where it was needed.

Every hedge and shrub in densely occupied areas which were submerged had strained a rich harvest of paper and cardboard from the flow of water. American-wire fences in the countryside resembled grass mats because the water had woven up-rooted plants so thickly between the strands.

It was sobering to think how any city like this depends on paperwork to keep running, and to realize how many records and documents, the stuff of daily life, had disappeared.

In almost every flooded church this reporter entered, five-foot-tall plaster statues of the saints were standing around in places not normally reserved for them,

like in front of the lobby doors.

Many lighter objects had remained in place, and it was not until a damaged statue was found that the puzzling case of the floating figurines was solved. They are hollow and lighter than they seem, with a heavy plaster base, so they tended to float in an upright position.

A mixed blessing was the swelling of wood caused by the water. While jammed doors made entry for looters more difficult, they also had to be pried open by the rightful owners. And wooden floors buckled upward after long submersion, creating more damage.

The water not only disrupted human life, it made refugees and victims of animals and insects. Besides the many land dwelling animals drowned, there were

fish and turtles and other water creatures swept unawares out of their natural habitat and stranded when the water receded.

The flood took much, but occasionally it also brought presents. The Sisters of St. Joseph at the parish convent of Ss. Peter and Paul found when they returned a yard full of somewhat water-logged goods, which ranged from a box of cigars to an unused coffee table and a new clothes bureau.

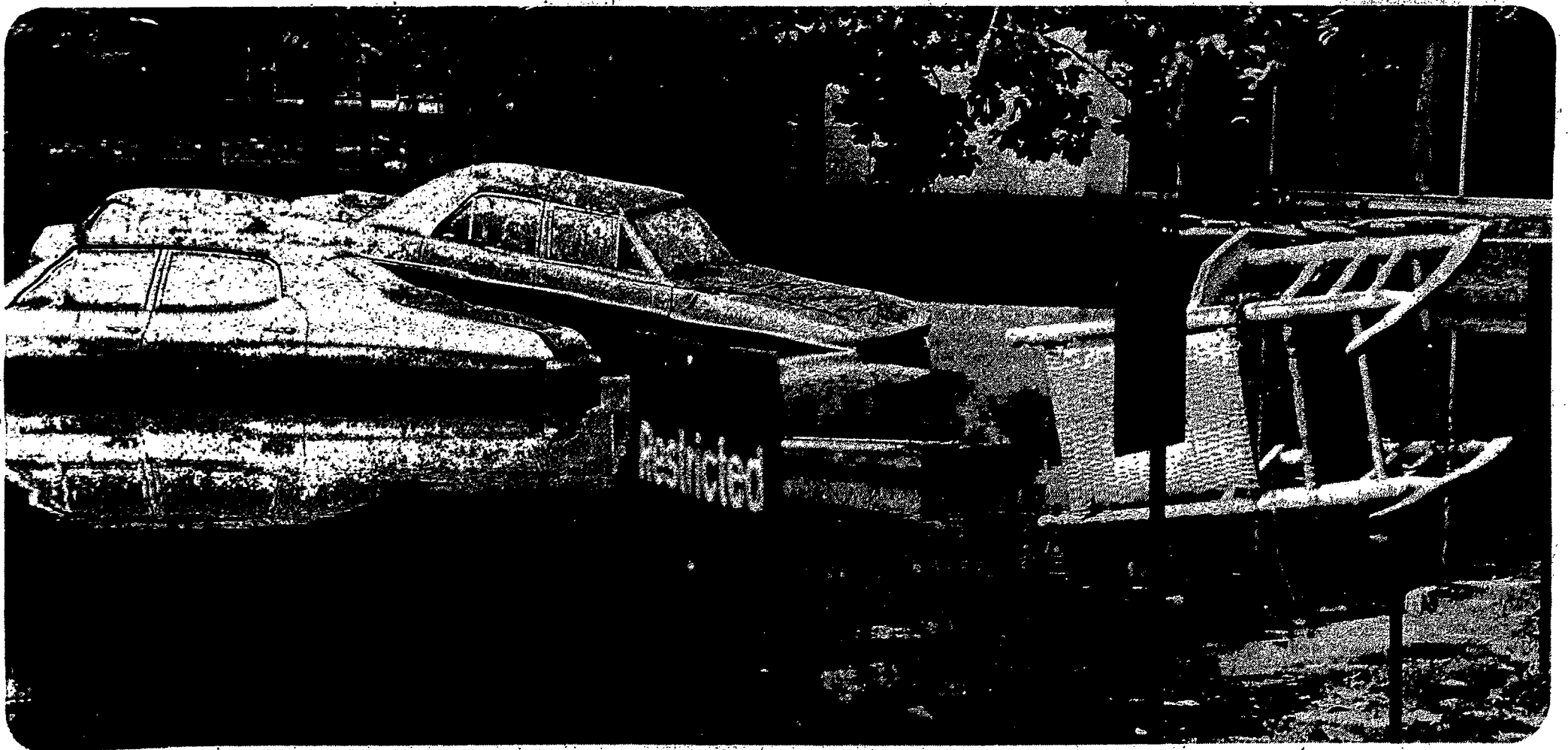
One last major problem left in the wake of the floods was the vast amount of dead wood and snags caught in culverts, sluiceways and girders. Looking upriver from the Lake Street bridge, the railroad bridge had the appearance of having taken root because of the branches caught in the underpinning.



Mud coated the flood area, both inside and outside.



Light illumines slime-coated interior of Corning church.



"Restricted" parking sign at Corning Glass Center takes on ironic meaning.