

You just don't know what it's like to walk into your home and see it full of mud.

Theodora Bragg
Elmira resident

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organizations such as the U.S. Army, National Guard, Red Cross and Salvation Army. The Diocese of Rochester became extensively involved as churches provided financial aid through emergency collections. In addition, Bishop Joseph L. Hogan established a Southern Tier Flood Relief Fund.

Arnold Jerome, health resources president at St. Joseph's Hospital, 555 E. Market St., recalled Army helicopters landing on the hospital roof to help evacuate 250 patients.

Yet it was the local volunteer effort that stood out most to Jerome.

"It's very hard to stop telling stories about the dedicated employees," he commented.

St. Joseph's Hospital, which had just experienced completion of an extensive renovation project when the flood hit, suffered damages totaling \$7 million.

Joseph Sartori, who became city manager shortly before the flood, echoed Jerome's sentiments.



Dorothy Banks, a member of the community choir at All Saints Home Church of God in Christ, reacts tearfully as James Sartori describes the flood's vast destruction. Sartori served as city manager in 1972.

Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor



(Above) Volunteers clean out debris in the first-floor emergency room at St. Joseph's Hospital in Elmira after flood waters inundated downtown. H. Mettler Henrich (left) was among 100 people who attended the commemoration, sponsored by the Chemung County's Council of Churches. Operating his ham radio on a 12-volt battery, Henrich was stationed at the Elmira hospital to maintain communication lines between Arnot-Odgen Hospital — where St. Joseph's patients were evacuated by helicopter — and to link the hospital to a larger ham radio network organized to aid the disaster area. While thanking the radio operator, Arnold Jerome, president of St. Joseph's Hospital Health Resources and one of the speakers June 21, recalled that Henrich manned his station for four consecutive days before collapsing.

File photo

"Most of all, I remember the spirit of the volunteers — the ham radio operators, the people from the hospitals and all the other agencies," Sartori remarked. "It was that spirit that pulled us through the flood of 1992. We can thank these people, and also God."

Sartori added that not a single death occurred in Chemung County as a result of the flood.

Jerome O'Dell, former principal at Southside High School, believed that the residents' bonding in the face of this adversity may have led to his school's excellent year in sports in 1972-73. In addition to Southside's football going undefeated that fall, the basketball squad won the Section 4 championship.

Rev. Curtis Coley, Council of Churches president, noted that "the community was unified. Ethnic differences were laid aside as the concept of neighbor became reality."

Elmira Mayor James Hare noted that it's important for residents to embrace that same kind of spirit and apply it to present-day difficulties in the community.

"Twenty years later, we face different kinds of problems ... we need to stand together and show the resilient character we showed in 1972," Hare emphasized.

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