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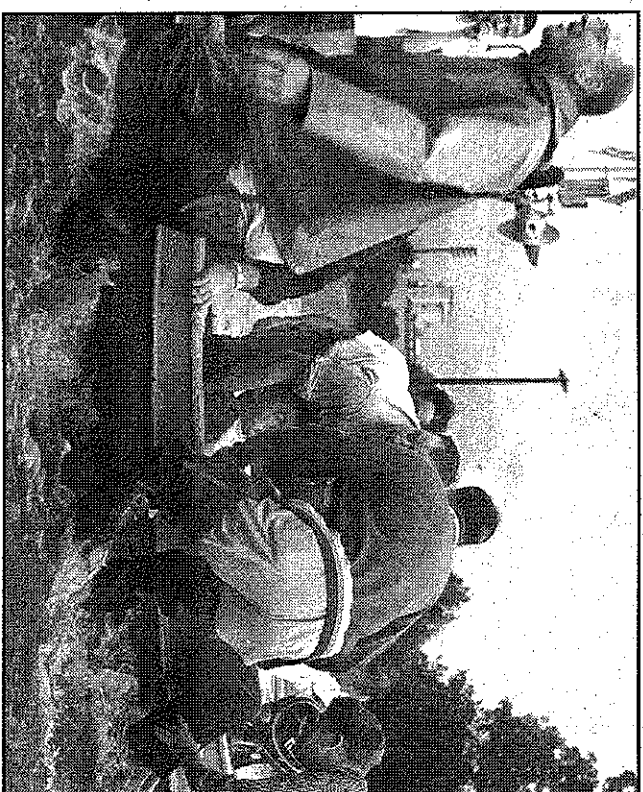
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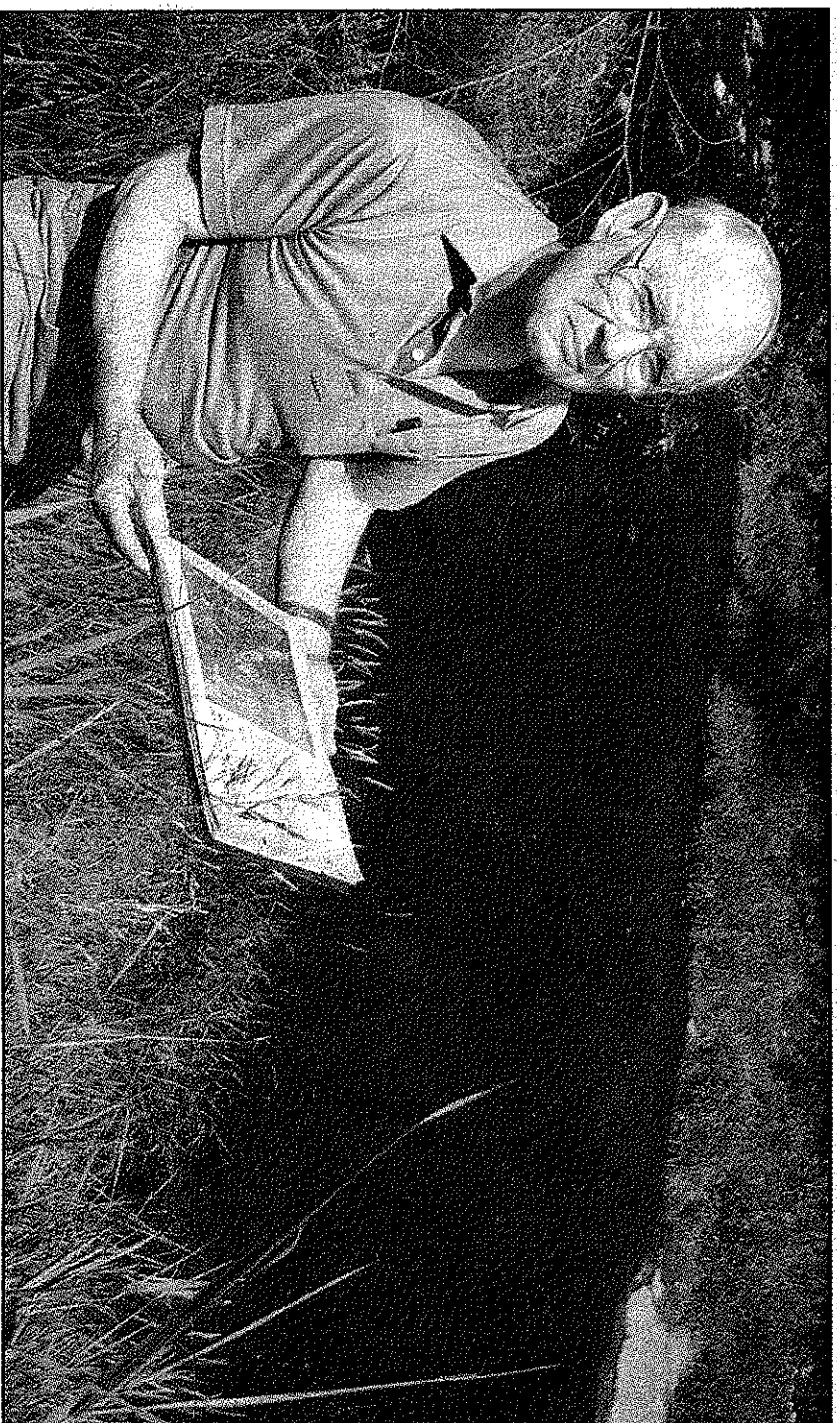
estival starts

# The worst flood in Kankakee's history ...



## Lake up to 10 feet deep covered heart of city

Recalling his experiences as a rookie firefighter during the flood that ravaged parts of Kankakee 40 years ago, Richard Guimond of Kankakee, right, looks over some old newspaper clips along the banks of Soldier Creek, the primary source of the flooding. The photo above right appeared in the July 14, 1957, Sunday Journal. The man lying in the center of the boat is Charles Purcell, who was rescued by then-Fire Chief James Marnell after nearly drowning.



Journal/Wayne Baranowski

By Michael Linneman, Journal writer

**FLOOD ROUTS 350 FAMILIES** read the banner headline on Page 1 of the July 14, 1957, *Sunday Journal*, referring to the tragedy that struck the area only two days before.

In just a 12-hour period on that fateful Friday, 8 1/2 inches of rain engulfed a square-mile area in Kankakee, forcing many out of their homes in rescue boats.

Saturday marks the 40-year anniversary of the worst flood in Kankakee's history, but some area residents remember it like it was yesterday.

Gerry Clark remembers it as the day she almost lost her father. "It was a real nightmare," Clark said, explaining how her father, Charles Purcell, then a resident of 225 E. Birch St. in Kankakee, left his house in a rescue boat after trying to recover a small safe

that contained many of the family's most important belongings and documents.

Clark said her parents stayed the night of the flood in her south Kankakee home because they knew they would not be able to get into their house during the deluge. But when some men in a boat offered to bring Mr. Purcell to his house the day after the rain, he accepted.

Purcell, who at the time was employed as a shift supervisor at A.O. Smith, was wearing hip boots to enable him to walk in regions where the water was not so high, but upon returning to the boat after retrieving the safe, the boat capsized.

"He fell in the water and he fell right to the bottom," Clark

See FLOOD next page

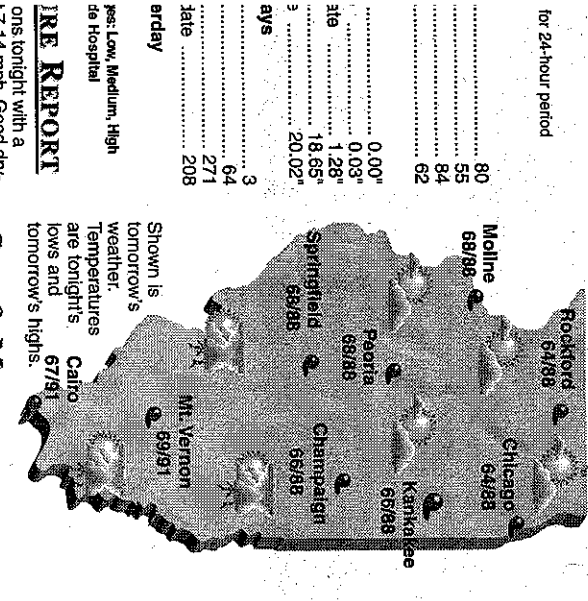
## Driver faces reckless homicide charge

### Wife testifies to drinking, says she tried to take control of car

Photo by [unclear]

WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Partly sunny. 84/62	Partly to mostly sunny. 84/60	Some sunshine. 86/64

## ILLINOIS



Shown is tomorrow's weather. Temperatures are tonight's lows and tomorrow's highs.

## IRE REPORT

ons tonight with a 17-14 mph. Good dry- now with a south wind t-8-12 hours of sun to- by averaging 60 per- undersiders Sunday. or drying conditions.

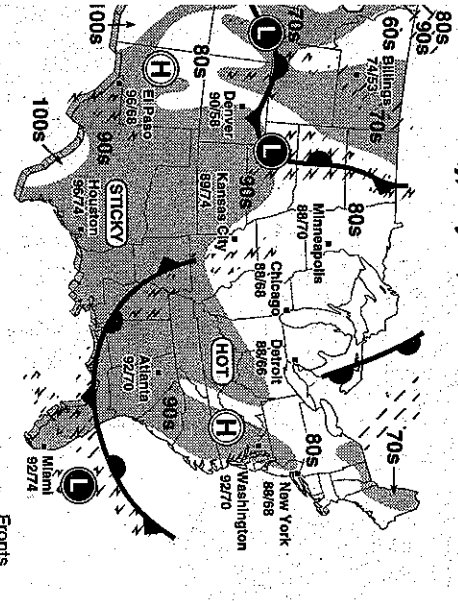
## SUN & MOON

Sunrise today ..... 5:29 a.m.  
Sunset today ..... 8:25 p.m.  
Moonrise today ..... 12:03 p.m.  
Moonset today ..... none

First Full Last New  
July 12 July 19 July 26 Aug 3

## NATION

Saturday, July 12, 1997



Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands indicate highs for the day. Forecast high/low temperatures are shown for selected cities.

**WEATHER** All maps, forecasts and data provided by AccuWeather, Inc. © 1997

## THE ALMANAC

ay, July 11, the 192nd day of 1997. There are 173

## Light in History:

1804, Vice President Aaron Burr mortally wounded Secretary Alexander Hamilton in a pistol duel near Quincy Adams, the sixth president of the United States, in Braintree, Mass. Confederate forces led by Gen. Jubal Early began an assault on Washington, D.C., turning back the next day. President Roosevelt became the first chief executive to visit the Panama Canal while in office.

Republican National Convention, meeting in Chicago, elected D. Eisenhower for president and Richard M. Nixon for vice president.

Air Force Academy was dedicated at Lowry Air Base in Colorado.

Medal of Freedom was awarded posthumously to the late King Jr. in a White House ceremony.

6 people were killed when a tanker truck overfilled with gas exploded on a coastal highway south of Tarragona, Spain.

abandoned U.S. space station Skylab made a splash to Earth, burning up in the atmosphere and showering the Indian Ocean and Australia.

**Today:** "There are philosophies which are unenforced because men are cowards, but because they are unenforced, they are unenforced."

began Thursday and was expected to continue today.

President Clinton has promised to bring U.S. troops home by next June, but members of both parties have been frustrated with a mission that continues to drag on, after earlier assurances that it would end last December, and with the soaring cost of deployment.

But some are concerned a funding cutoff would send the wrong message at a vulnerable point in the Bosnian peace process.

"Our troops are on the ground," said Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss. "We have some very serious circumstances that have evolved there in the last 24 hours." He urged members to "think very carefully" before imposing restrictions on Clinton.

Sen. Russell Feingold, D-Wis., proposed the outright funding cutoff for the troop deployment as of next June 30. Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., ranking Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, then offered a substitute, nonbinding measure declaring the U.S. intention to pull out of Bosnia.

## Flood

Continued from Page 1

said, adding that her father did not know how to swim. "But when they pulled him up, he still had the safe under his arm. He wasn't going to let that go."

James Marnell, then the Kankakee fire chief, revived Purcell by artificial respiration.

People living along or near Soldier Creek, which winds through the north side of Kankakee and can be seen from the small Fifth Avenue bridge or from behind the Public Works Department, were most affected by the flood.

Although the Kankakee River reportedly rose 7 feet in 24 hours — the dam was nothing more than a ripple — it did not affect the flooding situation.

By the time the rain had subsided, a virtual lake — reportedly up to 10 feet deep in some areas — remained. According to the *Journal*, the flooded area reached eastward from the Illinois Central tracks and north to the old Big Four railroad.

The two embankments carrying the railroads, in effect, caught the waters and blocked them from moving further south, the *Journal* reported. Also, Soldier Creek apparently had not been adequately prepared for an unusually heavy rain.

"The walls were not lined, they were jagged rock," said Richard Guimond, a retired Kankakee firefighter. "A lot of debris through the years got caught up in there and it wouldn't be released."

"This is what caused (Soldier Creek) to be clogged up," he added.

Guimond recalls the day of the flood particularly well because it was his first day on the job. He, too, had a close call, which he attributed to inexperience and his youthful pride in his brand new uniform.

"I was a good swimmer, or I thought I was, but I sank like a piece of lead because I had all the heavy equipment on and then the water got in my boots," he said.

Guimond was saved, however, when his boots released and he was able to grab on to an outstretched branch of a nearby tree on North Schuyler Avenue.

According to Marnell, the ex-fire chief who helped save Mr. Purcell's life, few people sustained serious flood-related injuries, thanks in large part to an outpouring of support from members of the community whose homes were not directly affected by the flood — particularly

support a plan to have the Europeans accept the entire Bosnia burden.

"You're going to say we'll now have a policy when there's a risk our people will go to a safe haven in some other land and let the (allied) chaps stay in harm's way?" Warner asked. "I find that unbelievable."

In June, the House passed a proposal closer to Feingold's that would actually cut off funding for the troop deployment. Differences in the House and Senate versions would have to be worked out in negotiations.

Both House and Senate Bosnia proposals were part of the debate on the \$268 billion defense authorization bill for fiscal 1998, which begins Oct. 1. Clinton is unlikely to veto the entire bill over a sense-of-Congress measure. But the administration has expressed vehement opposition to any proposal ending the funding.

Feingold chided the administration for repeatedly upping its estimate of the cost of the Bosnia mission, from less than \$2 billion when it was supposed to last a year to more than \$7 billion after the cur-

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Journal/Wayne Baranowski

Gerry Clark and James Marnell, both of Kankakee, have interesting stories to tell about the flood of 1957. Clark's father, Charles Purcell, nearly died when he fell out of a rescue boat after retrieving some items from his north Kankakee house. Marnell, the Kankakee fire chief at the time, revived Purcell by artificial respiration.

boat owners.

"The local boat owners really pitched in," Marnell said. "They went from house to house helping to evacuate people."

Once evacuated from their homes, residents were able to take refuge at the Red Cross emergency shelter, which was hastily established at the First Methodist Church on South Harrison Avenue.

Cots were also set up at the Armory building on North Indiana Avenue for flood victims looking for a dry place to spend the night. Every Kankakee firefighter was

on duty non-stop for two to three consecutive days throughout the flood and its aftermath, according to Marnell. "And at that time, firemen never received any overtime pay," he said, referring to the current ongoing controversy over overtime pay for Kankakee firefighters. "If they received overtime pay then, they would have broke the city."

Although the city wasn't quite "broke" 40 years ago this weekend, for a couple of days it certainly did need some fixing.