



Candy Glasco answers a call as volunteers help box up her things left in the remains of her home after last week's tornado destroyed their farm.

Times Staff photo by Melinda Basnett

## Tornados hit farms near Bird City

By Melinda Basnett

No one was hurt in Wednesday night's tornados that hit eight farms in the Bird City area. As the tornados entered the county from the south, they traveled in almost a direct northerly path through the eastern part of the county. It was already dark, making it hard to tell what was developing.

The first farm hit belonged to John and Maria Kamla 7 miles south of Bird City. Mr. and Mrs. Kamla were watching television when neighbors Phyllis and Gerald Wright called to warn them of the approaching storm. This allowed them time to get to the basement.

On the Kamla farm it removed the east half of the barn roof, left the other outbuildings alone, but destroyed their house. The car was left sitting on a concrete pad attached to the house with a 3-inch piece of wood driven into the top of the windshield. The garage around it was gone as well as a great deal of the house.

Debris was scattered in a path north into the tree row. The horse trailer that had been parked next to the house was left about a half mile north.

From there the next victim was a barn belonging to Elaine Johnson. The twister ripped through the center of the barn, but left the house untouched.

The storm then continued its path north destroying sprinklers belonging to John Deeds, Joe Kramer and others, and utility poles across the countryside. As it neared Bird City it claimed outbuildings on the unoccupied Neil Carsten farm, before hitting the Ed and Phyllis Carson farm along U.S. 36 less than one half mile from the east edge of Bird City.

Mr. and Mrs. Carson had heard the warnings and had taken refuge in their basement. They heard the high winds but did not realize until later what had really happened. Their barn was gone, and their shop a collapsed mess. The house suffered damage to the siding and had many shingles gone from the west side, but there were no broken windows or major damage.

After crossing U.S. 36, the storm followed Road 31 north and seemed to grow more powerful as it tore apart the farm of Nick and Heidi Ketzner 2 miles north and two east of Bird City. The Ketzner family was in the storm cellar as the storm ripped up trees, took the barn, destroyed their house and scattered the remains for miles. The framework entrance to the cellar door suffered



This flag was found amid the rubble on the Ketzner farm and posted on what was left of the fence to symbolize the spirit of the community and its citizens. The Ketzners plan to rebuild their farm and fly their flag high once more.

Times Staff photo by Melinda Basnett

damage and an iron wagon wheel that had been in the yard came down the stairs toward the family hiding there.

"I'm just glad it didn't hit the town," Mr. Ketzner said. "It could have been so much worse."

Numbers of volunteers arrived early the next morning to help salvage any belongings left and to round up the sheep. Mr. Ketzner raises show sheep and is the owner of High Noon Feeds. He feels lucky to have only lost around a dozen out of a little over a 100 sheep.

An American flag, torn and tattered from the tornado was found in the rubble and placed on what was left of the fence along the road. It

showed a sense of the community spirit and kindness as so many came to help clean up and prepare to rebuild.

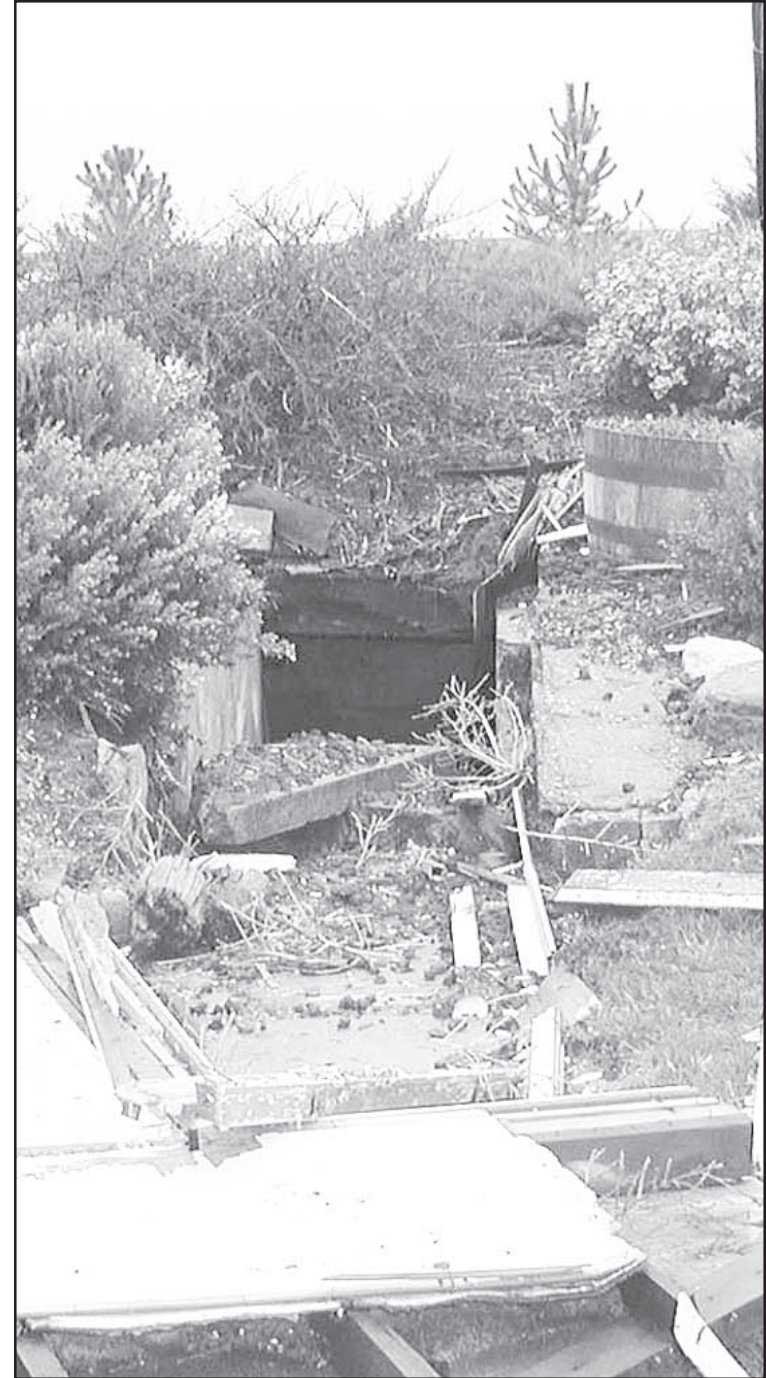
Farther north the unoccupied farm belonging to Keith and Hulda Dorsch was ripped apart next. The outbuildings are gone and the house imploded and fell into the basement. Mr. and Mrs. Dorsch were out of town, but were shocked to hear the news. Their own home only a few miles away and was untouched by the tornado.

Many bales of feed and hay were unrolled across fields as the tornado created a trail of wreckage.

The farm of Lynn and Candy Glasco suffered incredible damage

as well. The brick home was destroyed, trees ripped up and broken, a bale feeder wrapped around one tree. Several years ago, the Glascos had won the Banker's Windbreak Award. There was a twisted pile of vehicles and farm equipment where the shop used to stand.

Early the next morning, Mrs. Glasco and many volunteers searched through the rubble of her home for any salvageable items. Clutched under her arm was a Bible that her parents had given her in 1959. With a grin and tears in her eyes, she looked up and praised God that no one was hurt. She had found the Bible among



The cellar entrance where Nick, Heidi and their two small boys had taken refuge was damaged as the storm tore apart their home.

Times Staff photo by Melinda Basnett

the debris.

Mr. Glasco and others were working to repair corrals to keep the cattle from getting out and to make sure that they had feed and water. Everywhere there was stuff scattered along with straw matted into the trees and shrubs.

Cheyenne County law enforcement evacuated Mr. and Mrs. Glasco when they called 911 on Wednesday night after the storm.

The Bud Mears farm was also hit. There were two barns destroyed and the house suffered severe damage. Mr. Mears was not at home when the storm hit.

Farther north near Benkelman, other farms and fields suffered ex-

tensive damage as well. Some have reported many trees uprooted and three houses with severe damage.

Weather officials have rated the tornados near Bird City as F2 with winds in excess of 170 mph. Local power and utility companies have been working feverishly to restore poles taken out by the storm. Crews from many areas have been brought in to assist.

Many different groups have come to the area to help as well. The Lions Club members from Gem came to help cleanup. A volunteer center was set up at the Bird City Emergency building and many different organizations prepared meals for the workers.