

06-09-1972 – Rapid City SD – Daniel Wickard – LEO Flood Vehicle Washed Away

Officer Daniel E. Wickard

<http://www.rcgov.org/departments/police-department/about-the-police-dept/rcpd-fallen-heroes-301.html>



Rapid City Police Officer Daniel E. Wickard died June 9, 1972. Patrolman Wickard drowned June 9, 1972 when his patrol car was washed away while he tried to warn people of an impending severe flood. 237 other people were killed as a result of the flood.

<https://penningtoncountyemergency.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/newspaper-june-26-pd-and-fd1.jpg>

Law enforcement officers' task impossible, role heroic

By JACK KEITE
Journal Staff Writer

There had been heavy rains in the Hill, streams and creeks were rising in some areas. Water was reported to be high near the junction of Highways 46 and 205 west of Rapid City.

At 7:19 p.m. on Friday, June 9, a dispatcher at State Radio Communications, the law enforcement radio monitoring station at Camp Rapid, ordered that information to police and sheriff's agencies in western South Dakota.

It came when the afternoon patrol shift at the Rapid City Police Department was two-thirds of the way through its eight-hour shift. At the Pennington County Sheriff's Office, two night deputies had reported flooding, while two other men were still at work clearing up odds and ends from the day shift.

There seemed to be no immediate cause for alarm. But within minutes, another report indicated that Highway 46 was cut off. Water was over the road at Johnson Siding, Police Lt. Thomas Hestenes ordered the officers to get into their rain gear.

By 7:20 p.m. from the tone of the State Radio messages and his own observations, he figured an emergency situation could be developing. Down streets over Rapid City, about the sun and brought an

early dusk, Behre drove every officer on every shift, every available deputy sheriff and highway patrolman, and the entire force of reserve police officers were working in a community that had collided with calamity.

The law enforcement toll was high. One life. Four cars. Thousands of dollars worth of sophisticated equipment. An entire record archive.

Reserve Officer Daniel Wickard volunteered to work with a regular duty officer and several firemen in the Canyon Lake area. Some persons who lived near 2nd Street and Jackson Boulevard were still unaware of their peril, although water rushed past their doorsteps. Some had already evacuated their homes. Some were already dead.

Water was running over the road street bridge, but the span had not collapsed. A rope was stretched across the bridge. Wickard and the others crossed safely to the other side.

But in the rain, in the darkness, in the confusion men disappeared. No one knows exactly how.

Wickard's body was recovered the next day.

Hestenes abandoned his city patrol car when it started to

Daniel Wickard gave his life

float on Omaha Street. Deputy Sheriff DuWayne Glanges escaped from his when it was swamped while he was trying to drive through The Gap on West Main. Highway Patrolman Joel Pina was attempting to pull another motorist out of danger in the Koyote area with a log chain when the high water came. He saved himself by jumping the chain off his patrol car and heading toward a tree. A patrol car assigned to Deputy Sheriff Pat Burke and parked beside his Chicago Street home was swept away.

Water rained into the basement of City Hall, inundating the police duty room and locker room, the recently renovated records and identification room, which contained all department records as well as a darkroom equipped with a near-ray enlarger, and the detective office.

When the power went out, the police station was evacuated. For the next several hours, police activities were coordinated from the main office at Star Village atop Signal Heights, with the radio dispatcher operating from a patrol car.

Law enforcement efforts during the heroic hours of darkness Friday and early Saturday began as evacuation and changed suddenly to rescue. Acts of heroism were legion.

"Most of the men," said Police Chief Donald Messer, "probably did things we'll never find out about."

Patrolman Samuel Roach was stationed at the Jackson Boulevard-Mountain View flood spot to stop motorists from driving down Jackson into the teeth of the developing disaster. Soon it was no longer necessary to turn them away. The area was a boiling river.

The water smashed into the west side of the Charleston-Mountain View Glass House and knocked down a wall, endangering the lives of dozens of elderly residents. Roach waded through the swirling waters to carry man and woman, one at a time, to safety at the Triangle Texaco service station located at the spot.

He personally saved at lives, Messer said. Other police units and HEMAT volunteers had been informed of the partial collapse of the glass house, but were unable to reach the area.



Roach Messer

"There were a lot of little things standing in the way of rescue. One of them was the fact that the water was so deep that we couldn't get to them."

Police officials estimate that 80 per cent of the members of the force found themselves under water at one point or another late Friday and early Saturday.

And the job didn't end. Many police officers who were on duty when the flood hit worked 24 hours straight. One deputy sheriff reported in a 4 a.m. on a hand but calm Friday — and didn't go home until 1 a.m. Sunday.

The rescue phase of the law enforcement operation continued until mid-afternoon Saturday. That officers turned to the grimmer task of body recovery. At the same time, with the assistance of volunteers and the National Guard, they worked at traffic control, communications coordination and property protection.

That night a chain to fence curfew was put into effect. Persons found within the disaster area after 8 p.m. were arrested.

Dogs were allowed to roam by their owners and others victims of the flood began to gather in yards. Police were ordered to avoid them.

"I don't know," Chief Deputy Joe Burton remarked last week, "if I'll ever get back to normal."

locked and abandoned by their owners.

Neither curfew violators, one day, nor looters posed the problems they might have, Messer said. At week's end the curfew and the flooding order were lifted. Seven persons, however, were arraigned on charges of grand or petit larceny, and cases against several other individuals were being prepared.

And others apparently got away with their loot.

The return by law enforcement officers to their regular duties was a gradual process, and it's still continuing.

Head of the Rapid City police station — the basement portion — remains completely wrecked. Officials are looking for another building. The converting of the old city library into police headquarters was explored, briefly and dropped.

Sheriff's deputies, displaced by volunteers and Civil Defense subdivisions at the height of the disaster, have regained possession of their desks and offices.

Highway Patrolmen are returning back to their task of enforcing laws on the state's streets and roads.

Even so, the primary job of law enforcement is still "to do right." It will be for a long time.

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Law enforcement officers' task impossible, role heroic

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It came when the afternoon patrol shift at the Rapid City Police Department was two-thirds of the way through its eight-hour shift. At the Pennington County Sheriff's Office, two night deputies had reported for duty, while two other men were still at work clearing up debris and ends from the day shift.

There seemed to be no immediate cause for alarm. But within minutes, another report indicated that Highway 40 was cut off. Water was over the road at Johnson Siding, Police Lt. Thomas Hennessy ordered his officers to get into their rain gear.

By 7:30 p.m., from the tone of the State Radio messages and his own observations, he figured an emergency situation could be developing.

early dusk. Before dawn, every officer on every shift, every available deputy sheriff and highway patrolman, and the entire force of reserve police officers were working in a community that had collied with calamity.

The law enforcement toll was high. One life. Four cars. Thousands of dollars' worth of sophisticated equipment. An entire records section.

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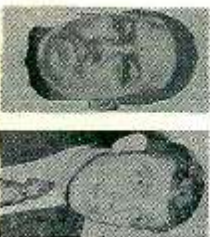
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gering the lives of dozens of elderly residents. Roach waded through the swirling waters to carry men and women, one at a time, to safety at the Tri-angle Toyota service station located at the wye.

He personally saved 41 lives, Messer said. Other police units and Red Cross volunteers had been informed of the partial collapse of the guest home, but were unable to reach the site.

Disaster in the city at about the same time, Hennessy, who had been knocked down first by a propane tank and later by a flooding roof on Omaha Street.

"We pulled in as many people as we could that were floating past," he said. "One man was standing on top of a car waiting for his arms. We shouted for him to grab the trees, but he couldn't hear us. The car hit a tree and he knuckled him off into the water."

"There were a lot of little kids standing on top of houses hammering for help, and there was no way we could get to them."

Police officials estimate that 80 per cent of the members of the force found themselves under water at one point or another late Friday and early Saturday.

And the job didn't end. Many police officers who were on duty when the flood hit worked 28 hours straight. One deputy sheriff didn't go home until 1 a.m. Sunday.

The rescue phase of the law enforcement operation continued until mid-afternoon Saturday. Then officers turned to the grimmer task of body recovery. At the same time, with the assistance of volunteers and the National Guard, they worked at traffic control, communications coordination and property protection.

That night a dunk to dawn courier was put into effect. Persons found within the disaster area after 9 p.m. were arrested. Dogs, some allowed to roam by their owners and others victim of the flood, began to gather in packs. Police were ordered to shoot them.

Thousands, not content to pull personal possessions out of piles of debris, broke into houses and motor vehicles that had been

locked and abandoned by their owners.

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Even so, the primary job of law enforcement is still flood-related. It will be for a long time.