



# LYNCHBURG GE NEWS

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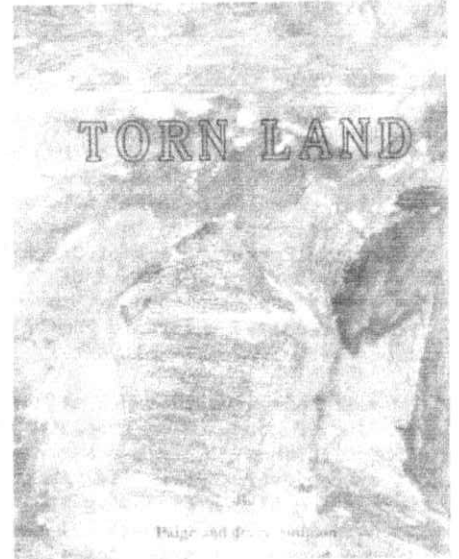
## New Book--"Torn Land"--Vividly Describes Nelson County Flood

MANY GE EMPLOYEES WILL NEVER FORGET THE FATEFUL NIGHT OF AUGUST 19-20, 1969; BOOK REFERS TO EFFORTS OF GE PEOPLE

It's been said that almost every American living at the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor remembers what he was doing on December 7 or 8, 1941, when he first heard the devastating news. The same undoubtedly holds true for virtually every Lynchburg GE employee...and indeed just about everyone in this part of Virginia...on August 20, 1969, as we began to realize, ever so slowly, how awful was the disaster a few miles to the north of here.

(It was shortly after noon on August 20, for example, when an employee called the *News* office to inquire whether the bridges over the James River would still be open when they left the plant at 4:00 o'clock...and we laughed at such a ridiculous question. As the day wore on, and more and more frightening reports began to trickle in, it suddenly was no longer a laughing matter!)

To relieve that fateful day, through the memories of a few



DUST JACKET OF "TORN LAND" is a crayon and watercolor representation of the flood.

of the individuals most deeply involved in the disaster and the recovery effort, you will want to read *Torn Land*, by Paige and Jerry Simpson, and published by J. P. Bell Company, Lynchburg, October, 1970. The book, commissioned by the Nelson County Chamber of Commerce Book Committee, is highly readable; many who have read it have remarked, "I couldn't put it down until I had finished it."

It's highly controversial, too, so this review is by no means intended as an endorsement of the book, or of the opinions expressed by the authors. Simpson and his wife live in Waynesboro; he

(See "TORN LAND,".....Page 2)

◊ REMEMBER THIS ISSUE OF THE NEWS a week after the flood?



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VOLUME 11 NUMBER 158

THURSDAY, AUGUST 28, 1969

### Devastation Described as "Incredible" in Flood-Stricken Areas

HOWEVER...IF THERE'S ANYTHING THEY DON'T NEED" IN THE AREA...IT'S SPECTATORS AND CURIOSITY SEEKERS WITHOUT SPECIFIC TASKS; SUCH ACTIVITY INTERFERES WITH RESCUE AND REHABILITATION WORK

In an effort to determine how Lynchburg GE and its employees might make a further contribution toward relieving the distress in the flood-ravaged areas of Amherst and Nelson Counties, a tour has been made by a team from Employee and Community Relations to contact officials and volunteer workers at work in the area. The team heard much praise and gratitude for the efforts of so many people who have helped out already, and also a plea for spectators and curiosity seekers without specific tasks to stay out of the area. Today, and possibly tomorrow, as space permits, the *News* will publish photos and word pictures brought back by the E&CR team.



RUBBLE AT THE BRIDGE AT MASSIE'S MILL provides mute testimony of the destruction wrought by the flood waters in the early morning hours of August 20. Countless similar scenes exist.

TORN LAND.....(Continued)

is a journalist and novelist and associate state editor of *The Daily Progress* in Charlottesville. Mrs. Simpson is a housewife.

The Simpsons describe the "earth-dissolving downpour" as having been spawned by Hurricane Camille, which the National Hurricane Center has called "the greatest recorded storm ever to hit a heavily populated area of the Western Hemisphere."

THE ROLE OF GE COMMUNICATIONS

Time and again throughout *Torn Land*, there are references to Lynchburg General Electric and its employees. For example, here are a few comments recorded in an interview with Austin Embrey, clerk of Circuit Court and clerk of the Board of Supervisors of Nelson County, in which he recalled the radio communications set up by GE employees:


"Their communications did us an awful lot of good. They brought their radios with them. They had a real good system everywhere. They kept on expanding it and expanding it and expanding it. They brought all this stuff in here, no charge, new stuff, and over there at the Control Center that stuff took a beating with all that dust stirred up everytime a chopper came in or took off."

The book goes on to note that "despite difficulties, General Electric volunteers set up radio communications at schools that served as food and clothing distribution points, at emergency offices in the Court House, at remote village rescue and relief stations, wherever anyone wanted them."


Chapter 9 of *Torn Land* is devoted to Clifford E. Wood, who, as vice chairman of the Nelson County Board of Supervisors was the ranking local authority for coordinating and directing the county's operation

TRADING POST

For Rent: Unfurnished large one bedroom apt., Old Forest Rd. Elec. heat. Call 846-1931.  
Wanted: Children to keep in my home, 1st or 2nd shift, hot meals, references. Timberlake area. Call 237-0917.  
...Go-cart, any cond. Call 237-0602 after 4:30 p.m.  
Ride Wanted: From Greenbrier Apts. to CAP, 7:30-4:00. Call 846-5339 after 4:30 p.m.  
For Sale: '57 1/2 ton pickup truck, 6 cyl., custom cab, clean body, new seats, motor needs to be overhauled. Call 845-6260 after 5:00 p.m.  
...Canon FT-QL w/1.2 lens, also 35 mm/2.8 Soligor wide angle elec. flash, filter set. 2X telexender. only used

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VOLUME 11 NUMBER 182 THURSDAY, OCTOBER 2, 1969

**Governor Godwin Salutes Lynchburg General Electric People For Assistance in Relief Communications in Recent Disaster**

 **COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE RICHMOND 22218**  
**RECEIVED**  
SEP 22 1969  
R. P. GIFFORD  
September 19, 1969

Mr. R. P. Gifford  
General Manager  
Communication Systems Division  
General Electric Company  
Mountain View Road  
Lynchburg, Virginia 24502

Dear Mr. Gifford:

On Wednesday, August 20, 1969, after a night of horror the like of which is not in the memory of contemporary Virginians, the General Electric Company Mobile Radio Department, recognized that due to the events of the night that disaster relief communications in and out of the Nelson County area would be nonexistent.



GOVERNOR MILLS E. GODWIN, JR.

throughout the emergency. Mr. Wood makes frequent references to the GE radio equipment and the GE employees who helped to man the communication system. He refers on Page 110 to a "ham radio operator by the name of Johnson" who was, of course, Bob Johnston of MRD Drafting.

There's a salute, too, to the Lynchburg Life Saving and Rescue Squad headed by Kimball Glass, boiler room operator here at the Mountain View Plant. This reference is on page 211. And, on page 217 the high-rise antenna installed by GE volunteers is noted.

The Rev. John W. Gordon, Jr., notes in his interview...in Chapter 15 which is devoted to him...that "the GE plant in Lynchburg supplied portable radios, and the crews could talk to us with these. We used the radios in the more isolated places to speed communications." A similar

acknowledgement of GE equipment is made in Chapter 17 by James L. Tribble of the State Office of Civil Defense.

The efforts of Lynchburg General Electric and its employees were acknowledged also by Major General Alfred B. Denniston, at the time coordinator of Civil Defense and Director of Emergency Planning for the Commonwealth of Virginia, in a report to the U. S. Senate's special sub-committee on disaster relief of the Committee on Public Works, in a hearing held in Roanoke on Feb. 1 and 2, 1970. This reference appears on page 421 of *Torn Land*.

Earlier, the authors had noted, on page 400 that "communications, except for telephone, were by far the greatest problem encountered during the flooding." Then, they noted General Electric Company's loan of Porta Mobil units which helped alleviate this problem.

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There is, of course, much, much more of interest in *Torn Land* in addition to the references to GE. But there's a special bit of food for thought for everyone--and especially Lynchburg GE people--in a couple of quotes from Nelson County Sheriff William N. Whitehead. These quotes appear on pages 168 and 169 of the book:

"Lack of communication is a bad thing. I'm not talking just about electronic communication. I mean between people, whether it's by radio, telephone or face to face.

"The lack of communication is a