

9.1 billion gallons of water held by dam

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operate the gates should the electrical supply fail. Firewood cut from debris he cleared from the channel improvements area rested against the side of his home.

Everything seemed ready for 40 days and nights of rain. It only took five to bring tragedy.

There was no way to tell how bad the roads to town might be that Wednesday night, but Kirkpatrick's son, Tim, 19, volunteered to try them in an effort to reach Kirkpatrick's two assistants and the telephone company.

Meanwhile, Kirkpatrick turned to his radio. Cut off from Baltimore by interference he reached the Corps station at Whitney Point, N. Y., and relayed his data through it.

By dark, he knew he would have to shut the gates. Whitney Point made a long distance call to Mechanicsburg for an H. J. Williams Co. fireman whose bridge crew had left heavy construction equipment in the reservoir area.

It was too late. By dawn the equipment — like the cellar of the elderly farmer in West Manchester Township, and like the first floor apartment of that man's granddaughter in downtown York City — was sitting in flood waters.

No wonder the farmer thought the dam had "failed." Along with many other area residents, he spent Thursday and Friday wondering if it would hold at all. They had forgotten about the

spillway. The dam would sink under water before it would let go. Meantime, in the words of President County Commissioner Charles A. Stein Jr., "It did a job!"

Tim Kirkpatrick made it to York City — just. At his call, the York Telephone and Telegraph Co. dispatched Ken Rankin and Allen Walker, installation and maintenance men, to the dam in a radio-equipped panel truck.

The panel truck couldn't make it on the flooded back roads, but Tim's fellow workers at Skip's Foreign Cars loaded the panel truck onto a flatbed truck that could.

By that time, police departments throughout the county faced emergency situations, and York County Control wanted to reach Kirkpatrick for a report on the dam.

West Manchester township Patrolman Bozer attempted to get through with his cruiser and was cut off on flooded roads. Bozer hitched a ride on a West York Fire Co. truck about the time Rankin and Allen reopened communications.

Also making their way to the dam were Thomas Hanlin and Robert Harris, Kirkpatrick's assistants who had taken readings on water level gauges measuring the combined flow of the two creek branches downstream from the dam — important data for Baltimore. With that information, the Corps made its decision at

10:30 p.m.: close the gates.

Bozer, with other problems to handle, left. It wasn't until he stopped by the dam several days later that Kirkpatrick knew for sure the patrolman made it back.

Rankin and Allen stayed and deserved "credit no end for their help" Kirkpatrick said later. Perhaps the hardest working member of the crew that Wednesday was Mrs. Kirkpatrick, who kept the men supplied with sandwiches and coffee through the long night.

"We had plenty of provisions and our own power system, so we were O.K.," Kirkpatrick said later. "Mostly what we did was take readings and sit on it."

There is perhaps no way for him to explain what it felt like to "sit on" 9.1 billion gallons of water. Between 5 p.m., Wednesday, and 5 p.m., Thursday, York County was hit with 13.40 inches of rain.

"Thursday was a sleepy day, mostly walking around all wet and keeping a check," Kirkpatrick remembers. Shortly after 2 p.m., a helicopter from the Baltimore office picked him up at the end of the dam for a tour of the York-Harrisburg area.

Other areas were harder hit by flooding, but York County got the most rainfall, the Corps says. The nearest to our 16.32 inches was Harrisburg with 15.11.

It was not until shortly after midnight Friday the water hit the spillway level. Somewhere out in

the 1,500 acres of water behind the dam, farmer John Shearer Jr.'s snap beans, cut off from the sun, began to die.

In York City, flood waters from the south branch had crested before dark Thursday, after killing one man and, according to Donald G. Schlosser, city director of community development, creating about 80 per cent of the city's \$10 million damages.

The crest reached the dam at 1 p.m., Friday: 66.44 feet, or 16.56 feet below the top of the earth and rock embankment. While it was still coming up, Baltimore instructed Kirkpatrick to begin the weeks long process of easing it out into the Codorus channel through the city.

Then Kirkpatrick and his men joined other countians in the long, dreary process of cleaning up.

Rumors and unofficial estimates since that week have added up to some mighty confused theories on the value of the Indian Rock Project, but even as they arrived to help with the clean up, Army Engineers were proud of their dam. County Civil Defense officials praised the way the Corps had used it.

No one is sure how much higher the flood waters would have risen in York City if it had not been for the dam. The Corps has made a rough guess at 56 inches, a considerable addition.

Damages in 1972 were \$6 million higher than in 1933, but as

Schlosser points out, American basements and first floors in 1933 did not contain washers and dryers, recreation rooms, television sets and stereos.

The 1972 rainfall was 10 inches — exactly the total amount the dam had been built to control — greater than that of 1933.

As Rep. George A. Goodling (R-19th) said last week, man has covered more and more earth with concrete as he crowds himself together on the Eastern Seaboard. Ground covered with concrete cannot absorb rainfall.

No additional plans had been made for flood protection in York County. According to estimates based on the 1933 flood, the area should have been safe.

As one Corps spokesman said, "Plans for further studies based on new information will have to come from Congress."

Congressman Goodling knew of no immediate discussions of flood control, but he said further planning for the Corps' Codorus Creek Waste Water Management Program Study, set for completion this summer, will have to include flood planning "to protect what we do."

As for what happened last month, Commissioner Stein's words come back with what is perhaps the best summary about Indian Rock Dam in the 1972 flood: "It did a job."

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