

Weather

Greenbush Area Weather

The Greenbush area, where the unusual is the usual, at least regarding the weather, is difficult to describe in terms of climate. We certainly have seasons. Some say the four seasons are almost winter, winter, still winter, and turning cold. Others claim the description can be distilled to nine months of winter and three months of cold weather. These descriptions are a little unfair, as northern Minnesota has all four seasons, spring, summer, fall, and winter. I know, because many times I have experienced all of them in a single day.

Sometimes a season doesn't stay around long enough to recognize it, but this is not necessarily bad. Take this year of 2004, for instance. It is October, and I haven't done my spring cleaning yet, because we didn't seem to have spring. Think of the labor saved! Fall cleaning will have to be done, though, as fall is here and there's no mistaking **that**.



Loading snow on main street Greenbush. (photo courtesy of the Tribune)

Winter is our most common and most commented upon season. It truly is long, cold, and inconvenient. We love to complain about it, but I believe we enjoy being "tough enough" to live with it. We complain to draw attention to the fact that we are barely surviving yet another northern Minnesota winter.

In truth, our weather isn't always bad. We have lovely spring days, beautiful sunny summer days, gorgeous fall days, and invigorating winter days. We do have some damaging weather, such as severe



High waters date unknown. (photo courtesy of Milt Sather)

summer storms, flooding rains, hail, high winds, tornadoes, heavy snowstorms, and ice storms, but these debilitating weather conditions are not as common as the photos and stories in this section may indicate. Our wonderful, beautiful sunny days don't inspire dramatic stories and pictures, but we do have them. In fact, I remember one back in the 1970s...

Please remember these pictures and stories cover a period of about one hundred years and are not necessarily indicative of our usual weather conditions.

Submitted by Eunice Korczak

Lightning Strikes

We tend to be fairly cavalier about lightning, because we see it often in the Greenbush area. However, it can be dangerous, so taking cover is important although sometimes this capricious phenomenon will seek out even those who are indoors! Following are just a few local stories that illustrate the quirky behavior of northern Minnesota lightning.

Graff and Day Children 1929

About 1929, Deborah Graff and the Raymond Day children were walking home from school at District #22 when a powerful bolt of lightning struck a pole just twelve to fifteen feet from them. It shattered the pole, shredding it into about a thousand pieces with large slivers of wood flying everywhere. Stunned by the violence and noise, the children huddled together -- after the lightning had struck! Luckily, no one was hurt.

Larson 1930s

In the early 1930s, the first thunderstorm of the season arrived with a bang at the Larson household in Deer Township. Oscar Larson had gone to get the mail and was sitting in a rocker near the radio, when suddenly there was a terrible noise. Ludvig (Oscar's brother) and Jenny were also present, as were the children Lillian, Laura, and Lawrence. All were stunned by the powerful noise. At first no one was sure exactly what had happened, but then they realized that Oscar's back was on fire! Ludvig came to his senses and put out the fire. Although they were somewhat reluctant to use the phone as the storm raged on, Ludvig called Dr. Knutson. The doctor came out to the house. Lillian, who was around eight years old at the time, recalls large amounts of ointment and big gauze pads being applied to her father's back. Oscar carried scars on his back for the rest of his life and claimed he could "feel" when a thunderstorm was coming, but he healed.

The lightning had entered the house by following the aerial wire leading to the radio. From there it jumped to Oscar in the rocker. The rocker was scorched, but Oscar repaired it and it remains in the family. Lillian said she and the other two children (Laura and Lawrence) were very afraid of lightning after the incident. "We saw what damage it could do," she said.

Stanislawski 1945

In July of 1945, Georgine Stanislawski of Polonia Township had a narrow escape from death by lightning. Georgine eleven-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Alex Stanislawski was with her family in the kitchen where they had gathered when the storm struck. Lightning entered the house by an undiscovered route and left by way of the kitchen pump. Georgine was hit at the hips and knocked down but not out. The new pair of overalls she was wearing were ripped off her by the blast. The garment was left in tattered ribbons, and one of the pockets was torn off and thrown on the kitchen table. Mr. Stanislawski said that when he picked up his daughter after the bolt struck, he was happy to find her alive.

Georgine sustained painful but not serious injuries on hips, groin, and legs. Georgine's sister, Alice, who was eight-years-old was not hit but suffered a severe shock. A number of kitchen utensils were damaged and the house was somewhat damaged, but there was no fire.

Kukowski 1945

Henryka (Kukowski) Evans, recalls that during the same storm that assaulted the Stanislawski's, lightning entered their house through the chimney, blew the covers off the chimney vent holes, and traveled into the stove and out. Her mother was canning at the time and saw a ball of fire go into the stove. Henryka was in the dining room rocking her brother. The concussion was so great that it lifted Henryka off her seat, and she dropped the boy. She said she was not actually hit, but was jolted and stunned.

Heltne 1945

In another storm in July of 1945, lightning seemed to be playing games at the Carl Heltne home. It struck a large tree in their front yard, and followed the telephone line to the kitchen, smashing the phone to bits. It also hit the radio aerial and smashed the lightning arrester on the windowsill, but didn't damage the radio. The lightning knocked out windowpanes in the dining room and living room before continuing through the hall and into their bedroom where it knocked out more windowpanes. One end of the curtain rods in the dining and living rooms had been knocked off and the curtains were left hanging askew.

Mrs. Heltne didn't know anything untoward had happened until she felt a breeze and discovered the windowpanes were gone. Carl told her, "Lightning must have struck somewhere." Yep, it did, Carl!

Fortunately, neither of the Heltnes were injured and there was no fire.

Holm 1950s

One evening in the 1950s, as Henna and Grace Holm returned home from a trip to Greenbush, a storm was brewing. Herman made a visit to the bathroom. While he was there, lightning entered the house and balls of fire flew around. Frightened, Grace called to Herman who did not answer. She was afraid to go check on him. "All I could think of was he was sitting on that stool of water," she said. Luckily, both Herman and Grace were uninjured, but the house sustained damage to the electrical system including blowing the electrical outlet covers off the wall. Repairs required several hours of attention from a professional electrician.

Sather 1980s

One evening in the early 1980s, Clark and Sandra Sather were spending a quiet evening at home with their new baby, Ryan. Lynn and Michael, their older boys, were gone for the evening. Clark had just put Ryan to bed in the bedroom, when lightning struck the television antenna. It blew out the television and went through the electrical system, and sparks flew from the outlets, even in the bedroom. The drapes were set afire from the coax cable leading in from the antenna. Little glowing balls of fire flew around and then dissipated. No one was hurt, and although the television was fried, the electrical system sustained no detectable damage. "We did replace the wiring," Clark said, "But not until years later."

Submitted by Eunice Korczak

Sources: Henryka Evans, Deborah Sather, Lillian Wagner, Clark Sather, Roseau County Historical Society Museum, Roseau Times Region.

The Twister of August, 1913

The Greenbush paper made an interesting comment regarding this storm, "This is the first time in the history of Roseau County so far as we have heard that a cyclone had visited this county." In most reports of this storm, it is called a cyclone, but I think we can safely assume it was a tornado. We should also note that the "recorded history" of Roseau County was still very new, the area having been populated with non-Indians for perhaps twenty-five years or less.

The storm in August of 1913 was fierce and left much damage in its path. The true path was about a quarter mile wide, with less violence beyond this to a width of one to one and a half miles. The most serious damage occurred at the Anton Anderson farm where the house and other buildings were destroyed and scattered about and an eleven-year-old son, Roy, was killed. A younger son suffered a crushed foot and other severe bruises.

The wind apparently came roaring in from the southwest near Karlstad, where it destroyed a barn and a garage. It took a barn and a calf at the Harold Johnson place. Mrs. Walsh and children, Jimmie and Cally, were overtaken by the storm near the old Schaller place and had to drive to a haystack until the storm was over, as the team would not go against the winds.

It struck at the Nick Kalinowski farm, where it blew down a large barn, killed several horses, and blew away a lean-to that had been attached to the house. Joe Kulpinski lost all his buildings and two horses. Mrs. Kota lost all her buildings, too. Two school buildings in that neighborhood were wrecked. John Bolek's house was destroyed, and his wife seriously injured. Mr. Lorbiecki lost a barn and his house, and Mr. Shanowski (Chrzanowski) lost his buildings.

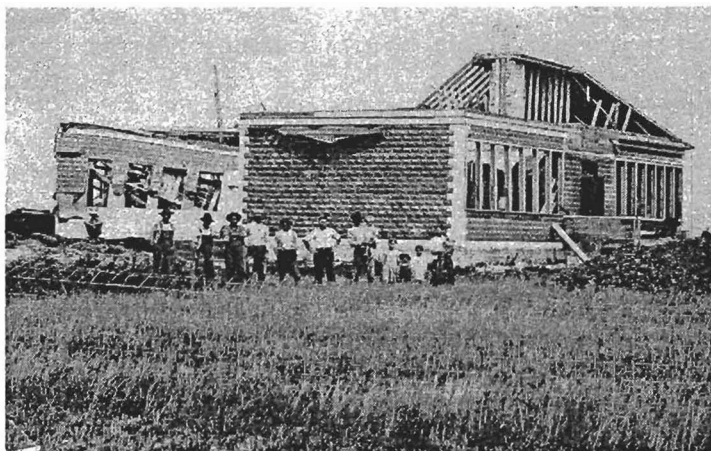
The Peter Rutkowski family, living just west of the Leo church, had an unusual experience. The wind picked up their house and turned it upside down on some nearby poplar trees, and some branches pierced the roof. Mrs. Rutkowski's father was seriously injured, but amazingly the rest of the family escaped with just minor injuries.

All of the buildings at the John Stanislawski farm were leveled and one horse killed. The John Pulczynski barn and the Henry Schires barn were both rendered beyond repair.

At Leo, the church was moved about fifteen feet off its foundation at the front and about three feet at the rear. The front of the Leo store was blown in, and the barns for the church wrecked and blown

away. The Zabolski house south of the church was demolished, and across the road at the John Pelowski farm, all the buildings but the house were blown down. To the north of the church, the winds destroyed the house and all the buildings on the Theo. Zabinski farm. The family was in the cellar and escaped serious injury, but Mr. Zabinski remained upstairs to hold the doors. When the house blew to pieces, he ended up on the woodpile nearby, badly injured.

The C.O. Haug family lost their bam, granary, and machine shed. The kitchen of the house was tom away and the remainder of the house was moved about twenty feet. The family was in the main part of the house and came through without a scratch. In that area, the twister ravaged the new Haug School that had been built in 1910.



Haug School District 16 after 1913 "cyclone" (tornado).

The storm continued on to Roseau where it demolished a church, caused considerable damage to windows, and blew away the fair-ground structures. Not even a fence remained on the fairgrounds.

Submitted by Eunice Korczak

Condensed from articles in the August 22, 1913, issue of the Greenbush Tribune.

Wind Storm, 1943

In July of 1943, the Greenbush Tribune reported "the worst wind storm to hit this section in the 34 years that we have lived here." This **would** include the big tornado of 1913 that damaged the fine, new Haug School. But unlike the 1913 storm, this storm took no human life.

The storm, coming from North Dakota by way of Stephen and Argyle, struck Greenbush around two a.m., traveling at a pretty good clip. The Tribune reported it featured a "head-on wind of great velocity mixed with some small twisters" and described the path of the storm as "about fifteen miles wide," although the severity was reduced on the outside edges of the path.

Damage in town included the demolition of L. Hopkin's airplane hanger, bee equipment, and warehouse. At least five downtown businesses suffered loss of windows, the roof on Einar Johnson's warehouse was badly damaged, the bank's chimney came through the skylight into the building, Rinowski's barber shop lost its porch, and many trees were uprooted. One garage **was** lifted up and over the car within, leaving the car undamaged.

Most of the phones in town were served by underground cable and were not affected, but the country lines sustained damages and service outages. As many as ninety bams were lost and uncounted numbers of outbuildings destroyed. Luckily not one person sus-

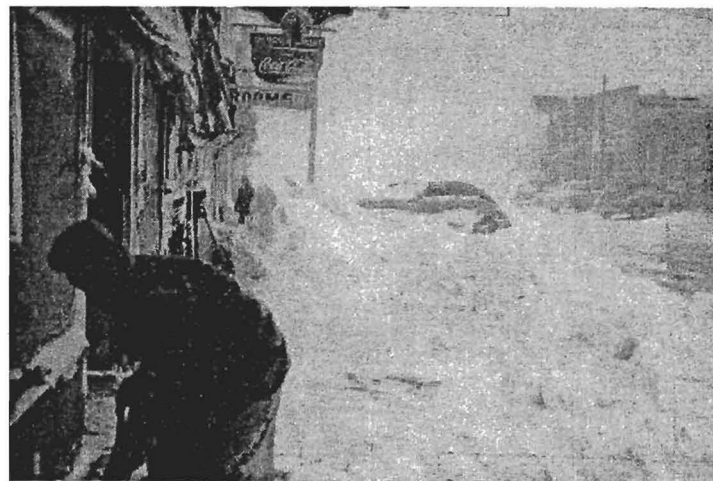
tained injuries and only a few animals were lost in the storm as it continued on through Badger and Roseau.

Bill Ekstrand, IM. Roche, and R.W. Huggett of Greenbush joined others meeting at Roseau with Red Cross and government officials to plead for assistance to provide winter shelter for the livestock left unhoused by the wind's demolition of barns.

Because of power outage due to the storm, The Tribune was a "little late getting out" and "the news a little abbreviated," and the creamery was closed all day after the storm.

Submitted by Eunice Korczak

Condensed from the July 15, 1943, issue of The Greenbush Tribune.



Cleaning sidewalks is a common occurrence in Greenbush during the winter. These pictures are circa 1946. (photos courtesy of Milt Sather)

Flying boxcars in 1954

The wind storm of 1954, a wide-spread storm with winds reported from eighty-five to one hundred miles per hour, raged through the Greenbush area on its way to Canada.

A warning was received that two runaway boxcars were heading this way from Thief River Falls. They were traveling at top speed and hitting crossings at unscheduled times. Nearing 6:30 p.m., with darkness descending rapidly, people were concerned about drivers who were already excited about the storm. Tony Burkel and Don Rinowski bravely jumped aboard the flying boxcars near the Ellerd Paulson crossing and set the brakes.

The storm collapsed the chimney of the Greenbush Community Hospital. When the chimney fell unto the roof, it caved into the

Blizzard of '66

waiting room and nurses' station, then crashed into the nurses' reception room in the basement. Shortly before the chimney collapsed, Thea Iverson had been seated in the waiting room, but Bert Anderson, custodian, had come down the hall and she had left her seat to speak with him. Seconds later the chimney collapsed. It was a narrow escape from death. Other less major damage to the hospital also occurred, but volunteers pitched in immediately and were even making temporary repairs to the roof while the wind was still raging.

The hanger in which Father McMahon's Piper Cub was parked collapsed, but the plane was only slightly damaged due to some quick work of anchoring the plane to a Caterpillar, reportedly while the hanger was partially in the air.

Extensive farm damage included broken silos and caved-in barn roofs, as well as damage to windows, chicken coops, and homes.

In the June 10, 1954, Greenbush Tribune, only one person was reported injured - Ole Moberg of Middle River, who had been hit by a heavy rack carried by the wind. He was admitted to the Greenbush Hospital.

Submitted by: Eunice Korczak

Condensed from the June 10, 1954, issue of The Greenbush Tribune.

Worst Snowstorm of 1956 Season Came in March



Snowbanks along Highway 11 in 1956.
(photo courtesy of Korczak Collection)

In 1956, snow and wind began on a Monday night in March and had picked up momentum by Tuesday evening. The storm continued until the following Thursday morning, leaving the area isolated. The continued wind along with a snowfall of six to eight inches left roads filled in with snowdrifts, and it was estimated that it would take the rest of the week to open just the main ones. The storm affected an area extending from Badger to Thief River Falls, rendering the highway impassable for that distance.

Submitted by: Eunice Korczak

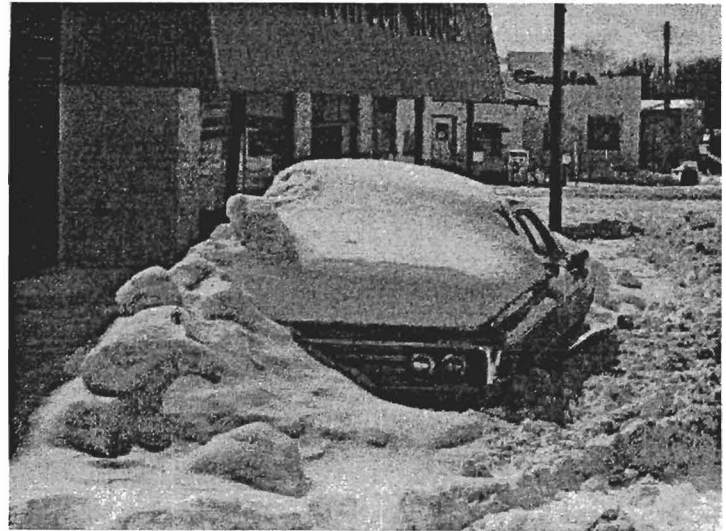
Source: Greenbush Tribune, 1956



Cleaning up Hwy 11 after the Blizzard of '66.
(photo courtesy of Milt Sather)

According to the March 10, 1966, issue of The Greenbush Tribune, the Blizzard of 1966 will go down in the history of the area with the storms of 1888, 1909, and 1941. Although the storm of 1941 was more sudden, stranding more people and causing more deaths, people felt the storm of 1966 was the longest period of snowing and blowing and left the most snow. The winds began Wednesday evening but quieted for short spells. About midnight the winds and snow began in earnest. Most businesses were open on Thursday although the school closed.

Comments were made that people had never before seen a business day in Greenbush when no farmers had been seen in town. But then came the reports that one farmer had been seen -- James Efta.



Snow-covered car on Main Street Greenbush.
(photo courtesy of Milt Sather)

The county snowplow made two emergency runs during the storm to bring two medical patients to the hospital, one on Saturday and one on Sunday. The patients were Adolph Tomasek and Alice Owens.

Friday, streets were blocked all over town, and things were yet nearly at a stand-still. The school was closed and several of the businesses also did not open. People with snow removal equipment and snowmobiles were busy clearing the streets, providing emergency transportation, transporting health care personnel, and running errands to people in need. Many of the hospital employees slept at the hospital, particularly on Friday night, because visibility

was so poor that even the snowmobile drivers found it impossible to provide rides.

Submitted by Eunice Korczak

Condensed from an article in the March 10, 1966, issue of The Greenbush Tribune.

Floods Cause Hardship in Greenbush Area. 1966

The year 1966 was a year of disasters proclaimed The Greenbush Tribune - and it was only April!

After fighting the battle of the March blizzard, followed by temperatures reaching 48 degrees below zero, farmers and those with buildings along the river were fighting floodwaters. Early in the week, the Army Corps of Engineers told Mayor Art Braun and other city officials to prepare for a possible additional foot of water. But the weather continued cold, so many ditches didn't open as quickly as expected. Thus the South Branch of Two Rivers that runs through town receded about a foot.

The Great Northern Railway bridge south of Greenbush was badly damaged and in serious danger of being completely destroyed by floodwaters from State Ditch 91. Crews worked to break up ice floes to keep them going under the bridge, a long and tedious task as the floes kept coming, one after another. One bridge was completely washed out and the Grivi Bridge damaged. The tracks were also affected. In places, the water washed away the roadbed leaving the rails and ties suspended in midair.



The Grivi Bridge was damaged in the Flood of 1966 (April).
(photo courtesy of Milt Sather)

County and township roads took a beating from the water and ice, washing them away and making them impassable in many places. Sandbagging was done around the Jeff Everson home and a dike was built by Hi-Way Lanes. Farmers had to make unusual arrangements for their livestock and fowl. Pigs were put in haylofts of bams and cattle were fed on roads because of flooded bams.

Submitted by Eunice Korczak

Condensed from the April 7, 1966, issue of The Greenbush Tribune.

Winds of 1975

It seems the winds in this area strengthen with practice. **The July 3, 1975,** issue of the Greenbush Tribune again described a wind storm as "one of the worst wind storms in the history of Greenbush."

The wind reportedly came from the Art Dokken farm, past the

school, past the office of the Minnesota Department of Resource, to the Sheep Palace and Tom's Body Shop and then to the homes located east of Highway 32.



Tom's Body Shop after the windstorm of 1975.
(photo courtesy of Milt Sather)

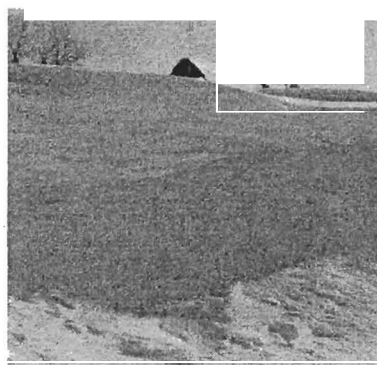
This storm brought down the Sheep Palace, damaged Tom's Body Shop, The Noreen Construction Office parked near the school, and the aerial at the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. It also took away a shed on Ed Dallager's property, but left the snowmobile within undamaged.

Submitted by Eunice Korczak

Christmas Snows for Easter. 1975

Just before Easter of 1975, Mother Nature decorated as if for Christmas. To add sparkle to the decorations, Easter Day was sunny and pretty.

In the April 3, 1975, edition of the Greenbush Tribune, a picture of Elderbush Manor, taken the Monday after Easter, shows snow drifted nearly to the eaves of the building. The Tribune reported that many people had not been out for two or three days because of difficulty walking.



Huge snowbanks at the John L. Kukowski farm, Christmas of 1977. *(photo courtesy of Elinor Koshinina)*

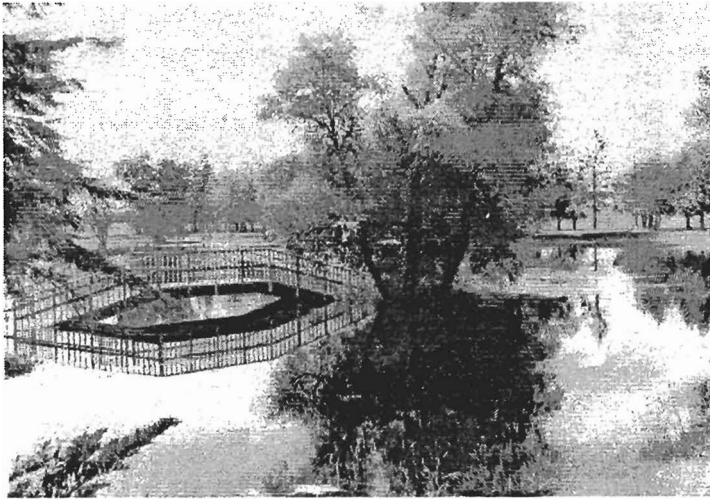
One picture shows a car nearly buried in the white stuff, and another shows large piles of snow resulting from the efforts of snow removal from Main Street. According to the newspaper, snow removal was

nearing completion on Wednesday, three days after Easter.

Submitted by Eunice Korczak

The Rains of 1993

In the Greenbush Tribune of August 18, 1993, Roseau County Extension Agent Dale Carter was quoted as saying, "In the Greenbush area, there is about ninety percent small grain loss plus field loss." He said the water level was so high there really was nothing farmers could do but wait it out. Agent Snooky Erickson



Beautiful reflections in the waters flooding Welcome Park -1993.
(photo courtesy of Greenbush Tribune)

said that virtually one hundred percent of the corn was gone and seventy to eighty percent of the sunflowers destroyed.

Congressman Collin Peterson and Representative Jim Tunheim visited the area to assess the damage.

Submitted by Eunice Korczak

Condensed from the August 18, 1993, issue of The Greenbush Tribune.

Winter Storms

I am inclined to believe the winters in those days (the early days) were far more severe than they are now. It was not uncommon to have snowdrifts cover the windows in the house. It would be the job of the able to get out and shovel the snow away to allow the light to come through. Winds actually shook the house during the storms. Mother nature had a way of swirling the snow around the corner of the house, building a bank as high as the house. We kids often approached these banks from the back side and had no problem climbing on top of the house. From this position, what a thrilling ride you could get on a piece of tin, a homemade sled, or just the seat of your pants.

After a storm such as I described, it was interesting and enjoyable to see what changes in the outdoors had taken place. Where was the water pump? No sign of it. It was completely covered with snow. The barn, yes, it's straight east of the house. The top is visible. How do I get to those animals? They'd been most comfortably housed with ample food and warmth. Before you were to make your entrance, you shoveled tons of snow from the door. These animals had to come out. They needed water. Water from the well which just minutes ago was invisible to the human eye.

I remember one storm especially well. The turkeys and geese were housed in a machine shed. Here they received shelter from the wind, but were expected to keep themselves warm from their own body heat. A day or two after this storm, someone mentioned that the turkeys and geese were nowhere to be found. What could have happened to them?

About two weeks later, I was romping around the machine shed area, when suddenly I stepped on a hollow spot in a snow bank. My foot and whole body was suddenly resting on the back of a turkey. This poor thing had been buried by the wind and had survived the storm. The heat from its body had melted enough snow around it to make a comfortable tomb. It had been pecking in the snow wall for

its water supply and was in good health. Rest assured it wasn't the turkey you would want for your Thanksgiving dinner, since it had lost many pounds during the ordeal. It was skin and bone.

I assumed that since one had met this fate, there must be other turkeys imprisoned in the same way. What about the geese? It was then that I became the hero of the day. I walked, jumped, and probed the area hoping to rescue the poor creatures, if there were others like the first one I'd found. Unfortunately, I didn't find all the missing ones, but I was able to rescue four more turkeys and one goose. The rest were discovered the following spring when the huge snowdrifts melted. Why they left the shelter of the machine shed, I will never know. Perhaps they were frightened by the howling winds. *Albin Zabrocki, excerpt from his book, The Story of my Life, now at the Roseau County Historical Museum.*

Submitted by Eunice Korczak

The Tornadoes of 1997

"Never underestimate the power of a tornado... They can do a lot of damage in a short time. I have a whole new respect for clouds." *Darlene Ihrke, whose home was severely damaged.*

The weather went a little crazy in Greenbush area at the end of June of 1997. Harvey Melby lay face down clinging to a shrub as a twister caused considerable damage to his home. He looked up at the sky once during the ordeal and saw nothing but black. He doesn't remember hearing a sound as the tornado passed overhead.



Home of Arthur and Lizzie Kjersten after the tornado on June 27, 1997.
(photo courtesy of Lizzie Kjersten)

About a quarter of a mile from the Melby home, Lizzie Kjersten remained in her house during the storm and luckily was uninjured. Kjersten's barn, hog barn, two steel bins, and other outbuildings were destroyed. The barn roof was carried to the north of the house, a steel bin rested in the trees northwest of the house, another bin became lodged between two trees east of where the barn had stood. The roof, siding, and windows of the house were damaged.

Byron and Stuart Eeg were working in a field near the Kjersten home. The windows of Byron's tractor were blown out, and Stuart's tractor also sustained minor damage. Byron was taken to the emergency room where his eyes were flushed out. Stuart was uninjured.

About a half hour later, another tornado formed further south. Cutting through fields and ditches, it came roaring to Darlene Ihrke's farmstead about three miles northeast of Greenbush, where it caused extensive damage to the grove. A garage was destroyed, and two sheds were demolished. The house sustained damage to the roof,



Tornado as seen from the Ernie and Karen Janousek farm as it damaged Lizzie Kjersten's home. (photo courtesy of Karen Janousek)

the porch, windows, and doors. The force of the storm shifted the house on the foundation, pushing the walls out at the top and sucking them in at the bottom. No one was home at the time.

The tornado proceeded across Highway 11 causing damage to Barb Burkel Sluka's home.

Crop damage due to the accompanying hail was extensive in some areas.



The tornado that damaged Darlene Ihrkes's home. In the foreground Martin Peterson and Mike Korczak. (photo courtesy of Felix Korczak)

The weather in the town of Greenbush remained relatively calm with very little rain and no hail.

Submitted by Eunice Korczak

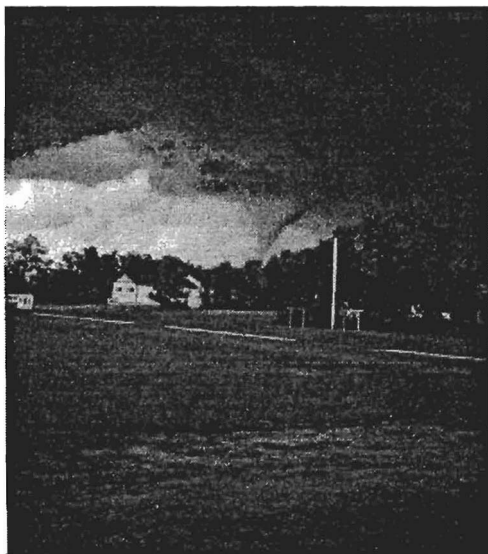
Condensed from the July 2, 1997, issue of the Greenbush Tribune.



Hail in the summer of 1997.



County Road 29 floods over almost every year. (photo by Myrna Sovde)



Tornado in 1997. There were five different funnels that day. (photo submitted by Margaret Anderson)



Easter Sunday, April 4th, 1999.



1929. When they were lucky, they got a ride home from school on a contraption called a toboggan. Gladys E., Orpha E., **Helen C.** with Lillian Kelly holding the reins. (photo courtesy of Lillian (Kelly) Nelson)



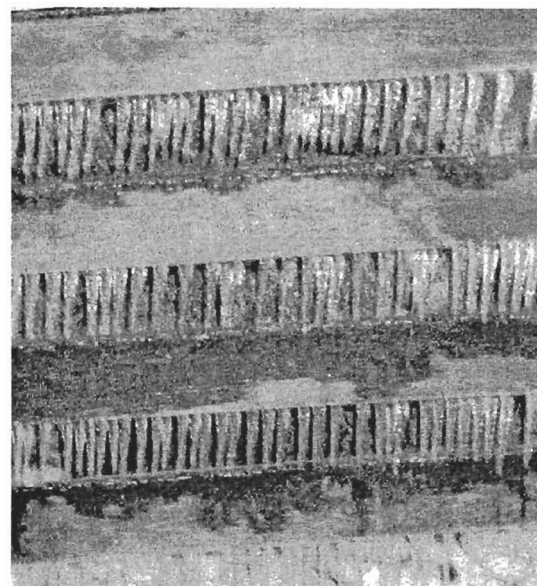
A bright frosty wonderland in 1970.



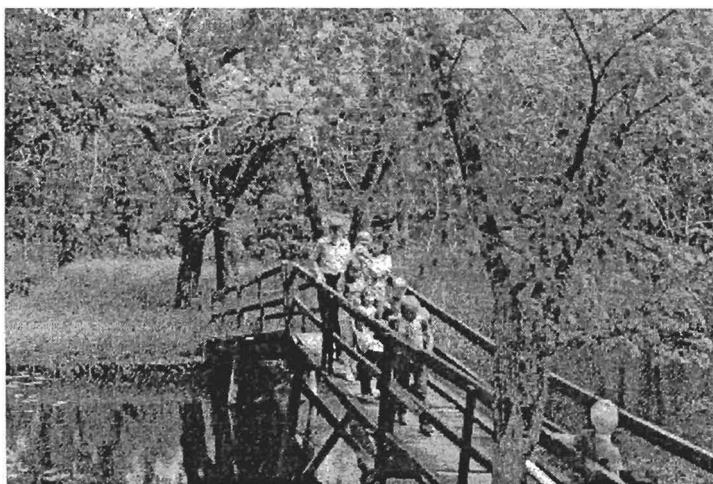
Icicles on the vines on April Fool's Day of 1999. (photo courtesy of Myrna Sovde)



Ice storm in 1999.



Icicles on the fence 1999.



Enjoying summer weather in Pelan Park in 1985.



Grandpa takes the girls for a ride on a nice winter day, 1987.