



Federal Disaster News Center

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, May 25, 1970

EDITORS: This color roundup on the Lubbock tornado is by E.V.W. Jones, special writer assigned to the disaster area by the Office of Emergency Preparedness, and is offered as a summary as the urgent phase of the disaster draws to a close.)

LUBBOCK, TEXAS - Dr. James H. Granberry had been mayor of Lubbock for only three weeks when an important part of the city blew away.

In a terrifying five minutes starting at 9:45 p.m., May 11th, one of the worst tornadoes in Texas history brought death of 26 persons, injured 1,500, and shattered homes, factories and businesses in a 1,600 acre area to the extent of about \$135 million in losses.

Suddenly, 2,600 Lubbock families were thrown into various degrees of distress. Ninety of the injured were hospitalized. With 949 homes destroyed or heavily damaged, 1,800 persons required emergency shelter, and 11,664 were provided by the American Red Cross with 34,994 hot meals in a week.

For the 37 year old dentist-turned-mayor, life changed instantly. A happy settling-in period blew away with the tornado's vicious winds. Instead of wellwishers exchanging pleasantries, Mayor Granberry looked into stunned, hurt faces seeking help.

What can a mayor of three weeks, accustomed to the quiet decorum of a dental office, do under such dramatically changed circumstances?

"I have never seen rescue and relief operations brought into being

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more quickly or effectively," said George A. Lincoln, director of President Nixon's Office of Emergency Preparedness, who flew in from Washington the next morning.

George Hastings, regional director of the Office of Emergency Preparedness, also arrived the next day to set up a Lubbock disaster office. After two weeks of intensive activity he summed up the effort:

"Disaster operations are always difficult, but this has been the smoothest I have known. I attribute it to an excellent city government, and to full understanding and cooperation by the city, county and state governments."

Hastings coordinated the entire federal relief and recovery effort for the White House, under Lincoln's direction.

The tornado that Lubbock will never forget dipped down from a noisy, lightning-filled thunderstorm which grew more violent as it approached the West Texas city.

Two hours before it struck, the Weather Bureau issued a tornado ^{Warning} alert. At 8:10 p.m. Harold Frost, in charge of the Lubbock weather station, observed a telltale hook on the radar. This indicated tornadic circulation over the city, but the first spinning winds did not dip to earth. Nine more hooks appeared on the radar screen, one of them at 9:45 p.m., the fateful moment when the often-described "roar of a thousand jet airplanes" screeched into the city of 170,000.

It came in from the southwest, its giant funnel a mile in diameter. Moving towards the northeast, it skimmed over Texas Tech University, damaging a roof and bending one tall floodlight standard on the east side of the stadium.

Then it touched the ground a block from Texas Tech. Buildings

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disintegrated, automobiles flew through the ~~air which was filled with flying debris~~---lumber, building blocks, signs, roofs, merchandise from shattered stores, sheets of tin, household furnishings, *debris filled* *all went flying about like pollen.*

But the funnel at the time was lopsided. While inflicting total destruction east of Texas Tech, it crossed the downtown section with the whirling winds still off the ground.

Lubbock's two tallest buildings, the 22-story Great Plains Life Insurance and 14-story First National Bank Buildings, were in and out of the tornado at the same time. Their upper floors were in the funnel and suffered heavy damage while lower floors were out of it and suffered only glass breakage.

The mile-wide funnel was sweeping solid ground as it roared through the fashionable Country Club subdivision, shattering everything in its path. On Cypress Road, Mrs. Frances Rogers and her daughter, Cassie, huddled together as their home shook and suddenly disintegrated. The merciless winds stripped the clothing from both women, then freakishly wrapped Mrs. Rogers in a strip of sheet metal. Rain and baseball-size hail poured upon them. They were discovered next morning. Later Mrs. Rogers died.

Mrs. Helen Alafa may have lived except for a minor traffic accident on wet streets prior to the tornado. Her husband met her at the accident scene and got their car going again. They were driving home when the car began to shake in tornadic winds. They decided to abandon the vehicle and run for shelter. As she stepped out, a piece of flying debris slammed into Mrs. Alafa. Ten days later she became the tornado's 26th fatality.

Along the eight-mile-long path of destruction there were as many stories of death, injury and miraculous escape as there were residents

who experienced the terrible winds.

With rain and hail still falling but with the funnel pulled back into the cloud that gave it birth, rescue and relief operations began.

The devastation was appalling. Hardest hit was the Guadalupe community where citizens of Mexican descent lived, the Holmes Addition, and the Country Club area, home of more affluent residents.

Not a single house was left undamaged in Guadalupe, and nearby all were destroyed. About 675 families were evacuated to emergency housing provided by the Federal Housing Administration of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the VA.

The U.S. Army's Corps of Engineers, as the debris clearance agency, contracted for the removal of 150,000 cubic yards of rubble to dumps where much of it was burned.

Two one-stop relief centers brought residents in touch with city and federal agencies performing disaster work, included the Fourth U.S. Army, Veteran's Administration, Small Business Administration, Social Security Administration, Internal Revenue Service, General Services Administration, Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, Food and Drug Administration and Farmers Home Administration.

The American Red Cross and Salvation Army performed heroically, said George Hastings of the OEP.

Mayor Granberry addressed the people of Lubbock by radio and television the day after the storm.

"Now we must take care of the living, bury the dead, and plan for the future," he said. He proclaimed the following Sunday a day of prayer and thanksgiving. He called on citizens to join together in prayer for those who had died and were injured, and to express thanksgiving for the many who had been spared.

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And that's the way it has been. An emergency and planning committee the mayor appointed is drawing up a redevelopment plan to make the devastated area more attractive, more useful than it was before May 11.

NEWS RELEASE

On April 21, 1970, the citizens of Lubbock turned out in record number to elect the youngest Mayor in Lubbock's history. In a five man race, Dr. James H. Granberry, a 37 year old orthodontist practicing in Lubbock since 1961, was elected as Mayor of this city of 170,000 people by receiving an overwhelming 16,057 of the 24,041 total votes cast. This represented 67% of the total votes cast and was a 73% victory over the incumbent Mayor of Lubbock who had been written-in with 63% of the total votes in the 1966 two-man mayoral race.

Dr. Granberry, completing four years on the Lubbock City Council as Mayor Pro Tem, received a clear majority in all but three of the city's 30 voting precincts. The "Now Mayor's" nearest rival received 5,901 votes with others following with 1,239; 425; and 222 votes.

While serving as Mayor Pro Tem, Dr. Granberry was one of the most productive Council members. During these four years, Dr. Granberry and his wife, Edwina, had three children. Altogether their family consists of two daughters and three sons.

The new Mayor was graduated from high school in Lindale, near Tyler, where his parents, Mr. & Mrs. H. Granberry still reside. The Mayor attended Tyler Jr. College, North Texas State University, and the Baylor University College of Dentistry.

Becoming the youngest Mayor of Lubbock is not Dr. Granberry's first position of distinction in his youth he has acquired. In 1963, Dr. Granberry was selected by the Lubbock Jaycees as Lubbock's "Outstanding Young Man", and one year later he was one of five "Outstanding Young Texans".

Dr. Granberry's victory carried with it an overwhelming approval of a \$14 million airport bond with 18,437 votes for the expansion of the airport facilities. This vote on capital improvements has changed a trend set in 1967 when the citizens of Lubbock for the first time in history turned down bonds for capital improvements and did so a second time in 1969.