

Tornado heroine nearly lost life

By ANDY JUNIPER

Sentinel-Review staff writer

BRIGHT — Jane Fleming, 22, has been in London's Victoria Hospital since Aug. 7 — the night of the tornado, the night Jane nearly lost her life protecting her nephew Ben.

Jane Fleming is credited with saving the three-year-old's life. Jane is a heroine, and now it's the community's turn to help her. Caught in the twister's rage, Jane received serious injuries, and since has had to have her right leg amputated above the knee. Ben spent one week in Woodstock General Hospital with multiple bruises.

Concerned citizens, headed by Bright's Michael Ashton, have set up a trust fund at the Plattsville Imperial Bank of Commerce, to help Jane.

Jane is now recovering from her injuries. Her story is one of bravery and courage.

"Jane was working in Simcoe and staying at her brother Dan's, working on the tobacco harvest," said Ben's grandmother Mrs. Blair Graham in an interview Thursday.

"On the night of the storm she was on her way to Tavistock to

visit her sister Pat and she was caught on the second concession (near Hobart Brothers and King Hydraulic at Highways 401 and 59 when the tornado hit.

"She came over the hill and she said there wasn't one, but three or four (funnels).

"She saw Hobart's roof blow off and the church (John Knox Christian Reformed Church) go down, then she backed up and headed for the closest house."

The closest home was that of Mr. and Mrs. Blair Earle, and according to reports, the Earle's had already raced for shelter in their basement before Jane and Ben arrived.

"They tried to open the door but couldn't (because of vacuum)," Mrs. Graham said.

Jane took Ben under an overhanging picture window and layed on top of him while the tornado raged over the area.

When the storm passed, the Earle's house had been swept off its foundation and blown into a ditch on the far side of the road.

Jane's and the Earle's car had been thrown into the houseless foundation, and Jane and Ben were in the middle of the yard engulfed in shrubs.

Say not that friendship's but a name,

Sincere we cannot find; An empty bubble in the air,

A phantom of the mind. What is life without a friend?

A dreary race to run, A desert where no water is, A world without a sun.

(Henry Alford)

Burgessville

Mar. 19/80
BURGESSVILLE (C) —

Mr. and Mrs. Fred J. Salmon spent Saturday at the home of the former's sister Mr. and Mrs. Lorne Ballandine, Brantford.

Mrs. Malcolm Mann and children, Kathleen and Christopher, Port Dover, spent Tuesday at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Bill McMillen.

Mr. and Mrs. Karl Yeager, Woodstock, Mr. Garth Yeager, Sarnia, spent Sunday at the home of their sister Mrs. Merton Penny.

Mr. and Mrs. Bill McMillen have returned home after spending 10 days with Mr. and Mrs. Frank Hilliker and friends in Denver, Colorado.

Mrs. Wilbur Morley has returned home after spending a week with her daughters Mr. and Mrs. John Rennie, Ilderton, and Mrs. Lavina Porcnic and girls, London.

Mr. and Mrs. Bill McMillen, Mr. and Mrs. Murray Cole and family, Mr. and Mrs. Keith Turner, (Galt) Cambridge held a birthday supper on Sunday in Cambridge in honor of Bill's, Sharon's and Keith's birthdays. Happy Birthday.

protecting 3-year-old child

When asked what hit Jane, Mrs. Graham paused, "it could have been the house, or the car, or they could have been thrown. "The people in the house (Earle's) dug their way out and went to get help. A car came by and they took Jane to the hospital and later she was rushed to London (Victoria Hospital)."

The people who came by the twister-torn area were Carson and Pam Steele and their four-year-old daughter, Nicole, of Ingersoll, who were travelling to Woodstock to "buy a T.V."

"We were just two or three minutes behind it (tornado)," said Carson. "We started checking out houses on the corner of 59 and 401.

"We found Jane and she was cut from the knee to the groin and she had a compound fracture on her right arm.

"Everyone in the area was in shock so we had to decide what to do. We found a door from the basement and used it as a stretcher then another driver (with a station wagon) showed up and we put Jane in the wagon."

The Steele's, whose being on the spot in a matter of minutes, and their quick thinking, may have saved Jane's life.

"I'm glad we were there and I'm glad we could help," said Carson. "We've visited Jane about four times in the hospital and we know her pretty well now — she's a pretty brave girl."

Though her recovery has been excellent, it will be some time before Jane is released from hospital.

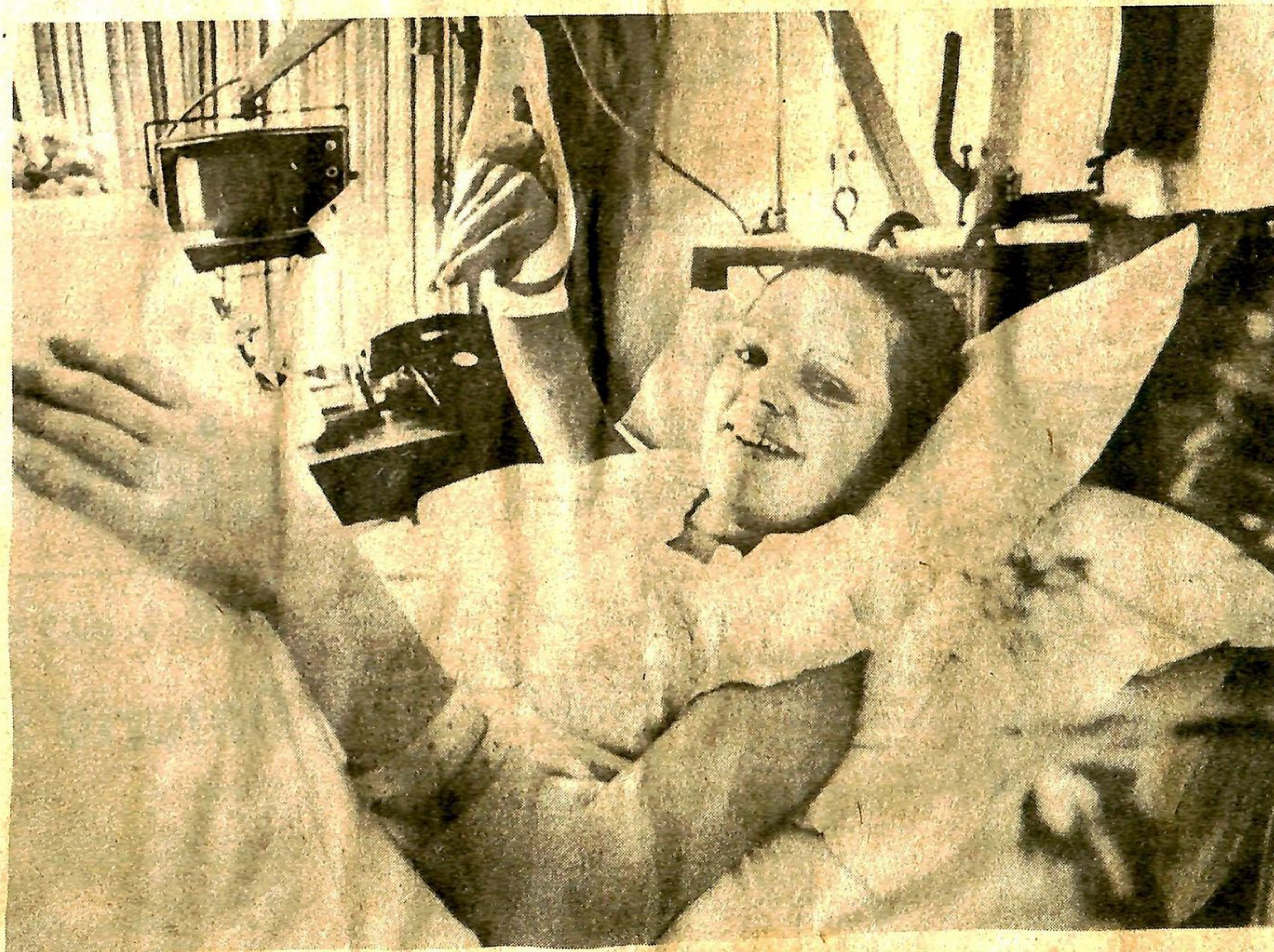
"Doctors were unable to save her leg and the other leg is as if someone took a knife and sliced right down her leg," said Mrs. Graham.

"She's started having skin graphs, and she's coming along. "Her age is in her favor and the doctors feel she's doing quite well considering..."

Loretta Fleming, Jane's mother, said that she has not been told when Jane will be able to leave the hospital, but that she, her husband, Murray, and Jane's six brothers and three sisters have been keeping Jane's spirits up.

"It's still unbelievable — they're all very good (family) and they've been keeping Jane smiling," she said.

"They (doctors) don't give us any set time on how long Jane will have to be in the hospital but it will be a long time."



GOOD NEIGHBORS FUND

Jane Fleming, of Bright, smiles from her Victoria Hospital bed where she is recovering from tornado injuries. Neighbors and friends

have started a special fund for the young heroine who lost a leg in the storm and the other leg and an arm were badly broken.

She was honored in Ottawa March 9/80 by Gov. Gen. Ca Schreyer the medal of Bravery for saving her nephew. She made about 10 trips to the operation room besides during her Reg. Neighbors service Clubs and other organizations collected \$7,000.00 in a special fund.

At the Year's End
At the years end 'tis good to ponder
To look back in retrospect
On the blessings we've been blessed with-
Giving each its due respect.
Each year has its share of sorrow.
Threads of happiness we see;
God weaves the wrap and wool of life
In a pattern perfectly!
Leafing through the year-book's pages,
We can quickly call to mind
All the grateful benedic-tions
That the year has left behind.
Ere we start the New Year's pages,
This we never should neglect;
At the year's end to stop to ponder
To look back in retrospect.