



# Penetanguishene Citizen

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## The day after disaster struck Barrie

Residents of Allandale Heights area of Barrie console each other Saturday afternoon less than 24 hours after a killer tornado cut a destructive path through the

south end of the city, killing eight, injuring scores more, and causing an estimated \$100 million in damage. Homes on either side of this Glenridge Drive home were

also destroyed. Twelve died in tornados across Ontario Friday. More photos of the Barrie tornado disaster are in today's Citizen. **-photo by Peter Spohn**

# Picking up the pieces

by PETER SPOHN  
Less than 24 hours after a tornado smashed its way across the south end of Barrie leaving eight dead and approximately \$100 million in property damage, residents had already started to pick up the pieces and begin the monumental task of rebuilding their shattered city.

Saturday afternoon in neighbourhoods devastated by the twister that roared into the city from the west, homeowners lucky enough to have a house to return to were busy cleaning up debris left behind by the winds and covering gaping holes in walls and roofs created by flying debris. Stuck in the wall of a house half a mile away from Highway 400, was a hunk of metal torn from a moving van travelling down the highway when the twister passed over it around 4:30 p.m. Friday afternoon.

The less fortunate began the grim task of sifting through the piles of rubble that had been their homes.

The twister touched down west of the city and smashed several factories in the Pat-

erson Road area on the west side of the city before crossing Highway 400, levelling the Barrie Raceway and sweeping along a row of townhouses in a valley east of the racetrack. The townhouses were reduced to piles of rubble as were homes above them along the ridge of the valley. The tornado blew the roof off a school before advancing east, hitting more homes. Several businesses along Burton Street in the southeast corner of the city were next in line. The twister smashed a marina on Kempenfelt Bay before heading out onto Lake Simcoe and away from the city. Everything in its path, roughly 300 to 400 yards wide, was smashed.

On Burton Street, Doug McKinley was going over his used car lot and trailer rental business with employee Jill Hawken. The twister levelled the concrete block building housing his offices. When it struck, several employees were injured by flying glass; they were among the scores of people whose injuries were such they'd normally be treated in the

hospital emergency room, but Royal Victoria Hospital was admitting only those with serious injuries. McKinley estimated his loss at about half a million dollars.

He had to move cars at the front of the lot so that Hydro crews could get at the lines strewn across the property. In the background, city crews were busy clearing fallen trees. McKinley noted that some of the dealers he is in competition with approached him and offered to find space for him to set up his business while he rebuilds. "That's nice in this day and age," he said.

On Glenridge Street, Don McNall and his wife Mary Anne sifted through the rubble of their home. A couple of interior walls were left standing but the rest of the house was a shattered heap. A backyard swimming pool was filled with debris. The McNalls, an exchange student from Mexico living with them and the family dog and cat came out of the house alive. The student spent Friday night in hospital with cuts. Saturday

morning, Premier Frank Miller toured the neighbourhood, and with a crew of cameramen in tow, walked around what was left of the McNall's home. McNall said he was upset by the cameramen because he thought their jostling could result in somebody getting injured by falling debris. He found his Labrador Retriever unconscious, but apparently unhurt, in the backyard shortly after the twister passed by. The cat was also outside, in a tree. The family had lived in the house for the last 12 years. On either side of the McNalls along a row, other homes in the neighbourhood were totally destroyed. Seven people were home when the next door neighbour's house came down. They escaped with hardly a scratch.

In the same neighbourhood, a woman who emigrated from Germany after World War II noted that Friday's disaster was the second tornado she has lived through. The woman, who declined to give her name, was in her living room when the tornado struck, shortly after she

had finished with a customer she was waiting on in her basement hair salon. She couldn't dry the customer's hair because the power went out about 4:25 p.m.

"It got very very dark. After a while, I could hear this strange humming sound, then there was a very loud roar. I thought the furnace blew up. Then I could see this stuff flying through the air and the front window blew in. My husband grabbed me and we tried to get down to the basement."

By the time they got part way into the basement, the wind was blowing through open doors at the basement level, creating a wind tunnel so powerful it blew inside doors backwards through their door frames. With the wind howling upstairs and down, they waited in the stairwell until the storm passed. The couple was lucky; their home is salvageable. They were doing their cooking on a propane stove in a camper parked in the driveway and were brewing coffee for their harder hit neighbours in the

morning. The neighbourhood looked like a war zone. Troops roamed the streets, along with R.C.M.P. officers, city police and O.P.P. officers from local detachments and outside detachments. Pedestrians were stopped and asked for identification to prove they were residents of the neighbourhood; the only car that didn't get stopped was a red one with a sign "Provincial Coroner" in the front windshield.

Below the neighbourhood in the townhouse development, the scene is one of total destruction. Families were allowed to sift through the rubble for a few hours during the afternoon. At about 4:30, the area was starting to get deserted again as police sealed off the area for the

night.

In mid-afternoon, a woman outside her smashed townhouse called over and over again for either a family dog or cat. There were no sounds to her call of "Here, fluffy." Down the row, a man removed some personal belongings from his equally devastated home. He muttered something about looters and said, "If they think they can get anything out of this place, I'd like to know how. Farther down, a child yelled out to a sibling and said "Tracey, I just found your spelling medal." Another child collected some cassette tapes lying in a pile of rubble.

Whole neighbourhoods smashed to pieces in a matter of seconds; it will require many months and much patience to start over again.

## Ontarians digging deep

Donations are expected to pour into those areas of Ontario hardest hit by last Friday's six howling tornadoes.

Already food and clothing has been donated. Saturday, Barrie Mayor Ross Archer said, a fund has been set up at the Toronto Dominion Bank in Barrie to process the tax deductible donations.

Other TD Banks in the province are expected to follow.

## Penetang will contribute to tornado disaster relief

Penetanguishene Mayor Ron Bellisle met yesterday afternoon with Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Dennis Timbrell in an effort to find the best way to provide local assistance to Barrie residents stricken in last Friday's tornado disaster.

And the mayor said yesterday morning he will be meeting with members of the Penetanguishene municipal staff and various municipal departments Thursday morning to coordinate a relief plan. He said it would be more effective and far more meaningful for the municipality to provide assistance through direct involvement of municipal workers than to take money out of general municipal revenues to pass on the stricken Barrie residents.

Bellisle said he will try to sell other municipal officials on his idea to have municipal workers canvass local residents door to door to raise relief funds.

"I've been getting indications from the people in my neighbourhood that they want to help out," he said. The best way to do it, he suggested is to get every will municipal employee to go out and canvass the entire town. "If we get the town staff involved we could hopefully cover the town (in an evening) and meet back at the municipal office," Bellisle said.

He noted that the municipality has assisted relief efforts in past years with small donations, but that the Barrie disaster called for something beyond the usual response. "Usually, it's a remote area that's involved," he said. "It struck awfully close to home this time." He said police, fire fighters and other municipal departments will sit down to discuss the possibilities.

Bellisle was meeting Timbrell with Simcoe County Warden John Moreau and Midland Mayor Al Roach. Timbrell was also scheduled to meet with Barrie Mayor Ross Archer and municipal leaders from other areas hit by tornadoes. They were to meet at the Nottawasaga Inn just outside Alliston. Alliston sustained heavy damage last Friday.

Timbrell is co-ordinating the provincial government's disaster relief campaign.