



Humor Mixed With Heartbreak

The July 15 storm left in its wake a trail of heartbreak and tragedy. That aspect of the Big Wind will never be forgotten. But neither will the camaraderie, the fellowship, and the benevolence that developed as people helped each other put their lives back together.

For NSP employees, the strain of working long hours under adverse conditions was made somewhat more bearable by the humorous and heartwarming incidents that helped break up the monotony. Little things like the thumbs-up signs from passing motorists, the offers of cold drinks, the applause when power was restored to an area, made a big difference.

Nearly every employee has a few stories he could recite. Some are serious, some sound like they came straight from a Woody Allen movie. Here are just a few:

An obviously distraught lady phoned the service center several days after the storm with an unusual complaint.

"It's all your fault," she cried. "The street light is out and our alley is dark. Because of that, somebody beke into our garage last night and stole my son's entire collection of Playboy magazines."

She said some other things, too, but those are the bare facts.

Another caller identified himself as a college student who was forced to study for his summer school finals by candlelight. He said he really didn't mind, though, because "now I know how Abe Lincoln felt."

Not all customers were so congenial. One distressed lady said she was promised on Thursday that her power would be restored by Friday. In anticipation, she had gone to the locker and ordered "a freezer-full of meat for Friday delivery." The meat arrived but not the power.

Meter superintendent Don Christopher is claiming the trophy for the "most trees lost by an em-

ployee." Christopher says 127 Noeyway pine were toppled on his one-acre-plus lot near Lake Altoona, most of them 8-10 inches across at the base.

"There must have been a small twister out there," he said. "The trees were blown in two different directions."

Christopher, incidentally, sat out the storm in his car. He was out showing relatives the town.

While some customers rewarded linemen with applause or cold drinks, one man announced the return of power by serenading the crews with his bugle. Cameron and Helen Carlson were more sedate with their acknowledgement. After service was restored to their home on Eau Claire's west side, they tacked a red, hand-lettered sign onto the only tree left standing in their yard. It read simply, "Thanks NSP".

But Abbotsford lineman Bob Knight got an even better deal. After his crew energized a particularly hard-hit neighborhood, a delirious housewife rushed out of her home, wrapped her arms around Knight, and planted a big kiss on his cheek.