

'One Week in June' offers a flood of stories and photos

By Jessica Lowe

Nearly three years after the fury of Mother Nature was unleashed on northeast Iowa, the towns, the cities, the neighborhoods are still working to be rebuilt. Sadly, years of rebuilding still remain from what one week of surging water ripped through and rushed away.

It's hard to imagine what Iowans endured during that one week in June 2008, but the book, *One Week in June*, written and photos compiled by Jeff Stein, begins to tell the tale. One of the buildings noted in Stein's book is the Helen G. Nassiff YMCA. In the lobby of the Y, which is located in downtown Cedar Rapids, a line marks where the water crested at 7.5 feet in the building. Built in 2002, the new site was but six years old when the floods of 2008 swept through causing \$2 million dollars in damage.

Down the street from the Y, the now abandoned site of the Cedar Rapids Science Station, had its doors almost completely covered with water; the historic Paramount Theatre's basement was flooded, ruining many props and historic artifacts, and the list continues.

Photos collected in Stein's book are overwhelming images of what the city of Cedar Rapids endured. And the story of these sites in Cedar Rapids itself would be remarkable if it stopped there, however, the city is but one community that was impacted and shared in *One Week in June*.

Stein's book captures the enormity of the 2008 flood, which broke flood records – not only of high crests but in dollars in damage sustained. The book trails the flooding as it began on Monday, June 9, 2008, in Charles City as it washed away the 102-year old suspension bridge. From the opening page on, Stein, using simple and modern layout, documents the Cedar and Iowa rivers paths of destruction.

Traveling downstream from Charles City, the story flows to the college town of Waverly, where the Cedar River crested at 19.12 feet (2.32 feet above the 1999 record). Stein shares how the floods impacted the entire community, even the Wartburg College students who call the town their temporary home. Businesses were closed for months, railroads were washed away, homes destroyed and lives changed forever.

As Stein writes so eloquently, "Even Noah's Ark was no match for the Cedar River in this year".



Written by Jeff Stein and published by WDG Communications, Inc., of Cedar Rapids, the book *One Week In June* offers a penetrating look at the historic flood that ravaged much of the state in the summer of 2008. It includes over 200 color photographs.

Flipping through the book's watery problems of that year — from Waverly to Cedar Falls, Waterloo to Cedar Rapids, Iowa City to Columbus Junction — it's apparent that Stein is not just a man looking to make a dollar by accumulating photos and putting them on pages. Each photo, each cutline, each sentence is carefully crafted and helps to paint the picture that was a reality, a nightmare, for the thousands of Iowans in 2008.

What is truly remarkable about the book is the emphasis on what truly happened. While Stein could have chosen hundreds of devastating photos of abandoned buildings, shuttered

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business fronts, people crying in despair – and there are some of these photos too – the author chose to chronologically follow the events from flooding to recovery. The book truly tells the whole story, in great detail.

Perhaps the most moving images, and what sets the book apart from others, are the photos, not of the damage but of the life that remains in the flood ravaged communities. Readers can see touching images of neighbors retrieving pets for neighbors, a goldfish found swimming through a puddle in downtown Iowa City, volunteers receiving hugs, sandbags being filled by teenagers and children playing in an evacuation shelter.

One Week In June was the No. 1 book at Barnes & Noble in Iowa following its 2009 release and it is apparent why. The book can be purchased at Barnes & Noble and many other Iowa bookstores for \$44.95. The more than 140 pages, 200 color photos and the accurately written portrayal of one of Iowa's most devastating natural disasters is worth the asking price.

As an author, Stein brings tremendous credentials to the book. He has worked in radio, television and newspapers for more than 30 years. He is the long-time executive director of the Iowa Broadcast News Association, has taught mass com-

munication at the college level for more than 20 years, and is the author of multiple award-winning books on Iowa history.

He received a 2011 national Award of Merit from the American Association for State and Local History, and is a

sought-after commentator on media, history and politics; most recently, his comments on the history of the Iowa Caucuses have appeared in *The New York Times*, on Fox News Channel, and on Iowa radio stations.

Stein truly deserves praise for his work documenting the floods of 2008, and *One Week in June* belongs in every public library, every school library and on the shelves in homes throughout the

Iowa and Cedar River Valley. The book is one that reminds us how imperative it is as Iowans to remember not what has happened to them, but what Iowans have overcome.

(Jessica Lowe is an award-winning journalist and columnist who won the prestigious 2010 Genevieve Mauck Stouffer Outstanding Iowa Young Journalist Award at the Newton Daily News. She is currently the marketing and membership director for the Newton YMCA in Newton, Iowa. She is a regular contributor to Iowa History Journal.) ■

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'Dirty 30' star dies at age 74

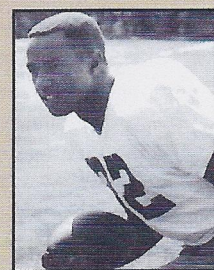
Tom Watkins, one of the stars of the famous "Dirty Thirty" football team from Iowa State, died October 29, in Detroit, Michigan, after an extended illness. He was 74 years old.

The team was featured in the November-December, 2011, issue of *Iowa History Journal*.

A running back, Watkins was first team All-Big Eight in his final two seasons at ISU. As a junior in 1959, he was the nation's second leading rusher, with 843 yards. His senior season, 1960, he rushed for 10 touchdowns to set a new Cyclone record, and was also selected to play in three post-season all-star games.

Watkins played seven seasons in the NFL, mostly for the Detroit Lions. He led the league twice (1963 and 1964) in punt return yardage and once in kickoff return yardage (1965). After retiring from pro football, he served as head football coach at Detroit Chadsey High School for 35 years, retiring in 2006.

A native of West Memphis, Arkansas, Watkins was inducted into the Iowa State Athletic Hall of Fame in 2002. He is survived by four daughters and a son. ■



Tom Watkins