



Photo by Roger Werth

A few people on the Old Highway 99 bridge watch the steaming Toutle River, heated by erupting Mount St. Helens, pass under them on its way to the Cowlitz River

Warm Toutle and Cowlitz killing fish

By Lew Pumphrey
The Daily News

Adult spring chinook in the Cowlitz and Toutle rivers are "dying in hair-pulling numbers," according to the Washington Department of Fisheries. The toll of dead fish from the eruption of Mount St. Helens has reached 10 million for sure, with a likelihood of twice that many anadromous fish eventually dying because of the disrupted ecology of the rivers.

Tony Floor, with the WDF in Olympia, said the losses in dollars total \$1.5 million as of today, but that total grows with each fish that returns from the ocean. Aside from the instant losses caused by mud and water, other dangers are lurking for salmon, according to biologists. The hot water in the Cowlitz River — it was measured at 84 degrees in Longview Monday — robs

the water of oxygen. Floor said that's causing fish to die. The salmon can't take much more than about 70 degrees, he said. Floor said that if the Toutle returns to its original size and temperature, some provisions can be made to save the fish that return this summer and fall. Traps can be set up at the mouth, and the fish taken to certain other hatcheries. But Columbia River fish can't be moved out of the Columbia River system. And even at other Columbia-system hatcheries, their conditions might kill the unacclimated salmon. Floor said many of the salmon, upon returning to the non-existent hatchery, will seek out a new place to spawn. The biologists are hoping there will be some place to spawn.

At the Toutle River Hatchery, which is actually on the Green River one mile from the Toutle, 10.7 million fingerlings are dead. The buildings that housed the hatchery are destroyed while a log truck and part of a steel bridge are lodged in the five feet of mud that covers the site. "The Toutle is a raging, hot river," said Floor. "There are no fish left in the Toutle River." The Cowlitz Hatchery, near Salkum, had released "several million" young salmon within the past few weeks, and those baby fish were undoubtedly still in the river, Floor said. Also in the river was the tail end of the spring chinook run, heading toward the Cowlitz Hatchery. A news-report quoted Clifford Soderstrom, a biologist with the National Marine Fisheries Service, as saying that agency is concerned with the effects of volcanic ash on salmon. Soderstrom said, "Mount Adams is completely covered with a black ash and what that's going to do to the spring runoff, we just don't know." The Kalama River, which also drains the St. Helens area, was silted badly, said Rick Johnson, a fishing guide who lives on the Kalama. "It's never dirty this time of year," Johnson said.

Neighbors pitch in at Green Acres

By Andre Staszewski
The Daily News

CASTLE ROCK — Like many others, the Cripes underestimated Mount St. Helens. But when the mud put in motion by the mountain finally stopped leaning against their home Monday morning, they became shocked believers. The force had pushed their home 30 feet off its foundation in Castle Rock's Green Acres subdivision. Like newlyweds, Karen and Jerry Cripe must build their life anew. "We did it once, we'll do it again," Mrs. Cripe said. They were among those who started digging their way out of the cement-like mud that surged over the Cowlitz River banks, pressing logs and rock against homes and also roads Sunday night and Monday morning. The flood covered the river side of the 38-home subdivision in a mix of pumice, logs and water. Only a few homes suffered structural damage, and the mud stopped one foot short of the front doors of several residences. Elsewhere, about 20 homes in the lower half of the Camelot Trailer home subdivisions were under three feet of mud and water as residents donned hip boots and carried their belongings to higher ground.

In a way, the Cripes were fortunate. Although their home was destroyed, the Cripes, their two children and their furniture and other belongings were safe. "We're lucky the eruption didn't happen in the middle of the night," said Cripe, an electrician for Reynolds Metals. Sweated profusely from his brow as he, his family and friends struggled to move their property from their demolished home. The muck surrounding their home mothered some ingeniously. A brigade of neighbors carried furniture from their homes across the roof of a neighboring home and down to a waiting pickup truck that swished through the mud to dry land. They saw mud and water cresting above the river bank before they left to spend Sunday night with their relatives. While they expected some damage, they didn't think it would be so extensive. "I couldn't conceive of the mountain sending enough stuff down to do this," said Cripe, 40, as he packed books in his living room, which had tilted 30 degrees. The hearth on the fireplace was badly broken and had sunk into the floor. Mud had broken through a back door and poured through the kitchen. The garage had separated from the house and the home's left wing had

collapsed. "I love this house," Mrs. Cripe, 35, said as she packed in her daughter's bedroom. It was a blow when we came out here this morning. "This has been home to Scott and Brenda. It's upsetting to them." "When I heard that this happened I was in hysterics," 18-year old Brenda said. "But now I just want to get out of here." Photographs, lamps, couches and desks sat on the lawn in a neighbor's yard, waiting to be loaded into pickup trucks. Tony Herbert, who seemed to be taking it in stride, "Is there anything I can do in here, honey?" Cripe asked his wife. They were moving from the home where they had lived six years to relatives in Longview, at least temporarily. But they aren't sure where they will move permanently — their insurance only covers about one-third the value of their home. Mrs. Cripe grew up in Castle Rock and knows most townspeople. And it appeared that many of them were helping the family lift themselves out of the house. "Thank goodness our neighbors weren't hurt," Mrs. Cripe said. "They're really pitched in their help. That's one of the nice things about this neighborhood."

Mud destroys house, dream

The Associated Press

Dabbling tears from her eyes, Nancy Althof proudly held her muddy teakettle aloft. It was a ridge that was left of the Althofs' \$100,000 dream house. They watched a wall of mud and water sweep down the Toutle River and slowly, awfully, smash their home and flush it down the chocolate-brown river. "It's surreal," Mrs. Althof mused late Monday, still stunned and shaken after sitting through the mudhole that had once been a three-bedroom home with three-car garage and shop. "I've had everything. This old teakettle is what I salvaged. This is all that's left. Nothing else." Fighting tears, she recalled the events of late Sunday night. "We had pulled out our cars and our camp trailer for what we thought would be an evacuation of a few hours. I took out my picture albums but I never really thought we'd be wiped out. I thought we'd be back soon after the river had done its thing." After setting up camp, Mrs. Althof, husband Jim, and son Sam came back to watch from an elevation above the house. "We watched the mud rise," she said. "We didn't think we'd ever see it hit the top of the bank, but it came maybe 20 feet above that. "It all happened very fast. Mud was (flowing) fast and full of debris and logs. Cars and trucks went floating by like toys. Then it was like the house was crushed. It crashed and that was all there was. It took maybe five minutes. "We lost all our furniture, our clothes, the gun collection, about 40 saws, compressors and so on. We watched the houses of 10 of our neighbors go. It was awful." Meanwhile, the family will continue camping and then look for a rental house until they figure out what to do. "We'll never rebuild by the water, no way," she said. Other effects of the ravaging floodwaters and mud are evident at the Toutle River near Interstate 5. For at least one-half mile on either side of the riverbank trees are water marked about 10 feet up, coated with light gray mud. Several hundred local residents and visitors congregated at the Old Highway 99 bridge, which has been closed after being rammed with logs, logging trucks and other debris borne by the massive mud flow. The channel has been widened and twisted so the natives can barely recognize it. "This used to be a favorite swimming hole, a great place to fish," said Bernice Kondro, Castle Rock, shaking his head. "It was a great big pool of clear water and on day like this you'd see people out enjoying themselves. It is really ruined."

Toutle's stoutest toughing it out

By Leo Siegel
The Daily News

TOUTLE — "It's pretty sad," said Orin Groth as he stared glumly at the muddy remains of his home. The double-wide mobile home sat in waist-deep mud where the bridge over the Toutle River's South Fork once was. Groth said a mud flow swept his home 230 feet down a hill. A bulldozer tried to clear the road while Groth and several friends waded into the mud in hip boots in an attempt to salvage his belongings. Up the hill, George Fickett surveyed the situation from the road in front of his home, which was untouched by the mud flow. Fickett stayed overnight, even though he sent his wife, kids and "the hound" away. He said he stepped out on his porch at about 1 a.m.

Monday to hear the mud flow "snappin', grindin' and crunchin'" trees in its path. "You could hear it just roaring down the river," he said. "It don't bother me," said Fickett. "I figure if old Truman's gonna go down the river, I'm gonna go with him." Harry Truman, the crusty operator of a lodge at Spirit Lake, was missing and presumed dead after Sunday's eruption. "Spirit Lake is no more," said Chief Warrant Officer Karl Luken, one of many National Guardsmen running a search and rescue operation from the field at the Toutle School. "Spirit Lake is no more," said Chief Warrant Officer Karl Luken, one of many National Guardsmen running a search and rescue operation from the field at the Toutle School. Business was off because the State Patrol blocked Spirit Lake Highway at Interstate Highway 5 to everyone but residents and reporters.

"The souvenir business is down to nothing," said Bonnie Peterson, the grocery clerk. "We got quite a souvenir yesterday," she added, pointing east to a massive mud flow that wiped out the main Spirit Lake Highway bridge across the Toutle River. Local residents gathered where the bridge had rested — less than a mile from Toutle Lake School. They stared in disbelief. Peterson's house is — or was — seven miles farther up the road. "I don't even know what condition our house is in," she said. "We slept in our car last night. I was scared to death. Now I'm worried about the house." Down the road, a dozen local folks sat drinking beer and listening to country western music at the Lakeside Cafe near Silver Lake. Tony Herbert, who works at a souvenir and food concession stand, hoped the road would soon be reopened. "Once they open the road back up, I'll be sittin' here with my stand open waiting to make a little money."



Photo by Roger Werth

Bob Kaseweter and Bev Wetherald were happy on Saturday as they sat on Kaseweter's porch watching Mount St. Helens

Geologists missing Scientists likely died in mountain home

By Rick Selfert
The Daily News

It was a geologist's dream. Bob Kaseweter of Portland proudly told visitors last Saturday that he had an active volcano in his front yard at Spirit Lake. He and Bev Wetherald, a fellow scientist and friend, planned to stay overnight as they had done at weekends since the volcano began erupting. On Sunday morning at 8:37 Bob Kaseweter's dream-come-true turned into a steady nightmare. All Spirit Lake's south shore cabins, including Bob's, are no more, officials report. Bob and Bev are among the missing. Kaseweter was the only Spirit Lake property owner, except Harry Truman, to get special entry privileges to the mountain. As a geologist conducting a photographic study from his front deck, he got a permit to come and go. Bev, a geographer, got permission to join him. Week-by-week they recorded the mountain's changes. With the gate closest to the mountain locked, they had taken to bicycling in. The bikes rested against the deck railing Saturday. "You can't believe what it takes to get in," he told a visitor. "It took an hour last night before they let us in."

Property owners bent on packing up their belongings were allowed in Saturday afternoon for what turned out to be the last visit to Spirit Lake as we know it. The press went along. Bob showed off the small A-frame perched on the hillside. He had outfitted the cabin with a homemade battery-run seismograph tucked away in a corner. The contraption's graph paper disappeared through a hole and trailed down into the basement. Some property owners had complained that Kaseweter had dreamed up a bogus study to gain the special privilege. "But Bob, an affable, smiling man, denied that. 'It's a serious study. I'm not using it as an excuse. It's the chance of a lifetime.' Bob and Bev both worked for Portland General Electric, he explained. Part of his work at the firm's analytical-laboratory-in-Beaverton was to analyze Mount St. Helens' ash samples. The utility was concerned about what falling ash might do to power line insulation and conductivity. The composition of the ash depends on the its cooling history, Bob explained. So far the ash seemed quite inert, he said. Bob, an 8-year veteran on the mountain, planned to build higher up on the ridge. "People here used to laugh at me for wanting to build higher up the hillside." His infectious smile crept across his boyish face.

"Now they say they'll float up to visit when the flood comes." In anticipation of the move, the cabin was for sale, and Bob, like other owners, speculated about property values since the volcano came to life. He had listed the cabin with a Realtor for \$22,900, but now he thought it could be worth five times that much with the volcano's national fame. The only problem was that since his Realtor wasn't a geologist or Harry Truman, the cabin couldn't be shown to potential buyers. Bob said he supported property owners who wanted freer access to the mountain. "I don't think it's that dangerous here now, but it can be," he said. "Things get blown out of proportion." Because the mountain was a composite volcano, he allowed, its lava would be thick and slow moving. But, he added, almost in passing, "I don't know that much more than you do. You need practical experience which no one around here has." That's why he and Bev were on the mountain, he said — to gain practical experience. Bev, a smiling, playful young woman, allowed as how there was "a little bit of danger." "Anything is possible," she said with a shrug. "Nothing is predictable."



David Johnston on March 27
The mountain worried him then

Young USGS volcanologist missing, feared dead

By Donna duBeth
The Daily News

U.S. Geological Survey volcanologist David Johnston is missing and feared dead on a ridge six miles from Mount St. Helens. Another man, Reid Blackburn, a photographer for the Vancouver *Columbian*, also is presumed dead. The two men were at separate camps on Coldwater Creek. Blackburn was monitoring remote cameras at a site called Coldwater One Camp by the USGS. Johnston, 30, was at Coldwater Two Camp monitoring USGS equipment which was keeping track of activity on the mountain. The USGS scientists took turns living at the remote site. Saturday, one day before the mountain exploded, Johnston began his duty tour. A spokesman for the U.S. Forest Service, Sam Frear, said that military helicopters have circled both camps daily but are unable to land because of deep mud and ash. Blackburn's car was spotted Sunday, full of mud and ash and affre.

Johnston's camp is under four feet of ash, said Frear, with no sign of life. Johnston came to Southwest Washington from USGS headquarters in Menlo Park, Calif., in late March when the volcano first began acting up. On March 27, when the first eruption of smoke and ash appeared, he landed in a helicopter in the parking lot of the north flank of the mountain and told reporters: "It is extremely dangerous where we are standing. If it exploded we would die. It's like standing next to a dynamite keg with the fuse lit — only we don't know how long that fuse is." That afternoon Johnston predicted that when the volcano did explode, it would produce a "glowing avalanche" at temperatures in excess of 1,000 degrees Centigrade cascading down the mountain at speeds up to 100 mph. That is exactly what happened Sunday morning. Frear said little hope is held for either man. Some 120 square miles of trees were knocked down and scorched by the initial shock wave from the volcano. The camps were, within six miles of the peak.

Texan determined to return to mountain

By Leo Siegel
The Daily News

TOUTLE — Come mud or high water, Michael West said Monday he was heading for Mount St. Helens. "We're taking our own risks," says the 31-year-old Texan, who wants to get as close as possible to the erupting volcano to take photos, collect rocks "and maybe find some more disaster victims." West, who says he helped rescue a couple stranded by mud flows Sunday, vowed to fight if police try to stop him. While he's afraid of the possibility of dying, West says he will try to drive logging roads — and if that fails, walk — toward the mountain because the eruption "is a rather stupendous thing."

But West is confident of his ability to survive, contending most of the persons who were injured or killed by mud flows "didn't know what they were doing." A New Jersey native living in Texas, West traveled to Washington last week, hoping to make some money selling photographs. Late Sunday morning, West stood on the bridge over the South Fork of the Toutle River taking photos when he heard a man yelling for help. West and a local man walked across the bridge and then north toward the yeils, as did two other men they met. They walked on logs and held onto branches to negotiate their way through the mud, but occasionally sank two or three feet. "We heard what we thought was a mud slide coming. Things got a little frantic." But West and his companion made their way to high ground near a campground, where they found a stranded couple he identified as Venus Dergan and Ronald Reitan of Tacoma. West says they tried Dergan for shock and tried to calm Reitan until Weyerhaeuser helicopters rescued them. St. John's Hospital officials said Ms. Dergan received treatment for a fractured arm and Reitan was treated for multiple bruises and abrasions. Both were later released. About a half-hour after the helicopter took West and the others out of the area, a new mud flow wiped out the bridge over the South Fork.

"We got real scared when it was all over," says West. "Everybody sat down and got the shaker."

Here's how, where to check rumors

By Bob Martinson
The Daily News

A flood of rumors accompanied the high waters that roared down the Toutle and Cowlitz rivers. Several evacuees at the Red Cross evacuation center at Cascade Middle School said Monday night they'd heard reports of a 200-foot-high wall of mud hurtling down the Toutle. One tall tale was being telephoned to Longview merchants when "some nut" called stores to tell them to close by noon because the city was being evacuated, Longview police said. The rumor was completely unfounded, police said. However, anyone hearing reports of imminent catastrophes stemming from the eruption of Mount St. Helens should check them out. The official emergency information radio station is KBAM. "With anything like this you begin to get one rumor after another," according to Nolan Lewis, director of the Department of Emergency Services. Lewis said he has heard numerous rumors of impending disaster, most of them based on facts blown out of proportion. "It's hard enough to get out information," Lewis said. "And a lot of people seem to believe we're holding something out on them." In fact, events around the mountain change rapidly and a cloud cover can stop the flow of information to Emergency Services and other agencies, he said. "A lot of people seem to be looking for something terrible to believe in. A lot of rumors we can lay to rest immediately. Lewis said anyone who wants to check out a rumor about the eruption and its aftermath can contact his office at 577-3131. However, callers might have to wait because there likely will be more callers than phones when rumors fly. KBAM, however, will broadcast any official information or warnings.

County crews start clearing, cleaning

County crews started clearing roads of mud Monday, but found the work difficult. "It's just all stop," said Nelson Graham, county public works director. He could not say how long it will take to clear numerous county roads of mud flows triggered by the eruption of Mount St. Helens. "We've got about 10 different places we've got to get opened up," he said. The county's top priority was to clear the South Toutle Road to allow access to isolated homes and the Weyerhaeuser Co.'s Green Mountain sawmill, Graham said. "We reaped two of the biggest frontloaders we could get our hands on in a hurry from Halton Tractor. They hauled 'em up from Portland, I believe," he added. Weyerhaeuser is helping clear the road too, Graham said. Four county scoops are also clearing mud. One — a track loader — is clearing the approach to what used to be the Tower Road Bridge over the Toutle River east of Castle Rock. Graham said he wants the approach cleared to determine whether the washed out center span of the bridge can be temporarily replaced. The three other loaders are working along the Cowlitz River at Green Acres north of Castle Rock High School, the Camelot Trailer Park to the south and at Sandy Bend off West Side Highway, Graham said. After the South Toutle Road, Tower Road and the spots along the Cowlitz River, Graham said the next priorities for clearing mud are Cook Ferry Road and nearby Hoyer Road. Graham said that, in some cases, the county may just rebuild roads over the mud deposits once they dry.

Roads open, close

Interstate Highway 5 was open for legal loads today, but at least 25 other roads around the state are closed in the aftermath of flooding caused by the Mount St. Helens eruption. West Side Highway between Longview and Castle Rock remained closed today and it is unclear when it will be reopened. Persons wishing to travel between those two points, however, may detour through Hazel Dell and Delameter roads. The Allen Street Bridge was reopened this morning. Roadblocks have been set up at Lewis River Road at Merwin Dam, South Lake Highway and Spirit Lake Loop and those roads remain closed. Other closures include Highway 508 between Napavine and Morton, and Interstate 90 through Snoqualmie Pass. Due to volcanic ash fallouts, roads are closed in the east, including I-52 between Ellensburg and Yakima and Highway 12 from I-5 to Yakima.

Firefighters ready to attack into forest

By AP and The Daily News

Firefighters were cautiously preparing today to attack at least 80 forest fires reported in the wake of Mount St. Helens' eruption. Both the U.S. Forest Service and the state Department of Natural Resources office in Castle Rock were assembling teams and equipment. But washed-out logging roads, layers of ash and a still-menacing mountain may not allow much of a firefighting effort. The Forest Service reported the fires cover about 3,000 acres of forest. However, Forest Service spokesman Rich Scott said it was impossible to tell exactly where, how many and how large the fires were with the reduced visibility caused by the heavy ash fall. Steve Robinson, public affairs director for the DNR, said more than 20 fires have been spotted on private and state-owned lands on the volcano's west and northwest sides. Only three of 26 bridges over the South Fork of the Toutle remain standing, but a DNR team will try today to enter the area by land, Robinson said. "Not only do we want to be able to gain access, we want to be able to retreat if necessary, too," he said. The DNR has several hundred firefighters available, including inmate crews from the Larch Mountain Honor Camp near Yacolt. The DNR theorizes that lightning accompanying Sunday's eruption started the fires. The mountain's blast leveled about 25,000 acres of trees after some were already burning, Robinson said. The two to three feet of ash covering much of the fire area has a good and a bad effect. On one hand, the ash keeps the fires from burning with the reduced visibility caused by the heavy ash fall. But the ash also will allow fires in downed trees to smolder for months, undetected. "The weather is drying and the fire danger is increasing," Robinson said. The downed timber is worth saving, especially in the first year, before insects and disease set in. The DNR had scheduled about eight timber sales in the devastated area, Robinson said.

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