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Floods

The recent floods we've seen on television and read about in the newspaper remind me of the floods we had on Wild Valley Drive in Dallas. I can't help feeling that we were very fortunate at the same time that I remember the misery we experienced.

The first flood must have been in 1959, in September. I date it from two events: George had just started to school and we had just bought our first electric clothes drier. I was awakened in the middle of the night by voices outside our bedroom window. I hopped out of bed to peer through the window at this unusual phenomenon; the shock of stepping into water up to my bare ankles both deflected my mission and explained why people were talking outside. Although we lived on a street named Wild Valley, we were actually near the top of a gentle hill that descended into an intersection with a true valley a block away. We were having a typical Texas late summer downpour, commonly called a "gulley washer." The street in front of us was flooded; the water had inched up our driveway into our house, *all* of our house, although it had touched no other house in the neighborhood. The high water reached only halfway up the Cadenheads' driveway next door and only a couple of feet into the driveways of the two houses across the street. The culprit for our soaking was a clogged drain between our property and the Kitchens' driveway on the other side of our house. As the heavy downpour of rain ceased, two neighboring men pushed away the tree limbs which the storm had washed across the drain entrance, and the flood waters quickly receded.



We were left with a sodden house. After pulling up all the soaked carpeting and transferring it to the carport, we used all the towels we could find to absorb the remaining liquid. The boys had a wonderful time taking part in our blotting up the water. Part of our flood brigade would throw towels on the floor, part would wring the towels into the bathroom tub to use again on the wet floors. Later we gratefully put our new clothes drier to work drying the towels. No furniture was seriously damaged, with only a few inch-high watermarks to show how little water we'd actually had. The next day after George went to school, we contacted our insurance agent, discovering that *rising* water is not covered by standard household policies, thus provoking a Minton's Law that

"Whatever can happen will not be covered" (based on the well-known Murphy's Law). We consoled ourselves that, after cleaning, the carpeting could be re-laid. Compared to the floods we've seen on the news in the Mississippi Valley, the West Coast, and here in Virginia, where rampaging rivers invaded houses and deposited quantities of slimy mud, our nice, clean floodwater was minor indeed, although we hardly thought so at the time.

We decided to approach City Hall to protest that our storm drain system was inadequate for our neighborhood. The judgment from the authorities was that our storm drains were sufficient for all but "once-in-a-hundred-year floods." We were disheartened but felt that wiser heads than we must know what they were talking about.

However, just seven years later in 1966 while we were in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, on a sabbatical, we received a middle-of-the-night phone call from C.T. Cadenhead that another flood had occurred, this time reaching his house as well as ours. But we were the only two houses to suffer. My sister Martha and her husband Charles heroically stood in for us and pulled the carpeting out of the house, another "clean" water flood, and did the necessary preliminary clean-up in order to get the moisture from the house. This time the water marks on furniture legs were several inches higher than they had been seven years earlier. Paul had several business trips back to Dallas from Oak Ridge and was able to take care of some of the damage. An interesting side development was that crickets had invaded the damp heating/cooling ducts, making sleeping a noisy operation.

Paul and C.T. began their campaign to assault City Hall with this second once-in-a-hundred-year flood, a campaign which Paul and I pursued even more vigorously when we returned to Wild Valley in June. We felt that this time we had reason on our side. Since we had moved into the neighborhood in 1958, we had lost the large pecan orchard, which had backed all the houses on the south side of Wild Valley, to a residential development. Another street, named Arboreal (pronounced variously *Arbo-real* and *Ar-bor-eal*), had bisected that orchard and almost every lot now contained a house. We felt that development had changed the drainage requirements and that new storm sewers were needed. Much to our surprise, City Hall agreed with us, added our project to the next bond election, and began the necessary surveying and planning to upgrade the storm system. We had assumed that the improvement would disrupt our lives by adding the new drains down Wild Valley Drive. Interestingly enough, the planners determined that the new storm sewer pipes should go down Arboreal, the street behind us through the former pecan orchard. Our neighbors on Arboreal suffered through a long dry summer of having their street torn up and large four-foot drainage pipes laid into deep trenches. The Cadenheads and the Mintons would not have won a popularity contest when the Arboreal inhabitants discovered that *our* flood resulted in their months of thick dust and traffic inconvenience. Eventually they forgave us as they thought about the possibility of *their* houses perhaps being next on the flood list. Meantime, we selected new carpeting after we had eradicated the crickets, and life returned to normal.

By the time we moved to Virginia in 1972, several record-breaking rainstorms had occurred in Dallas but had not caused any flooding in the neighborhood. The Cadenheads and the Mintons were heartened that "You *can* fight City Hall."



FRONTAL VIEW OF SUBJECT



REAR VIEW OF SUBJECT



STREET SCENE



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