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# Hillside

College Heights Herald Magazine

Tuesday, March 29, 1994



**COVER STORY:** They weren't sitting on the beach during Spring Break. A group of Western students spent its vacation cleaning up flood damage on the Mississippi River.

**INSIDE:** Whether she's driving a school bus, spending time with her neighbors, or just being a student, Glenda Lewis is always learning lessons.

# 'If you look around, you know it's not over'

STORY BY JIM HANNAH

ST. CHARLES, Mo. — "The wind pounded against Cathy Schlee's old house.

Sunlight barely came through the mud-covered windows of the building's abandoned shell. The floor tiles were warped. Mud filled the kitchen sink. The inside of the refrigerator was coated with mud. Tops of plastic plants poked out of the mud that filled an aquarium built into one wall. The blades of the ceiling fans were broken or bent. A pot holder hung from

one of the blades.

In one of the bedrooms, a ladder to the attic hung from the ceiling. The Schlee family had filled their attic with belongings, hoping to keep them dry. It didn't work.

"So many people need help," Schlee said. "In the summer, if you watched the news, everybody was sandbagging, but when the drama was over, everyone left. But if you look around, you know it's not over."

Schlee was one victim of the floods of 1993.

To help in the cleanup, 11 students from Western's Baptist Student Center went to the St. Louis area over Spring Break. For two days, the students helped the Schlee family clean up their riverfront neighborhood. Each paid \$50 to go on the trip.

"There are some older people who can't do this work," Schlee said. "My husband is 42 and it's hard on him."

PHOTOS BY TOR MATHIESEN

The Great Flood of 1993 did more than just destroy one house or neighborhood. About 50 people were killed, and damages were estimated at more than \$10 billion as water rose to levels never seen before along the Mississippi. Cleanup after the flood will take years, and some worry about more flooding this spring. While the Western students were there, the river was at 23.4 feet. Flood stage for that area is 25 feet.

"I have never cleaned up or

seen anything like the flood damage," sophomore Rob Strickland said. "I'm from Nashville and I have worked at soup kitchens in homeless shelters before, but this is hard to describe to people back home."

Strickland said when he saw mattresses and appliances sitting on the ground after they had been pushed out of homes, he began to realize the force of Mother Nature.

"I was just amazed at how

## Hillside

College Heights Herald Magazine



Jason Koski/Herald

Glenda Lewis isn't your typical non-traditional student. Here, she shows off her new tie as she drives a school bus. Read more about her on page 6.

Magazine editor: Jim Hannah  
Photo editor: Tracey Steele

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## COVER PHOTO:

Radcliff sophomore Chuck Ridgeway is loading a truck with trash found in piles outside one of the 33 homes in the Lakeshore subdivision. The Mississippi River can be seen in the background.

PHOTO TAKEN BY TOR MATHIESEN.

Look for the next  
**Hillside**  
in the April 26  
edition of the  
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Cathy Schleaf, whose home was flooded, gives Bowling Green junior Cara Catlett a big hug at the group's departure. "This is the best thing anybody can do for us, and I mean that," Schleaf said.

the water had no barriers," Strickland said.

After someone bought the Schleaf's flood-damaged home, the family moved five houses down. The new house was remodeled after the flood. The back wall of the house is covered with windows that overlook the Mississippi River. On the side of the house is a deck with an even better view of the river.

Schleaf's family is one of two to move back into the Lakeshore subdivision, which once was home to 33 families. Lakeshore is in St. Charles County and is less than an hour from St. Louis.

The family rebuilt less than 50 yards from the river. "It was just a freaky thing," Schleaf said of the flood. "There are 80- or 90-year-old people who have never seen it this bad before, so I don't think I'm going to live long enough to see it flood this bad again."

The sound of Western students throwing water-damaged refrigerators, stoves and air conditioners into a dumpster could be heard as Schleaf looked at the river through the windows of her new home. She sat at an antique table that had been saved from the flood waters when it was moved onto the roof of the old house. The table and chairs were in pieces after the flood, but Schleaf had each refinished and glued back together.

Four photo albums of

pictures, letters and newspaper clippings about the flood covered the table.

One picture is of a hole Schleaf's husband, knocked in the side of their house to load their possessions from the attic onto a boat when water threatened to submerge the house.

Schleaf was interrupted by the cuckoo clock at the top of the hour. She looked at the clock hanging on the wall and said it hasn't kept accurate time since the flood, when it received moisture damage. She took it to a clock maker, but it still didn't keep the right time.

On the first day Western students were in the neighborhood, Schleaf's son, Jeff, stayed home from school and hung around the students. Jeff played softball with a friend part of the time ground covered in brown mud as far as one could see. The ground looked like a giant brownie, one student said.

Hanging in the trees above

Jeff were bowls, clothes and sandbags that were snagged by limbs as they floated by during the flood.

In the background was a sign nailed to the top of a telephone pole that said, "No wake. Idle speed only." During the height of the flood, residents of the

"I just don't think Americans realize what the flood left behind," Schleaf said. "It's funny how people assume a disaster is here and gone."

In the woods behind the homes, students burned trash. Included were cans, tires, a jar of peanut butter, furniture and cans of flood relief work.

"If you don't pick up the trash from the flood, people will start dumping," said Jerry Green, one of the residents trying to rebuild.

Trash is burned, scrap metal is put in one dumpster to be recycled and everything else is put in another dumpster.

"It's getting better," said Green's wife, Beverly.

"We're coming back home. We're coming back home. That's what I'm looking forward to. I'm sick of apartment life."

The Greens, who have two children, have lived in four different places since the flooding started. Beverly said her 8-year-old son is sick of the whole thing and is looking

forward to going back to his old school.

The last day in the neighborhood, students helped Jerry shovel trash from his yard into garbage cans.

"I can't believe Kentucky students came up here during Spring Break to help us," Jerry said.

Rick Howerton, the campus minister at the Baptist Student Center, said that he would like the world to know that not everyone is partying on Spring Break. "College students are helping the community."

On this trip, the Western group met students from the Baptist Student Unions from across the state, including the University of Louisville, Eastern Kentucky University and Owensboro Community College.

The Western group stayed at the Jewell Baptist Church on the south side of St. Louis. During the five nights they stayed at the church the group slept on the floor in sleeping bags and took showers from two stalls with water that wasn't always hot.

Also in St. Louis, the students participated in church services on Sunday and ripped out worn carpet in a Baptist Association building.

Howerton said a group from the Baptist Student Center goes on mission trips almost every Spring Break to where people need help.

"I'm glad I had a chance to go," Strickland said, "and do something for God and the other people."

### Spring Break destination



neighborhood had to boat about eight miles to get to their houses.

Jeff didn't have to worry about breaking a window. He was surrounded by houses that looked like they had been bombed during a war. Many had neon stickers on their doors that said, "St. Charles Co. Building Dept. Condemned Danger."





A group of students burn an American flag that was underwater during the flood.

# FLOOD

# RELIEF

*in*

# St. Louis



Radcliff sophomore Chuck Ridgeway carries the broken pieces of some windows to a dumpster.



Above: Nashville sophomore Rob Strickland and Muldraugh senior Duane Berry pet two of the local dogs, Freckles and Dodo.

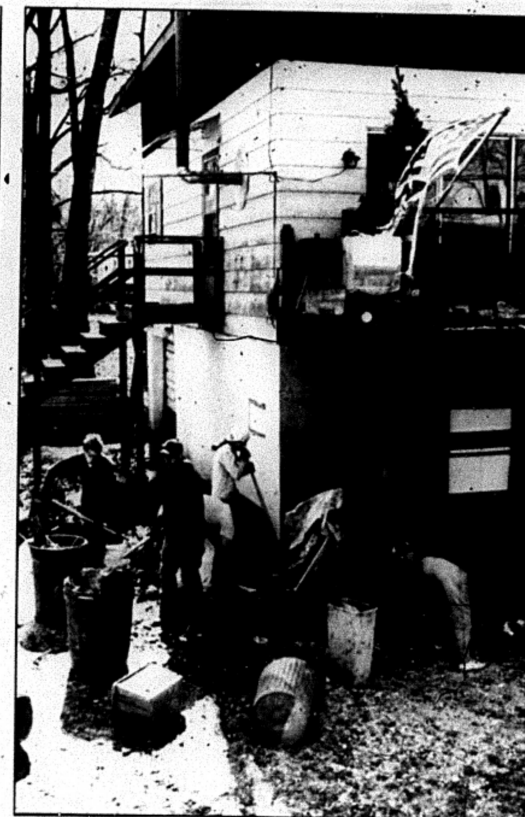
Right: Students clean up debris outside one of the 33 houses in the area. The waterline went above the telephone line going to the house.



Exhausted after a long day of work, Nashville sophomore Rob Strickland and Bowling Green junior Cara Catlett fall asleep in the van on their way back to Jewell Baptist Church in St. Louis.



After each day, the students gathered in a circle to pray for the well-being and the future of the community, some of the residents also participated.



*"I JUST DON'T THINK people realize what the flood left behind. It's funny how people assume a disaster is here and gone."*

— CATHY SCHLEEF  
flood survivor

# Glenda Lewis thinks life is like school

Glenda Lewis was sitting at a red traffic light on Scottsville Road when the man in the Corvette beside her called for her attention.

"Hey," he said.

"Feed it to your cows," she said.

Lewis, a Hardinsburg senior, didn't have time to flirt, nor did she want to. She had a job to do.

She was driving a school bus to pick up students from school, like she has done for the past 10 years — nine years in Breckinridge County, one year in Warren County.

So she knows the bus driver jargon.

"Bus number 222 to bus station, E. T. A. (estimated time of arrival) three and a half minutes," she said.

And she waves to other bus drivers passing her on the road. "They are really big into teamwork — big time," she said.

Her morning route begins at 6 and ends at about 8, and the afternoon route begins at about 2 and ends at about 4.

The bus routes are just part of a typical day for Lewis. She takes classes at night, works at Red Lobster during the day, sometimes substitute teaches, and is always a friend to the women who live on the same floor in her dorm.

She enjoys driving a school bus and hopes to continue even after she gets certified to teach elementary education and begins a teaching career.

"Driving a school bus is seeing kids at their best," she said, because they can act like themselves and aren't in a structured classroom setting.

Not only does she enjoy driving the children; she thinks her job is important and thinks it contributes to how much children like school.

"You know your face as a driver is the first face they'll see in a school setting," she said.

Many times she drives disabled students, some with physical problems, some with emotional problems, because she's certified to work with them.

And she takes a special interest in them. She visits them when they're sick, knows which ones like to bounce over bumps in the road, sings with them and always asks about their day.

"These kids are just so neat," she said. "They are God's gift to the world."

Lewis has seven years' experience working with disabled children in a classroom setting for the Breckinridge County Schools.

She said she would still be there today if it weren't for her divorce about a year ago.

"After my divorce, I realized I couldn't count on anything but myself," she said.

And she was scared.

But she decided to look at the divorce as one of life's lessons and turn a negative situation into a positive one.

So she came to Western to get certification to teach elementary and middle school.

She said she's excited about having an "open and honest classroom" so children want to learn, and she is looking forward to owning her own home, hopefully marrying again and having a child.

It's the support she gets from her family, she said, and her faith in God that gave her the strength to come to Western, leaving the familiar surroundings of Breckinridge County where she lived all her life.

"We eat together, play together, and pray together," she said.

She grew up on a farm in Hardinsburg, the third of five children in a close-knit family. The family gets together every weekend. If she can't go home, they come to visit her.

Working on the farm, hard work and independence were instilled in



Lewis looks back at some of the young riders on her morning bus route. She has been driving for Warren County Schools since May.



Above: Lewis takes a moment to say goodbye to Shawn, a deaf student at Natcher Elementary. Lewis is fairly proficient in sign language, but she still practices frequently.

Left: Lewis shows her parents a school bus necktie that was given to her as a birthday gift by her brother Joe (left).





Before students are let out of school, all the drivers usually congregate on one bus to catch up on any new gossip. Although Lewis is the only woman on the bus, she has no problem joking around with the other drivers.



**Above:** After her morning route, Lewis takes some time to read for an American Literature class.

**Left:** Lewis will park her bus in the student lot close to her dorm. She leaves her car at the bus garage and doesn't bring it back until the afternoon bus run is finished.

her, and they are what she relies on each day.

"I'm a getter; I want what's out there for me to get," she said.

Lewis said she wants to teach because she likes working with children because they tell you exactly what they think.

"Kids are more honest than adults," she said. "Adults have to be what they expect you to be."

Lewis has the same enthusiasm for being a student as she does a bus driver.

Astronomy Professor Paul Campbell said Lewis is a good student who asks questions and works hard, but he is more appreciative of Lewis' friendliness and willingness to help others.

Teacher Education Instructor Alice Mikovich said Lewis is enthusiastic and a hard worker.

For a special education class, Lewis brought a disabled student to class to show how children are tubefed.

Mikovich said it really added to the class' understanding.

While instructors have been impressed with Lewis, she has also been impressed with them.

"I think Western is the best university anywhere," she said. "They want you to succeed."

Lewis, 34, also wears the hat of a mother figure and a friend to the fifth-floor residents of Poland Hall, where she lives.

Being with younger women has been good for her. "I'm only as old as they are," she said.

Her door is always open for neighbors who need advice, money, extension cords, help with schoolwork, a button sewn on or care when they are sick.

Lewis even took a neighbor to class on a school bus because she had never ridden one before.

She knows they would do the same for her. "Our floor is a family," she said.

During Spring Break, Lewis ended a romantic relationship. Some women on the floor called her every day to talk and make sure she was doing all right.

But living with younger women has also been an adjustment.

"We've all changed her; we loosened her up," said Kyle DePeppe, a junior from Long Island, N.Y. "She used to be an adult and a teacher."

A balanced diet is a thing of the past. Now fast food is the norm—even at 12:30 in the morning.

"And I've still got a 24-inch waist," Lewis added.

Country music isn't the only type of music she listens to anymore. The women on her floor have exposed her to rock music.

"But I don't like rap music," she said.

She dresses "more free" now. But "I haven't gotten to (wearing clothes) inside-out yet," she said.

Sometimes she is like a kid learning things and saying something for the first time," said Louisville junior Valerie Hadnot, the floor's resident assistant.

And Lewis said she likes her role as mother and friend to the young women on her floor.

"I am a role model because I've been where they are," she said. "I've been someplace else and then I've come back."



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