

Copy of letter from Blakely Helin  
to Harold Helin in N.Y.

1-1

Louisville, Kentucky  
February 4, 1937

Dear Harold:

Your letter of January 20, reached me on the 22nd. On the following day I thought of wiring to you that Hoe McFadden should postpone his trip. Before I knew it, however, I was head over heels in the relief work. I did go by the Brown Hotel on the morning of January 23, to locate Silvert Perkins, but found that he had not been there.

From Saturday, January 23, until last night, I was in the Emergency Welfare Department. This was the department furnishing shelter, food and other supplies to refugees. Its work grew daily. Dr. K.P. Vinsel was head of this department and I was one of the two assistants. He had to plan the divisions of the work and in general John Mallon and I got the personnel and handled the supervision over the various divisions.

We were quite proud of our division heads and their work, although the nature of the work changed constantly. We had Foree Dennis in charge of housing with T.D. Lockett, Ev. Brown and others; Squire Ogden on food for boat stations with Francis Stites, Turman Jones and others; Bob Dosker and Tom on retail food distribution with Ab Kirwan, Gerard Pilcher, Paul Briney, Martin Schmidt and many others; Bill Rahill on buying with Boots Engelhard, Carter Stewart and others; Neville Blakemore on restaurants (or soup kitchens) with Booker Robinson; George Caspari on requisitions with Bob Sloss, Vincent Thomas, Arthur Robert and others; Bill Gates (formerly of the Brown Hotel) on transportation with most of the big truck operators.

Of course, the evacuation work came first with wonderful work by the trucks and boats, but the feeding and supplying continued on. We had wonderful cooperation from the truck department and the boat department, of course.

Including the islands at various points, about three-fourths of Louisville was under water or cut off. The City Hall was on an island about five blocks wide, twenty blocks long. Hence, we referred to it as Long Island. Strange to say, practically all of Broadway was under water, while Main and Jefferson Streets were under only at the west and a few blocks at the east end.

Our family has come through fine. Catherine is the only refugee. She went to Lexington on Monday, January 25, with Carl Franke and his little girl. We understand that the girls have entered Hamilton College. When the electricity went off, that put our gas furnace out. Kitty and Jack went to Joe Burge's and Joe and Margie to Tom's. Tom and I were marooned on Long Island anyhow and I had a room at the Seelbach where our workers slept in relays.

The Red Cross has now come on the scene in full force. Most of us have been able to step out. Bob Dosker and Tom should get out today. Wallace Davis and Harold Bringham, who were running the Highland headquarters, should be out in a day or two. At this stage, of course, there is plenty of talk as to how things could have been handled otherwise. But you never saw such whole-hearted cooperation at anything in your life. We never hesitated to call anyone at any hour of the day or night and they were glad to be called. It was like the World War though, too big for any special ones to be heroes.

The other parts of the country were even more cooperative. Refugees are located all over Kentucky and Indiana. It is unbelievable that the doctors and nurses from all

H-H  
Cherry

1-2

neighboring states could have come in such numbers. The Highlands was under New Jersey state police; the down town section under Pennsylvania state police; the southern part of the city under Boston police and other parts under Chicago police. And food and bedding came from everywhere. It looks as if people are alike all over this country and that they all have big hearts.

Your brother,

Blakey

cc - Miss Margie Helm,  
Helm Hotel,  
Bowling Green, Kentucky