

14 Feb 1937

24(2)

*True*

We were not on a raft in a swirling current but might easily have been as the waters were within a block on two sides and boats came into the end of our street. You cannot imagine what it was like! Ninety percent of the city under water, the streets raging streams and 250,000 refugees. Our good Grady whom you remember with a wife and two children was completely washed out losing every stick of furniture, clothes, etc. We didn't see him nor our car for a week, the landlady also was submerged, but our cook stayed here and was safe.

We were the most fortunate people I know in town yet when I tell you our experience you may guess what others have suffered. We had no light for three weeks, the first electricity coming on last night. No refrigeration, no telephone, no papers, no mail. For two weeks we had no water in the pipes and some days used melted snow or rain water. The closets had to be flushed and some days we had to carry all refuse to the yard and bury in a ditch with lime. Every drop of water had to be boiled, even for bathing and most everybody was sick from typhoid inoculations. Cale being the only man on the place had to forage each morning for canned foods and anything he could find to keep us going; to carry all the water up and down stairs and do a thousand and one odd jobs. I tried to do the house work, with no clean linen for three weeks and three extra beds to provide for refugees. Aunt Sit Buckner aged 82 was marooned in her boarding house for four days, no heat, no light and ill with a fever. Fannie Macaulay (also marooned) finding her call for a boat unanswered finally got an army truck to take her out. As soon as Cale could get to Fan's hotel he brought Aunt Sit here where she was ill for five days. No nurse or doctor was available of course but we nursed her back to a safe condition and she has gone home again. Fortunately we had furnace heat, so that was a great help. Many of the handsomest homes in the suburbs are still without heat or light and full of refugees.

The breadline at our corner was two blocks long and people stood in pouring rain for four hours often to get food. When I could make it I went around to the Cabbage Patch Settlement to do my bit, mostly to take some little comfort to the workers who did not have off their clothes for eight days and nights. We fed and bedded 147 in our gymnasium until the pipes burst and they were forced to use the halls for lavatories.

Now for the more cheerful side. The relief work was magnificent. Every school, public building, etc., was utilized. The people were fed and cared for. Attics were ransacked - clothes were taken off peoples back to put on the destitute. We even took the slip off a couch when the call came from The Womens Club that thirty babies were without covering. One friend of mine

Mrs. Blane, you remember her, stayed in her house with the water eight feet around her. She covered an old negro at night with a Persian rug. Newspapers were most handy as coverings. We had provisions brought to us only one day. But I had to go out and ask for four candles as none could be bought. Then a good friend came in from the country and brought three lamps and some kerosene and wassshe welcome!

So thorough was the typhoid preventions that not one case had been reported, in spite of the fact that dead cats, rats and dogs floated in the street and a dead horse or cow was often left for days. Even people who died had to be kept for days as undertakers could not reach them.

But we are valiantly struggling up again in spite of caved in streets, sagging walls, and thousands of wrecked homes. The Red Cross and the city welfare are bringing order out of chaos. Almost every store in the heart of the city has store windows smashed or full of debris. A thick layer of mud is still over everything the water touched.

The Martins were out of the flooded area, but of course suffered the discomforts common to us all. I feel very sorry for Georgie with two invalids on her hands and not well herself. She wrote a report which was published in the New York Herald Tribune which was what she was told - that St. James Court was 12 feet under water. She also heard that I was ill and carried to Lexington in an airplane and got word to all our friends in her neighborhood which caused unnecessary alarm.

I was hobbling around with acute lumbar and sciatic trouble but I had no idea of leaving town. But now I am in bed with the privilege of walking out twice a day and not allowed to put any pressure by sitting on afflicted nerves in leg.

Here is a long horribly written scrawl but I knew you wanted to hear.

Copy of letter from Mrs. Rice - February 14, 1937