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Tornado: One year after

Citizens rebuilding both lives and property

United Press International
WICHITA FALLS — Linda Swift has tried to keep busy this past year, hoping that in activity there would be release from her terrible memories.

It was 5:57 p.m. on April 10, 1979, when a tornado touched ground outside Wichita Falls, with winds spinning at 200 miles an hour in a circle up to an incredible three-quarters of a mile in diameter.

Swift lay on her two daughters in the bathtub, but the winds and enormous suction tore the house apart, flinging her and the children into the yard among lumber, furniture and felled trees.

Her husband found them in the yard, the children dead and Swift unconscious. She has recovered now from her own physical injuries.

"Emotionally," she said, "I suppose I'm to the point now where at least I can say the word 'tornado' without trembling. But when I let myself think of the actual details, I get cold inside. I feel clammy and shaky."

The storm's numbers, compiled by the American Red Cross, quantify what horrified survivors saw last April.

- 46 dead;
- 3,245 injured;
- 220 hospitalized;
- 2,606 homes destroyed;
- 2,540 homes damaged;
- 1,294 apartments destroyed or damaged;
- 84 mobile homes destroyed;
- 79 businesses destroyed or substantially damaged;

— 6,603 families suffering losses to their dwellings;
— \$300 million in damage.

Superficially, the city of 100,000 has made a remarkable recovery. But beneath the new yellow pine roofs, the pressure of being near death and then struggling to start a new life has taken a mental toll.

Perhaps the most visible symbol of the Wichita Falls renaissance is Sikes Senter, a shopping mall punished by the vicious black storm.

Hundreds of dazed survivors crawled out of the battered mall last spring into a war zone scene, crushed buildings and trees, the parking lot littered with pummeled cars. Today, the parking lot is full of cars again and shoppers stroll the mall.

The virtually destroyed JCPenney store has been rebuilt and reopened. That opening, March 5, became symbolic of the Sikes Senter comeback.

Sharla Harman, 28, a children's photographer at the mall who hid beneath a counter said memories of the storm are vivid city-wide.

"They haven't forgotten, not with the weather coming up like it is and

all. I sure respect tornadoes a lot more," she said. "When there's a warning, you better look out."

An extensive study on the movement of residents during the storm was prepared by the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Barbara Stoll of the Emory University School of Medicine, Neil Horowitz of the School of Health Care Sciences at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, and Joe Winkle of the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration.

The report concluded: "Residents had such long warning that many fled to their cars to try to outrun the storm. It was a dreadful mistake."

"Of the 26 people killed and 30 injured by the storm while they were in vehicles, 77 percent had left the relative safety of buildings. The homes left by 20 of these victims, including eight who died, suffered little or no damage. Only five deaths occurred among the 10,863 people who stayed indoors in the area affected by the tornado."

The report said apartments and single-family dwellings were the safest places to be, while motor cars were the most dangerous.

NTSU student's hand reattached

United Press International
DALLAS — Baylor Medical Center doctors Wednesday completed a 13½-hour operation that reattached the left hand of a North Texas State University student that had been virtually amputated in an accident with a band saw in art class.

A hospital spokeswoman said the accident Tuesday had left Christie Legg's hand with "a little piece of skin holding it on" when it was cut just above the wrist in a freak accident.

Legg, 21, a journalism major from Longview, was in satisfactory condition Wednesday.

A team of doctors began working on the hand about 4 p.m. Tuesday and announced it had been reattached about 5:30 a.m. Wednesday. It will take about 72 hours to determine if the body will accept the reattached hand.

"All the major structures were severed in the accident and during the surgery all major structures were re-joined and her blood supply was re-established," the spokeswoman said.

"We're cautiously optimistic at this point but the surgery went well," said Dot Legg, the woman's mother. "Her attitude is great."

"The way they handled it in Denton (site of North Texas State) when the accident happened was just super and the doctors have done a fine job here."

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OPEC: 'Share the wealth'

United Press International
HOUSTON — The secretary general of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries said Wednesday that OPEC needs more help from industrialized nations in working toward peaceful achievement of an "equitable" distribution of the world's wealth.

Dr. Rene Ortiz of Ecuador told the Conference on International Business that developed nations must help improve the economic, social and political plight of poorer countries or face less OPEC cooperation on oil prices and supplies.

"Now is the appropriate time for this oil power to be brought into play actively in achieving an equitable international economic order," Ortiz said.

"We're not thinking in terms of

confiscation. The idea is not to take from one and give to another. The idea is to be fair one side to another," he said.

"Cooperation in my mind cannot mean the condemnation of our people to poverty and underdevelopment," Ortiz said. "Concrete evidence of cooperation and good will from the side of the advanced, consuming countries should clearly be shown."

Ortiz called upon the industrialized nations to share Western technology to improve underdeveloped countries' economies, to eliminate barriers to "meaningful use" of OPEC revenues and to solve the Middle East and other political crises that increase Third World tensions.

Ortiz said effective use of OPEC

revenues requires ending the erosion of buying power caused by inflation — which he blamed on unrealistic lifestyles in industrialized countries — and eliminating nationalistic trade and financial barriers.

"I am confident that the appreciation of each other's points of view and that sincere efforts towards the solution of our problems will help bring about a mutuality of interests in a fair and equitable manner," Ortiz said.

Ortiz said an OPEC committee, chaired by Saudi Arabian oil minister Zaki Yamani, has developed a long-range analysis of the world oil situation and OPEC will meet next month to discuss it.

Ortiz declined to predict the future course of OPEC price decisions, although he said that crude oil prices will be discussed at an OPEC meeting next June.

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