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COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

The river belongs to the Nation,
The levee, they say, to the State;
The Government runs navigation,
The Commonwealth, though, pays the freight.

Now here is the problem that's heavy—
Please, which is the right or the wrong—
When the water runs over the levee,
To whom does the river belong?

—Uncle Sam's River, Stanza 1
Douglas Malloch

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"Saga of the Sandbags" — "Dubuque's Greatest Flood" — "How High's the Water Mama?" — whichever it's to be called, the following is a brief picture exposition of the Mississippi floodwaters as they affected and afflicted Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers.

To our family of authors, bookstore friends, and employees we dedicate this account.





Under normal conditions, the Mississippi River as it passes Dubuque rests at stages of between eight to ten feet. **Flood Stage is 17.0 feet.** In relation to the River, the front door of the Wm. C. Brown Companies is 24.0 feet, and never in the history of the Weather Bureau records had the water usurped even the 23-foot mark.



April 13, 1965 — The Dubuque Office of the United States Weather Bureau predicted flood waters in **excess of 23 feet.** As a precautionary measure (at this stage), flood preparations began in and around this Company. First, polyethylene was placed to encompass the lower portion of the entire building. Tiers of sandbags (90 tons in all) were then brought to be set against the "poly." Over and around these defenses were dumped 150 truckloads of clay-dirt.



While sandbagging (with the aid of local high school and college students) and dike building continued outside, the office and plant facilities functioned at near normal on the inside. During the early stages, Brown workers were brought to this location, through water, by truck. It was then necessary to walk the dike in order to step down into the building. Finally on **Thursday, April 22**, operations were forced to cease because the flood waters were getting to the level which threatened water backup in the plumbing facilities within the building. Also, the Weather Bureau had issued a revised forecast predicting a crest of **nearly 27.0 feet**. As a result, the weekend of April 24, 25, and 26 was spent hauling as much office equipment as possible, by boat to waiting trucks, to a vacant ninth floor of a downtown Dubuque department store. Office work was handled per se at this location until the move back on Monday, May 10.







From April 22 through May 6, a twenty-four hour backbreaking vigil was in effect in order to reinforce weak sections in the dike, haul sandbags (by boat), raise furniture throughout the building, lift 600,000 pounds of paper onto cement blocks, take up carpeting, and not of least importance to keep the pumps continually manned.

At the crest of the flood (26.8 feet, April 26), the dikes were holding well and fighting back the tons of pressure. The pumps became necessary only after the water burrowed its way under the street, under the dike, under the floor of the building and bubbled up through any vantage point it could find—usually through a separation in the cement of the flooring or under the corners of the building. A water level on the inside was held to no more than 5 inches. However, 10 pumps, each removing from 3,200 to 36,000 gallons of water per hour, were necessary for this feat.











For those working on the dikes, stranger sights were never seen. Looking North, South, or East produced nothing but the sight of water, floating debris, and an occasional boat where once was a busy South Locust Street and surrounding area.

However, "In every job that must be done, there is an element of fun." An Atlantic Sailfish, usually a mounted trophy in the office of Wm. C. Brown, found it impossible to resist the water and with considerable help made its way to the water's edge. (By the way, the fish is at the left of the picture!)

WM. C. BROWN CO., INC.
MANUFACTURING PRINTERS

AT CREST, APRIL 26, 1965 — 26.8 FEET

W.C. Brown Co., Inc.

As you turn this last page of our account of the fight against the Mississippi, we are now back in full operation. Our floors have been cleaned and waxed, the walls have been freshly painted, where necessary carpeting and tile replaced, and our personnel are once again at your service. If by chance we have inconvenienced you in any way during the past weeks, it is hoped that this booklet is a partial explanation. Your cooperation and patience during these times have been greatly appreciated.

Also, a special heartfelt thanks to everyone here at the Brown Companies who suffered or was inconvenienced in any way during our soggy saga.

Wm C. Brown



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