



Death Toll Raising Questions

Junk Yields Gems

This story was written from reports by staff writers Bobby Ross Jr., Melissa Nelson, Meri McManus, Amy Greene and Christy Watson.

As the damage estimate from Monday's deadly tornadoes doubled, thousands of Oklahomans dug through the mess of their ravaged homes Wednesday.

Amid the devastation, victims salvaged tiny mementos like diamond anniversary rings, family photographs and Barbie dolls.

Brian Colhnia sat amid the rubble of his grandfather's Del City home holding a handful of engraved pens. His grandfather, Gustia Miller, 75, died trying to protect Colhnia's grand-

See DIG, Page 9



Senior Airman Adrian Beliveau helps clean up debris Wednesday from the home of fellow AWACS member Staff Sgt. Brent Wangen at 200 Highland Ave. in Moore. Wangen's colleagues at Tinker Air Force Base's 964th AWACS unit painted the graffiti.

Half-Billion Estimated In Damage

By Randy Ellis and Steve Lackmeyer Staff Writers

Following two days of intense searches, metro rescue workers were cautiously optimistic Wednesday that few if any additional victims will be pulled from the 19-mile path of devastation left by Monday night's killer tornado.

The Oklahoma medical examiner's office was less optimistic, however. Officials there said they have a list of 100 missing people and urged family members of missing loved ones to call that office in an attempt to consolidate efforts to locate missing people.

Oklahoma's death count remained at 38 Wednesday.

"I don't think it's going to go up much over what they're showing now. I would be real surprised," said John Long, chief of the public education office for the Oklahoma City Fire Department.

Officials in Moore, Midwest City and Del City expressed similar confidence.

In fact, they were confident enough in that belief that victims whose homes had been destroyed or severely damaged were being allowed back in most cordoned off neighborhoods to search for personal belongings Wednesday afternoon, where property losses could be as high as \$500 million, twice the figure given Tuesday, officials say.

The growing confidence of rescuers stands in stark contrast with the escalating panic voiced by worried relatives and friends of people who lived in the damaged area and who haven't heard from the missing since the killer tornado roared through.

The Internet and telephone lines of hospitals, churches and shelters continued to be jammed Wednesday with urgent messages from people concerned about the fate and whereabouts of loved ones.

"We only have 38 bodies, (but) we have 100 missing-person reports for people unaccounted for and that's concerning us," said Ray Blakeney, director of operations for the medical examiner's office.

But rescuers said it is only natural that many people have been unable to locate each other in the mass confusion and dislocation.

"Calling friends and relatives isn't always a priority of people whose homes have been destroyed. They've got a lot to worry about," Long said.

Efforts to account for missing people have been complicated by the fact that various shelters and agencies have maintained separate lists of people who

See RESCUE, Page 2

"We only have 38 bodies, (but) we have 100 missing-person reports for people unaccounted for and that's concerning us,"

— Ray Blakeney, operations director, state medical examiner's office



At right, Brian Curn, 14, whose mother, Esther Curn, was killed Monday when a tornado swept through Moore, is hugged by his cousin, Rick Lambert, who is holding his son, Austin.

— Staff Photo by David McDaniel

AFTER THE STORM

- Cities Prepare to Remove Storm Debris
- Agencies Offer Help Rebuilding
- Tap Water Safe, Officials Say — Page 15

- Array of Items Flows in to Assist Victims
- How to Help or Get Help
- Benefit Concerts — Page 16

- 'We'll Make Do'
- Churches Helping Tornado Victims
- Bibles, Dolls, Aid Arrives
- Acts of Kindness — Page 17

- Desolated Street Full of Memories
- Tornado Survivors Finding Little
- Tornado Damage — Page 18

- Animal Survivors Lift Spirits
- Wind Stole Birthday Happiness — Page 19

- Profiles of Life
- Towns Littered With Remains, Rubble
- Generators Power Hope After Storm
- Vo-Tech Skills to Rebuild — Page 20

- Address Children's Fears, Experts Say — Page 21

- Builders Foresee Shortages — Page 22

- Lawmakers Mull Disaster Funds — Page 24

- Junior College Offers Class Space
- Destruction Skips Theater at Rose State — Page 25

- Bombing's Lessons Help Confront Tragedy
- Guard Leader Surveys Areas in Storm Path
- Victims Can Pick Up Mail — Page 26

- 10,000 Twisted Autos Headed to Scrap Heap
- Damage Estimate Hits \$500 Million
- Apartments Helping Homeless
- Mall's Loss Hard for Stroud — Page 27

- Gas to Flow Again to 1,200
- 2,000 Still Powerless
- Utilities Continue to Restore Power — Page 28

- Community First, Softball Second — Page 37

- Tornadoes Alter Priorities — Page 42

Share your personal accounts of the storms by calling 475-4001 or send e-mail to newsroom@oklahoman.net. Leave your name and phone number.

Continuous coverage of Monday's deadly tornadoes is available online at www.oklahoman.com.

Victims Hunt Memories

Family Treasures Scattered Among Debris

By Ann DeFrance and Diana Baldwin Staff Writers

MOORE — Without houses or yards or trees as landmarks, no sense of location is possible in Regency Park addition. Addresses have been spray-painted on cement driveways or on any standing wall. The graffiti gave a small sense of order for insurance appraisers or relief workers who came through the tornado-torn neighborhood Wednesday.

It was the first day residents were allowed back into their streets since they fled the Monday disaster. Many of their homes have disappeared, or fallen apart into piles of bricks and sticks.

They walked through the neighborhood, stunned. They relied on activity, bringing brooms and shovels to collect debris.

It appears not a good tree is left in this part of Moore. They are stripped of leaves, the nude

branches leaning one way, showing the direction of the tornadic wind, objects — including sheet metal — wrapped around the limbs and trunks.

If the scene didn't resemble a salvage yard, it could have been a gigantic garage sale. People roamed about picking up items from their lots, throwing them aside into a trash pile or placing them gently on a retrievable heap. Cars drove down the streets, drivers gawking at debris or checking on neighbors. Children slid along on bikes.

Robert Acuff, turning over in his fingers one hoop earring he had picked up in his daughter's home, said, "All this can be replaced. But lives cannot be replaced."

Rental trucks were loaded with personal items or the few pieces of furniture left. Pickups were filled with furnishings, appliances, bundles of clothes — all tied down with rope.

See RETURN, Page 2

Despite Pilots' Deaths, Apache Mission a Go

TIRANA, Albania (AP) — The U.S. Army won't disrupt its plans to send Apache helicopters into combat against Serb forces, despite a crash in Albania's mountains Wednesday that killed two American aviators and brought NATO's first fatalities in its campaign against Yugoslavia.

The crash, during nighttime training in rugged northeastern Albania, was the second in nine days involving one of the two dozen heavily armed anti-tank Apache gunships deployed in Albania. They are preparing for missions against Yugoslav forces, accused of driving nearly 700,000 ethnic Albanians out of the neighboring Kosovo province.

Training will proceed. The Army will stick to its secret schedule for deploying the Apaches in combat, said Lt. Col. Garrie Dornan, a spokesman for the task force that includes the gunships.

"This will not hinder the timeline — there's no delay, no aircraft grounded," he told reporters Wednesday at Tirana's airport, the Apaches' temporary base.

KOSOVO CRISIS

- Despite Weather, NATO Bombs Fall
- Troop Estimates Rise — Page 12

- Soldiers Braced for Execution
- First Refugees Arrive in U.S. — Page 13

Continuous Kosovo Crisis coverage is available online at www.oklahoman.com.

See CRASH, Page 2

INSIDE

INDEX

- Ann Landers 14
- Billy Graham 14
- Bridge 50
- Business 27-32
- Classified 43-51
- Comics 52
- Crossword 50
- Dear Abby 14
- Editorials 6
- Entertainment .. 34-35
- Horoscope 14
- Livestock 28
- Markets 27, 30-32
- Miss Manners 14
- Obituaries 36, 43
- Oil 28
- Public Records 36
- Social Security 14
- Sports 37-43
- TV Log 33

WEATHER

Cloudy
High: 68
Low: 46

Forecasts | Weatherline:
Page 36 | 478-3377

Delivery 478-7171
Classifieds ... 475-3000
Other Calls ... 475-3311

www The Oklahoman
is available daily
on The Oklahoman Online
at www.oklahoman.com.

Four Sections



Entire contents copyright
1999, The Oklahoman
Publishing Co., Box
25125, Oklahoma City,
OK 73125.
Vol. 108, No. 104.

TODAY'S PRAYER

WE praise You, Lord, for bringing love to our hearts. So many of us hurt because we don't feel loved. We know that You love us deeply and that counts for it all. Amen.