

# Paul N. Williams

REPORTS RELIEF OPERATIONS

(Editor's note: Paul N. Williams, 27, Omaha World-Herald photographer-reporter, came to O'Neill Wednesday, January 26, to "make a few pictures of snowdrifts and be done with it." He stayed on, however, for nine days and provided the World-Herald with a steady flow of pictures and news that graphically reported the January 27-28 seige, during which morale in this blizzard-stricken area hit a new low; the desperate means that were taken to attract outside help; the coming of the American Red Cross and the Fifth Army. He was the first reporter to reach isolated rural families. Last week's issue of The Frontier carried reprints of Mr. Williams' first six articles. This issue contains three subsequent articles that first appeared in the World-Herald. During his stay here, Mr. Williams worked out of The Frontier office, made himself a welcomed visitor everywhere, sat in on important conferences. He belonged.)

## Takes Weasel Ride to See Snowland

**Friday, February 4**  
O'NEILL, NEBR. — Want to know how it is out there—out where weeks of snow and wind have made a trackless alabaster desert of Holt county farmland? Take a ride in a weasel on a mercy mission. Two of the little, widetracked Army vehicles from Camp Carson, Colo., made a typical run east of O'Neill Wednesday afternoon, February 2. The crews found only cold and downhearted people, and starving and dead cattle. They came back from the trip—their first—a shaken group.

At the Carl Belzer farm, a little over eight miles from O'Neill, they found the family burning brushwood in the cook stove to stretch the less than one hundred pounds of coal a light airplane had left three days before.

Eight miles doesn't sound like a long distance when you think of riding it in a heated car along the concrete highway.

But it seems like a "trip to the moon," Carl Belzer said, when you walk it through snow almost hip deep most of the way. Mr. Belzer made the journey by foot three weeks ago when groceries began running low.

He was able to carry only a small bundle of staples for himself, his wife and their daughter, Mary, 12, on the return trip. "We've just barely been get the road open," Mr. Belzer said. "There hasn't been a car on this road since November 17."

But the road—a country route wasn't opened. All available equipment has been able only to keep the main state highways open about three days out of four in the past month.

The Belzers soon ran out of fuel. They brought in what brushwood they could find in the snow, then started using furniture.

Except for the beds and the kitchen furniture they were almost without fuel last week, when they learned from a leaflet dropped from an airplane that they should make distress signals in the snow. They tore up a wooden bench to make a big "F"—signifying a need for food—and before long a plane came in with Red Cross bundles.

The day the plane arrived the Belzers had used almost all the prepared and packaged foods in the house. They still had some eggs and milk, and that was about all. The Red Cross supplies were almost gone when the weasel crews arrived late Wednesday afternoon with more.

"We've just barely been get-

ting along," Mr. Belzer told the soldiers. "Sometimes we sit out here and listen to the wind, and watch the cattle bunch up close to the barn, and we wonder if we're going to make it. We know there's probably a lot of people as bad off as we are, though, and we know the folks in town are doing their best to help."

Mr. Belzer now has 20 head of cattle. Five died Monday and Tuesday—including two new calves. He said his haystacks are almost a mile away, cut off from the farmyard by impassable drifts.

A. Neil Dawes, Holt county agent, was a passenger in the airplane that brought the Belzers their first emergency supplies.

"They were literally out of food when we arrived. We have them the Red Cross package, and while they were going through it, Mary came across a 10-pound bag of sugar.

"Here," she said, "we've already got five or 10 pounds of sugar. You'd better take this to some other family."

Only 1½ miles from O'Neill, the weasel crews found Mrs. Troy Howard and her five young sons working to keep the five milk cows—their main source of income—in condition to withstand the chilling winds that sweep across the fields.

Mrs. Howard's husband died last summer. Since then the boys—Marcell, 18; Bernard, 15; Joseph, 10; Ambrose, 8; Bobby, 5—have shared the work of keeping the 160-acre farm going.

The recurring storms have made it impossible for the Howards to take their merchandise—dairy products—to town for marketing. This has cut into an already meager income.

The weasels, commanded by Capt. William Tanski, Wilkes-Barre, Pa., proved themselves in their first test in Holt county snows. The start in the trip was delayed by difficulties in routine maintenance and in obtaining supplies. The actual round trip—about 17 miles—took only about three hours, including unloading time.

One of the weasels towed a small sled. Between them, the two vehicles carried: 1, about 800 pounds of feed; 2, about 100 pounds of food; 3, about 800 pounds of coal; 4, four regular crewmen, plus this reporter and two army photographers.

## Morris Harmon An Unsung Hero

**Saturday, February 5**  
O'NEILL, NEBR.—Among people who will be remembered as heroes of the 1948-'49 blizzards are men with snow-fighting equipment who turned their efforts to helping their communities.

Typical of such men is Morris Harmon, a farmer who lives a mile north of O'Neill. There are others like him, but he is typical.

He has a 40-horsepower cat-erpillar tractor. Since the first storm struck, November 18, Mr. Harmon has failed on only five days to do some kind of work toward easing the blizzard problem.

He has done the bulk of the work without pay. Since the Red Cross came to town about 10 days ago and since many outlying farmers began asking for grocery deliveries, Mr. Harmon has been getting regular pay for the extra work he does.

But he will estimate, if you ask him, that: "I've donated maybe a thousand dollars worth of work since November."

At first his work consisted of helping his immediate neighbors break trails to their stock; pulling wagons into town so the neighbors could stock up on fuel and other supplies; dragging haystacks and such.

"Of course, I couldn't charge my neighbors," he explains.

Another free service was pulling cars out of ditches and snowbanks. He remembers one busy day when he started to town towing a truck that wouldn't start. Then he came to a crippled pickup truck. He hitched that behind the big truck. Then he came to a founder auto.

When he chugged into town, Mr. Harmon was towing all three vehicles.

His heaviest work has been since mid-January, when he began towing sleds to outlying farm families. With his son, Wayne, or with Al Sipes or Dick Tomlinson, local men, as helpers, he will haul a two-ton load of groceries, fuel or hay as far as 30 miles from O'Neill.

The little "cat" will average about three miles an hour on trips like these. And the wind that blows almost constantly from the north makes Mr. Harmon's job and those of his helpers icy ones.

"It's not too bad," Mr. Harmon explained, "I wear long-handled underwear, my regular work clothes, a flying suit, a jacket, a full-length sheepskin parka and wolf-hide mittens."

Mr. Harmon is proud of the fact that he's never failed, sooner or later, to complete every trip, despite frequent blizzard conditions. This has called for some heavy snow-scooping in soft drifts.

One night, Mr. Harmon was putting along over a desolate stretch when he suddenly lost traction. He figured he was "high-centered"—hung up on a ridge of ice. But when he and his assistant shoveled their way to the bottom of things, they found another answer: "The tractor was almost exactly balanced on the top of a four-foot fence post."

## He's a Man They Lean On

**Sunday, February 6**  
O'NEILL, NEBR.—Times such as the past few weeks have turned up many a man in a small Nebraska town who has turned into a leader the community can lean on.

As an example, take Glea Wade, a level-headed young man of this community. Without an official title, without pay, without a formal directive, he has carried much of the burden of storm relief work in the area served by O'Neill.

Wade (that's the name he prefers) was already well-liked here before the snows began. He was in the Army more than three years, served most of his time in the Pacific, won four Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star.

He served two years as the commander of the local American Legion Post. He is credited with the construction and paying off of a 30-thousand dollar Legion Hall.

When Glen D. Custer, Red Cross field man from Crawford, came to O'Neill, he called a meeting of persons interested in the relief job. Wade was one.

Since then, Wade has spent from 10 to 20 hours a day at the distress center, in the basement of the Holt county courthouse.

While Mr. Custer handled policy matters and co-ordinated his activities with those of other Red Cross, Army and state representatives in the disaster area, Wade was ordering, packing and dispatching food and fuel orders at the rate of 20 or 30 a day, plotting "targets" and routes for tractor-sled missions to outlying points, loading bags of coal and bales of hay in Army weasels, arranging housing and feeding for incoming rescue personnel, helping the shifts of women who answer the three telephones at the distress center, and doing a myriad of other jobs that seemed to fall in nobody else's job classification.

## PAGE LOCALS

Mr. and Mrs. Homer Rutherford and family called on his mother Sunday, January 30. Mrs. Harvey Cullen returned home from O'Neill Saturday, January 29, where she had spent a week to be near her husband who is in the O'Neill hospital.



One of the best known and most universally respected men in Nebraska territory was Rev. William Hamilton, the Presbyterian missionary at Bellevue.

Father Hamilton, as he generally was called, was born in Pennsylvania in 1811 and arrived at Bellevue on June 6, 1853, having been sent there by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions to take charge of the Otoe and Omaha missions.

The new missionary at Bellevue was no novice when he arrived. For 15 years he had served in the capacity of preacher and teacher among the Iona and Sac Indians, and was well acquainted with both the Indians and the Indian country.

The mission, in turn, was established when Father Hamilton arrived. It had been set up by the Presbyterians in 1846, under the direction of Rev. and Mrs. Edward McKinney, who had constructed a building and started a school. When Rev. Hamilton took charge of the mission, 42 Indian children were enrolled in the school.

At the time Nebraska territory was created in 1854, the Presbyterian mission was the only dwelling of any size in Bellevue, the territory's principal settlement. Consequently, Rev. and Mrs. Hamilton entertained a wide variety of guests under their hospitable roof.

Most notable of these guests was Francis Burt of South Carolina, who had been appointed the first governor of Nebraska territory by President Franklin Pierce. His visit was not a happy one, however. The long journey to Nebraska had so exhausted the Governor that he went to bed at the mission as soon as he arrived—a bed from which he never arose.

In 1857, ill health caused Rev. Hamilton to retire from the work of the mission. A decade later, though, he returned to the mission and spent the rest of his life (until 1891) among his Indian friends. He was highly respected by the Indians and exercised a great deal of influence among them.

As an old man, he told a story which in many respects summed up his work. When he arrived, he related, he saw a man riding horseback, with his wife walking and carrying a load. Fifty years later, he saw the wife on the horse and the man walking.

## Phoenix YMCA Holds Banquet

By A. STROLLER

PHOENIX, ARIZ., Feb. 1 — The Phoenix Y M C A held its annual dinner-meeting Monday evening, January 24, and the writer attended as one of its guests. The cost per plate was one dollar, but the writer, having been more or less active in the association for a number of years, was one of those who were admitted free.

The annual dinner-meeting is one of the events of the year and it is always largely attended. The "Y" stenographers, several attractive girls, had been busy sending out invitations for days and the attendance this year was a record-breaker. It was the 42nd meeting.

The event was held in the big gymnasium and it was appropriately decorated for the occasion.

Obviously, the purpose of the dinner-meeting is to report the progress which has been made during the past year and a great many interesting facts were contained in the elaborate, eight-page program. Statistics were given in regard to all the various clubs, classes, teams and extensive activities of the association and they were classified under such heads as Membership, Physical Growth, Youth Program, Friendship and Service, Public Welfare, Health, etc. It gave one a comprehensive view of the extensive work the Y M C A is doing in Phoenix.

A financial statement was also contained in the program.

The dinner was an elaborate one and was served cafeteria style and the several long tables which filled the room were very tastefully arranged, being lighted by candles.

The program was entertaining and interesting. Music was furnished by a string quartet from Phoenix College, the invocation was offered by the pastor of the First Baptist church, there were the usual introductions, president's message and awards, a report on the new building was given and the general secretary spoke briefly.

Howard Pyle, KTAR radio announcer, acted as master of ceremonies and the speaker of the evening was J. Roger Deas, executive secretary of the Conference of Christians and Jews of California. His subject was "Men To March Our Mountains."

The dinner was served by the Y M C A cafeteria. (Next week: Letter Writing.)

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## Holt Steer Gains 2 Pounds a Day

Two pounds a day gain per steer was accomplished by Marie Wollenhaupt for the first 84 days of the feeding period for the Schleswig, Ia., conservation and calf show to be held September 8-9-10 with Schleswig's golden jubilee.

In a spot check of the 38 pens of five calves each, being fed by youngsters of the Schleswig community in a new and unique calf feeding project, George Else, chairman of the calf committee was well pleased with the results.

Marie's calves totaled 1,380 when they arrived in Schleswig from the Dewey Shaeffer and Son ranch, of O'Neill, and after 84 days of feeding weighed 2,230 pounds. Total gain for the feeding period was 850 pounds.

Of the 190 head of Hereford calves all from the Shaeffer ranch only one was lost due to death or other causes.

## CELIA NEWS

Lex and Paul Forstythe helped Duane Beck celebrate his birthday anniversary on Friday, January 21. The Forsythes walked to Beck's.

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