

Few will forget tornado of 1988

By JOE ARTERBURN

With the debris settled, the injured undergoing care and family members and neighbors accounted for, the topic of conversation changed: Where were you when the tornado hit?

Ben Anson was in his bathtub.

Tobie Smith was looking for her cat.

Patty Walker was huddled in a closet with four children.

Don Bart was videotaping the approaching maelstrom.

Don Mace was fishing in Missouri.

Tony Ragaller was worrying about five frightened children in a park.

The tornado of 1988 goes into the history books with, among others, the flood of 1952, the drought of 1974 and the May 6, 1975, Omaha tornado.

Answers to the question Where were you? have become ingrained in local memories like answers to Where were you when you heard President Kennedy had been shot? or Where were you when the Challenger exploded?

BEN ANSON was in his bathtub.

Anson, 1321 N. 22nd St., watched one of several funnel clouds that dipped from the ugly sky rip northward along N. 22nd Street

towards his home. Branches and leaves whipped through the air, his neighbors' homes taking a furied beating.

"The the trees around me started to bend way over and I headed for the bathtub," he said. Anson's home, like many in the area, has no basement to offer shelter.

The house came out of it pretty well, battered and beaten but whole and sound. But a 15-year-old maple tree in the front yard stood stripped of top branches and leaves — a tangle of twisted limbs, strips of exposed inner wood, bleeding

(Continued)



The roof from a local business was blown into the parking lot of the Starlite Motel. A guest at the motel said it was evident that the roof of the motel was lifted off by a tornado because

a curtain had been sucked up and was trapped between the top of a wall and the roof. — Photo by Kevin McAndrews