

How-How

[HORD]

Henrietta, Missouri
March , 1945

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

I have just finished reading "My Day" and as usual I wonder how you survive it all yet here am I trying to load more upon you. I, a mere farm woman, never would have ^{had} the presumption to address our First Lady had you not in the first article I read written by you after the White House became your home, requested people to write concerning their communities.

Not only am I writing about conditions in our community but also in regard to another situation of far greater importance - the affliction of a young girl, Marie Stephenson, 416 North 10th Street St. Joseph, Mo.

a victim of infantile paralysis the past ten years. I do not know the girl personally but I have heard so much about her, it seems a pity if there is any relief for her that she cannot get the benefit of it. Everyone who knows ^{her} feels deep sympathy for her. I understand high school boys carry her down stairs every morning in order that she may get to school but nothing is being done for her physical condition. I have been informed she has a marvelous disposition - never complains and writes such sweet poems.

A lady told me a hardened soldier listened to them and the tears streamed down his cheeks. She and her mother live alone and the mother works. Further than that I cannot tell you anything concerning the family. She is said to be a very appreciative person.

As you know all Gaul was composed of three parts and no doubt

you will think I am in possession of all three parts - with a little different spelling - for I am requesting you to write to her personally and decide whether or not you think she is deserving and, if so, tell her how to proceed to get the treatments she needs. No doubt I am asking entirely too much but my faith in your ability to achieve is so great I made you my victim.

Now in regard to this vicinity. It concerns the Missouri River situation. In the March 20th issue of The Kansas City Star the President was quoted as saying, "In my judgment the proposed work will not interfere with the conduct of the war." I am not criticizing our President - no indeed - I and all my near relatives have supported him for twelve years and still stand pat. But I feel that he should be informed of the devastation wrought upon thousands and thousands of acres of top notch products which are so badly needed now in

interest of navigation after the war,
saying nothing of the loss of live
stock, wrecked buildings, ruined
fences and furniture, the gates,
door steps, a hundred one other
things that float away.

When we moved to this farm in
1907, located on the second bench
from the Missouri River all the old
residents said the average overflow
from the Big Muddy was three times
in a hundred years. That held true
until the engineers began making
a creek of the stream. Not only
have we had floods the last four
years in succession but four times
last year.

Get a picture of my home the
16th of April 1944. A flash flood (never
before heard of at this early date.) My
brother and I, the last of the family,
live on the farm. Night is closing
in. He has to go with the men who
are taking the stock out in trucks.
9 P.M. A frightened neighbor family
with much difficulty arrives in a
car because we have a boat.

11 P.M. My brother returns exhausted.

In order to get home he has waded
a quarter of a mile up to his
shoulders through icy water, the
waves dashing over him at every
hazardous step. The wind is still
blowing a gale.

3 a. m. A neighbor is calling. They
take the boat and fight the waves to
the home. The family is standing in
water up to their knees. Another
neighbor is stranded in a barn
loft but is too far away for us to
hear his calls.

2 P. m. The water is still rising.
It sounds as if the house were
surrounded by people beating it
with boards.

6 p. m. Water is coming into the
house now but is too far from land
~~now~~ to try to leave and anyway the
little boat wouldn't hold more than
half of the people. The three families
and two dogs go up stairs, while
much of the furniture including an
extra good piano ~~are~~ are left to ruin.

11 a. m. next day. The house rocks,

we seem to go up on tip-toe and
settle back. A river launch towing
a barge, on its way to rescue other
people and their stock, land at
our back door and leave life pre-
servers. And this is what the en-
gineers refer to as a small flood
they say we haven't had a big
one since the grandfathers flood
of 1903, that only a fourth as
much water was carried by the
stream last year. No doubt that
is true. Judging from observation
I would say that the River is
not more than a fifth as wide
as it once was. A foot rise in
Kansas City used to mean but a
few inches here. It is just the
reverse now. This house situated
on a knoll with a two and one
half foot foundation, the big cattle
barn - both above 1903 flood level
were badly damaged by the little
flood of 1944. A flood of equal
over

volume of 1903 would have washed every building out of this valley.

Engineers say Kansas City can now watch the water go by. I think that might be said of all the cities along the stream as they are protected but the rural districts have no protection. We watch helpless stock drown (a neighbor's cow became exhausted and drowned in our front yard.) and other disasters too numerous to mention. People have had to leave their homes.

We haven't an old neighbor left.

At one time there were twelve vacant houses in this immediate neighborhood. If we have another this year - and we are threatened with it now - we shall have to go too - but where?

German prisoners pass here daily still working on the project. Seems to me levees should have been built first.

If some reliable person in every

community in the Valley had
gotten statements of damage done
each family surely we would have
had some protection or remuneration.

One cannot get the faintest
conception done by driving through
a country. As much as possible
is covered up, veneered and
patched up.

My dear First Lady, I hope you will
not get the impression I am a
hysterical, gossipy woman. I talk
only to those whom I think might
direct a little aid our way. The
truth is, the people of the Valley
throughout its 2000 mile length
because of their feeling of helplessness
have taken it quietly - too
quietly I now believe. I am telling you
this only because people of influence
should know. Use your own judgment
about passing it along to our over-worked
beloved President.

If we have to camp under a

"a" sapling the rest of our days
we will still say, Hooray for
President Roosevelt.

Very sincerely,
(Miss) Margaret Ford

Please do not think me as
unreasonable as to expect you
take a minute of your precious time
to answer this.