

SKAGIT VALLEY HERALD



NOT WORRIED—Charlie Storrs, 87-year-old Skagit Valley pioneer, looks with unconcerned eyes across flood water from the Skagit River that is creeping up around several fishing cabins he maintains near his Penn Road home. Although the river has risen near the top of the dike several times in the past few days, Storrs says he is not worried about the possibility of a major flood here.

Not afraid

River no threat to Charlie Storrs

By FRANK CALHOUN
Herald Staff Writer

Charlie Storrs has lived alongside the Skagit River for all but two of his 87 years.

That's why he's "not worried" about this area's present high water conditions. Storrs, who lives on Penn Road just a stone's throw from the west dike along the Skagit, has seen the muddy river leave its banks several times. He's seen all of the valley floor, from a point about a quarter of a mile west of his farm all the way to the Swinomish Channel, covered with water.

"It looked like the bay," Storrs declared.

THIS WAS the "big flood" of Nov. 30 and Dec. 1, 1890. It's been the last really big flood in Storrs' memory. Several hours of Chinook winds preceded it, causing the snows in the mountain to melt and swell the Skagit River.

Now, because much of the Skagit's watershed has been logged off, such a sudden snow melt

brings high water, Storrs believes. Half a century ago, he related, the heavy stands of virgin timber on Little Mountain kept snow there well into late spring. It wouldn't melt until May or June, causing the annually-feared "June freshets".

"NOW, OUR high water usually comes in November," Storrs said. Since there isn't much snow to melt, winter floods usually aren't too bad.

Storrs doesn't expect trouble from this week's high water. Since his little farm home is just across the road from the dike, and well below it, he's got a stake in any prediction he might make.

The Skagit Valley pioneer has been intimately associated with the river all his life and feels he knows it pretty well.

His father was the man who broke the Skagit's famed log jam, coming here from Cedar Rapids, Ia., on March 9, 1874, when Charlie was only two years old.

The jam was one of the worst in the history of the Pacific Northwest, extending for a distance of four miles up the river from what is now known as "Storr's Bar". This is a bend in the river about two miles below Mount Vernon famous for its steelhead and salmon fishing.

THE LOG JAM, which was a solid mass of logs completely across the river, thus extended two miles beyond Mount Vernon. It took the elder Storrs and his crew of timber workers 4½ years to clear the channel.

"They worked by hand," Storrs said. "They had no dynamite, no cables, nothing."

The project ranks as one of the epic accomplishments of the west and is still a topic of conversation whenever old-timers gather.

NOVEMBER 23, 1959