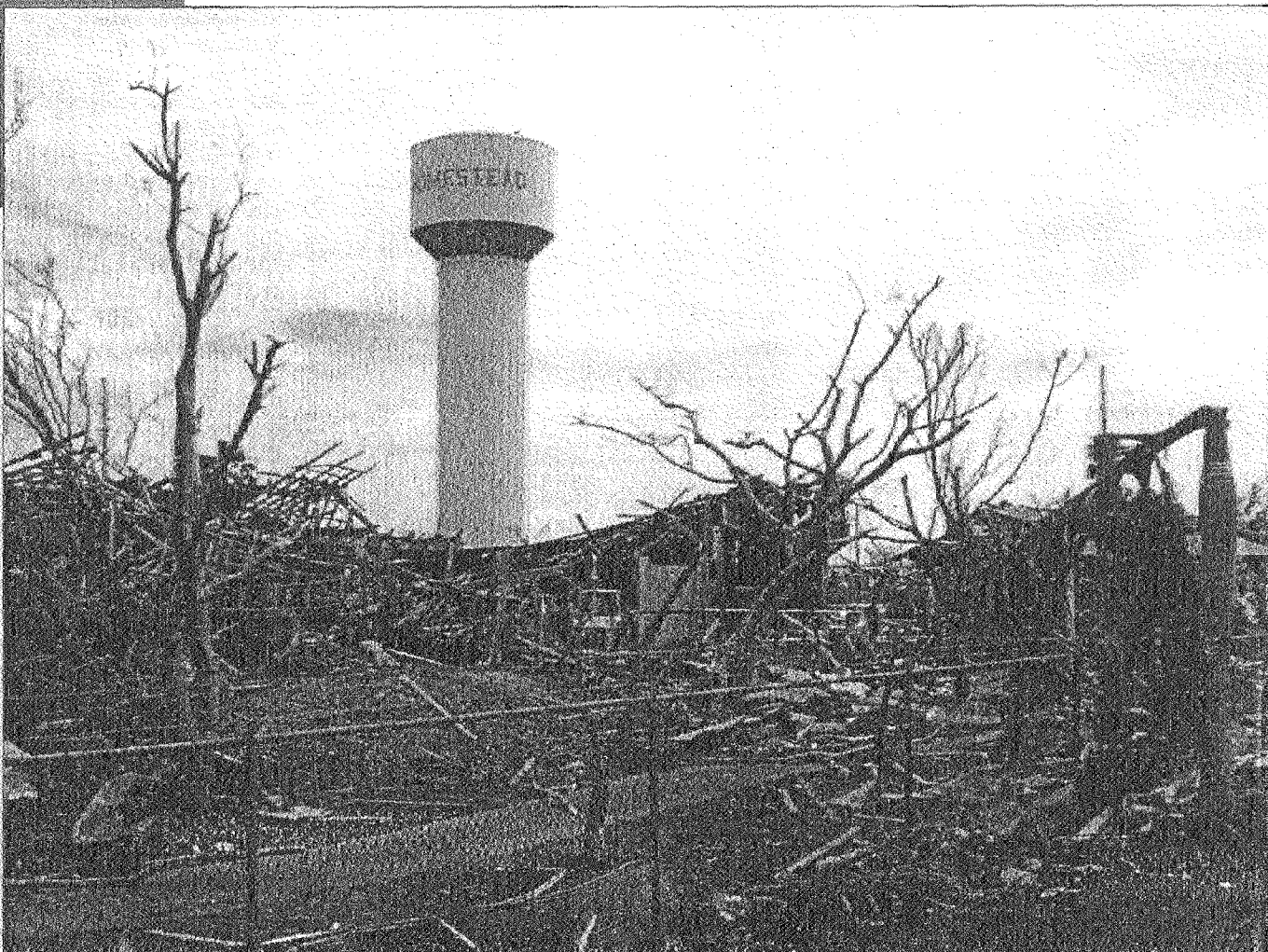


The elevated water storage tank in Homestead, Fla., some 30 mi south of Miami, remained standing in an area that was all but flattened by Hurricane Andrew.



BOB MARSHALL PHOTOGRAPHY, HOMESTEAD, FL. ©1992

but we wouldn't classify it as a good storm to plan by." Luis Aguiar puts it more bluntly: "We had an emergency hurricane manual, but we might as well have tossed it, given the magnitude of this storm."

Little damage to Broward, Dade physical plants

Despite the storm's fury, water systems in Broward and Dade counties suffered relatively little damage to their physical plants. At Miami-Dade, for example, some tanks stopped spinning because of debris. Of the three utilities in Homestead—water, sewer, and electrical—the water facilities weathered the storm best. An office building lost most of its roof, resulting in damage to the contents of the offices. One of two water laboratories was damaged but was still able to function, and wellhouses sustained minor damage.

Amazingly, in many areas flattened to rubble by the furious winds, elevated water tanks were the only structures to remain standing. Rob Brush of Homestead notes that two of the city's elevated tanks had cracked welds going into the storm. Not only did the towers stand, but the welds did not fail.

Because Andrew moved fast and dropped only 4 to 6 in. of rain, there was little fear of flooding. But the tornado-force winds wreaked havoc, sucking up trees and utility poles and tossing them like straws or turning them into kindling. Residents had planted trees in utility easements, and as the trees toppled they pulled up water mains and destroyed service lines. Many flood-control canals were full of debris and vegetation that blocked water flow.

In destroyed buildings, many thousands more service connections were broken. In just one housing development, for example, 2,000 to 3,000 homes were obliterated, resulting in free-flowing service at each one. Even in areas that showed little evidence of storm damage, service was disrupted; where hoses had been left attached to outside spigots, the faucets were blown off.

Smaller systems reported similar problems, as Rob Brush of Homestead attests. "Right after the storm hit, it became evident that the water system was flowing very hard from somewhere. The water level was depleted even with pumps running." Investigating workers discovered one hydrant broken off, but much