

Future generations will still be able to witness the aftermath of this historic natural event which influenced the lives of so many in such a short period of time.

The Storm of the Century

In January of this year, one of the worst storms ever recorded hit northern New York and Southeastern Canada. The rains froze, coating everything with ice. Power was out for weeks, and life did not return to normal for months afterward. Hit especially hard was the maple syrup industry of northern New York. It is estimated that the industry will take more than 30 years to recover.



ALTHOUGH THE DENOS were able to tap over 8,000 gallons of sap, this year's sap collection produced barely 12 barrels of syrup. An average year's sap yields just over 40 barrels of syrup. According to Cornell Cooperative Extension forestry expert Lewis Staats, the loss of maple trees will leave a void in sap production for more than 30 years. The trees that were destroyed will never provide the farmers with the same amount of sap once tapped before The Ice Storm of 1998.



"MOM'S BEEN SMOKING a lot more since The Ice Storm," Matt commented after she stepped out of the back door to smoke another cigarette just 30 minutes after the last one. The effects of The Ice Storm has hit everyone.

*Photography and text by
Wesley Law*

Almost one year ago, rain fell from the sky and transformed thousands of lives after it transformed into ice.

Many Syracuse University students may remember returning to campus for the spring semester of 1998 to hear that much of New England was in a state of disaster. Television and print media gave constant updates on the conditions of residents who were forced out of their powerless homes and into shelters that held hundreds of their neighbors and other stranded strangers.

We were given reports of diary farmers who lost their cows either to the cold, or more commonly to mastitis, a disease that occurred

Continued on next page ►



BRIAN DENO FREQUENTLY sleeps in front of the television in his recliner after a long day of working in the maple bush. He often fell asleep earlier than his two boys in the evenings. Brian spent most of the day in the forest drilling new tapping holes, replacing tubing, or pumping hundreds of gallons of sap into holding tanks.

Facts about the North Country Ice Storm

- The storm knocked out power to more than 3 million people.
- Power was out, on average, for more than two weeks.
- It was the worst storm in 150 years.
- It covered an area that stretched through Upstate New York, northern New England and parts of Canada.
- 7 deaths occurred as a result of the storm.
- There was more than \$500 million in property damage.



ON JANUARY 7, 1998, rain fell from the sky for 4 days, glazing everything in a layer of ice in northern New England and portions of southern Canada. In New York, counties of Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Jefferson, St. Lawrence and Lewis were declared federal disaster areas. Clinton was the hardest hit. Power lines quickly snapped under the weight of the ice and trees soon followed. Maple trees were some of the most devastated by the ice.



BRIAN READS A letter from the principle of the Beakmantown School notifying him of his eldest son's poor behavior in school as Melissa puts her face in her hands out of frustration. Jessie has Dysgraphia, a disorder which complicates his eye-hand coordination troubling his writing ability. This makes him impatient and disruptive in class, creating constant conflicts between the teachers and his parents. He actually does well in science because he's interested in it but the school does not know how to work with his problems, Melissa says.

Even though the Ice Storm of 1998 occurred less than one year ago, the effects of the damage will be present with Maple Producers for decades to come.



BRIAN DENO IS a maple producer from West Chazy, a town just 10 minutes west of Plattsburgh. His maple bush lies within Clinton County which was one of the most severely damaged areas in New York. His family has been tapping the same bush for three generations and has never experienced an ice storm of this proportion. He has a wife, Melissa and two boys, Jessie, 9, and Matt, 7.

■ *Continued from Page B9*

after the automated salons that milked hundreds of cows a day were rendered powerless. This caused the cows' mammary glands to become infected.

But not as common were stories of the thousands of maple syrup farmers whose maple trees were decimated by the ice. There were no generators to power heaters or provide electricity, no community centers to shelter their trees, and no government workers to clear the debris.

The trees were left to break and bleed.

Remnants of the decimation can still be witnessed today by driving through sections of highway in the northern Adirondacks and in cities like Watertown.

Areas that were once luscious with vegetation have turned into a wasteland of wreckage. Future generations will still be able to witness the aftermath of this historic natural event which influenced the lives of so many in such a short period of time.

Fifteen counties were declared

Federal disaster areas. National Guardsmen, generators and supplies flooded the region. But the rain continued to fall on the trees and turn into ice.

This story takes place in West Chazy, a small town northwest of Plattsburgh in northern New York with a population of 458. It lies in the hardest hit area in New York State, Clinton County.

The Deno family was only one of a few dozen maple producers in the area who were able to tap from their remaining maple trees. While their original bush numbered over 15,000 trees, they could only tap 3,000 of the existing bush.

Brian Deno, his wife Melissa, his two boys, Jessie, 9, and Matt, 7, and their grandfather, Wayne, rely on maple syrup to provide for their families.

Deno does not live off of the syrup productions alone. It is a supplemental source of income vital to his standard of living. Deno also runs his own trucking business, drives a school bus for the Beekmantown School District and is a volunteer assistant chief for the West Chazy fire department.

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WAYNE DENO SITS next to the boiling pans with the thermometer and ladle to measure the amount of sugar in the sap as Brian takes a short break from his responsibilities. The Denos still use the traditional method of boiling sap with a wood furnace.



AMONG BRIAN'S MANY jobs is driving the school bus for the Beakmantown School District. Brian considers himself a professional driver as he also runs his own trucking business which employs him full-time. His trucking business, which transported logs for the logging industry, was also adversely affected by the Ice Storm.

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About the photographer :
Wesley Law photographed this picture story in the spring semester of 1998. He is a senior photojournalism major who is currently studying at the London Centre of the Division of International Programs Abroad.



BRIAN STOPS AT the local convenience store to pick up lunch for Jessie and Matt. Trips to the store were once worry free, but the question of a future maple syrup crop creates increased doubt on their financial stability.



BRIAN WAS ONLY one of a few maple syrup producers who was able to tap from their maple bushes. All of his original 15,000 taps were dry. He had to drill new holes in all of his trees and lay a new system of tubing since the old tubing snapped under the weight of the ice and fallen branches. Fortunately, he had help from friends and family. Here he receives help from his brother, John, who independently maintains the Deno family milk farm.

■ *Continued from Page B11*

Though the maple trees were the most affected, the ice had an effect on every aspect of life. Deno's trucking business was put on hold as major highways closed. The majority of his business came from the logging industry which was unproductive due to fallen trees blocking the dirt roads leading into the forest.

Driving children to school was treacherous as the roads remained dangerous even after they were cleared by the National Guard. The children's lives were placed in Deno's hands, adding to the stress of his job.

Even though the Ice Storm of 1998 occurred less than one year ago, the

effects of the damage will be present with Maple Producers for decades to come.

The initial monetary loss to Clinton County maple producers exceeded \$9 million. But the losses during the first year alone would be approximately \$28 million. This affects not only the maple syrup business, but people all over the United States as maple syrup produced in New York and Vermont provides the country with three-quarters of its maple syrup.

Though the damage most directly affected today's maple producers, Brian Deno's and many other maple producer's progeny will have to cope with today's catastrophies.