

# DOING MY BIT

by Howard Powers, longtime  
Marion horseman

The floods and tornadoes that wreaked havoc in eastern Iowa could not help but impact all of us, even though we may not have been in the affected areas. Never have so many lives been disrupted in such a short time.

Each of us may have had a special family or business that we knew was destroyed by the water or winds and may have felt a desire to do something, even if it was only a small effort.

Having bought my first new Hereford roping saddle from George Barta at the Saddle and Leather Shop in 1952, and having done business there since that time, I felt especially bad for the shop. The thoughts of all the tooled leather works, clothing, jewelry and other equipment being under muddy, sewage-filled water (12 feet, I learned later) was just sickening. I sent a note of condolence to Nan, through her go-between, Peggy Lewis, and offered to help if there was anything I could do. There was.

Nan invited me to come to her mother's home to pick up some items to clean. There were two 20-gallon tote boxes of belts



encased in mud (*Top photo, next column*), which would be a good place to start. With instructions as to the cleaning, sanitizing and deodorizing of the belts, I went to work. 154 belts later, I looked at the results of my efforts and was amazed at the transformation. They looked better than new and possibly are better, because of the extra conditioning applied. It is a matter of debate as to who was the most pleased, Nan or myself.

There was much more to do, so the next session was cleaning and oiling harness

and related items. Those also turned out well. At that time, Nan rather hesitantly asked me if I would like to clean a couple of saddles. It takes a bit of muscle to take a western saddle apart, especially the stirrup leathers, and she may have thought it would be too much for this octogenarian. I agreed to give it a try. The first two were custom-made saddles, one by local saddle maker Russ Sebetka, so I put some special effort into those two saddles and they turned out well. To make a long story short, eleven saddles later, Nan informed me that my work was finished. We were all

happy with the results.

What I did was only a small part of the work put into cleaning up what was salvaged from the saddle shop, but the appreciation from Nan and Kris made my small efforts well worth the time. Yes, I was only helping to restore disposable and replaceable items and not saving someone's life, but the satisfaction was still tangible.

There is always something we can do if we will only look, and we are the beneficiaries for volunteer efforts.

