

BRAIN DELAY – DECISION MAKING AMIDST RUTHIAN PERFORMANCES AND EXCITABLE CROWDS AT LARGE VENUES

Dr. Kevin Kloesel

The National Weather Center at The University of Oklahoma

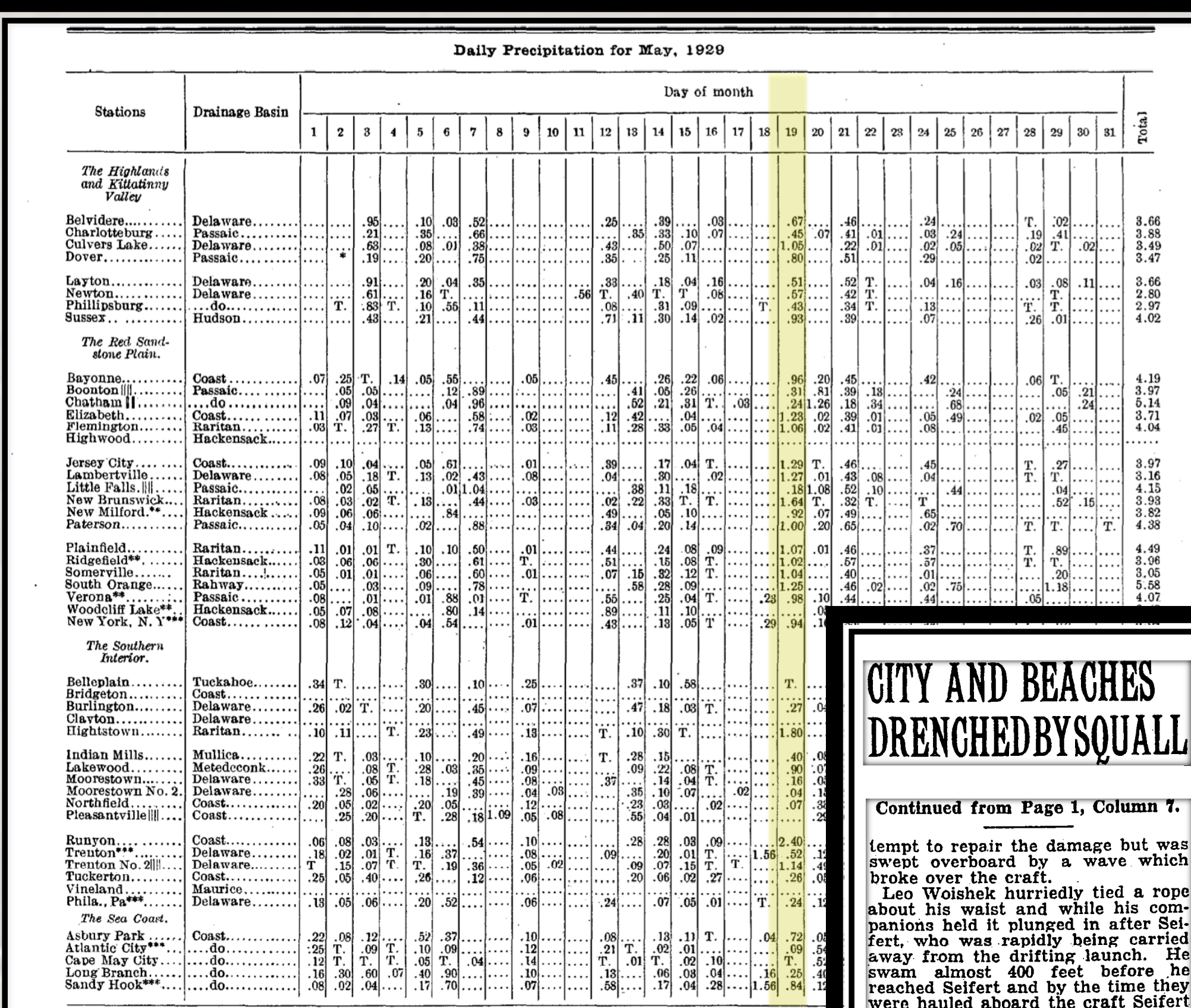
The Setting

On 19 May 1929, Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig hit back to back home runs in the 3rd inning against the rival Boston Red Sox sending the capacity crowd of 50,000 in Yankee Stadium into a frenzy.



The Threat

At the same time, a derecho-like squall line was wreaking havoc on an axis from eastern New York southward across New Jersey, eastern Pennsylvania to the DelMarVa. Although it is undeniable that the western sky must have been imposing, the game continues.



The Decision

The 50,000 in attendance had come to see their heroes. As Ruth steps to the plate to lead off the 5th inning, the skies open. Torrents of rain and lightning descend upon the gathered, and all 50,000 patrons attempt to leave simultaneously. Over 9,000 fans had packed "Ruthville," the right field bleachers where many of Ruth's home runs landed.



The Times

"Ruthville," yesterday afternoon, was filled. The Stadium altogether held about 50,000 persons, the bleachers, more than 9,000 and more than half of the latter sat in the desirable location. They wore straw hats and summer clothes, for at the beginning of the first game of the scheduled New York Yankee-Boston doubleheader the sun was out."

- May 20, 1929, The New York Times

Verdict

Within 2 days, the Yankees were absolved of any responsibility in the fatalities and injuries. The Bronx District Attorney determined that there was no negligence on the part of the Yankees.



Baseball

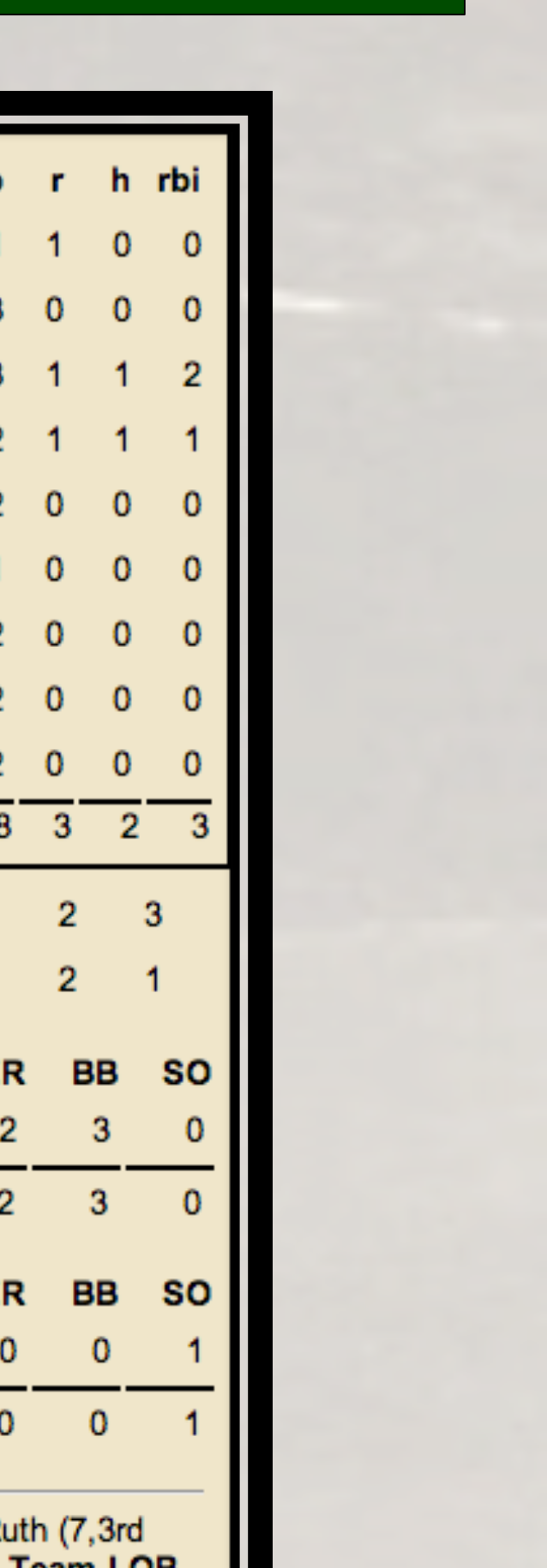
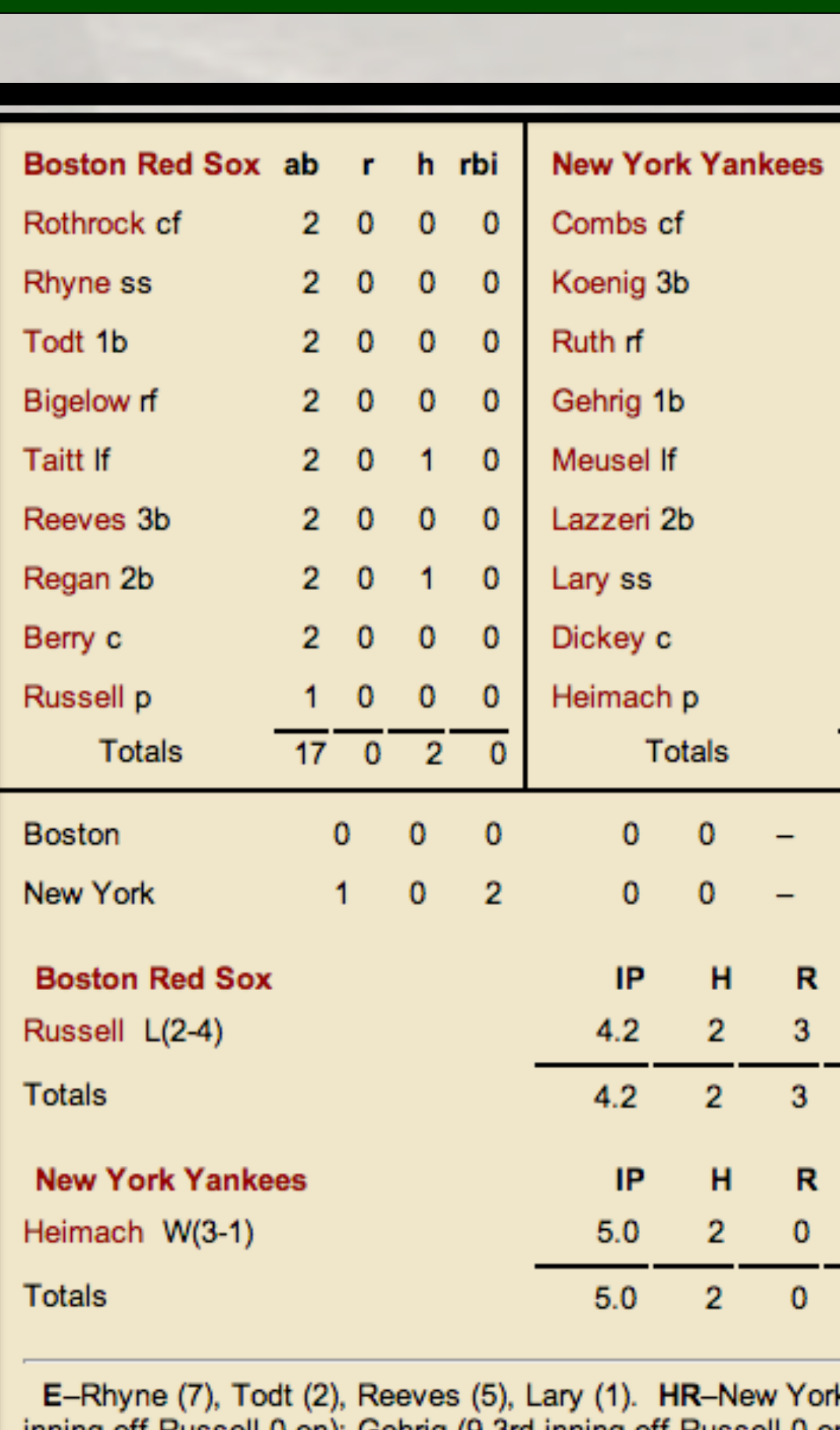
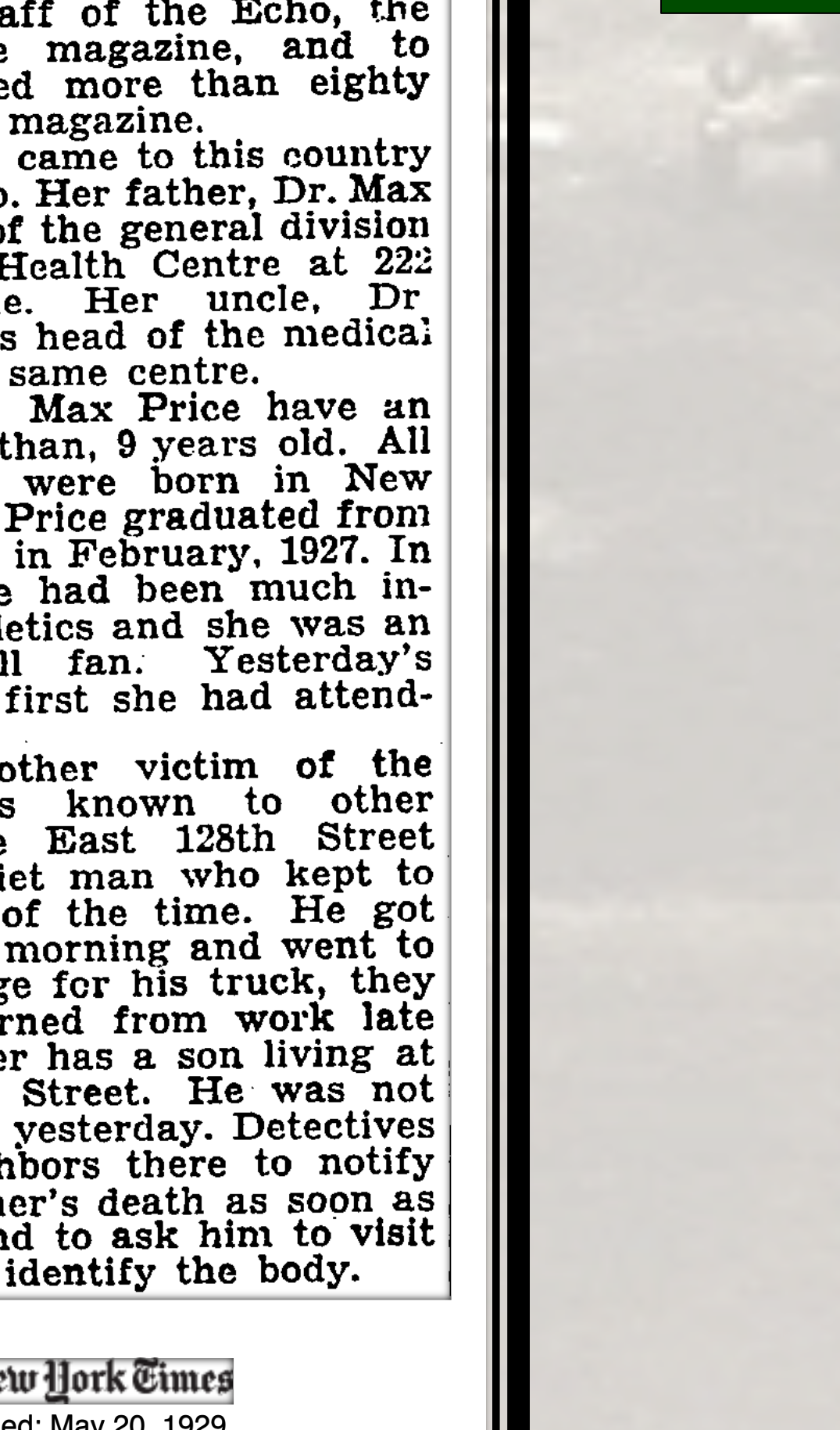
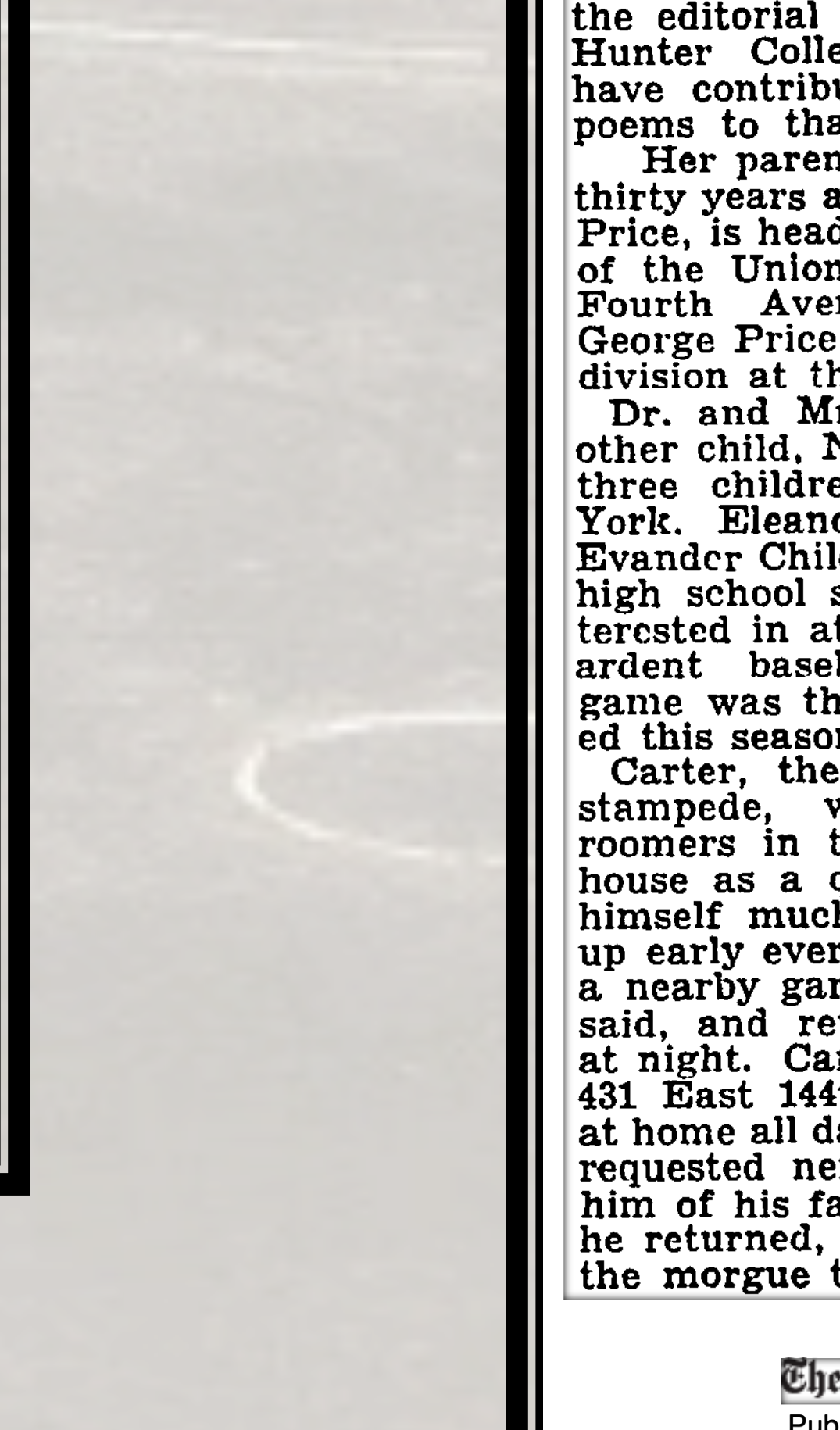
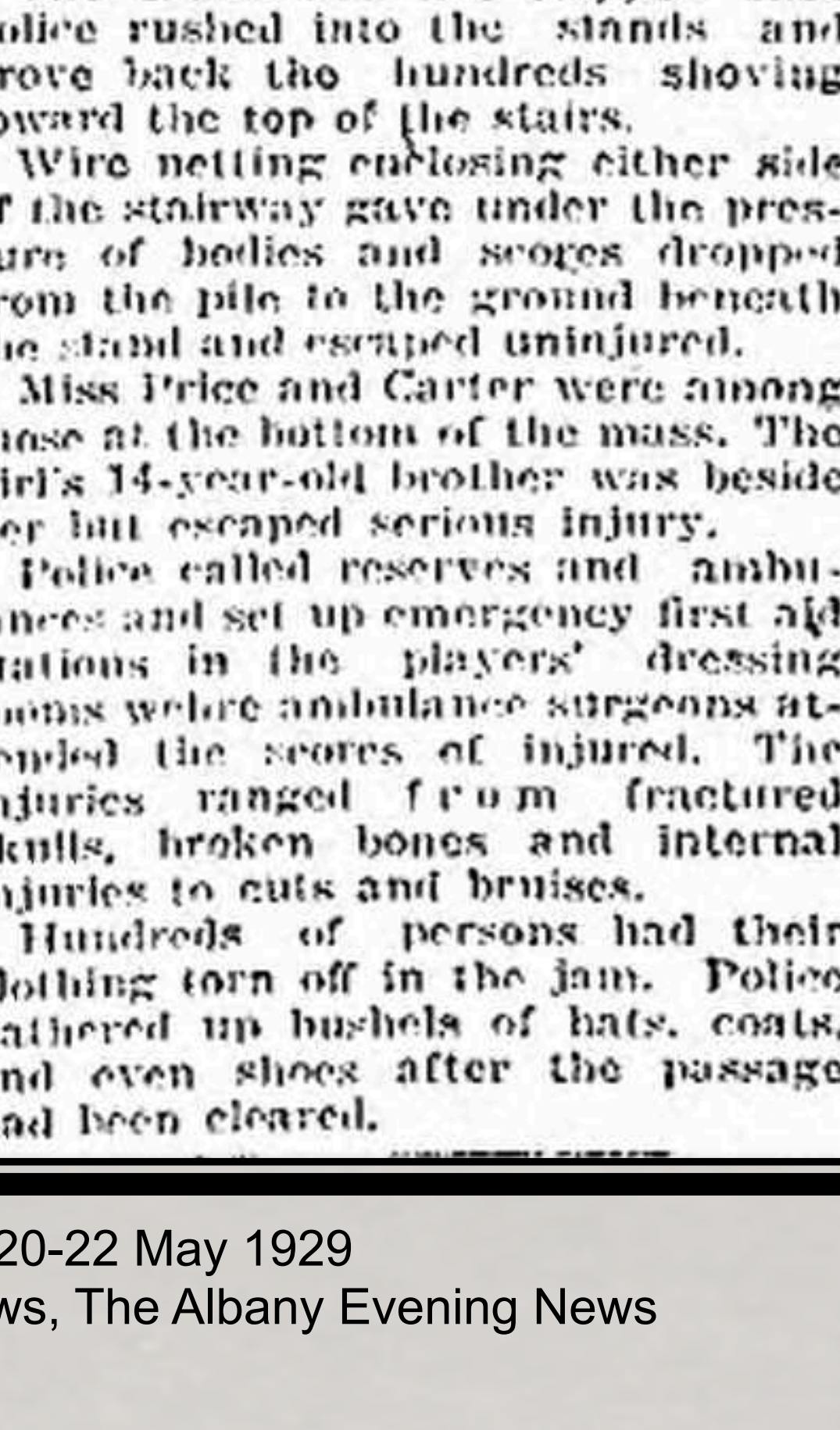
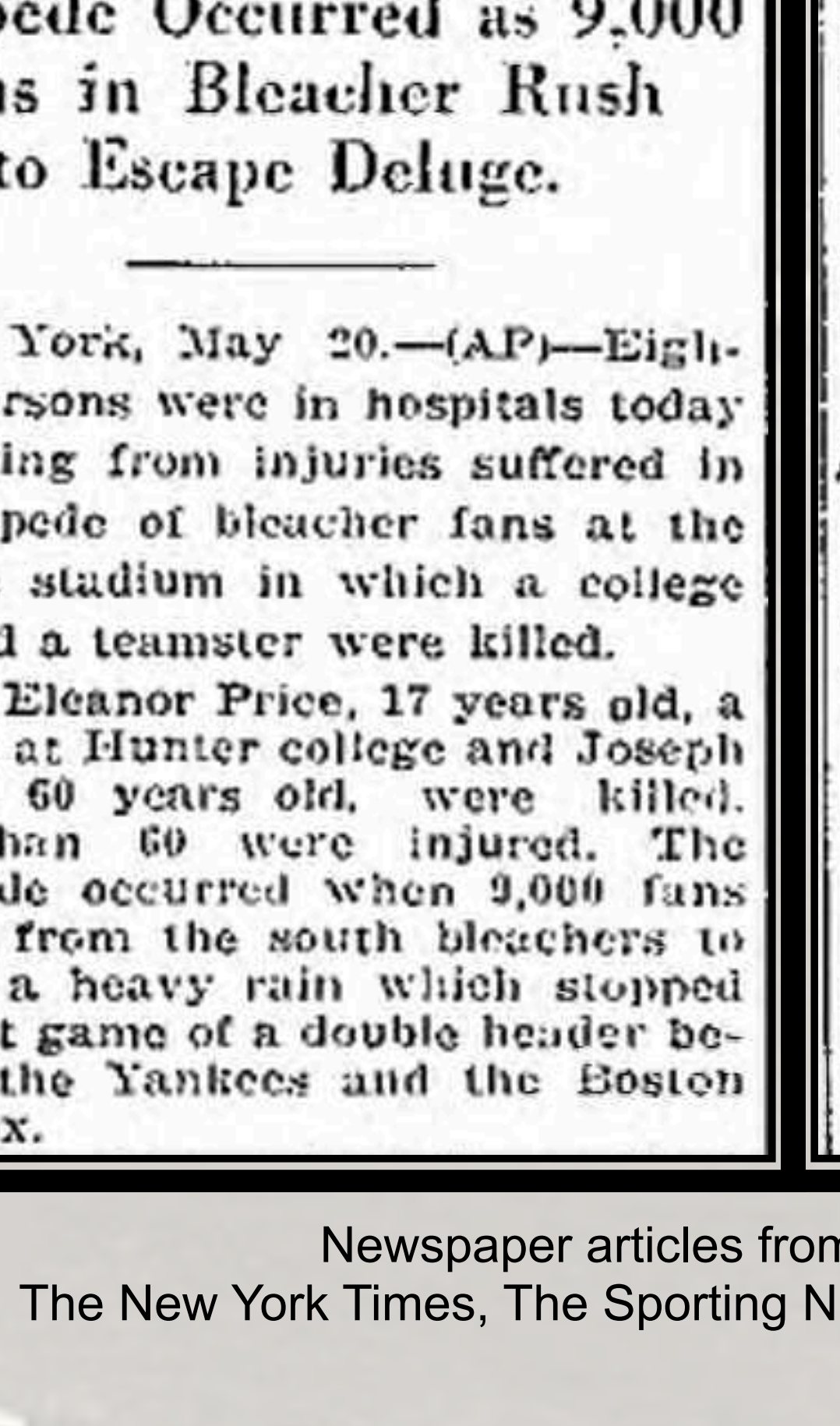
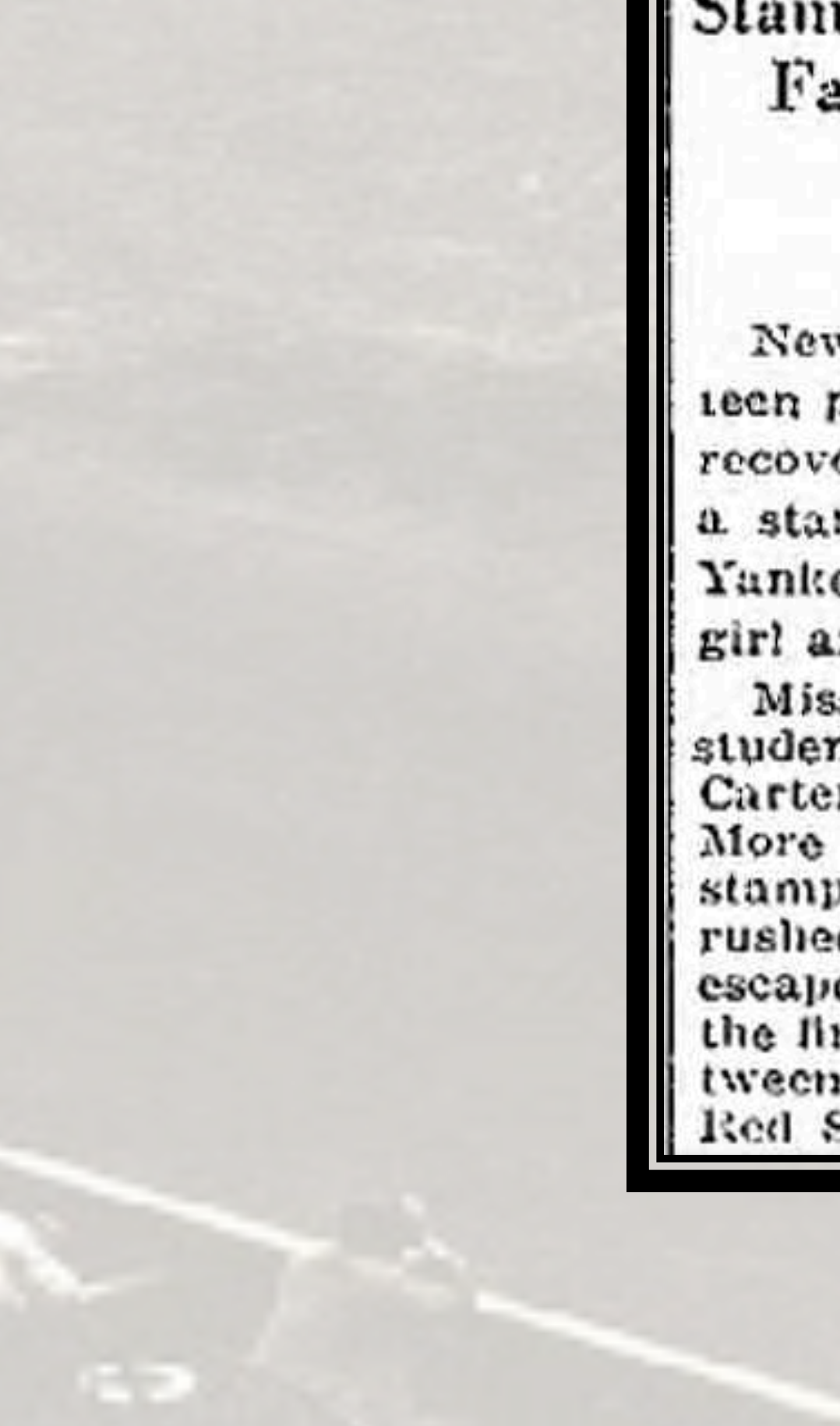
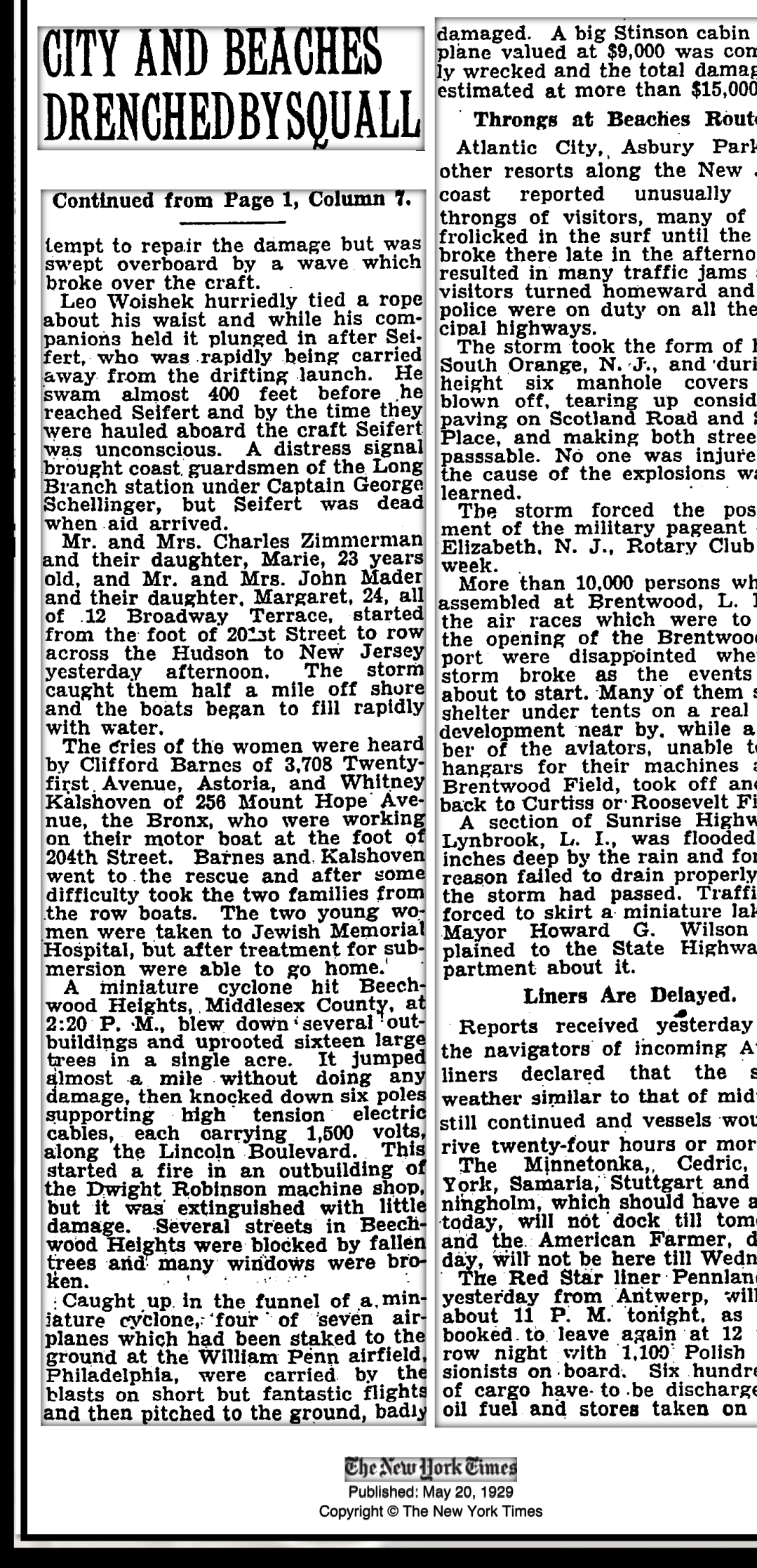
The 19 May 1929 official box score between the Yankees and Red Sox. The official game lasted 50 minutes. The game was not called until after both Ruth and Gehrig had batted in the 5th inning.

Boston Red Sox					ab	r	h	rbi	New York Yankees					ab	r	h	rbi
Rotrock	cf	2	0	0	0				Combs	cf	1	1	0	0			
Rhyme	ss	2	0	0	0				Koenig	3b	3	0	0	0			
Todd	1b	2	0	0	0				Ruth	rf	3	1	1	2			
Bigelow	rf	2	0	0	0				Gehrig	1b	2	1	1	1			
Taitt	if	2	0	1	0				Musel	if	2	0	0	0			
Reeves	3b	2	0	0	0				Lazzeri	2b	1	0	0	0			
Regan	2b	2	0	1	0				Lary	ss	2	0	0	0			
Berry	c	2	0	0	0				Dickey	c	2	0	0	0			
Russell	p	1	0	0	0				Heimach	p	2	0	0	0			
Totals					17	0	2	0	Totals					18	3	2	3

Boston	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	2	3	
New York	1	0	2	0	0	—	3	2	1	
Boston Red Sox				IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	
Russell L(2-4)				4.2	2	3	2	3	0	
Totals				4.2	2	3	2	3	0	
New York Yankees				IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	
Heimach W(3-1)				5.0	2	0	0	0	0	1
Totals				5.0	2	0	0	0	0	1

E—Rhyme (7), Todd (2), Reeves (5), Lary (1), HR—New York Ruth (7, 3rd inning off Russell 0 on); Gehrig (8, 3rd inning off Russell 0 on); Team LOB—2. Team—4. U—Harry Geisel, Brick Owens, Dick Campbell. T—50. A—50,000.

The 19 May 1929 storms caused widespread damage in NYC, uprooting trees, causing flooding, impacting beachgoers, and disrupting transportation.



Corresponding author address:
Dr. Kevin Kloesel, Associate Dean for Public Safety and Outreach
National Weather Center, 120 David L Boren Blvd, Suite 2900, Norman, OK 73072
E-mail: kkloesel@nwc.ou.edu ; Phone: 405-397-9652



The details and aftermath of one of the first known large venue weather tragedies involving a professional sports franchise in the US. Have we learned anything since 1929?