



# Friend in famine, friend in flood

*Since 1895 the H.G. Hill Company has serviced our community*

by Wilson Hardcastle

**D**uring the May Day Flood of 2010, many homes and businesses took on far too much water.

Everywhere. Clean water, however, was in scarce supply. Truly, "water, water, everywhere but not a drop to drink." The irony has not been lost on the flooded Middle Tennessee community.

Like many businesses in the area, the relatively new Hill Center Belle Meade shopping center and office building suffered damage from the severe flooding with water filling the surface parking lots and the subterranean parking garage. The parking garage at the Hill Center Belle Meade features several pumps with electric generators situated well above any previously conceived flood level, but even those precautions were no match for the May Day Flood deluge coupled with a NES power loss. The Hill Center Belle Meade was designed with a series of French drains and water collection tanks for rain and runoff and also with permanent pumps to drain any seepage from the underground natural spring.

Most of Middle Tennessee's drain and pump systems were overwhelmed by the onslaught of flood water, and to deal with the overflowing Richland Creek, which runs behind the Hill Center Belle Meade, Jimmy Granbery, CEO of the H.G. Hill Realty Company, and his team were on hand immediately to begin damage assessment and remediation. Using diesel pumps brought in for the occasion, the H.G. Hill Realty Company emergency response team began pumping the flood waters from the lower levels of the

Hill Center parking structure. Once the murky waters were removed, the flow of water from the pumps began to run clear, and the Hill Center became one of the few sources of clean water in Davidson County.

Never having really thought about it before, the road bordering the eastern edge of the property is named "Bosley Springs Road," and Mr. Granbery believes it is likely that the fresh water spring below the Hill Center Belle Meade is part

of the original Bosley Spring. The water is not likely potable, but it runs clean and clear. "It's cold and crystal clear right from the spring," says Granbery, "It's perfect for property cleaning and irrigation."

With Nashville's K.R. Harrington Water Treatment Plant out of commission, Metro asked Nashvillians to ration their water use and requested a cessation of non-essential water uses such as car washing, irrigation and non-personal cleaning. Having hundreds of gallons of their own fresh water available, the Hill Company was able to address its own needs without affecting the City reserves and quickly made this resource available to anyone else in need, free of charge. All the Hill Company asked

was that those receiving the water sign a disclosure promising not to drink it. The H.G. Hill Company may have gotten out of the business of selling food but now found itself giving away water.

The first organization to bring tanker trucks to the Hill Center pumps was the deeply flooded Ensworth High School. While the academic buildings were barely spared, the parking lots were filled with mud and flotsam, and the

athletic facilities were inundated. (A photo circulated among the students of someone sitting on a football goalpost, dangling his legs in the water.) Once the flood waters began to recede, the campus was in desperate need of fresh water to begin clean-up and repairs. On behalf of the H.G. Hill Realty Company,

Company who provided water that did not come from city water supplies. Because the parking areas were usable, Ensworth High School students were able to resume classes and take scheduled Advanced Placement tests after missing only two days of school."

Other institutions followed suit, with the H.G. Hill Realty Company providing clean water to Metro Public Works, community fire departments, a few landscape companies and even MetroWater Services. If anyone brought a tank, the Hill Company would fill it. One onlooker commented "I remember when the Hill stores started selling beer. Who thought they'd be known for supplying water?"

Mr. Granbery lost count of how much water the Hill Company gave out "at least hundreds of thousands of gallons," he estimates. The Harrington Water Treatment Plant has only recently resumed operations. Mark Macy, Director of Engineering for Metro Public Works, Nashville said, "Metro Nashville truly appreciates Jimmy Granbery and the generosity of the Hill Company for letting us use their fresh ground water to wash and clear the streets and to get the city clean again."

As of the time of this writing, the pumps at Hill Center Belle Meade are still running and the community is still lining up for clean water. The next time Middle Tennessee faces such a storm, more Nashvillians will be heading for the Hills.

