

# Hurricane Carol, Cape Cod, August 31, 1954

By Henry Brown

I can remember being 8 years old, ready to start Third Grade in the Village School in Falmouth. We lived a few hundred yards from the ocean. The night before the storm, we had a cookout for my cousin who had just returned from serving in the Army. I can remember the sky looking strange that evening, and people commenting about it at the cookout. Then, my parents went to the movies while my aunt and cousin babysat for us. I can remember it raining very hard that night-I must have woken up when my parents came home from the movies.

The next morning I woke up to a gray, windy and rainy day. My bedroom was in the southwest corner of the house and there was a weeping willow tree next door. It was blowing and flailing away and looked like a giant hand had pushed it down against the ground. What was really significant, after getting up, was seeing my father home. He always went to work before I got up and it was unusual for him to be home so I knew something was up. He was huddled over the old RCA table radio in the kitchen and said we were about to get a hurricane, a new word for me.

The rest of the day was dramatic. Our neighbor Bruce Pease was the Water Department foreman and he was out at Woods Hole trying to do something with the sewer pumping station there. His wife was at our house. We lost power so my father made a blowtorch stove with firebricks for hot coffee and soup. I can still remember seeing that stove making soup. At about 11 AM or so, my father took me in his Chevy pickup and we drove down Swing Lane towards Falmouth Inner Harbor, a very short distance. The water was up the road about 100 yards so we left the truck there and walked over to Tom Richard's house on Scranton Avenue. It was very windy with driving rain-I couldn't stand. When we got to the Richards', the water was swirling around Scranton Avenue and up to my chest. I had played in this area most of my young life and it was always dry land. It was shocking to see water everywhere. We helped a few people with their boats but I remember a chaotic scene-there wasn't much people could do.

Later, the storm was over by late afternoon and it had cleared up. We took a walk to the harbor in the early evening. We walked down Swing Lane and in front of the Swing's driveway was the square, peaked roof of the old "Hurricane Deck" restaurant, just sitting there. Apparently, the battering waves and storm surge had pushed it there. I can remember wires hanging down, leaves everywhere, junk everywhere and white houses turning yellow from the gases churned up from the harbor bottom. They just slowly turned yellow! We walked to the old Hurricane Deck location, where the Regatta condos are now, and picked up a few pieces of silverware. The place was completely wrecked. I remember a fully armed and helmeted soldier came over to see what we were doing-the National Guard was guarding the area. The harbor was full of upside down boats, some with just masts sticking up. We walked down to Wormelle's Boatyard, saw more devastation there, and walked home up Mr. Phillips' road and through Peases' yard. Our house had cheery lights in the window so we figured the power was back on, but my Mom had lit a large number of old kerosene lamps and it was bright inside. We all sat around in the house with some neighbors, and my father said "I hear there's going to be another big blow tonight". That sent shivers up and down my spine, but it was only a rumor he had heard on our walk. Without a radio we were out of touch, and no one really understood the storm tracks like we do today. Later that night we got power back, since we were on the Main Street circuit, and businesses needed to be up and running.

The next morning we took a ride. It was a beautiful day and I remember being stunned by the wreckage along the water. I always took the beach roads at Surf Drive, Menahaunt and Falmouth Heights for granted, as solid objects. Now they were gone, just rubble and sand. The beach houses

along Surf Drive were either in Salt Pond or on the other side of the pond. Telephone poles were down or leaning at crazy angles. Big houses were destroyed or horribly mutilated. People were beginning to dig out and rebuild: to me, it looked like it would take forever. But it didn't.

Hurricane Edna arrived a couple of weeks later, on September 11. I don't remember too much about that one. It was an afternoon storm. We were in our upstairs bedroom watching the heavy rain hit the roof of the house next door. It was so hard it made a "fog" over the roof. Later, my father called the police and they suggested that we leave the house since it was close to the water, so we went to my grandparent's house on Oakwood Avenue, about a mile inland. There were lots of family members there and that's all I remember.

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