

Thursday, September 14, in Provincetown

(1950)

Dear Friends:

Folks on this part of the Cape sleep comfortably through winds of 40 and 45 which to visitors seem bent on removing the end of the Narrow Land, but when these breezes stiffen and a real blow commences the old anxieties of many bygone generations return and there is thought about little else than what evil that old sea may be doing.

We have come through again, just as we have times without number, and save for those whose boats suffered damage, it wasn't so bad. We were caught slightly off guard, partly because of previous scares which had not materialized and partly because the hurricane which came up the coast on Monday, passing 80 miles east of Nantucket seemed a bit eccentric and for a time it was impossible to find out just how close it might come.

Sunday was a dull, spiritless day and Monday started much the same way, cloudy and heavily overcast. But in the afternoon the wind began to pick up and the Upper Cape began to get its beating about 4 with torrential rains and whipping gusts. It was quite a bit later in the evening that the rains hit Provincetown and the northeast gale really got down to the business of the night. Stronger and stronger it blew, until around midnight and for too long afterward its force was estimated at 75 miles with gusts around 80. Near midnight was also time for the high tide of 10.2 but with the shove of that air the sea came higher and higher, throwing jets up between the planks of Town Wharf and washing over the Macara Wharf as though it weren't there. Beneath Town Wharf the sea sluiced and raced as though pulled for a drop over a cliff.

Between the ends of the two main piers and around them heavy draggers heaved over and plunged down with strong search lights bobbing on the waters, searching rigging, hitting wharf sheds, adding the mad, eerie touch of unreality to the scene. And through the light patches the heavy-handed wind threw rain and more rain that seemed to be in far too great a hurry to drop.

All day Tuesday until late in the evening the winds tore away at the Cape End. In the early morning the end of Town Wharf was crowded with fishermen and townspeople, there to see in daylight just how much damage had been done. A brave sight was Skipper Johnny DeWitt working bravely with a hand pump on his boat, Chance, which was awash and was given help by the Coast Guards. The dragger, Cape Cod, had two bad holes stove through the forward hull and other damage.

Off the end of Town Wharf was the graceful 48-foot swordfishing boat, Eugenia J., out of New Bedford, and her 65-year-old skipper, Myron L. Parsons, glad to feel the steady planks of the wharf 'neath his feet, said it was the worst storm he had experienced in 50 years. He had been fishing off Georges Bank when the wind hit and he turned the craft toward shore only to be caught in the worst of the blow off Highland Light. There were times, he said, when he stood waist deep in water in the pilot house and it looked as though it were the end. But the brave craft came through with dories and other gear washed over.

Sports fishing skipper, Captain Charlie Mayo had a night of it getting his two Chanteys into Pamet River at Truro but he had a picnic compared with Captain Bob Woods who couldn't get his Dixie into shelter and rode out the storm. One wave took away his bowsprit, fastened to the boat with strong piping, as neatly as though it had packed a blow torch.

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Small boats piled against West End Breakwater during the storm (see preceding article)



The Eugenia J. riding it out. (See article)