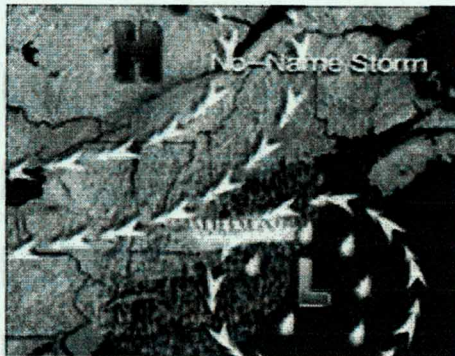


7 Worst Storms of the CENTURY
09/1938 • 06/1953 • 02/1978 • 08/1955 • 03/1936 • 10/191 • 09/1954 • 10/1954

Todd Gross

**#6 Halloween Nor'easter
"No-Name" Storm of 1991**
October 29-31, 1991

Weather systems usually travel from west to east in our hemisphere, but on rare occasion, a storm will track in the opposite direction. This "backwards" motion occurred on October 30th, 1991, as a massive ocean storm in the Atlantic backed in, looping furiously towards New England, and unleashing a devastating blow to our coastline.



The storm began as Hurricane Grace on October 27th. The tropical system remained out at sea, but merged with another storm in the Mid-Atlantic by the 30th. A strong impulse in the upper atmosphere dropped out of Canada, causing the new hybrid storm to explode AND "back" towards southern New England! Strong high pressure to our north served to enhance the winds from the storm, pushing gusts to 80mph in Nahant that afternoon. By 4:30pm, towering waves of 20 to 40 feet battered the coastline, as

seas swelled to over 9' in Boston Harbor during high tide. The storm then pummeled Long Island, slipping farther south on Halloween, further battering the Mid-atlantic.

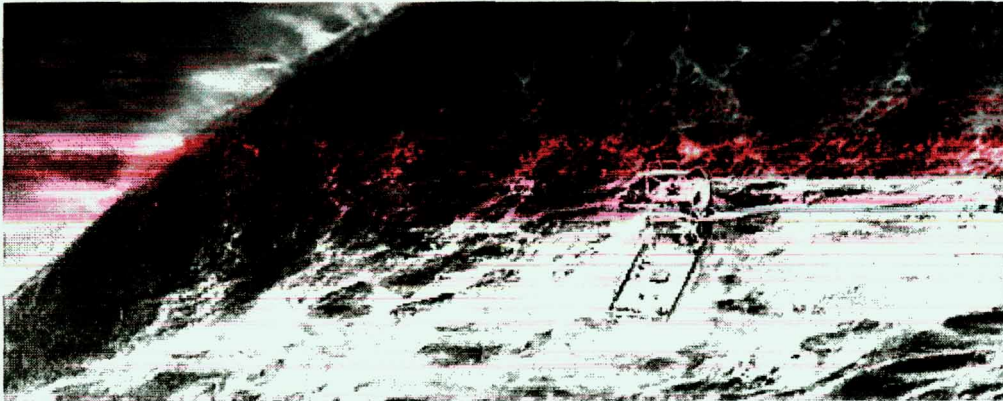
Locally, rains followed the wind and waves, with nearly 6" recorded atop Blue Hill in Milton. On November 1st, the storm passed over the Gulf Stream, once again taking on tropical characteristics as it redeveloped into a hurricane! To avoid further confusion, the National Hurricane Center decided not to name this latest incarnation of Grace. So during its last stand, the storm became known as the "No Name" storm before it quietly slipped out to sea once and for all.

This bizarre ocean storm battered beaches from Gloucester to Chatham. Coastal erosion was extensive, claiming 30 to 60 feet of Truro Beach on Cape Cod. In Scituate, the massive waves defeated the seawall, flooding most streets and ripping down or damaging some 250 homes in that town alone. Meanwhile, Hull was isolated by water. Damage estimates ran close to \$170 million. The storm claimed 12 lives, including 5 that were lost at sea.

Todd Gross is the 7 Weather Team weekday Morning and Noon Meteorologist and was on duty back in 1991 during what he calls the "Halloween Horror." "The Perfect Storm", a novel by Sebastian Junger, is based on the "No Name" storm.

THE PERFECT STORM

Late October, 1991



This is a depiction of the Andrea Gail, in the upcoming movie The Perfect Storm, as it maneuvered through waves up to 100 feet high in the North Atlantic, late in October, 1991. In the Warner Brothers feature movie, Meteorologist Todd Gross is played by actor Christopher McDonald. However, years before the movie or even the novel (Sebastian Junger) was written, Todd wrote this very brief synopsis of his experiences during the storm as it slammed into the shoreline of Eastern Massachusetts. His account follows below, **with links to information about the storm following:**



The No-name Storm, or the "Halloween Horror".
an accounting of the pre-halloween storm 1991
by Todd Gross, Meteorologist, Ch. 7, Boston
(written approximately Nov. 1, 1991)

It was Wednesday, **October 30th, 1991**. I woke up a bit early, about 4:30am so that I could get

to Channel 7, in Boston, on time, before 6:00am. It was going to be a big day.

The problem was that I had a terrible feeling as soon as I awoke, a terrible sore throat, and feverlike shakes. No matter, I HAD to get into work to forecast the storm!

On my drive in, I listened to our sister radio station, WHDH Radio, and the traffic report was on. Trooper Grant Mollison reported that THIS high tide, was causing some flooding at Point of Pines in Revere, and some of the roads were closed. That got me nervous, and excited, as winds were not even gusting to 30 mph, and the storm had just started it's acceleration westward from far out in the Atlantic. However, I did note that Chatham, on Cape Cod, had been blowing well over 40 MPH in gusts for the past two days, and I knew seas far out in the Ocean were reported 30-60'....so I guess it made sense.

When I got in, sure enough, the NGM computer guidance, and the Aviation models still had an enormous pressure gradient over us, perhaps earlier than I previously thought. Originally on Tuesday, I dubbed the storm "Halloween Horror"...now it looked like for Massachusetts at any rate, the storm would move in TODAY, HALLOWEEN EVE!

As I checked the surface observations, I noted the skies were clear everywhere except the Cape, but the winds were picking up.

After some early morning broadcasts touting the Coastal Flood Warning, I now began to believe my own reports. You see, I received calls from Winthrop, and Revere, two nearby coastal communities, that as the tide dropped, the seas did not..that the Waves were crashing against the seawalls, and just about creeping over them. Then as precipitation reached Chatham as rain and sleet, their winds picked up markedly. It was time to speak to the News Director.

I arrived at the 9:00AM meeting equipped with a map highlighting some of the communities I thought would be flooded. Cape Ann, Revere, Scituate, and Chatham were sample communities that also got it in 1978 during the blizzard with 3 successive high tides. The news director seemed to take the situation very seriously, I was starting to have second thoughts. What if the flooding didn't materialize? Would they blame me for devoting the whole news to the weather?

When I went outside though a few minutes later, I felt the decision to play it up was sound: The winds were gusting to 50 MPH in Downtown Boston, and we hadn't even clouded over yet. Signs were clashing, dust pelted my face. I kicked myself for forgetting my handheld anemometer, but the wind felt just about as strong, or just slightly less than during Hurricane Bob when we gusted to 52 MPH outside the studio.

Walt Drag from the NWS issued another one of his amazing proclamations about the storm at this point, calling it viscious, and the worst Ocean storm to approach New England since 1978. He reported Ship reports found numerous 60' seas offshore. I wished I was able to easily call up the ship reports on our system, but I had to rely on his statements.

I did the Noon Weathercast with warnings about the storm, mentioning evacuations. Later, in retrospect, I felt I should have done even more of that. Then every half hour we went on live with updates as the winds continued to increase on the Cape, clouds and sprinkles fell from our

Boston skies, and high tide approached.

Harvey Leonard the evening Meteorologist came in, and we had fun looking over the maps. Yup, the storm was going to fill, but not soon enough to spare us. It was time for me to run to the car, the lure of the ocean was too much for me to resist.

My first trip to Revere this day was an eye-opener. I found weather-watcher Roger Williamson eager to show me around. Across the street from his house, 2.5 hours before high tide, waves were crashing against the retaining wall. Boom! They splashed over, partially into the street and onto the houses next to the wall.

Roger took me up onto the wall further north, where it was safe, but I feared we would blow off in the 50-60 mph gusts. Noting that I would only fall about 4' onto grass, I decided to kneel down and walk it. We video taped the waves from this vantage point, some of which crashed over the rooftops of the houses ahead, the ones just behind the wall.

We walked over to Winthrop Pkwy., and it was in trouble, waves crashed over onto the cars as they drove by, and water was beginning to pool.

Roger's uncle was on the street, and he told Roger to forget it, 5' of water will flood his home at high tide, in his opinion, because this was worse than in 1978 2 hours before high tide.

By the time I made my way back to Roger's house, the water was starting to creep up towards his house, up Broad Sound Blvd. where he lived.

Inside, the house shook, and the windows rattled with each pound of the surf. I "borrowed" his home video, to run it back to the TV station, and found that I almost could not get out of his house, as the water now.... within minutes had taken over most of his street and was reaching his porch entryway.

I jumped over the water, climbed in my car which I had parked on a high spot on the side road nearby (thinking that the water would never get that high about 5'+ above Broad Sound Blvd.) and drove back to the studio.

Upon arriving at the TV Station I noted that the winds were leveling off, except for near the spiral band on radar that now moved across Cape Cod. "Gosh", I thought to myself, "it looks like a Hurricane as the eye moves westward on the Satellite, and these spiral bands are like a Hurricane too". At this rate, Harvey and I determined, that band may just come in about the time of high tide! STORM SURGE!

I don't know how I lucked out, but somehow I wasn't needed on the news at 5:30, they had too many live shots as it was. That allowed me for the first time in many years to actually get out in the storm on my own, go where I wanted to go for high tide. It was 4:00, and high tide came in 1/2 hour now, so I decided to go back to where I was familiar, to Revere.

To my surprise, there was little traffic getting back, but when I approached the Ocean the scene had changed so much since two hours earlier. Now, ambulances, and watercraft cruised the now-flooded streets. Waves that crashed were now soaring sky high, 30' easily, up over the wall. The waves filled the sky, and partially spilled on me, a two blocks inland!

Winthrop Pkwy. was one wave after another, and as I ran to see what was going on, I felt myself tire from my illness... my fever, and sore throat. I ignored my health, and thought only of making it through the day, to view such an event. As I ran, I tried to make my way around the gushing streams of water - to get back to Broad Sound Ave. The water was closing in around me. I became aware that three blocks inland, on my right, the houses were taking on water, and two blocks inland, on my left it was like a lake. Only the street I ran along which was higher, had any dry spots. I hurried before the water could get any higher. My glasses were covered in salt water spray, my good pants were ruined, and my shoes soaked. I had to turn around.

I made it to near where I parked my car "high" earlier in the day, near Roger's, and was stunned to see the cars there buried in the water. That meant that Roger was probably stuck in his house, he had called the station an hour ago, saying it was getting dangerous.

I ran back to my carphone and called him. The power was out, but his phone worked. Roger confirmed that he was nervous, and his weather-watching would have to be curtailed, but after placing several calls, nobody had come to pull him out of his house. It turned out that the water was reaching the roof of his neighbor's house at 9', but he was OK for now on the top floor, but felt his foundation was flimsy and would not hold.

I drove down the dry streets, looking for help. I found the police, and had them radio the watercraft to attempt a rescue. It took over 2 hours for them to get to him, but Roger was safe!

My health made me decide to call it a day, Ironically I got stuck in traffic getting home, apparently everyone tried to get out on the same road because of detours from all the now closed streets along the water.

Later that night, the storm continued to work WSW with it's storm surge, and hit Long Island, and New Jersey's shore at the time of the next high tide.

**-Todd Gross
WHDH-TV Meteorologist**