



West Bay Bridge in Westhampton Beach showing the total destruction of the south approach. This photo (and the bottom photo) was taken from a plane the day after the hurricane by Thomas J. White and Stephen F. Griffing, Jr.



Judge Harold R. Medina's big yacht shown resting on the 12th fairway of the Westhampton Country Club.



One of the inlets created by the storm's fury. These photos loaned by Thomas J. White

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E.D.T. 10:00 a.m. -

At 10:00 a.m. Wednesday, September 21st the wind was strong from the north, with a heavy sea and sultry weather, but there was nothing alarming. In fact the surf was not nearly as high as the afternoon before. The sky was overcast, and it was raining slightly.

11:00 a.m. -

By 11:00 a.m. the wind started shifting towards the east and grew considerably stronger, until at 11:30 it blew almost a gale from the N.E., with heavy rain. This looked like a good northeaster, which was to be expected at that time of year, and caused no concern. Then C. Dalin reported water bubbling up through the concrete floor of the garage, which was situated under the house on the ground floor opposite the servants' quarters and furnace. We went down to investigate, and found it coming up in two places. We thought at first it was bay water backing up from the wind, but after tasting it, found it was quite salty and must be sea water. Up to this time no waves had come over the dune, so we concluded it was seepage from the surf through the sand.

All this time the wind was increasing in strength, and I looked out of the window to see if the poles were still standing. The large poles holding the V antenna were in good shape, but the dipole on the 30 ft. mast nearest the house was swinging very badly. I thought it would be carried away any minute. It was raining very hard now, but quite warm.

12:00 m. -

At 12:00 noon C. Dalin saw Livermore's boat start drifting with her mooring, and called to me. I telephoned Madison Raynor, who gave me Capt. Ketcham's number. He commands the Moriches Coast Guard Station about three miles west on the dunes. This, by the way, was the only station open up to Shinnecock, 10 miles east; all the others, including No. 75, having only one lookout in the tower, and all buildings closed. I called Ketcham, and he said he would come right down and get the boat.

Mable then called Mrs. Norvin Green, who lived on the Dune Road some two miles west, and told her we were not going to the tennis, as it had been called off. We had been planning to go to town about noon, but the storm looked so good that I decided to stay over and watch it. (I did.) The Island Court Club then called me to report the roof leaking. I said, "Mop it up as best you can. We are having a bit of a storm down here ourselves." I took my field glasses and watched the Livermore boat, but it soon drifted out into the bay, and the rain was so heavy I couldn't see very much.

Then Bill Ottmann called and asked how things looked. I said it looked like it was going to be some storm, so he said he would come down and watch it with me. The wind was now N.E., and blowing a real gale.

1:00 p.m. -

All this time the radio was going and tuned to WEA. At 1:00 p.m. the Arlington time signals came on, and I went to the radio room to set my chronometer, as I did each day. After the time signals they gave the following weather report: "The West Indies hurricane is in mid-Atlantic, but has changed its course, and will probably hit Long Island." This was said in such a casual way that I paid no further attention to it. It seemed impossible anyway. The electric power was still on.

1:30 p.m. -

As I looked out of the sun room windows I noticed that the dipole antenna was in bad shape, so I put on my rubber waders and a slicker coat, and went out on the board walk to tighten up the guy rope which was fastened to the railing near the dune. When I stepped on the walk the wind was so strong and so full of sand and rain that it cut my face. Twice I was lifted off my feet, but by crawling along the railing I did the job, and managed to get back in the house safely. I tried to reach the top of the dune and look at the surf, but it was impossible to keep my footing. Then I tried to phone Bill and tell him not to come over, because the wind was so strong it would blow his car off the road, but the phone was dead. I couldn't get the operator. About ten minutes later he called us. Mable answered, and he said he wasn't coming because his garage had just blown into the bay.

2:00 p.m. -

Up to now no waves had come over the dunes, but the wind was shifting more to the east, and growing stronger all the time. I judged it to be at least 90 miles per hour.

C. Dalin and I went down to the garage, finding the water about 2 feet deep, both there and in the servants' quarters. Things didn't look so good, but we thought it would let up very soon. We came upstairs.

Mable had been sitting on the sun porch sewing, with her back to the easterly windows. Mrs. Dalin told her to change her seat, because the windows might blow in. She left, and went into the kitchen to press the dress she had been sewing, but the power was off and the iron wouldn't heat up. Just at this moment the window where she had been sitting blew out completely and showered glass all over the place. The outside screen was still intact, but the sand and rain were filling the whole house. Lucky thing that Mable left when she did, and I asked her how she timed things so nicely. C. Dalin and I got an old door from below and lashed it up in front of the window with great difficulty. The wind was so strong that it was all a man could do to hold the door against it. We finally secured it with 1/2 inch rope and screw eyes in the casement. Then we spent some time sweeping up the glass sand, and rain-water.

2:30 p.m. -

The wind and rain were still increasing, always turning more to the east - in fact, the wind was almost due east by this time. The sky was dark, but the air quite warm. I went to the leeward windows and saw that the 50 ft. mast to the northwest was leaning at a crazy angle - about 30 degrees. The dipole, through some miracle, was still there, although badly bent. As I looked, I saw the first wave come over the dune right in front of the house. It was all white water, but

about 4 feet deep, with plenty of force. All kinds of drift-wood and wreckage came with it, but it was difficult to see distinctly through the sand and rain covered windows. The next wave came a few seconds later, and I saw the bath house lifted up in the air and swept around the west end of the house into the Dune Road, at about 20 miles per hour.

3:00 p.m. -

This did not look so good, and Mabel said to me, "Don't you think it's getting serious?" I didn't know what to say, but I said I thought I would go out and let down the large V antenna to save the poles. She had been wet from the rain coming through the broken window, and had gone upstairs to put on her bathing suit, which proved very useful later.

I told C. Dalin to go below and get what clothes, etc. he could, and bring them up to the third floor to the guest room, where he and his wife could spend the night. I helped him up with a suitcase and other clothes, and then went into the servants' quarters to see what I could find. The water was about 2-1/2 ft. deep, and all white and swirling like the surf. I went to the rear door to investigate, and then picked up some shoes and things that were floating around, when suddenly a wave broke down the back door, and swept me back along the hall. Luckily the door to the stairway was open, and I just squeezed through in time, as it opened in the wrong direction.

Then I went through the garage, which had 3 ft. of boiling water in it by now, and got to the leeward side of the house, where the cleats that held the halyards on the V antenna were located. Just as I got there a big one came over the dune, and I had to hold on to the pole to stand against it. Between waves I managed to clear the halyard and lower the V antenna, but the northwest pole was almost down.

3:30 p.m. -

After I had finished, I noticed John Avery, the Coast Guardsman who had been on watch in the tower, coming across the meadow. As I watched him the meadow between our house and the Coast Guard Station was completely covered by white water, but he managed to get to where I was standing. I asked him, "Well, lad, do you think it's getting better or worse?" He said, "The whole dune is going. We'll have to walk for it. I had to leave the tower because all the windows blew out. Is there anybody in the house?" "Yes, three," I answered. "Two women and an old man." "Let's get them moving quick. There is no time to lose." Every wave was now coming over, and the white water would bound down the slope of the dune much like a snowslide in the mountains, and roar right across the Dune Road into the bay. It was then I realized, that the tide had just started to come in, as high tide was scheduled for 6:10 p.m. E.D.T., and if the surf was that high now, where would it be at 6:10?

We went into the house and everyone was quite calm, - no trace of panic. Mrs. Dalin kept saying that this storm wasn't as bad as two years ago, which of course was not so, but if she felt that way it might help matters. Avery then said we would all have to leave the house and try to walk to the bridge, one half mile to the east. This was our best chance, as even if we couldn't make it, the bay narrows down there to 100 ft. or more, which would be only a short swim at the most, while from where we were it was well over a mile across to the mainland. I told the Dalins we had to abandon ship, and gave the old man a pair of boots; then sent Mabel upstairs to put on some shoes, as the walking was very dangerous on account of the wreckage.

My pet barometer, which I had had for years, was hanging in the radio room not 15 ft. away, but for some unaccountable reason, I never once during that day consulted the glass. It seems a pity, because I had always wanted to see a barometer go below 28.

The surf was now running right through the bottom of the house - all white water. I went up to the bedroom on the third floor to see what I could find to take along. Mabel did likewise, and put on a pair of sandals. Strange things happen in extraordinary situations. Mabel took a pair of lorgnettes, put them around her neck on a chain, and put her handbag on her arm. The bag hadn't been opened since the night before. I, in turn, looked at my watch on the night table and some cuff links, disregarded them entirely - never thought of my keys - but found the two season tickets for the tennis matches at Forest Hills. I immediately thought to myself - I must have these, because I have to see the semi-finals tomorrow - and put them in my trouser pocket. (They were lost en route across the bay.) That, strange as it may seem, was the only thing I tried to save.

Thus encumbered I came downstairs to the living room and found C. Dalin coming upstairs with a suitcase and some clothes. His wife was still working in the kitchen. Of course I upbraided them for not hurrying, and Mrs. Dalin said, "Do we really have to go?" Whereupon the old man asked, "Can't I take my car?" I said "No! We must leave at once before the house caves in, and try to walk to the bridge. The cars are absolutely useless because the motors have been under sea water for an hour, and the force of the waves and wreckage will wash them right off the road into the bay." This was pretty hard on the old man, as I had given him a new car early in the summer, and it was his pride and joy. I told him to put on the boots and get out as quickly as possible, as every minute counted. Both old people seemed stunned, and were very reluctant to leave the house.

4:00 p.m. -

Then Mabel came down. We were all in the living room together. She put on a leather jacket, and asked C. Dalin for the dogs' leashes, as we had to walk. He said they were downstairs. Of course there was no need for the leashes, as the lower part of the house and the whole dune were covered with 3 ft. of white water. Mabel picked up Peter and started down the stairs. I followed with Blitzie, after telling the Dalins to hurry, and left Avery to help them along. When we arrived at the door to the garage, which was the only exit, we found ourselves in white water up to our waists, and what with the dogs and all, couldn't get the door open against the tide. Avery came to the rescue, and we finally jammed it open so it would stay. Mabel and I then floundered out onto the driveway, while Avery went up again to hurry the Dalins.

The wind was now due east, and blowing all of 100 miles per hour. The driveway was full of holes gouged out by the

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