



Jack Dean

I was 10 years old on August 31, 1954 when the hurricane I believe known as Carol, hit Southeastern New England. I lived in the North end of New Bedford, near Normandin Junior High School with my parents and two sisters. So we were not subjected to the major impact of the water surge which caused untold damage to those houses and businesses close to the water on the coast. Its effects on the long narrow harbors of New Bedford, Padanaram, and Wareham were devastating.

At that time, I was keenly interested in the weather and was seriously thinking of studying meteorology in college. I assiduously followed the weather on radio and TV and even wrote a letter to WBZ-TV's highly respected weatherman Don Kent asking about why we no longer got as much snow as in prior years.

My parents had an indoor outdoor thermometer and a wall mounted barometer, which I frequently checked. On this day I checked both instruments every few minutes and carefully recorded the readings along with the wind velocity as the wind relentlessly increased in velocity and the barometric pressure became lower and lower. Then within a few minutes time, the skies brightened. The wind died to a whisper and the rain ceased.

I remember thinking, is that it? And went outside to view any damage. It was only after a brief period, however that the clouds returned. The wind picked up velocity and the heavy rain resumed. The eye of the storm had passed right over the New Bedford area.

When the storm finally abated and moved away, I went out again to view the scene. Leaves and twigs from the trees were everywhere and some good size trees had fallen. A few houses away from us I spotted two very large weeping willow trees lying on the ground somehow falling between two nearby houses. Climbing among the now easily accessible, supple branches of these very large trees, provided great entertainment over the next several days, ignorant of the great devastation that had been visited upon other parts of the city.

As reported in the Standard Times/Cape Cod Standard Times pictorial booklet issued in the fall of 1954, "And when the hurricane had died the job of picking up the pieces began. Monumental task met with the stubborn, enduring, constant faith and courage that have mocked New England since its first citizens scratched their foothold in a bitter wilderness three centuries ago.

Business executives and their workers from clerical employees to skilled machinists pitched in and got hard hit plants back in production in record time. From a school of towns came the roar of cranes picking up debris and the whine of saws removing felled trees. Carpenters hammers rang to tell of a rebuilding job that is enormous, but steadily moves on."