

# Hurricanes Connie and Diane Remembered

*By Rich Gallup*

*Our cottage, as well as many others around the lake, has always maintained a log book to keep track of family events and visits to Big Pond. One interesting entry dates from the summer of 1955. Life on the lake was just a bit more rustic in those days. To put things in perspective electricity had reached the cottage that June and the outhouse was very much in use. My parents, Howard and Lucia Gallup and my 5 year old sister Janice arrived August 7th 1955 for a two week vacation. The weather had been extremely hot and dry and they had no idea that that was about to change considerably.*

*Hurricanes Connie and Diane hit North Carolina and moved toward Massachusetts five days apart. Both storms were severe enough and caused so much damage that their names were retired and have not been used since. Diane was the wettest hurricane on record in the Northeast, dropping nearly 20 inches of rain in Westfield (Normal rainfall for the month of August is less than 5 inches). Needless to say this was an exciting time to be at the lake. The following is the Ferncliff II log book entry made by my mother, Lucia Gallup:*

We thought the wind and rain of Hurricane Connie could not be topped at which time the wind came directly east soaking everything up to the windows and also the east walls on the inside as well as leaked around the fireplace. The rains caused the lake to rise about two feet.

Our second week and Howard's vacation has been a quiet one as far as company but real exciting due to the torrential rains caused by Hurricane Dianne. The rains started at 6:15 a.m. Thursday and continued, continuously, until Friday afternoon around three. During Thursday about four times Howard bailed the boat and at 11:30 p.m. after listening to the news that 8" of rain had already fallen in Springfield, the boat was bailed again and seemed all set. However, at about 3:00 a.m. we were awakened by terrific east, southeast winds and the boat and dock were bouncing up and down and rain was pouring in the east bedroom windows and leaks in many places. We evacuated everything from the front bedroom - mattresses, etc. and had pots and pans catching drips.

Howard and I took turns about every fifteen to thirty minutes getting up to mop up the floor and check the boat from the window. About 7:00 a.m. we heard the banging of barrels and rushed to see. The front barrels had come free. Howard soon rescued those and before long the waves completely swamped our new boat. Just as we sat down to breakfast the electricity went off (NO TOASTER!) and the kerosene lamp was resurrected. About 8:00 a.m. a knock at the door and Helen Pease (two doors to the North, currently owned by the Paddocks) came with boots to get through more than ankle deep water on the path and a basket of food - no knowing how long we might be confined. Helen informed us that Thursday night Route 23 to Blandford was closed due to a washout on Tannery Hill and Route 20 near Chester was also closed so we couldn't have gone home if we had chosen to.

Some of the observations seen the following day round the lake - water up to the second steps down front (probably at least four feet above normal level); all rocks down front under water; water within two feet of Helen Pease's lower porch floor; pieces of docks, chairs, tin cases floating against the shore and rafts floating in the middle of the lake. Water covering little island so that the Hitz's have their boat tied to the porch. The Hitz family evacuated by canoe at 7:30 a.m. Friday and spent the night at the East Otis Hotel.

Webster's cottage (at the old County Right-of-Way currently owned by Tacke's) - water up to the top step, outdoor fireplace half covered and now boat tied to back porch, five inches of water in his garage. Cottage next door (Harrison's) had water on the first floor. Water so deep everywhere - not a place on the whole lake that Janice could go swimming. The Big Pond Association Picnic at Magovern's beach was canceled, the picnic area and fireplaces covered by water. Sightseeing tour around the lake showed docks overturned and boats overturned and sunk but no real damage seen. Near the bunk house, the water was up almost up to the underpinning. A beautiful weekend, but few people around unless they were here before the roads were closed.

Friday night we drove to East Otis - water running across the road by Hall's Store, about 6 inches of water and one-way traffic, no mail or bread coming in to Otis or East Otis. Water across the road at Barton's garage (by the Hardware store near the Route 8 / Route 23 intersection) but was passable. No real damage to the boats or dock for which we are thankful and we are also thankful that the cottage is located on high ground and ledges!

Sunday - As we are about to end vacation, we find we must take the following route home - Otis to Pittsfield, Dalton, Goshen, Cummington, Williamsburg, Northampton, Holyoke and finally to Springfield., we hope. It sounds like a long trip home and a good shakedown cruise for our new "Chevy." - Lucia