

Storm Stories Transcript

Kay Richardson

JULIE: This is Julie Christie, I'm at Perfection Point in Harrison St, Cardiff. I'm going to speak to Kay Richardson about the storm that struck Lake Macquarie on June 8th to the 11th in 2007.

KAY: Soon on, on the Friday night of the storm my daughter and I were working in the salon and we were both working on clients and one of them whose name is Lebanese said to me you know gee I better go and move my car. Anyway she looked out, she said the car, the water was coming up to the, the sill of the car so she rolled up her pants and went out the front and I stood at the window and looked out and I said oh, its pretty, it looks like we're in Venice cause the water had by then, was up to the window. So anyway my husband had been sick, he'd had a heart attack and was laying out in one of the rooms out the back so I said to him, you know can you come and help Robyn move the car. By the time we got out the front the water by then had started to come inside the door into a little... part where you step up and within seconds, it seemed seconds anyway the water was at the front of the counter. So my apprentice and I went and moved, lifted a couple of pieces of equipment up onto one the beds and we could hear the water rushing down the wall. So then, we went out the back to get some towels to start putting on the floor and it was pouring in the back door and the floor as we were walking up and down the corridor was coming up to meet us, the vinyl had lifted and was coming up, bubbling up under our feet. Then we started to hear the ceiling crack so we thought it was time to get out of there.

So anyway after we left the salon, there were 2 clients, myself, my daughter, my husband, and Robyn who's Down Syndrome. We got out the front and of course the cars were starting to float and one of, the bottom car was 6 weeks old, another one was 6 months old and of course the girl that had the car that was 6 months old was screaming, she was hysterical. I got it to the other side of the veterinary clinic and the force of the water was so strong I was struggling to get across. So this gentleman came across from the, walked along the front of the hotel, came across the road and pulled me across that, that drain area and I said to him, I asked him to help the others. So he pulled the others across, and because the water was so um, it was so cold and I was worried about my husband. So, I said to [?Mikaela?] come on we'll go, try to go round the corner to the back carpark to see if we can get our car at least I could sit him in the car. But of course when we got around to the back street we couldn't get anywhere near that because the force of the water was so strong again. So we came back. Then, I couldn't find anyone, they'd all come back in to get the pets out of the pet shop, out of the veterinary clinic. So there was a sick dog, we um, they got the sick dog and all the cats in cages out of there and there were also two people that my daughter rescued out of the car, she got them out of the car that was

parked out the front there, they got them out through the window. And then this fellow turned up from no where, he was a lovely fellow, his name was Jo, he lived up the street a little bit and he took us all into his house. He had no electricity of course, he had an open fire. We had all the cat cages, we had about 6 or 7 cat cages, we had a sick dog on the ground with us, the vet had her dog there and we all stood in front of the fire and yes my husband had been shopping before that so we had a loaf of dry bread [laughs]. And this Joe had a packet of biscuits he passed around and we were there for hours all trying to pass our phones around because we were running, you know, service for one, one person would have service and then another one wouldn't have any service so we were ringing relatives and checking to see if everyone was alright and let them know that we were ok. After a few hours this Joe had a truck and he said he would try and get a couple of us out, so he did that and he got a few of the people out and then my brother in law came and finally got, we got to our car. But it still took me hours to get home, my daughter was fine in her car and I was terrified because we lost her, couldn't find her. Everywhere we went we were running into cars that were just sitting in the middle of the road we had to drive up on median strips so back back and he'd back up into the traffic to get out. It was really horrific and we finally got home probably about, I'd say about 3 hours after we started our journey.

JULIE: Kay, what time did you first notice the water coming up?

KAY: I would say it would be about 5.15.

JULIE: And what time did you finally get out of the shop?

KAY: Well it was pretty fast, I would, wouldn't been more then I'd say 10 minutes after that.

JULIE: And by the time you got to your car to finally get home?

KAY: The time, I would say would have been about 12 o'clock at night.

JULIE: And what sort of, did you have to drive to, to get home?

KAY: To Blackall's Park.

JULIE: Oh that's a long way. Kay, it must have been terrifying while you were waiting for the storm to go?

KAY: It was but it was a good bonding experience, even with like some of the people we barely knew, some I knew well, some I didn't know too well and of course the fella that took us in, didn't know him at all. But um everyone looked after each other, we even had ah, as I said, animals from the veterinary ah, clinic. The cats in the cages and the one girl there she had her dog that was very sick and she, you could tell she was and ah, this lady had taken her dog down to have his injection at the time the water came in the front of the veterinary storage room and they had to put him up on the chair to give him his injection, his insulin, he's diabetic. We had him on the floor and he was shivering wrapped in towels and we ended up cuddling him. Yeah we just, it was good fun in some ways you know we ended up, some of us ended up taking our wet pants off, we were gettin' around in our underwear... Yeah all standing in front of the fire, everyone moving around to let someone else get in and warm up, as I said sharing the dry bread and the biscuits. Yeah but, it was good, it was good in that, you know, people that we have never met before... it was, everyone was looking after each other and trying to do the best for everyone else. It was um survival I suppose and worrying about our own businesses and things flash through your mind of, where are we going to work now that our shops are ruined? The vet was worried about all of her computers and all of her files would be missing. So it was a, though it was a worrying time for us all we still all helped each other. It was good.

JULIE: Have you been able to make contact with any of those people since?

KAY: Yes, actually um we have. I've been down to the vets and cause we, you know, we see them quite regularly. The, Joe that took us in, the fellow up the road and his mate, we bought them a big tray of meat and some beer so that they can have a barbeque.

JULIE: Thanks Kay

KAY: Okay