

Storm Stories Transcript

Jon & Georgie Hanley

JULIE: This is Julie Christie. I'm talking to Jon & Georgie Hanley today at their house in Victory Rd, Toronto we're talking about the storm that struck their house on the 8th of June, 2007.

Jon you were going to tell us about Friday, the 8th of June when the terrible storm struck.

JON: Well I think it was Friday afternoon, we'd been down to the acting studio and coming back I had to go to Newcastle to get some stitches in my legs and uh we were heading in towards the [unclear] and the tides and we couldn't see, see where we were going so we turned around and came back and ah that's when the um Macquarie Star came alongside or nearly alongside and just [unclear] put up on the [unclear] about 100 yards south of us, and we watched them get that off and then during the early part of the evening the winds started to pick up, there was some waves coming onto the shore about dark but it wasn't too bad. And then it was just after dinner that night we thought we'd [?check it?] because the rain was coming in very horizontal onto the house. We went down and checked the, we've got a roller door down below, we just put some towels underneath that in case the rain came in.

GEORGIE: And the furniture up on the bed.

JON: Yeah the furniture up on top of the bunk bed, ah the ones that we could, we thought there might be some more then. Ah, and that was about it until we went to bed and then we were woken up close on midnight I think it was, or after midnight with the howling wind. Georgie was highly concerned so she went to the fridge dear? You went...

GEORGIE: I got up and I ah got a glass of water and I opened the door going downstairs and saw a huge amount of water down there. It really shocked me and um so I called to Jon and I said look at this water and he said well we can't do anything about it. So I just closed the door and I really got quite nervous so I locked myself in the toilet with lounge cushions around me and stayed there until the wind cleared.

JON: Yeah that was quite some time and when ah, then we had another look out

down the, down the stairwell and ah I was a bit concerned because what was coming up the stairwell was quite a gale and ah I didn't like to say to Georgie that I thought we may, there's a gale coming through something's been [?breached?] down there whether it's the windows or the door or both or some [?lot?]. So we just kept that quiet for the time being and ah, and then Georgie kept saying what can we do? We've gotta do something and ah there's nothing much you can do at that time it was, what was done was done and what was going to happen. We knew the house was fairly safe it was built on 2 to 3 metre foundations we weren't sure about the roof that was a problem. Uh, the only active thing we did was to move our daughter in law's car from a bit lower down to move it up onto higher ground and uh we waited until well just for me to get my sleep that night. We hung around til daylight or just before dawn and ah, had a look at what was outside then, it was very still and ah, the [unclear] had actually done down, the water was up probably a metre over the sea wall. Just prior to dawn I was watching our neighbour whose o, about 50 feet away and she was madly trying to clear the [unclear] that was coming into her lounge room and seemed to be doing a fairly good job with it but the waves at that stage and this is going back a bit they appeared to be about a metre high coming in and they were cresting just like you see down on the surf. The noise, the noise was horrendous but it was so suddenly quiet, just before dawn that it was a bit nerve racking like the middle of a cyclone, so I guess it was... Then we had a look down below a bit later on and found that a log which was about 2 metres long and about half a metre in diameter had come in on one of those waves and gone through the roller door and breached that and, but, it imbedded itself between a fridge which was knocked over and the ride on lawn mower so that then held the, it shut the door by that action or locked the door back in position and didn't let the water get out so it was quite horrendous with what was down below. It didn't start to go down until the night after that, didn't see much reduction until late in the, the second night and then by next morning it was pretty much down. Chairs that had put up on top of the double bunks had been knocked over by the surge of the water and they were floating around in the water. The lounge we'd put up on the blocks it had taken off. There were funny things flashing around there was a

GEORGIE: A microwave

JON: [laughs] A microwave which was half sinking, half, it was floating around and I've got an office down there, it was flooded and floating around and all our photographs they were spread all over the place and we found them oh, a couple of hundred of yards down the lake in some cases... Yes we lost most of the photographs but Georgie got through the next night, sorted them all out and put them all over the table and it dried a lot of them out. We were lucky that a neighbour, or a friend of ours, down the lake a little bit, they came up and had a look and said what could they do? And they got stuck into cleaning up and their son from Gosford came with his wife and another friend and his wife. Between the six of us we got things pretty well cleaned up the day after that. It's amazing just how many, how much work they did put into, to it. I didn't recognise it

because it was such a mess before then. The ride on lawn mower looked like an old man with a beard with all the seaweed drooping all over it and the a, the bar had been inundated it didn't look much better. It's amazing you forget about things and don't realise what's missing until maybe 3 or 4 days later or even a week later. Something you go looking for and it's not there anymore. I mean I know that he was here before the current one, if I can put it that way, he'd been here for over 30 years and he hadn't experienced anything like that so that was 30 odd years, cause he moved out 4 or 5 years ago. So in 35 years there had been nothing like that around here, of that [?constance?], of that magnitude. It was just that the, the wind although it, they said it wasn't so strong I think it must have been gusting up to 70 knots, if not more. Not so much gusting but fairly steady and somebody said they had measured further down the lake at 193 kilometres per hour but I haven't had that confirmed. It was the noise of the wind which was the unnerving thing and the, and the, and then the beat of the water, the sound of the water was like a rushing waterfall. I've been sailing at sea quite a bit and never, ever experienced anything like that before, not that I would ever want to.

JULIE: What about the yacht club? Could you see anything, any damage there at the marina?

JON: Yes, yeah, do you want to talk about that?

GEORGIA: You couldn't see the marina. The water was over, you saw all these boats sitting there and you wouldn't think they were in the marina at all.

JON: No they looked as though they were all anchored up just side by side.

GEORGIA: Yeah

JON: Yes they, and the, the power had gone off in the marina. Ah there were, during the night you could see some people out there trying to take some action to protect things but it was, it's pretty hopeless. I guess if we had a metre wave coming up here there would have been more than a metre going along the top of the marina. There's one vessel actually sunk in the marina I believe we had heard there were more than that but I think there was only one. But a, four other vessels up on the shore line just north of us here

GEORGIA: And one down here

JON: And one 50 foot just, that nearly came through our, that nearly got to us it was caught up on a little shoal just south of us about 50 feet away. It was, was quite on an angle. But then just north there were 4 other vessels right up on their side with their mast sticking into, one appeared to be sticking into a house but it, I think it just missed it, the mast that is. But there's quite a lot of damage done to the marina, they lost 17 pylons I think it was.