

Grand Isle Diaries Transcripts : 03 Hurricanes

1: (speaking another language)

2: And she told me that at three o'clock the day before the storms and she said, "There was something about that Sunday I've never seen before the wet." At three o'clock the next morning, I was 1600 feet above ground.

3: I think it's about a recorded wind of 200 miles per hour, yeah, like 210 215.

4: Like a frigate bird, they call that the storm bird, you know, because they didn't know. They just said, "Well, that's a storm bird." It's true. It was so rough out there it couldn't feed, so it come to shore to feed during the hurricane season.

5: We spent the (unintelligible) in the coast guard station. You pray a lot. It bad. You could see buildings passing down the lane at the coast guard station.

6: Had a few horses, you'd see a horse pass, the tide washing it away. I had a police car, brand new unit, under the station. Then next day, it was in a Catholic churchyard.

7: But you'd see it, hear that roaring during the night, and then, you'd hear something blow up like a freight train. That was somebody's house gone.

8: But you felt bad about leaving all your, my people, so to speak. They have to leave everything they own down here and leave to save themselves, so you felt bad about leaving, so you'd stay and try, you know, if they, help them out a little by the best way you can, you know. If they had something in the yard that was going to wash away, you might pick it up throw it in the house cause people you knew. It's all local people. (unintelligible)

9: We were in our house, and the water kept coming up. The wind kept coming up, so we moved from there to stay with an aunt. They were in a more substantial house that was right next to the coast guard station. It was not a town hall back in the 1850s. It was a coast guard station. As the water came up, the coast guard came over. One of their big, one of their old-fashioned rowboats, the coast guard's been out waiting in the water and pushing the boat, and we had several people mostly, a lot of more really elderly

people. We got them in the boat. The coast guard waited back and pulled us back to the station. We all rode the storm out in the coast guard station.

10: We didn't even know they had a hurricane.

11: By twelve o'clock at night, it came, and we was there at home. My momma, daddy was there. We had like four five feet of water over there, six feet, I don't know, and we spent the night, and then, we got so scared that the next day they had some people go on up the bayou, so we got in a truck, and we, it was like evacuating after the storm. It's blowing. It's raining, you know. It's terrible, you know, and if you know what's going on, it's even worse, you know.

12: Top those seventy miles an hour wind over this island, we had five people here, and we had five. I was more worried about the five people because I gave them body bags before I left. I said, "I'm gonna give you a body bag cause this is serious." I gave the keys to the city hall, and they saved their lives in there.

13: The storm hit. Of course they had no warning in those days. My grandmother was pregnant. The waters came. The story that my mother would always tell me was that she was holding a niece or a nephew in her arms best she could, and my grandfather was trying to hold her up out of the water, and the baby got washed away and drowned. My grandfather couldn't hold her anymore, and she had long, long black hair, and he, the only thing he could, tree that was available was a thorn tree, and he wrapped her hair up in the thorn tree, and then, he drifted away. He survived, and after the water went down, they went back to assume they, thought they were gonna be cutting down her body, but she was still alive.