

# ECOWATCH



## Musings on Hurricane Ian

■ BY DELORES SAVAS

"And once the storm is over, you won't remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won't even be sure whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain: When you come out of the storm, you won't be the same person who walked in. That's what the storm is all about."

Haruki Murakami  
Japanese writer,  
candidate for Nobel Prize in Literature

Turbulent, wild winds that howled ferociously for nine hours along the eye's edge, rattling our windows and doors: That was a surreal encounter with the forces of nature. Like a guest who arrives early for a dinner party, Ian was very unwelcome. Indeed, his arrival was hours earlier than what was predicted.

According to author Rosa Miriam Elizalde, "Ernest Hemingway learned in Cuba that the best way to get through a hurricane is to have your ears tuned to a battery-powered radio and keep your hands busy with a bottle of rum and a hammer to nail down doors and windows."

My hubby and I did not have the rum on hand, but we did have nails and a hammer as we struggled in the escalating wind and rain to put up our boards – late, because originally no evacuation notice was issued for our zone. However, evacuation orders changed, and our zone was placed under an evacuation notice.

That seemed to be a pregnant idea, but since we have four large, healthy and rambunctious dogs, we decided to take our chances rather than sit for hours

at the mercy of the elements on a crowded highway where an accident or car breakdown was likely to occur. But we did wish we had that bottle of rum.

We were lucky. Both hubby and I were getting to be hurricane survivors, as we already had Hurricane Charley under our belts. However, Charley was a walk in the park by comparison. He blew over fast and did not linger in any one area for hours. This guy Ian was different, one of the biggest hurricanes on record, with hurricane-force winds extending some 500 miles from edge to edge and registering velocities of 150 mph, just shy of a Category 5 storm.

Ian was one of the most destructive storms in the history of our nation, causing damages that will total billions of dollars in the state of Florida alone. It made us both wonder how Florida's new transplants got past the encounter of Ian, with its screaming winds and rising waters.

The next morning, as the sun rose hesitantly, we ventured out to view the damage. While I was never in a war zone, hubby thought this was what a bombed-out city might have looked like during World War II. Thanks to the powers that be, we were more fortunate than most. There will be much repair work for us. While we had no electricity, no phone and no internet, we were thankful for what we were spared. As we looked around, the sight of our beautiful 50-foot kapok tree lying broken and scattered in the canal was heartbreaking to me. It was a tree that I loved like a cherished friend, and I had watched it change with the seasons over the years. It had sported beautiful flowers during the winter months, with dancing leaves and huge branches, where squirrels congregated to play tag, crows came and drank from the flowers that held water, and birds made their homes.

It was ironic that when Hurricane Charley ran roughshod over our house and battered it, our 60-foot pine tree chose to fall along the side of our

house and not straight on top of us. Our insurance agent said the tree saved our house. I used to sit under that tree and listen to it whistle as the wind passed through its branches.

Now, 18 years later, our beloved kapok tree fell backward into the canal instead of crashing into our house, and three trees in front of the house protected the carport from destruction.

These were trees that we paid special attention to, but the only tree for which I shed a tear was the kapok tree, lying in her watery grave. One has to wonder if her actions were intentional. Call it anthropomorphism if you will.

There were other sights that greeted us when we ventured out. A blue jay flew by our bent bush and searched for a way inside. Finding an entry, the little bird scampered inside for refuge and rest. One lone butterfly fluttered carefully around, and we wondered if he was the only one that survived. An apparently confused wasp tried to nest in my hair, and a flock of whistler ducks flew overhead. We saw one little plant with a bright pink flower greeting the morning sun.

Here's a special "thank you" to all the responders and volunteers who left their families in order to help others. And to all the employees in the grocery stores who worked like busy bees to fill shelves with the necessities to survive. It was the first time we had ever gone into a grocery store and seen empty selves throughout the premises.

This storm brought out the best in many folks, and the worst in a few, as we witnessed in dismay. The best were the ones who brightened the day. Courtesy and a smile go a long way in hectic times.

Please remember that the hurricane season does not officially end until November 30. Stay prepared. Consider Hurricane Ian a training run. Hopefully everyone learned that preparations are crucial for survival in the next storm.

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