



Hurricane Hazel: Canada's Storm of the Century

Jim Gifford

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On October 15, 1954, Hurricane Hazel battered southern Ontario, leaving in its wake a terrible toll: thousands homeless, million in property damage, and, worst of all, 81 people dead. Hazel destroyed bridges, submerged towns, and drowned unsuspecting Ontarians in their homes and cars. Raymore Drive in Weston was decimated when the Humber River swelled by eight feet, taking the lives of 32 residents in only one hour. In Etobicoke, five volunteer firemen drowned while trying to reach marooned motorists. Towns and villages from Toronto north to Timmins felt Hazel's fury.

After the storm, people walked the now-surreal streets of their towns: cars upside-down and wrapped in power lines, iceboxes and dead cows hanging from trees, houses flattened, toys and furniture floating down the street.

On the 50th anniversary of the storm, Jim Gifford has captured that fatal night in the voices of those who survived it, from residents who lived along the surging Humber River to a policeman who rescued families from their rooftops to firemen and Boy Scouts who searched for victims along the riverbanks. Including more than 100 never-before-published photographs, *Hurricane Hazel: Canada's Storm of the Century* documents one of the worst natural disasters in Canadian history.

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