

## The BELISARIUS In Hurricane Carol

By Barbara H. Rockwell

[BELISARIUS H.M.C. #1266 (1936) L.O.A. 56' 2"]

ON AUGUST 30, 1954, my husband Charlie and I, Captain Willie Carstens, and two guests, enjoyed a pleasant, brisk sail on the BELISARIUS, from Provincetown to Cuttyhunk. In Cuttyhunk it was peaceful early evening, with birds begging for scraps as they paddled on calm water, lit by a lovely sunset.

At breakfast the next morning, Charlie looked at the barometer, as he always did when aboard, and could hardly believe what it said. Then on the radio we heard "the hurricane is over Montauk, going north northeast at 40 miles an hour, with wind speed of 120 miles an hour". Our guests and I hastily cleared up below. Charles and Willie worked rapidly on deck, securing, putting out two anchors in bridle and keeping the engine running.

And then it struck. Looking up from the hatch I saw the air inundated with spray. It seemed a world of nothing but wind and water gone mad, a wind that soon began a shrill, metallic, whining scream in the rigging, an astonishing, ominous sound Willie said to me, "THIS is a hurricane".

Charlie jumped overboard to prevent the dingy from being caught in the propeller. Willie grabbed him by the hair and hauled him aboard just before the solid little boat somersaulted like a leaf across the water. Other objects of various kinds flew through the air. When the Coast Guard station broke up, its planks, with menacing nails protruding, came close and had to be fended off. The anchor chain of the boat next to us broke and, with her owner and his dog sitting on deck, she swept out of the harbor. (When the wind turned around, she returned.) In a house on a hill refugees took shelter. As they sat there, the roof blew off. Throughout the havoc, the BELISARIUS rode out the storm, one of only two boats to remain afloat. Also, through it all, there was only a rather gentle, circular motion below deck. I felt quite safe because I trusted this strong, superb boat and the two fine sailors in charge of her.

When the wind calmed and the sun came out and birds returned, it seemed that the violence of a short while ago may have been imagination, except for the evidence everywhere. Not long thereafter, we left for home. The ocean swells were large.



*Full rowboat from the BELISARIUS*

the hurricane's effect on the sea and sky, on the entire atmosphere, very telling. It was a feeling of recovery after disaster. There was not another boat in sight on that ocean: we had it all to ourselves, except for the Coast Guard, once. They asked how we were and offered us cigarettes. And as we neared land, all along the shores, we saw that familiar structures and landmarks were simply gone. It was a landscape totally changed. Houses, piers, boats, trees, were all in shambles or had disappeared. At Point Pleasant Farm on Poppasquash, our destination, the dock and boathouse were no longer there. We had been unable to call, so a most anxious time was over for those waiting for us. When they saw us coming up the bay, the great bell at the house rang in welcome. Without our dinghy, there was no way to get ashore, so Mel and Eleanor Edelstein, with great effort, launched the row boat, still on the beach, and Charlie's father rowed out to meet us. The BELISARIUS was home, with only a single scratch on her, a tiny memento of Hurricane Carol's fury.

### CHRONICLE.

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