

Mr. Lurie's Version of the "High Winds Incident Report" at Camp Waupaca in 1983

Paul Warshauer's Corrections & Rebuttals in **YELLOW, ALL CAPS**

Mike Lurie's updates 12Nov in **GREEN, ALL CAPS**

Warren Metzdorff's updates, 13-Nov in **PURPLE, ALL CAPS**

After my illustrious 12-year career at Camp Waupaca For Boys, I attained "Emeritus" status which allowed me to come up on select weekends. I never expected a free ride on these occasional visits, and Manny made me work for my room & board. It often involved picking up hundreds of pounds of kosher meat from Shaevitz Kosher Meat Market in Highland Park and *shlepping* it to camp. HIS TASKS ALSO INVOLVED MINOR REPAIRS AND THE INSTALLATION OF SPEAKERS TO BROADCAST ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAIN OFFICE TO THE FAR FIELDS.

I believe this occurred on a ~~Saturday~~ **SUNDAY** evening. Everyone was in the dining hall for casino night. I was in the infirmary with a few senior staff, including Warren Metzdorff **AND CAMP NURSE, MAXINE GREENSTEIN**. The skies became ominous and foretold of some very severe weather to come. Back then we did not have weather alert radios or cell phones at the ready for instant access to information. The skies darkened, the wind began to switch. Barney Town **MIKE'S ABBREVIATION FOR MANNY'S HOUSE, INFIRMARY, ETC. NOT MINE! THIS WAS THE NAME GOING BACK TO THE EARLY 1970s. THE SWISS CHALET** began to pitch and the hinges started to unhitch. And oh, what happened next was rich!



Some incredibly heavy, wind driven rain pelted camp. The winds were wild and visibility through the rain and wind was almost non-existent. It only lasted for a minute or two, and then it became incredibly silent. No rain, no wind - just a peaceful quiet that happens when the power goes out.

AS MIKE LURIE WAS NOT PRESENT IN THE MESS HALL AND I WAS, THE CAMPERS AND COUNSELORS HEARD WHAT WE ALL THOUGHT WAS A FREIGHT TRAIN COMING. THERE IS A DEBATE AS TO WHICH WAY THE HIGH WINDS TRAVELLED. I STILL BELIEVE THE WINDS STARTED ON THE GOLF COURSE AND TRAVELED THROUGH CAMP DOWN TO THE WATERFRONT. OTHERS SAY THEY WINDS STARTED ON LAKE STRATTON AND TRAVELED TO THE GOLF COURSE. WARREN CONFIRMED THE PATH WAS FROM WATERFRONT TO GOLF COURSE. EITHER WAY, I SAW A DARK CLOUD (TORNADO) PASS AND DESTROY THE TENNIS FENCE.

IT IS RELATIVELY RARE THAT A TORNADO MOVES FROM EAST TO WEST. ADDITIONALLY, HAD THE TORNADO ACTUALLY MOVE FROM EAST TO WEST, THE ALUMINUM ROWBOATS AND CANOES WOULD HAVE LIKELY BEEN THROWN INTO THE LAKE INSTEAD OF INTO THE TREE LINE AT THE TOP OF THE WATERFRONT.

I left Barney Town and ran to the dining hall, expecting the worst. I burst through the door (some campers still remember that!) and found everyone safe, under the tables because of the quick thinking of Georgia Euer. The Euer family was very accustomed to this type of weather event from their home in "Southeast Missouri." Georgia felt the air pressure change and ordered everyone to hit the deck. Luckily, there was no damage to the dining hall. Everyone was safe, thank goodness! **GEORGIA EUER DID INDEED HOLLER, "GET UNDER THE TABLES." WE DID.**

Our initial assessment of the damage came from looking out the windows of the "New Addition" of the dining hall out to the tennis courts and golf course. We could see that the tennis court fences were nothing but a pile of toothpicks and twisted welded wire mesh. Further out at the corner of the golf course, we could see some significant White Pine Trail tree damage. **I CONFIRMED THE DESTRUCTION OF MANY WHITE PINE TREES ON THE FAR CORNER OF THE GOLF COURSE.**

The power was out. There were power wires down all over camp. A deeper look into camp revealed that there was no building damage at all - that was a miracle given the ferocity of the storm. Down at the waterfront, the piers were all twisted up, as if a giant troll picked them up and just tossed them about. There was a rowboat and a couple of canoes in the trees! Here is a picture proof of this with Ross Berkson:

The metal slide also suffered damage. The only weather phenomenon that could cause this type of damage is a tornado. **I CONFIRMED THAT MORE THAN A FEW BOATS WERE TOSSED INTO THE TREES. ALSO THE OLD SLIDE WAS MANGLED BUT EVENTUALLY REPAIRED BY THE CALDWELLS. THE SLIDE HAD MANY MORE YEARS IN SERVICE.**



Senior staff gathered in the infirmary **(I CONTEND MANNY'S HOUSE)** to discuss a plan of action. I was there, along with Paul Warshauer, Warren Metzдорff, Mike Euer, and I'm sure a few others. **NO, THAT WAS THE EXTENT OF THE SENIOR STAFF. WHERE WAS RON LAVINE? WARREN CONCURS AS NEITHER ONE OF RECALL RON BEING ANYWHERE NEAR THE ACTION.** This was the summer that Manny was unfortunately stricken with cardiac issues, and he missed most of the summer. The phone lines were still active, thank goodness.

I don't recall who called whom: did Mike Euer call Manny, or did Manny call Mike Euer? Not sure. Mike Euer, well aware of Manny's condition, was eager to minimize the extent of the damage so as to not stress Manny's condition any further. **MIKE LURIE, YOU WERE PRESENT WHEN MIKE EUER CALLED MANNY.** He explained that the power was out but should be restored soon. No buildings were damaged. Everyone was safe and no one was hurt. **ICE WAS BEING PURCHASED AND THE COOKS AGREED TO WORK WITHOUT**

ELECTRICITY. THE GAS WAS STILL ON... In his infinite wisdom, Warren got on the line on an extension phone and proceeded to tell Manny EVERYTHING that happened. This exacerbated Manny's condition, causing him to worry and clutch his chest needlessly. **PURE SPECULATION AS MIKE WAS NOT WITH MANNY. AS I RECALL MANNY WAS GRATEFUL TO THE SENIOR STAFF WHO GAVE THEIR REPORTS.** Mike Euer was trying to downplay the damage in hopes he could have everything cleaned up and fixed before Manny returned to camp.

Then came "the discussion": what do we do now? There were two schools of thought:

1. **THE MAJORITY**: Keep everyone in camp in a controlled, known environment. Provisions were to be made to protect the food. Clean-up activities would start the next morning. All campers and staff would be instructed on safety procedures to avoid downed power lines and watch out for debris. This option made a lot of sense. **COUNSELORS WENT TO TOWN AND BOUGHT MANY BAGS OF ICE TO KEEP VITAL SUPPLIES WELL COOLED.**
2. **ONLY WARREN**: Move everyone out of camp to an alternative site, like Hartman's Creek or something similar. This was Warren's suggestion and he lobbied for it vigorously. There was some very healthy debate on this option. **AS THERE WERE MANY TREES AND POWER LINES DOWN, THIS MADE SENSE TO WARREN.** I made the mistake (or was it?) of interjecting myself into the conversation, making a case for staying put. Warren was having none of it! "Lurie, you don't work here so you have no say". I wasn't about to let him get away with that! I calmly replied "Warren, I have the ear of about a dozen or more families of campers, and I would hate to go back to Chicago and tell them what happened and what you are suggesting". That pretty much ended the debate right there. **MIKE EXAGGERATES AS THE REST OF US ARGUED AGAINST WARREN'S PRACTICAL SUGGESTION.**

I don't recall much after that. ~~Sunday~~ **MONDAY** morning came. I don't recall anything about eating. I left after lunch to head back to Chicago. **I heard later** that all outgoing mail was held.

THAT IS TRUE. WE ENCOURAGED THE KIDS TO WRITE HOME. IN A NORMALLY SLOW MAIL PERIOD, THE ~~SUNDAY~~ MONDAY REST HOUR WAS CONSUMED BY A VIGOROUS MAIL WRITING SESSION. MANY BOYS WROTE TO PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS. I WAS THE DECISION MAKER OF HOLDING MAIL FROM CAMPERS. MIKE EUER AND I WROTE A SHORT LETTER TO ALL THE PARENTS TO BE SENT IMMEDIATELY THAT USED MY PHRASE, "HIGH WINDS."™ I CAME UP WITH THE PHRASE AND CLAIM IT FOR ALL TIME.

NOTE: MY ORIGINAL INCIDENT REPORT INCLUDED THE WORDS "I HEARD LATER" AS SEEN ABOVE. NOT SURE WHY PW FEELS THE NEED TO DEFEND THIS SO VIGOROUSLY, AS I NEVER DID ATTRIBUTE ANY ACTION OR PHRASE OR TERM TO ANY ONE PARTICULAR PERSON REGARDING NAMING THE EVENT.

MY CHAIN SAW WAS KEPT BUSY AND SEVERAL OF THE WATERFRONT STAFF HELPED ME CLEAR THE TREES ON MONDAY MORNING. I RECALL THERE WAS SOME SORT OF INDOOR ACTIVITY AFTER BREAKFAST AND THE CAMPERS WERE NOT ALLOWED TO WANDER THROUGH CAMP.

This was done in order to keep 100 or more sets of parents from frantically calling camp to make sure their little *nebbish* was ok after receiving letters describing horrific images of buildings destroyed (there were none) dozens of campers and staff with grizzly injuries (there were none), and the occasional death or two (again, there were none)! Once power was restored, **ACTUALLY THAT SUNDAY MONDAY AFTERNOON**, a form letter was printed and sent to parents explaining the "high winds" event (this is where the legend started - it was agreed that the word "tornado" would NEVER be mentioned), and that there were some downed branches and a power outage for a few hours. They were told that their child may send home a more graphic letter, but no one was hurt and everyone is ok, and camp is fully functional again.

WE CALLED THE LOCAL (WASHARA) ELECTRIC COMPANY AND BECAUSE OF THE KIDS PRESENT, CREWS CAME OVER ON SUNDAY MONDAY BEFORE NOON.

THE BENCHES AT THE HORSESHOE: THE HIGH WINDS TOOK APART THE RATTY OLD BENCHES THAT HAD BEEN HELD TOGETHER WITH OLD TWO BY FOURS, STUMPS AND BAILING WIRE. I TRAVELED TO CAMP SEVERAL TIMES THE NEXT SPRING TO BUILD THE BENCHES WHICH REMAIN TO THIS DAY!! I SUGGESTED MANNY ADD THE BENCHES TO THE INSURANCE CLAIM, WHICH HE DID.

WARREN, HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE BENCHES BEING PAINTED BY CYJ?!?

Note: AI was not used in the creation of this factual account.

MIKE'S MEMORY AND WARREN'S IS FAIRLY ACCURATE BUT AGAIN, MANY YEARS HAVE PASSED SO...

PAUL IS SENILE.

FURTHER INFO FROM WARREN: OUR CAMP NEIGHBOR, DR. KENNEDY CAME BY AND REMINDED US ALL THAT WE LIVED IN "TORNADO ALLEY" AND WE SHOULD GET USED TO MORE HIGH WINDS IN THE FUTURE.