

Then I got a brainstorm! We called Ted Gordon, a friend who is an Amateur HAM radio operator. He spends the summer in Connecticut, and we prayed he would be home, and able to try reaching Marathon. Teddy, himself, picked up the phone and said he had just completed a radio contact with Gordo Gray in Marathon. The word from Gordo was that the winds in Marathon had been only about 25 knots and all was well in Marathon.

We thanked God, we filled up, we hugged, we kissed. We were overwhelmed with relief!!!

We had emotional reservations, however, since we did not know, yet, if all of the bridges to Marathon were intact, and if, in fact, we could get home in any reasonable length of time. We decided to make plans to return as soon as word leaked through about road conditions to the Keys.

We spent the afternoon in a mixed state of relief, tension, apprehension and hope. To fill the hours, we went shopping at a Costco warehouse store. We bought Vidalia onions, garlic, some canned goods, two flashlights and gifts for the babies from "Mickey Land". Really silly - the onions, etc - since we didn't know how long it would take us to be in a place that we could use them.

The flashlights were important though. One of the many items we did not have, but should have had, on our evacuation list.

We had lunch in Orlando, Dinner at the hotel and then spent the entire evening trying to get word about the Keys and the roads.

There were many hot lies, many broadcasts, but still no news. Finally through one hot line we heard all roads were closed to the Keys.

It was very frustrating. There was much rumor, little fact and virtually no credible information.

Then Mort had a brainstorm! We called the Florida Highway Patrol and asked about a specific road, the Florida Turnpike. They said they just got a telex stating that the Turnpike was open all the way to U.S. 1, and that U.S. 2 was open to people having a reason to be in the Keys.

We made the decision to try for home early in the A.M. That night we actually got some sleep. We were exhausted.

Tuesday
Aug. 25 We have coffee in the room early, check out and are on the road by 8:00. When we go through the toll booth on the Turnpike we are waved through. The State Turnpike Authority has waived the tolls for now. The police officer passing us through says the highway is closed at Miami. Maybe we won't get home today. Still no official word of the Keys.

Note: Everyone in Orlando was wonderful, helpful, empathetic. The hotels put people up in the lobbies free of charge, gave them pillows, blankets and shut down some air cond. so they would not get chilled. When we checked out they noted to us that we were not charged for one emergency number we had called. These were in the dozens.

We were still very tense and anxious about getting through into the Keys. The roadway was a perpetual stream of cars with license plates from Broward County

Dade County and Monroe County (Fla.). Everyone we pass is grim faced and taunted.

Our prayers are very selfish!

At 10:00 on FM 97.3 we hear that U.S. 1 will be open to residents of the Keys, but that we must prove that we are residents and/or have business being there.

Just before we reach Miami we begin to see evidence of what happened. Pine trees are stripped of all bark and leaves, except those at the very tops of the finest branches.

Then we see what looks like a housing development under construction, but it was ^{just} the beginning of the destruction.

We saw a huge tree lifted totally from the ground with a 25 foot \pm soil ball attached. The ball was draped with the entire front lawn like a blanket of sod. The power of this storm was mind boggling. And it got worse!

There was not one property we passed that was not either seriously damaged or totally destroyed. There was a truck sticking into the side of a concrete building as though it had been thrown like a javelin by a giant hand.

The landscape looked like shades of W.W.II bombing.

I cried, or rather filled up. How could this have happened? Could it really have left us unscathed? Would we find all O.K. in Marathon?

Just before Kendall the traffic slowed to a crawl. This gives us an opportunity to take in the devastation. There is no question that it is a shock to our minds and emotional system. It is unfathomable the number of lives this will devastate.

We think the traffic is moving slowly because of an accident, but find that the tie up is caused by a road block at U.S. 1. They are really turning back people with no reason to go to the Keys. We are allowed through and feel we have jumped another

hurtle.

The road to Marathon is empty, but for the few cars admitted. There are no walkers, no bikers, no open businesses. It's like we are returning through a ghost town.

Otherwise the day is beautiful, but certainly the beauty is not being enjoyed by anyone.

We had driven straight through with only one stop in Ft. Lauderdale for fuel and McDonald's take out. We got off the Turnpike, for this, since the lines were blocks long and only some pumps on the pike were working. It took a total of 30 minutes. We would still have been in line on the Turnpike.

We arrived at Faro Blanco Oceanside at 4:00^{P.M.} or 4:30^{P.M.}. The boat looked beautiful. She was fine. We had our home. We greeted her with subdued elation. We were physically and emotionally drained. We were the lucky ones!

The power had been out only intermittently. Even our food was still good. God was so good to us!!!!
I asked Billy Atwood (the only soul left on the pier) over for tuna fish dinner. We had learned a lot. We would evaluate again in the event of another threat. However we have a new revised list of things to take with us, what is important, what we can do without.

Please God, nothing like this ever happens again!

Note: at about Florida City I begin to develop a rash, all over my body. I think it is nerves, but we ^{later} discover that I am probably allergic to the hotel shampoo. I washed my clothes in it in lieu of clothes detergent.

Wednesday, August 26, 1992

Back Home in Marathon

We are drained, the potty is plugged and I'm a rash all over. But we are happy to be alive and have our home safe for the moment. (We did not sleep well last night.)

I stowed the gear we had hauled with us while Most fixed the aft head. Then he got the whaler batteries re-charged. It had rained enough to cause the automatic bilge pump to drain the battery of energy.

The power was on until 11:00 A.M. Enough time for me to wash a load of clothes. Most strung lines on the top deck so that I could hang them out to dry.

The power came on at 8:00 P.M. We ran the genset while it was out. The word is that power will be scarce for months.

The phones came back on about 9:30 A.M. I was able to call all of the kids and Carol & James. I also reached Maw to tell him we were safe, and to run my, by now, very serious rash by him. He immediately put me on Deltason (Cortisone) by mouth.

The word from Homestead is trickling in. Things are even worse than we saw. How is this possible? An entire county wiped out in the matter of an hour or two. Thank God the people left, for the most part.

We had a steak and salad on the aft deck. Not a boat is moving in the harbour. Erie!!

Thursday, August 27, 1992

Marathon

The night was warm. Even though we have power (we are on line with the fish houses where they are trying to save the catch.) we are asked to use no air conditioners. Small sacrifice compared to Dade County's