

Personal Experience

A CANADIAN TORNADO, OR
 "I AM THE PERSON STANDING BEHIND THE CAMERA
 THAT IS IN FRONT OF THIS TORNADO!"

by Kim Temple
 855 Lewiston Street
 Lewiston, Maine 04240

I was vacationing last August in a rustic resort on Big Gull Lake, a 17-mile-long lake in Arden, Ontario, Canada. It was a quiet, rainy afternoon, the kind of day you curl up in front of the fireplace and read a book. Suddenly, we heard a tremendous noise, and one of my companions knew that it was a tornado before he even saw it. It was a sound unlike any we had ever heard before, and it could have been nothing but a tornado.

We saw it touch down on the lake and start to form a "water spout." It danced on the lake for a few seconds, and we could not tell in which direction it was headed. My friends ran out of the cabin to reconnoiter the situation, and I, the proverbial photographer who stops at nothing -- even death -- to get the Shot, grabbed my 35mm camera and began shooting.

I suddenly realized that the tornado was headed directly for the cabin. I ran for the door, only to find that the wind was blowing past it so fast that I was unable to get the door open. I panicked, and in a state of sheer terror, I ran to a back room and crouched behind a wall. There was no question in my mind at that point that I was going to die. I remember thinking that you never know what is going to happen to you that day when you get up in the morning. The cabin shook, but miraculously, the tornado veered off about 20 yards away. When it was all over -- about two minutes from start to finish, although it seemed like an

eternity for me -- my friends and I saw that we were all okay, and we started immediately to see how the other cabins had fared and to see if we could be of any assistance.

Everyone in the camp was in a semi-state of shock. Beautiful, gargantuan trees had been felled and all power lines were down. A car had been wrecked by one downed tree, and there were boats and canoes in the most unlikely spots. One person found his boat up in a tree about 100 yards from the lake.

The only real casualty was the owner of the camp, whose fresh stitches were ripped from her side when she was thrown against a wall. Another person was out sailing in his boat when the tornado sucked the boat into its path. He dove from the boat and stayed on the bottom of the lake for as long as he could hold his breath. When the tornado passed and he surfaced, he found his boat mast facing down and the hull of the boat almost completely submerged.

No one in the area had ever seen or heard of anything like this before, and some of them have been there for over 50 years. Many of us are still shaking.

Kim Temple is a Case Worker for Senator William Cohen of Maine. A lifetime resident of Gardiner, Maine, she has a strong interest in photography, and had her camera and skills on hand when vacationing in Canada.

