## Norval hit hard by the 'storm of the century'

t started as one of those weather forecasts we all pay little attention to, as the residents of Halton Hills tuned into their radios October of 1954.

The reports on CBC Radio Friday, October 15 reported a hurricane, called Hazel, had ravaged the town of Myrtle Beach in South Carolina and was working its way toward east Toronto.

It had already left a trail of destruction and death in its wake, as it came inland, and was pounding its way through Rochester and Buffalo, preparing to cross Lake Ontario, progressing at about 30 miles an hour, assaulting everything in its wake with 100 mile per hour winds and torrents of rain.

Forty-five years later, local residents, especially those in Norval, recall the destruction vividly.

Lifelong Norval resident Julian Reed certainly won't forget Hazel.

"As I came home that weekend, it was raining. I recall Elwood Carney (a neighbor) working at the old dam by the grist mill, and he called me over to help. The water level was rising dramatically, too fast for the sluice gates to handle it, and there was too much pressure to open them, and let the water go.

"Elwood said the gates were jammed," continued Reed who was 18 at the time, "and decided we'd have to dynamite



Hurricane Hazel destroyed the Norval grist mill in 1954. This photo was taken the day after the storm and shows the severe flooding that finished off the mill.

them, to let the water go before it got too high. His plan was to tape dynamite to a conduit pipe, then hold it against the gates, and set off the dynamite electronically."

"Elwood said to me 'somebody's got to hold the dynamite against the gates, Julian, and I can't swim, so I guess it's you," Reed chuckled.

Reed said he and Carney did manage to blow the sluice gates off the dam, and allowed the water to get away.

"But in hindsight, " continued Reed, "It didn't save much, since the water still continued to rise, and eventually crossed the road. By morning, the water had broken over the earthen banks at the mill,

Photo courtesy Mary Maxwell

washing away the northeast corner, tak-

ing out the foundation. It was the end of the old grist mill." Canon Jimmy and Mary Maxwell recall that night well, as they watched

the power of nature ravage their village. "At that time, few people actually locked their doors around here," said Canon Maxwell, "And Julian Reed and I received calls from some of the local neighbors to go into their houses and check their cellars. Julian and I sloshed through that cold water, moving anything electrical out of the way, before the water rose too high."

"The water was rising so fast it was unbelievable," said Mary, "I can still see

it crossing the road right where Cano Country is located now."

The Wednesday, October 20, 195 issue of the Georgetown Herald reporte the local damage, mostly minor, but for some unknown reason, the loss of th Norval grist mill never made the paper

"Firemen, town works staff and hydi employees were local heroes Friday nigh when they were abroad until morning Several cellars were pumped out, son dangerous trees were taken down an hydro wires repaired. Hydro power was o for five hours during the night.

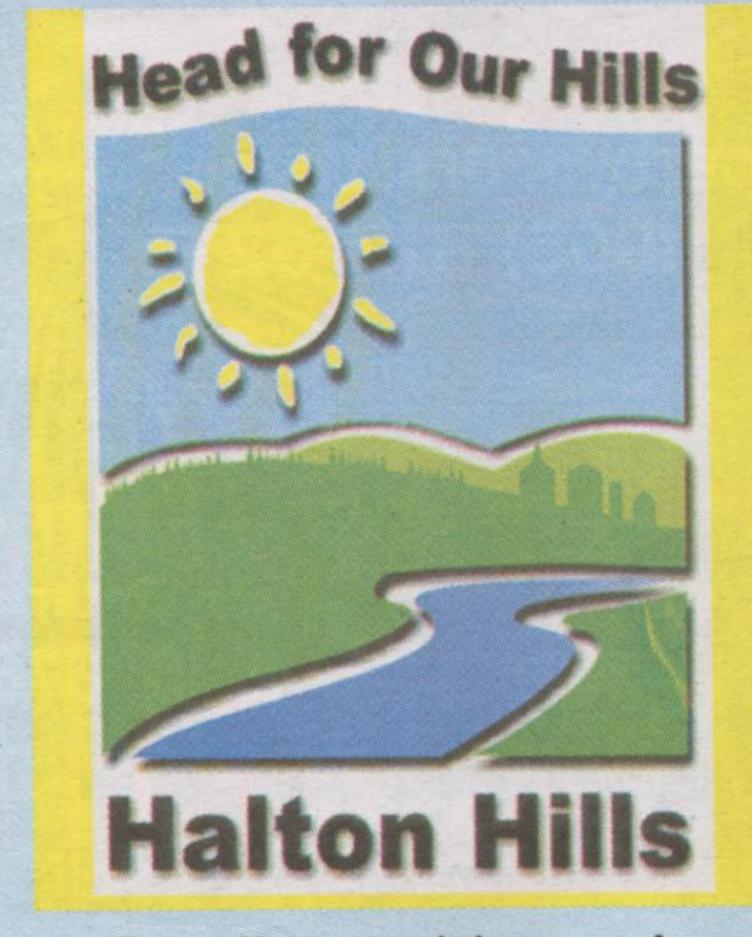
Most serious damage locally was th golf course, where both dams were washe out emptying the ponds with damage dor to the grounds.

At least one local man was a her Harvey Lusty aided in pulling people of from flooded cars in the danger zone belo Norval, and also organized a convoy in the Woodbridge area."

Limehouse area farmer Fred Brow also recalled the storm.

"It rained most of Friday night, simply teemed," he said, "In the morn ing, when we went out to bring th cows in from the field, we discovere one had given birth to a calf during the storm. Both the cow and the calf we in one high corner of the field, su rounded by water. We had to wait for the water level to go down before w could get them into the barn."

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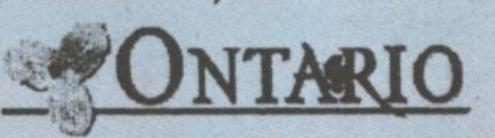
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The house with originally built in 1862 by Dr. James Freeman, who lived with his family and practiced medicine from this location for many years. As time went by, the house changed owners only 5 times, with the longest occupants being the "Sykes" family. The house was purchased in 1985 by Alex and Kelly Trenton, and like the original

owner, they live there and also run their DENTURE CLINIC practice. So this charming old building with lots of character, whose roots began in healing, over 138 years ago, will continue as a health care facility well into the new millennium.

