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Exclusive

## Storm brings 'holiday from hell'

By MIKE RUTA  
Correspondent

Just sit right back and you'll hear a tale—a tale of a fateful trip.

Joann Zadorsky-Ivens of Mus-selman Lake said it was the Hell Holiday. She, husband Grant, and six friends decided to rent a houseboat last weekend and cruise the Trent Waterway. At 7 p.m. last Friday, they left Sunburst Houseboat Rentals at Egan Marine in Omeme, at the southern end of Pigeon Lake.

They had checked the weather forecast: chance of a thunder-storm.

"We watched the sun set and we parked just after dark in a marshy area," said Zadorsky-Ivens. "It was so hot, and there were so many bugs, that we decided to stay up all night and party." The three men in the group went up to the top deck and, trying to beat the heat, took off their clothes. Finding that the bugs weren't so bad anymore, they asked the five women to join them. "We all went up on top of the boat and out of the blue the wind started picking up really drastically," she said, adding that it was about 2:30 a.m. "We knew it was a little more severe when a piece of sheet metal ripped off the boat and flew by us."

Realizing it was time to get below, they began to make their way down the ladder to the main deck. The men, still naked, tried to dress themselves.

Grant was the only person to remain on top when a tornado picked him up and hurled him 150 feet away into the water. The same blast turned the houseboat on its side. The boat's fridge and stove, bolted to the floor, came loose and crashed into the bathroom door.

Disoriented, the party scrambled to find lifejackets, unaware that Grant wasn't with them. Immediately after the first blast, a

second turned the craft upside-down. Windows smashed and water began pouring in.

The party climbed up and out the back door, and hung on to the back of the boat. Zadorsky-Ivens reflected that staying up all

hard to hang on. They yelled for help, but the storm made it hard to hear even themselves. Now all they could do was wait. And wait. As the minutes turned to hours, some suggested swimming for shore. That plan was nixed, and

they waited. "We were trying to keep each others spirits up, telling jokes and singing songs," she said.

When the sun came up it became "amazingly calm" and warmer, and the party knew it was just a matter of time before they would be rescued.

Roughly three and a half hours after the mishap, at 6 a.m., two boats passed them. They yelled and waved but were not seen.

Half an hour later, a rescue boat from the nearby Ennis volunteer fire department arrived and were amazed no one was seriously injured. The party was taken back to the Ennis fire hall.

"They literally gave us the shirts off their backs," said a grateful Zadorsky-Ivens. "We

were so cold."

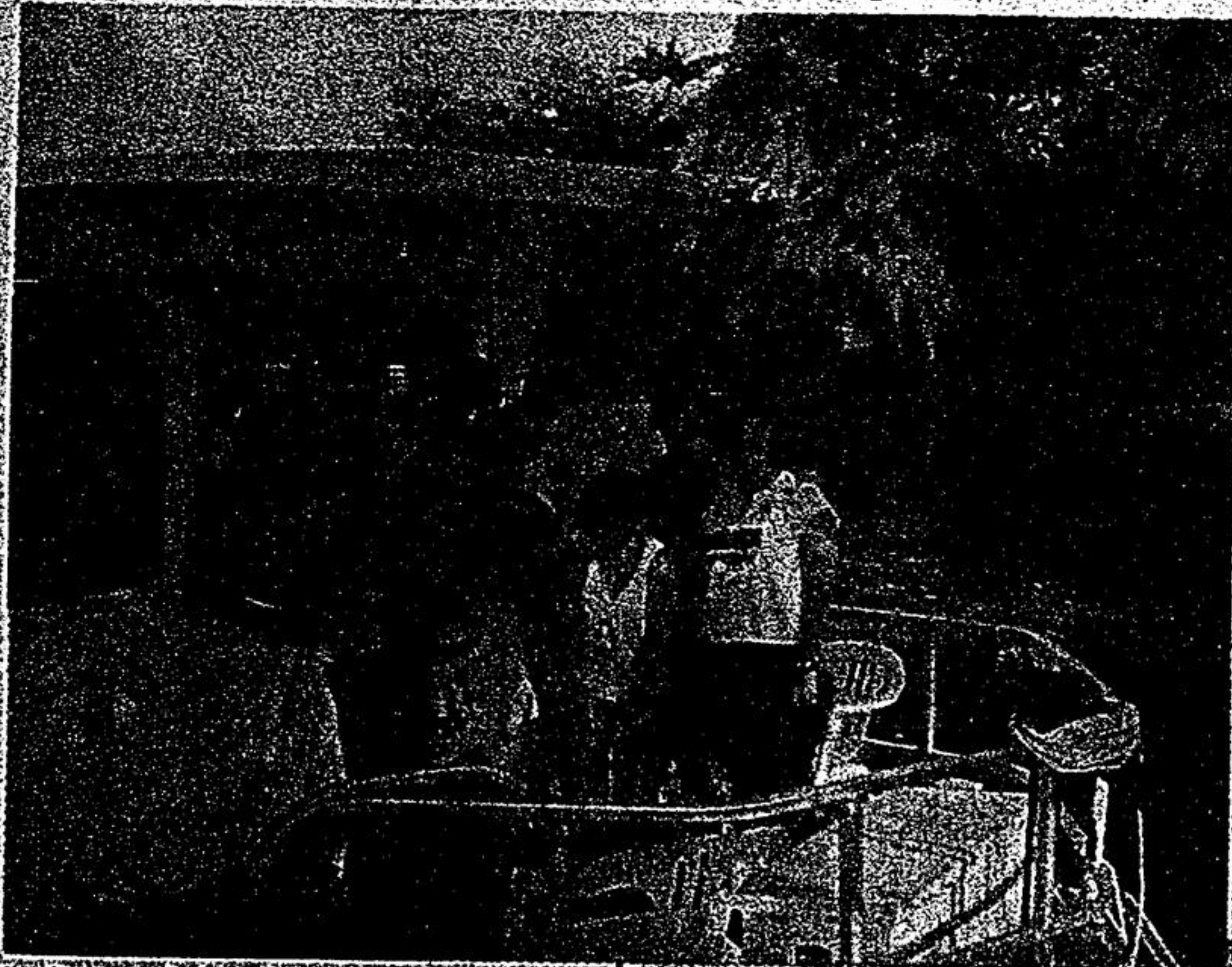
A representative from the houseboat outfitter came and heard their story. He offered them another houseboat.

"Yeah, right!" someone responded in disbelief. The \$75,000 craft was totalled, but the party did get back their \$1,500 deposit. When the boat was raised the next day, the party recovered some of their belongings, but much was lost or ruined.

The outfitter promised them a great deal if they want to try again next year.

After the rescue, their close brush with death hit the party hard.

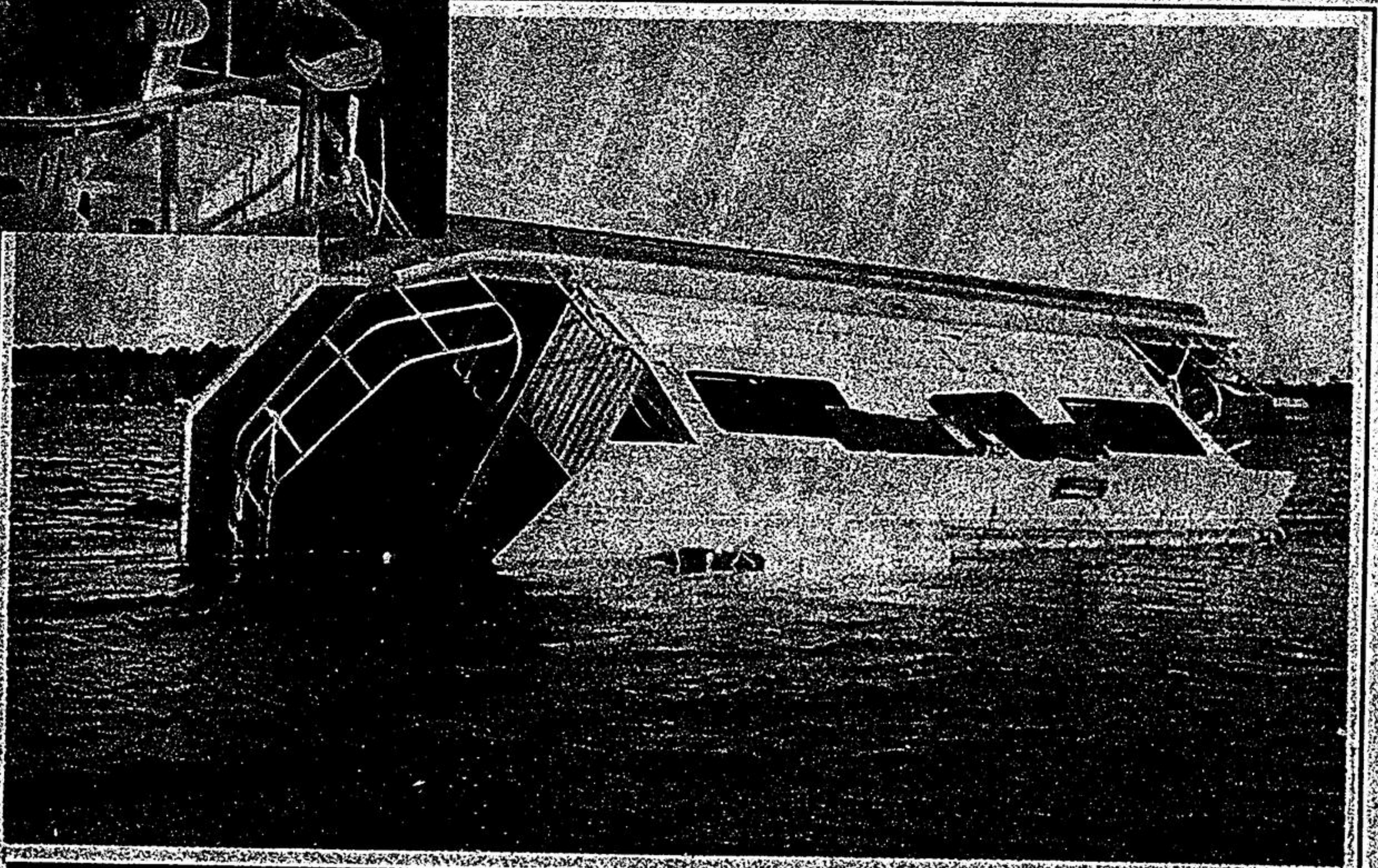
"All of us cried for a day," said Zadorsky-Ivens. "We couldn't believe we were alive."



Left to right, back row, Grant Ivens, Raymond Showers, Steve Mangor. Front row, Jo Ivens, Janis Williams, Liz Williams.

night had been a fortunate decision. "If anybody had been asleep in any of the bunks, there was no way they could have made it out," she said.

Adrift and hanging on, someone thought of taking a head count. Grant wasn't with them. Fortunately, wind-whipped water soon carried him right back to the boat. Grant later said he didn't even have to swim. Sweating from the heat a short time ago, the party was now cold. Most had cuts and bruises. (Grant was spared these minor injuries). To make things worse, the boat's gas tank had burst and they were all floating in gasoline-fouled water. Zadorsky-Ivens said for two hours the rough weather made it



Near tragic holiday

Rescuers took this photograph of the craft the Ivens and their friends were on when a tornado hit, flipping the boat and sending Grant Ivens flying 150 feet into Pigeon Lake.

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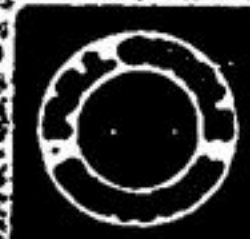
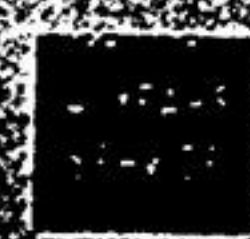
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