Storm Date
Monday. March 7 '88

The Colonist

March 8, 1966

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Freak Twister Rips Village

By MARY TAYLOR

UCLUELET — "I thought the place was coming down around me," said George Hurley. "I backed into a corner and waited for flying glass, but none came."

* * *

That was Mr. Hurley's view of a freak tornado packing 100 m.p.h. winds which hit the village of Uclulet Monday.

It ripped off roofs, sank boats, and did other damage.

Mr. Hurley, the secretary-treasurer of the school district, was inside the school board office between elementary and high schools, when the big blow hit.

An 18-inch fence surrounds the school ground. The fence is topped by 10-inch by 10-inch cedar poles, each 14 feet long.

* * *

The twister picked one of these hefty poles up and slammed it through the window of the athletic hall. One end remained on the window ledge, the other was propped on the refreshment bar.

While school board office windows remained intact, windows were smashed in both schools. The twister picked up gravel from the roof of a school building and hurled it at cars in the parking lot, smashing windshields.

Chief Alex McCarthy, an Indian at Uclulet, didn't realize the tornado had passed close to his beach home.

* * *

"Then I noticed something happening at the wharf," he said. When he went to the waterfront, he found a two-car garage had been picked up and hurled into the water.

Chief McCarthy said "freak winds are not uncommon this time of year."

Several years ago a wind hit his fishing boat and almost lifted it out of the water, as he watched from his living room.

Roofs were torn off two buildings at this village and others damaged. The twister plucked wharf pilings from their anchorages and threw them about.

"Ten-foot-long planks of wood were flying through the air like matchsticks," said Village Chairman Richard W. Poole. "We've never seen anything like this before. The town is in quite a mess."

* * *

Children were attending classes at the village school when the winds struck. A metal spike was driven through a window and lodged in the blackboard before the startled teacher and class.

The Uclulet Athletic Club and village fire hall both lost their roofs.

Monday night the village had a new problem: all the lights were out.

Chief McCarthy was making his way about with a candle.

Mr. Hurley, too, was sitting in the school board office with a candle, waiting for the arrival of school superintendent P. C. Grant, due in on school business.

Mr. Grant left his Qualicum home at 10 a.m. and hadn't arrived at nightfall Monday.

* * *

Mr. Grant was having his troubles . . . more than 11 inches of new snow had fallen at Marion Creek, between the Twin Cities and Uclulet.

Traffic was tied up by cars stuck in the snow.

Late Monday night a plow was pushing slowly toward Uclulet, followed by a string of tired motorists.

The Daily Province

March 8, 1966

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Twister rips Island village

Special to The Province

UCLUELET — Tornado-like winds ripped roofs off two buildings here Monday and flung pieces of a two-car garage out into the bay.

"It was a twister all right," said Village Chairman Richard W. Poole. "It tore about a third of the roof off the Ucluelet Athletic Club building and hurled timber about 10 by 10 and 20 feet long through the window. It landed on the refreshment bar.

"The wind lifted the roof off the firehall, but then dropped it back on again. Of course it snapped all the conduit and wires and things."

At the harbor a number of wharf pilings were snapped loose "probably from boats smashing against them," said Poole.

A metal spike whizzed through a schoolroom window while children were at their seats. It imbedded itself in a notice board on the wall."

"The town is quite a mess," said Poole. "The shingles and debris were falling down on the area for quite a while after it was over."

The spiralling flow of air moved in quickly from the ocean, probably generated by storms off the west coast Vancouver Island community, and rippled through a narrow area of the village.

A number of other buildings are believed to have been less seriously damaged.

"People who watched it through their windows just couldn't believe their eyes," said Poole. "We've never had anything like this before."

In the same area, 10 persons in five cars were stranded overnight Sunday on the Ucluelet-Tofino-Alberni Highway when snow drifted up to six feet deep.

They were rescued Monday by the Alberni Valley Rescue Squad. There were no injuries.

B

TORNADO PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET

F = 1

B.C.

1. DATE AND TIME MARCH 7, 1966 NEAR NOON

2. LOCATION OR PATH (attach map)
UCLUCLET

3. PATH LENGTH [✓] NOT KNOWN [ ] <1mi; [ ] 1-4mi; [ ] 5-10mi; [ ] 11-50mi; [ ] LENGTH IF>50mi

4. PATH WIDTH [U] 5. TORNADO PART OF SQUALL LINE? [ ] YES; [ ] NO; [ ] UNKNOWN:

6. ANY UNUSUAL COLORATION? [ ] YES; [ ] NO; [ ] UNKNOWN

7. ANY UNUSUAL SOUND? [ ] YES; [ ] NO; [ ] UNKNOWN

8. IF ANSWER TO 6 OR 7 YES, ELABORATE;

9. LIST ANY ASSOCIATED PHENOMENA
(Such as hail, vivid lightning heavy rain, no rain, etc.)

10. TOTAL DAMAGE ESTIMATE $ U 11. TOTAL DEATHS NONE

12. TOTAL INJURED NONE 13. TOTAL HOMELESS U

14. LIST ALL REFERENCES

VICTORIA DAILY COLONIST MARCH 8, 1966
VANCOUVER SUN MARCH 8, 1966

15. SUMMARIZE REMARKS PERTAINING TO (a) FUNNEL; (b) INTERESTING OR CAPRICIOUS EVENTS.

(a) no remarks, but the storm ripped through a narrow area of the village, and moved in from the ocean.

(b) Roof torn off the firehall and the athletic club. 10"x10" timbers tossed about. 2-car garage lurked off its foundation into the bay. A metal spike driven through the window of a classroom and lodged in the blackboard.

(9)

Time, date & location of occurrence - just prior to noon March 7, 1966 in Ucluclet, B.C.

Considerable property damage resulted but no personal injuries were reported. From the newspaper accounts this appears to be one of the more potent tornadoes reported in British Columbia. The tornado moved in quickly from the ocean and ripped through a narrow area of the village. Winds estimated at 100 mph tore the roofs off the Athletic Club and the firehall; a 2 car garage was picked off its foundation and hurled into the bay; 10" x 10" timbers of various lengths were freely tossed about; wharf pilings were snapped loose; cars pitted and windshields broken when pelted by gravel picked up from the roof of the school. A metal spike was driven through a window of the school, lodging in the blackboard. Although the class was in session no one was injured, other than some students being showered with glass.

Local inhabitants reported that they had never seen anything like this before. However, an Indian Chief said "freak winds were not uncommon at this time of the year".

This tornado was reported on March 8, 1966 in the Victoria Daily Colonist and the Vancouver Sun.

Storm Date: Monday March 7 '66

The Vancouver Sun

March 8, 1966

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Twister Followed By Power Failure

Roofs Ripped From Buildings In Storm on Island West Coast

Sun Staff Reporter

UCLUELET — This west coast Vancouver Island community was torn by a twister and then paralyzed by a power failure Monday.

The twister, which struck just before noon, tore the roofs off two buildings, showered a classroom of students with glass, and dumped a carport into the harbor.

The power outage came four hours later and left the area without normal heat or light.

"It's a candles-and-fireplace night," said one resident.

The village's recreation hall lost part of its shingled roof in the twister, whipped up by thunderstorms off the coast.

One of the shingles, with an inch-and-a-half nail smashed through a window of the secondary school, showering glass over 20 Grade 9 social studies students.

Teacher John Ayrton said the shingle broke up during its flight across the room but the nail was found later, sticking into the wall on the opposite side of the room to the window.

"The surprising thing is that not one of the children was even scratched," he added.

Village chairman Richard W. Poole said the wind lifted the roof off the firehall and then dropped it back on again.

"We've never seen anything like this before. The town is in quite a mess," he said.

Today, he estimated damage at $20,000.

Poole said 10-foot long planks of wood flew through the air like matchsticks and wharf pilings were flung around.

He said people watching through their windows could not believe their eyes.

Police said a carport, standing on its own above the harbor, was ripped from its foundations and dumped into the water.

The power outage was believed due to a short circuit between here and Port Alberni and a Hydro spokesman said it was expected to be fixed later today.

92 C 1:250,000 CANADA

