

IT'S NOT NICE TO FOOL MOTHER NATURE

by Marie Coady

The deluge of rain that bucketed down on Woburn the weekend of October nineteenth certainly put Woburn on the map. The now famous Scalley Dam at Horn Pond attracted on-site reporters from the major Boston TV news stations. They even kept a dam watch, or is that---a damn watch. Gratefully, the dam held and disaster was avoided.

There were also many other flooded areas that taught us that Woburn's waterways are alive and well in spite of man's efforts to tame them. To say the least, the rain did not stay mainly on the plain. It ran joyously out of the confines of pond, brook, stream and river, flowing into backyards, basements and bungalows.

There was one waterway that took some businesses on Russell Street at Four Corners by surprise when the babbling brook, hidden behind those buildings reared its ugly head. Windy Brook, as it is generally called, does indeed wind eagerly under Four Corners as it wends its way across Lexington Street to Russell Street to join up with a pleasant waterfall that interrupts the pavement in the parking lot at Hair by Tante's beauty salon. This union of waterways was overwhelmed by the torrents of rain and crested at the ceiling of the storage basements of Boyle Insurance, Hair at Four Corners and CS Cruises & Tours.

According to Wanda Perro at Boyle Insurance, the water crested at seven feet, and lapped against the door to her office. She wasn't too concerned about anything in the basement because all her important documents are stored on her hard drive. Her biggest concern was that her hard drive was on the floor under her desk, and she wanted to move it to higher ground. But she wasn't allowed to enter her office, because the heating and electricity had been damaged, and it wasn't safe.

Although Boyle's records were safe, Hair at Four Corners lost most of its supplies along with their new washer and dryer. Those errant appliances were playing bumper cars in the basement as they floated into each other. CS Cruises & Tours lost a substantial amount, including a computer, copier, telephones, desks and a chair. So much in fact that owner Connie Slauenwhite remarked that it was like starting over again. By Tuesday, all the damaged goods were piled up outside ready to be carted away in a dumpster.

Down in the Glenn, the normally peaceful, Windy Brook behind Waverly Road swamped the backyards at the intersection of Waverly and Glenwood Avenue. According to Joyce Goodwin, the whole area became a small lake. Although Joyce had only a few inches of water in her basement, her neighbor, Mary McCormack's basement was filled to overflowing. "I stood here and watched the water lapping against Mary's foundation and knew it must have flooded

her basement." Joyce said.

But Joyce remembers an even worse scenario. A few years back, an oil drum had been carried downstream and blocked the culvert meant to let the water pass through the Glen and along its way to its final destination at Horn Pond. The men of the neighborhood all pulled together, found the offending oil drum and dislodged it from the culvert opening to let the water flow on its way away from home and hearth. Before that happened, kids in rubber rafts and canoes had a wonderful time sailing across the corner of Glenwood and Waverly.

That area where Joyce and Mary came to build their homes was once a small pond where neighborhood children swam, fished, sailed rafts and paddled canoes. It reminded some old-timers of the carefree days at the old swimming hole. One of the original residents even brought out his old scrapbook and showed everyone a picture of himself as a child, shoeless with a fishing pole over his shoulder and headed toward that small pond for an afternoon of daydreaming.

As clever as we are, we still can't fool mother nature. The system of brooks, rivers, streams and ponds that spider their way through Woburn were once the highways of trade and the sustenance of life to the ancient residents of Woburn. They must have stood shaking their heads at us that weekend as we tried to turn the tides and control the flow of what the Indians considered---the rivers of life.

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