

# Surviving Hurricane Carla

**Story by Carol Park**

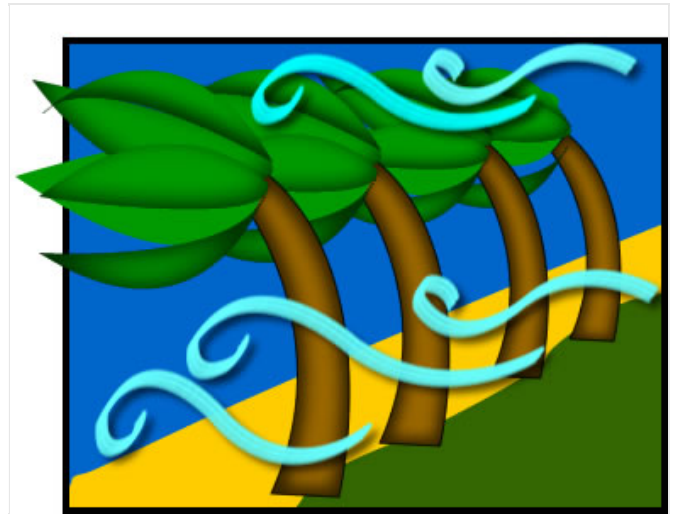
***Do you know how to stay safe? Check out the [hurricane safety page!](#)***

**As you read the story below, think about how you would answer these questions.**

- **How would you feel if you were in this weather event?**
- **Would you do anything differently to make sure you stay safe?**

I was 10 years old in September of 1961 when a storm began to form out in the Gulf of Mexico. The storm grew into a Category 5 hurricane. They named it Carla.

We lived in a Houston neighborhood with small homes and ditches running alongside the streets. In those days, people did not evacuate to flee storms, nor did they board up their homes; they stayed put. My parents decided to throw a hurricane party for the adults and while they were inside playing cards, the kids were outside running wild.

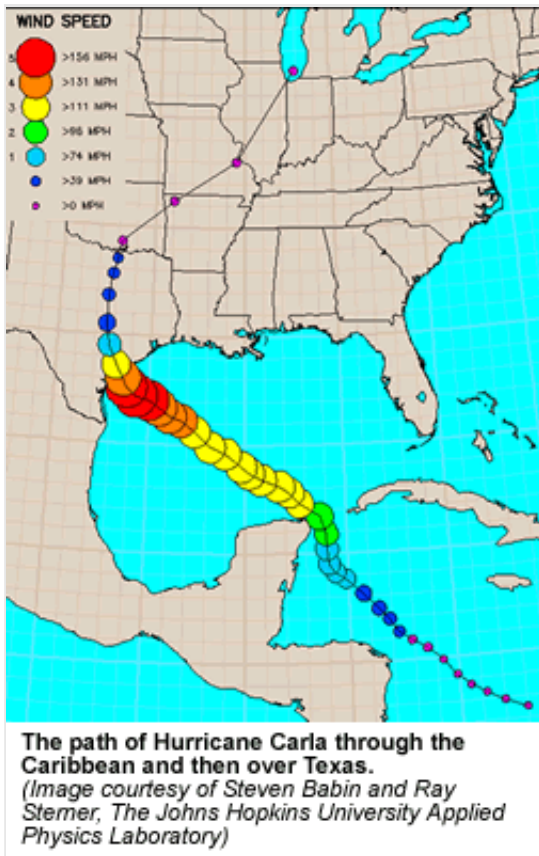




Flooding during Hurricane Carla (Image: NOAA)

It was eerie playing outdoors while the clouds grew dark and swirly. I remember it looked like night, in the middle of the afternoon. It began to rain. The wind began to howl and something in the air made us feel wild and free. We waded in the ditches trying to catch crawfish but when the lightning began to strike dangerously close to the crackle of thunder, my mother called us in. We were drenched. Despite the edge of fear in the air, it was exciting and we all remained in high spirits. I was mesmerized by what the storm was doing outside.

I remember watching out of our picture window. The wind caused the trees and bushes to bend over in funny ways I'd never seen before. The power lines were swinging around. The ditches flooded, then the roads, and then the yards. I recall seeing tiny, brightly colored frogs plastered on the window I was looking through. Was it raining frogs? Or, were the frogs just looking for an escape from the soaked ground?



After some time, everything became still and silent. Even the birds were quiet. The winds calmed, the clouds parted and the sun appeared. The eye of the hurricane was over Houston! We ran outside and I looked up to see blue sky. After about an hour, the clouds darkened and the wind and rain returned. We went back inside and watched the second half of the storm.

We went to bed with the rain beating on the roof and the wind howling. The next morning we awoke to a different world. The sun was shining and the birds were chirping. Tree limbs were down everywhere and the roads and yards had become a giant lake.

Hurricane Carla had left her mark on the landscape and our lives. The best part was that everyone was

safe and the kids got a bonus 3 days off from school!

## FACTS: Hurricane Carla

- September 9 -12, 1961
- The strongest storm to hit the Gulf Coast since the storm of 1919 (Galveston)

- Max sustained winds: over 150 mph
- Rainfall: 10-16 inches over 3 days
- Storm surge: tides reported to be 10'-15' above normal
- Lives lost: 43