

HURRICANE

By James Collins

My brother Don is very stubborn. He is also careful handling his money and his spending. In the fall, hurricanes hit the eastern seaboard quite frequently and do a tremendous amount of damage. This Saturday, the hurricane had already been raging for two hours. The winds were deafening and the rain came in torrents. Don could hear a shingle flapping frantically on the roof above the garage. It was 7 PM and dark as pitch. Don announced to his wife Mary he was going out to fix that shingle, otherwise the wind would whip it off and it could cost a couple of hundred dollars to repair the damage.

Mary made an announcement and said in no uncertain terms, "You are not to go out and try to fix the shingle. You will wait until the storm ends and then you can go out and do the repairs. It won't cost that much."

Don listened, but his personality was such that he had already decided what he was going to do, so he acted on it. Mary was on the phone. Don slipped on his rain gear, went out to the garage and got a ladder, which he propped up, to the roof over the garage. He then took a small ladder so that he could go from the lower roof to the upper roof. The storm was intense and the winds got louder by the minute. Don was not to be discouraged. He got a hammer and some nails and started his ascent up the ladder. When he reached the roof, he drew up the small ladder with a rope and placed it against the side of the house reaching the upper roof from the lower roof. Then he turned to face the second ladder and a torrential gust of wind caught his body and blew him off the roof towards the driveway. He could not reach anything and was airborne like a frisbee.

When he awoke, he was in great pain lying in a clump of bushes. His left leg was immobilized, his right arm damaged, and the pain in his ribs made it difficult to breathe. Don tried to holler for help but the sound of the wind drowned out his voice. He passed out. When he came to, nothing had changed except he was now totally wet inside his rain gear because he was lying in a deep puddle. Don again tried hollering for help and after a few minutes realized he was on his own. With great difficulty, he pulled himself along the ground, using his left arm and resting on his right leg. He reached the front porch and was able to drag himself up the six inches to get on the flat surface. Now he had to pull himself the additional 18 feet to the front door. Lying on the porch, he used his right arm to knock on the lower edge of the door.

Mary heard the knock on the door and was surprised because the storm was so violent she could not imagine who was calling. Holding the door against the wind, Mary opened it a crack, looked out, saw nothing, and slammed the door closed. As she turned away from the door, she again heard a knocking. The second time she opened the door; she looked down and found Don lying on the porch. It took 20 minutes for the ambulance to

show up, after she made the 911 call, because there were so many other emergencies and accidents in the town.

The next day, Don was sitting in the family room, which is three steps down from the front door of their split-level. He had a cast on his broken leg, a pair of crutches, and a sling for his injured arm. The ribs also had tape on them, but the tape was not visible. After every hurricane, the weather is clear as all of the moisture and particulate matter has blown away. This was such a day. Then the doorbell rang and Mary went from the kitchen to open the front door. She conversed with a man and then called Don.

"Don, get up here. It's important."

"Mary, I've got the cast on the leg, my arm in a sling and I need to use these crutches to get up the stairs. It's a real job for me to walk those three steps. Whatever it is, it can't be all that important, you can tell me about it later."

"Don, it is that important. You have to come up here, and you have to come up now!"

"Oh, all right. But you got to gimme a couple of minutes as I have to get everything together and I'm not that steady on my feet."

"You have two minutes. Get up here now."

Don juggled all the paraphernalia, stood up, steadied himself, and then started up the three steps holding onto the short railing. When he reached the door, he saw a stranger standing outside talking to his wife who was inside the door.

"Okay, Mary, here I am. What's so important that I had to get out of the chair and struggle up the stairs?"

"Sir, would you please tell my husband, what you told me."

"Well sir, I am a roofer and I am going around to all the houses in the neighborhood, and I will repair any shingle damage on your roof for \$25."

Mary never let Don forget this story. She used it as an example of his stubbornness and of what he risked to save \$25.

THE END