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Tracy - a life changing experience

by **TONI HARPER**, 8 months ago

My experience of Tracy was one of terror, fear and relief that we actually survived.

Like all Darwinites we were sceptical that Tracy would hit. I was 11 at the time and now I am 51. I have to say that I can remember every sound, every sense of fear and every sense of relief as if it was yesterday. We were watching t.v. until the power went out. At that time my mother and step-father said time for bed. Little did we know that we wouldn't even have a bed in the morning. As I was scared, I made a bed on the floor of their room. The house was a high set, in Milner. As the wind intensified I felt a pinching sensation. That was the house lifting off the pillars. This was about 11.00pm. We heard a crash as the guttering flew through my bedroom window onto my bed. Luckily I wasn't in it. That was when we went to the bathroom. The wind became stronger, we heard our above ground swimming pool collapse I can remember mum saying "I hope no one is down there, they will get wet". Little did she know. We heard the roof go, that's when we really started to get scared. When the eye came over, we walked out of the bathroom and saw that walls were gone in both my room and my mothers. We walked through the darkness to the front door. I do remember looking up and seeing stars, and then realising we were actually in the lounge room. The next door neighbours (who had a brick house) were outside and reassured us that we were doing fine, and to just ride it out in the bathroom. They didn't want to tell us that our house was peeling like a banana. The stairs were already gone but it was so dark that we couldn't see. We returned to the bathroom to endure the fury of the other side of the eye. From 1am to 7am we said the Lords prayer, that was all we could do. In the morning, walking out of the bathroom to find no walls, and being able to see straight into town was so surreal. We could actually see the Travelodge green roof. We walked around in a daze. The screams of our neighbours at the rear when they discovered the death of their mother, the grief of a family friend when we found out his wife had been killed by debris which cut her in half ... these are the memories that stick in my head. There was a small shining light... one of our neighbours who had come through unscathed had crawled under our debris to rescue a teddy bear that I had had since I was born - I still have Ted today. Unfortunately the neighbour ended up having a huge cut on his leg as a result of his act of kindness. Like all Darwinites, we ended up at an evacuation centre. We were evacuated out, but our Hercules was struck by lightning and had to return back to Darwin. Unfortunately my mother took ill on that flight and we were stuck in Darwin for another 10 days. Major Stretton toured the RAAF hospital where we were and my mother, bless her soul called him Padre, she had no idea he was co-ordinating the Darwin Evacuation. Sadly mum passed away in 1975. Later in life, I managed to obtain a copy of the NT museum Cyclone Tracy Video. Every Christmas since, I play that DVD to remind myself and my family just what I actually went through. It makes you not take things for granted and also not be attached to material things. You can wake up one day and it can all be gone. Even though I have left Darwin, it will always