Lightning strikes beech tree; S. Manitou storm a ‘dandy’

The storm was approaching the island when I was at the station, and already the lightning was silhouetting the pines behind the building and thunder was rumbling in the distance. It was only a matter of minutes before the first bolts of lightning lit up the sky, and I knew that I had to get under cover.

The wind was picking up and the trees were swaying violently. I grabbed my rain jacket and headed outside, not caring about the wind and rain. I ran as fast as I could to the station, my heart pounding with fear.

As I reached the station, I saw that the windows were shattered and the roof had been torn off. Debris was scattered everywhere, and the smell of smoke filled the air. I knew that I had to get out of there as fast as possible.

I ran back out to the beach, where I found a group of people who had also been caught in the storm. We were all shaken, but no one was seriously hurt.

The sun was just coming up as we surveyed the damage. The trees behind the station were all bent and broken, and the windows were shattered. It was a scene of destruction and chaos.

Looking back on that day, I realize how lucky we were. The lightning could have struck us, and the wind could have caused even more damage. But we were safe, and that’s all that matters.

Lightning will probably stay that way. Coast Guard officials said yesterday that the “dog detectors” on the horn some 3 miles out in Lake Michigan are working, and it won’t be replaced or repaired anytime soon.

SLEEPING BEARS Dunes National Lakeshore might be exempt from proposed National Park Service restrictions on sportfishing — depending on how the rules changes are interpreted. The proposed regulations may be varied by order of the Secretary of the interior, national parks and lakeshores according to a Park Service official. (from replies by Jay Vander Jagt (R-Cadillac).

Replacement of boards in the Leland to raise the level of Lake Leelanau has resulted in the station and heading down the plank towards the lake. I thought it would be too dangerous.

I scrambled down the steep stairway and hustled toward the station. After swinging a hook of cane that Crain had stored away behind a plate in the cupboard, I gripped up in my rain gear, hip boots and over-coaster. Then I slung the Newman clock and Coston signals under my rain jacket before leaving the station and heading down the plank towards the lake.

Before I reached the store the wind hauled into the southwest and came in strong. Great sheets of lightning slashed through the dark sky as was followed seconds later by crashes of thunder that jarred the earth. “This,” I thought, “is going to be a dandy”!

My lantern flew out before I reached the door. I stayed beside the door, watching the lightning signals building and hit the beach. I had experienced many storms while on patrol, but this one as I braced into it, seemed to be more violent than any of the others. The sea picked up rapidly and I was glad I wore my boots because the sea were half way to my knees at times. I sought higher ground away from the surges, but the battling was more difficult in the soft sand.

Then the rain came down in buckets full and was driven almost horizontally before the wind. It came in under the sou'easter and ran down my neck. It was most uncomfortable, to say the least! Lightning rent sky almost constant-ly and the thunder crashed contin- uously.

As I rounded the first point the wind seemed to increase in intensity. The sun of the stronger gusts picked up the wet sand and whipped it into my face and hands with such force that I had to turn my back to windward. “Many dear, “I thought. ‘What a storm! I feared for my life, my warm, dry beach-bank, when a tremendous burst of lightning exploded all around me. The ensuing crash of thunder deafened me, and before I knew anything, I was knee-deep in sand and heading toward Sleeping Bear Point. Believe me, I was scared stiff! After collected my senses, I contin-ued toward the key post, hoping fin- ally to find that I couldn’t sud- denly ex- terior lightning blast like one that had stunned me. The key post was finally reached. I marked the dial in the Newman clock and stood back towards North Island. The sparks had begun to fly out of one mouthpiece of the lookout phone, as it often did during severe electrical storms, he had run for the shelter of the station.

Upon reaching the station, I found hand; that had run for the shelter of the station.

The next afternoon I hiked down to find out, if I could, where the lightning had struck the night before. I took the old path that led through the woods next to the beach. I reached the old Haas place and crossed the clearing. The old apple trees were all intact. It hadn’t struck there. The path then led through a stand of large beech trees, and it was among them that I found out what had happened.

A huge bench, four feet or more in diameter, lay in shreds all over the woods. Forty sticks of dynamite couldn’t have warded more help.

Pieces of wood and shattered limbs lay everywhere. Some were lying fifty yards from where the remnants of the riven tree trunk. The big tree had stood not more than a hundred feet from the beach. I remained there for several minutes, pondering the might of that one tremen-

ous lightning bolt that had destroyed that big tree in second, and just about flattened the lifeline of our own.

SOUTH MANITOU crew members (from left) were Alfred Anderson, Theodore Crain, Clifford Deering, and parked the patrol boat at the Signals station and heading down the plank under my rain jacket before leaving the store. The light breeze had already been joined by crashing thunder before it. Before Al had turned in. How good it felt to slide under those warm, dry sheets! And there I was, standing not more than a hundred feet from the beach.

I was down the back of the Light and it was among them that I found out what had happened.

S. Manitou storm a ‘dandy’