

RADLEY GOURZONG, RANGER

I went to sea, out to the Miskito Bank to catch turtle and hawksbill and nurse and shark hides. We went as what we called, Rangers, They put us out on Cays from where we would go out and set our nets and we stayed there on a Cay named Cocorocuma. We left here in June and we went out there and stayed out there for the season until September. They would try to bring you back home before 22nd of September because of the type of weather you could have.

You see, in those days it was only sailing boats going to those places and if she didn't get a fair wind to go and to come, you were in trouble. The sun and moon crossed the equatorial line and the wind usually used to go to the Northeast and stay there. It was alright to go to the Cays but it was very much against you coming back. You had to beat, what they call, tack, up and down from out there to come back.

So, in 1941 the boat that came out to pick us up, to bring us back to Cayman was the Majestic No. 2 and Captain Steadman Bodden was the captain of her. Captain Delmore Conolly, which was Corinne Conolly's father, was lost and Captain Steadman's son was lost. But the man that saved our lives, he was named Eddylou Dixon. There wouldn't have been a soul to tell the tale of the Majestic No.2 if it hadn't been for that man, Eddylou Dixon. He was a hero because when he went to the captain and told him how the weather was and that his barometer had gone crazy, that the barometer couldn't register it. He told him, he say, "Well, Captain, I am going ashore." That time we was anchored under the lee of the Cay, Serranas. And he said to the Captain, he say, "Captain, I am not staying aboard this boat, you hear, to be tossed about by the winds and waves. I'm going ashore."

Captain Steadman told him, he say, "You're not allowed to take a boat off this vessel's deck. I'm Captain here and you ain't taking no boat." He say, "Captain, my father, Abener Dixon, has a boat on here and you are not going to stop me from taking her off. I take her and that's the boat my father used. And he did it and he went around and spoke to practically every one of the Rangers that was on there, "Let's go ashore." Well, the few decided to do it, but the majority didn't. And we went ashore.

Eddylou Dixon, Seaman

And when we were on our way to Serrana Cay, I said to the Captain, I said, "Captain, but tell me something, what about this weather? I all don't look good to my eye." He say, "Dixon, what you think of it?" I say, "I think it is a storm." He say, "Pshaw, that ain't nothing, that's squall right around the mainland."

And I say to him, I say, "Captain, no, you not telling me this, I been in too much storm. This is a storm, and I tell you, Captain, it's a bad one, too, in my belief." And he laughed, because we was going out to that cay then and the wind was from the Nor'west. It is not usual to have that kind of wind at that time of year. And he going out there, so I said to him, "Captain, you still saying this weather is like that because it is around the mainland?" He say, "Yes, Dixon, that's what I say."

So around Four o'clock that morning, I hear this footstep coming on the deck, forward, and I imagined it was the captain or the mate, but I didn't get up. And I heard when he looked down in the foc'sle and said, "Dixon, Dixon!". I say, "Yes, Captain, what happen?" He said, "Gracious God; it is a storm approaching, and it's right here, and it's a dangerous one." I say, "Well, Captain, you're late in

knowing that." Majestic was pitching forward out of sight. Well, we got up. I said, "Well, what we going to do?"

He say, "We going to put out an anchor...the other anchor, the big anchor."

I say, "Okay." We got ready and we hauled her up 15 shackles from that anchor iron and we let a'go the big anchor. And when we let go that big anchor, I said to him, "How much you going slack her?" And he say, "We going to slack her off 40."

And when we did that, I said to him, "Well, Captain, what else you going to do?" He say, "Well, put a motion reef in your standing jib." And, we also put a double reef into the foresail. We went to work when we did that, we needed all hands to help doing that. And when I was done, the mate was there but he wasn't doing nothing because he was an old man and he was frightened. So, all the trouble came to me.

When we done that, I say, "Captain..." it's morning now, around about nin o'clock. "what else you going to do?" He say, "See what I mean, Dixon, there ain't nothing else for us to do now but stand by."

I say to him, "Captain, I ain't going to be here while there is one tree holding on that cay there that God Almighty grows there that one tree is worth a thousand vessel masts that are standing on the water in this weather."

He say, "well, what you going to do?" I say, "I'm going ashore." So, all of my men from East End and some from West Bay, agreed to go ashore with me.

Radley Gourzong

It was my brother-in-law, Varian Pierson, and myself and two brothers from down on the cliff, Gracey Rankine and the other one is Logan Rankine, well, the crowd of us got into the boat and we statted to go ashore and Eddylou had to make a second trip aboard the boat which was very dangerous, the sea was rough, the sea was mounting high. The vessel, she was rolling so that we couldn't go ov.er the side to get into the boat. We had to go over the stem, so that was how bad it was. It was a Catboat. And then he got some of the West Bayers to come along and 19 of us was saved... and 22 went along with her. They went down with her. .

You see, Captain Steadman said that he had ridden out worse weather out on the Miskito Bank than that that we were in. But, we could see by experience that it was getting worse and worse and worse all the time. It was a hurricane. This was the hurricane of the 27th day of September, 1941.

You see, it was the length of time that he came to get us, it was too long. And this catastrophe came on and we, the Lord help us, we went ashore and after the second time and he came back it was just like a door locked, it was just like saying, "Well, no more.."

It became so rough on the West side of that Cay that we had to take our boats off the beach and launch them into the mangroves and we were up among the mangrove trees. The Cay overflowed and where we were when the water subsided our boat was cotched up on Red Mangrove roots. We were in the boats all that night. We was in the boats, and the water. I sat almost to my waist in water that whole night. It rained so. And even though we had a sail and we tried to cover the: boat, it couldn't

cover the whole thing. That was from Saturday to Sunday morning.

We had tied the Catboat on to the mangrove trees and when the water came through the cay and went out to the other side of the cay, it just sweep us to and fro, but we never moved out of it. And the next day, Sunday morning, when we got our boat back to the beach, we looked down to where the Majestic was, when we saw her last, but we only saw the masts and we wondered then that she had gone down where the masts were. But, when we went there, and the weather was very good then, wee come to find' out that it was only the masts there. The boat was gone. They had chopped out her masts and ba!! tried to run before the storm. She had succumbed on a reef.