

The bad blood between Cuba and the U.S. reached tragic heights with the recent hurricane. Information has surfaced that officials of the United States Weather Bureau have felt disdain for the Cuban meteorologists for some time. One could suggest that the problem stemmed from U.S. scientists recognizing that Cuba might be better at predicting hurricanes than the bureau. This would not be a surprise to anyone who knows the history of hurricane prediction. The Cubans pioneered the art. Still, tensions remained high and the U.S. Weather Bureau under the leadership of Willis Moore seemed to want hurricanes all to itself.

In Havana, William Stockman spent a good part of the summer of 1900 insisting that the "poor, ignorant natives (of Cuba) were too easily panicked," and suggested that restraint be used when issuing hurricane warnings in order to avoid causing "unnecessary alarm among the natives."

As a result, on August 28, 1900, Stockman's recommendations were put into place; Moore instituted a ban on Cuban weather telegrams and discontinued all transmission of storm reports from Havana. Not surprisingly, the Cubans took offense. How could the U.S. disregard the opinions and observations of the Cuban hurricane experts especially at the peak of hurricane season? It was as if the Cuban and U.S. weather bureaus were in a fierce boxing match that eventually became a stand-off. The U.S. was so opposed to the way Cubans did things that they took special pains to avoid using the word "hurricane," except when absolutely necessary or when stipulating that a particular storm was *not* a hurricane. What nonsense!

So, it's not surprising that the stand-off turned deadly. Between noon and 8:00 pm on Monday, September 3, Cuba received over 10 inches of rain. The rain kept coming and by Friday, the total reached almost 25 inches. There was "energy" in the air, as the Cubans called it. It was this "energy" that ultimately destroyed the lives of so many in Galveston.

If only the U.S. would have been good sports in the meteorology ring and listened to their Cuban colleagues!

ADVICE FROM MISS NICE

Dear Miss Nice,
I am writing you with an urgent concern. My brother, a respected Senior member of the United States Weather Bureau, recently experienced a most devastating loss in the Galveston hurricane. He is now a widower due, in part, to his stubborn insistence that his home just blocks from the beachfront, was the safest place for his family. I, on the other hand, urged him to bring his wife and daughters to the weather station where we both work. It is a well-constructed brick building that I believed was far more likely to withstand the storm. My brother lost his wife when their house collapsed and she and the rest of the family, including myself, were thrown into the raging waters. My brother and three young nieces almost drowned but were able to hold on to debris which served as a make-shift raft. The experience was beyond harrowing for all of us. Now I fear my brother is pained by my presence as I remind him of his tragic decision; the weather station sustained only minimal damage just as I predicted. He has arranged for me to be demoted in my position here at the Weather Bureau which has resulted in a sizable pay cut. He barely speaks to me.
What shall I do?

Signed,

Sad, Distraught and Soon-to-Be Broke Brother



Dear Miss Nice,

I am a respected shop owner here in Galveston. While I was able to move some of my merchandise to safe ground once Isaac Cline issued a formal warning on the afternoon of September 8, the bulk of the items in my store were damaged or swept away by the fierce wind and water. The store, itself, will need extensive repairs. As I have always been one to be concerned about my community, I want to help my fellow Texans by keeping my prices affordable, especially on staples such as flour. However, I am worried that I will not be able to support my family if I don't raise my prices some. I have already lost so much! But, then again, everyone in my immediate family survived so I have much to be grateful for. The future of my position in Galveston depends on me making the right decision at this trying time.
What shall I do?

Signed,

Concerned and Confused

MISS NICE RESPONDS

Dear Sad, Distraught and Soon-to-Be Broke,
Your tragic tale is one of many that I have heard since that fateful September day one week ago. It is true that all of us in Galveston are plagued by doubts and misgivings. What could we have done differently to have averted the death of destruction that is now our legacy? Give your brother time. Not only must he feel responsible for the death of his wife, but also the tragic loss of so many lives. The hurricane of 1900 will go down in history as a warning for all time. It shows us what can happen when human arrogance meets nature's last great uncontrollable force.

Signed,

Miss Nice



Dear Concerned and Confused,
I forwarded your letter to Clara Barton, leader of the Red Cross disaster relief effort. Although there has never been a hurricane as deadly as the one that all of Galveston just experienced, she feels that the concern and confusion you express are normal and represent the thoughts of so many who have suffered over this past week. Her recommendation is to not raise your prices. You will earn your reward from your loyal customers and the wider community. Donations are coming in from all parts of the country in amounts big and small: Millionaire William Randolph Hearst gave \$50,000, while the Kansas State Insane Asylum sent \$12.25. Clara assures Miss Nice that you benefit directly from the generosity of others by being generous yourself.

Signed,

Miss Nice

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