

There are moments when we know  
our lives will be **forever changed.**

**Each morning when I walk my dog, I'm reminded of the devastation that Hurricane Ian brought to our community nearly 2 years ago.**

It took me almost 2 years to share my experience and my story. Now I'm choosing to not only share my story, but to help you and other communities prepare for the future. To help you prevent and minimize destruction from natural AND man-made disasters.

***Like our deteriorating roads, aging utility infrastructure, and neglected properties that don't fit today's places to live, work, and play.***

It's time to start investing **IN** the communities we live. **To redevelop** neglected buildings, **to become** the business owners, and **to support** our local businesses so that the money stays in our communities allowing the local governments to update the public infrastructure—**to create** a self-sustaining ecosystem within each Local Community.

With Local Real Estate Developers, we are helping ordinary people become the local developers in their community. With I&D Consulting, we are partnering with local governments to empower them to build public-private partnerships with locals.

***Together we can and WILL make a difference.***



Follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#)  
[@localrealestatedevelopers](#) to learn more!

# THE PRICE OF PARADISE

A Community CLOSE-UP

**HURRICANE IAN:** Rebuilding Through Hope, Resilience, and Community



*Kristi Kandel*



I am sharing my own Hurricane Ian experience in this book to help inspire you and your community to tap into the **power of hope** and discover positive ways to talk to one another about grief and loss. I genuinely hope my story **helps your community begin to heal** and find ways to **transform** whatever happened so that you can **work together to create a stronger and more positive future**.

As this story demonstrates, communities benefit when they become better prepared physically, logistically, and of course, emotionally for future challenges. No matter the size, location, or unforeseen circumstances, **every community is unique and can find its own ways to recover and heal**. By coming together with **unified compassion, resilience, and hope** every community can begin to rebuild after a natural disaster, work to re-frame its losses, and reconnect with one another.

As my story shows, I clearly understand that after a traumatic disaster, **what once was will never be again**. I clearly understand that for everyone involved and impacted by the circumstance, **the road back will be long**—longer than anyone might foresee. Every community will be in it for the long haul. It won't pass quickly, we can't run from what happened, and the fix is most likely not an easy fix. Recovery will be a long game. **Resilience and healing will continue over time**.

I've chosen this time to share my own story because so many more people are living in areas that have high risks of fires, floods, hurricanes, and other natural disasters. Add to the natural disasters that are beyond our control the many disasters we CAN prevent and we risk facing expanded devastating disasters—everywhere. This is why **my company focuses on revitalizing smaller and medium communities** to help communities to discover their resilience to aging infrastructure AND natural disasters. My team and I help communities create **self-sustaining ecosystems to become self-reliant** without needing to be at the mercy of outside help.

**We strive to empower local entrepreneurs and investors to transform underutilized properties into awesome community assets that benefit all.**

We build and re-purpose existing buildings so that local business owners can operate their businesses. Moving forward, we plan to create a funding mechanism that allows the locals to also INVEST their dollars into locally-run projects and to bring communities together. By working with investors, developers, and business owners it is our goal to keep the money local to create a self-sustaining ecosystem. This is MY example of how learning from my own devastating experience can help other communities. **I hope that my story will have a positive impact on your community.**

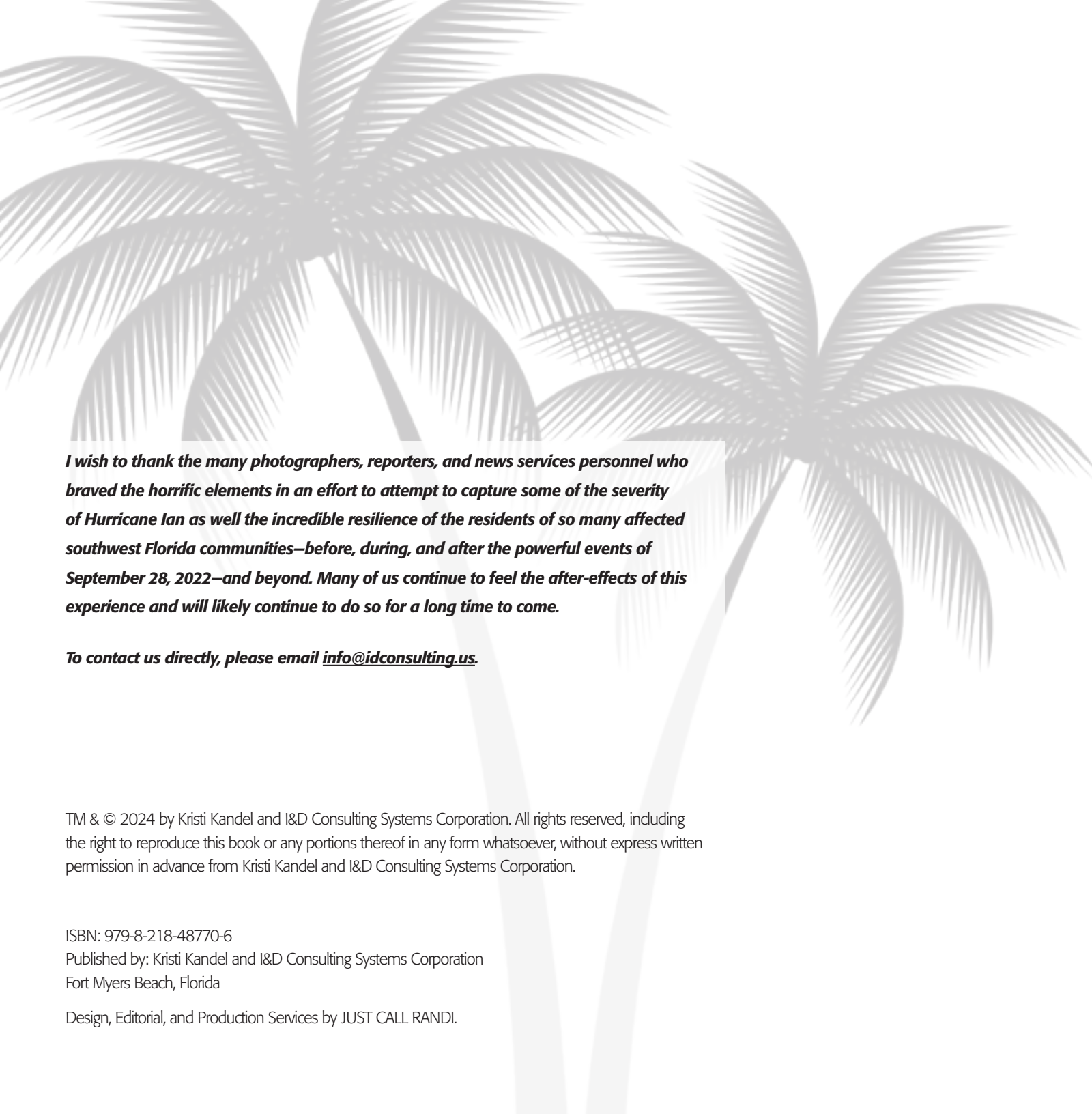
# THE PRICE OF PARADISE

*A Community CLOSE-UP*

**HURRICANE IAN:** Rebuilding Through Hope, Resilience, and Community







***I wish to thank the many photographers, reporters, and news services personnel who braved the horrific elements in an effort to attempt to capture some of the severity of Hurricane Ian as well the incredible resilience of the residents of so many affected southwest Florida communities—before, during, and after the powerful events of September 28, 2022—and beyond. Many of us continue to feel the after-effects of this experience and will likely continue to do so for a long time to come.***

***To contact us directly, please email [info@idconsulting.us](mailto:info@idconsulting.us).***

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### ***Excerpts from My Journal***

*I had been through enough traumatic experiences in my life to know that emotions can be forgotten—or buried too deep to recall. So I wrote. Daily. On many days following the disaster I had to force myself to write, capture, and record what I saw, felt, and heard. I also knew I needed to go back and capture the normalcy of the BEFORE—so that the devastation of the DURING and AFTER wouldn't permanently destroy my perception and hope of restoring our once thriving community. I knew that in order to help others face their future community challenges, I HAD to remember. Someone wise once told me, "You can't learn from a past you don't remember."*

*Each day when I leave my house I'm reminded of the impact of Ian. The lives lost, dreams dashed, and hope all but destroyed for what the future would hold. It took me almost 2 years to revisit my journal. I couldn't bear to look at these words; the pain was still too new, too raw. When I finally had the courage to reread my story the words immediately transported me back to those tragic fall days in 2022. I've worked diligently to process my experience and **NOW it is time.** I am ready to share the story of our community's resilience and my own personal journey so that we can empower others to face your unique community challenges together.*

*In my work, I have the honor of collaborating with many communities, some similar to my own in Fort Myers Beach, and others very different—on the surface at least. A small farming town in Ohio is so different and so similar to a small town in California. Both are eager to breathe new life into long dormant buildings and demonstrate resilience when faced with natural disasters and aging infrastructure challenges. Communities of all sizes suffer losses, attempt to recover, refresh, and renew our communities with pride, resourcefulness, collaboration, and determination.*

*While your community may not have experienced the devastation of a hurricane, every community experiences hardship. I'm sharing my story so you feel less alone and believe that **you can rebuild, repurpose, and re-imagine a better, bigger, future for your own community.***

*I hope you will share your community's story with us. I look forward to it. Until then, here is my story. BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER Hurricane Ian hit Fort Myers Beach in 2022. And yes, I'm OK—I'm even better than OK. **Now.***

—Kristi



SEPTEMBER 18, 2022

*It was the Sunday  
before I left for  
Los Angeles—and  
I was craving  
an adventure.*

***It was early September 2022, the Sunday before I left for Los Angeles—and I was craving an adventure.*** I took my WaveRunner® out for a quick spin from my home in Fort Myers Beach, Florida. The weather was postcard-worthy and sultry—the summer heat lingering as the ever-so-slightly cooler temperatures of autumn slowly crept in.

Time got away from me and my forty-five-minute “quick spin” became two wondrous hours that slipped gracefully and gradually through my fingers. It’s not difficult for that to happen on the water. The picturesque Florida coastline provided a stunning backdrop for my ride.

I soared across the natural inlets, feeling more alive and energized than I remembered having felt for a very long time. I felt incredibly free, zipping up and down the Gulf of Mexico from Fort Myers Beach to Naples. The water was vast and mesmerizing. As I rode, savoring my freedom, I also remained mindful of its power and unpredictable mystery.

As my awareness of the time increased, I made my way back toward Fort Myers Beach, reluctantly ending my joy ride. At the north end of the beach, I spotted a pod of dolphins cruising right next to me. It was one of those rare synchronistic moments in life—a sort of divine timing that I did not take lightly. I felt at one with nature and everything around me. I had finally received the rejuvenating adventure I was craving so deeply.

***In my carefree replenished state while I cherished my experience, I had no idea of its rarity.***

***Little did I know that this would be the second to last time I would ever ride my freedom-filled WaveRunner®.***

I headed to Los Angeles the week of September 19th to have work meetings, see friends, and participate in a collaborative entrepreneurial program\* I’d joined earlier that summer. I left with great confidence, looking forward to my week. I knew that this program, with its wise coaches, engaging thinking tools, and entrepreneurial peers would soon rejuvenate my work side, much like the water did a few days earlier.

I looked forward to the week, not only for my action-packed visits with friends. My birthday was also approaching on the upcoming Monday, the 26th, so I looked equally forward to returning home and spending it with Ryan and the furry kids, of course.

While I was away, my friend Ryan became my resident dog-sitter back in Florida, in charge of spoiling my sweet, smart, older dog, Kaia, along with her current play date, Misty. Misty belonged to dear friends, Dan and Emma who were in Spain to celebrate a friend’s birthday. They planned to return on the 30th to spend the weekend with me before heading back to Delray Beach.

**A**s I’d anticipated, my week in L.A. was filled with impactful meetings and catching up with old friends. My days and evenings overflowed with activity and business—nothing out of the ordinary. Friday culminated with the entrepreneurial coaching session, a long robust day that I adored. I had the opportunity to engage with phenomenal people, both at the front of the room and around each table. I ended the day with delicious food and drinks, getting to know everyone better prior to heading back to LAX. The week had flown by in the blink of an eye. I was fully recharged and excited to be heading home.

Once I settled in at the American Airlines lounge at LAX, a colleague from the day’s session ambled over and we began to chat. He was on the same redeye and was headed to Miami too. Since he’d lived through hurricanes, he wanted to make sure I was alert to what was heading our way and that I had a plan in place. Hurricane? I’d been so involved and absorbed in my whirlwind week in LA, I’d not heard about a hurricane.

\*This program is called The Strategic Coach. I’d recommend any entrepreneur with a growth mindset and even a mild curiosity check it out at <https://now.strategiccoach.com/whonothow-download-kk>

SEPTEMBER 19, 2022



SEPTEMBER 23, 2022

*The worst that could happen was strong winds and mild flooding... or so I thought.*

*Little did I know, Hurricane Ian was about to hit southwest Florida.*

**Hard.**

Puzzled, I asked what he was talking about. I paused as the man showed me the weather radar. He was right—a hurricane was headed directly for Tampa, about 3 hours north of my home. It was too soon to tell whether it would veer south or not.

I wasn't worried, though. A long-time resident of Florida, I'd "been there, done that" enough to know that this, too, was a sort of "business as usual" for my beach community. I'd experienced Florida hurricanes in the past. They were usually nothing to worry about and a well-formed way of life when living on the coast of Florida. Just the past year, I'd been directly beneath the eye of a hurricane while staying in the Keys. The worst that could happen was strong winds and mild flooding... or so I thought. Little did I know, Hurricane Ian was about to hit southwest Florida. Hard.

That Friday night, I took a red-eye flight out of L.A. to Miami, landing around 7 A.M. on Saturday morning. Later that day, I headed to Dog Beach with Ryan and Kaia to soak up some sun, unwind, and hang out before the Buckeye's game started. While we were at Dog Beach, my friend Matt and his friend joined us for a few hours after retrieving the jet ski from my house. Matt's detour made the day even more enjoyable.

Matt planned to leave Florida on Monday. I'd recently sold my truck camper to a buyer in Colorado, and Matt was going to drive my truck west to deliver the camper to the buyer early the following week. As we floated in the water next to the boat, Matt said that with his upcoming travels, he was beginning to worry about the storm.

That felt reasonable. As we enjoyed our time at Dog Beach, we created a plan of action—just in case the hurricane took a right turn. If it had the potential for surges over 4' in Fort Myers Beach and Naples, we wanted to be prepared.

We didn't anticipate getting a significant surge from the storm, but I would have Matt's Tesla while he borrowed my truck to deliver the camper. That meant I'd have to keep an eye out for anything greater than a 1-foot surge in my driveway. This wouldn't happen unless there were local surges around 4-to-5 feet. This was rare, but I had a gut feeling it was worth paying attention to the situation just in case.

Once we'd made our plan, we spent the rest of the day at the Dog Beach relaxing, socializing, and taking joy rides. Around sunset, we pulled the jet ski out of the water. I planned to take it over to the Lover's Key Boat Ramp, where I would pull it out to store in the garage during the storm. I decided to stop at the marina to fuel up for future boating missions.

While filling up, I chatted with the marina staff about the pending storm and how they were preparing. Later, with the jet ski safely stored in the garage, we said goodbye to Matt and his friend, each heading home.

Later that night, Ryan and I met up with our friend Colin. We headed out for a night on the town starting with the Lani Kai for drinks. Lani Kai was a well-known older hotel resort beloved by many locals. We decided it was time we finally tried it out. Our visit was short-lived from the stench overpowering the elevators. We quickly switched from ordering drinks to taking a quick shot before heading to a different bar. We agreed that Lanai Kai was off our list of future local haunts. What we didn't know at the time was that soon frequenting this bar wouldn't be an option—for anyone. This legendary local resort would soon fall victim to Hurricane Ian, and it would take years for it to recover and reopen.

We headed to The Whale next—the spot had new owners who revamped it into an Ohio State University Buckeye-themed sports bar on Fort Myers Beach. The Whale had a phenomenal new upstairs patio stacked with a row of TVs for the games with unmatched beach views behind us, perfect for cheering on our team. We chatted with some of the staff and learned the new owners were planning to put high-quality sound bars on the patio so patrons could enjoy the weather, ocean air, and immerse themselves in the next football game. Unfortunately, those plans would be postponed for years.

***That relaxed Saturday night, each person in The Whale was blissfully unaware of the lively sports bar's impending fate.*** Just days later during Hurricane Ian, The Whale was on the receiving end of devastating structural damage. The debris of the remains were hauled away in the following weeks.

SEPTEMBER 24, 2022

**Lani Kai, a long-standing older hotel resort was soon not standing nearly so well as it once had. Shoring up the structural damage became a two-year project.**



SEPTEMBER 25, 2022

The next day—Sunday—Ryan and I headed back to Dog Beach for another relaxing day in the water. “Shark dog,” Kaia, literally owned the beach; she played numerous games of fetch with her dog friends and other dog owners, almost forgetting we were there with her. The boat stereo blasted great vibe-to music while we floated by the boat relaxing and watching NFL Red Zone on the iPad.

After spending the entire day savoring southwest Florida’s beach and sunshine, we packed up and headed home. With Matt leaving for Colorado early in the morning, it would be an early night. We ordered some pizza and spent the evening kicking back and watching Sunday night football before calling it a day.

Early Monday morning, I took the truck to an auto shop for an oil change to be sure everything was in order for Matt’s road trip. Matt, gave me a detailed tutorial on how to operate his Tesla in case I needed to drive it for some reason. However, I had no intention of driving it.

Next, we prepped the boat to be stored on the lift. I planned to tie the boat to the lift and tie the lift to the dock, so it would be at least 7 feet above the surge, which should have been plenty. As long as the surge didn’t exceed 7 feet, it would keep the boat safe and intact during the storm.

Finally, Matt and I headed to the library to have the camper sale papers notarized. This wasn’t a necessary step, but we both wanted to chat with Cletus, who worked at the library, before Matt departed. As we entered the library, Cletus greeted us with a warm smile and a firm handshake. He told us that the board was scheduled to have a very important funding meeting the next day. According to Cletus, they wanted to squeeze it in before the hurricane hit on Wednesday. Fortunately, the library was one of the few buildings that fared relatively well through Hurricane Ian. Although even two years after the storm, it hasn’t yet reopened to the public. When I bike past the library I still wonder if they held that meeting and if Cletus is still around. Some questions may never be answered.

**The Fort Myers Beach Public Library, while less damaged as a result of Hurricane Ian than many other structures, continues to be closed to the public today.**



Once the papers were notarized, we loaded the camper onto the truck and prepared Matt for his journey. The weather shifted slightly. A light rain foreshadowed what was to become the great storm that soon would hit. We tried to tune out the rain and sinking feelings of what could be ahead as we said our goodbyes.

During the day, Ryan and I began to prep my garage in case the storm surge got to the house. Since it was my birthday, we waited out the final minutes of the light rainstorm that was moving over the island before heading to Dog Beach to spend the early evening. It was the perfect time to relax, enjoy the coastal vibes, and let Kaia run around before the weather set in. The hurricane wasn’t supposed to hit southwest Florida until late Tuesday, bringing with it heavy rains to our area, so we wanted to enjoy the evening on the water before the weather took a turn.

We arrived to find the beach completely deserted. It was an eerie and rare sight to see it so empty. People were likely too busy preparing for the storm to make time for the beach. Had it not been my birthday, I’m not sure we would have done so, either. Despite these disconcerting vibes at the beach, we managed to enjoy ourselves as Kaia ran free through the sand and water.

After our time on the beach, we secured the boat and lifts to the dock as planned. Even though we’d had pizza the night before, we ordered another. I can never get enough pizza, and it was my birthday, after all. So we decided to indulge in yet another pizza. We happily gorged ourselves on pizza, played games on the patio, and styled Dan and Emma’s dog Misty’s hair into a cute little ponytail to keep it out of her eyes. Even in need of a trip to the groomer, she was adorable, as usual. My birthday evening was fantastic, and we had a great time hanging out.

Later that night, my friend Jim from L.A. reached out. He was worried about the incoming hurricane and wanting to check on my situation. I told him I was fine and that we were not stressing about it too much because the storm was now targeting Sarasota, which was about an hour and a half north of where we were in Fort Myers Beach. Most locals concurred that there was minimal risk and probably “no way” that we would receive the full brunt of the surge if there was one. I did notice, however, that I seemed to be working hard to convince him. Or was I trying to convince myself?

SEPTEMBER 26, 2022



**The camper was loaded onto the truck for delivery to its buyer in Colorado.**



As a sinking feeling started to consume me I tried to ease his mind. I told him that we had a open offer with my friend Dan's mother who lived in Delray Beach to head to her home for a safe, secure place to stay if we needed it. I thought I had done a fairly good job of alleviating his concerns.

As I was falling asleep that night, in my sleepy daze, my phone buzzed. Jim texted me again, more adamantly, this time. He warned me that I had to get off the island before Tuesday afternoon when the winds were predicted to pick up. He said it would likely be unsafe for me to take the bridge to the mainland if I waited too long to leave. So much for sweet dreams.

It's no wonder that I tossed and turned and finally gave into a full-fledged nightmare about trying to evacuate the island. In hindsight, it was almost as if my subconscious knew what was about to come. In my fitful struggle to leave, everything went awry. We tried desperately to evacuate, but no matter which way we went, things stood in our way, making it impossible. The nightmare became extremely dramatic—lots of death and gun violence and people losing their humanity.

**I woke up with a start at 5 in the morning. My phone blared an evacuation alert. Residents were to evacuate immediately to escape Hurricane Ian. Bolting straight up in bed, I read Jim's text again. Then I jumped into action. FAST.**

- I called Dan to tell him we planned to leave the island before 1 P.M.
- I told him that I would head to his mother's house with the two dogs.
- Ryan was planning to fly out of Fort Myers at 5 P.M. that day.
- He reached out to the airline to confirm his flight.
- Representatives assured him that they were confident the flight was still scheduled to depart on time as planned.
- We spent the rest of the morning preparing the house for potential disaster.
- We packed to ensure we would be ready to depart before 1.

Once we were nearly packed, we took the dogs for one last walk on the beach. I wanted to see the water—to check out its current state. The gulf was looking rough and choppy, but this felt familiar. We'd see this kind of chop before—many times.

On our walk, we passed some neighbors and chatted for a bit, asking one another about plans to evacuate. Many people we spoke to were still on the fence about leaving; the storm was still headed toward Sarasota. It didn't seem like our little island would take any kind of a direct hit.

As we headed back, we crossed paths with my realtor. He told us he was staying behind. He had a generator if the area lost power for an extended time; hardly a rookie, they had been through many hurricanes. He mentioned that the local Publix was on high ground, telling us that if we decided to stay as well, we could always take the car there if things got bad. We told him that we planned to leave, just to be safe. Besides, even one foot of water would destroy the Tesla with which I'd been entrusted.

**However, in less than 30 hours, Publix and the entire island would be under 12-to-18 feet of water.**

Before leaving the island, Ryan and I drove to Fort Myers to get some errands done. We finished with everything we needed to get done by 10 A.M. and headed back home to finish packing. We arrived home around 11 A.M. That's when we received a storm update that the storm had taken the final right turn.

**Hurricane Ian was headed directly for Fort Myers Beach.**

Friends and family began texting us frantically to make sure we were leaving the island and had a safe place to go. The hurricane was also slowing down. This meant the surge would be more intense than most had originally anticipated. My property was located on the south end of the hurricane, meaning the water would cycle down and around from the north end, pummeling Fort Myers Beach with the full force of the storm surge.



*“The water would cycle down and around from the north end, pummeling Fort Myers Beach with the full force of the storm surge.”*

*Hurricane Ian would soon bring in surges between 12 and 18 feet all across Fort Myers Beach.*

***Our beautiful little island didn't stand a chance.***

- The eye of the storm was heading just north up the Fort Myers River, right between Fort Myers Beach and Sanibel Island.
- The winds were a Category 4 hurricane level at this point, with gusts well into Category 5 territory.
- Ryan and I agreed that we had to leave by noon—giving us only an hour to finish what needed to be done and depart.
- We anticipated last minute evacuation traffic.
- We had to make sure we had a buffer before the winds really picked up.
- We quickly scrambled to prep the garage and patios.
- We carted almost everything from the garage to the upper level of my house so it would be safe with a storm surge between 4 and 8 feet.
- This kind of surge would quickly fill the garage with 3-4 feet of water.
- We were prepared. Or so we thought.

Our teamwork was impeccable that day. As we packed the car with luggage and the dogs, it began to rain lightly. I brought enough clothes to last me 5 days, just in case it took extra time for the power to be turned back on.

#### THE PLAN:

- I would drop Ryan off to meet our friend Colin so they could go to Southwest Florida International Airport together.
- Meanwhile, I would take the dogs to the east coast of Florida to Dan's mother's house.
- Thinking ahead, I called to check with the Mercato, a community in Naples with nightlife, living, food, and more, to see if there was space to park the car on the 3rd floor (in a final attempt to avoid driving across the state).
- Maybe the dogs and I could stay at a hotel to ride out the storm.
- It was a good idea, but unfortunately, Mercato and all hotels in Naples were closed due to the hurricane evacuation.
- Even my Naples Park duplex investment property was full, as were other friend's rentals.

- An Airbnb wasn't an option either; the prices had been driven up into the thousands per week by that point.
- I had no choice but to drive to the east coast, where I could at least return Misty to her owners who were about to be home.

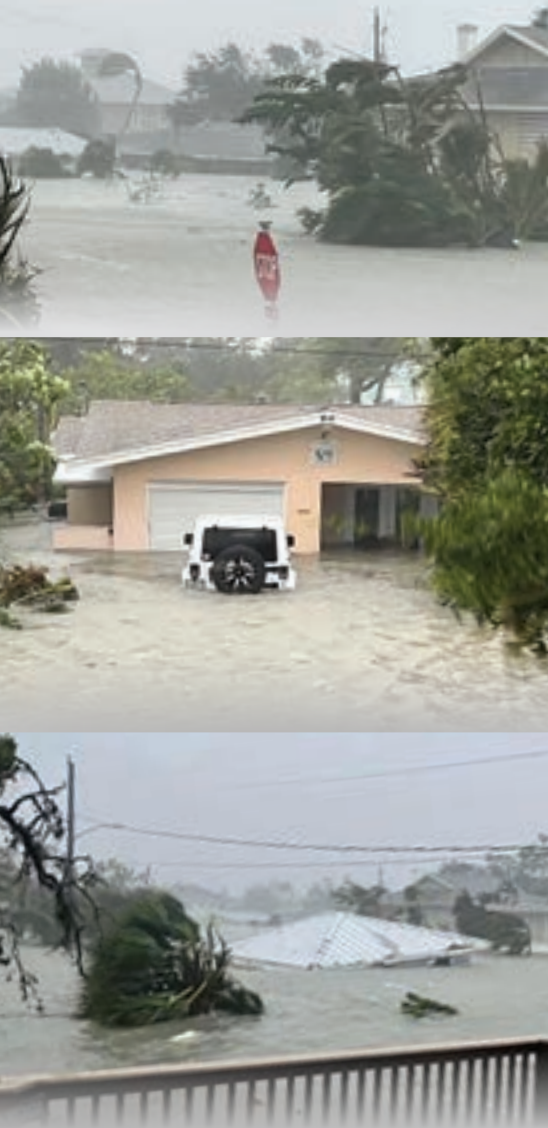
***Talk about obstacles. It felt like my frightening nightmare of only hours before was suddenly becoming all too real.***

- We stopped at Starbucks to get coffee for the road.
- As Ryan walked with our drinks back to the car, I saw he was on the phone, brows furrowed and a worried look on his face.
- All Southwest flights out of RSW (Ft. Myers) had been canceled.
- He had been rebooked to fly out of Fort Lauderdale that night instead.
- We called Colin to let him know about the change of plans.
- Ryan would head to the east coast with me.
- I would drop him at the airport for his flight.
- Colin's flight was on another airline and was still scheduled to leave from Southwest Florida International Airport, so he stayed behind.
- Ryan and I headed to a charging station in Naples to top off the Tesla battery before our journey across Alligator Alley.
- It was still only lightly raining, but traffic was already backed up.
- We turned on the radio app to keep up with news about the hurricane, but the signal kept dropping, leaving us no choice but to switch back and forth between music and the news station.

Although we both stayed cool, calm, and collected on the outside, tensions and anxiety were on the rise for everyone as the weather began to shift. Kaia was antsy and riddled with nervousness, which is typical for her during car rides, while Misty was curled up and sleeping peacefully. We inched along, wipers swishing rhythmically, and worked our way across the state.

**We didn't dare look back.**





Eventually, we made it through the traffic and to Fort Lauderdale Airport. I dropped Ryan off to catch his flight. Once he got out, it was just me and my furry travel companions. Except for Kaia’s agitated whimpers, the car felt as silent as the beach had the day before.

I knew better than to let myself give into my own anxiety so I jumped into action. I made a final stop to charge up the Tesla battery once again. I felt irritated at the inconvenience of electric cars. Exactly what good are they in a natural disaster when time is so precious? After my silent rant on the subject, I oddly felt better. I pushed forward, heading straight for Dan’s mother’s house—dogs in tow.

The moment we arrived, both dogs headed straight for the water bowls and began chugging. Still anxious from the coming storm and the car ride, Kaia immediately threw up. She’s never been a fan of riding in cars or tight spaces, and the chaos of the evacuation was definitely getting to her. She was not alone. I felt a rush of relief myself, grateful to be in a safe place—and to be out of the car. What would typically take 2.5–3 hours took me 7 hours instead.

THE NEXT PART OF MY PLAN:

- I set up a room for myself in the office at Dan’s mother’s house.
- I took the dogs on a walk to let them exert some energy before staying in for the night. In all honesty, I needed the walk as much as they did.
- I stayed up late to get some work done; I was determined to do something normal and at least somewhat productively kill time before Ryan’s flight departed.
- Although I was exhausted to my core, I wanted to be sure I stayed awake to confirm he was able to catch his flight safely.
- By this point, we had already received confirmation that Colin’s flight left as planned at 5 P.M. and had no trouble departing.

Friends continued to text me, asking for a status of the situation and to check up on me. I watched the news. The adrenaline from the day had finally worn off and I felt drained. Finally, Ryan texted; he had boarded his plane. Relieved, I shut down my tech and headed to bed.

Too soon thereafter, Ryan texted again. His flight was delayed. All planes sat on the runway. Tired and exhausted, he was unsure he would make it home that night. Worried he would have nowhere to go, I stayed up with him, and we texted back and forth. The connection was all that really mattered. Finally, after what seemed like much longer than the hour that it was, Ryan’s plane departed. He eventually made it home safely very late that evening.

Exhausted, I passed out with dogs plastered right by my side and tornado sirens blasting throughout the night. We were all unaware of the extent of the chaos and destruction that would ensue next.

The next morning, I anxiously awoke, still awaiting the storm. I watched the news to distract myself. No surprise, the repetitive announcements and footage I’d seen before as if on a loop only made me feel more uneasy.

**The other shoe finally dropped. At around 11:30 that morning, the media announced—the surge had finally hit Fort Myers Beach. In that moment, hearing those words about MY HOME, where I LIVE, the enormity of it all hit me—HARD.**

It all instantly became real. I finally understood the gravity of Hurricane Ian. The island—MY island—was flooded with water, between 4 and 8 feet so far, with no sign of letting up. The news showed security camera footage taken from the tops of people’s homes and garages, making it clear to viewers that this storm was going to be nasty.

As the chaos began to unfold on the island, I texted my neighbor, Tom, to see if he had managed to evacuate before the hurricane touched down. He wrote back to let me know he and his wife were okay.



My street during the storm

“The island—MY island—was flooded with water, between 4 and 8 feet so far—with no sign of letting up. The news showed security camera footage taken from the tops of people’s homes and garages, making it clear to viewers **that this storm was going to be nasty.**”



SEPTEMBER 28, 2022



Images taken from a time-lapse video by Max Olson, STORM CHASER, shows an occupied home being swept away. petapixel.com

I then reached out to my realtor to see if he had managed to evacuate. I'd find out a couple of days later that once the impending storm intensity and severity had become clear, his family quickly moved to a 2nd-floor concrete condo to avoid the surge. They lost all of their vehicles along with all the belongings they had put into their newly constructed 1st-floor storage room. Despite their losses, they were safe and sheltered.

All day Wednesday, I was a mess—fraught with worry about over who had stayed and who had managed to evacuate. I felt completely isolated from my community. It was not safe to be in Fort Myers Beach at this point and I desperately wanted news of the safety and well-being of my own community. Waiting for my neighbors to respond was nerve-wracking, but eventually, most of them managed to check in and we updated one another on our respective status and whereabouts.

#### JUST ONE FRIGHTENING PROGRESSION—OF MANY

- Later that day, I spoke with Ryan.
- My heart sunk when he told me that he'd been chatting with Ty and Ty's wife who were still on the island.
- They were posting live videos of the storm and damage to their house on social media.
- The initial surge had engulfed the 1st floor of their home and was quickly making its way toward the 2nd floor.
- When a surge at 3:30 P.M. pushed the water to 12 to 18 feet all throughout the island, Ty and his wife were forced to move up to their 3rd floor.
- The walls of their home were cracking and the roof was leaking.
- Nobody had any idea when it would be over.
- I asked Ryan if it felt terrifying to consider that he might be messaging with a dead man.
- Thankfully, Ty and his wife did make it out safely to a nearby concrete structure, where they had shelter to ride out the storm overnight.

The hurricane soon slowed down to a speed of 9 miles per hour; this meant it stalled out and essentially sat on top of the island dumping in water from the north. Tampa Bay was drained and Ian sent all of that water hurtling at us for the next 4 hours—all during high tide. This combination had the potential to create the worst possible conditions—ones that would likely result in devastating destruction.

Eventually, the hurricane made its way inland, and the water returned to the Gulf, taking with it many things that did not belong out at sea. A significant portion of Fort Myers Beach had been taken by nature, washed away, never to be seen again.

The next day, the extent of the damage was unknown. The storm had knocked out power, water, Internet, and cell service. The island was completely inaccessible. For hours on end, those who had stayed behind, hunkering down in their homes, were unreachable. As the hours ticked by, it became clear that this was no ordinary storm. The destruction was widespread and devastating, far beyond what anyone had anticipated, and the island was cut off from the rest of the world.

News trickled out slowly. A handful of people who had managed to weather the storm and make their way to safety shared their experiences. Airplanes and helicopters flew over the island, capturing initial images of the aftermath, trying to assess the damage. Unfortunately, it became clear that the weather predictions were right. **MAXIMUM DAMAGE.**

The images confirmed that too many people had stayed behind. Some thought they'd seen it all before and that hurricanes never lived up to the hype. Others had been around for the hurricane five years earlier which had the same predicted surges but only delivered a scant 15 inches of surge. They thought this storm would be the same, that they could ride it out without a problem.

**They were wrong. Hurricane Ian was fiercely different, more powerful, and more cruelly destructive than anything we'd ever experienced.**

SEPTEMBER 29, 2022

*The hurricane was slowing down. This meant that **the surge would be more intense than most people had originally anticipated.***

*A significant portion of Fort Myers Beach had been taken by nature, washed away, never to be seen again.*





***How can such a vibrant blue sky possibly be the backdrop for so much loss and destruction?***







***Devastation prevailed  
at every turn.***

***Our beautiful beach  
community would  
never be the same.***





OCTOBER 1, 2022  
*The Longest Day*

*Hurricane Ian was a force to be reckoned with. The massive storm left its mark on nearly all of Florida except for the panhandle.*

Photo by Nathan Mayberg, as seen in Fort Myers Beach Talk.

Thursday and Friday were a stressful blur. I felt like I was in a dream, but not in a good way. The hurricane, and the destruction that came with it, were a lot to process—to say the least. In fact, I couldn't even speak about it, although that is all any of us spoke about.

In the end, too many people died who didn't need to die. They ignored the warnings because far too often the experts weren't just wrong, they were really wrong. But nature is a force to be respected, and sometimes even the best-laid plans won't stand up to its power. I knew that the island would never be the same and that our community, the people who survived, would never forget the lessons we had learned.

Hurricane Ian was a force to be reckoned with. The massive storm left its mark on nearly all of Florida except for the panhandle. It's no surprise that everyone seemed to be in a state of shock. We all tried to assess the damage and figure out what, if anything, remained of our lives—and what we would and wouldn't find back in Fort Myers Beach. People began referring to it as Ground Zero.

**Reports declared that almost 90% of the island had been destroyed.**

As videos were released, we watched in horror as scene after scene showed us the impact of the surge. As if it were a terrible B-grade movie, we stared silently as this unbelievable storm had effortlessly wiped out entire homes and wooden structures like small, insignificant beach toys. It looked as if a bomb had gone off in the town I call home.

Many news reporters covering the hurricane claimed to have been reporting from Fort Myers Beach. I understand why they weren't, of course; all access to the island was blocked to non-residents. What residents needed was honesty, however. One look at the backdrop told every local exactly where they weren't—Fort Myers Beach. Later, I learned that they were all filming from San Carlos Island, just off the North Bridge.

Dan and Emma returned home to Delray Beach from Spain that Thursday. Just to add more drama to the mix, Dan had come down with COVID. His mother quickly found another place to stay to protect her from the illness. The rest of us shuffled our sleeping situations so Dan could stay isolated.

My friend Howard reached out. He had been in the midst of making a cross-country move to Florida. He now found himself stuck in Chicago as he tried to figure out his next moves. Mildly panicked, he realized he would probably have nowhere to go or to even store his belongings if he continued on to Florida as he'd planned. I explained I'd just spoken to my neighbor, a firefighter named Bob, who told me that the only way to access the island was by bicycle.

**All vehicle roads were completely blocked off or destroyed. First responders worked tirelessly to conduct search & rescue missions to recover those trapped in cars as they tried to leave the island.**

Howard's brother had found a video of my street in Fort Myers Beach. It was blurry, but it seemed like some structures were still standing. I was hopeful. Even more good news had come—Matt had successfully delivered the camper to the seller in Colorado—one less loss for me to worry about.

On Friday while watching the morning news with Dan and Emma, I saw CNN aerial footage that showed a glimpse of my silver rooftop, giving me a flood of hope that my home was still standing. We stopped and replayed the footage many times until I could confidently confirm that it was my roof and it was in one piece. I even saw what looked to be my boat still sitting on the lift.

It was just two days after the storm, so I was optimistic that by the end of October, my house would have power and water would be restored. Maybe I could even move back in by November? It was a bold prediction, but after the chaos of the storm, even a small amount of hope was a welcome respite.

But my optimism was short-lived. Later that same Friday afternoon, I turned on the news and saw an aerial view of the island. My heart sank as I watched. Everything from the car wash just two blocks from my house to all the way





“My innate optimism had been completely shattered by the reality of the storm, but I held onto the hope that maybe, just maybe, my home had made it through the chaos—as battered, but unbroken as I myself felt.”

north was literally **GONE**. The marina for gas was gone, and all of the boats had been tossed like rag dolls into the mangroves across the bay.

The news reports consistently stated that 90% of the island was destroyed. The footage always stopped north of my house. Maybe, just maybe, I was part of the unspoken 10% that had survived relatively unscathed? It was too early to tell.

The north bridge to Fort Myers Beach was blocked off for emergency vehicle access only. It would likely remain closed until the bridge and the island were “stabilized” and ready for full public access. The timing to repair and reopen the three south bridges from the Bonita Beach side was unclear. It could be minimal damage, but it was too early to say anything for sure.

My optimism had been shattered by the reality of the storm, but I held on to the hope that maybe, just maybe, my house had made it through the chaos. I clung to the belief that I was part of the 10% they did not speak about—one of the ones who had emerged from the storm battered but not broken.

My neighbor, Bob the firefighter, kept me informed. Since I was a resident, he said I could come and scope out the damage *if* I was willing to enter the island by bike or on foot, but not by car. There was nothing I wanted to do more. We squeezed Dan’s bike into his SUV, so I could head to Fort Myers Beach for my recon mission. Bob warned to me that the sliders on people’s homes were blown out—meaning mine likely were, too. This meant that my 2nd floor living area would have sustained damage. I tried to prepare myself.

Bob also warned me to bring a machete. He said that there was plenty of misplaced wildlife wandering around after the storm. While I didn’t buy a machete until almost a year later, my guard was definitely up. I might encounter animals—and looters, to say the very least. I knew that seeing the destruction would be a lot for me mentally, but I had to go. I couldn’t wait any longer.

As I loaded up the borrowed SUV with heavy-duty shoes, gloves, water, and snacks, my nerves were already shot. But stronger than my nerves was my

clarity that I had to try to get back to Fort Myers Beach to see the damage for myself. I had to see with my own eyes what I was dealing with—and what the community I loved was facing—to figure out what was next for Kaia and me.

The drive from the east coast to the west coast of Florida was a long and lonely one. As I crossed into Naples, the extent of the damage started to reveal itself—everywhere I looked. My heart sank as I saw trees uprooted, buildings torn apart, and debris strewn everywhere. I wasn’t even close to Fort Myers Beach and the aftermath was already devastating. Tears were streaming down my face, but I did my best to push my emotions back down and move forward.

***I kept going. I couldn’t turn back now. I had to know what had happened to my home.***

As I got closer to the island, the feeling of dread only intensified, permeating every part of me. I had heard rumors of complete devastation, I had seen footage, but until I truly saw it, breathed it, and stood there, I couldn’t let myself believe it. I had to see for myself.

Once I reached Naples, I picked up my friend Jacquie and her daughter, Justine. They didn’t want me venturing in alone so we tried the southern route to the island via Bonita Springs.

When we got to Bonita Springs we found a checkpoint had been setup. Emergency personnel only. As I turned the car around to try to find a different route, we stared, stunned, at what was left of **Coconut Jack’s**. Water had completely submerged the restaurant and the roof had collapsed. It was heartbreaking.

Bob had been right; the only way onto the island was by bike. So, I turned around and took Jacquie and Justine back home. I had to do a solo mission after all if I was going to get back to the island. The entire day moved in slow motion as I continued to trudge on to find a way to assess the damage.



ABOVE: After 7 feet of water filled the beloved Coconut Jack’s restaurant in Bonita Springs, all of the equipment was lined up, ruined and waiting to be hauled away.

BELOW: Coconut Jack’s was ultimately able to rebuild and reopen, retaining most of its staff with incredible support by the community.



Still images adapted from news release live videos by Fox News and WINK News, respectively.



OCTOBER 1, 2022  
*The Longest Day*

“Even with my own eyes, the level of destruction was unfathomable. I pressed on. I had to see what had happened to the home I missed and loved.”

As I passed back through Naples, I discovered that my friend Laura’s mom was nearby and she was without power. To help her and distract myself, I detoured to buy her some milk that didn’t require refrigeration. At least she’d have that until the power came back. Once I delivered that, I told myself I could have no more distractions. I dug down deep to muster up the courage to finally go home.

Ft. Myers had been hit with significant damage from the heavy winds. The power was down throughout the town, including the stoplights. People handled this surprisingly well, treating intersections like 4-way stops. This small sliver of human decency was heartwarming. I’d later come to miss it. As the days and weeks passed, selfish behaviors started to dominate the roadways once again.

The closer I got to Fort Myers Beach, the more uneasy I became. As I approached, my heart began to race. I started to see the true extent of the damage. Entire buildings had been destroyed. Debris was piled up so high that it looked like mangled mountains. Boats and out-of-place structures littered the ravaged landscape. Even with my own eyes, the level of destruction was unfathomable. I pressed on. I had to see what had happened to my home.

Once I was close to the bridge to Fort Myers Beach, I parked the SUV in a small business parking lot on San Carlos Island. It was as close as I could get by vehicle. After grabbing Dan’s bike from the car and assembling it, I began my journey to the bridge that would take me home. However, as I began to pedal, I could feel resistance. I got off the bike to examine it, and realized that in my foggy state of mind, I had managed to put the front tire on wrong. Frustrated, I went back to the car to reassemble the bike. Everything took so long and I continued to feel like I was sludging through it all in slow motion.

I tried to find that “Kristi-you-are-a-bad-ass” part of my personality, willing myself to power through. That part of me was nowhere to be found. I felt hollow, like

a puppet moving slowly through the motions. Everything had been suddenly ripped away from me, and I didn’t have a clue what to do next. Hell, beyond asking, “Why?”, I didn’t even know the questions to ask, let alone, have any answers.

With the bike finally fixed, I departed once again. As I got closer, my breath literally caught in my throat. The memory of what I saw will forever be seared into my mind.

It was a scene straight out of a horror movie. Power lines were twisted at a 45-degree angle. Power poles and cables were mangled and ripped out of the ground on the left side of the street. Massive boats, some over 100 feet in length, were stranded on sidewalks and streets, trapped under the sideways power lines, and some even wedged between buildings.

OCTOBER 1, 2022  
*The Longest Day*

“When I finally reached the bridge, my breath literally caught in my throat. The memory of what I saw will forever be seared into my mind.”



Photo by Nathan Mayberg, as seen in Fort Myers Beach Talk.



This is the view I encountered at the end of my street. Even here, where the damage was not nearly as severe as other parts of the island, the enormity of the storm’s impact is undeniable.



Concrete screen walls that were meant to protect residential homes from the street were twisted and uprooted, as if they were made of thin tissue paper. The roads and sidewalks were almost invisible because they were so heavily covered in a thick layer of sandy muck. Everything looked unrecognizable.

As I approached the base of the bridge, the true horror of the situation became apparent. Massive shrimp boats, usually docked safely in the water sat in mobile home parks behind the popular Doc Ford's restaurant. On both sides of the street, only twisted metal frames and piles of rubble remained where hundreds of homes once stood.

The devastation was heartbreaking. It was hard to believe that these mobile homes that so many people called home, were now destroyed by the surge. It was blatantly obvious that these people were left with nothing.

When I reached the base of the bridge, I had to show proof of residency in order to be permitted to bike onto the island. I felt silent, wet tears streaming down my face, yet I didn't care who saw me. The scene was horrific, and my emotions broke free. I couldn't contain them any longer.



Even when the homes were not totally destroyed, damage and debris was still significant, as this image reflects.

This experience was a stark reminder of the unpredictable and destructive power of nature. It could bring joy and happiness, and conversely, could obliterate everything in an instant. I knew that I would never forget this day.

Once I was allowed to pass the checkpoint, I pedaled Dan's bike hard, forcing myself to climb the bridge with as much energy as I could muster. My heart raced as I reached the top. I had to stop and catch my breath. The stench that emanated from the destruction triggered a sudden overwhelming need to throw up. Those urges stayed with me the entire day.

**Everything was gone.** What little remained of San Carlos Island, Matanzas Pass, and Fort Myers Beach was surreal. The scene was unimaginable. How could anything, even nature, be this powerful and destructive? As I stood at the top of the bridge, my tears stopped, and shock took over. No one can be prepared to face this level of destruction. It's incomprehensible. There's no way to prepare yourself to experience this level of devastation.

I numbly coasted down to Time Square, the main downtown area of Fort Myers Beach, only to be engulfed in the nothingness that remained. The area had become a base camp for the emergency personnel. The National Guard, first responders, and sheriff's teams were all present and in full gear, working tirelessly as search and recovery efforts continued round the clock. It was as though I'd been dropped onto a movie set. This was *not* something that happened in real life. It looked and sounded like a war zone, the apocalypse.

What was even worse was the smell. I now know that it smelled like death, tightly tangled with rot and sewerage. The smell of such destruction was overwhelming. I had never smelled anything like that before, and I hope to never smell anything similar ever again.

I saw myself moving in slow motion as I pedaled through the sand that replaced Estero Boulevard, our main road. Every wooden building and single-story home was destroyed. Every single business was gone, their first floors completely in ruins.

*“I felt silent, wet tears streaming down my face, but I didn't care who saw me. The scene was horrific, and my emotions simply broke free. I couldn't contain them any longer. This silence was the beginning of my shocked shutdown that would last a very long time.”*



TOP: Photo I took in July 2024 after the stove fell.

MIDDLE: Remains of the car wash and laundromat I previously had considered purchasing.

BOTTOM: The car wash lot is still listed for sale following demo.



As I made my way toward my street and my home, military equipment passed by on the left. People walked and biked past me with bags of the few belongings they could retrieve from the remains of their homes. Others sat on curbs, looking as lost and in shock as I felt. This had to be a dream.

No one could have anticipated the wrath of this hurricane. No one could have predicted the enormity of this tragedy. No one expected to lose everything—yet so many did—including their lives.

I watched the scene unfold before my eyes. First responders slowly and methodically searched every structure for signs of life, while somehow still giving us the space to take it in. Despite the rampant chaos and destruction, I was struck by how respectful and kind they were. They understood the gravity of the situation and did all they could to make it easier for us to bear.

As I made my way down the road, my heart sank even deeper. I couldn't believe that my community had been destroyed. Everything was damaged. Almost every home and business was damaged, if not entirely gone.

I passed a quadplex on stilts; its sides and roof were completely ripped off. Inside, the bed remained, clothes hung in the closet, and artwork still adorned the walls. Kitchen cabinets were still intact as the stove teetered precariously on what was left of the floor. It was like a dollhouse opened up for all to see. But it wasn't a dollhouse; this had been someone's home. And now it was gone, destroyed by the relentless force of nature. Even now, years later, that fractured building still stands as a haunting reminder of all that was lost. After hanging on for a year-and-a-half, the stove finally crashed to the ground.

HideAway Village, with its iconic teal units, was completely destroyed. Earlier that year, I'd had my eye on the matching teal car wash and laundromat; I seriously had considered purchasing them. Just two blocks from my home, they were also wiped out. The CMU (concrete masonry unit) structure and machines were still there, but the front and sides were ripped out, and the building in front was gone. By November, the lot would be completely demolished and razed to the ground.

I continued down the island. The sand and muck that Hurricane Ian had so violently dumped everywhere made it difficult to find, let alone identify, the road beneath my wheels. Suddenly, I realized I'd missed my own street. The beach access had been completely annihilated. The little yellow house on the corner, in the process of building a new beach deck just days before, was now reduced to a pile of concrete rubble.

I had walked down this street at least twice each day in the last year, but I didn't recognize it at all. Not one landmark looked familiar. It was as though I had never been here before in my life. In that moment, I felt jarred, agitated, lost and powerless. This was not a nightmare from which I might awaken; this was my reality—a reality that would take me a very long time to process and even longer to accept.

The little teal house on the corner had been pushed back nearly 100 feet; it almost touched the blue house on stilts behind it. The house on stilts had lost portions of its roof and sides, but there seemed like there was a chance the owners could salvage it. Only time would tell.

Older wood duplexes that had been previously hidden from view were now completely exposed. Their partially standing remains meant they would inevitably need to be torn down and rebuilt.

POST SCRIPT: Two+ years later, the blue house is still standing, but repairs haven't started. As for the wooden duplexes, on December 1, 2022, I witnessed the demolition of these structures. By the following morning, massive disaster debris trucks had already taken the remains to the temporary landfill on Lovers Key. That efficient action all but erased what little evidence remained of those homes.



**My Neighbor, Tommy**

*I continued my way down what I'd finally recognized as my own street. My heart sank as I glanced toward the little yellow house on the corner—my corner. An older gentleman named Tommy lived there with someone named Frank. Kaia and I passed Tommy with two little dogs on our daily walks to the beach, often twice each day.*

*Tommy's house had collapsed. I later learned that on October 3rd, the rescue workers discovered Tommy's body in the rubble. I also learned that Frank and the dogs were still missing.*

*Over the next couple of months, the house continued to slowly collapse on itself. I couldn't help but wonder if their families knew or cared.*

**I only knew I cared.**



*“Despite the devastation, I felt a small glimmer of hope as I slowly rode further down my street. Most of the houses were still standing, with minimal exterior damage, but I knew that looks could be deceiving.”*

Despite the devastation, I felt a small glimmer of hope as I slowly rode further down my street. Most of the houses were still standing, with minimal exterior damage, but I knew that looks could be deceiving. I stopped to talk to my neighbors across the street as they walked their dog. They rode out the storm on the island; their story was harrowing. I could see the terror in their eyes as they recounted their debate about moving everything to their third floor as the water seeped into the second floor. Thankfully, the water stopped rising and started to recede before they had to take that action.

I made a point to stop and chat with every neighbor I saw, the same neighbors I passed every morning and evening—before. One neighbor in particular stood out. He had a prosthetic leg, but his tennis shoes were what always caught my eye—the best ones I had ever seen. We spoke and commiserated that we reacted in similar ways to this trauma—right down to our ongoing dry heaves.

After checking on everyone else I saw, I finally forced myself to go to MY home to assess MY damage. I left my bike in the middle of the driveway as the sandy muck that lined the streets and driveways was caked onto the tires. The trees and landscaping in the front still stood. My home looked like a house—my house. Surprisingly, the sliding doors on the front that I thought had surely blown out were still intact.

As I headed to the back, I nearly slipped and fell; the muck created one heck of a slick mess. The neighbor's wood fence was half destroyed, and a tree had been uprooted. Feeling a sudden rush of adrenaline and fury, I twisted the mangled tree in circles, until I could rip it out of the ground.

Most of the new fence I had built months earlier was still standing, and the panels that had blown out appeared to all be on the property. I stacked the fence slats so I could reassemble them—later.

Finally, I went upstairs to check out my living area. I was nervous that the water had reached my second floor. Portions of the stairs had been swept away, but overall, they seemed safe enough to walk up. When I opened the door, I was

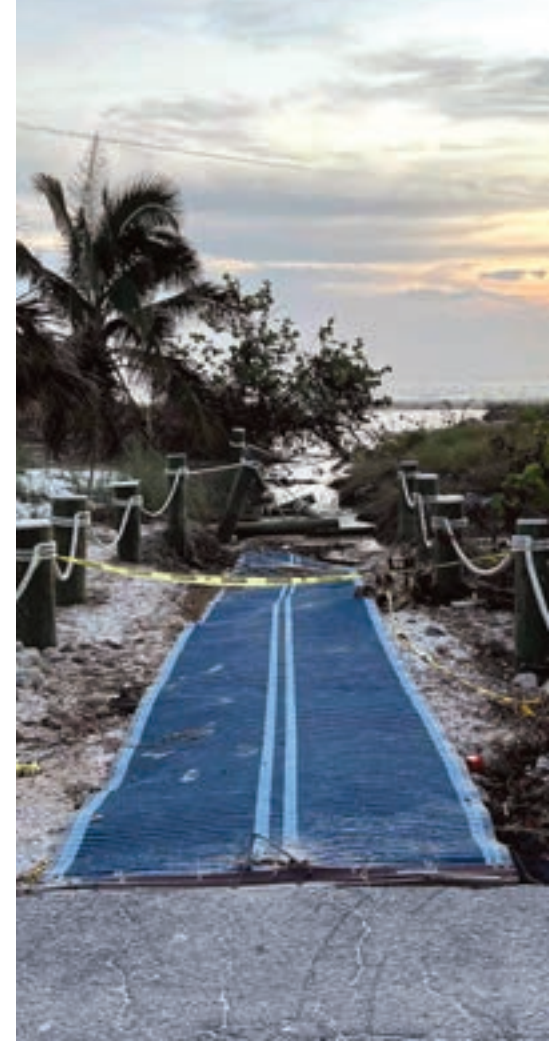
relieved to see that the water hadn't made it up that high. After a quick walk around, I confirmed that damage to the second floor was minimal.

The moment of truth had arrived. What happened inside the garages? I couldn't remember where I'd stored the spare keys, and all of the first-floor keypads were dead. I remembered that the side window under the stairs was loose. My entry must have been quite a sight as I shoved the window up and launched myself through the opening before the window came crashing down on my back. With my fanny pack caught outside I was momentarily trapped half-in and half-out of the garage. I paused to survey the scene in front of me. Stuff was strewn everywhere amongst the layers of sandy muck that coated everything.

I finally pulled myself into the garage, using the desk for support to avoid falling to the floor. Ironically, the monitor that had been sitting on the desk was in its original position, and still upright. The red bucket that had been on top of the 6' white shelves was also upright, with all the contents intact, despite the fact that it had been transported across the room. However, my mountain bike and a chair we'd left hanging to the workout machine frame were rusted and destroyed, and the rest of the workout equipment was strewn around the floor.

As I methodically worked to assess the damage to my home, I knew that I was in shock. The immense destruction to our community began to seep deep into my thoughts. An overwhelming sense of hopelessness and helplessness hung in the stench-filled air.

I thought of every neighbor, business owner, family, friend, and our entire community now inextricably bound together by this horrific experience. I already knew on a fundamental level all that we had lost—well beyond the physical assets, property, and too many precious lives. We also lost our ability to trust that we could peacefully co-exist safely with nature in this special place. The road ahead would be filled with rebuilding our homes, schools, and businesses. We were about to face a tremendously long and grueling path ahead to rebuild our lives, our confidence, and our trust with paradise.



**Like the obstacle-riddled path to the beach after the hurricane, it was already clear that the Fort Myers Beach community had an equally challenging and long path in front of it.**





**The WaveRunner® had risen up so rapidly and high with a force and speed that must have been great. Not only was it completely destroyed, but much of the garage ceiling was, too. The WaveRunner® did not matter; the risk of structural damage did.**



In the other garage, the trash cans (thankfully, we had duct-taped them) were tossed over, along with two eBikes, an extra Amazon couch from the rental, kayaks, and life jackets. The twin mattress and frame that my friend, Komaki, had stored in my garage from her Naples property were soaked and ruined.

Finally, I remembered where the keys were hidden. They were in terrible shape. The spare keys held up just long enough for me to open the rest of the garage doors so that I could start airing them out.

I made my way inside where the WaveRunner® had been stored and my heart immediately sank. The water had risen so high that the WaveRunner® smashed into the ceiling with enough force to make large gashes in the drywall. I knew from my construction experience that the floor joists might have been damaged, potentially causing significant structural damage to my home.

I pushed forward with my daunting clean up tasks. With shoes and gloves on, I hauled the contents of the garages to the street like everyone else way doing. The process was excruciatingly slow and arduous. I gagged from the stench regularly. Whenever I felt too thirsty, I stopped for a sip of water and a moment to catch my breath.

As I cleared debris from my garages, yard, and property, I thought constantly of Kaia. I had to make sure this place safe again for her—and for me. It was a long road ahead, but I was determined to see it through. Although my future was uncertain, I was ready to face it. With determination and resilience, I knew I would make the necessary repairs and move forward. I couldn't let myself dwell on the losses. I had to do something, anything, to make things feel okay again. So, I got to work putting the property back together, trying to restore a very small sense of normalcy.

The sun would set soon. I had a long drive back to the east coast, so I knew it was time to pack up and make my way back. As I looked out my bedroom window I realized that the dock I had built only months earlier had been

destroyed. Now, it better resembled a mangled roller coaster sitting 5 feet in the air atop the mangroves. It was Hurricane Ian's the final punch in my gut for the day.

It wasn't just about the dock or the money it would take to fix it. It was about the dreams I had for this place, my new paradise on the water. It was about all the happy memories we had and planned to make. All of that now felt so far away. The broken, mangled dock would be a constant reminder of the destruction that had swept through our entire community. As the weight of it all hit me, I felt completely destroyed. I didn't know how to step forward. Ever the problem solver, the fixer, now I had no answers. I was beaten down and broken.

So, I took a video, explaining what I had seen and how I felt. Then, I stripped off my cruddy clothes, now covered in layer upon layer of sandy muck, sweat, and tears, and bagged them up. I put on fresh clothes from my closet. I reminded myself that I was alive. Kaia was alive. And we had plenty of places to live in the meantime. My home wasn't my paradise anymore, at least not now. But, we were still here. I had to be grateful for that. And I was.

I took my green e-bike from the living room and tied down a bag of clean clothes to take back to the east coast of Florida. I was physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted. I hadn't eaten all day, and the adrenaline had long worn off. I needed a break from the destruction that surrounded me. As I was leaving, I realized that I still needed to see the condition of the south end of the island. Especially the restaurants in Santini Plaza and Pinchers across the street where my friends and I spent countless meals and sunsets together.

As I rode towards the Plaza, I already knew the truth. The surge had destroyed everything in its path. All the businesses were on the first floor. The once-bustling Plaza was now a command center for authorities and cleanup crews. Every storefront and interior was completely destroyed. One of the restaurants even had a car sitting inside at the bar. Down the side street behind the Plaza, a car now sat on a transformer and a boat perched on the car's rooftop.

As the sun set, I slowly rode my bike north on the island. I wanted to leave here as soon as possible. Near the bridge, people were handing out food to locals

*“As I rode towards the Plaza, I already knew the truth. The surge had destroyed everything in its path. The once-bustling Plaza was now a command center for authorities and clean-up crews. Every storefront and interior was completely destroyed.”*



OCTOBER 1, 2022  
*The Longest Day Finally Ends*

I was hardly fazed by the time I saw this car on a transformer with a boat perched on the car's rooftop because I was numb. I only hoped I would not also be confronted with evidence of the loss of life I knew had occurred.



and doing photo ops. I wanted to throw up. They offered me food, but I turned it down and pedaled away. I wanted no part in that PR stunt.

I stopped at the top of the bridge to survey the destruction one last time. I felt little emotion beyond a deep sense of loss and emptiness. I coasted back down the bridge and made my way past the news trucks to Dan's SUV.

It had been 12 hours since my arrival—yet it felt like a lifetime ago. Back on Alligator Alley I headed back to—well, where exactly? After this day, it was abundantly clear that I wouldn't have a place to live for who knew how long.

With each mile, the feeling of hopelessness and fear of the unknown enveloped me. Numb. Tired. Afraid. But at the same time, I was grateful to even have these feelings. So many had suffered the ultimate loss and were no longer here to feel anything at all.

OCTOBER 2, 2022

In the days that followed, I didn't want to talk to anyone. I only wanted to curl up inside of myself. For the next six weeks, I felt perfectly fine not speaking. My world had been flipped upside down overnight, and I had nothing left to say.

Those who knew me understood my silence signaled pain. Normally you can't get me to stop talking. However, this was different. I was lost inside myself. I didn't want to come out. If I wasn't safe at home, where was I safe? If the water that had comforted me for a lifetime was now the enemy, where could I turn?

***I was angry, tired, and had no idea what to do next.***

As the days and weeks passed, I realized that no matter what I did, I was not in control. I did not feel safe anywhere. There was nothing left of my community to make living possible—no power, no water, no businesses, no restaurants. It was all gone.

To rebuild, starting with the roads and utilities, would take a very long time. The word was that it could take two to three months to restore power and water. Demolition would follow, and then many, many years of rebuilding.

I did feel proud of the bruises I had from the day I biked onto the island. I've had many bruises in my life, but those ended up being completely ridiculous, completely covering my body. That's exactly why they made me smile.

On day five, the island was closed indefinitely to finish search and rescue efforts. I couldn't help but wonder when I'd be able to take my vehicle onto the island. I remember telling someone that I'd love to get the chance one day in mid-October to get in, load the truck up, and get out for a year.

**Just get away from it all.**

*“I was lost inside myself. I didn't want to come out. If I wasn't safe at home, where was I safe? If the water that had comforted me for a lifetime was now the enemy, where could I turn?”*



OCTOBER 3, 2022

On October 3rd, I finally pieced together why so many people had stayed on the island to ride out the storm. I realized it was the timing. It turned for the worse at the very last minute. Few actually believed that the surge would happen and if it did, it couldn't be more than a couple of feet—just like so many of the prior storms.

That's why Frank and Tommy and their two dogs died. That's why too many others did, and why so many others may never be found. The only other loss that felt this painful was when my Uncle Chris died. Most days felt like taking one step forward and three steps back - and I felt each painful one.

OCTOBER 4, 2022

Six days after the storm, on October 4th, I had my first “snap out of it” moment when I realized what a bigger, better future this experience could push me towards. I thought about the many people I could influence and inspire as a result of this experience. **Life doesn't happen to us, it happens for us. I was ready to find a way to do what I could to also help my community.**

I was still very much in shock. However, this was just the first root from a seed starting to grow. It would not be until six weeks later, after bouncing all over the country on previously scheduled trips to Morgantown, Aruba, and southern California for a friend's wedding that I eventually got back to myself. I had been completing weekly EMDR therapy sessions and finally starting to feel like “me” again.

OCTOBER 7, 2022

On October 7th, we were finally allowed to drive on the island. My friend Howard and I drove in together for round two. The line to get to the island was long and the agitation was palpable. Cars cut in line, blocked intersections, and everyone was on edge. **We were all headed to the same place, but we were not IN the same place.** The difference was that most of the others didn't know what they were about to see. They didn't have the advantage I had; I knew the destruction we would find. And so I was patient.

I felt calm as we drove toward the bridge, but that was a coping mechanism. I was still only a shell of myself. As we got closer, Howard saw for the first time what I had already seen. No cleanup had begun yet as the first responders were now onto search and recovery. The rescue part was over. The smell was still there.

When we got to the house\*, I grabbed all of my clothes and anything else I needed. I planned to move into the Naples duplex I'd purchased with a partner in 2021. I would live there for the month of October to give myself time to figure out what was next.

**After a few hours, I was drained.** Just being back there was tiring, and Howard and I were both edgy, speaking perhaps ten words the entire time. It was still too overwhelming to truly process the extent of what happened. I remembered I needed to unlock the rear storage room in the garage. I finally found a key that worked, took a breath, and unlocked it. Staring back at me was yet another mess to clean up. We silently filled up the pathetic wheelbarrow with its flat tire and took many trips—back and forth to the street—to continue adding to the ever-growing piles of debris that my life had turned into.

Because we didn't know when we would have permanent unrestricted access to the island, we had to assume that they would continue to close access off at times. This is why I took anything and everything I could fit, anything I even remotely thought I might want, miss, or need for the rest of the year. I already had a strong sense that it would be a very long time before I'd be back living in Fort Myers Beach.

While my Naples duplex itself had been safe from the storm surges, the houses closest to the water, were flooded with over four feet of water. Naples wasn't as intensely damaged as Fort Myers Beach, but debris was pervasive there, too. Each time I drove by the areas near the water, the piles along the curb grew larger and larger, evidencing so many destroyed shards of people's lives. Finally, the massive demolition claw trucks would come and take these reminders away.

OCTOBER 7, 2022

*\*I called it “the house” by this point because it was hardly my home in its current state. This change of descriptor somehow helped me to be objective and less emotional. But only a little.*

*“Even though I would only be in Naples for a few weeks, I already had a strong sense that it would be a very long time before I'd be back in Fort Myers Beach.”*





### ***He'll Believe It (but not until he sees it)***

*Insurance claims, SBA, and FEMA applications were clunky, cumbersome, and without clarity. It was very clear which adjusters had already been on the island and which were still removed from the devastation. I spoke with my SBA adjuster on the way home from a flag football game I had watched in Morgantown with my sister.*

*It was clear he was young and inexperienced.*

*He was driving to my house and called to say, "Wow, it's pretty over here. What do you guys do for fun?" I just looked at the phone, dumbfounded. My sister, Brindi, motioned to me to relax; I later told her I was in such disbelief that I*

*had no anger left for him. He was clearly out of his element. Apparently, an hour later, when Howard met him at the property, the guy was clearly shaken and out of sorts. He was terrified to walk up the entry steps and wanted to leave quickly. **He finally "got it" and understood what I'd been trying to explain.***



**This was the shared FEMA and SBA tent that was setup mid-island for residents.**

I flew back from Morgantown and had less than 24 hours to prepare for a trip I'd booked a year ago with my friend Komaki. We went to **Aruba**, and I found myself staring at the ocean, not wanting to go in. I had a very weird, unsettled feeling. I finally forced myself to go into the ocean and have a one-on-one with my old friend turned new foe. I cried in the water for a long time. After reconnecting with the ocean, I went scuba diving. The diving trip reminded me that underneath the water was a vibrant community of organisms and wildlife living and thriving just out of human eyesight.

The water isn't the monster. The water did what it does, and we know the risk of nature, whether we are in the mountains, on the water, or anywhere outside. It's life. Human-made things get destroyed, people die, new things get built, and new lives are born. Nature is resilient and rebounds much faster than we do.

A day after returning to **Florida**, I had severe vertigo again. I'd first started experiencing it in August 2022 and something about the disaster had triggered it again. I barely had enough energy to say hi to Kaia and Howard before trying to sleep it off. Kaia knew that I wasn't really there and left me to spend the night with Howard. I didn't blame her. I wasn't present and she knew it. The next day I repacked and flew to **California** to be in Jamie's wedding the upcoming weekend.

I attempted to play volleyball on Thursday with friends—Komaki, Toya, and Michelle. The vertigo became worse. It took two trips to a chiropractor to finally level out to something manageable. Despite my discomfort, Jamie's wedding was beautiful, and it was great to catch up with Angela and Komaki again.

After I got back to Florida, I stayed a couple of days in my **Naples** duplex before packing up Kaia to head to **Georgia** to meet up with my friend Michelle at her vacation rental in the mountains for a relaxing and recharging weekend.

After our time in Georgia, I made my way to **Asheville, North Carolina** to spend the day and I found a dog park for at which Kaia could play. It was great to see her running around, having fun, and being around other dogs.

Eventually, we arrived in Durham at Laura's place. It was there that everything finally came together. I got news that my house in **Fort Myers Beach** had finally gotten power and water, and that the house and driveway had been pressure washed. I'd also had a conversation with a specialist out in California about my vertigo. We did a couple tests and she was able to confirm that the vertigo was stress induced. Shocker. I'd been under a ton of pressure in August prior to the hurricane with my businesses and then the hurricane came and demolished my community. Stress induced added up.







I would come to understand that the worst part of a disaster or really any bad situation in life is the unknown. When there are too many variables out of your control it seems impossible to know how to come up with a plan for moving forward. It's a very helpless and hopeless feeling.

I would leave **North Carolina** feeling excited about returning home. Before making it back to **Naples** I would spend the weekend in **Miami** with friends for the Browns vs. Dolphins game. Then I could finally get back to southwest Florida and start thinking about moving back home. The game was fun to attend. I got to experience a new stadium, and it was great hanging out with my friends Emma, Dan, and Howard.

Finally, I felt human again. My spark had returned, and I was starting to think about the future. I knew I still had a lot to process to keep healing, but by late November of 2022, I felt like I was starting to become whole again. Full of hope, optimism, energy, and enthusiasm for life.

I spent a weekend away in **St. Pete** with my sister, Brindi, and my friends, and it was amazing. It almost felt normal. It was a much-needed break from the chaos of the past few months.

I returned home the Saturday after Thanksgiving and made sure the house was ready for Kaia and me to move back into the next day.

And then, on the evening of November 27th, exactly two months after we left the island, Kaia and I moved back home. We walked to the beach for the first time in far too long, and when we got there, I took out my phone to take a picture of Kaia. As I was looking through the phone, a bird flew into the picture and soared along the horizon in the sunset. It stayed there for a minute before taking off, and I knew that my Uncle Chris was watching over us. I said, "Thank you," and knew that we were going to be okay.

It's been a week since Kaia and I moved back home. We've finally resumed our twice-daily walks to the beach. It was such a relief to be back in our routine and reunited with our neighbors. We've been having deeper and more meaningful conversations than ever before.

One morning, I was invited to join the neighborhood coffee session at the end of my street. I met some new faces who had heard about me, the girl from **Tahoe**, and they finally got to meet me in person. Now, I was more than just an outsider, like I was during my first year in Fort Myers Beach. Despite the chaos it caused, the storm had opened everyone's hearts and strengthened our bond as a community. It didn't matter whether a person was a newcomer or had been in the area for decades—**everyone who had experienced the trauma induced by Hurricane Ian felt that connection now.** We'd been through it, together as a community, and because of that, we knew that if we worked together, we would recover together as a community.

As for now, the repairs on my property are well underway, and hopefully, we will be completely back to normal soon. Admittedly—a new normal.

There's still a long road ahead, but on December 3rd, 2022, I knew that Kaia and I were going to be okay. Watching Kaia's joy from being at the beach again, and catching seashells fills me with warmth. We were finally home, safe, and alive. We were finally living again.

In December I drove back to Tahoe with Kaia and stayed until June of 2023. Tahoe had a record snow season that left us shoveling roofs and stuck in blizzards in Mammoth and Tahoe. Apparently water in any form was going to prove to be abundant for me.

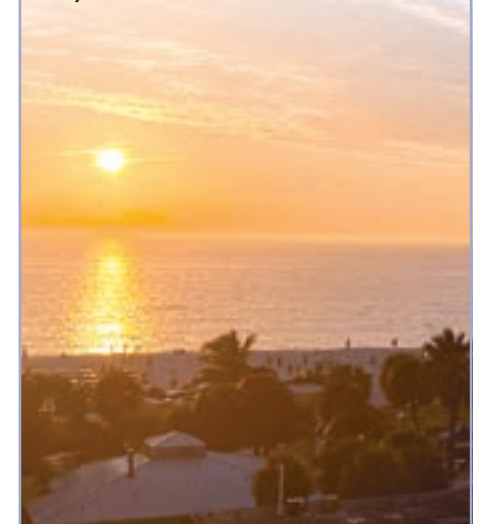
When I received the news that the grocery store had reopened on Fort Myers Beach, I knew it was finally time to leave Tahoe and head back to Florida with Kaia—for good. During the past 6 months I'd managed to adjust to normal life once again. **Being away confirmed for me that with my skill set and experience, I could give back to the Fort Myers Beach community. That meant being home, and I was more than ready.**

I worked with my team to create a robust database of contractors, lenders, architects, engineers, town permitting info, and other businesses that were helping rebuild the island so information was accessible. We mailed over 2,500 letters directly to homeowners on the island to share the resources we'd gathered to help them rebuild. We created resource lists of agencies, too.

### ***Progress is in the Eye of the Beholder***

*My sister, Brindi, flew into Fort Myers just before Thanksgiving. I couldn't wait to show her the progress we'd made. Over 400,000 pounds of debris had already been removed, and although my house still needed power, it looked somewhat normal, except for the dock.*

*What I didn't realize was that, even two months later, it was still an extreme scene for people to see for the first time. For me, it finally felt like a construction zone instead of the apocalypse, but for everyone else, it was still indescribable.*



**My last trip was back to St. Petersburg for Thanksgiving weekend with friends. As I looked at this sunset from our hotel, one of so many hotels I'd frequented since Hurricane Ian, I realized that this chapter was also drawing to a close. I would finally be able to return to Fort Myers Beach. I wasn't sure I could call it home just yet, but I was ready to find out.**





“My team and I actively put together a plan to help rebuild some lots into attainable housing projects by leveraging modular construction. We plan to scale this initiative over the next several years until the island is completely rebuilt.”

We also created a website “restorefmb.com” and as of August 2024, almost 2 years later, we are still actively putting together a plan to help rebuild some of our lots into attainable housing projects leveraging modular construction. We’ll put together a proof of concept fund in 2025. **Thinking even bigger, we then plan to scale that initiative over the next several years until the island is completely rebuilt.**

Hurricane Ian was costly on so many levels and for so many people. Personally, my out-of-pocket expenses, not covered by insurance, topped \$175K, and that is only as of this writing. Hopefully, my last hurricane-related repairs were wrapped up in June of 2024. The average person who was lucky enough to still have a structurally sound building in need of repairs spent between \$100K and \$250K in out-of-pocket repair expenses. For those who completely lost their homes and businesses, the price was exponentially higher. Many were left fighting insurance companies for months and years before coming to a somewhat reasonable outcome.

**Times of crises bring out the best and the worst of humanity.** Thankfully for every shady and underhanded thing I witnessed or heard about, we seemed to have a counterbalancing positive act of kindness and goodwill. I was so incredibly grateful and inspired by the resilience shown by our community. Each day felt incredibly heavy in those early days and weeks. There were times it was hard to get out of bed knowing the monumental effort it would take to make it through the day.

However, witnessing one random act of kindness, seeing someone going out of their way to help someone else would give the rest of us the courage and the fight to keep going. They say it takes a community to raise a child. It takes every single person in a community to recover from such a devastating storm.

While I wouldn’t wish this experience on anyone, I am able to see the silver lining today. **Hurricane Ian, with its violent wrath, was a profound teacher; we could not help but learn.** Now I am so incredibly grateful for what the disaster has done for me and how it has helped me to transform my life. I knew I was strong and that I would always be OK. I would always find a way to make

myself safe again. **What I didn’t know before this experience was that it is also OK to be openly broken and to allow others to pick me up.** I now know I don’t always need to be the strong one who always has the right answers. Friendships and relationships are two-way streets. If I don’t let other people give back to me and only allow them to receive from me, that’s not a true relationship.

At the ripe old age of 37, I also learned the very important concept of self love. As I continue to look for silver linings from this devastating experience, I realize I would not have been in this same position. Since the hurricane, I have worked hard to discover that I’ve always been the person I am. I didn’t need to become anything more or different. I just needed to finally learn to love myself.

I now know that don’t need to continue to prove I’m worthy or try to become someone else or someone better. Just me, little old me, just the way I am, is enough, and always has been enough. Now I know that and accept that in both my head and my heart.

The main thing I’ve learned is that I can’t control Mother Nature just like I can’t control anyone else or anything I encounter. Control is just a mechanism to stay safe yet staying safe is not the purpose of life. The purpose of life is to live well, to get—and embrace—the many bumps, bruises, and deep scars that remind us and reflect with clear evidence that we lived life to the fullest.

The only thing I can control in life is my response to the situations life sends my way. Knowing that I can pause and take the time to think and then respond, provides a freedom I can’t really explain.

As the current hurricane season gets underway, we are all bracing ourselves for whatever this season will bring. The gulf is as warm in early summer as it typically is in August. This means that hurricanes might intensify quickly, making it hard to predict their path and leaving less time for coastal communities to react. Daily thunderstorms serve to constantly remind us all of **the precariousness of calling where we live—home.**

This is the true price of **PARADISE.**

“Just me, little old me, just the way I am, is enough. Now I know that and accept that in both my head—and my heart.”





# for Disaster Preparedness & Recovery

## NATIONAL RESOURCES

**Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** <https://www.fema.gov>

Disaster Assistance: <https://www.disasterassistance.gov>

Helpline: 1-800-621-3362 Email: AskIA@fema.dhs.gov

**National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF)**

<https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/frameworks/recovery>

RESOURCES: Recovery Support Function Leadership Group (RSFLG), Recovery & Resilience Resource Library

**USDA Disaster Resource Center**

<https://www.usda.gov/topics/disaster-resource-center>

RESOURCES: Preparedness and Assistance Resources

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**

<https://www.samhsa.gov/disaster-preparedness>

RESOURCES: Behavioral health resources for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery

## STATE-LEVEL RESOURCES

**Florida Division of Emergency Management**

<https://www.floridadisaster.org/dem/recovery/>

RESOURCES: Recovery programs, funding opportunities, and environmental assessments

**New York State Office of Emergency Management**

<https://www.dhSES.ny.gov/office-emergency-management>

RESOURCES: State EOC, Watch Center, Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program

**State Emergency Management Agencies**

<https://www.usa.gov/state-emergency-management>

RESOURCES: Contact information for state emergency management agencies across the U.S.

## LOCAL RESOURCES

**Restore Fort Myers Beach** <https://restorefmb.com>

RESOURCES: Contractor information, city recovery plans, local assistance programs

**Local Emergency Management Offices** <https://www.fema.gov/locations>

RESOURCES: Contact information for local emergency management offices, disaster declarations, and news releases

## SUGGESTIONS FOR CONTACTING LOCAL & STATE RESOURCES

### 1. Identify Local Emergency Management Office:

Use FEMA's location search to find contact information specific to your area.

### 2. State-Level Coordination:

- Visit your state's emergency management website for specific programs and resources.
- Contact state offices directly for assistance with larger-scale disaster recovery efforts.

### 3. Community Engagement:

- Participate in local community meetings and emergency preparedness drills.
- Engage with local non-profits and volunteer organizations for additional support.

### 4. Utilize Online Tools:

- Leverage FEMA's Recovery and Resilience Resource Library and Community Recovery Management Toolkit for comprehensive guidance.

### 5. Stay Informed:

- Sign up for local alerts and warnings through your local emergency management office.
- Follow local news and official social media channels



# Natural Disaster Preparedness

*This checklist aims to ensure you are prepared for a range of natural disasters and severe weather conditions. Regularly review and update your plans and kits to accommodate any changes in your family's needs.*

## GENERAL PREPAREDNESS

### Emergency Plan:

- Create and practice an emergency evacuation plan with all household members.
- Establish two meeting places: one near your home and one outside your neighborhood.
- Choose an out-of-state contact for family members to call if separated.
- Know your community's evacuation routes and emergency shelters.

### Communication:

- Ensure all family members know how to use emergency communication tools.
- Sign up for local alerts and warnings.

## EMERGENCY KIT

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| • <b>Water:</b> One gallon per person, per day, for at least 3 days. | • <b>Moist Towelettes, Garbage Bags, &amp; Plastic Ties</b>  | • <b>Prescriptions &amp; OTC Medications</b>                                      |
| • <b>Food:</b> At least a 3-day supply of non-perishable food.       | • <b>Wrench or Pliers:</b> To turn off utilities.  | • <b>Sleeping Bags &amp; Warm Blankets</b>  |
| • <b>Radio:</b> Battery-powered/hand-crank & NOAA Weather Radio.     | • <b>Manual Can Opener:</b> For food.  | • <b>Complete Change of Clothing &amp; Sturdy Shoes</b>                           |
| • <b>Flashlight &amp; Extra Batteries</b>                            | • <b>Local Maps</b>  | • <b>Fire Extinguisher</b>  |
| • <b>First Aid Kit</b>   | • <b>Cell Phone with Chargers &amp; Backup Battery</b>   | • <b>Matches in Waterproof Container</b>  |
| • <b>Whistle:</b> To signal for help.                                | • <b>Cash or Traveler's Checks</b>   | • <b>Feminine Supplies &amp; Personal Hygiene Items</b>                           |
| • <b>Dust Mask:</b> To help filter contaminated air.                 | • <b>Important Document Copies:</b> Insurance policies, IDs, & bank records in waterproof container. | • <b>Mess Kits, Paper Cups &amp; Plates, Paper Towels, &amp; Plastic Utensils</b> |
| • <b>Plastic Sheetting &amp; Duct Tape:</b> To shelter in place.     |  | • <b>Books, Games, &amp; Activities for Children</b>                              |

## SPECIFIC DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

### Hurricanes

#### BEFORE the Storm:

- Secure outdoor furniture & items.
- Plan to shelter pets indoors.
- Know flood risk & evacuation routes.
- Prepare a "go bag" of essential items.

#### DURING the Storm:

- Stay indoors, away from windows.
- Shelter in a central room on the lowest floor.
- Evacuate if instructed by authorities.

#### AFTER the Storm:

- Avoid flooded areas and downed power lines.
- Wait for official notification before returning to evacuated areas.



### Thunderstorms

**BEFORE the Storm:**

- Remove dead or hazardous trees and branches.
- Secure outdoor items that could blow away.

**DURING the Storm:**

- Take shelter indoors or in a hard-top vehicle.
- Avoid using electrical appliances.
- Stay away from tall objects and metal structures.

**AFTER the Storm:**

- Avoid flooded areas and downed power lines.
- Report power outages and damages to the local utility company.

### Extreme Heat

**Preparation:**

- Ensure cooling systems are working.
- Install weather stripping on windows and doors.
- Cover windows with drapes or shades.

**DURING Extreme Heat:**

- Stay hydrated and drink plenty of water.
- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- Avoid strenuous activities during the hottest part of the day.
- Check on family, friends, and neighbors who are vulnerable.

### Extreme Cold

**Preparation:**

- Insulate your home and weather-strip doors & windows.
- Ensure heating equipment and chimneys are cleaned & inspected.
- Prepare your vehicle with winter emergency supplies.

**DURING Extreme Cold:**

- Stay indoors as much as possible.
- Wear layers of loose-fitting, lightweight clothing.
- Keep dry and change wet clothing promptly.

### Maintaining Your Kit

- Keep canned food in a cool, dry place.
- Store boxed food in tightly closed containers.
- Replace expired items regularly.
- Update your kit annually based on family needs

#### Kit Storage Locations

**Home:** Keep your kit in a designated place known to all family members.

**Work:** Have a kit ready to shelter at work for at least 24 hours.

**Car:** Maintain a kit of emergency supplies in your vehicle.

**CITATIONS:**

[1] <https://www.ready.gov/kit>

[2] <https://northcentralhealthdistrict.org/severe-weather-preparedness/>

[3] <https://www.weather.gov/safety/hurricane-plan>

[4] [https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/atg/Chapters/Division\\_1\\_-\\_Media/Denver/Denver\\_-\\_PDFs/EmergencyPreparednessChecklist.pdf](https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/atg/Chapters/Division_1_-_Media/Denver/Denver_-_PDFs/EmergencyPreparednessChecklist.pdf)

[5] <https://thompsontractor.com/blog/10-steps-to-severe-weather-preparation/>

[6] [https://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/2020-03/fema\\_how-to-prepare-for-hurricane.pdf](https://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/2020-03/fema_how-to-prepare-for-hurricane.pdf)

## Meet Kristi Kandel

My nearly 20-year journey in real estate development and investing has transformed my quality of life, and today I have managed over \$450 million in development projects nationwide. Through I&D Consulting, our development courses and our community designed for emerging Local Real Estate Developers™, we’re redefining local development projects that not only promise financial returns but also transform our communities.

A couple of years after starting my first company, I&D Consulting, I also started investing the profits into my personal real estate portfolio with a mixture of short-term and long-term rentals in multiple states. In recent years, I’ve changed my focus from investing in properties to investing in businesses with great partners.

When Hurricane Ian caused so much irreparable damage to my own SWFL community in Fort Myers Beach, I captured the harrowing and emotional experience in my journal. Almost two years and a lot of healing later, I have written this book to share my first-hand understanding of the pain and struggle that so many communities across the country face. It is my hope that after reading this book, other community stakeholders and leaders will reach out and rebuild, re-image, and repurpose damaged or underutilized properties to restore their community to the vibrant place it once was so that they can thrive again.

***“This amazing country is made up of so many incredible and unique communities. Each one I encounter has its own personality, culture, history, and vision. I am truly honored to meet so many strong local leaders and to offer my expertise to support Local Real Estate developers™ to help their communities to thrive.”***

Communities, local leaders, entrepreneurs, and Local Real Estate Developers™ consult with myself and my team to benefit from the resources and wisdom I’ve gained over the years. As a result, many communities discover how to channel their creativity and design innovative projects that reflect the community’s vision for reshaping and rebuilding its local spaces.

Ready to become a CHANGEMAKER in your community? Have a vision to transform underutilized properties into awesome, new community assets? Struggling from a community challenge? Reach out to me. I’m passionate about providing support to help you take the first steps in a new and exciting direction.

For more information, reach out to Kristi Kandel at **Kristi@idconsulting.us** today.





# THE PRICE OF PARADISE

**HURRICANE IAN:** Rebuilding Through Hope, Resilience, and Community

When Hurricane Ian caused so much irreparable damage to her own southwest Florida community in Fort Myers Beach, seasoned real estate developer, Kristi Kandel, captured the harrowing and emotional experience in her journal. Almost two years and a lot of healing later, Kristi has written this book to share her first-hand understanding of the pain and struggle that so many small and medium-sized communities across the country face. It is Kristi's hope that after reading this book, other communities will reach out and rebuild, re-image, and repurpose damaged or underutilized properties to restore their community stakeholders and leaders to the vibrant place it once was so that they can thrive again. As Kristi says—

***“This amazing country is made up of so many incredible and unique communities. Each one I encounter has its own personality, culture, history, and vision. I am truly honored to meet so many strong local leaders and to offer my expertise to support local real estate developers to help their communities to thrive.”***

With its informative **National, State, and Local Resources** and **Natural Disaster Checklists**, ***The Price of Paradise*** provides a compelling first-person account designed to inspire communities to be prepared and stay a step ahead of natural disasters. Plus, this book equips small- and mid-sized communities with strategies and content that inspire smart action. Once you pick up this quick chronicle of one experience of so many, you won't be able to put it down.

