

My First Florida Hurricane by Charles Wendel

Up to now, my biggest concern about living in Miami involved a fear of overtanning. But, Irma is approaching and a sense of anticipation and a bit of panic is in the air, fueled in part by the media that loves to report “storms of century” as frequently as possible.

At the local Publix in Brickell, water deliveries are awaited eagerly and bottled water is grabbed up as soon as it arrives on the shelves. Shoppers fill their wagons with canned goods that they never considered before: do “fancy smoked oysters” really come in a can? News to me. And, all the spam is gone. Spam! Water may not be available, but alcohol is, a potential salve. One friend looking for an excuse to indulge in light of the storm of the century decided to face the storm by buying a supply of ice cream. If the electricity goes off, he gets to eat it all.

Last night on the way to the Miami Marlins baseball game, the line of cars waiting for gasoline stretched for blocks. The indoor Marlins stadium was empty with maybe 5,000 fans there to see the Nationals and their ace, Stephen Strasburg, even though yesterday was sunny with no rain. Today is another tanning day, but people seem to be leaving or staying close to home. A number of our neighbors have been lugging BIG roller bags in the elevator as they flee, and lots of people appear to be waiting for Uber.

Friends from around the US, London, and Brasil have sent inquiring messages, and a Dallas Texan suggested coming there as a refugee. One friend even expressed the hope that the storm would miss Florida and go to D.C. Unkind.

Flights over the next day are increasingly difficult to get. American Airlines has responded by raising the price to above \$2,000 on the few coach seats it has available to New York. Nice corporate citizenship. At least last night, Jet Blue’s website had crashed.

We expect banks to use this crisis to try to humanize themselves as they did with the most recent storm. The *American Banker* recently reported: “Many in the path of the storm Harvey could not get to a bank, so BBVA Compass raised the monthly mobile-deposit limit and decreased the hold time on mobile deposits for customers in Texas. Information about branch closings also was added to the app.” Question: You need a hurricane to cause you to make that customer friendly change?

Walking around Miami, you see smart preparations being made. Palm trees are being cut back to avoid the danger of their huge leaves doing damage. Furniture both outdoors and in lobbies is being stored away. Schools are closing. Our condo has two generators and a plan for keeping residents safe and happy and with ice for cocktails. But, what about the huge cranes in many parts of the city? Better not to be living near them.

Maybe this will be the storm of the century (again). The press may be right, but the weather predictions are coming from the same type of experts who guaranteed that Hillary would be President. And, then, the next day they were still on the air

prognosticating rather than having had the integrity to commit hare kari. We'll see. It may only be hours before this storm passes and the next one begins to get hyped. At least Irma has curtailed the endless Trump and Russia stories.