



# August Gale: A Father and Daughter's Journey into the Storm

*Barbara Walsh*

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Long before "The Perfect Storm," the 1935 August Gale roared northeast. The surf raged along the New York and New Jersey shores as the gale whirled toward Newfoundland. Waves as tall as three-story houses swamped ships; monster combers broke masts in two and swept every man on deck into the raging sea. Scores of fishermen disappeared when the "divil" descended on that August evening, and one Newfoundland village would never be the same. Forty-two children in a community of three hundred lost their fathers.

In August Gale, Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Barbara Walsh takes readers on two heartrending odysseys: one into a deadly Newfoundland hurricane and the lives of schooner fishermen who relied on God and the wind to carry them home; the other, into a squall stirred by a man with many secrets: a grandfather who remained a mystery until long after his death.

## **August Gale: A Father and Daughter's Journey into the Storm Details**

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Author : Barbara Walsh

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## From Reader Review August Gale: A Father and Daughter's Journey into the Storm for online ebook

### Janet says

My daughter and I love this book and have put it on the list for our book club to read in January. This book is unique in the way it was written which involves present day family and the families that have passed. We in particular loved reading about the fishermen and the lives that they chose to live. Passions about a chosen livelihood are rare these days and it made us cheer the men who work hard everyday to bring in the fish, plow the fields and work the farms.

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### Susan Khaladkar says

Been away from GoodReads for awhile but have still been reading. I just finished this way and feel compelled to recommend it. Five stars for show. True story of a fishing disaster in 1935 interspersed with a storm in the family. I couldn't put this book down once I started it.

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### Bill Pilon says

I just finished August Gale: A Father and Daughter's Journey into the Storm by Barbara Walsh. This is an outstanding book. Barbara Walsh has very skillfully meshed three related stories. First is that of the catastrophic 1935 gale that took the lives of 40 Newfoundland fishermen including her great-uncle "Paddy" Walsh and several of her cousins, second is the story of her grandfather Ambrose Walsh who had emigrated to NY from Newfoundland to start and later abandon his own family and third, the effect that Ambrose's actions had on her dad, Ronald and her uncle William Patrick (the namesake of the drowned fisherman) and their mother.

The book alternates between the three story lines in the context of and the author's trip, accompanied by her dad, to Marystown, Newfoundland during which she unraveled the story of the gale and she and her dad came to know their relatives. All the story lines and the Marystown trip are well written and compelling. Even better they are seamlessly woven together.

Walsh is particularly strong on the human cost of these tragedies. Her descriptions of the grief of the women and children over the loss of their fathers, husbands and brothers and their plight in the following winter is especially poignant. The images she describes are haunting. Equally well done is her writing about the effects of Ambrose's abandonment on Ambrose's wife and well as on the author's dad and uncle.

I simply can't recommend this highly enough.

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### Michael says

The author pursues her interest in family roots in Newfoundland and the impact of a terrible storm in 1935 that killed her great uncle Paddy and several cousins. It was an event Barbara's father never talked about

when she was growing up. His own father, Ambrose had left the tight Newfoundland community for a new life in New York City and then when he was a boy abandoned his mother for another woman and another life. The interest Barbara has in the past leads her to inspire an interest in her father in reconnecting with their family and pursuing the story and fate of Ambrose. For me, the lack of direct connection of Ambrose's story to the tragic storm makes this a disjointed tale. Most other readers seem to get more mileage out of this story than me. It was moving to experience the father and daughter drawing out memories of surviving family members about the impact of 40 deaths on the small fishing community. However, I didn't appreciate the quality and content of the reconstructed dialogue and life of people at the time of the storm. Because there were no surviving witnesses among the fishermen in the storm, the experience is beyond reach. I guess I am spoiled by the fine evocative writing of books like *The Perfect Storm: A True Story of Men Against the Sea* and *In the Heart of the Sea: The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex*.

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### **Stephen Geneseo says**

Barbara Walsh has crafted a riveting piece of nonfiction by skillfully weaving two lines of parallel events within three generations of her family. The author's Pulitzer Prize-winning research skills are showcased in the narrative's historical accuracy and honesty. Her humanity and compassion ground the work somewhere closer to the heart, reinforcing the idea that we are all the sum of our experiences and our decisions. There are inherited traits and tendencies, but we each build our castle (or shack) on those foundations. Here is the story of a man who found the courage to be a better man than the example he was given and nurtured that bravery in others. I hope many more people will read the book, taking solace and strength from the lives and events it depicts. Readers will continue to weigh the wisdom of decisions made against their consequences long after the last page has been turned.

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### **Karen Lee says**

I am always up for a good seafaring tale and *August Gale*: delivered that in addition to a multi-layered story of family betrayal and redemption. Walsh writes simply and directly of the tragedy of the hurricane on a small fishing village in Newfoundland and weaves the story around the emotional exploration of long held family secrets. This honest and touching journey adds a rich depth to the telling of the bit of regional history that has echoed down through the generations of the Walsh family. The plentiful family photographs and the maps and glossary were welcome aids to picturing the storm and environs.

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### **Dana Clinton says**

*August Gale: A Father and Daughter's Journey into the Storm* (by Barbara Walsh) is the current read for the South Berwick Library book group, and I expect there will be good discussion... apparently with the author in Skype with us. If you have seen the movie *The Perfect Storm*, you'll feel the same dread as Walsh little by little leads us towards the tragedies that resulted from the great August gale of 1935 that claimed over 40 fisherman's lives from her family in Marystown, Newfoundland. But the book is so much more than what she set out to write, which was the story of her Uncle Paddy (one of those lost in that storm), because with the decision to research this storm, this born American woman unearths her own father's past which he has stubbornly refused to talk about all his grown life to either his daughters or his wife. For one of Paddy's brothers, the youngest in the Walsh family of those days, had left for America rather than go to sea, and that brother became Barbara Walsh's grandfather, a grandfather she didn't know at all, because long ago he

walked out (twice, in fact) on his own wife and two sons. It is this Ambrose that Barbara's father Ronald has refused to talk about. In the search for details of the storm's impact on the Walsh family, Ronald finally reveals his own story and recovers much... of his past and his present. All losses in our lives hurt us, and those done by the living hurt no less than those done by the hand of fate. Hurt lingers. This is all a true story, and sometimes it is challenging to keep all the people in the different generations straight, but it is quite captivating overall. The strength of family is a powerful thing; I have so little that the book left me feeling a bit adrift on this gloomy rainy day. Early onset cabin fever, I think! But the rain is much needed, and balancing this book with something lighter will set things aright!

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### **Rebecca says**

As this book moves back and forth through time in two parallel narratives of heartrending loss and family ties over a century, the imagined portrayals of these real seafaring Newfoundlanders and those who waited at home come to life most vividly.

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### **John Barbieri says**

Having spent over 30 years in the ocean business, this book has the making of an epic "sea story." It is superbly written. The author has managed to detach herself from a story to which she is very much attached, to the benefit of the reader. The rich storytelling will appeal to those who are interested in the sea, as well as those who experience a test of faith in their own lives. It is a story of reconciliation and, ultimately, hope.

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### **Michael says**

This is one of the saddest and most moving stories I have read in quite a while. It recalls the effect a devastating and tragic hurricane that struck Newfoundland in August 1935 and the cost to one family. The storm leaves the Walsh family in tatters. The husband, captain of a fishing schooner, and three sons lost to the storm, a brother of the lost captain learns of the storm and abandons his family.

The hopeful part is that, through the efforts of one member of the Walsh family, the entire story of the storm and its effects is finally told. The real strength of the family eventually turns out to be stronger than the storm and stronger than one man's betrayal. It takes decades for the whole story to be told, but a splintered family is reunited.

I cannot recommend this book enough. It is a remarkable and powerful story of how one family overcame natural disaster and emotional failures to come back together. Read it.

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### **James Mowery says**

This was a great book. The title August Gale is quite appropriate as many things happen in August. It is the birth month of the author and her father--both principle characters in the book; as well as the month that took the lives of the author's great uncle and three or his four sons. It is a book about a family tracing its routes and finding and renewing relationships that had long been relegated to the past.

No family I know was ever perfect, but in the author's, my own, and the families of my close friends there are in addition to the love, devotion, and joys: secrets, hurt, and trial. Some families have hurt that lingers and others have hurt resolved quickly. And although most family issues can be mended over time, some can never be understood. This book places all of that on the table in a prose that draws the reader in and keeps them there.

The joy of their family's renewal intertwined with the sadness of the loss of life in the 1935 August Gale is a heart-wrenching yet heartwarming story of life. I can see why the author was awarded the Pulitzer Prize as well as many other awards (See Barbara Walsh on Wikipedia). It is a great book that warms the heart, even though it can also bring a few tears. My hat is off to the author and I applaud this great work about family and recommend it highly.

Would hope Hollywood would make a movie of it all as such a movie would do justice to the concept of family as well as pay tribute to the brave men of her family and their surrounding Newfoundland community who lost their lives to the sea on that tragic August night in 1935.

Bravo Zulu (Please search on Google if you do not recognize this phrase. It is a Naval term).

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### **Nick says**

Barbara Walsh's book is both entertaining and informative. The past and present are woven together masterfully, so that the reader feels like they have hopped in a dory to find out what really happened to Marystown during the August Gale of 1935. Legendary figures like Uncle Paddy Walsh emerge and bring the salty Newfoundland community to life on the pages. However, this book is not just about adventure, the dangerous life of cod fishermen, and a terrible storm. It is also about simple people dealing with the harsh realities of life. The quest of a father and daughter to understand the secret sufferings of dark corners of family history is truly poignant and encouraging.

I highly recommend 'August Gale'. It is a must-read for anyone who loves the voyage of discovery. Also, for anyone who just loves to shorten the path with a damn good story.

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### **Leslie says**

"August Gale" by Barbara Walsh is beautifully written. A poignant story of family, relationships, and sailors' battles with the sea. Walsh is a gifted storyteller. She shares emotion without sentimentality, and you are there with her as she tells this tale. "August Gale" is a new classic that simply should not be missed. Add this book to your summer reading shelf, you will carry its story with you forever.

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### **Christine Holmes says**

Great beach read! This true story moves fluidly between a terrible "August gale" in Newfoundland in 1935 (reminiscent of the Perfect Storm) that takes the lives of the author's relatives, to the present day journey the author and her dad take to uncover the secrets of the gale as well as find an explanation for her grandfather's abandonment of her father's family, not once, but twice. The story is gut wrenching and uplifting at the same

time. The author does a great job bringing the hardscrabble existence of fishing families in the early 20th century to life and connects the strength needed for this existence with her family's success despite the devastating effects of loss and abandonment. A good reminder that we are the captains of our own ship!

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### **Susan Emmet says**

Liked "August Gale," the interwoven stories of the 1935 hurricane that hit the east coast of Newfoundland, taking many dorrymen and captains, and the history of Walsh's father's family, especially the tales of Paddy Walsh and his children and grandchildren. The desertion of Ambrose, Walsh's grandfather, deeply scarred her father Ron, who bore the scars throughout his life.

Lots to learn about hard fishing and hard times in isolated places. And lots to think about regarding family "secrets" and conflicts borne over time. And about healing and discovering truth.

Walsh's reportorial skills and experience serve her well - and readers, too.

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