

## CHAPTER VII

### WEATHER

“There was never a night or a problem that could defeat sunrise or hope.”

- BERN WILLIAMS

Since 1971, Jaffrey has had some memorable weather events. On Sunday, February 9, 1971, snow began to pile up across the state, and by Monday Jaffrey was digging out from the heaviest accumulation of snow in three years. State and local plows spent two days moving snow off major roads. On Route 124 west of town, the road was closed at Yeatman meadow, a place that has often been a problem for motorists. East of town, the same route was closed between the Sawyer and Bush farms because of heavy drifting. At the Warfield residence drifts measured nine feet. Many residents were isolated for days before plows could liberate them. The high winds compacted the snow making it very difficult to move. Classified as a true blizzard, it was the worst storm in many years.



*Mt. Monadnock in the winter*

On February 6 and 7, 1978, a storm dropped 24 inches of snow to bring the total for the winter to 73 inches. Governor Thompson declared a statewide emergency enabling Jaffrey and other towns to apply for \$40,000 to cover the cost of snow removal and pay for damage done by the storm. Because the temperature hovered between 15 and 20 degrees below zero, even the landfill area was closed. For several days it was hazardous for people to be outside.

Torrential rainfall in April of 1987 caused many areas to become flooded and roads to wash out throughout Jaffrey. Gilmore Pond Road was closed when the pressure of many tons of water roaring down a mountain stream forced a three-ton culvert up from under the roadway. It was carried downstream by the swift current.

In late October of the same year, heavy rainfall and a mix of rain and snow clogged the drains in downtown Jaffrey, flooding the intersection near B & B Grocery and bringing traffic to a standstill. Then Hurricane Bob barreled up the New England coast and struck Rhode Island with 100-mile-per-hour winds. In the northwest quadrant of the storm, Jaffrey sustained some damage to trees and power lines, but no injuries were reported.

A series of northeasters with no break between them plastered all of New England in 1992. Jaffrey was blanketed with 31 inches



*Mt. Monadnock in the summer*

of heavy, wet snow that was a challenge to move.

The winter of 1995-1996 delivered dual northeasters that contributed to the total 168 inches of snow that year. The dubious honor of "King of the Snowpile" was awarded to Jaffrey by the National Weather Service in Taunton, Massachusetts. No other New England town had accumulated that much snow.

The spring of 1997 was, after a winter of only 100 inches of snow, cool and slow to warm. However Mother Nature dropped 26 inches of heavy, wet snow on Jaffrey on April 1. The summer of 1997 brought some dangerous weather in the form of tornadoes that destroyed a building at the Cheshire Fairgrounds just a few weeks before the annual fair. Campgrounds at Greenfield State Park were also damaged. Jaffrey experienced severe thunderstorms, heavy rain, and a strange light green sky but escaped major damage from that storm.

On May 29 and 31, 1998, Jaffrey and the Monadnock Region experienced violent thunder and lightening storms when a tornado touched down in the town of Antrim. The 120-mile-per-hour winds caused severe roof damage at Antrim's Great Brook School. During the evening of May 31, a storm knocked out Keene Mutual Aid phone lines in the region, and it was not until the following day that communications were reestablished without serious effect. Power outages were scattered throughout the area. The destructive force of the winds damaged trees and brought down wires throughout town. On Main Street in Jaffrey Center a very large, ancient maple tree came down on Louise Bristol's front lawn, entirely changing the view along Route 124 in the historic district. No personal injury or major structural damage was reported in Jaffrey, but many residents felt threatened by the powerful storms.

The El Niño phenomenon, stemming from a large area of unusually warm waters in the Pacific, had an effect on New England weather beginning in 1997. There were very few tropical storms in the Atlantic, with the result that during June and July that year we got only three inches of rain, causing crop failures and low yields. It is not clear how many years into the future El Niño will affect our weather.