



MY FAVORITE SPOT

By Monroe S. Miller

It's a sign of the times, I guess — there just isn't time to think anymore. Or, maybe it is a case of most of us not feeling comfortable taking the time to think, and nothing but think, anymore. Someone might think us lazy. We wouldn't want to be accused of daydreaming, on the job. But even if the latter is true, there still are too few hours in the day and too many demands on our time. Family requirements, endless questions from employees and constant contact with members seem to consume every waking minute, for some of us at least. We don't take time for ourselves, our thoughts or simply a few minutes to relax alone.

The 20th Century, I am convinced, is determined to shorten the distance between thought and word and thought and deed. The fear I have is that, in too short a time, the world will be governed by acts based on no thinking whatsoever. No time, you know. It is already happening and is illustrated by the speed by which computers handle transactions, by quartz watches (no need for learning how to tell time), velcro straps on shoes (no need for youngsters to think about how to tie), electronic payment of bills (no time to decide to "sit" on one for a few days), and the cordless telephone (you lose the thinking time you used to have walking to the phone — no time to think up an excuse not to help your neighbor of 10 years ago move his furniture on a hot July afternoon).

How often do Golf Course Superintendents close the door to their office, to be alone, just to think? Very seldom, I suspect. The phone rings and thought is interrupted. A knock at the door and thought is interrupted. It seems hopeless, doesn't it? Pascal was right: "The troubles of life come upon us because we refuse to sit quietly for a while in our own rooms." I have a solution for you, one that has worked for me for a long time. It gives me time to think and reflect and plan.

I propose that every Golf Course Manager choose a favorite spot. I have

one and it has given me untold hours of thought, of pleasure, of inspiration and of reflection. Selection must be made carefully. It needs to be a truly special place, one that offers comfort. It should be a spot that you think about occasionally and want to return to often. It should be a beautiful spot, ineffably sublime, and one that is refreshing and new. It should be a place that distinctively changes with the seasons and enhances the pleasures of them.

This place should never be very far away from you or your golf course, and I believe it should, in fact, be on the golf course. It should offer some privacy and therefore some comfort of being alone. A shade tree nearby helps. The spot should be away from everyone — no jangling telephones, no traffic, no noise, no people. I don't necessarily think it should be cut off from the rest of the world, but it should get you alone and give you a setting in which to think, uninterrupted.

My favorite spot is a beauty. It is on top of a hill on the east end of the golf course, the highest point of the property and one of the highest spots in the city. I feel fortunate that the founders of our Club had the wisdom to choose this place for a golf course and thereby preserve this little corner of the world and its beauty for a long time. It was, some 60 years ago, "way out of town." Today we seem to be right in the middle of Madison. But from my favorite spot you would not believe this. It's a place of great beauty and gives me a wonderful place from which to think, alone and by myself.

Many centuries ago — about 20,000 years ago, in fact — a huge and vast continental glacier invaded Wisconsin from the north and buried the Madison area beneath almost a thousand feet of ice. While it advanced it smoothed off hills and became heavily laden with massive amounts of soil and rock and gravel. When it melted, the ice deposited this debris to dam valleys and form lakes. Lake Mendota was created this way, as was the isthmus

that the capitol and downtown Madison now occupy. My golf course is on the shores of Lake Mendota, and it was that same glacier that created the beautiful landscape my golf course is in. I sort of feel like Senator Moses E. Clapp when he said, years ago, "It is hard to speak of the beauties of Madison without being charged with exaggeration. No city I have ever seen compares with it. Forest growths abound everywhere; trees crown the hills, line the water courses and border the roads." That is about how I feel about my golf course and the surrounding land that I see from my favorite spot. And when I am relaxed at the spot I can fancy, along the shore of Lake Mendota, near Dr. Cookson's house and on our golf course, the flash of Indian moccasins and see the bark wickiups of the Sac Indians among the oak and maple trees. Although their paths have vanished, the burial and effigy mounds have not and their presence is still felt by me. I know they believed this spot of mine was something special, too. The simplicity and intense sincerity of beauty and nature that I see and feel from here makes the tale of these Indian ancestors live on. This dreaming is part of the mood my spot creates.

And often I have wondered if Henry Wadsworth Longfellow reflected from my favorite spot when he wrote, in 1875, this poem, the most famous written about Madison:

*The Four lakes of Madison
Four limpid lakes, four Naiades
Or sylvan deities are these,
In flowing robes of azure dressed;
Four lovely handmaids that uphold
Their shining mirrors rimmed with
gold,*

To the fair city of the west.

*By day the coursers of the sun
Drink of these waters as they run
Their swift diurnal round on high;
By night the constellations glow
Far down the hollow deeps below,
And glimmer in another sky.*

*Fair lakes serene and full of light,
Fair town arrayed in robes of white,
Her visionary ye appear!*

*All like a floating landscape seems
In cloudland or the land of dreams,
Bathed in a golden atmosphere.*

It may well be that many of you already have a special place on your golf course and have experienced the wonders it offers with its solitude. If you haven't, look around. Upland or marsh, a golf course is an easy place to find a beautiful and favorite spot.