



AUTUMN IN WISCONSIN

By Monroe S. Miller

Fall is the best of seasons, for a lot of reasons. It's my favorite season, a hands down winner, an easy choice. This time of warm days and cool nights brings an enormous sense of relief to me and to the golf course I manage, especially after a brutal summer like this one just past. Once we get to Labor Day, I know full well we "made it through" another golf season.

Maybe that realization should bring on melancholy and gloom, instead of joy. You know, time passing too quickly, especially for a man who is over forty now. But who cares — not I! It's this time that I'm usually counting the days remaining until Cheryl and I leave for our vacation. We laugh at the people who don't seem to know any better than to take their vacation in the summertime. They gripe about the heat and the humidity and how hard it is to sleep at night. The waiting lines are long no matter where they go and the traffic on the highways is miserable. We don't have those problems on our autumn trip to New England.

I don't think anyone has ever done justice, in words, to the autumn color in New England. Most of the descriptions I've read tend to drift into clichés. It's not the fault or deficiencies of the many writers who have tried; it's because the spectacle of fall itself in New England is so enormous and so incredibly varied. Autumn there is a season of colors that don't exist anywhere else on earth at any time of the year. It just could be that the words to properly describe these endless scenes aren't in the English language.

But this year we're staying home.

A few months ago, I faced that realization with a bit of bitterness. "No leafpeekers trip?" a friend asked. "Nope," says me. "As usual, business comes first — a new irrigation system and some fairly major construction on the golf course. So I'm going to have to wait until 1989 to recapture what autumn really should be."

I cannot complain too much. Working with an antique irrigation system like ours has made the job of providing

competitive playing conditions on our golf course damned tough over the years. I can hardly wait to see what we'll be able to do now. I feel a sense of responsibility that simply says I have to be here during the entire installation process. Heaven knows that the Midwest Irrigation crew doesn't need me; the construction work most likely does.

So Cher and I plan to make the best of it — an autumn spent only in Wisconsin. It isn't the end of the world, although for months it seemed like it. Fall is a beautiful season here, too.

When he was almost sixty years old, in 1960, the great American writer John Steinbeck set out to rediscover America. Accompanied only by his dog Charley, he travelled the length and breadth of the U.S. He kept a diary and a log and from them he wrote a book, appropriately titled "*Travels With Charley*". It's our good luck he visited Wisconsin in early October. Did Steinbeck capture your emotions, when he wrote of October in Wisconsin like this?

"I had never been to Wisconsin, but all my life I had heard about it, had eaten its cheeses. And I must have seen pictures. Everyone must have. Why then was I unprepared for the beauty of this region, for its variety of field and hill, forest, lake? I don't know how it is in other seasons, the summers may reek and rock with heat, the winters may groan with dismal cold, but when I saw it for the first and only time, in early October, the air was rich with butter-colored sunlight, not fuzzy but crisp and clear so that every frost-gay tree was set off, the rising hills were not compounded, but alone and separate. There was a penetration of the light into solid substances so that I seemed to see into things, deep in. I remembered now that I had been told Wisconsin is a lovely state, but the telling had not prepared me. It was a magic day. The land dripped with richness; the fat cows and pigs gleamed against green, and in smaller holdings, corn standing in little tents as corn should, and pumpkins all about."

How could anyone say it better? Or

be closer to the truth? Imagine how I felt when I read those words—I was on about the 11th parallel, almost within walking distance of the equator, where it rained a hundred inches in a normal year, the humidity was high and debilitating. The VC and NVA were sending incoming rounds every night. It was September and I still had a year to go before I could return to Wisconsin. Steinbeck's words gave me happiness, a little bit of happiness and a reminder of home in the midst of a whole lot of misery.

Twenty years later, Steinbeck has reminded me of our own beautiful Wisconsin autumns. The tree that New England has in abundance is the sugar maple. Those trees are primarily responsible for the spectacular fall color there. Despite the fact that the sugar maple is our state tree, we don't have very many respectable ones. Oh, Tom Harrison has a few at Maple Bluff that have pretty color, but nothing like those in the northeast. But what Wisconsin has that few others can claim the likes of are the oak trees. Some say there are beautiful oak trees in the Ozarks, and there probably are. But I'd put the russets and reds and browns and burgundies and clarets and purples of our oaks against those anywhere and feel confident that ours are the prettiest. And about the time maples are declining, the ash are fading and the hackberry have fallen, the oak colors are coming on strong with their mingled and overlapping colors, and their colors last into November.

I believe the fall blue of our white ash trees, the red flame of our sumac and the soft yellow of the needles of our larch are as fine as those elsewhere. I've often boasted that we have a dozen shagbark hickory trees at Blackhawk Country Club that are "All Americans" in the fall — their deep and clear yellow leaves against the black of the bark and the blue of the sky are breathtaking.

Autumn in Wisconsin tastes good, too. Tomatoes, winter squash, pump-

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kings, grapes and apples are traditional fall garden fare. They add a lot of color to the Farmers' Market around the Capitol Square here in Madison, usually dressed up with bunches of orange bittersweet. This fall we're going to take a trip west to "Coulee Country" and visit Gays Mills. The orchards of that quaint little village produce delicious ripe apples. If you enjoy apples for their beauty as well as their taste, look up a piece written by Henry David Thoreau entitled "Wild Apples". It was actually a lecture he gave that was subsequently printed in the November 1862 issue of "The Atlantic Monthly". It is timeless and reads best in autumn.

Door County is a trip, hopefully, most of us will make this fall. My guess is that the warm water on either side of the Door will preserve the fall color of Cherry Hills through our October meeting. Tom Parent almost promises it.

The irrigation crew works four long days, Monday through Thursday. Once our project is on its way to healing, we're going to pick either a Saturday

when the Badgers aren't playing or a Sunday when the Packers are out of state and get lost on some of the skinny roads in the Kettle Moraine area of Wisconsin. Some of Wisconsin's prettiest vistas are there and they probably are best in fall. Imagine the restful pleasures of travelling leaf-covered roads, maybe to the sound of Johann Pachelbel's "Canon in D" or Vivaldi's "Four Seasons", soaking up the gorgeous landscape.

And speaking of football, in Wisconsin we enjoy, nay love, some of the worst football in the whole country! There aren't many things that rival fall in a college town, and that's mainly because of the football season. It's hard to figure — for twenty years Wisconsin has ranked in the top ten nationally in per game attendance at Camp Randall Stadium. We produce as many NFL draft choices as Michigan or Notre Dame and more than Iowa. Yet our win-loss record stinks. So why do fans still pour into the stadium on game days? It's a "fall" tradition in Madison, the classic college town.

Football means watching Bucky Badger stomping on the Northwestern

Wildcat or kidnapping the Michigan State Spartan or tripping Purdue's Boilermaker. Football at Wisconsin is a sea of red streaming up and down Bascom Hill, alums and students alike, on warm fall game days. Football is the Big Red Pep Rally at the Union, the Homecoming "Yell Like Hell" contest and floats up and down Langdon Street. It's hard to describe — ask Randy Witt or Jim Knapp or Curt Larson. Afternoons at Camp Randall Stadium mean the chance to hear the finest, absolutely the best university marching band in America. After the team leaves the field at the end of the game, the stadium is still full — post-game music and fun! It doesn't happen like that anywhere else in the country.

I inherited many of my Grandfather Miller's books. Among them is a small leatherbound copy of "Evangeline, A Tale of Acadie". It was written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and on page 22 is a line that only a poet like Longfellow could write:

"Then followed that beautiful season, called by the Acadian peasants the Summer of All-Saints!"

I think I'm going to enjoy "that beautiful season" right here in Wisconsin.

WGCSA MONTHLY MEETING ROUNDUP

MONROE COUNTRY CLUB

June 27, 1988

For the second time in four years, Tom Schwab hosted a WGCSA monthly meeting at the beautiful Monroe Country Club. The low level of the pond that provides irrigation water for the golf course reminded the 61 WGCSA members of how serious this drought is for Tom.

The Chapman system of golf was the play method for the day. Winners were:

First place	Dick Evenson and Woody Vligt
Second place	Tom Van Valin and Mike Halverson
Third place	Jack Ross and Jim Knapp
Fourth place	Don Ferger and John Krutilla
Fifth place	Roy Figi and Virgil Elmer

Event prizes went to the following players:

Long drive	Don Ferger
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Closest to
the pin
Long putt

Brad Wagner
Tom Van Valin
Dan Barrett
Roger Bell
and Bob Belfield.

DRETZKA PARK MEETING

July 27, 1988

Dretzka Park golf course is a hidden jewel on Milwaukee's northwest side. A golf course in the Milwaukee County Park system, Dretzka Park has a wide variety of golf holes that have great appeal to the resident players. Golf Course Superintendent Bill Knight deserves much of the credit for the course's popularity. It provided a great setting for the July WGCSA meeting.

Thanks to the PGA Wisconsin Section Executive Director Tony Coleman and past president Dennis Tiziani for joining our group for the day.

Blind draw team winners were Dan Quast, Charlie Shaw, Tom Lewanowski and Chris Pinkerton. Second place

was a tie among three teams with Paul Rhode, Jim Shaw, Greg Youngs, Paul Delfosse, Mike Handrich, Steve Allen, Bob Gosewher, Joe Kuda, Karl Wihausen, Mike Lee and Mark Kienert.

Event winners were:

- Closest to the pin - Wayne Otto and Mark Kienert
- Low gross - Jim Shaw
- Low net - Chris Pinkerton
- Longest drive - Mike Halverson

The Milwaukee County Parks Catering Service offered the finest accommodations. Beer, excellent food (and lots of it) and a beautiful cake topped with the GCSAA logo made the meal a special treat. And finally, all proceeds of this meeting will go to the O.J. NOER CENTER for TURFGRASS RESEARCH.

Mary Rondeau deserves thanks for all the time she spent in working at the starters desk before the event and in recording the scores afterwards. And again, appreciation from the WGCSA to Bill Knight for a job well done.