



SUMMER STORMS

By Monroe S. Miller

A late afternoon storm advanced on our golf course like a marching army destined for victory. It was an awesome sight from my vantage point on the tenth tee, the promontory offering the best view of oncoming summertime weather.

It came to us like many others have over the years. After lunch I was aware of a strange quietness on the golf course. Nary a leaf on any of our trees was moving. No birds sang. The waters on our pond and even on Lake Mendota were perfectly calm and still, offering mirror-like reflections of their shorelines.

So quiet was it that I found myself talking softly to people, in hushed tones. Players enjoying the game and conversation several holes away could be heard.

The sun, which had come up over the eastern horizon with a bold and brassy look this morning, fought a losing battle for a share of the sky this afternoon. A blue haze hung heavily over the city and settled on the golf course. "It's like a heat blanket," I thought.

Although I knew a summer storm was coming, I didn't feel threatened. At first, anyway. Part of the sense of ambivalence came from the fact that it looked so far away. All there was to cause any concern were a few quiet flickers of lightning on the western horizon. And I was right next to the clubhouse which offered protected comfort to my mind.

The first sounds of thunder were merely quiet thuds. Even though they were soft, I almost felt them on the ground where I was standing.

Some players stopped to visit as they walked from the eighteenth green back to the golf shop. To them, the pending storm was more of an inconvenience than anything. They weren't filled with either the fear or the relief I was feeling. Or the anticipation of rain that most golf course superintendents live for.

The leaves in the trees started to stir. A few gusts of wind kicked up dust and

swirled it around in clockwise funnels.

The dark sky now showed thunderheads to our west, thick and black and blue and nearly solid. Slashes of lightning were more frequent and brighter. Players were starting to come in from the golf course, on their own, without suggestion from either sirens or rangers.

Then the first drops of rain came. They splattered against the clubhouse windows, so big that they seemed like eggs on the glass. I watched as the drops, seemingly the size of large ball bearings, made craters in the dry sand in the bunkers around the eighteenth green.

Then it happened. The gray curtain of rain I'd watched move toward me from across the golf course arrived. The crest of the storm brought rain in buckets, more of it moving horizontally than vertically. Sheets of water ran down the cart paths to the first and tenth fairways. It made the asphalt glisten like glass. Water accumulated on the greens I could see, all in a matter of minutes.

The wind lashed at the trees and rattled the American flag on its pole at our club entrance. A siren from somewhere in the city wailed. Lightning crashed everywhere. Despite my shelter under the roof overhang, I was soaked. The sky was so black and Lake Mendota was so dark that I couldn't really tell where they met. It was so dark that the lightning flashes lit the course to the intensity of high noon.

The summer storm raged on, bringing the city and the golf course to the heart of humility. My mind raced ahead: will we be closed until tomorrow? Will there be enough time to get the course in order before play begins? Is there any serious damage—downed trees or pumping station power outage?

A summer storm that possesses the power and fury this one did tends to cause a temporary upset in your psychological equilibrium. The fear causes some uneasiness and a vague

discomfort. But nevertheless, there is a sense of relief with the cooler temperatures and a feeling of gratitude for the rain that has fallen, albeit too fast.

I've always been fascinated by summer storms. It doesn't matter much if you watch them come over your golf course or a farm. It makes little difference if you see one from a skyscraper in Milwaukee or from a gun jeep in Vietnam; the emotions are all the same.

This summer storm drew me in more than most because we've not had any in our town for quite awhile. The drought years of 1988 and 1989 left us wanting. And the rains we received last year came, by and large, quietly and gently. The one summer storm we did have come in the dead of night; I missed it.

I was thinking about that as the sky over Middleton to our west took on a lighter, almost yellow hue. A bit of blue even showed. That led my thoughts to a prayer I'd copied a few years ago.

This prayer, which appears below, was written by William A. White. He was prompted to write it by a terrible drought that plagued Kansas in 1935. Mr. White, a Pulitzer Prize winning writer, was editor of the *Emporia (Kansas) Gazette*. It captures so many emotions that I am willing to bet you will appreciate it just as much as I do. It is entitled, "O Lord, Let it Rain!"

*O Lord, in Thy mercy grant us rain,
and by that we don't mean a shower.
We want to go out and watch the lightning rip across the southwestern sky in hot blue forks as the fat clouds roll in on us. We want to hurry home to close the house, with the first fat drops the size of marbles, on a suddenly rising wind, chasing us and plunking on the car hood. We want to scramble all over the house, just as the first sheets descend, frantically slamming down the windows.*

O Lord of Hosts, we want to look out of the windows and watch the regiments of close-packed raindrops march diagonally down. We want to hear the

gurgle of the gutters under the eaves, and then the sputter of the downspout.

God of Israel, Isaac and Jacob, let it come down so hard, let the drops dance so high, that the street and sidewalks seem covered with a six-inch fog of spatterdrops. Then, let it just keep up for a while, and then begin to taper off, and then turn right around and get a lot worse, swishing, pounding, splattering, pouring, drenching, the thunder coming—crackity—BAM—and the lightning flashing so fast and furious you can't tell which flash goes with

which peal of thunder. So that all the women will get scared and climb on top of the beds and scream at you not to get too close to that window.

And then, O Zealous God, repeat the whole act about three times, and in the middle of the second time, we will climb the attic stairs and put the wash pan under that tiny leak in the roof, which usually you can't even notice in an ordinary rain. And after a couple of hours, kind of taper it down, O Lord, to a good steady rain—not a drizzle, but a businesslike one that keeps up until just

about dawn and then spits a few drops occasionally during the morning from the gray sky.

Kansas is indeed the Promised Land, O Lord, and if it gets a break, it will flow with milk and honey. But we can't live much longer on promises. So in Thine own way and in Thine own time, make up Thy mind, O Lord, and we will bow before Thy judgement, and praise Thine everlasting name.

Amen.

April Showers Greet Opening WGCSA Golf Meeting

By Bill Knight

Dave Smith was our host April 23rd at Abbey Springs Golf Course in Fontana. A threat of rain was in the air and in the weatherman's predictions, but, as we all know, predicting weather is not an exact science. So the event went ahead as planned.

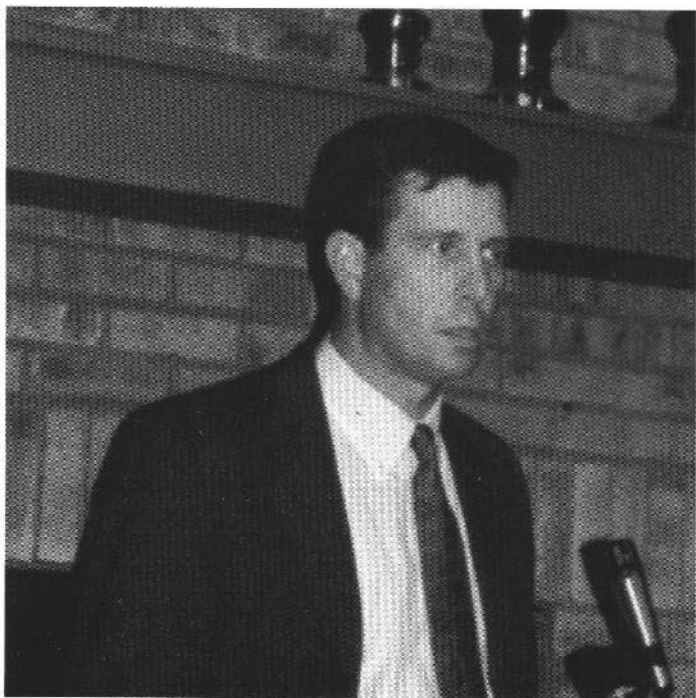
After a lunch of hot dogs and brats, we were led onto the course for the year's first event, a scramble. The course was in particularly fine shape for April. Three holes into our round the sky let loose with a huge downpour. Every one scurried for cover except for twelve brave souls. The rest of us spent the day either trying to get back on the course, only to be rained on again, or

playing cards, or going to the Lake Geneva dog track. Later that afternoon, we all reconvened for a delicious prime rib dinner.

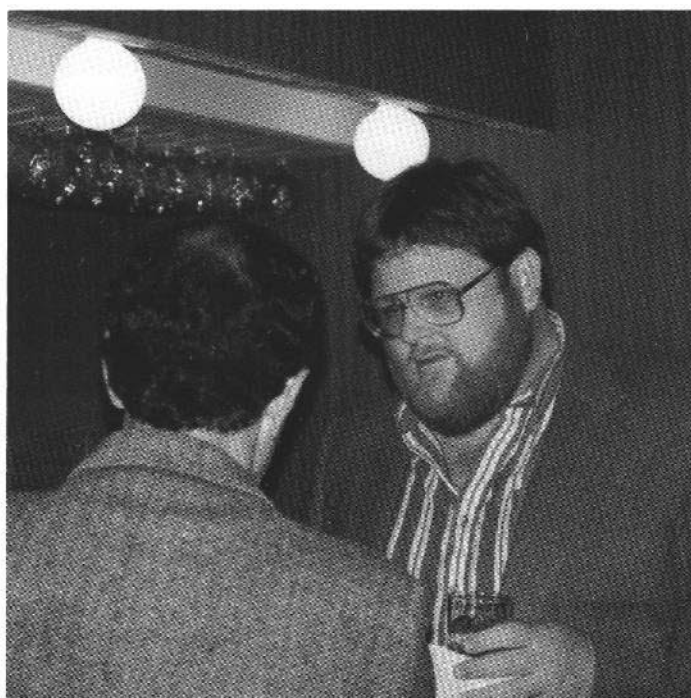
Our speaker for the evening was former Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association President, Bill Roberts. His topic was life as a director for Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. Bill praised his friends from Wisconsin for all the support and encouragement they gave him in his quest of GCSAA directorship. We are all proud of Bill and his accomplishments. His wide ranging lecture covered everything from environmental issues to his extensive

travel schedule.

Our prize winners for the scramble were: first place, Pat Shaw, Jim Shaw, Charlie Shaw and Bill Douglas with a 69 for \$35. Second place, by virtue of tie breaker: Joe Wollner, Chuck Wollner, John Myer and Brian Winkle, 70 for \$25. Third place: Scott Schaller, Gary Sorenson, Dale Parske, and Jim Knulte, 70 for \$15. Bruce Schweiger had the long drive for \$25. Jim Knulte had the straight drive for \$25. Dale Parske had the long putt for \$25. We had 88 turn out for golf, good attendance for April.



GCSAA Director Bill Roberts.



Host Dave Smith seeking advice from Wayne Otto.