



A NATURAL HIGH

By Pat Norton

Contrary to many flood stricken western Wisconsinites this summer, I've lately been on a long term 'natural high'.

While the Hatfield Dam was breaking up and seemingly the entire area between LaCrosse and Eau Claire was being overwhelmed with rains and flooding, we here at "The Creek" saw only acres and acres of green, green grass. While people in this area were dealing with life threatening situations, we were forced to deal with such heart wrenching decisions as "golf cars or no golf cars" or simply which areas to mow first!

Some friends in the public golf business really did suffer through some lost weekends and are experiencing a tough year because of the weather. It's much preferred, though, over the plight of our Iowa and Missouri neighbors.

We did have to close our golf course due to some temporary flooding—for only one day. We also had a somewhat scary Saturday night during which we thought a couple of boys had drowned in our rain swollen creek. Their ignoramus father finally called the authorities to tell them the youths had come home about ten minutes after he'd raised the alarm. The upshot is that about thirty men were out searching for over two hours for boys who were home safe and sound the whole time! This guy never did identify himself to the Onalaska police or fire department. I wonder why.

Since then, though, things have improved considerably. With all of the rain, it's almost impossible to have poor quality turf—everything is lush and green. Almost all of our outings have been able to go—a few mushy days, but no cancellations due to wet weather. The ample June rains always seemed to interrupt Ladies' Day, Men's Day or a weekend. Too bad for the members, I guess.

Consequently, revenue has been coming in nicely. Big golf outings mean big dollars for golf courses, as I'm sure others can attest. The only

stipulation during the big outings is that the superintendent and maintenance staff must either leave the property entirely or tiptoe around the course with eyes closed. Tiptoeing with the CarryAll to avoid getting beamed by Mr. NoBrain Golfer while also keeping the eyes tightly shut to avoid looking at the damage caused by all of the "fun seeking, sun seeking non-golfers". What a zany way to make a living, eh?

Outings, outings, outings. We seem to take anybody's outing. This summer we've had outings ranging from the LaCrosse County Homebuilders Association (carpenters intent on improving their golf ability) to Fish's Bar (these gentlemen requested only certain brands of beer be served them) to the Alzheimers Outing. Say what?

That's no kidding, folks. On June 14, 1993 we hosted the **Alzheimers Outing** with a noon shotgun start. I don't remember exactly, but it seems that quite a few golfers that day got disoriented, got lost, and didn't know where they were on the course. Moreover, they didn't recognize me and I certainly didn't recognize any of them. Who knows, maybe we were all temporarily afflicted with that dread disease that day!

It's really a natural high, though, when things are going good. The golf course looks good, people are enjoying themselves, employees are all doing good work, and a lot of progress is being made. The days really do fly by.

On those days, everybody feels really vibrant and alive. The sense of self worth is very high, the "can do" attitude is very strong, and everything just keeps clicking. Sort of like this typewriter as I pound out my fifteen words per minute.

In that scenario, Mother Nature is cooperating nicely. The real measure of a person's will is to go through a personal or natural disaster, like so many midwesterners have experienced this summer. I often wonder how I'd react in the face of such peril. I

hope that my resolve would be strong enough, but one never knows until it happens.

Maybe we Americans have had the good life handed to us too easily. Could our generation handle the hardships imposed by a conflict such as World War II? Our 76 year old mechanic, Bernard, really doubts that today's breed of American man could measure up to the task. This old bird feels that people, men in particular, were much tougher and used to adversity in those days. Undoubtedly true. Also true is that old folks in the 30s and 40s saw their lives as being much more difficult than those of Bernard's generation.

People have a way of measuring up and handling a lot of adversity once their lives, families and property are threatened. Witness the efforts of this summer's flood victims.

Compare our profession to others, for example. There are certainly tougher ways out there to make a living. But most of our neighbors seem to have easier lives than we do in our household. Men in our neighborhood all have a lot more free time than I for most of the calendar year. I leave the house much earlier, return home later, work seven days a week with a rare day off, and return to the golf course at night for various reasons. These same neighbors cannot fathom that it takes so much effort "to be a greenkeeper at a golf course".

It all goes with the territory, though. I was cruising the golf course on a recent Friday night with my eight year old son, Ryan, just checking out a few things pertaining to irrigation. I noticed up on the clubhouse deck that the golf pro and his staff were "schmoozing" with the members. The party before the "night golf" outing, don't you know? I had absolutely no desire to be at that party, and moreover chuckled cynically to myself as I entered the pumphouse. "Stay away from that scene," says I.

The highs in our business are natural ones—sunrises, sunsets, working

outside, being healthy and somewhat in shape, and working in a natural setting.

The "highs" in my life very much include my wife and children—being jointly responsible for three young sprouts who look to us for love and guidance. They all require time and individual attention, which always seems to be in short supply.

So I'll be damned if I'll let somebody tell me that it's some sort of duty or fun time for me to golf on Men's Day and stay at the club for dinner and drinks until 1:00 a.m. That's not my job or my responsibility at all.

My responsibility is to be there Friday morning bright and early, directing activities on the golf course until the course looks and plays up to my standards and expectations, not to the standards of the Thursday night Men's club.

When a guy devotes time and attention to the important things in life, then the "natural highs" begin to roll. I am convinced that effort, dedication and hard work are continually being rewarded. I also know that my life would quickly fall apart if I jumped into too much of "the good life". Booze, late evening hours, gambling, short work hours and the opposite sex—all of those factors would soon combine to ruin me.

Fortunately, I'm the one who is now laughing as my young crew members report for work feeling so poorly from the effects of too much alcohol. These youngsters are "finding their way" through their version of "the good life". I did have to laugh recently when 21 year old Todd told me that he was late for work not because of beer, not because of oversleeping—it was

because of "the women"! Sounds like me at that age.

Sooner or later the smarter people in the world realize that there is more to life than getting wasted in celebration of a birthday or having to attend all of the social functions at "the Club". Some people don't ever wise up, though—typically these are the parents who just can't get along with their troublesome teenagers.

My two year old—Tommy—is now talking almost as fluently as Jay Leno, it seems. He's a much better natural high—most of the time—than any of the unnatural substitutes.

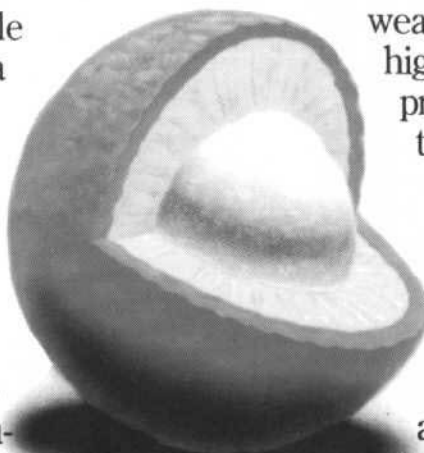
Unless you catch me off guard, suggest golfing (and a few on course drinks) and a short night out with the boys. Don't twist my arm too tightly, boys, I'm coming! I'm coming! 🍷

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