

As I ‘weathered the storm’ on September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018, I got thinking back to other storms that have been memorable to me. Growing up on the farm, weather of course is a key element in all you do. I’ll reminisce about some of those other storms but first let me tell you what happened to me on that Thursday evening just over a month ago. As some of you know, I drive school bus for the Cannon Falls district on a part time basis. This particular night I was bringing the junior high girls volleyball team back from Byron. West Concord had some wind but not one of the 16 tornadoes that hit Minnesota that night from roughly west of Waseca to Cannon Falls. As we were traveling north on highway 52, north of the old Edgewood restaurant we could see the very black clouds and we knew that heavy rain was imminent but didn’t know the half of it. As we got to the first exit towards the Mayo Clinic Hospital in town it was torrential rain coming down sideways. With the emergency flashers on and the strobe light flashing from the top of the bus we moved slowly down the street. But it got to the point where we couldn’t see beyond the hood of the bus. The coach and I decided to take the first driveway into a parking lot one block south of the John Deere dealership in town. There was no getting out of the bus by that time as it was hurricane force winds and heavy rain that lasted about 6 or 7 minutes.

During this time, any street lights or lights in any building went dark. We pulled in that driveway just after 7pm. It was later reported that at 7:04pm most power went out across the entire town. So we were in that parking lot at the worst possible time. The only thing I could do was park the bus so the strong winds were hitting the back of the bus and not the side which I’m positive kept the bus from tipping over. It turned out that a large pole shed at Frontier Ag had been destroyed by an EF1 tornado. We were just one short block straight south of that building. It was indeed fortunate that the swirling winds avoided the bus. We were finally able to get off the bus and into the restaurant of the Artisan Plaza. There were no lights so we finally realized the usefulness of flashlights on phones having only previously used them at concerts.

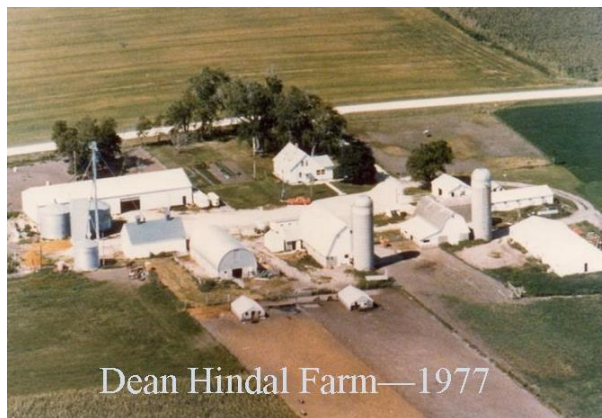
We were at this location for about 75 minutes. The parents of one girl came from the high school to our location to pick up their daughter. He told me there was only one way to get to back to the high school as trees were blocking every street. So I took the only way back. It’s was strange to drive through town in pitch black, There were no street lights, no building lights but only car lights. We ended up safe and somewhat sound as the girls were reunited with parents. The junior high coaches did a marvelous job throughout the entire storm and I thank them.



It ended up that Cannon Falls was hit by two tornadoes losing over 1000 trees including 3 big ones in my yard. The picture to the left is the cul de sac in front of my house. That’s my tree in the street and the leaning electric pole that needed fixing. My electric power was out for ‘only’ 28 hours. Some had to wait days. It was a miracle that there were no injuries reported locally from the storm although there were a couple of chain saw injuries reported during the cleanup.

So now a month later there is still clean up and fix up to do but we are moving on. I watched a lot of the video from Hurricane Michael that hit the gulf coast recently. It made the storm I went through seem pale in comparison. I can't imagine that relentless wind and rain for hours on end.

As I started out this column, I said I would reminisce about some previous storms. The year was 1970. My dad and I were baling hay as we saw the blackest clouds I had ever seen move in from the west. We baled as fast as we could and then high-tailed it back to the buildings. We did get strong winds and heavy rain and a tornado developed just to the north and east of us hitting the Ernie Johnson farm, taking down a silo and part of the barn.



Another storm I vividly remember was October 9th, 1973. I can remember the exact date because the next day several of the neighbors went over to the Dean Hindal farm to help them clean up as the tornado destroyed some buildings. I remember that Darrel Faulkner came over to help and as he joined in he asked us if we heard that Spiro T. Agnew had resigned as Vice President of the U.S. If you look it up, he resigned on October 10, 1973.

That same storm went north of Hindal's place and flattened a corn field that we had yet to harvest. It was on land owned by Louie and Doris Wenzel. The tornado pushed all the corn down to the north so we could only get the corn picked up with the cornheader of the combine by going from north to south. It was a slow process and it took three days to harvest that 15 acres.

Of course many of us have memorable storms from our life. Some are summer storms and living in Minnesota, many are winter storms. One of those I remember was the Super Bowl blizzard of 1975. That weekend the Vikings were playing the Steelers in Super Bowl IX. That's nine for those who forgot Roman numerals. That weekend was a 3 day blizzard. I was living in Waseca at the time, working at my first commercial radio station, KOWO 1170. Since I lived only one block from the station, I was the only one who could get to work. I enjoyed it as I had a captive audience. Businesses would call in to say they were closed. Finally I just had businesses call in if they were open as there were far less of them.

We don't seem to get as many 3 day blizzards as we used to which is fine with me. And it's funny that the two I really remember were both on weekends. The other one was the winter of 1970-71. It was a Friday night, the high school had girls visiting from Renville. Joyce Eubank was hosting a party for them. Joel Sackett and I were determined to make it to the party. As we left, Joel was driving his car and there were already high snowbanks on the sides of township and county roads. The wind was increasing by the minute so we had to make good time otherwise spend the weekend in a snowbank on a Concord township road. That alternative was not as good as spending a weekend with 7 girls. Well it was tough to see as the wind picked up. I remember being on the road south of Dean Wright's place. Joel couldn't see any more so I told him don't give up. I rolled down the passenger side window and would watch the side of the road so he would not veer off. After all, we had a party to get to. I don't

know how we made it but we did and we were snowbound with 7 girls for the weekend. Darn the luck! The storm did not quit until that Sunday afternoon. My dad and Ed Roberts were out in the township snowplow which was a big plum-colored FWD truck. I wish there were pictures of this old truck. I had talked to my dad earlier that morning and told him he didn't have to hurry to plow the roads on our account. But about midafternoon here came the big plow and the weekend party was finally over. That was my all-time favorite snowstorm.

So as I think Roy Rogers once said or perhaps it was Baxter Black, 'May the wind always be at your back and may you always drink upstream from the herd'.