



Summer, 1995

SPECIAL STORM EDITION

July 13, 1995

No one remembers another storm like it. Not Lucy Schultz, not Ted Lawrence, nor any other long-timers who were here to see the trees toppling by the dozens in ripping thunderstorm winds.

The worst of the storm was over in half an hour, but it will change the face of Pinewoods for decades. It started like so many other storms we've seen. How many dozens of times have we called the kids out of the lake because of a black western sky like that one? How many dozens of times did our parents do the same for us? This time was devastatingly different.

None of us will forget the experience of meeting our neighbors wandering the road and the driveways, shaking our heads and looking for even a footpath through the jumble of fallen trees. From the mailboxes right through camp, our road was blocked by dozens of downed trees, many of them more than a foot in diameter, several over a hundred years old. In front of the dining hall, a power transformer sat in the middle of the road next to the snapped-off top of the utility pole. If you climbed and scrambled down the road to the beginning of Cottage Grove, all you could see was more of the same.

Walking through the woods, the light was wrong. It was too bright up above where the trees should have been shading the road -- all those trees that were lying shattered in the road, the driveways and the woods.

Neither will we forget the growing sense of wonderment that with dozens and dozens of trees down throughout camp, there was practically no damage to cottages. The Will/Wade back cottage had the dubious distinction of sustaining the worst damage; and even that, we understand, was not major structural damage.

The best memory of the storm is the way everyone pitched in to open the roads and driveways, to keep camp running, and to start the long cleanup.

While we're counting our blessings, let's include a grateful acknowledgment of Roger Rasmusson for an impressive log-clearing effort in miserable heat and humidity after the storm. And thanks to all who assisted Roger in the effort to clear the road and driveways so that the power company could get their trucks in to restore power. Even with Roger leading a procession of four or five chainsaws, it took more than three hours of cutting and hauling before the road was passable. Thanks to Chris and Dave Robinson, for having not one but three chainsaws available, just for such an emergency.

Kudos to Kathy Piehl and her staff for preparing what meals they could in three days without lights, refrigeration or water pumps, in that enervating heat. This meant making breakfast in near-darkness, using fresh food that Kathy bought each morning, so the freezer wouldn't have to be opened, endangering a valuable store of food.

Thanks to Howie Schultz, for driving up from Flint with a generator to keep the freezer running. And when that generator fell short of the task, Rocky Flinterman filled the breach by trailering a bigger one all the way from Chicago. Thanks to John Fink for making the equally important return trip! These efforts kept our loss of food to a few hundred dollars, rather than the thousands we had feared.

Special thanks to Bill Cline, who probably expected to coast through the final weeks of his presidency. Instead, he found himself at the emergency command center, helping to keep the dining hall open and organizing a massive cleanup operation to remove downed and damaged trees.



Notes on the clean-up.

As we go to press, the cleanup from the storm is continuing. The Board acted on behalf of all member cottages, entering into an agreement with a local timber company to clear leaning trees that posed a threat to cottages, followed by all downed timber and trees still standing but killed by the storm. Sale of salvaged logs will help to offset the cost of the cleanup. The final stage will be to bring in chippers to turn the masses of broken branches into a mulch that the forest floor will absorb and recycle into a new generation of forest.

Images of the storm:

Everyone has a story of this storm that will be retold across dining-hall tables and around bonfires for a lot of years to come. Here are a few pictures that will remain in our minds.



Liz Wade, trekking through the back lots with a chainsaw in her hand, asking, "Has anyone seen Roger? Kay brought his chainsaw. Do you know where Roger is?"

Young Eddie Bennett, in mid-storm, trying to believe his uncles that there was nothing to worry about. When we finally got outside, we uncles realized we'd been dead wrong: with those massive Norway pines coming down, we should have been at least as scared as Eddie.

The sunfish that came through the storm with its sail disheveled but undamaged, while a few hundred feet away a Boston Whaler was flipped and two docks blew over.

The discovery that in our thick Pinewoods forest, trees fall in slow-motion. Our huge



Norway pine fell, not with a crash but with a drawn-out crackling whoosh.

The sight of Woodsers toting buckets of water up from the lake to flush their toilets.

The relief when the thunderstorm predicted for the next day failed to materialize.

The Christmas smell of pine throughout camp, a delicious aroma rising from the heartbreaking wreck of broken trees.

It was an unforgettable adventure, the kind that Nature slips in on us if we stay close to her for enough years. Showing her dark side, letting us know who's boss.

Pinewoods will wear a different face for a while, with new beams of sunlight through the gaps in the canopy. An unfamiliar face, perhaps, but one shaped by natural forces far older, even, than our old corner of the woods.



Photos by Bitsy