

Saturday, September 18, 1993

TORNADO WARNING

At noon, my neighbor Ruth, phoned to say there was a tornado warning from Colorado Springs to north of Fort Collins. Looking out the windows as we talked, we could see that it was dark, dead still, and green as if the very air itself were green. Then the downpour began; straight down, overflowing the gutters.

There were no tornados at the farm, but Pennsylvania has dramatic thunderstorms. I loved the charged atmosphere before these storms. I would hurry outdoors to twirl in the dark green light and point my face into the wind, letting it tangle my wavy hair. During this prelude, the cows would walk purposefully to their worn paths and single file from the fields to the haymow under the big barn. They could enter under the stone foundation.

Last year your Dad taught you to "count the thunder", the time between the flash and the crash. We also counted, and twirled, and watched and waited until, once upon us, the lightning and thunder crashed and sizzled simultaneously. The electric lines were above ground on telephone poles. Storms often struck them down and the electric went out. All man-made things fell magically silent. We light wooden matches and candles in order to fetch old kerosene lanterns from the cellar. Since the gas lines were underground, it was very rare that we couldn't cook. Your grandmother would prepare dinner by the blue light of the flame on the stove. Then we'd bring our plates to the mellow yellow kerosene lamp on the kitchen table. How is it that children's squabbling ceases in this mysterious atmosphere?

Today's storm passed without damage here, leaving a well-watered lawn. A tornado did touch down in Aurora, taking the roof off an apartment building but harming no one. No matter what our position is in life, weather helps, harms, amuses, and amazes us.

Carae



9-1-53 Hereford cows Brahma Bull



Thunder advances
wielding his lightning sword
heralding summer.

Audrey Fulton