

MEDIA

by Helen Gowan

What a week to write about “media”! Fortunate as I was to remain largely high and dry despite all the rainfall in the past week, I was able to remain in touch by phone with my three sons scattered around the Front Range in nearby Aurora, Boulder, and unincorporated Longmont north of the Dacono, Firestone, Erie area. TV reports showed damage or devastation in all of these areas. I say phone, that is a media form is it not? Because for some reason my own internet was out, probably caused by a loose connection under my desk. The *Denver Post* faithfully appeared at my doorstep every morning with pages of photos and reports of closed roads as well as its usual 75- 90% content of promotions for events and sales. My television, at least on Channel 7 Thursday and Friday, did a top rate of covering the flooding, warning about major road closures, failing dams and water mains, reporting rescues, covering government actions both ongoing and proposed, individual tragedies and acts of neighborly responses, and showing sufficient photos of cars washed away in sudden overpowering surges of high water to keep me out of my car. Public radio, while reporting regularly on the local Colorado disaster, remained to remind us that what “nature doesn’t do to us, is done by our fellow man.”

I kept track of the storm by observing the discharge channel from the golf course pond which flows through the usually parched lawn between my building and the one on the west. It flooded its banks, of course. At the height of the rain on Thursday, the water surrounded the large flower bed on the lawn backed up onto the golf course possibly 30 or 40 feet, extended possibly a hundred feet northward, reached the doors of a car parked across the way to the west, and puzzled a small dog who gazed at it curiously from a small wet patch of ground outside its apartment door. I watched as the water flowed furiously westward, and then, when the rain paused for a while, poured as furiously back toward the golf course pond, and then, when the rain resumed, began its furious race westward again. It had all subsided by Saturday except for a pool the size of a child's wading pond I could see in one of the sand traps. On Sunday morning a disconsolate or perhaps optimistic golfer wandered around the deserted golf course. The skies remain gray and the weather forecasts ominous on Sunday as I write this.

There will be media reports of this storm for weeks in newspapers, on television, and in all the other media of the present day. In years to come it will be studied, analyzed, in journals and reports and books, captured in print and whatever will pass for print and television in future decades, commemorated annually and then less frequently, upon occasions of subsequent disasters. I would not be surprised to see it reappear in fiction, just as have the sinking of the Titanic and Colorado wildfires, as in Stephen White's recent *In the Line of Fire* mystery. And there is this, a small report of what is in the grand scheme of things, a small event, preserved and communicated on paper at least.

Such is the power of the event, the media, and the memory.