

Lifetimes
By Christine Loughlin, OP

Each year the rock edges of the flower gardens need to be reconstituted. The other evening I hauled a small wheelbarrow filled with rocks out of the woods to the flower garden by the house. As I turned onto the path at the edge of the meadow, my glance fell upon a Pine Elfin Butterfly with wings spread wide resting on a stone pile still warm in the late afternoon light. In the few moments, contemplating the butterfly upon the rock, the story of place and purpose emerge.

The rocks have endured through many phases. In southern New England the landscape has been evolving for millions of years, and the rocks in the wheelbarrow converted from one form to another. Perhaps a thousand years from now they will be stony loam.

The elfin butterfly resting at the edge of the oak and white pine woods will not know such time endurance. The recovering pine wood offer the breeding habitat and the blueberry underbrush provides her nectar. Beauty manifest in her reddish brown wings aglow in the late afternoon light will know one spring season flight and then her life will be no more.

In this embrace of rocks and oak, stonewall and butterfly another presence is revealed ~ the human cultures that have embraced this place over the last three centuries. Before that we can only guess from what we read in the books that tell the story of who settled here as the last ice age receded 12,000 years ago. In the not so distant past native peoples, devastated by disease and famine, were removed from their ancestral homes in the colonial battle for land in southeastern Massachusetts.

The oldest recorded deed found at the Land Court in the county seat reads that in 1793 Ebenezer Blake granted to Calvin Blake the land from the meeting house to Shepard's. Those landmarks are gone from local memory. The deed that gives us permission to make our home in this place dates from 1949. Beyond the deed we have a picture album that tells a detailed story of these acres as far back as 1917 when Crystal Spring was owned, named, and farmed by the retired sea captain, Albert Crowley.

The pictures speak of the time between the clear cutting of Eastern forests and the emergence of a rural town. One can look into the black and white photos and see a low tree line beyond cultivated fields. The great white pines along with the red and white oaks are slowly recovering from clear cutting. The stones in the wheelbarrow from the crumbled wall mark the era of open pastures with grazing herds. A model-T Ford sits in a paved driveway that meanders down to a winding country road.

Today the road is still registered as *scenic country* but the cars whiz past on their way to the major highways on either end. The woods proclaim nearly a full century re-growth while the rural town has developed into suburbia. Into this cultural context our human presence and decisions must continue to unfold in the 21st century.

To pause and reflect upon the local transitions draws one into the global actions that propelled the changes. The issuing of the first deed in land court is commensurate with the birth of the Industrial Revolution. In a few decades, a country once populated by native peoples intimate with the spirit of life forms became a material resource for scientific learning and technological enterprises. A European worldview that separated the human venture from the rest of nature took hold. With the perceptual separation human ingenuity found the ways to exploit not only this continent but eventually the Planet. This land and our environs lay bare the shifts from first peoples to rural agricultural to urban industrial to suburban consumer. A native culture whose

spiritual needs were met through intimacy with all creatures became a modern culture whose spiritual needs are met by consumerism.

Unwittingly, perhaps, our human ingenuity superseded the previous ways of Earth's emerging. Where once cultures found their niche in the living environment in which the human community settled, we modern humans master and manipulate all life forms from the genetic memory to the direction of the river's flow to elemental gases in the atmosphere. Our modern human perception that we are separate from the living systems that brought us forth dominates our cultural decisions and downplays the devastation.

The great task of our lifetime is to once again come home to place, to relocate our human genius amid the myriad collective of consciousness manifest in our biome. The elfin butterfly followed the return of the white pine and low bush blueberry. Her lifetime, one magnificent assent of interbeing, expressing the possibility of recovery of place. Our future lies in knowing who resides here. Not information about habitat or history, but a knowing that awakens an abiding love. For to know one creature whose future presence in this place and upon this planet is dependent upon our relationship activates a response that guides our way home to the community of life. The indwelling spirit of what we protect and defend in this place resonates throughout the one living system of all life forms. What an awesome responsibility and grace-filled vocation to bear witness to a time that recognizes what we embrace will move forward.

As the next cultural expression manifests, we sense its emergence forming through our conscious interactions with Earth community stirring an energy that will become the revealed, "All is One."

Spiritual Discipline of the Decade

No matter the weather every day about 11 o'clock, unless work schedule or weekend alter the time, an old white Chevy pulls into our driveway. Josh Fecteau gets out, opens the trunk, and retrieves his waist pack and binoculars. Off he goes to his sacred site for a long sit before he meanders further along the trails and into the fields.

Josh, a recent graduate of Stonehill college, lives in Plainville. "As a high school student, I was very good at math and thought I'd find a career connected to that field. The FBI also attracted me. I guess I was a typical high schooler of the 90's!" he reflects. "But I read a book, *The Story of B*, by Daniel Quinn and that jostled me into looking at life in a new way. It enabled me to begin questioning our culture and the values I hold. This led to questioning everything and I began to read different kinds of material.

As I read, I became more dissatisfied with pat answers and the American way of life portrayed in mass media. I grew to realizing that passing another law, electing a different president wouldn't bring real change. We need fundamental change, a shift in thinking, a conversion in how we view ourselves. I began to read about indigenous people and their ways, and I found a new wisdom there.

My life search is leading me to find opportunities to invest myself in something meaningful. That's what the Kamana Naturalist Home Study Program is about. It speaks of the recovery of knowledge...glimpses of how native peoples saw this land and lived in relationship with the spirit of place.

I find the best way to enter the spirit of this place is to spend a lot of time outside...to listen, to look, to get to know how to live instructed by the best teachers there are...those who have lived in this landscape and helped shape this terrain longer than the human community has endured.

My interaction with Kamana and my everyday contemplative time at Crystal Spring is shaping me in new ways. I want to live a sustainable life in harmony with all.”

Kamana program is created by the Wilderness Awareness School in Duvall, WA. Dan Gardoqui of White Pines Tracking, who leads tracking experiences at Crystal Spring, introduced Josh to the program

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