



## The Healing Strength of Trees

July 28, 2017

Nothing realigns priorities more effectively than an unexpected health crisis. My planned activities and writing for the summer were derailed by the discovery of a kidney tumor resolved by surgery. So once again I had the mental exercise of reviewing what matters in my life, knowing I am still on borrowed time, and perhaps a shorter span than I had imagined. Having escaped

from one malignant diagnosis for 11 years, why did I think I was safe from other disasters? We do not know how many days we have on this Earth, so it is critical to make the most of each day and live life to the fullest in each moment.

I have spent many hours in the last few weeks absorbing the wisdom and healing energy of the trees. My back yard is graced with two hundred- year- old pin oak trees whose interlacing branches soar high into the sky above my house. I can lie on an afghan in the clover looking up and feel the thrum of life underground where their roots connect in intimate communication. If I lie very still, I can watch the bees come to the blooming clover and feel the beat of my own pulse against the warm earth. Here I can look up into the branches and see the layers of life play out – a small band of juvenile blue jays makes noisy pass through the apple tree; a pair of squirrels have invaded and tipped over the bird feeder to the delight of the mourning doves who feed on the ground. A cardinal sings his heart out while his mate coaxes the fledglings to feed on their own. The banded robin named Master of

the Garden enjoys a noisy splash in the birdbath. A tiger swallowtail butterfly drifts across my view on the way to the blooming flowers on the edge of the pond. Cicada's shrill song and the softer trill of the golden eye lacewing offer the themes of the insect orchestra to the afternoon. I am so aware of this teeming life all around me, this critical part of the life of the Earth and I breathe in the scent of growing things and add the exhalations of my tortured body to the air around me. Do the trees perceive my need for healing? I imagine that they might, so I settle into my resting place and try to absorb the wisdom of their years.

I think about all of the things I have yet to accomplish, my ambitions to use my new book as a springboard to reach more people for action on a pathway to a more sustainable future. I think about my grandchildren, just barely teens now, facing a world likely to be degraded compared to present times, and I feel a rage rising at my own impotence to influence the changes that can help ease their life. They are distant and absorbed in their own world, not close by to share the unpressured moments where insight can cross generations through shared tasks.

Illness and suffering impose a time of reflection and offer an opportunity for growth. My heart swells with gratitude and love for all of the people who have reached out to me with daily attention and care from my family; with food, reading material and visits from friends; and notes and calls from people near and far. The interconnected community is necessary for healing. I also feel the value of giving such comfort and healing presence when the need arises for others. No one thrives alone. The interconnectedness makes us each stronger. So I reflect on the goodness of those around me, and rest in the confidence that my body will heal as long as my spirit rises above the challenge. Our tortured Earth will heal as well in response to love and care from the humans that depend on its life support system. We have the power through love and caring to overcome the scourges of the Age of Man (global warming and global pollution.) I will rise from my bed soon and resume the battle strengthened by the wisdom of these centenary trees.