

NATURE AND US

A Symbiotic Relationship

Richard W. Daniels

Sandra M. T. Cole

DEDICATION

Dedicated to

Clarinda Philips

She taught us how to live and she taught us how to die

The following was written by 'Chele Miller and presented by her on January 18, 2004 at a memorial service for Clarinda Philips. Clarinda was our next door neighbor, and she made our lives more complete. We miss her.

Clarinda was the quintessential independent woman; involved, welcoming and hospitable, always a good and interested listener; and very private. Until I read her obituary, I did not know even that she played the violin, much less that she possessed such expertise. She never spoke about herself.

I was also surprised, as I thought about memories and anecdotes of her, that I have so many I could tell, since I have only known her for a short time. However, I know that she would counsel me to be brief, and I know that if I don't do a good job, I will hear a branch tapping at my bedroom window tonight; so I will hold myself to three particular images.

First, I know we all picture her digging, planting, transplanting and weeding. She gardened simply, especially anxious to nourish the natural plants in her yard and woods. She weeded the grass from her lawn to encourage the moss. She moved partridge berries from the woods into an expanding bed by the house. And she successfully transplanted delicate lady slippers by carefully replicating their environment. Summer before last she planted a long bed of lilies here at the chapel along the newly constructed ramp. I believe Clarinda thought of this as a gift to the chapel, as needed beautification and as a gift to her friend, Lillian Bowles, in whose memory the ramp was built.

A personal memory I will cherish is our chapel Christmas tree excursions. Since I moved to Wonalancet, we have put up the chapel tree together each year. Last year, after examining what seemed like every tree in Cawley's tree farm and finally selecting one, she reached over, took the bow saw out of my hand, dropped to her knees and cut down the tree. And later, we had great fun securing the tree against the wind and untangling and attaching the lights with numb fingers. Clarinda was not able to put up the tree this year, but she did approve the lights and monitor my progress.

And finally, I picture her expression when she introduced one of her not square boxes to new admirers and anticipated their reactions when they recognized that It was, indeed, not square. After she retired, Clarinda pursued an interest in woodworking; and, as with everything she did, she did it right. She attended the Museum school, learned the basics and created a very respectable woodworking shop in her cellar. She has given me both the gift and the challenge of those tools, I'm sure to be certain that I will be kept busy with good work. .

Clarinda loved it here. Like her lady slippers, she transplanted herself to this place when she retired, and she often spoke of her joy in being here. She found friends, enjoyed the social occasions she chose; and lived contentedly within a circle of her own creation. She found interest and contentment in the natural cycle of each day and of the turning of the seasons. Even through her illness, which she confronted with astounding grace way beyond my understanding, she had her bed in the dining room where she could watch each day through the window.

As the struggle became more difficult, Joan called early one morning and asked that I consider whether it was the right time to share her poem with Clarinda. That day did prove to be just the right time. I visited Clarinda and explained that I had a poem for her from Joan and asked if she wanted to hear it. She did. She closed her eyes and listened. At the end she said, "I think it's time," and she asked to hear the poem again.

You may recall, the poem closes with these words:

*Walk slowly down that long, long path, for soon we'll follow you.
We want to know each step you take, so we may take the same.
For someday down that lonely road, you'll hear us call your name.*

Clarinda listened. After a moment and in a peaceful tone of acceptance. she said, "I will go slowly, very very slowly. I will be listening."

Our neighborhood is diminished missing Clarinda's quiet presence. We will all remember her fondly and nurture her day lilies here at the chapel. I will try to transplant a lady slipper into the grove following the directions she has given me. And, if I am blessed with a life as long and competent has hers, I will continue to put up our Christmas tree here, at least until I am 85.

PREFACE

In its early development, the book's title was Nature and Me, but fortunately a more appropriate title is now Nature and Us. For more than the first twenty-five years of its time span, the book focuses on the interaction between Dick and nature. It took more than two and a half decades, plus the development of the Internet, for Dick to find Sandy. Even so, Sandy has lent her expertise as the more gifted writer to massage the first part of the book into an easier and more entertaining read. And she wrote chapters in the later part of the book.

The subtitle refers to a symbiotic relationship. A symbiotic relationship is one that is mutually beneficial. But for billions of years, nature got along just fine without the human species. Isn't it presumptuous to assume that I have given nature a hand? Well, for

quite a while man has been messing up what nature presented to us. Thus there are now countless opportunities to undo some of the blights that have been introduced by our fellow inhabitants of this planet.

At this stage of the book, I'll just use a single example how one can give nature a helping hand. When the European settlers landed in North America, the forests were vastly different. In what we now call the White Mountains of New Hampshire, the white pines grew to heights of two hundred feet and a five-foot diameter was not uncommon. Now, a hundred-foot tree, three feet in diameter is uncommon. But white pine seedlings can be planted in favorable locations and the competing trees periodically thinned so the seedlings start developing to their potential. Here's the hard part – waiting another couple of hundred years for the pines to slowly reach their full maturity. At the time of publication, twenty-five years have passed since I first planted white pines, so there are only 175 years to go! Succeeding owners might be tempted to sell out my tree friends for a monetary reward. But then again, maybe by reading this book they will learn to appreciate the aesthetic reward that can be attained watching a forest reach a maturity that is too uncommon today.

This book describes the evolution of neglected woods with negligible wildlife into a rejuvenated forest where wildlife thrives. As the forest evolves, so do I - from a research and development engineer to a person who feels an ongoing kinship with the land. In the process, the property evolves to meet the criteria of being a Tree Farm.

What is a Tree Farm? In a narrow sense it is a farm for trees. If it meets strict standards, it is officially designated a Registered Tree Farm. But just as a farm is not just livestock or crops, a Tree Farm is not just trees; it is trees and wildlife and trails and a feeling. For this Tree Farmer it has become a way of life.

While I hope there is useful information for Tree Farmers and prospective Tree Farmers, this book is not written as a text for those who want to learn about managing a Tree Farm. My main purpose is relating the enjoyment and satisfaction I have discovered living and working on this land. And by reading of the pleasure it has given me, I hope some of you will decide to spend more time in the woods.

To help the forest in its betterment and evolution, I had a number of logging operations to remove problematic trees which were a result of earlier mismanagement. Quite a while ago, I stopped managing the trees for economic gain. For the rest of the time that I own this land, which I hope will be decades more, there will be no more tree harvests. The trees are now maturing nicely without drastic surgeries.

Now for a little background about Dick and Sandy.

As a youth, Dick dedicated his life to being a great student. He had natural aptitude for math and science; and loved to read, especially science fiction. Summers were spent at the family cottage at Cobbetts pond in Windham, New Hampshire. Swimming, boating, and water skiing brought out another side of him. Books were reserved for rainy days. Moonless nights found him out on a raft enjoying the beauty of the stars.

Dick continued his studious ways to graduate Summa cum Laude from Brown University with a Bachelors of Science degree in Electrical Engineering. Hired by Bell Telephone Laboratories (now Lucent Technologies), he combined working with studying to receive a M. S. Degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and a Ph.D. from Northeastern University. He also wrote two scientific books.

This lets you understand who Dick was before acquiring 155 acres in the White Mountains of Sandwich New Hampshire. He was a nerd, with a childhood that fortunately had awakened in him a wonderment of nature. He is now a born-again naturalist.

If you are caught in the rat race - there is another world out there. Come to the woods! Let nature draw you in! If you must, bring your PC's, but take a moment to draw a deep breath, stop and experience the life around you. And be warned, you might forget to turn on the PC.

As a child, Sandy was a year-round lakeaholic. Living in a big house on a hill overlooking the lake, she was wading, hunting for crawfish as soon as the ice receded in the spring, coming out only to give her legs a chance to thaw. On the first day school of summer vacation, she got the sunburn that would tan her enough to last the summer, and began hardening up the soles of her feet by racing down her gravel road to play with the boys who lived on 'the bubble,' the turn around on her dead end road. Days were spent fishing, swimming, and rowing to the 'Treasure Spot,' an untouched part of the lakeshore where the currents deposited tiny clam shells, lost fishing lure, and all manner of exotic items. When school started again, and she still had that stomach sinking, end-of-summer-freedom feeling, she shoved her leather soled feet back into shoes and went about being a good little student. School was good to her, but summers were better.

Still weekends held the lure of the outdoors, biking to a local riding stable to feed apple slices to the horses, or trying, rather muddily and unsuccessfully to cross swamps by jumping from clump to clump of grass. And in winter there was the wonder of sledding down the hill onto the lake's glassy surface and skating on the shoveled rinks. Skating by moonlight was magical, as was going to the middle of the lake on a foggy winter's day and twirling and twirling around until all sense of direction was lost, then walking in a straight line to find where in the world you would come ashore.

From the lake, Sandy went to college to become a teacher and followed that occupation overseas for five years of teaching in Germany and England. Then, back in the States, while shopping in a supermarket with a toddler riding in the basket, she picked up a brochure "For People Who Want to Write Children's Books." Her final article from the course was published in Ranger Rick- a nature piece entitled "Sharks Were Babies Too." That wakened anew an interest in the world's critters and seven or eight articles were published in the following, child rearing years. Full time work as a counselor and psychology professor and mother of two growing children left little time for writing. But now in the glories of retirement, with a lovely outdoor environment to explore, there once again is time to write- and a person to join me in doing just that.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I originally purchased the property in the White Mountains, I had little idea what a Tree Farm was and certainly not what a Tree Farmer did. I am deeply grateful to the various individuals who have contributed greatly to my silvaculture education and, by so doing, have helped in the evolution of me and my Tree Farm.

Peter Pohl, the county forester, has been my mentor, always willing and very able to suggest how to improve the forest. As I reread our correspondences I am always

impressed with Peter's ability to communicate and the thought he put in to answering my questions.

Dave Weathers, from the Soil and Conservation Service, nicely complemented the help that Peter provided. Peter's charter is to help landowners manage their woods so that the forests will develop marketable products. Dave's charter is to help the landowners so that the wildlife will benefit. Dave's conservation attitudes have been very contagious.

Jack Wadsworth, a forester for S. D. Warren Paper Co., taught me what trees should be selected for a timber harvest so well that I eventually did not need his help! What better compliment can a teacher have?

Fred Bickford, owner of a timber harvesting company, has been my contact with the commercial side of Tree Farming. Thanks to Fred, I have not had to worry about detrimental effects of harvests. Instead, his work has helped shape the Tree Farm so that its future looks even brighter than its past.

Bill Read, my next door neighbor, has participated in many of my projects that required earth moving equipment. His machines and his talent to make them do wonderful things were both helpful and instructive.

I eventually purchased a backhoe. Len Marino was a critical factor in keeping that machine in good running order. He is no longer with us – I miss my best friend.

All of these people have had a major impact on the education and metamorphosis of this engineer who now would be lost without the woods.