

Nearby

BY LOU LIPSITZ

Recently, the astronomers discovered several stars only four light-years away and around them circled a group of possibly earth-like planets. Somehow that seems close, though four light years mean something like trillions of miles. It reminds me of when we met again, my dear childhood friend, after fifty-five years of silence.



Suggestions for Being and Judging America's President

BY LYNN VEACH SADLER

He/She must have both a knowledge base on-the-build and be always in learning mode supported by Cabinet members best in their fields. Especially, he/she and that Cabinet must always, before acting, lay out the possible reactions of the world's countries and choose accordingly.

What if, prior to assuming office, the President writes out a code of operating and uses it to judge actions before taking them and to self-evaluate? He/She might read Gene Autry's "Cowboy Code," ("A cowboy must never shoot first, shoot at a smaller man . . .") and listen to the voice-over at the end of She Wore a Yellow Ribbon.

Every piece of the American Heritage is a valuable learning tool. Why not a President's "Personal Cabinet" of representatives of the people's sects and schisms (including youth) meeting every two weeks, changing members every three months?

Among the rest? Helping America, Americans, and the world; complying with rules in place; being truthful; eschewing provocation, ridicule, revenge; exemplifying dignity; keeping promises or explaining why not; giving others recognition; retaining self-and family-time.

As Shakespeare knew, after first passing the self-test, the President cannot be false to others.

Ramble

By Gary Phillips

Of all the things I love to do
The one that's my delight
It is to take a ramble
On a starry night

—as sung by Betty Smith, from an old ballad

I am a child of Appalachia. My family ranges from the Cherokee foothills all the way up to the high forests of Pisgah.

I have written about my grandma Lilly, the first great love of my life, that she grew up just light enough to pass but not to matter. Married at 13 and raised 8 babies.

My people were subsistence farmers, sharecroppers, multi-racial poor white trash and worse, taking to the forests to gather firewood and hickory-nuts, to hunt squirrel, rabbit, bullfrog, catfish, trout, raccoon and sometimes even possum.

My grandma Etta brought all the Cherokee into our line, and hers was a family who chose during the Great Removal, like Marrano Jews, to hide in plain sight, assimilating into white culture and fading into the forests. They could not persuade their bodies to leave those hills, no matter the cost.

Grandma was a fey hill-witch too. She prepared herbals, met with women, foraged; pointed out to me the sacred places, under stone and by water, the trees of worth, the shy creatures of air and earth and sky.

She let me see they meant no harm, had their own ways and business to perform.

Her husband was Robert Holloway, who I was named after. His people were driven off their land by the famine and the English, flung toward America in coffin-ships where thousands died, were impressed into armies as the poorest of the poor, wandered south and west until they found any scrap of ground abandoned, and stayed.

The cause of social justice and the love and care of land are married, and always have been.

A story:

When I stayed in Big Creek in Yancey County my grandparents left me to sleep in a little room off the high porch, which I loved.

In the middle of the night one summer grandpa knocked on the door and stepped in. He had his old hand-made rifle in his arms.

"Get up," he said; "if you want to go coon hunting."

Grandpa was never a man for words, but I was, and so I asked him a thousand questions on the way to the dog-lot, but he

never answered. We opened up the pen and the hounds swirled out in a mob, 4 or 5 tall bony black-and-tans that my grandfather tended like kin.

We all headed up the mountain together, using a trail that went through his cow pasture and up to the high ridge. I raced to keep up with him.

"Grandpa, where's my flashlight?"

"You don't need a flashlight," he said. "We got a moon tonight." And so I began to inculcate a night vision, to ken that a beam of sharp light is blinding to the target and the bearer, dividing the whole into seen and unseen. It's been a useful metaphor.

That night we followed the dogs for hours, up hill and down valley, crossing wet creeks and little bogs, dodging dog hobble and laurel hells, avoiding any lit place, working our way deeper into Pisgah Forest.

Sometimes we sat and listened to the dogs talk to each other, their voices changing if they caught a scent or went to tree. It was beautiful.

I was on my last legs when we crested a rise and looked down on a long ribbon of water under the moonlight. The old man motioned to a massive pig-nut hickory and I slid down to lean against it. After a time light slowly crept in on cat feet, and the whole mountain erupted into birdsong and rustling. Fifteen feet away from me I saw a long-eared rabbit politely looking away. Grey squirrels heaped scorn at us from the trees, who seemed to breathe and stretch all around us. On the forest floor little quaker-ladies were blooming and bowing to each other, falling away to cohosh and beeches and then the Cane River, where a doe and two fawns gingerly entered the water.

I could hear the trees in conversation, the rustle of creatures in the leaf litter. I could sense somehow the pheromones on the wind, everything. It's all alive, I thought. Every little bit of it. I knew that this was my grandfather's way of revealing his interior life, his love and loyalty.

It takes a lot of lies not to love this earth.

And those lies are beginning to fall apart, outside the seats of power. This is our day. Let their day be over. We are part of the mountain. We are of the forests; we are animal and mineral.

Maybe we can take the wisdom of the old and the courage of the new to form a culture and tell the truth, every day. The world is waiting for that, every day.

Aho.

Gary Phillips is long-time Chatham resident.

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SATYRS

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eat many grasses, such as purple-top and blue-grass, yet I associate adults with dry woods or brushy habitat. Adults, males probably metamorphosing first, appear around June or July and females might linger into September, their yellow bands whitening with age. Some adults might aestivate around August, the summer version of hibernation. According to Mathew Tekulsky's butterfly gardening book, besides rotting fruit and sap, wood nymphs visit composites such as purple coneflowers and sunflowers, alfalfa, mint, Spirea, fleabane, Penstemon, ironweed, and wild clematis, but I can't recall ever seeing one at a flower. Wood nymphs lay single eggs in late summer and the caterpillars lash themselves to grass stalks or hide in the leaf litter for the winter, apparently without eating first. There are smaller Western species and the English call similar butterflies meadow browns.

IDENTIFY "YOUR" BUTTERFLIES

- www.dpr.ncparks.gov/nbnc/
- www.butterfliesandmoths.org/

Michael Pollock is a freelance writer living in southern Durham and founded Northeast Creek Stream Watch (www.northeastcreek.org). He studied biology and anthropology at UNC.



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