

Trees Are a Few of My Favorite Things!

By Mary Jane McCormick

"I Think that I shall never See, a Poem as Lovely as a Tree"

Joyce Kilmer was my first poet laureate. His rhyme was brought to my attention as I was discovering the beauty of trees. The apple orchard on the south side of the farmhouse provided low branches for this seven year old to climb. The pear trees, with vines intertwined, are where we played 'Tarzan and Jane' in a magical forest just a cornfield away from the barn.

And to date, I still grieve my cottonwood that stood outside my lanai until last year when it went for kindling.

My relationship with trees is legendary, although only to me. It's no wonder my pilgrimage to Ireland in 2007 was all about the Fairy Tree.

All over the Celtic Isle there are Fairy Trees which are believed to be sacred ground for the 'Wee People.' A Fairy Tree is usually a hawthorn or ash tree, but what makes them stand out from any other tree of its type is its location. A Fairy tree is found standing by itself in the center of a field or on the side of the road, thus making them easy to spot.

The Irish culture is rich with folklore and Fairy Trees are regarded as sacred sites. Some believe these trees are the gateway between worlds for mortals and that of the faeries in the otherworld. The wee folk also have entrances to the otherworld at burial sites and underwater, but their favorite is believed to be the base of Fairy trees. Some believe if you damage or cut these trees down, you'll be faced with a life of bad luck. People are even wary of touching one.

On my bus tour in Western Ireland, the driver slowed down to show us a Fairy Tree standing alone off the busy roadway. He told us that the highway cost thousands of dollars over budget.

During construction, they came upon this Fairy Tree. New plans had to be drawn up to re-route the interstate to by-pass this tree.

The seven year old still living within me came back from Ireland reminiscing of her early encounters in the apple orchard with fairies and the wee people from another world. And although this 70-year-old woman no longer climbs their branches, I feel the power of the sacred as I sit with my back against their trunks.

As a youth, I searched in their branches but now I am drawn to their roots. Their years and years of digging in the earth tell me they hold secrets for living and secrets for dying. So it's time for me to do lot of just plain listening.