A Short Geography of Remembrance

by

Mark P. Widrlechner
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A collection of poems and photographs
by Mark P. Widrlechner
This collection of poems and photos is dedicated to everyone who has shared their kind healing thoughts and touches with me over these last two years.

Designed and published by the author
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Introduction

In the early Summer of 2012, my wildest year came to a gradual close. To help mark that ending, through nearby friends I found a sweat lodge leader and learned the protocol for meeting him and requesting that a lodge be conducted on my behalf. The experience of connecting with him was much richer than I ever would have imagined. Surprisingly, that unexpected connection hinged upon an old, nearly empty plastic bag holding the last remnants of my favorite kinnickinnic.

My purpose for requesting the lodge was mostly for purification, as I began to prepare for a journey to seek advice on how I might best bring my formal mourning to a close and begin looking at the world through new eyes. My trip was planned for that coming September, timed to coincide with the Manitoba Elk rut. And it turned out to be unforgettable.

This new collection of poems includes all the verses from eight of my chapbooks, beginning shortly after the sweat lodge and concluding as Summer began in 2013. As with the poems published in “This Wildest Year,” nearly all those included here have resulted from a spontaneous flow that still puzzles me. I should also note that I have not included three works of prose that were in the eight chapbooks, nor the 23 poems that I created for “The Dancing Bear (and Other Brief Fantasies).” The latter were part of a very different writing exercise and, for the most part, do not involve the same sorts of “geographies.”
“Manitoba Dreamin’” focused on preparations for my journey and things I learned along the way. “Down Past the Ciderhouse” celebrated Autumn and reported on some key aspects of my trip to Canada. “Hungry Like the Wolf” explored local and interior landscapes. “A New Bureau of Reclamation” was a call to action to shape our future geography. “Smoke Rises” had a strong subtropical flavor, as significant parts of it were written while visiting southern Florida. “Awaiting the Equinox” examined the late Winter landscape, the flow of recent events, and my impatience for the coming of Spring. “Off Center” defied any such characterization. Its geography is all over the map, but it also is a plea to take actions to make this world a better place. And, finally, “Elk Dreams” ventured into the hidden spaces where physical places, our minds and hearts, and the Divine Mystery all converge.

As you will soon see, the geography covered in these poems encompasses broad swaths of territory: physical and spiritual (or, in the Taoist sense, both earthly and heavenly). Occasionally, it also ventures into dreamscapes, especially in the closing chapter. As I reread these verses now, I can see that personal, historical geography (remembrance in the formal sense), geography of the fleeting moment (to be captured, transformed, and become remembrance), and intuitions and prayers about the future (attempting to shape remembrance yet to be) all come together. My hope is that this collection will help you see our sacred Earth anew and sense, in some unanticipated way, the mysterious powers that it holds, inspiring you to seek out and walk down the fragrant path.