

SPACE, TIME, AND MATTER MADE HOLY: EVIDENCE OF PURPOSE

Space, time and matter made holy. Even though I didn't think about these things in just this way for many years, I believe I got some inkling that it was true when I was fourteen. It happened during a summer vacation with my family on a lake named Kakadjo in Maine. In the early evening after we had arrived, it was not quite dusk, I had gone looking for skimmers along the shore in front of our log cabin. I had helped my father unpack the car, and bring in fire wood for the great iron stove which was used for both cooking and heating. After helping to get a fire started and my mother had begun preparing our evening meal I ambled outside to look around. It was a very rustic old place filled with the scent of hemlock, pine, blueberries and fresh ferns outside, and that musty clean smell inside that comes with braided rugs, woolen blankets, and bedding quilts in a place that has been just been opened up and aired after being closed for the winter. My dad had fetched his tackle box and was checking his lures. My sister was setting the table. So while I was waiting for supper, I headed down the worn path to the pier in front of the cabin. Mr. Richardson, had tied up the boat we used for fishing and exploring the lake shore. The water was gently slapping against its sides, and the air was still. The faint aroma of chimney smoke drifting out from the kitchen and made me feel a little hungry. A small cloud of gnats busily danced to a silent tune in the rays of the setting sun over the water at the end of the pier. From across the lake came the ghostly cry of a pair of loons, as a doe and her fawn strolled along the opposite shore, stopping for an occasional drink and listening to the quiet. Here and there on the almost ripple free water came a splash, then a series of ever increasing circles where some fish had left its telltale mealtime mark. It was a perfect time for throwing a skimmer.

As I walked slowly along the rocky shore at the waters edge, looking for skimming stones. I found several about the right size; round and flat enough to do the trick. Then suddenly, there in the tea colored brackish water my eye caught nestled among the other stones the most perfect skimmer I had ever seen. I quickly plunged my hand into the cool wet water and retrieved this bit of treasure. It was a slightly bigger than a silver dollar, and about the same thickness. Being wet, it had a sheen that darkened its light grayish brown color. A funny little tiny vein of what looked like quartz ran through it creating an image like one of those familiar "smiley face" pins. It was such a happy looking skimmer I decided not to throw it, and so I put it in my pants pocket for safe keeping. I walked out to the end of the pier and skimmed the other stones I had found. They were pretty average, skipping only three or four times. Just then my father called me to the cabin for supper. As I started to walk back up the rocky old path, I felt the damp smiley face skimmer jostling around in my pocket and I stopped. It might have been my imagination, but the stone seemed to be calling me: "Please let me go; don't keep me in here; I want to fly!" As I resumed my walking along the path it persisted. Again I stopped and this time I took it out of my pocket, held it in my hand, looked at it hesitantly and weighed it. That skimmer was a beauty. I really wanted to keep it to show the kids back home. But something inside me told me how it would feel to fly like a skimmer. The thrill of the air rushing by, The cool silkiness of the water as it touched and skimmed along the surface. I knew my skimmer really wanted to make the trip. After all, how often does a stone with a smiling face get a chance to fly. And it truly was a happy looking skimmer and I knew I had to let it go. Slowly, I walked back out to the end of the pier, gave it another good look and a little kiss. Then, with my very best fling I sent my skimmer on its way. It must have been really happy because it skipped an unbelievable eight times, leaving behind a trail of overlapping concentric circles before disappearing under the water. I felt a little sad; yet, at the same time, I was sort of happy and kind of proud of myself, because I had helped give that "smiley face" stone, a little bit life, of my life. I was there to help it make the trip. A few days later just before we left for home I ran down to the lake for one last look at the spot where my "smiley face" stone slipped into the water. I felt a great peace knowing I left a part of myself in that beautiful place called Kakadjo and that it would always be there.

THE SEQUEL: WHEN SPACE, TIME AND MATTER BECAME HOLY

We went back to Lake Kakadjo the following year, for very last time as a family. The trip always seemed long. It was an all day trip and we usually arrived in the late afternoon. After we all shared in the ritual of unpacking the car, bringing in wood for the stove, and helping my mother setting things up, it was her vacation too!, I ran down to the lake. Everything was just about the same as I remembered from the year before. Mr. Richardson had made things ready for us. The row boat was tied in its usual place. The pines and hemlocks had that familiar damp woodsy smell that comes from their dried out needles. There was a faint hint of citronella in the air as well.

As I strolled along the looking for skimmers and thinking about the "smiley face" stone, I suddenly stopped short. I couldn't believe my eyes. There in about a foot of clear water, just off the edge of the shore, lay my "smiley face" skimmer. I stared down at it, in utter surprise and sheer amazement shaking my head in total disbelief. My heart must have surely skipped a beat. But there, right in front of me with absolutely no question about it, was the same "smiley face" stone, the same "smiley face" grin, with the same "smiley face" vein of quartz running through it. Stunned, I continued stare down at it. There it was, in its naked togetherness, just laying there and smiling back. I couldn't move or bring myself to touch it, much less pick it up. I overwhelmed with joy. Tears from nowhere filled my eyes and ran down my cheeks. Somehow I knew I had felt the presence of God in this tiny corner of Creation where for a few moments space, time, and matter had been made holy. I didn't tell anyone about this experience for fear no one would believe me. It wasn't the right time anyway, because the experience had been overwhelming, and much more than I could comprehend or explain. Only recently I was able to realize the full impact of the experience. So now I can share it. The enlightenment came as I read a passage from St. Augustine's "Confessions". I felt close to St. Augustine and knew how he felt when I read: "And, so in an instant of awe, my mind attained to the sight of God who IS. Then, at last, I caught sight of your invisible nature, as it is known through your creatures [Rom. 1:20]. But I had no strength to fix my gaze upon them. In my weakness I recoiled and fell back into my old ways, carrying with me nothing but the memory of something I loved and longed for, as though I had sensed the fragrance of the fare but was not able to consume it."

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