

STUMPS

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They jut from the pinegrass like elderly molars, eroded in many cases to a jagged facade of their original bulk, much of the heartwood having returned to the soil that nourished it.

The sight of one of these relics often spurs a queer sense of nostalgia — queer because I have no personal connection to the history of this place, yet I feel something like the same sensation as when I ponder events that are part of my own life story.

This emotion is pleasant but also a trifle unsettling. It's as if the weight of all those years has roiled the placid progression of time, creating a series of swells that leave me slightly seasick.

As I kneel beside the gaunt remnants of a tree that might once have soared 100 feet, and run my fingers across its sand-papery surface, I am struck always by the dichotomy of constancy in a world defined by change, by

events both modest and epochal. I imagine how much has happened while this formerly grand tree, which once perfumed the warm summer wind with its strong sweet scents of bark and sap and needle, was making its inexorable transition to the mere husk that is all I will ever see, or touch.

That tree might have been standing still when the armies of Europe were wasting themselves in the mud of France and Flanders, at Ypres and Verdun and the Somme.

But surely it was a stump — though a much more solid stump than now, solid enough to make for a proper stool — when the stock market crashed in 1929.

What, I wonder, did it look like 16 years later when, less than 20 miles away, the people of Baker were joining their fellow Americans in celebrating the end of another, even worse, world war.

Or on Nov. 22, 1963, when our president was slain.

Or on any other landmark day in the ensuing decades.

I know only that it was here, in this very spot, on every one of those days. And every other day in between.

Inevitably this exercise leads me to think about the very beginning of the story — the birth, as it were, of the stump, when it ceased to be a tree.

It is very nearly a compulsion.

I wonder, even though I know I will never reveal the truth, about the men who stood on this very patch of ground, possibly before any of my grandparents was born. I think of them as they sized up this tree, gauged its lean as against the lay of the land, and plotted where they would wish for it to fall if they did the work properly.

I try to conjure, from the unfathomable depths of time, the sound as the saw made its first bite into the bole, the sharp fresh smell and the bright white drift of the chips as they began to accumulate, like the flakes of a winter squall, around

the leather cork boots. Who were these men? Were they here on a scorching July afternoon, the sweat soaking their plaid shirts even before the sawing commenced? Or were they grateful for the exertion to warm their blood on a frigid February morning?

What did they think about, these men who had never seen television, perhaps never even heard a radio?

Was the felling of this tree for them a routine job, anonymous among the hundreds they dropped in a career? Or was this tree made slightly memorable because someone smashed a thumb under a wedge, or sliced a thigh in an instant of carelessness, lulled by the rhythm of the slashing saw, leaving a scar that the sawyer still remembered, still felt the vestigial searing pain, in his own final hour?

The stump of course is silent, no more able to tell its story than a chunk of stone can explain how it came to be, belched from a volcano or compressed from layers of sediment

over the millennia on the bed of a distant sea. Yet the stump is also here, a real and solid link to those men, even if the surfaces they touched have long since decomposed.

To people, with our puny lifespans, wood seems all but perpetual. But compared with the rocks, even the span of a Methuselah pine is a brief interval, scarcely measurable.

The stumps that enliven my hikes in the hills above the Powder River will persist long after I am making my

meager contribution to whatever patch of soil I end up in. But one day they too will disappear, their stories, whatever they could have been, finally and irretrievably lost.

This saddens me in a way I find impossible to express.

It is, I suppose, the peculiar melancholy that attends the finality not of death itself, but of the moment when the last shred of anything that once lived can no longer be grasped, or knelt beside in a lonely woods.

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HOROSCOPES

by Stella Wilder

SATURDAY, MARCH 26, 2022
YOUR BIRTHDAY by Stella Wilder

Born today, you have a great deal of charisma and could, if you so choose, take all sorts of advantage of all sorts of people simply by flashing your irresistible smile and saying and doing what they think they want you to say and do -- but that's not your way. You are far more genuine than that, and far more interested in dealing with other people in ways that are suitable to the situations in which you find yourself.

SUNDAY, MARCH 27
ARIES (March 21-April 19) -- A little gentleness can get you much further today than any use of force. You can perhaps get someone to agree to your terms before you ask.
TAURUS (April 20-May 20) -- A minor victory turns into a major one today, and you'll have something to celebrate when you realize you've charted a new path forward.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) -- It may be next to impossible today for you to choose sides, though the fact that you understand both points of view can serve you quite well.
CANCER (June 21-July 22) -- A Taurus or Gemini native appears as if from nowhere today and influences you in a manner that you may be talking about for quite some time.
LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) -- You've managed to balance some very disparate elements, but today your work may be threatened by someone who doesn't know what it's all about.
VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) -- A family member needs precisely what you can give today, but this means you're going to have to alter what was a "perfect" schedule.
LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) -- You have what someone wants, and vice versa -- so there is likely an arrangement to be made here that can satisfy both of you quite well.
SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) -- You may have to do something you swore you'd never do -- but very few people will notice, so your reputation should not be at risk.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) -- Others are relying on your clear vision and honesty at this time. You can provide what is needed without asking too much in return.
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) -- You may wish things would return to "normal," but the fact is that what you are experiencing may well be the "new normal," and that's that!
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) -- You can get a good deal of work done early in the day, leaving plenty of time for you to engage in an activity that is personal in nature.
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) -- You can't get something for nothing today -- try as you might. The experience gives you a new appreciation for what someone has done.

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LA GRANDE GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS
 Every Friday Night @ 5pm, 2107 Gekeler Ln, LG, Church of Christ basement. For more info please call 971-219-8411

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CELEBRATE RECOVERY
 Calvary Baptist Church
 Third & Broadway
 Baker City, OR
EVERY THURSDAY
 6:15 - 8:00 PM

SATURDAY, MARCH 26, 2022

CROSSWORD PUZZLER

ACROSS

1 Frisk about
 5 Student's quarters
 9 Nightwear
 12 Therefore
 13 Canal of song
 14 Buscaglia or Tolstoy
 15 River crosser
 17 Ms. Hagen
 18 Famous mummy
 19 Avid
 21 Reside
 24 Red-ink item
 26 Facile
 27 Small bark
 28 Two pounds, plus
 32 Climber's challenge
 33 Eggs, in biology
 34 Good name, for short
 35 Vegas alternative
 37 Family mem.

DOWN

1 NBA official
 2 Galena
 3 Boss, briefly
 4 Rather heavy
 5 Sum owed
 6 Gonzalez's gold
 7 Narrow inlet

38 Barry or Matthews
 39 Stein fillers
 41 Column type
 42 High heel
 45 Pizza Hut alternative
 46 Note-taker's need
 47 Make clear
 53 Poet's before
 54 Clock part
 55 "Garfield" pooch
 56 — Montgomery of jazz
 57 Essay byline
 58 Tirade

Answer to Previous Puzzle

S	H	E	D	S	A	W	N	E	G	O
P	A	L	E	A	R	E	A	W	E	D
A	L	M	A	I	T	S	P	E	E	D
T	E	S	T	S	L	A	D	Y	A	R
O	R	K	H	E	C	K	S	A	G	E
N	O	I	R	M	E	R	M	U	R	K
I	D	L	E	M	E	A	D	L	E	E
C	E	L	E	R	Y	J	E	T	T	Y
W	R	E	S	T	F	A	L	I	S	T
R	A	P	T	A	C	K	D	O	O	R
Y	E	A	Y	U	K	S	E	T	N	A

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8 Rations out
 9 Outlet insert
 10 Leap in a tutu
 11 Fly upward
 16 "The King and I" name

20 Seek information
 21 Pet name
 22 Corduroy rib
 23 "Monday Night Football" aier
 24 Breathes
 25 Iridescent gem
 27 Long past
 29 Baha'i origin
 30 Strauss of jeans
 31 Sheik's cartel
 36 Paneling wood
 38 Physician
 40 Rocky projection
 41 Maybes
 42 Pour out violently
 43 Remove the peel
 44 Caesar's worst day
 45 Actress Sedgwick
 48 Fish without scales
 49 Printemps month
 50 Potato st.
 51 Plane's stabilizer
 52 To date

110 Announcements

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- Ryder Bros
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- Lefty's Tap House
- Baker City Fire Dept.
- Haines Sell-Rite
- Idle Hour
- Salvation Army

114 Self-Help Group Meetings

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS
 541-805-2229
neo-na.org

AA MEETINGS
 Wednesday Nights, 7-8:15pm.
 Fort Union Grange Hall, corner of McAlister & Gekeler Lanes.
 For more info, call 541-786-1222

AL-ANON
 Keep Coming Back Family Group
 Mondays, 7 pm
 at NKWest, 1208 Adams,
 La Grande, OR

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS
 Monday, Thursday, & Friday
 at 8pm. Episcopal Church
 2177 First St.
 Baker City

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 Episcopal Church Basement
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 Joseph Methodist Church (basement on northside)
 Joseph, OR
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Saturday, 9 a.m.
NOCC - Nazarene Church
 1250 Hughes Ln. • Baker City
 (541)519-7227 or (541)239-7323

Are You Lonely? Do You Need Help? Are You Looking For A New Direction?

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 Alcohol Chemical Treatment Series
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