



I would like to take this opportunity to thank the community for responding so warmly to my reading this week. I am non-plussed at the sheer numbers who turned out last Tuesday at city hall. Perhaps the dearth of entertainment this rainy November accounts for the crowd. Maybe some thought I'd reveal some lurid gossip or a juicy scandal or two. Whatever the motivation, thank you all immensely.

I sometimes think of history as a people's collective dream about the past. Louis DeBernieres in his fine novel *Corelli's Mandolin* says history consists of "hearsay tempered with myth and hazy memory." I subscribe to that notion. "Facts" are shifty things, less tangible than impressions, not as durable as the stories and deeper truths.

In the aftermath, a number of people have expressed interest in seeing the manuscript reproduced in some published form. I am flattered and humbled. As I've suggested this past year, I feel the manuscript is roughly hewn at this point and needs to be sculpted and fleshed out somewhat more fully. I harbored a secret hope that the public reading would generate additional interest. Perhaps diffident voices, over-looked stories, unknown sources would step forward. If the words I've linked together end up with a spine and numbered pages, the text cries out for some dusty old black and white photographs. Our historical society has offered me access to their collections. If any of you have photos in collections or scrapbooks pertaining to local history, I would like to consider them for their inclusion. Any leads on potential interviews with additional informants would also be extremely helpful.

The Professor's address and phone number follow. A Luddite and practicing techno-phobe, your Professor has no FAXes, TVs, Webs, or .coms. He can often be found haranguing and extemporizing on Osburn's Grocery porch, The Cannon Beach Cookie Co., The Espresso Bean, Hane's Bakerie, or Bill's Tavern. Thank you all once again for your kindness.

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Everybody's Cryin' Mercy, but they don't know the meanin' of the word. Mose Allison

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**FROM THE LOWER LEFT CORNER**  
Victoria Stoppiello  
Almost a shut-out

It was a howler the other night, high winds roaring and sighing in the tall trees around my friends' house in Nehalem. I awoke many times, wondering if any trees would fall—then reminding myself it hasn't rained much yet this season. Soils are relatively dry, so topping trees are unlikely, but high wind does sometimes snap off the tops of trees standing in unprotected locations, especially those no longer enmeshed with their fellows in thick stands. Later in the fall and winter, when there's lots of rain, is when a windstorm like the other night's would result in flooding, mud slides, and uprooted trees.

The view around the Nehalem house is more open than years ago. There used to be a row of relatively young firs and spruces, 30 feet tall, along the street below the house. The PUD came through and not only topped them, but completely removed every one. Now the view up the Nehalem Valley is more expansive from the house, for better or worse.

There are lots of things we do to trees in the name of our own comfort or safety. I say comfort because people do fear trees, fear that they will fall, crush a house, car or person. In fact, this seldom happens. It's a little like the statistics for plane travel: in terms of passenger miles, there are statistically few fatalities, but when the fatalities occur, they are sudden, instantaneous, and shocking. So we regard plane travel as risky, and likewise we fear living near big trees in winter storms.

The odds, of course, are all in our favor. The match between humans and trees is almost a shut out. The logger who is killed by a tree that splits as it falls, sending projectiles in all directions, the wind tossed giant that drops onto the suburban roof, killing the occupant as she sleeps, the old snag that suddenly gives way on the state park hiking trail—those are a few examples of the trees' revenge. I say revenge because the trees are losing the battle, and the few human lives lost are like a few grains of sand removed from a beach littered with billions of trees taken for our benefit.

Many trees don't even serve a useful death. Some are cut down so a builder has a simpler task working on a clear cut lot. Some are taken down because the home owner is tired of raking leaves. Others are removed because the household says "they're too close to the house" and no further explanation is necessary. Trees are removed to improve the view, even though the view gained perspective and focus from its framing by trees.

Other trees are removed in public places "because they might fall on somebody," or they shade the roadway and delay the melting of winter ice. Seldom is there an apparent examination of the tree's health, evaluation of the direction of a potential fall, or consideration of the statistical probability of such an event at a moment when someone is nearby.

At the Arcadia Beach wayside, south of Cannon Beach, two very large old conifers were cut right down to the ground apparently with this rationale. A tree had fallen and killed a child in a state park somewhere and that was reason enough to chainsaw these two giants. Even the logs were removed, so that no sense of history or perpetuation of the forest through nursery logs would remain. Scrutiny of the rings showed no sign of disease. A more likely story is that the highway department, which is in charge of the waysides and is no respecter of trees, saw an opportunity for some quick bucks from logging two big old trees. After all, they're the same folks who use what I refer to as the "grim reaper" to trim back limbs, small trees and brush along what's supposed to be scenic Highway 101. That equipment leaves behind a display of tortured, ripped and shredded limbs, a sight to send an orchardist reeling.

So while I lay awake during the night, listening to wind whirring through big trees in Nehalem, I think these thoughts. I think of trees falling, examine the facts of the matter, and realize that in fact I've only heard a tree fall once, long ago, in a forest, at a distance. It was a unique experience, like hearing a cougar's cry for the first time—something you remember with gratification and respect, but may not want to repeat.

Victoria Stoppiello is a writer living in Ilwaco, at the lower left corner of Washington state.

We think in generalities, we live in detail.  
Alfred North Whitehead

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To hate and to fear is to be psychologically ill, it is, in fact, the consuming illness of our time. H. A. Overstreet