

A Case for Conservation



Alene N. Case

"I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree."

Thus begins the familiar poem "Trees" by Joyce Kilmer. Most of us memorized it as children because it was short and had easy rhymes. We tend to remember snatches of it occasionally, but do we know anything else about Joyce Kilmer? First, you may be surprised to discover that the poet was a man. In fact, he was killed in action in France during the First World War and decorated for valor. Kilmer was a journalist who worked for the *New York Times*; he wrote two volumes of poetry; and, he edited a marvelous collection called the *Anthology of Catholic Poets*. His wife, Aline, was also a poet. She outlived him by 23 years.

But, Joyce Kilmer may be best remembered for an action taken 18 years after his death - the setting aside of 3,800 acres of virgin forest as a memorial to a slain young man. During the early 1930's, there was a great flurry of activity to protect the remaining uncut acres of mixed forest in the Great Smoky Mountains before axes and saws had a chance to fell them. By happy coincidence, the Veterans of Foreign Wars were petitioning the U.S. government to "examine its millions of forested acres and set aside a fitting area of trees to stand for all time as a living memorial to a man who, though he lived only 31 years, rendered his country distinguished service through his genius and patriotism." The Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest in the mountains of North Carolina was dedicated in July, 1936.

Perhaps the best thing about this memorial is that it is so difficult to find. Even those of us who think we know western North



Author (right) visits Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest in the early '80's with her father, Philip Nordstrom, and two sons, Alex and Berit. (Photographer: Mike Case)

The Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest

Carolina begin to wonder whether or not we are lost or if we are really in Tennessee instead. Then, when one finally turns off of NC1127 onto Forest Service Road 416, the anticipation is palpable. A small parking and picnic area accom-

modates the few visitors who persevere. And, the perseverance is well worth it! I have been to this magnificent forest twice—once as a young girl with my parents and sister, and once (shown in the accompanying photo) with my own family and parents.

The forest is known as a virgin mixed forest. "Virgin" means that its trees have never been cut. And, "mixed" means that it has such a wide variety of species and types of trees that there is no one forest type which describes it. In layperson's language, it means that there are lots and lots of very large trees! There are huge tulip poplar, red oak, sycamore, beech, buckeye, hemlock and white pine. (No child can resist gathering the family around some huge giant to see

how many arms stretched wide are required to reach all the way around the tree.) There is a stream running through the forest. And, there is an elevation change of approximately 2,000 feet so that the forest includes plants adapted to

lowlands and highlands. Obviously, there is great diversity in small plants as well as

large.

On this Veterans Day, let us remember not only fallen soldiers but special memorials. The Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest can turn hardened foresters, who usually look at large trees and start calculating board feet, into poets. The words of Charles Newton Elliott illustrate my point: "Unbroken virgin forest; a land of hushed treed aisles; a dank, lush, green sun-dappled land; a land of woodland monarchs and tiny flowers, where one feels a close kinship with all living creatures, and a deeper understanding and appreciation of our creator. A living, magnificent memorial to a great man and a great lover of trees."

3,800 acres honor an American hero and poet

Library news

'Green Jar' campaign will offer snowblower

By NANCY KOZEMCHAK

The Back Mountain Memorial Library staff, friends and board members are very pleased with the response to the "Green Jar" campaign sponsored by the Friends of the Library. The next campaign will be for a 'Snow Blower', which will begin on November 9 and run until the end of December. Hopefully we will not have as much snow as last year, but surely enough to use a snow blower. It is a joy to watch patrons drop coins and bills into the green jar and, especially to see children beg parents for a few more coins to drop in the jar. Our friends and patrons are so supportive of their library and we thank them.

The library Book Club met in October with Marge McGivern presiding at the business meeting. Special guest was Alexander Zubko, grandson of Elda Oleson, who shared his lunch with the book club members. Membership to date is 213 with \$1,965

collected in dues for books on the Book Club shelf. The program was presented by members with show and tell items and interesting stories and announcements. Audrey Farr and Blanche Thompson presided at the tea table. The November meeting will be held on Monday, November 21 at 1:30 in the reference room. Guests are always welcome to attend the meeting.

New books at the library: "Brothers and Sisters" by Bebe Moore Campbell is a story that burns with the fire of real life. This novel is set in the white-hot center of racially troubled Los Angeles, still healing from the deep scars of riot, violence and suspicion. At the heart of the story is Esther Jackson, an African-American who has a promising career.

"What I Lived For" by Joyce Carol Oates is a masterpiece; a searing journey into the heart of a complex, troubled, and unforgettable man—and the women who

made the mistake of loving him. At 42, Jerome Corcoran - 'Corky' to his friends and associates - is by all appearances, a successful real estate developer and broker. His illusions will be shattered.

"Borderliners" by Peter Hoeg is set in the sealed-off world of an elite private school in Copenhagen in the 1970's. Peter, the narrator, has grown up in institutions and is given a last chance to join 'normal' society when he is accepted at Biehli's Academy. Of course, he is drawn to the school's outsiders: Katarina and August; with two different backgrounds.

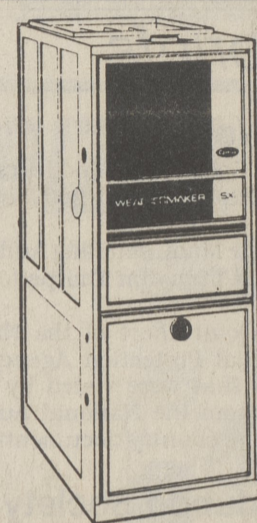
"Baba" by Belle Yang is a return to China upon my father's shoulders. Baba is 'Papa' in Chinese and this particular Baba is Joseph Yang, born in Manchuria in 1928. Belle set out to paint and write—and thereby to preserve for posterity—Baba's memories of his coming-of-age in northern China in the 1930s and 1940s. The result is a spellbinding odyssey.

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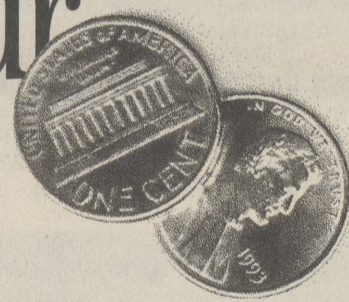
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