

OH, TO BE A TREE NOT A FENCEPOST!

Greeting Dear Ones and welcome to another Ponderance. I would like to start off by calling to your attention the photograph that is accompanying this article. It was taken by my lovely wife Lisa on a recent venture into the beautiful Ohio forest on a warm and sunny October afternoon. It was a magical day for us as we parked our kayaks on the stony shore of our favorite lake and set off to play amongst the trees. The leaves were golden and crunchy and the sun cast long shadows from the stand of trees that were preparing for a long winters nap. When she and I are in nature the call of Gaia to commune with her in a sacred way is too strong to ignore. We feel great peace and love coming from the Earth as we exist with her in oneness of spirit. Our divine mother speaks to us with love and peace and when the time is right she gives us messages often in metaphors so we may learn for ourselves and use our experiences to help others in our spiritual practices.

On this particular day the message was loud and clear and I could only stop and stare at this beautiful tree as the message poured into my awareness. I almost passed by without much thought of the scene before me. I grew up in the Ohio woods so such a site was common. Now let's observe the photo. Here we have an oak tree about thirty five years old or so. Running through the center of the trunk is a rusty old stretch of wire fence. From its position we can observe that the tree encountered the fence very early in its development. We can also imagine that in these earlier days the oak would have displayed an injury when it encountered the fence. At first there would have been noticeable damage to the bark of the young sapling followed by a period of scarring and healing. Maybe at the time, the growth of the tree was slowed while energy was diverted to overcome the damage. Oaks are slow growing so undoubtedly the process took several years until finally no trauma could be outwardly seen. The tree from this point on, appears to be healthy and strong in spite of its earlier struggle with the fence. One may even have wondered in those formative years if the oak would even survive the damage but obviously the strength and fortitude of this fine specimen assured that it would continue on to experience a long and healthy life.

So here we are some thirty or so years later. This lovely tree is tall and proud. We can see that it has indeed suffered and to this day we may observe that the fence at this point is but a memory of an event in the past. Its evidence lingers but the injury is healed. The oak thrives and if you think about it, the encounter with the wire is nothing more than a story in the past. It's no longer a story of the present and in the future it will continue to become less of an issue. Time may very well dissolve the wire and in a few decades all evidence of injury will be gone.

Now I stated earlier that I am often inspired by metaphors and I'm sure that most of you can see where I'm headed. For me the tree and its story reminds me of how we as humans use hurt and injury as part of *our* story. Everyone on the planet has suffered to greater or lesser degrees. We accept trauma and sometimes we give it. More than likely we trying to repair our own damage just like this oak tree but sometimes we are the intrusive wire fence. The point I would like to make most is in the observance of how we use injury. Yes, I said use.

With every injury to our mind, body, or spirit we are given a chance to grow. The energy of polarity allows us to use the event to grow stronger or grow weaker. It's totally our choice. This lovely tree could have stunted itself and died at a young age. Giving up all potential and becoming nothing more than a fence post. Instead it accepted its encounter with an adversary and now it may feel that it has overcome

the injury. Allowing it to be nothing more than a story of its past and a reason of how it showed its strength and fortitude. From the evidence one may see that the trees story of damage is the very thing that makes it unique in a forest of commons. I noticed its uniqueness right away and in the few moments I spent with it, it became my teacher to great wisdom. What a gift it is to be able to use its personal trial and tribulation to present me with this message of strength. Maybe the next time I'm faced with a difficult situation I'll remember the strength of this teacher and instead of stunting myself I will move forward to teach others. Maybe, just maybe if I teach from experience I can help prevent others from having to suffer similar trauma to themselves.

So now I'll ask you to contemplate the pain that you have suffered in your past. How have you used it? Do you hold onto it so you can retell the story as a victim or have you let it go and moved on? When our ego is out of balance we often feel that we need to use our story to receive sympathy. We often think that to be valid we must have the attention from others so we move into victimhood. We'll even go so far as to tell our story to strangers on a park bench and since they don't know our story we're free to make it as grand and dramatic as we like. I often observe that if one's past experience is particularly unique it becomes who they are. At this stage we oddly become our story instead of remaining a human being *with* a story. Someone may say to others, "I'm a trauma survivor". To the observer this person's story will be known right away. But how is the story used from this point on? Do we impede our growth and use it to garner sympathy or do we see it as an experience that propels us forward into our true power and wisdom? From the latter perhaps we could say, "I survived trauma and now I have a story that may help and inspire others". And here's another point I would like to make. Perhaps most often we really don't have to tell our story. Perhaps we stand tall and continue to grow and when someone walks by and observes us they will receive inspiration from how we have taken a painful experience and turned it into a chance to move forward with greater strength. I'm not suggesting that we become a martyr from our struggles though. Martyrdom, in reality, is simply an ego out of balance that seeks attention for itself. It says, "Look at me and pity me. See how I silently carry a great burden for the benefit of others". From my perspective that view is a stunting of ones growth and not a means of moving forward.

Now, it doesn't have to be trauma that causes us to become our story. It's interesting to observe how the ego tends to have the need to give itself an identity through titles and statuses. For instance, there are many times when we are asked, "So... what are you"? And our response is, "Well, I'm a doctor", or truck driver or teacher. This is just a simple example of how we have become our story. How about saying instead, "I'm Bob and I drive a truck". In this example we can see that Bob is more apt to see himself as a person who is using his story to describe an activity in his life instead of allowing his ego to label himself *as* his story. See the difference here?

The long and short of it all is that ultimately there is no right or wrong on how we should use our story. In fact there shouldn't be any judgement at all. We have free will to do as we please and that includes the prerogative to use of story any way we like. After all, it is *our* story! But just as the mighty oak has done, perhaps we can use our pain and trauma as a way to heal and grow stronger so others can be inspired to new heights of their own. From my perspective it seems like a wonderful gift to give to another when you inspire them to become a strong and healthy tree and not a fence post.

Stand tall my friends and thanks for reading!