

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/7/2024 9:36:19 PM

First name: Julie

Last name: Hudson

Organization:

Title:

Comments:

-Tree of Life-

Birth certificate. Crib. Baby wipes. Cereal box. Crayon box. Coloring book. Report card.

Judy Blume book. Junior Mints box. Diary. Magazine. Tampon box. High school diploma. Dollar bills.

Newspaper. Microwave popcorn bag. College diploma. Checkbook. Paycheck. Journal.

Marriage license. Mortgage papers. Wine box. Grocery list. Junk mail. Coffee table.

Library books. Insurance papers. Birthday card. Coffin. Death certificate.

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Honestly, what ARE trees? That is what I wondered as a child.

I grew up in suburbia with a church on every corner, near a towering, fantastical willow tree on a church parking lot. Children swung like monkeys from the drooping vines. Older kids hoisted the smaller kids up to give them a bird's eye view of our fence-less neighborhood.

In the summer, teenagers' legs dangled in pairs from the higher parts, faces hidden by the willow's boughs.

In the spring, winter and fall, those willow vines danced and flew in wet, stormy weather.

I rode my bike through that parking lot every weekend and Wednesday night when my dad had custody of us. I just rode past, feeling odd, wanting to stop and spend time with that tree; sit at its base; marvel at its thick trunk, delicate vines and immense presence. But what if someone saw me just sitting there, doing nothing? Everyone was busy with dinner, chores, television or yard work.

Would they think I was weird that I liked being with a tree; alone, loving it?

I always just rode past.

Now it's just a parking lot. Two or three SUVs could fit where it once was. Maybe more. But I never stopped to spend time together.

So now I have my own house in the same hometown. I have a gorgeous 100-year old maple in my front yard and an equally gigantic maple in my neighbor's backyard. His name is Charlie.

One day I was sunbathing and Charlie said he had to pray that he never fell on me and hurt me.

Charlie usually never speaks to me directly. I thought maybe I was sun-stroked. But I just replied in my mind, "Oh, Charlie, that will never happen."

As I came into the house shortly after, I heard the tv report in a local newscast that the night before, a girl and her father had gone on a camping trip in Wisconsin. A tree limb had fallen on their tent, killing the little girl. I was astounded. I live in Illinois. South of Chicago.

We really don't know what trees are, what their names are, or what they do for the planet. All we know is how to cut them down, sell them and use them. But we need more of them to protect the air, water, wildlife and our own sense of divinity and wonder.

Please protect these old-growth, irreplaceable treasures across our nation. We have little idea of all the good they do and they have no voice for themselves.

I recently found out that I'm 1/16th native American. Maybe that's why I have such a love and devotion for trees. I'm going to do whatever I can to save them. I pray you will too. Thank you for reading.