



“Musing from the Hill” by Susan Crossett

as seen on the *Dunkirk Observer* on Fridays
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Watching the Maples

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He's become an erstwhile partner and revered friend and the best travel companion I'd ever encountered. The memories piled up as high as the photographs from our trips to Maine and thereabouts and then the cruise to Alaska with stops in Washington along the way.

Unbelievably easy to get along with (and, for me, that's saying a lot), we've enjoyed friends, concerts, and many, many particularly good meals. I have enjoyed cooking for him and discovered he was an excellent cook in his own right. Besides, we both appreciate the luxury of eating out when someone else did the work . . . and cleaning up.

The one aspect of our friendship that may well live the longest is the five maple trees we planted. All right, “we” is unfair. I'm no good at all at digging holes but I could locate the trees – and knew where I wanted them to go.

Just north of what I've always referred to as the Flying Saucer Spot (because way back then, on the only time I explored that part of the property, we saw what seemed to be a perfect circle in the open area. It is pretty much inaccessible and can't even be seen from road or anywhere else on the property). I have not checked again – in decades.

But just north of that there was (well, is – pretty much still) is a string of tall straggly trees. I've never even bothered to see what kind they were. One fell over a few years back which led me to believe the future for the others wasn't all that secure.

Right beside the “barn” there is now one huge maple tree. I remember when it was a foot or two high and worth the debate whether to keep it or not. Why not? The thinking went then. Well, that “Why not?” towers over everything now. It's lovely in the fall and seems OK so it stays. As if I have a choice. As long as it stays healthy and well.

But that example is what made me think that more maples would grow as quickly and as happily. Maybe. Maybe not.



I picked the area (yup. Back to those straggly trees) and was with him as he dug up the seedlings (otherwise to be destroyed as weeds) and planted them in the row below.

All have been staked (many marked with old “Happy Birthday” green ribbon”) and landspeople are warned not to mow them down. They are just far enough off the mowers' path to be safe if one knows where to look. So far, it's all worked well.

Most often when I walk down to the road (good for health, dog and my well-being) I will circle around to check on the trees. One does have to look carefully to see them at all. (Was the one by the barn that small while getting a toehold? I'm sure I didn't notice – or remember. It was just there, minding its own business, and that was fine with me.)

These five are different – for me. I check frequently and measure once a year. It's around the time I should be doing my tree “census” – the month when I get out to measure all “important” trees and bushes. (I think I've fallen behind on that too this year.)

But not the maples. I'll go down, at least a couple times every year, trim away the grasses around them so there is no excuse for not observing them, and then measure.

I just did it this year – second time with a camera as well.

I'm still waiting for time to put all the information together. “all”? Well, there isn't that much but I know some seem to have shrunk. Does that make any sense at all?

How difficult can it be to compare a 2020 tree with the same one a year later?

I have lovely days ahead to check again . . . and again, as I must.

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