

Get Ready for Northness

Around the second or third weekend of August, I usually start looking forward to a visit from an old friend and game-changer –northness. Northness is a term Rodney Nelson, Christine ND. poet, and I agreed on back in the late 60's when a visit to his dad's hobby farm near Pelican Rapids, Mn. blessed us both with an over-night swing in temperatures from the sweaty high 80's to the refreshing mid-50's. We were out at dawn walking along the marge of a lovely natural pond on the western border of "Trudvang," (Rodney's name for the property), taking deep Zen breaths, inhaling the morning. Then we remarked almost in unison, "Feel that? It's northness."

Northness is a climate change I've noticed ever since I was a teen with a mind full of visions of hunting season coming on. Now at 85 my northness still makes its entrance, but much more stealthily. Its first signs are the exodus of the town's grackles and the growing numbers of mourning doves searching the roadside edges for true grit. That change used to inspire Warren and I to start reloading low-based #8's, our standard load for the great dove shoots we used to have down in the dry bed of the Boise de Sioux in early September.

Concurrently, on TV, comes the annual notice of the Perseid Meteor Shower, the fast, streak-leaving kinds, and in the garden, the August bounty of tomatoes, squash and cucumbers pulls the loafing retiree away from his couch and out for an early taste of Shakespeare's "teaming autumn/ Rich with big increase."

This year's northness moment came early, on Aug. 12,th when a visit to our garden on an early morning, wet with heavy dew, I filled a bucket with zucchini and ripe tomatoes. But there was something in the air far different than the swelter and smoke I had been used to enduring.

Then it hit me – northness. It’s time to get out fishing, and at ten that morning I inched my way down to a pier on the Red and began to feel the old wet magic of good fishing coming on. In that hour on the pier I was treated to good battles with drum, catfish and small mouth bass. I took one fish down to the new cleaning station at the Kidder Rec. Area and came home happy as a carp drunk on dough balls: fresh fish for dinner, goody!

Looking back on it all, I was reminded of how blessed we are up here in the Dakotas to experience the change of the seasons – a welcome hope-bringing change the folks in LA or Miami take no notice of except in hurricane season or the season of the Santa Anna winds that fan California’s wild fires.

The change of season should remind the Christian that “For every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under Heaven.” If your prayers are not being answered fast enough, keep in mind that God’s timing is always perfect: never early, but also never late. He always acts “In the fullness of time.”

So for you couch potatoes, hooked on “As The Stomach Turns, or “The Hung and the Breastless,” or “General Horse Piddle,” it’s time to drag your “soggy bottoms” off your Archie Bunker rocker and get out there onto the fields of action. One might visit a shut-in, help a neighbor, take a leisurely nature walk, or even better, ask God to put you in the right place at the right time, where you can do somebody some good. God usually answers that prayer in no time. Expect that “something good is going to happen to you.”

More often than not, it will. 23-08-14- (G. Pinkney/ for the Daily News)