

***Rock of Sages***  
*Presented by the Worship Committee*  
*October 25, 2015*  
*Allen Avenue Unitarian Universalist Church*

POEM

Visiting the Rock

by Erica Bartlett

It is one of the bones of the earth,  
this stone,  
resting quiet and unassuming  
in the dappled forest light.  
I wonder  
how long it has been here,  
how long will it remain?  
I rest a hand  
on its cool, pebbly skin,  
and its silent strength  
seeps into me,  
grounding and settling,  
giving me its greater perspective  
of time, triumph, and tragedy.  
I do not know  
how much it has weathered,  
only that it has seen much.  
In my new sense of calm,  
I feel how the rock  
connects me  
to everything else,  
one bone among many,  
linking me piece by piece  
to the past,  
present,  
and unseen future.  
I lean on it,  
draw comfort  
from its stability,  
knowing it can carry  
whatever burdens I might leave,  
remaining still,  
quiet and unassuming,  
simply here  
whenever I need support  
and a moment of peace.

EXCERPT

The Man Who Walked Through Time

Colin Fletcher

John Howard

A year ago I hiked the Grand Canyon with some cousins and other family members, and this is how I was introduced to the author and back-packer Colin Fletcher, who wrote about his experiences in the Grand Canyon in the book [The Man Who Walked Through Time](#).

When Henry David Thoreau left the busy civilized world to live at Walden Pond, it was in order to reset his internal clock to keep time with nature, paying attention to the slow movement of sunlight and the cycle of seasons. When Colin Fletcher decided to hike the Grand Canyon west to east, his goal was even more ambitious. He wanted to slow himself down so much that he could feel the story that the Canyon rocks tell of deep time. This is resetting

the internal clock in a really big way. For example, standing on the rim and looking down, you might wonder if there are dinosaur bones down there – only to find out that the dinosaur layers would be above you and they've all been eroded away.

The excerpt I've picked begins when Colin has been struggling to leave behind the mental games and logistics of wilderness back-packing and he's finally gotten to a break-through moment.

What was Colin Fletcher looking for in this story the rocks tell? What are we looking for when we visit our own rock or spend time in nature? I believe we do it because we are being called. There is something like a presence or Personality in nature that wants to be in relationship with us. Even in the Grand Canyon, which can be a very dangerous place for humans, there is something tender and intimate. We respond to this as if to an invitation, a very personal message that whispers "this is your story, too; this is your home."

POEM (1)

When Boulders Danced

Keith Prairie

Great old slab of rock,  
Aging gracefully through time,  
Older than the glaciers,

Weathering is my timeline.  
The sun, the moon, freezing, thawing,  
Rain washes down taking particles.  
Frozen water splitting my face, my only reproduction.

My birth was millennia ago,  
When Earth's plates crashed and mountains danced.

Now I sit patiently as moisture, momentum,  
mycelium, roots and millennia work at me.

And you human sit on my back  
watching your fleeting shadow,  
Asking "what's important?"

You make no difference to me,  
I am millions of years and you only seconds.

There is no wisdom I can give to you.

"Can you begin to understand?"

REFLECTION (3)

McLean and Mom

Leslie McConnell

My sister and I grew up in a small house in Connecticut surrounded by woods that abutted a special place called McLeans Game Refuge. McLeans Game Refuge is 4,400 acres of forest, ponds and streams that was bought and donated by a state senator named George McLean in 1932. In his will he said, "I want the game refuge to be a place where some of the things God made may be seen by those who love them, as I loved them, and who may find in them the peace of mind and body that I have found."

I also grew up with a mother who was, among many other things, a biology teacher and a self-taught naturalist. We grew up in a time when our only directive on many days was, "Go outside and play." We took to the woods. We spent hours amongst the trees with the other neighborhood kids – exploring, walking and finding new things. One of our favorite games was to search for a really rotten log and turn it over. We'd be crouched in the leaves– my sister Sharon and me - joined by several other neighborhood kids. We could smell the soft decay of the wood, as someone was elected to be the one to actually push the log over. We'd hold our breath as the log tipped. Under a good one there would be lots of movement as the underneath was exposed to the light. Slithering worms, little centipedes with lots of legs and maybe even an orange and black salamander startled by having several chil-

dren staring down at him. If we found something we'd never seen before, I would scoop it up and keep it clasped firmly in my hand until we got home. Sometimes it would be a bug, sometimes a piece of fungus, or maybe a new plant.

"Mom, what is it?" was probably one of the most frequently asked questions in my house. And no matter what she was doing, my mother would reply, "Go get Palmer's." One of us would run and pull her much used copy of A Field Guide to Natural History by E. Laurence Palmer off the shelf. We would crowd around as we tried to help identify what kind of fern, mushroom, rock or caterpillar we had brought home. My mother had a reverence for the natural world that she passed on to us as she helped us learn what was around us in our wooded playground. She didn't go to a UU church, but lived our 7th principle - respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

My mother died at a much too young age while she was still teaching high school biology. I was invited into her classroom by her colleagues to see if there were any of her teaching materials that I would like to have for my own classroom. I took several things but the one that meant the most to me was poster that she had had hanging in her room since the day she began teaching in the early 70s. Here it is: "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea nor the trees." The 7th principle written in slightly different words.

When I came to Allen Avenue about 25 years ago and was first introduced to Unitarian Universalism, I especially knew I had found the right place when I was connected with people who also had a reverence for the natural world and talked about walking with care on this earth. I haven't spent much time with the rock out back. For me, it's not just about one rock. It's about all the rocks, and the logs, and the creatures under them and the children looking in awe at those creatures. If our church can continue to mirror the work of George McClean - both preserving a piece of the natural world and providing a spot where people can find peace - we will have done a good thing.