Imortality at Seventy-five

for Merlyn E. Mowrey, Ph.D.

Yesterday I noticed that my Japanese maple, out by the front gate near an old hemlock, is not leafing with its natural vigor, and its rear branches are dying. I like it there with a night light on it. I’ll mulch around its roots, work in some fertilizer, prune back the hemlock, water over summer.

Most mornings my wife and I walk our black Labrador three miles through this wooded town. Not all is right around here, there are trees and shrubs struggling where they don’t belong. But I like living here. I like landscaping these two acres. I’m grateful for this season of reborn senses. For the wrong turns that led me here, I’m also grateful.

This red barn’s an image of my grandfather’s larger one. This shrug came from my father. I like the idea of passing on more than chromosomes. I like the idea of leaving bits of heaven for the next guy. I like the idea of leaving bites of myself in poems.

I like going to the post office, too. Still . . . Why is it, five days out of six, I’m so disappointed with the mail?

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