

OUR ULMUS

By L.A. Wild

DAY 26

You are our Ulmus americana.

More statuesque than even Ceres atop the State House;
you are taller than any house on Court Street.

Soon spring's blue sky will reach down
to bathe your fresh, feathery soft green leaves in its growing warmth.
As we make our ways to the Farmers' Market,
you will begin to drape your cooling shadow
over our feet, hair, shoulders, a welcome cover in warm weather.
Your ever larger shade has returned every spring . . . since 1850?

American Elm, elegant survivor, are you lonely?
Do you remember your buds who used to live around the corner?
They so graced downtown Main and Elm Streets;
from Court all the way to the farm that is now the Nature Center.

In springs past, thousands of upstretched branches with *their* soft, green leaves
touched the blue sky, as they swayed in the breeze.

Their shadows *drenched* the feet and shoulders of young children as
they played hard, in love with summer.

In June in the 1950's, elm branches reached from one side of the street towards
the other, some touching in the middle, a sylvan internet of trees, birds, bees,
butterflies, and all kinds of bugs. Idyllic to look in the rearview mirror and now
yearn for those bugs, and most especially, those elms.

A disease began to sicken our elms.

As it began, did you sense the signals of distress from elms around the corner?
Could you know the passing of your family down the block?

Did you feel the vibrations of saws, when they cut down still healthy trees?

How do you survive? A miracle of geographic immunity? A miracle pure & simple?

When I pass your way, I reach out to you,
To study and enjoy the texture of your lovely aged bark
To check the little shelter that formed at the base of your trunk,
a sometimes home to skittles bags, creatures, a black walnut from up the road.

To look way up – I see your branches halfway or more across Court Street,
I want to see if we can tell each other something good today;
I want to not . . . just . . . pass . . . you . . . by.

So many people walk by you each day.
As if they do not see you.
Students, legislators, lobbyists, heads down, faces to phones,
all seem too busy to look up to you.
Unaware that your miracle continues to this day.

Your miracle overwhelms me with joy, such that
when someone else walks near,
I must stop them, or shout out across the street,
tell them about you, then and there.
I see them look at you; recognize you for the gift you are,
Something . . . very . . . good . . . today