

Dear Aldo Leopold,

In “Good Oak” you said, “There are two spiritual dangers in not owning a farm. One is the danger of supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery, and the other that heat comes from the furnace.” We have become disconnected from the animals and land that nurture us. Economics control our view of the world. We rely on supply and demand, but we never think about how our resources will be affected by our needs and desires.

You described your tree in “Good Oak” as a witness to changes in the land. Not only was it lucky to survive the rabbits and other obstacles, but it stood long enough to see eighty years of change – and not only minor events, but permanent changes to the land. We are all part of a cycle, and that cycle cannot continue without the balance of man, land, and animal coexisting in harmony.

On a recent camping trip to Snow Lake, I stepped out of the tent and was greeted by an amazing view. The hills, covered in yellow grass, flowers and pine trees, rolled behind the lake. They cast their dazzling reflection on the water. The ducks left “V’s” behind them as they swam across the lake. Fish jumped in little arches catching bugs. In that moment, I felt a connection to the land. I knew it was important then, but after reading “Thinking Like a Mountain,” I understand the true importance of that view.

Your land ethic is important today because I can’t imagine a shopping mall replacing Snow Lake. To preserve our resources, we need to think ecologically instead of economically. Making the land our priority will protect it from further destruction. If we don’t conserve what we have now, there will be nothing left in the future.

Sincerely,

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First Place Award: Grade 6 - 7 Category