

About Trees: Blooming dogwood conjures memories

By Fred Morgan

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After more than six decades now of welcoming the return of spring and flowering trees, you'd think it would become old hat, but somehow it doesn't. Not even when it's a halting start-and-stop kind of coming.

This year the pears were among the first bloomers, and not surprisingly, they quickly got zapped with one more of those famous Memphis cold snaps. After that, they just sort of staggered into spring with flowers that looked more like limp dishrags.

Then came the crabapples and the cherries. Both of those made a much better showing and offered a bit more assurance that spring was really going to get here after all. And now, last but surely not least, here come the dogwoods and the azaleas. They are wonderful; glorious.

We have a dogwood outside our kitchen window that is not only glorious but one I call a virtual miracle. This year it's 23 years old and when it was an infant, just 1 or 2, it nearly lost its life. It was wintertime and snow was on the ground that year for a day or so. Our three girls were playing outside. For reasons still unknown, our then-10-year-old middle daughter bent over and broke off part of what she took to be a stick poking out of the ground. As she did, my wife screamed out to her through the plate glass window. "Stop, don't break that! It's a dogwood!" But it was too late, as Kim held up the now-pathetic bare stick in her hand and stared at it as though to say, "What? This?"

But a piece of it somehow remained, and now that survivor towers up almost 30 feet in the air and seems to continue thriving on what was certainly far less than a propitious start.

Now and for some time, we have called it our kitchen dogwood. A few years later a carefully selected adolescent part of it even became a handsome walking stick with the title "cocina cornus" burned into its debarked and polyurethaned surface along with the year and ages of our girls at the time. Now every time I pick up that old friend or look at it there in its corner, I am reminded again of that tree, of that scene, and of our good history here under its shady canopy.

Aside from the practical stuff, the cooling, the shade benefits and beauty, maybe the

curb appeal and enhanced resale value, this is just another reason that we love our trees, maybe even the best reason to appreciate them. They can often be the focal point of memories and history, representing our lives to us. No wonder then, that we can sometimes think of them as part of the family.

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