

Wilderness House Literary Review 4/3

Kristen Lodge
Searching for Rocks

I spend hours walking my dogs along the trails searching for rocks to line the walkway in front of my house. This new project has presented a few problems. The initial goal was to bring one rock back to the house during each walk. The rocks would symbolize all the hikes I take; each time I walk into my house I would remember each walk.

As I walk the dogs, my head is down looking for the perfect coloring and shape. As it turns out, I find too many “perfect rocks” and try to carry them all back in pockets. I put them in coat pockets, pants pockets, and carry one in each hand. All while trying to handle two rambunctious dogs on a leash; one a German Sheppard mix and one a yellow lab. They are not the easiest to walk without rocks in hand. They love every smell and want to chase squirrels; it’s a constant tug of war with them. By the time I get home from each of these walks I feel pulled, weighed down, and frustrated. Not exactly the way I want to feel at the end of the day.

But most days when I can let the dogs off leash to look for rocks, I think about my grandmother. I’ve been thinking of her a lot lately. I’ve been thinking about her and all the summer vacations my family spend together with her. In my youth, we only saw my parent’s family for two weeks each summer growing up. We drove south on the interstate from upstate New York to just outside of Philadelphia. Our first stop - my grandmother’s house; the house where my dad grew up. Once we were off the highway and driving in the tree-filled suburban landscape, my siblings and I start practicing kissing by grabbing the headrests in front of us and start kissing it. We knew as soon as we pulled up to the house, my grandmother would run out of her house and hug and kiss us – we needed to be ready.

After a few days in Pennsylvania we all drove to the Jersey Shore. We rented the same small house three blocks from the ocean in a town called Ocean City. My grandmother would swim in the ocean with us, taught us how to duck under waves, pulled us on rafts into the deep, and in the evening would ride every amusement park ride. No - was not part of her vocabulary. She did everything with us.

All of these memories of her run through my mind as I’m hiking with the dogs on the mountain looking for that perfect rock with a bluish swirl and cut in a perfect square from erosion. I remember how my grandmother and I searched for perfect seashell on the sandy, beaches of Ocean City every day for a week in July.

She lavished us with love and hugs and kisses and presents; and created lasting memories for us all. I remember her while swimming, looking for rocks, and when I see little kids running to their grandmother for a big hug and kiss.