

A short reflection of fall

By Lawrence Tân JJR 69

Ever since I settled in Virginia in 1975, I had chances to travel to a number of places around the country and overseas. Except the one and a half year I worked in Southern California and another equally long period I worked in Saudi Arabia, I have spent much shorter times in a number of other States and visited other places such as Canada, Europe and Southeast Asia. However, Virginia has always been my home. Anywhere else, I would feel like a stranger. Of course, I once had another place called home, but now it seems like it only exists in my dreams.

In the earlier years when I used to travel, each time coming home to Virginia, as the plane approached Dulles Airport, from the air, it was such a wonderful feeling to see the ominous color of green covering the ground all over. The warm feeling of homecoming sets in while I was driving through the hilly and winding roads both sides of which are mostly populated by all kinds of trees including pines and evergreen. The State and the Fairfax County in particular we live in have done an excellent job in preserving the natural environment. I just love Virginia. After all, I spend more than half of my life here where I raised all my kids and watched them blossomed.



Virginia is located in a very special spot. After living here for so many years, I have noticed that harsh snowstorms normally devastated further north; further south is always under the menace of the hurricanes every year. Every now and then, we get the tail ends of things but never have to confront the brunt of both kinds of extreme weathers.

I had friends that used to live in New York and eventually some of them migrated over to the West Coast due to the harsh winter up there. I guess we are the lucky ones who settled in Virginia. Virginia is for Lovers. In Virginia, you would experience the taste of the four seasons. However, spring and fall are rather short, from just a few weeks to sometimes a few days! But I always have something to look forward to. The humidity in the summer is sometimes unbearable. But we have Ocean City and Virginia Beach there, just a few hours away. When the kids were younger, we used to drive up to Valleyfield, Canada every winter and spent our X'mas up there. The Hua live in that tiny francophone town where people speak Quebecquois. It takes about 45 minutes from there to Montreal. Our friend Huy worked for GoodYear Valleyfield since he graduated from college up there in the early 1970s. They used to drive down here in the summertime and we took all the kids to Ocean City for a few days, every

year, like a ritual, because that's what the kids wanted to do. Besides the crab feasts, the ocean, the kids loved to go to those mini-golf parks across the street from the boardwalk. Every now and then we could arrange to take an additional trip to the West Coast or overseas.

One year, we took them to Whistler to ski. The scenery of the mountain there was nothing short of spectacular. We don't ski, but we tried to take the kids to ski every year until the last two years. The ride up to the Blackcomb on the lift to its chalet (about 6000 feet?) is about twenty minutes; total silence. I have never experienced silence the way it was there. I felt its thick presence actually wrapped around me. My kids are fortunate compared to myself, they have been to places I did not even know nor dreamt of at their ages.

But the fall is for me, every year I wait for it to come patiently. I don't remember since when I started to fall in love with it. I embrace the pace of things in the fall. Fall is like a Sonata, it goes deep and slow enough for me to have time to sink in, to fall in love again, versus a Concerto where every note is strong, clear and forward like the crashes of the oncoming waves and laced with some staccato notes just to accent the space and time. Fall is my color. The beautiful colors of the leaves in the Shenandoah, which run from gold to red to brown with a multitude of hues in between, have inspired a lot of gazers and photographers every year. I have to admit I had been up there only once, a long time ago. We have plenty of magnificent colors



around here too in our local areas. During fall, the morning is chilly enough for a light sweater, or at times, it is comfortable enough for me to brave the wind with open windows while driving to work in the morning.

Fall reminds me so much of Dalat. I believe I was there with my mom perhaps just for a few months during a sad and turbulent time of my family. I was seven years old; I still recall clearly my heart was with my grandmother in Saigon. I was never happy, no matter how hard my mom tried. I think I broke her heart.

Before we know it, Halloween is around the corner, then Thanksgivings and Christmas, the whole works, the Holiday Seasons. The weather is cold but everybody is warm at heart preparing for the Holiday Seasons. Perhaps, the pace of fall is the pace of my heart

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