



Midwest Minute- The Lone Spruce

It may have been a mature blue spruce, but it wasn't, at least in my opinion, the nicest looking tree as it had long been robbed of soil moisture by encroaching maples and caragana.

As we stood together in the old farmyard looking at it, I wondered why she suddenly had tears in her eyes. I had been asked to meet at the family homestead to provide a value on two quarters of farmland she was considering listing for sale.

She had driven out that morning from her home in a city two hours away.

My client broke the silence by quietly telling me she had brought the seedling home from school one Arbor Day in Grade Two and with the assistance of her older sister, proudly planted it where the driveway entered the house yard. She had faithfully watered it through the hot, dry summers of her childhood and kept competing grass at bay.

Her sister was gone now; taken too young by cancer. Dad had passed years before, but Mom had lived into her mid-90s although senile dementia had stolen her mind in the last decade. She felt guilty at being the one who would let the land go as it had been in her family for over 100 years but deep down, she knew it was time.

The house had been sold years before to a young couple and relocated to a yardsite twenty miles away. Those outbuildings that were still on site were barely standing, home to pigeons, owls, and skunks. All these years she had refused to cancel the power supply, as it would have meant the yard would have gone dark.

In my experience, the two most emotional properties for people to sell is the family cabin at the lake and the home quarter. Both are packed full of memories; most good, some sad.

So, I asked if she, her children, and grandchildren liked to camp? The look I received back was first one of annoyance, then questioning. I told her of the three families in my district who had subdivided off their home yards and turned the resulting acreage into a family retreat.

The stories shared around the campfire on summer nights with visiting friends and neighbours ensured the young ones would know their heritage.

They too could explore the magical habitat of a shelter belt and adjacent sloughs, building tree houses and rafts.

It provided all with a refuge in a challenging world and keep the family connected to their roots.

As we walked toward our vehicles, she asked me to email her the name of a good surveyor.