

Solstice, June 21, 2007

GA posting by L. Peterson

The Potomac River region began its summer relation with the Sun in the mid-afternoon. We were grateful for the normal temperatures in the mid-80s F, after a series of unseasonably hot and humid days in the 90s F. The heat index on June 19 was 100 F.

On Summer Solstice my custom is to go down to the Potomac River and greet the Sun. I usually sit by the river and observe life, and think of friends greeting summer in convivial ways in the North Land (Kichisipi-Ottawa River region) and in the South Land across the continent of Turtle Island.

This year I did something different. I went up above the Potomac River to one of its ancestral terraces, at 300 feet, in northwest Washington and took an elevator to the seventh floor Observatory Gallery in a bell tower of the National Cathedral. Here you can enjoy bird's eye perspectives of the city, the surrounding counties in Maryland and Virginia, and the well-treed land.

There are views of five-story apartments and houses enfolded among the foliage of tall trees; and you see green tree crowns covering the land in what seem like endless expanses of forest. This has inspired residents and visitors to call Washington a "City in the Woods" and a "City of Trees".

I went up to the Cathedral's Observatory Gallery for a current and on-going project to make photographic images of this rolling Piedmont land of trees and stream valleys, above and along the fall line to the Anacostia ~ Potomac River floodplains. Monumental Washington and its national museums, and the downtown dwellings and offices were built on the lower terraces at about 25 feet above sea level to 10 feet on the alluvial floodplains.

A good number of fellow residents and their visiting family members or friends had also come up to this high Cathedral perch to enjoy the views. I didn't hear anyone comment on the impressive Oaks, Tulip Trees and Beeches, growing to heights of eighty to ninety and more than one hundred feet. People were pointing to the Watergate building, and the Kennedy Center along the Potomac River, and to the white dome of the Jefferson Memorial and to the Washington Monument spiking up into the sky. This is what most visitors come to see in the Capital City.

Some, though, were probably seeing in quiet ways the street and park trees of the city, and the native forests of the land that continue to inhabit preserved stream valleys, such as Glover-Archbold Park near the National Cathedral. Fellow viewers, who didn't notice the venerable trees and forests, might see these tall and expansive plant residents later, in their digital pictures and videos. Maybe then they will see with deep appreciation the natural wonders of this place in and among the trees of the mid-Potomac River region.

Best wishes for summer and for winter in the Southern Latitudes.

Lorne Peterson
Spring Branch valley
Eastern Piedmont Hills
mid-Potomac River region