



Writing Sample - Dana Kester-McCabe

Navigating Winter's Tide

Published on DelmarvaAlmanac.com - February 2011

I started to write this column with my usual process: a look through photographs I have taken in recent weeks and past images collected during this season. I am always in awe of the beauty of our peninsula. As I looked through my pictures, I thought I would write about the elegant abstract designs created by the weather this time of year. However, I found myself drawn to those pictures which show the raw destructive power of winter on our landscape.

Perhaps I was pulled there because nagging at me was a need not to disconnect from what is happening around the world in Egypt, which has been much on my mind. In Cairo's Tahrir Square people are taking to the street to demand democratic reform. They have met with harsh violent objections from the ruling regime. The conflict feels like a bitter winter wind coursing through the souls of the Egyptians and all who are following the events in the news. I am trying to think about what we here on the Eastern Shore have in common with the people there.

A quick look at the map reminded me that we are both people who live close to the shorelines. For us it is the Chesapeake, the Delaware, and the Atlantic. For Egypt it is the Nile, the Red Sea, Suez Canal, Mediterranean, and of course the surrounding deserts which are referred to as great "land seas." Though their climate is very different, their estuaries have gulls, herons, and other shore birds, like ours. And, like us, much of Egypt is a rural economy.

Next I went to a local history book to see if there were any similarities to our own revolutionary period. It was not an in depth study. But it was clear from my reading that locals here were torn between their desire for freedom and the responsibilities of family and home. The war was not just fought with our oppressors; it was fought with neighbors, and the challenges of everyday life. Men were conscripted by both sides. They fought the enemy and the urge to desert to return to their homes and loved ones who needed them.*

These are the things Egyptians now choose between: the fight for freedom or a seemingly safe but unsustainable dictatorship. Along our own shorelines, we have a lot to be grateful for. History shows that eventually such terrible times eventually give way to a better future, once civil society and the rule of just accountable laws are established.

Freedom is a tide that rises and falls with the struggles of those who seek it. Today my prayer is for those shores where courage and hope keep people afloat as they navigate the currents of change. May peaceful remedies be found for their political turmoil and may they find within themselves and each other that noble destination: democracy.

*In the depth of winter, I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer.
- Albert Camus*