

The Big Rock

The ‘habit’ started when I was three in back of Warm’s Hotel—in the Catskills, Greene County, NY, the land of Rip Van Winkle. It was when my two oldest sisters walked my third sister and me across a continent of green to the ‘Big Rock’ at the creek.

The grass stretched all around; I could see a tennis court a Model T Ford, but mainly just green grass—tufts of it—and farther away—is *that* where we were heading?—a belt of trees: leafy, some of them crooked, branches spreading.

When we arrived at those trees (the crooked ones were apple) it was cool, shady, and the sound of rushing water—a burble—beyond rocks little and large leading to the sparkles and gleams darting and ricocheting off the surface of the stream.

Holding sway over all of this was—The Big Rock: a huge (to a three-year-old) boulder shouldering out to the deluge inviting us and a slew of other kids (also from the hotel) to climb on, sit down, listen, dream or just play and raise hell.

Standing up on that Rock I could see ten meters upstream maybe fifteen down, watch the flow from above build up steam sluice round the rock under my feet and hurtle into shade of which, when I was three, I was—I’ll admit it—afraid.

But the glory of it, the adventure, the lure to explore to go beyond those upper limits, downstream even more all the time knowing (this allowed me to be a bit cocky) that my sisters and friends were on tap at the Big Rock.

For years we returned to the Warms and their hotel (in old country style, their call to dinner was a clanging bell) and before we’d unpacked or otherwise taken stock I’d make my habitual mad dash down to the Big Rock.

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