

MARK'S REMARKS

Several months ago I wrote about Buster. Remember him? A Black Lab that served as my companion for many years as I worked and played as a young boy under these gorgeous Iowa skies. Well, there was another that shared the farm with Buster. His name was Tyrone, a large, agile, and spirited farm cat. I hesitate to write about a cat, yet ever since Buster received the headlines, Tyrone has been catlike in scratching for his own 'front-page' article. So, under duress and the constant stare of the late, great Tyrone, I will attempt to please a cat, if that is even possible.

To begin, I am not even sure how Tyrone ended up on the farm. I believe he was a gift from my brother's girlfriend. How, where and why are questions I cannot answer. However, Tyrone etched his personality forever in our minds and found himself scattered throughout the family photo albums. I don't recall playing with Tyrone. One doesn't play with a cat like one does with a dog. I think it is because with a dog, you know he relishes the affectionate attention. With a cat, it seems more like borrowed time. Somehow a cat communicates, 'here is your window of opportunity to be adorned with *my* presence.' And Tyrone did spend time with us. He wouldn't like this comment but he was more like a dog than a cat. He would check cattle with us, strolling along the top fence board supervising our work. He would often run in the feed bunks ahead of the feeder wagon. I can see him lying by us in the machine shed as we repaired machinery or mysteriously appearing out of the tall ditch grass as we worked in the fields near home.

But in many ways he was a cat. He would disappear for hours at a time. I am not sure what he always did but on one occasion he came back with a freshly killed rabbit in his mouth. I suppose *he* thought he was more like a lion than a cat. One spring morning I remember him lying on his back underneath a maple tree. Since it was spring there were young birds in the nests, therefore, momma and poppa bird felt threatened to have such a large, self-reliant cat nearby. So they swooped down with shrieks of warning, yet Tyrone simply and casually remained on his back, not moving a muscle. Until the opportune time arrived; with pinpoint accuracy and one fatal swoop he picked a bird out in mid-flight. As he walked away, I imagine he was thinking that should serve as a warning that while *this* cat walked upon the earth, he somehow was still king of the air.

Tyrone spent over thirteen years on our farm. And in those thirteen years he maintained his routine; walking the fences, sleeping wherever and whenever it was convenient, crouching and perfecting his hunting techniques in the 'deep wooded jungle', showing up to benefit us with his presence, and simply living life as a farm cat. While I can remember several funeral services for our dogs, I cannot recall such a memorial for Tyrone. Actually I am uncertain as to when and how he passed away. But my thoughts of Tyrone are of a cat that lived life bigger than his stature. His walk was confident, his temperament consistent, his confidence unshakable. He saw himself different than those who observed him. He simply set his gaze on the next adventure and securely walked toward it.

Now, I must admit this is going to be a challenge to relate this to a Scripture passage as it was mostly written to soften the gaze of a long-since departed cat. Yet, Tyrone's character reminds me of Noah building an ark in the desert, a young shepherd boy named David carrying a slingshot, the life of Daniel, a fearless spy named Caleb or Paul's words to a young Timothy, "*Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity (1 Timothy 4:12).*"

For I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need (Philippians 4:13).

Under the gracious gaze of the Father,
Pastor Mark