

## Grandma's Tree

While I was growing up, my family often visited my paternal grandmother's house in Salem, a small town in central Missouri. One of my favorite activities, along with that of my cousins, was to climb the Pin Oak tree in grandma's front yard.

On one particular summer visit, when I was about seven, Marsha, my cousin, was climbing the tree and swinging upside down by her knees from a low branch. Keith, her brother, and I were participating in our next favorite activity: folding, coloring, and flying paper airplanes. We piloted our planes and gliders around the front yard to see whose would soar farther, stay aloft longer, or crash the most fantastically.

During one particularly long glider flight, a BZZZZ sound pierced my eardrum. A black and gold dive-bombing bee decided I was its target. I turned to run, but I did not get very far.

Thwack! It sounded like a hard line drive hit by a baseball bat, but no baseball was being played. The resonance was created when my forehead smacked the low branch on the tree. With a thump, I fell to the ground in a cloud of dust and blood.

"Oh my God! I think he's dead!" shouted Keith as he ran into the house to get help. Marsha climbed out of the tree; she had been higher up and had missed the attack, but she felt the collision and heard Keith yell.

"Are you all right?" she asked.

By then Mom, Dad, Grandma, Aunt Linda, Uncle George, and Keith had rushed outside to check on me.

"I guess you're too tall to be running around that tree anymore," my dad said to ease the situation once he had figured out I would be okay.

Airplane flying and tree climbing ended for that day. I sat on the couch, gingerly placed an icepack on the enormous knot on my head, and drank some of Grandma's sweet, homemade lemonade. Keith and Marsha were disappointed that their tree climbing privileges were temporarily suspended. They made up for their frustration by making BZZZZ noises in my ear to see if I would jump; I did not. As for the low limb, my dad sawed it off. The yard was a safe place to run again, but it made it harder to climb that tree.