

The Nut on the Stump

Butch Lester is a past master and current secretary of Sanctuary Lodge #23 in Masonsville. Butch went to work at the Masonville Flour Mill right out of high school. We were in DeMolay together, and have been friends and Brothers ever since. We've hunted and fished together for years, and I had the pleasure of coaching Butch Jr. through his catechism when he joined Sanctuary 23 recently.

I guess the thing I admire most about Butch is the way he handled himself during his younger days and the way he has conducted himself as an adult. Butch never cared much about what was popular and what was fashionable. It seems he has always had the notion to do the right thing. If he believed that what he was doing was right, he could care less about how his opinions would seem to others.

Back in the '60s, when our high school at Bradford's Neck was integrated, Butch went against the grain of what most white students and citizens of the community thought was acceptable. Butch didn't get on a soap box, but he let everyone know how he felt. More importantly, he treated our new classmates with respect. It meant a lot — we all knew and respected Butch, and he gave us an example to follow.

Butch is still a leader — he's active in his community, church and lodge. When we Freemasons were getting a lot of flack from a particular minister in town, I remember hearing one city councilman who was not a Mason say "Well, I don't believe that the Masons are a bad bunch — not at all. If they were, Butch Lester wouldn't be a member." That's powerful — our example means more than anything we could say. We could all use a reminder of that simple fact from time to time.

Butch and I were at the Flour Mill Farm Pond last week. We were bream fishing mostly, but doing more cigar smoking and talking than anything else. I kept watching a young squirrel on the other bank — he was acting very strangely. There was a stump sticking out of the water about 12 feet from shore. It was hard to see, but it looked like there was a hickory nut on top of the stump. I took my turkey binoculars out of my pack and checked — sure enough, it was a hickory nut.

The squirrel paced back and forth, and made several false starts like he was going to jump into the water and swim to the stump. Finally he jumped in and swam all the way out to the stump. He sat there and ate the hickory nut. Shortly he jumped back into the water, and began to swim to shore.

All of a sudden, a monster of a bass broke the surface and swallowed the squirrel whole!

It was an unbelievable sight! We couldn't believe our eyes!

Butch and I sat there in a dead quiet...

In a few minutes, the bass put another nut on the stump.