

EXPLORATION

Going Native

Tim Poland

Twice a year I dump my fly fishing gear in the trunk of my car and travel north from the New River Valley to spend a few days pestering native brook trout in the cold, clear, gradient streams of Shenandoah National Park. I drive hundreds of miles and spend hundreds of dollars on food and lodging, not to mention snazzy fishing gear at the local fly shop, all for the pleasure of catching a fish that averages about six inches in length and is, to my eye, the world's most beautiful creature. Why? The radiant brilliance of a brook trout's ivory-trimmed, orange belly? The peaceful beauty of ancient, wooded mountains? The dark glow in the eye of a passing white-tail doe? The temporary hiatus from a fundamentally fatuous, mean-spirited, and nasty human world? Any one of these reasons is enough to justify the jaunt.

But for lunatic fishers like me, it's more than that. It's a question of "going native." These little fish, on whom I spend so much time, energy, thought, and money—these little brook trout *belong* here. They've finned these streams and pools since the Ice Age, their present lives flowing down a continuum from an ancient past. Brook trout in my part of the country differ, in this respect, from even their wildest trout relations, who trace their heritage back no more than a couple of generations to state-run fish hatcheries, where their ancestors were raised on trout chow and from which they were scooped up and dumped by the truckload into streams and lakes. But when I drift my fly over these small native fish, I fish back through time, earnestly searching out a brief link with something authentic, indigenous.

Recently, after a week of flailing my fly rod over my favorite Shenandoah streams, I dumped my gear back into the trunk and headed home. To avoid the psychotic truck traffic on Interstate 81, I opted for the slower pace of Route 42 through the rolling farm country of the Shenandoah Valley. Yes—the scenic route.

Relaxing behind the wheel, not a truck in sight, I recalled that my grandmother in Ohio, where I grew up, once told me her grandparents were buried somewhere in this region. I had filed away what information she had given me between the pages of my road atlas, just in case I was ever up this way and might be interested enough to visit the

place. Well, I was "up this way" and, for the moment, I was "interested" with the scrap of note paper on which I'd scrawled the name of a town, a cemetery, and two people, I took a detour to Sanger, Virginia, and the little cemetery at the Church of the Brethren.

Clutching my wrinkled piece of paper, I wandered among headstones, old and new, looking for a match to the scribbled name carried: Louis William Maubrey; Sarah Francis Clatterbaugh. Great-great grandparents. My *people*. I found it oddly intriguing where I apparently had *people*—if I could find them, that is.

As I searched, I quickly realized the little graveyard was organized into distinct family plots—Bucks and Zimmermans and Karicofes and others. Not all that many different names, really. It appeared that they stayed together and stayed put around here. But among them, it couldn't seem to find the names on my piece of paper.

As I was about to chuck it in, a large headstone in one of the family plots caught my eye. *Clatterbaugh*. How could I have missed such a name? Scanning the group of grave markers, I found it: Sarah Maubrey, my great-great grandmother. Born: 1836; Died: . . . couldn't tell. Her headstone had sunken too far into the earth for me to read the death date. I hooked my forefinger and gouged about an inch of dirt from the base of the stone. Died: 1918.

Who was this woman? The fact was, I had no idea. About as safely as I knew about Sarah Maubrey was that she probably quite glad to marry Louis Maubrey, if for no other reason than to change her maiden name from Clatterbaugh to . . . anything but *Clatterbaugh*. My great-great grandmother was not more to me than a series of letters scratched in stone and jammed in dirt in a country churchyard in a place I'd never been before.

And yet, somehow, I felt connected. It's been said that you're really from a place until you've buried your dead there. Well, here I was. I had *people*, right here, neatly tucked away, dead and buried, stared at the name of a woman whose life was nothing to me, and from whom, in part, I came. I had a link to this place. I *belonged*!

I never did find Louis Maubrey's grave, but I left satisfied. Driven back to the scenic route, I should have heard the laughter of Monacan people whose ancestors inhabited this region for centuries before my *people* helped displace them. They had a right to laugh. "That's a good one, white boy," they would have said of my first attempt to reinvent myself as native. Nothing but a hatchery fish. . . . all, I realized, and my thoughts returned to brook trout, cold mountain streams, and the amount of gasoline registering on the fuel gauge

In the park the day before, as I released a particularly scrappy brook trout back into its pool, I overheard a passing hiker speak to his companion.

"Geez, those fish are all so small. Why does he bother?"
Why, indeed, pal? For the wind through the trees. For the clarity of rushing water and deep pools. For the look in the eye of a deer. For the brief link to an ancient past when a native brook trout takes my fly. And for the fragile satisfaction of the momentary illusion that I, too, actually *belong* here.

Christ of the Ozarks*

His robe has the chiseled clarity of my recurring dream the one where I'm always rappelling down the side of the mountain on an invisible rope, mouth open in wonder and horror, like Lazarus, just back from the dead; where I'm sleepwalking like Martha through my own party, juggling the covered dishes in my hands, sweeping up the wind again and again; where I'm left like Mary with nothing but the thick crust of sighs and tears, pale lids, eyes whose fixed stars blaze a trail nobody follows, one solitary as the sleeves that drape the arms the Ozark Christ stretches out, his hands sanguine as my recurring dream where I wake up different, the same new dawn rising bright red over my once-made-of-salt but now flesh and blood shoulder.

**Christ of the Ozarks is a giant concrete statue on top of a mountain outside Eureka Springs, Arkansas.*

—Llewellyn McKernan

FICTION

Honor for Glory

Barbara S

YOU KNOW THAT SAYING ABOUT PROPHETS not being v honor except in their own hometowns? Well, I, Glory Felicity ain't no prophet, but I sure have been without honor. Folks fifty miles of War, West Virginia, would laugh their square heads should I so much as whisper the word "artist." But by God, what I am beginning to believe I am about becoming.

See, in recent years now I have been spending unemj moments sitting here on the blocks in front of my doublev doublewide on account of because I used to have a husband ar little kids to shelter. But that's another whole story.

Maybe not. Maybe that's the gist of it, what forced m artisting.

See, all the time growing up, wishing my ma and pa was other kid's ma and pa or I was somebody else's kid or, best yet, N Pa had brung me up in some other not-so-god-forsaken loca would sit up in the apple tree or crawl into Pa's abandoned bac coal mine, and I would dream of being someplace else, someplac the mountain, someplace like Charleston staring at that golden or Cincinnati with them Reds and all, or maybe even Akron w could make tires for cars or little kids' bikes.

And what I would do while I was dreaming was take a pi coal and draw pictures on Mama's old grocery bags, them browr what was wore out and had holes in them. I would draw kids or bikes and Abraham Lincoln sitting down in a rocking chair instt having to stand up worried-like for years and years like my h books showed him in front of the West Virginia capitol. I'd dra and Pa laying on a beach in North Carolina though that never t out right on account of it was too hard to imagine, so I'd draw sitting under the apple tree out back. I could almost imagine the

That's what I'd do, hide in my secret places and think up s and draw pictures and sometimes just play with a kitten, which one was not yet a big nasty cat.

That went on for years and years until Ma and Pa decided I w enough to work and put me out as a hired girl after school ar week ends and in the summer until I didn't have no more private