



WISCONSIN FOREST TALES

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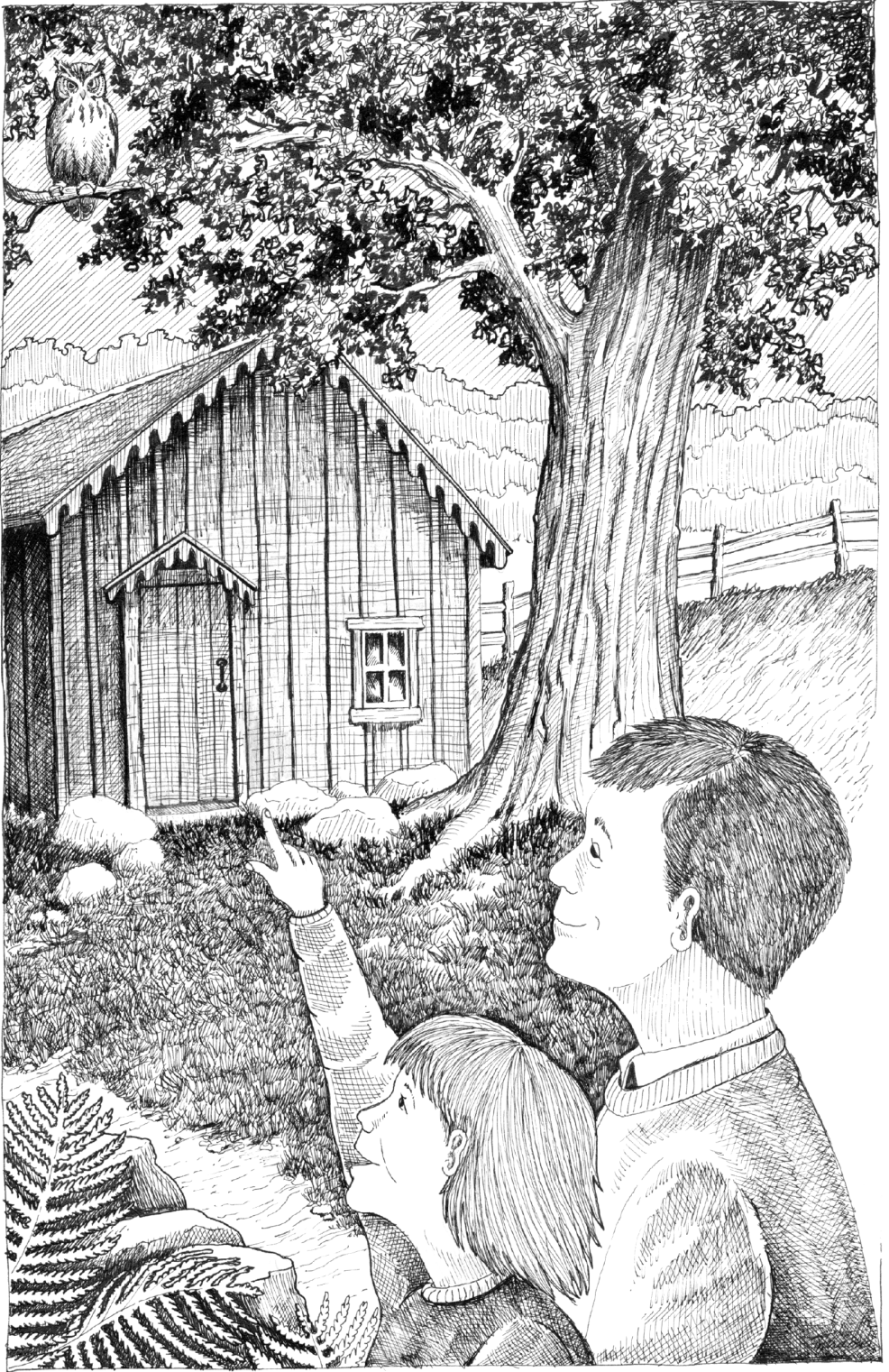
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CHAPTER EIGHT INTRODUCTION



WISCONSIN IS RICH! We have national, state, and county forests with beautiful lakes, campgrounds, and hiking trails. Wisconsin even has forests for kids—school forests, that is. We have more than 300 school forests in almost every part of Wisconsin.

Imagine a field trip to a school forest. Giant white pines and birches with white bark. Geese nesting in the wetlands. Walking trails and singing birds.

Learning comes to life in a school forest. Students identify trees, wildflowers, birds, and other wildlife. Classes plant trees, help take care of trails, and just enjoy the beauty of the forest.



GRANDMA'S WALK

“Pound the nails all the way,” said Jeremy. “You don’t want them sticking out where a bird could be hurt.”

“The hole looks so tiny,” Molly said. “Are you sure a bluebird can squeeze inside?”

“Yep,” Jeremy said. “They like small holes. Keeps hawks and crows away from the baby bluebirds.”

Mrs. McB’s class was building bluebird boxes. Every spring the fourth grade crammed into a yellow bus and rode to the Kellogg’s Glen School Forest where Jeremy was the naturalist. They watched herons with legs like skinny toothpicks in the pond. They made crayon rubbings of tree bark. Molly and her best friend, Sydney, sat like statues under maple trees while a mother deer and her fawn nibbled grass.

This was the best day—no books, no homework, just spring wildflowers, deer, and blue sky.

The fourth graders traveled to Kellogg’s Glen each spring. It was the school forest for a nearby school district. Molly’s school didn’t have its own special forest like this. It did own land next to Molly’s house, but nobody used it. There was no nature center. There were no trails to hike or signs to read about birds and trees. That would cost money. Lots of money. Someday, people said.

Mom, Dad, Grandma, and Molly lived like Laura in *Little House in the Big Woods*; her house was totally surrounded by trees.

On the north side was the family’s Christmas tree farm. Every year they planted new balsam, spruce, or white pine trees. Every winter they cut and sold the old ones.

Families drove out from the city and hunted for exactly the

right tree. Then, zip, zip, zip—the sound of a saw cutting echoed through the trees. Soon Molly would see the family trudging toward the house, carrying their tree.

Molly's dad said the south side of the house was good old Wisconsin forest—hills and valleys of leafy maple, oak, and birch trees. This was Molly's favorite place.

Molly always said, "Our house is Christmas on one side and the big woods on the other."

The forest belonged to the schools. But nobody walked on the paths that wound through the forest or enjoyed the bubbly creek. Nobody, that is, except Molly and her grandma.

Molly's grandma had always lived with them. Since Molly could remember, she and Grandma walked through the woods after supper every night. They knew every inch of the long path that snaked through the trees, along the creek, and to the wetlands at the bottom of the big hill. They never missed a night. In winter, they wore long johns and carried flashlights. In summer, they slapped mosquitoes.

But last winter, Grandma got sick. She was pale and shaky. She had to use a walker. The walks stopped. Molly's long johns lay in a crumpled heap under her bed. Now Grandma was visiting Uncle Al and Aunt Brenda in Florida. Maybe she'd get stronger in the warm Florida sun. Maybe. Molly could only hope.

Only two more weeks till Grandma came home again. Molly was counting the days.

Mrs. McB's class finished their bluebird houses and took a last hike along the nature trail. Molly noticed signs next to trees and on fences. "Cranes: Helping Endangered Birds," read a sign near the pond. The sign next to a maple tree said, "Sweeter than Sugar: Making Maple Syrup."

In glass-covered frames she saw drawings of leaves and photos of ducks on a nest, a mama raccoon and her babies, and a deer with huge antlers. Molly and Sydney read every sign.

"See the scratch marks on the trunk of that tree?" Jeremy

asked. “Look closely and you’ll find a hole. Not big, but big enough for a family of squirrels to get to their den.”

“Check out the mud near the pond,” he added. “We’ve got our very own animal footprint collection here!”

Molly found deer prints that looked like quotation marks. Near the water, she spied the marks of a little hand—like fingers and a thumb.

“Raccoons,” Sydney said. “I know those prints because they raid our trash cans at home.”

“Jeremy, what will you do with the bluebird houses we made?” Sydney asked.

“We’ll use some here,” Jeremy said. “The rest we’ll give away.”

Sydney grabbed Molly’s arm. “Molly, get one of those bluebird things!” she whispered.

“You could put one in your backyard,” Molly said.

“Too noisy,” Sydney said. “I’ve got three brothers, two cats, and Fearless, our dog. Fearless barks. The cats love birds—for dinner, that is.”

Sydney talked louder. “Jeremy, Molly has trees. Millions of ‘em,” she said. “She could put up those bluebird catchers.”

Jeremy laughed. “Bluebird boxes, Syd. For nesting, not for catching.”

“Would you put up bluebird boxes at home, Molly?” Mrs. McB asked.

Molly felt as if someone had set butterflies loose inside her stomach. Grandma loved bluebirds. Bluebirds used to nest on the old farm. Molly wanted bluebirds in the woods. In fact, she wanted it all—the deer and the herons. The leaf drawings and all the great science stuff written on signs. She wished she could take the whole nature trail home.

“Well, we’ve got trees on our land. And, there’s the school forest next door,” she said. “I’ll put up bluebird boxes if you’ll show me how.”

So before the yellow bus took Mrs. McB’s class back to school,

Molly and Sydney learned how to put up bluebird boxes. "Don't nail them on trees," Jeremy said. "Fence posts are better. Tall metal poles are best." The two girls hopped onto the bus, each carrying a bluebird box.

Molly thought about the nature trail and the bluebird boxes as she rode home after school. By the time she jumped off the bus, an idea was hatching in her mind.

"Mom, I'm home," she shouted. Molly skipped into her bedroom. She knelt next to her bed and pulled out her diary and began to write.

Dear Diary,

One person can make a difference. TV shows tell about kids who give socks to homeless guys and build houses for people.

Today I decided. I'm going to put up bluebird boxes. We can do it together, Syd and I.

My first plan is to read every book about birds in the library. Then we'll put the bluebird houses up.

Grandma comes home in two weeks. I want the boxes ready then. Syd and I can make signs about bluebirds like at Kellogg's Glen. There's an old wooden bench in the shed. We'll put it in front of the bluebird houses. If bluebirds come to nest, Grandma can sit on the bench and watch. Then, maybe Grandma will take walks again.

Love,

Molly



The next morning Molly jumped out of bed before the alarm rang. She thumped down the stairs, still pulling her sweater over her head.

Dad said, "What's the hurry? Tornado comin'?"

"Remember the tree where we saw the horned owl?" Molly

said. "I'm gonna check for pellets before school."

Dad took a swig of coffee. "Well, hurry then."

Molly grabbed a jar from the recycling bin and raced toward the shed.

An oak tree reached over the shed with giant, leafy arms. One night, Molly and Dad had seen a great horned owl in the branches.

Molly knew about owls. She hadn't earned a blue ribbon in the science fair for nothing!

"Owls swallow their food whole and throw up what they don't want," Molly had told her dad. "They eat mice, bats, and birds. But they spit out the bones and feathers in little fur-covered balls."

Molly wanted to find some of those little fur-covered balls this morning. They'd be perfect to show her class.

Molly carefully brushed away leaves under the big oak tree.

"Score!" she shouted. There, on the ground, she found two fuzzy balls. She scooped them into the jar.

At school, Molly told her plan to Sydney. They pestered Mrs. McB. "You've got to let us go to the library," Sydney said. "It's practically an emergency."

"A library emergency?" Mrs. McB asked.

"Can you keep a secret?" Molly asked.

"As long as nobody's in danger or getting in trouble, I can keep a secret," said Mrs. McB.

"We're putting up bluebird boxes. And that's not all. We're going to put a bench for sitting. And make signs about bluebirds like at Kellogg's Glen. It's a surprise for my grandma. We're not telling anybody," Molly said. "Except you."

Sydney nodded. "We've got research to do. So that's why we need the library pass."

Mrs. McB handed the pass to Molly. "You got the idea from our trip to Kellogg's Glen?"

"Yep," Molly said. "If I had one wish, I'd wave a magic wand and put Kellogg's Glen on the school forest next to our house. We'd have a nature center and a trail and signs and everything."

“And everybody would come!” Sydney said.

“Girls,” said Mrs. McB. “This isn’t just a good idea, this is brilliant. The school board keeps talking about nature trails in the school forest. But nothing happens.”

Molly stood like a statue. Sydney’s eyes opened wide.

“Could we?” Molly and Sydney said together.

“Wait right here,” said Mrs. McB. “I’m calling the superintendent. This is one idea she’s got to hear.”

Molly felt like a hammer was pounding inside her chest. Her idea had suddenly become huge. Bigger than big.

Mrs. McB was back in a minute. She actually danced across the classroom! “Hot dog!” she called out. “The superintendent says yes! If you’re willing to share your idea with the whole class, we’ll make ourselves a nature trail!”

Molly and Sydney spent the rest of the morning at the library. They piled guidebooks and magazines on a table. Sydney found an article on the Internet about owl pellets. Molly discovered a picture book about nature trails. The librarian even brought pictures and articles about school forests from the Department of Natural Resources.

“We can do it,” Molly kept saying to herself. “It’s a huge, huge idea, but we can do it.”

Back in the classroom, Sydney and Molly huddled around the reading center table. “We’ve got to get organized,” Sydney said. She pulled out her clipboard and began to write.

- * **Find tree names; make signs about each tree.**
- * **Find animal houses—squirrel dens, snake holes.**
Where do deer and bunnies live?
- * **Make signs and posters.**
- * **Find bird nests. Make signs about each bird.**
- * **Put up bluebird boxes. Make signs.**
- * **Copy animal footprints with plaster.**
- * **Make exhibit at the shed: owl pellets, bird feathers, old nests, snake skins, other things we find.**

In the afternoon, Mrs. McB let the two girls tell their idea to the class. By the time the bell rang and the day ended, everyone in the fourth grade was talking. Molly's little idea had exploded. It would be the best project of the whole year!



Dear Diary,

The whole class voted to make a nature trail in the school forest. At first, I felt sad. Having everybody help isn't the same as one person and her best friend doing something. Then I saw how excited everybody was. This was a really good idea. We've been working every day this week.

Rusty jumped around like a Ping-Pong ball. If he didn't call me Mollyball (rhymes with volleyball) all the time, I might think he was funny.

The next day he kept passing me crazy notes. One said, "Hey Mollyball. In *National Geographic* they put cameras in the jungle. I don't know exactly how it works. Maybe I could take movies of animals by hiding a camera in the trees and using a remote control. What do you think? Cool idea?—Rusty"

Everybody wanted to help. Mrs. McB said we could use the computer to print names and facts on paper. She'll laminate everything. Emily Miller's dad builds houses. She said he'd cut wood for the signs. Corey knows how to make plaster molds of animal tracks. Gina has the skin from a snake.

Rusty wanted to make a movie like on Discovery Channel, but finally Mrs. McB talked him into taking pictures of leaves and wildflowers.

You should see Sydney. She brought her clipboard to school and is running around like president of the world. She gives everybody jobs and checks them off when they're done. She even sends reminders by e-mail. Syd's the best!

Yesterday Corey, Nate, and Susanna rode the bus home

with me after school. We found five old bird nests. Nate found a snake hole. I saw an eagle! We wrote it in our bird-watch book in CAPITAL LETTERS!

One week till Grandma comes. My mom and dad haven't guessed a thing!

Happy, happy, happy,
Molly



Molly worked Saturday. She hauled junk out of the old shed on the edge of their property. She swept leaves and old mouse nests out the door and washed ten years of dust off the old worktable. Sunday after church, she hiked along the trail, taking notes. Snake hole at the foot of the sugar maple, she wrote. Bunnies in the big brush piles. Hawks nesting by the creek.

"It's for science," she told her parents at supper. "You know. Nature and stuff."

"You cleaned out the shed for science class?" Mom asked. "Well, give Mrs. McB my unending thanks!"

"Does that mean you'll clean your bedroom for math class?" Dad teased. "Maybe if you put away all the junk, you could measure the floor for extra credit."

Molly smiled. Good job, Dad. Change the subject, she thought. Her secret was safe for another day.



Monday morning Molly jumped out of bed and ran to the family room. There was an e-mail from Sydney on the computer. "Rusty, do you have the pictures ready? Andy, did you finish the signs for the bluebird houses? Corey and Susanna, don't forget the tree name signs. Scott and Erin, bring what you found out about maple trees and maple syrup. Molly, did you clean out the shed?"

Sydney was like an army general. Molly laughed. She could just see the whole class saluting. "Yes sir, Sydney sir."

A new message popped up. FeO2 the e-mail address read. What? Molly could think of only one person who might pick such a strange e-mail address. Rusty Russell, of course. She clicked on the message.

“Monday. 7 a.m. Hey Mollyball, my mom said I could come help you put up the bluebird houses after school Wednesday. I’ll bring my dad’s variable speed rechargeable drill and a bag of my mom’s famous chocolate chip cookies. They’re the best in the universe! See you in 56 hours, 30 minutes.”

The message was signed FeO2. Molly shook her head. Only Rusty would use words like variable speed rechargeable drill. Only Rusty would figure that three-thirty on Wednesday afternoon was 56 hours and 30 minutes away. And only Rusty would sign his e-mail FeO2.

Molly tromped upstairs and threw on a pair of jeans and her pink sweatshirt with the words “I’m going to be president” on the front and “or maybe queen” on the back. She pulled a brush through her hair and scrounged under the bed for her shoes. And all the while she wondered, *what on earth is FeO2?*

That morning at school, Mrs. McB let the class work on nature trail stuff during science time. Rusty scanned pictures of wildflowers in the computer lab. Corey and Susanna finished signs for every kind of tree. Andy pulled a chewed-up stub of pencil and a dirt-stained notebook from his desk and began to write *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Bluebirds*.

Emily, Britta, and Josh hauled a huge box into the classroom. Emily’s dad had cut wooden rectangles and pointed stakes.

“We’ve got signs and posts,” Emily said. “We just need to hammer them together.” She pulled three hammers and a bag of nails out of her backpack. “I’m ready!”

Mrs. McB shook her head. “Not here you don’t! Not safe and way too noisy.” She sent them to Mr. Albright’s workshop.

Mr. Albright was the school janitor. He didn’t mind noise. Emily, Britta, and Josh disappeared down the hall, dragging the

box, signs, posts, hammers, and nails behind them.

Syd and Molly shoved two tables together and spread out a big piece of bulletin board paper. They drew a map of the school forest, including the hills, creek, and winding trail. Molly wrote *white pines* at the top of the hill. At the bottom of the hill, she sketched circles for birches and squares for oaks and maples. She wrote wildflower names in yellow. Lady's slipper in one spot. Trillium in another. Bluebells and Dutchman's breeches. She marked each bluebird house with a *B* and every nest with a big, blue letter *N*. Every rabbit hole, brush pile, or squirrel den was marked *H*—for home.

Molly's plan was good. Signs with names and information would be put along the trail. People could stop and read as they walked. Molly imagined Grandma sitting on the bench, watching bluebirds. Andy's "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Bluebirds" sign would be there to read.

"This is amazing," Sydney said. "You're amazing!"

Molly squeezed Syd's hand. "Everybody's amazing. I can't believe this is really going to happen!"



All week, Mrs. McB's class worked. They made signs. They wrote about every kind of tree and animal in the school forest. They laminated and stapled and nailed. Corey brought in plaster casts of animal footprints. Every day, more jobs were finished.

"Who can come to Molly's on Saturday?" Sydney asked. Every single person raised a hand. She waved her clipboard. "I've got jobs for everybody!" Every single person groaned.

But really the whole class was excited about the nature trail. Emily would bring rubber hammers to pound signs into the ground. Corey and Josh were making a poster at home about animal footprints. The list for the nature shed grew. A snake's skin. A hawk's feather Hannah found on the Wisconsin River. Old birds' nests. Owl pellets.

“I’ll bring my mom’s famous chocolate chip cookies,” Rusty said. “They’re the best . . .”

“. . . in the universe,” said half the class.

Rusty smiled a gigantic smile. “That’s right.”



On Wednesday, Rusty showed up at school with a coffee can under his arm and his bulging backpack. He wasn’t kidding about the drill. Molly thought. After school, they both rode the bus to Molly’s house.

“Home, Mom,” Molly hollered. She scooted down the hall to Mom’s office with Rusty at her heels.

“Mom, Rusty. Rusty, my mom,” Molly introduced. “We’ve got homework to do in the woods. You know, science stuff.”

Mom’s eyebrows went up. “More science stuff? What do you have behind your back, Rusty? Is it some kind of top secret science project?”

Molly glanced at Rusty. There he stood, with his hands behind his back. The drill! Molly thought. He’s got that drill with the fancy name behind his back.

Molly didn’t know what to do. Her heart was pounding like the whole high school band was marching through the room. If Rusty pulled out that stupid drill, her mom would want to know what they planned to do with it. If he opened his mouth, who knew what Rusty might say. Either way, her secret would be ruined!

Rusty opened his mouth. No! He pulled his hands from behind his back.

“The recipe for my mom’s chocolate chip cookies is top secret,” Rusty said. He pulled the lid off the coffee can and held it out to Molly’s mom. “Want one? They’re famous.”

Molly felt light-headed. Like a balloon stuck with a pin, all the air seemed to leak out of her.

Molly’s mom took a cookie. Molly grabbed Rusty’s arm. “Bye, Mom,” she called as she dragged Rusty down the hall, into the

kitchen, and out the back door.

Rusty smiled his gigantic smile. "Betcha thought I'd give away your secret," he said.

Molly stared. How did Rusty know about her secret?

"Oh, I guessed it was a secret. With you and Syd whispering for the past two weeks."

"It's a surprise for my grandma," Molly said. "She . . ." Tears began to fill Molly's eyes. She wanted her grandma to love the nature trail. She wanted Grandma to be strong again so they could take walks together in the woods.

"Hey, Mollyball," Rusty said. "I've got a grandma, too. You don't have to explain feelings about grandmas to me."

Right then, every annoyed, irritated feeling Molly had ever felt about Rusty seemed to disappear. He pushed a cookie into her hand. "My mom's cookies can fix anything. Best in the universe," he said.

"Thanks, Rusty," Molly said.

"Any time."

Suddenly Molly felt shy. She'd cried about her grandma in front of a boy. She tried to think of something—anything—to say.

"Rusty. Your e-mail address is FeO2. What does that mean?"

Rusty dug another cookie out of the coffee can. "My name. It's the chemical sign for rust. Fe is the chemical symbol for iron, and O2 is oxygen. When the two come together, they form rust!"

The chemical sign for rust? Molly wanted to laugh. Rusty was still annoying. He was still strange. Really strange. But right then, she decided Rusty was OK. Really OK.

Molly and Rusty carried the bluebird houses and the bench from the shed to the school forest. Molly held each house against a fence post while Rusty drilled neat, even holes with his dad's drill. Then Molly tightened the screws. They found a perfect place for the bench.

They plopped down on the bench, grabbed a couple more cookies, and admired their work.

“Not bad,” said Rusty.

Molly thought about her grandma and the bluebirds. “Better than not bad,” she said. “They’re perfect.”



Thursday and Friday, Mrs. McB’s class worked like fury. Sydney ran around with her clipboard, filling her list with big red check marks. “Done!” she’d say, as she checked off another detail.

Mrs. McB agreed to come on Saturday. “At first I just wanted my grandma to see bluebirds,” Molly told the class. “Then I thought about taking walks with my grandma. Now it’s bigger than that. The idea keeps growing. And you’re all part of it.”

The whole class listened. At his desk in the corner, Rusty gave her a thumbs-up.

“Now we’re going to have a nature trail anybody can use,” she said. “School field trips. You can bring your families. Other classes can do projects. And maybe someday it’ll be an official school forest like Kellogg’s Glen!”

By Friday, everything was finished. Signs. Posters. The plaster footprints were labeled. Rusty’s wildflower pictures were in a binder. The classroom buzzed like a hive of bees. Molly had never had so much fun at school.

Mrs. McB raised her hand. “If you can hear my voice, raise your hand,” she said. One by one, kids raised their hands until the room was silent.

“Sydney, tell us what’s happening tomorrow.” Sydney could organize the world, Molly thought. They were a good team. Molly dreamed up cool ideas and Sydney could organize them!

Sydney waved her clipboard. “Mrs. McB is coming tomorrow. Parents are driving.” She wrote “9:00” on the board. “Be there at nine o’clock. Molly’s parents will be gone. They’re driving to the airport to get her grandma.”

Molly explained, “Mom and Dad said I could stay home with Mrs. McB so we could do science stuff in the school forest.”

Sydney wrote "NOON" on the board. "They'll be back at noon. Three hours. We've got to get every sign pounded in and every poster put up. We'll set up the nature center in Molly's shed."

"Can we do it by noon?" Andy asked.

"You bet!" Sydney said.

At the end of the day, the class loaded everything into Mrs. McB's van. It was stuffed to the windows.

"Looks like a traveling science fair," Rusty said.



That night, Molly wrote in her diary.

Dear Diary,

I've been thinking. If Grandma can't walk tomorrow, Dad could still drive up to the bluebird boxes. She could still see some of the nature trail from the car.

This has been the most fun. I'm proud of Syd. I'm proud of myself. I'm even proud of Rusty!

I can't wait to see Grandma's face when she sees the bluebird houses.

Molly



Saturday morning, Molly shot out of bed. Seven o'clock. She yanked on her clothes. Mom had given strict orders: don't wake us up till eight o'clock. Not one second before.

Molly got out cereal and bowls. She poured juice and set out spoons. Then she watched the numbers on the clock roll around. 7:30. 7:31. 7:32. At exactly eight o'clock she banged on her parents' bedroom door.

"Get up! Get up!" she said. "Grandma's already on the plane!"

Mrs. McB drove into the driveway around eight-thirty. Hurry up, Molly kept thinking. The sooner Mom and Dad leave, the sooner we can get to work.

Finally. Finally, the adults stopped gabbing. “Have fun with your science stuff,” Mom said as she and Dad pulled away in the car. “We’ll be back about . . .”

“Noon!” Molly shouted. “Don’t come back before noon.”

Sydney arrived fifteen minutes early, clipboard in hand.

At nine o’clock on the nose, Mrs. MCB’s entire class and Sydney’s dog, Fearless, were lined up in Molly’s driveway, ready to go. Sydney clutched her clipboard. She passed out copies of the map Molly made at school. Sydney started to give orders.

“Andy, Hannah, and Josh, take the tree signs. Britta and Cynthia, take the bluebird box signs. Susanna, signs for the squirrel, snake, and rabbit holes.”

In groups of two or three, all the kids trudged into the school forest. Corey carried his plaster footprints. Nate and Rusty took signs for wildflowers. Sydney put Molly in charge of the nature center.

The next three hours flew by. Mrs. MCB’s fourth graders raced along the trail. Laughing voices and the thump of pounding hammers sounded through the woods. Molly set up posters, notecards, pictures, and nature displays in the shed. Sydney stood like a circus ringmaster, clipboard in hand. Fearless tried to be everywhere at once, running and barking.

Ten o’clock. Eleven o’clock. Eleven-thirty. At ten minutes before noon, Sydney hollered. “Everybody in. We’re done!”

Voices echoed through the school forest. “We’re done. Everybody in.” Soon, everyone was standing in the driveway. Every single job was checked off on Sydney’s list. They were ready.

“Twelve o’clock. Exactly,” whispered Rusty. Just then Molly saw her mom and dad’s car at the end of the road. The car, with Grandma inside, came closer and closer to the crowd of kids.

The car rolled to a stop and Molly’s dad jumped out. He walked around to the passenger side and opened the door. Molly held her breath.

Grandma stepped out. No walker. No pale, shaking hands. Just the same smile and sparkling eyes Molly had remembered.

"Grandma!" Every kid in Mrs. McB's class shouted at once. Molly ran to her grandma with her arms spread wide.

"Grandma," she whispered. "Have we got a surprise for you!"

Mrs. McB's class exploded like firecrackers. Shouts filled the air. *Surprise! Surprise! Wait'll you see it. We did it! We did it!*

Molly's mom, dad, and grandma looked from Molly to the laughing, jumping kids and back again.

"What's the surprise?" Grandma asked.

"Somehow I don't think it's just 'science stuff,'" Mom said.

"Well," Molly said. "If you feel up to it, Grandma, about twenty kids are ready to take you on your first walk in the woods."

Rusty pushed through the crowd. He offered his arm to Molly's grandma like an usher at a fancy wedding.

"Ma'am," he said. "May I escort you to . . ." He turned to Molly with a questioning look.

"Molly, what are you going to call it?" he asked.

"It's called Grandma's Walk," Molly said. Molly took Grandma's other arm. With Molly, Grandma, and Rusty leading the way, everyone headed to the school forest and Grandma's Walk.

NOT YOUR TYPICAL SCHOOL FOREST

TAKE A TRIP TO PLAINFIELD, Wisconsin, and you'll find a school forest that does it all!

At Tri-County School Forest students hike nature trails. Families take picnics. Land owners learn how to use their forests.

If your class visited Tri-County School Forest, high school students would be your teachers. You might plant seedlings. You might hunt for butterflies in the prairie. You might help keep the forest healthy by weeding out plants that don't belong, like garlic mustard.



LARRY MANGLI/TRI-COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Students measure the size of a tree during a trip to the Tri-County School Forest.

The forest director and the county forester have a plan for keeping the forest beautiful and enjoyable for everyone. Each year, some trees are cut. This allows other trees more room to grow.

What happens to the cut trees? Some are sold and the money helps pay for school forest programs. Some are used for a special project. Students use the wood to build houses for bluebirds, bats, or butterflies.

Almost 200 school districts in Wisconsin have their own school forests. Does your district have a school forest?

**The first school forests were created in
Laona, Crandon, and Wabeno.**

LIFE ON A TREE FARM

ON THE Schendel family farm you won't find corn. They don't grow cranberries either. It takes chain saws and tractors to harvest this crop.

Dale and Bev and Mike and Sally love their tree farm in Menomonee, Wisconsin. At vacation time, the children and grandchildren say, "Let's go to the farm!"

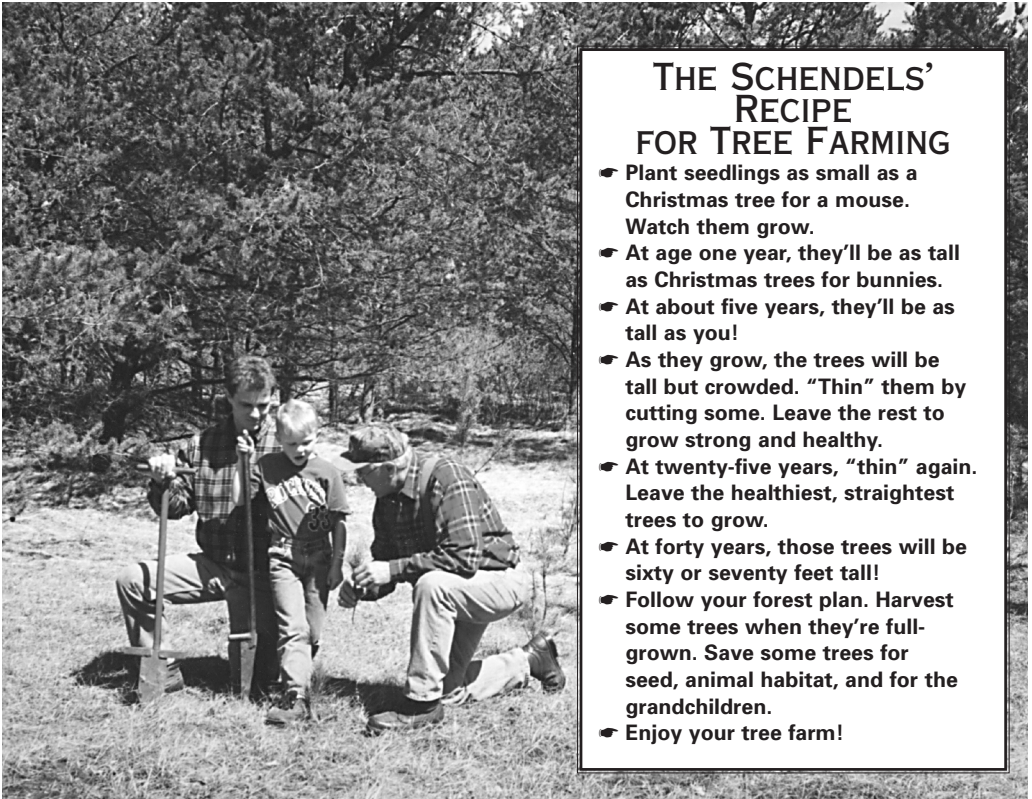
Forty years ago, Dale and Mike bought land to grow soybeans. But the crop was poor. The county forester said, "Try growing red pine trees."

Wow! The red pines grew and grew. So did white pines. So did black and white spruce trees. Soon, the soybean farm had become a tree farm.

Today, the tree farm is 400 acres. That means it's two miles from the farmhouse to the end of their land!

The Schendel families plant trees to make homes for different kinds of animals. They test the soil and match it to types of trees that will grow best.

A forester helps them plan. They want trees for animal habitat, trees to cut and sell, and trees to enjoy. Because they have a good plan, 100, even 200 years from now, the Schendel family children and grandchildren will still be able to say, "Let's go to the farm!"



THE SCHENDELS' RECIPE FOR TREE FARMING

- Plant seedlings as small as a Christmas tree for a mouse. Watch them grow.
- At age one year, they'll be as tall as Christmas trees for bunnies.
- At about five years, they'll be as tall as you!
- As they grow, the trees will be tall but crowded. "Thin" them by cutting some. Leave the rest to grow strong and healthy.
- At twenty-five years, "thin" again. Leave the healthiest, straightest trees to grow.
- At forty years, those trees will be sixty or seventy feet tall!
- Follow your forest plan. Harvest some trees when they're full-grown. Save some trees for seed, animal habitat, and for the grandchildren.
- Enjoy your tree farm!

BEV SCHENDEL

Jeff, Zack, and Dale Schendel plant trees on the family's farm.

WHAT'S MADE FROM WOOD?

I BET YOU DON'T KNOW just how many things you use each day that come from trees! Here is a list of some of the things made from wood, grown on trees, or made from parts of trees. Can you think of any others?

Things Made of Wood

door	boat
house	fence
floor	firewood
furniture	pencil
toothpick	golf tee
matchstick	crutches
chopstick	deck
baseball bat	desk
canoe paddle	picnic table
piano	rowboat
violin	sled
toys	snowshoes
ruler	paper—magazines, newspaper, toilet paper,
birdhouse	paper towel, Kleenex, cardboard, napkins,
ladder	milk cartons, bags
hockey stick	wood to heat homes



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Things That Come from Trees

spices—allspice, bay leaves, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg
fruit—cherries, apples, oranges, lemons, coffee, peaches, pears
cork—used to make baseballs
rubber—used to make tires, golf balls, shoes
maple syrup
nuts
chocolate

Things That Are Made from Parts of a Tree

soap
gum
charcoal
flavors—used in root beer, cola, vanilla