

“Momma, look at the pretty birdies!”

By: Kailee Davis

For the last twelve years I have lived in the same fixer-upper house in Silver Spur where I've gone through the same daily routine and have driven the same County Road 42 everyday where, every summer, I pass by the same Greater Sandhill Cranes that I have known for most of my life.

I remember the first time I saw the cranes. “Momma, look at the pretty birdies!” I half-yelled to my mom who, sitting in the passenger seat, was analyzing every detail of the photographs and paperwork for our new house. I had been crying for what felt like hours but was only a few minutes in reality. I didn't want to leave our old house. At that time it was all I had ever known, and I wasn't ready to let that go yet. My wailing in the backseat didn't end until I happened to look out of the car window just as we drove by a pond by an old farmer's house, and I saw what I believed to be the most beautiful and amazing birds to have existed in all of time.

These birds weren't like the others I had seen. They had long legs and were graceful and elegant. They reminded me of the ballerinas with long legs and grace and balance that I had seen on stage once before. They were absolutely exquisite. All I could do at that moment was exclaim as loudly as I possibly could, “Momma, look at the pretty birdies!” in the hopes that my mom would look up from her busy work and confirm that I wasn't just imagining the birds.

From that moment forward the Sandhill Cranes had a permanent place in my life. From then on, they were a part of the sameness that consumed my everyday. Every day I'd see old Glen Barber walking down to the pond where the cranes would meet him if they weren't already there to be fed. He'd walk slowly and, as the years went on Old Glen got slower and took more breaks as he walked from his front door to the edge of the water. But, day after day and year after year the Sandhill Cranes would meet him there. Every week on Saturday mornings my mom would take me to the library for story time and pick out any three books I wanted her to read to me at night. And every Saturday morning the cranes would be walking in the field through the morning dew and I'd feel like I was dreaming or imagining the same way I did the first time I saw them. As time went on, I got older and story time became a childhood memory. Trips to the library turned into grocery runs and extra dance rehearsals but, day after day and year after year, the cranes were still there in the field. Every summer the cranes would come and I'd marvel at the fact that cranes mate for life, watching them fly next to each other high above my head. As the years went on, I entered high school and tried the whole awkward dating thing on more than one occasion, I'd look up to the sky and envy the cranes who'd stay together from the moment they met until the day they'd die.

The sameness that seemed to overrun my life was rather comforting to me for a long time until I realized that there was no sameness and everything changes when given enough time. Old Glen got slower, story time ended and, next thing I know, I'm a graduating senior who no longer envies the cranes but worries about what's to come next. No matter what is in my future, I know that I'll always be able to drive home and pass the little pond where the cranes will be waiting, day after day and year after year every summer, as magnificent and graceful as the first day I saw them and exclaimed as loudly as I possibly could, “Momma, look at the pretty birdies!”.