

## **The Gift of Creativity**

My high school class traveled on a big yellow bus through the San Francisco Bay area into California's Big Sur country on a field trip. Our teacher asked us to write in her notebook about our trip. I contrasted housing developments on hills south of San Francisco with Big Sur's wild country, with trees, grass, rocks and brush on the hills.

When she read what I wrote, Mrs. Franklin said, "This is good. You're creative. You could be a writer." What she said woke a desire in me to express creativity, to write. By my own definition, I immediately became a writer, though much work over many years lay ahead of me to make that label more accurate.

I lived and wrote and gradually improved my writing skills. I published poems in several literary magazines. I wrote fiction, essays, and, eventually, books of fiction and nonfiction and published some of my writing. I sometimes received checks, but never enough to make a living.

It might have been best that I didn't make a living writing. My need to earn a living led me to varied jobs, often as caretaker of ranches, that fed my observation and appreciation of the natural world around me. Laura, my wife, was an assistant caretaker on two of those ranches. Our jobs led us into very rural existence. We saw abundant wildlife on and near the ranches we took care of, and we were always thrilled by all the life we saw. We appreciated our rural existence and adapted ourselves more and more to it.

Our distance from schools contributed to our decision to teach our daughters at home. Their rural experience and being taught at home helped lead our daughters into interesting, fulfilling existence, into respect for creativity and gratitude for life and creativity. I wrote about our experiences and invented songs about our life and about more general life.

Much of my writing is about wildlife, about family, about educating our children, about living largely away from the consuming culture, about living a simple existence that makes it easier to feel a sense of oneness with all other life, with all of existence. Some of my writing about feeling oneness with the earth, with all life, publishes. Readers share my sense of oneness with this planet and life and sometimes tell me of their increased sense of oneness and their gratitude for increased

awareness and appreciation for all existence that comes from reading about it and then thinking about it.

Early in my life, I knew I didn't want to look back when I was older and remember little of my existence that had been inspiring. I wanted to learn all my life, create all my life, be grateful all my life for the gift of life, for the gift of creativity. Whenever I had to choose between material gain or inspiration, creativity and learning to write more effectively about life's moments of joy, I left material gain as my last choice.

Years have gone. I own little material wealth, but I carry treasures in my memories and in my heart.

I wrote about a hundred songs over the past forty years. I played them on my guitar and sang them enough to remember wording, melodies, and presentation. I performed some of my songs for friends, but I stayed involved with living, earning a living, and writing and didn't devote extensive practice to my songs, to learning more about musical presentation.

I've left jobs behind. I practice my guitar more. I practice singing, and I record some of my music for the learning hearing it from recordings brings me and so I can share my songs with friends and family. With practice, my songs come closer to the way I want them to sound.

I'm writing an essay about the powerfully positive force of creativity and gratitude. I write the essay and extensively revise it to better say what I want to say as I also work on other projects and come back to writing this particular essay as I have time.

What I write and what I sing might not be published or heard. I'm not very concerned if it is or isn't.

Sharing through publication and through making recordings of my songs available to interested listeners offers a bonus for my expression of gratitude for my life, for the gift of creativity given to me, given to all of us. That bonus is secondary to creating, to feeling and expressing gratitude for creativity and for finding the oneness with all existence that creating helps me experience.