



How Very Rich Am I

Poems, Stories and Thoughts

By David H. Farley

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Preface

These pieces, in a large way, are representative of who I am; who I have been. I suppose that's generally true of writings that are introspective and find their purpose in one's experiences. Writing has been my passion; yet only in the past few years have I devoted any focused attention to going past the initial spurt of activity brought on by a sudden idea. Although trained for journalism in my college days, and spending time as a newspaper writer, I have mostly wandered through time and space doing other things.

Some of the poems.....actually, most of the poems.....came from my evolving view of the world, both in nature and in the greater scheme of things. As a young boy exploring the woods and streams of West Virginia, I developed a love for all things in nature. That love has been well rewarded by great experiences in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Arizona, Alaska, and even Germany during my Army tour there. Fishing and camping were among my very favorite activities. "Craig" and "Kath" were written to celebrate the births of my son and daughter.

The incidental entries are just that: incidental. They are meant to have no specific goal for the reader or the writer; they just are.

The "stories" portray some portion of my total outlook on things; there are four or five full-length books in the works which may round out my brief - and varied - writing career.

If nothing else, my writings have, while in progress, given me some of my most pleasant and satisfying moments. I only wish I had started a long time ago, for literally, time *is* flying.

Mountains

I climbed a mountain to its top
and there were more - as far as I could see.
It seemed as if they'd never stop,
and I felt them pulling me.
So on I go, always moving on,
and with each pinnacle I reach,
other mountains loom beyond,
and I must conquer each.
It's been that way all my days,
always striving for the top,
always struggling through the maze.
When, if ever, will it stop?
I long to halt, to cease this quest,
to sit and watch the world go by.
But every time I stop to rest,
another mountain fills my eye.



I was not given the keys to financial success. Instead I was granted the privilege of many experiences. In these declining years I feel I was indeed blessed for the memories will be with me until I die. I can hear voices and see faces and scenes that money cannot buy. If I were granted life over again I would still prefer experiences over painted paper.

Kath

Tiny heart that knows no strife
you bring intense joy to my life.
Vacant eyes that yet can't see
the happiness you bring to me.
On twisted lips, is that a smile
of innocence that holds no guile?
Tiny feet that can't yet walk;
tiny voice that can't yet talk.
This world is yours to be
A gift to you from me
I pray that I can leave it so
you will love it as you grow.



There are days in life when the very air is golden, when the heavens bless us with a sense of purity and exhilaration that remains in our memories as long as we live. They are few, to be certain, but they stand above all others until the day we die.

Craig

I'd like to take you fishing
or romping on the grass,
or, maybe you'd like an ice cream cone,
or, to get a ball and pass.

If we could just take a stroll
and watch the world wake up,
or, feed crumbs to pigeons,
or, stop and pet a pup.

And in the early evening
while twilight's still aglow
we could get a gang together
and play tag, or trapper joe.

I guess that I've been dreaming
for I know that I can't do
the many things I'd like to do,
with a son, especially you.



We seek individuality for ourselves and as nations to give us a feeling of uniqueness, yet at the same time seek the comfort and security of sameness. Being unique is a challenge as well as a blessing. While we all seek blessings we also try to avoid challenges.

On Eternity

No matter how hard man strains
to build eternal monuments to himself
In the end only God remains
The rest, just memories on a shelf
Rome and Greece — long since crumbled;
the Inca ruins — little more than dust.
All that man will build will tumble
How brief the span of human lust
While in the mountains and the sky
eternity beckons to us all
But we don't see it, you and I
We seldom even hear its call.



Finding God is an individual matter, one of searching within rather than without. External concerns diminish God and we soon are lost in confusion, resulting in anger and loss of understanding, not only spiritually but in external affairs as well. We end up having nothing.

The Crocus

I saw a crocus peeping through the earth:

The promise of another day of life.



“The meek of spirit shall inherit the earth,” the Bible says. In seventy plus years I have learned of no religion that is meek, nor any denomination within a religion either. The main effort of the religions and denominations I have studied is in disparaging all others while elevating themselves to most favored status with God, at least in their own minds. The truly meek, in my experience, are those who those religions ignore and sneer at. My own belief in God has been deepened and enriched since I became one of the untouchables. Theirs is a meekness of spirit that is beautiful to know.

Golden Children

We were innocent once, you and I,
Golden children in a golden world,
Playing beneath a sapphire sky
But that was oh, so long ago
Before the world
killed the rainbow glow
and left us wandering, lost and alone



There was a man who chased the good life so hard he ran right
by it. . . . He Was Me.

In Your Hand

The best things in life never are planned
But now that I find my heart in your hand
I have become the world's most blessed man
Now you have my heart in your hand
My heart in your hand

At night I wonder, when did it happen and how
Without my planning it the future is now
I'm alone with you in a once dreamed-of land
Now that you have my heart in your hand
My heart in your hand

It glows like tomorrow in that promised land
This heart of mine that's in your hand
I'll never leave you, I couldn't you know
For you have my heart in your hand
My heart in your hand

Saving Dreams

Once I owned a shiny bright red car
although it was just a toy.
In it my dreams carried me near and far
for I was just a little boy.
I've owned many cars since those golden days,
black, blue, green, brown and cream,
and driven countless streets and country ways.
But never red.
I'll keep the little boy dreams.



I save memories like some people save money for feeding
the mind is as important as feeding the body.

On Man And God And Creation

The science of man complacently watches molecules
tumbling to and fro.

It's learned to tell just when, and where
each one of them will go
and what they'll do
in any given circumstance.

Nothing, science sagely says,
in this world is left to chance.

Of the grandest arrangement of them all,
beyond the stretch of human mind,
that from which all things spring,
even humankind,

having not been designed
and surely not controlled by man
science then as sagely says,
not one bit of it was planned.

Don't you, as I, find it odd?

Successes science calls its own;
failures go to an unacknowledged God.



The universe has no meaning without God.

Regrets

Oh I've lived a life of many regrets,
a lot of dumb moves; a lot of bad bets
But I'll find a way to get it straight yet
this life of many regrets

I stand alone and look back the years
and see rivers of others tears
now I start to shed my own



Faith and understanding mix less well than oil and water. If
faith is present understanding is needless. If understanding is the
goal, faith is denied.

To Fiona

Coom wi' me whur we c'n see
th' moonbeams, dancin' o'er the hills.
'Tis a sight ye've got to see.
We'll listen to the whip poor wills.

An', when th' mist comes wispin' up the hill
ta mingle with th' fallin' dew
I'll hold ye tight ta fend th' chill.
An', maybe, steal a kiss or two.

and maybe steal a kiss or two.

I love you, and you love me
and love will let our hearts break free
like th' moonbeams dancin' on the hills
to th' music of the whip poor wills,
th' music of the whip poor wills



All of life is today.

Don't Weep For Me

Please, please, don't shed your tears for me,
all you who must remain behind.
I leave a world still partly free.
For you, fate won't be near as kind.
This world of ours which now I part
still yet bears traces of His love;
it's not all ruled by lust and greed.
Some still honor our God above.
You boast of power you don't have;
you lust for wealth beyond your grasp.
You say man can rule - that God is dead!
You fools, you're dancing with an asp.
I've known joys you could have shared
had you but looked beyond the glint of gold,
had you taken time to let Him know you cared
instead of worshiping something bright, but cold.
I look forward to where I'll be,
beyond the things you want to do.
So please, please, never weep for me.
It's meeter I should weep for you.



Planet Earth is a beautiful Christmas Tree ornament, just one
small decoration among many in the universe.

Food For Thought

Some things we consider food for thought
when digested, give – naught



The past lives with me now, returning memories long stored away, condensed yet still alive. I will take them with me when I go.

They and I will become a completed, integral part of the universe adding to the whole. I must apologize for my contribution. But it is not yet time to go, not until all I have been is reviewed and completed. It is a time for remembering, renewal, and preparing for the next step. There is no fear in what is happening, just acceptance, and, in a manner of speaking, excitement. I will become one cell, one gene, maybe less, in the entirety. That is enough.

Pimas of Arizona

Leather toned, the men who till its soil,
bent and wrinkled by the sun's harsh kiss.
Don't mark seasons by their fruits of toil
for this is land the seasons miss.
Better yet, mark their day's endeavor
By progress made today, and whether
Tomorrow sand will rule, and they must start anew
retilling land that yesterday their efforts knew.
And when their course is run they say
I existed here and now I die.
You and yours will have this land unspoiled;
this vermillion earth and azure sky.



Wisdom is the essence of life. Without it,
life has no real meaning and
God becomes a myth.

The Land of Happy Waters

There was a land of happy waters
prancing, dancing, singing, to the sea.
A mystic dream-filled land of laughter,
home of Cherokee.

Hazed blue mountains kissed the sky
where Eagle, Hawk and Raven flew.
Now the mountains moan, and sigh,
mourning friends that once they knew.

Now the haze is choked with filth,
and acid rain bathes dying trees
that once towered tall and green.
in the land of Cherokee.



My life has been a series of unrelated, unfinished chapters.

Clouds

The soaring clouds sing a song of life
whose moods mirror those of we below
from the joys of love to fear and strife
through night, through day, then evenings glow
They are born, and move and live, then die
into nothing, then are born anew
to drift on winds high in the sky.
I don't know which cloud is me, or you.
I've searched for truth and just found lies.
I've searched for love; it wasn't there.
I've searched for peace beneath the skies,
And searched for meaning everywhere.
The only truth I've known is what I know.
The only love is what I give
Peace is hidden beneath the snow.
*S*ometimes I find it hard to live.



Look forward to the future for it holds memories yet
to take place. It is the true cradle of history. The
past is but a repository of the past.

On The Shelf

Until I better know myself

It's best I stay upon the shelf



One of the tragedies of life is having the vocabulary to express
ones innermost feelings when they are but memories
rather than having the ability to express them at the
moment of their greatest impact.

So much is lost.

Paths

I walk paths you haven't trod
searching always for my God,
He's there, I know He's there,
just waiting for me to find him. I will.



Man sometimes spends much effort to crack open a rock
and remove an obstacle. Often-times the rubble from
the breaking present more obstacles
than did the rock.

So I'm Fey

So I'm fey, as many say.

Life's more pleasant that way.



Evening clouds trailing fringes of mauve, red and gold
across mountaintops.

Wild Azaleas

Come with me to a secret spot I know,
a sun-flecked glen in the deep green woods;
a place where vivid wild Azaleas grow,
and nature shares her many moods.
There the two of us will sit and ponder why
man must war and bicker without cease,
and kill, and cheat, and steal, and lie,
and never know the joys of love and peace.
Why must man be so cruel, so seldom kind,
denying truths his inner mind must know?
You and I, we'll breach that state of mind,
in the deep green woods where wild Azaleas grow.



The most precious gifts have no monetary value.

My Course is Run

My course is run,
and looking back the path I see
a multitude of twists and turns,
all engineered by me.

Had I the wit to use the rules God made for man
It would have been the course ran straight and true
Instead I chose the weaker route and hurt and preyed
On those who only gave me love, and love I soon betrayed
The lessons learned this way are hard, and mark and scar the heart
The bitter gall is all the wasted breath and space taken
from those whose lives are whole
I can't recall the hurt, nor dry the tears
that mark the trails I've traveled all those years
But know this from me, no more broken promises will pass my
lips, to fall on trusting ears
If there's a message to be learned from my twisted way
through life, it's this:
Brothers, tread with care and step not where I've trod
If you would assure yourself a place to rest with God.
I face what's left with fear, that I've no time to do some
worthwhile things man is meant to do.
But should God, with his amazing grace decree
there is a little time for me
I'll only ask to be used as best would suit the plan
And hope that somewhere I'll fit, and join the brotherhood of man
But if it's not to be, and my passage soon will cease
I go with prayer on my lips, God please give me peace

Things Mechanical

Things mechanical
are satanical



Don't blow your horn until you know the tune you're playing.

Wonderin'

Tattered, torn, scarred and tired am I
If you only see the outer man,
for I've lived hard all my life
and experienced near all man can.
I've been tormented by a vision
that doesn't match the manly scheme.
I've often damn near killed myself
to match reality with dream.
Now, in the days of now, I find
the dream that's haunted all my days
was not a shadow in my mind,
but was reality in every way.
Is it too late to turn back time,
and deny what I've mostly been,
to recapture now that reality,
and start over once again?
In my heart I know I can,
for God's love conquers all.
The sins that ruin a man forgiven,
if I but heed His call.



A gift is not a gift if one must ask for it, nor is a gift a gift
if one begrudges offering it.

How Very Rich Am I

I watched the magic of the night
and felt the wind caressing me
until the moon danced out of sight,
and wandered west, to find the sea.
Then dawn again coaxed forth the sun
to spread it's light across the sky.
I marveled at the things He's done.
How very, very rich am I.



I must spend the days left me in making the best use possible of the temple God placed me in when I was born. To date, through both ignorance and callousness, I have sadly abused it. But, God willing, it will finally be put to the use for which it was intended.

Local Office Holders

Here's to our local office holders
who stand straight and look bolder
than ever God would dare
then count with joy
the election returns
that put them where
to be they yearn
but something's odd
their plans were carried to perfection
they won their almighty election
but, make no mistake --
Not one of them made a promise
he couldn't break.

Spring

Up from the warmth of the south
Spring came charging in today.
Suddenly on bright green fields
children shout and play.
The birds are back again
rebuilding rustic homes
creating tiny kingdoms
in leafy, airy domes.
Kites are leaping in the air
and marbles roll round in rings.
Spring in all its glory
means a million different things.



He who seeks to please everyone
pleases no one, especially himself.

Eternity

The winds singing through the trees
and in high rocky mountain passes,
are ancestor voices telling us eternity is real;
ours to inherit and share with them.

The music is beautiful if we but listen.
It tells not only of man's own now dim past,
but gives promises of a future we have yet to know.

It is wordless, for words only express mortal thoughts:
life and eternity are above mere words; the music of the soul.



We look to our fellow man demanding perfection where
it doesn't exist, then grow angry when our own
imperfect judgment proves we were right.

Joy of sunsets

There is no fun in watching sunsets
but if we look long enough
we find them full of joy



Man cannot know about life until he has faced his own death

On Cathedrals

A new dam is built;
a new shopping mall takes form;
a new mine is opened;
each one destroys part of our cathedral.
Soon we'll have no place to worship,
and neither life nor God will have meaning.



The difference between reality and fantasy lies in what
one truly believes; therefore my reality may be
a fantasy to you. But if I respect your fantasy
my reality will grow.

Sunset

As the westing sun glows gold, then red
I wonder where you are, and why
I'm here alone, alone again
watching daylight die.



Life without mysteries is an unbearable thought. Why then must we try to solve all mysteries? As we solve each we then become bored with what we have unraveled. Will this continue until we have reached the point where life itself is boring and not worth living? Wouldn't it be wiser and more mentally healthy to leave some mysteries for what they are and leave it alone?

Port Wine Cheese

Port wine cheese is redder

But I think cheddar's bedder



Not seeing, touching, or measuring something doesn't mean it isn't real or doesn't exist. Many things exist that man has not seen, or touched, or measured. How did we uncover atoms? What of the soul?

Twists and Squirms

No matter how man twists and squirms
We can only know God on God's terms.



Nothing we can do will change the progression of time. Wise men adapt to it, as does nature. Other men uselessly fret about it and just as uselessly try to bend it to their wills. Time ignores them and marks its own course as they die.

Old England

Olde England, when in her prime,
stretched her rule to every clime.
The greatest gift of that master,
was in every case-disaster
Established life was swept away
when Olde England had her say.
Time honored laws she then disrupted
to honor hers, which were corrupted.
For her one's life never mattered,
man as well as towns were shattered.
Nothing remained that was sound
Until Olde England got her bloody pound.



I cannot please you unless I first am pleased with myself.

Why

Your truth is yours, but can't we share
And spend our time beneath the sky?
and build our castles in the air
If you say no I'll ask you, why?



Finding God is an individual matter. Sharing what we've found
is a collective matter.

Appalachia

Oh mighty Appalachians
how calm and still you lie,
with your snow encrusted shoulders
braced against the winter sky.
While in your sheltered valleys
hidden from the driving snow,
a myriad varied creatures live,
who quietly come, and quietly go.
How many have you sheltered
in all those countless years?
How many dreams were answered?
How many turned to tears?
How many winters turned to spring,
and green summers come your way?
How long my Appalachians,
in your splendor may I stay?



The first portion of life is spent making memories for the latter.

A wise person seeks to create pleasant ones.

jessie

jessie helms

underwhelms



Political correctness is an attempt by government regulations and law to enforce what is only common sense and respect. Such cannot be taught or enforced by government, but in the home. As with morality, political correctness is not a function of government.

It leads to mediocrity and self-deception. The result is leaders become followers, and followers leaders. That is against natural laws. It is a fact of life among humans that the vast majority are of average talent and ability. That segment seems to spend its time trying to pull down those of greater talent and ability in order that they may feel themselves equal, and, being in the majority will probably succeed. They don't even realize that in so doing they will limit their own lives and opportunities.

Nature

There's an old song, "You Always Hurt The One You Love," that tells part of the story of problems besetting the world we live in. Those of us who love the natural world are seeing it destroyed before our eyes. We cry inwardly and bemoan it to kindred souls, but, are we doing anything about it? The answer is, must be, no.

Without our active support then, nature is being more and more exposed to destructive forces while those who could help stand by, wring their hands and do nothing.

The other part of that problem is that a breed of humans has evolved which is so divorced from anything that is not purely materialistic and intellectual that they blindly, unknowingly, risk destroying the means of living for the entire planet, for their seeming magic has blinded most of the humans on this earth to the reality of the balance which supports us all. The animals and plants aren't impressed at all, other than suffering while those persons play intellectual and destructive games that upon analysis produce no real benefits© for anything other than the worship of what we call money, which is at best an artificial measurement of our worth.

When alone I think of them as stupid evil children for, aside from their unarguable technical intellect, they are without belief or respect for anything outside their own interests. They have no concept of the realities of life, or enjoyment of it.

There are those grey haired generals and admirals who still order toy lead soldiers about as they did when they were children playing games, not taking into consideration the toy soldier are no longer lead, but humans, both friendly and enemy. They see enemies who don't really exist any longer, but cannot be convinced otherwise,

for that would deny their lifelong efforts and personal reason for living.

Then there are the scientists, extremely disciplined, narrow minded, but brilliant, who see the world as a controllable, or a to be controlled entity, and their quest for control denies the right or purpose of any other consideration. They too miss the most important knowledge of all, that life, just life itself, is more important than any scientific knowledge they can produce or wars they can win. They don't realize, or admit, that it is not necessary to totally control something to enjoy and benefit from it: that something other than man also has rights to enjoy life, no matter on what level they may be.

They are probably more dangerous than any of history's devils, including Hitler and Stalin and Genghis Kahn, and like them cloak their evil in the guise of doing what is good for mankind. Their evil blinds the population with dazzling demonstrations of how man can control that which needs no controls, but accommodation.

They project a life of leisure and comfort that would relieve us of any physical efforts save pleasurable ones, not realizing that a body must be made to function in order to be healthy.

An American President, Dwight Eisenhower, once warned the American public to be especially on guard against what he termed would be a "military industrial complex," which would dominate every aspect of our personal lives and freedoms.

Another equally famous American of almost two centuries earlier, Ben Franklin, when thanked by a Philadelphia matron for helping free the nation, told her, "Madam, it was easier to win freedom than it will be to keep it. That task is in your hands."

The warnings of both those great men have gone unheeded and now we are faced with a greater struggle than at any time in

our history as a nation.

The enemy is not someone we can face with guns and force, for the enemy is part of us. It is our neighbors who create new electrical marvels, or a friend who is a construction employee who busily tears down in days what nature took hundreds or thousands of years to build. It could be a banker who advises us how to increase our paper wealth without any real effort on our part so that we can buy a newer car, or a boat, or any of a number of things.

To make it short we have a new God, one which we were repeatedly warned against in the Bible, and one which, it is becoming clear, will destroy all of humanity if not rejected, of life itself. Every day lost in turning that God aside weakens our chances of surviving and having life on this planet survive our madness.

As hopeless as it seems that battle can be won.

The one thing the captains of the military and industry, the military/industrial complex, cannot themselves survive is a united and determined populace demanding a halt to the madness.

We have learned that government, at least the American government, listens to the power of the industrial military complex more than they do the real needs of the citizenry. But government too can be brought into line.

How, you may ask?

Simple, form a nationwide body of concerned citizens who will demand to be, and be, heard and respected. Such a body must present a united front that will brook no further destruction of the planet in the name of progress. What good is progress if no one remains to enjoy it?

Such a body must be cohesive, which means people must be willing to spend free time and learn what is actually happening, and

how it came to pass. They must be willing to stand up to adversity and probably ridicule of those in power. But they can force a change.

The self discipline will be hard to achieve for it entails voluntarily surrendering personal time, and more than that, the surrender of dreams of leisure which are constantly dangled before us, luring us into complacency.

To begin, we must examine closely every glittering promise and toy placed before us and objectively decide what the cost really is. Will it truly enhance our lives, or provide us with a toy, so to speak, which diverts our attention from the real meaning of life?

We must realize that overcoming adversity, in its own right, can provide a certain amount of satisfaction which money or trinkets cannot buy or match. That may sound false, but examination will show it true. For instance, who takes more pride in ownership of a car, the child whose parents bought one for him as a matter of course, or the young man who worked for and saved enough money to buy it for himself or herself? Do I really need to answer that one?

Time

What is time?

Is it a measure of distance? Is it a measure of events? Is it a measure of thought? Is it a combination of all, or part, of the above? Is it the speed of light, or is the speed of light a measure of time?

Is it universal?

Or is time, as we know it, a measure of the above that applies to only this planet?

Is it constant?

Does time always have the same measurement, for identical, or similar, events to take place? Or the same time, or measurement, for an event or thought to occur? Does it always take the exact time for me to think the word yes, or does it sometimes take longer to form it in my mind than at other times?

Is it absolute or does it have variables? If it has variables how are they predicted? Controlled? Measured?

We are told that time is a scientifically proven concept. A scientifically proven concept is an absolute. Using that definition we should be able to measure any event, or distance, with absolutely no variation in the anticipated results. We should be able to control that event from concept to conclusion with absolute surety. Yet, have we defined and reached an understanding of time to the point we can do that?

For instance, we have been told that astronomers have now proved that all objects in space do not move at the same speed.

If this is true, then how does one tell with accuracy if an event, say the expansion of the universe, had occurred in an orderly and measurable way? In their measurement of the beginning of time,

therefore the universe, has the measurement now used, varied? If so, then all the scientific calculations are invalid. Does time vary with circumstance or other yet unknown variables?

On Love and Hate and Fear and Peace

God never promised to make life easy for us if we are to meet his standards and find salvation in him. But throughout the history of man, we have chosen the easy way. We verbally support the joys and personal satisfaction found in completing a difficult task, yet invariably try to find a way to avoid those difficulties.

For instance, why it is more difficult to express love than hate?

Is it that in hating we transfer our dislike of ourselves to others by painting them with our own shortcomings and weaknesses? It isn't easy to admit our faults or weakness, but easy to criticize others. That's called passing the buck, and we excel in it.

We also react to fear of the unknown, and hate it. Hate is most often based on fear, and fear on hate.

If we knew our enemies better we would surely find reflections of ourselves, and we're immersed in self-love as well as hate, failures we're quick to attribute to them. They are but opposite sides of the same coin. Most people are almost exactly as we are, wanting the same things, having the same dreams. Yet we find ourselves hating them and they us.

If we honestly look at what we hate in others, then just as honestly examine ourselves we'd be amazed at the results. I know I was.

The man who loves easiest has come to terms with his own faults and can grant others the same respect he gives himself, faults and all. It is harder to forgive ourselves than it is for God to forgive us. Love is accepting what is as it is and working with that; hate or

fear find us trying to change what must meet our own individual concepts of what should be.

We most closely approach perfection by acknowledging our own imperfections then trying to overcome them through contemplation of God's teachings as well as action.

The greatest difficulty in self-analysis is honest appraisal.

Let's face it, most of us are cowards. We have physical bravery at times, it's true. But where it counts, changing inwardly, all too frequently we find ourselves afraid to do anything for fear of stepping into the unknown.

It's so much easier to find fault with, or hate, or fear others so we can hide in the pretext we are above, or better than they, when actually the truth shows us with more in common than separating us.

How Reindeer Fly

Hi.

Do you know how Santa's Reindeer fly?

Would you like to know?

I'll bet your parents would too.

Ask them.

Well, because of something that happened last Christmas morning I'm going to tell you how the Reindeer fly. The reason I'm going to tell you is because Santa needs your help.

You'll help Santa if he needs it, won't you?

Thank you, I just knew you'd say yes.

Now.

How do I begin?

H-m-m-m-m.

All right, I know.

Last Christmas morning, about the time you were getting out of bed to see what Santa brought you, he and his eight Reindeer were just getting back to the North Pole. The sun was rising and they were worried.

Reindeer can't fly in daylight you know.

They were so tired.

Well, they were so tired they could hardly move. When the sleigh finally stopped in front of the deer barn, Santa gave a huge sigh, then just sat very still, resting. The eight little Reindeer stood still too. Their legs were trembling, and their heads hung down between their knees. They were panting and breathing very hard.

After a few minutes, Santa slowly climbed down from his sleigh and walked past each reindeer, patting it on its' "I'm very proud of you," he said. "Each of you did a wonderful job last night. I know how tired you must be. I know I've never been so tired in my whole life."

"You're right, Santa," bleated Vixen. "I didn't think I'd be able to fly the last few hundred miles."

"I don't think I'll ever be able to move again," panted Blitzen. "Won't someone please just put me in bed?"

The other Reindeer all said how tired they, too, were.

"Well, my little friends," Santa said. "I'm going to put away my things and get some rest. You put your things away too and enjoy a long rest for yourselves."

Slowly Santa unhooked each deer from the sleigh. then took his empty gift bag and very, very, slowly started toward his home.

Even more slowly the Reindeer carried their harnesses to the barn, groaning and moaning with every step.

Inside the barn there were hooks with each Reindeer's above them. The deer hung their harnesses on the hooks.

Then they opened boxes, also with their names on them, and began taking off their shoes and putting them away.

That's when the trouble began.

Suddenly Prancer exclaimed, "One of my Magic Reindeer shoes is missing!"

OH!

MY!

That's the secret.

Santa's Reindeer can fly because they wear special Magic Reindeer shoes! You won't tell anyone will you? Promise?

All right now. Pay close attention. We still have to find out how you can help Santa, don't we?

As soon as Prancer made his terrible discovery, all the other Reindeer gathered around him.

"Are you certain it's gone?" asked Dancer.

"Where did you put it?" Blitzen inquired.

"I-I didn't put it anywhere," Prancer said, "When I reached down to take it off, it-it wasn't there?"

"Well," said Donner. "As soon as the rest of us put our shoes away, we'll help you look for your missing one."

With that, the other Reindeer carefully put their Magic Reindeer shoes in their boxes and very, very carefully locked them. Then the search began.

The tired little deer removed every bit of hay from the barn, struggling and panting with each move they made.

They looked under everything, and behind too.

The missing shoe was not to be found.

They went outside, looking and searching over every bit of ground between the barn and the sleigh. Till, there was no missing shoe.

Finally they gave up.

"We must go tell Santa," said Dancer. "He has to know about this. He'll know what to do."

"Let Prancer tell him," said Vixen. "It's his shoe that's missing."

"I-I-I, well, I don't want to go alone," stammered poor Prancer. Tears were running down his cheeks.

"Prancer's right," said Dancer. "This concerns all of us, we should all go together."

The eight little deer timidly made their way to Santa's house. Prancer hesitated then, taking a deep breath, knocked on the door

with his hoof.

Mrs. Claus opened the door and looked at the little deer with surprise.

"Why, good morning my dears," she said. "I thought you'd be asleep by now. Santa told me what a wonderful job you did last night, and how tired everyone is. He just this minute went to bed himself."

She paused, looking at the eight worried little faces.

"Is something wrong?" she asked.

"Well, ma'am," Prancer mumbled. "I, I, that is, we, I, I, I mean....."

Before poor Prancer could say another word, Vixen bleated, "Prancer lost one of his Magic Reindeer shoes, and Then, faster than you can blink an eye, Mrs. Claus was dashing through the house, calling for Santa.

In a flash Santa was standing in the doorway.

"What's this about a shoe? What shoe? Whose shoe?" he asked.

"One of mine, sir," Prancer sobbed. "One of my Magic Reindeer shoes is m-m-missing. I-I'm sorry sir. I'm s-s-so s-s-orry."

"There, there," Santa said, gently patting Prancer on his head. "Now, don't you worry. We'll find it."

"How sir?" asked Blitzen. "We've looked everywhere."

"Are you certain it isn't laying around somewhere?" Santa asked.

"We're positive sir," answered Dasher. "It's really missing."

"Sir," said Blitzen. "I've been thinking. Maybe the shoe fell off Prancer's hoof while we were delivering gifts. If that happened, how will we ever find it?"

"That could be what happened," said Comet. "Hey- maybe that's the reason we're so tired. If the shoe fell off, it could have slowed us down. Maybe that's why we were so late getting home, and why we're so tired."

“Well, go get your rest,” said Santa. “I’ll take care of everything.”

Santa wasn’t sleepy any longer. After the little deer shuffled back to the barn he sat quietly, and thought deeply, for a long, long time. Then he picked up his telephone.

A second later my phone rang. “Shoemaker and Sons,” I answered.

“We make shoes of any type for anyone.”

“Gustavus, this is Santa,” a voice said.

“Good morning Santa, and Merry Christmas,” I replied. “How did your deliveries go last night?”

“Nicely, thanks,” he answered. “But, Gus, I have a very serious problem. You’re the only one who might help me.”

“Of course Santa,” I replied. “What can I do for you?”

“One of our Magic Reindeer Shoes is missing,” Santa “Do you think you can make another one for me?”

“I don’t know Santa,” I answered. “You know that when great-great-great-great-great grandfather, Gustavus Shoemaker, the First, made those shoes for you he promised that no more would ever be made.”

“I know, I know,” sighed Santa. “But maybe he made an extra one, or, maybe he wrote down the formula and hid it. Will you please see if he did?”

“Certainly Santa,” I answered. “I’ll begin looking right away.”

“I pray you can help me,” Santa said. “If you can’t replace that shoe, well, we might not be able to make our deliveries on time next year— or even make all of them.

“The children depend on me so much to visit them. Makes me sad to think I might not be able to visit each and every one.”

Well, for three days I searched everywhere.

I looked in every corner of the Shoemaker Shoe Factory. I looked in cabinets and desk drawers.

I looked under benches and behind boxes. I looked behind doors and over doorsills. I even searched my own home. I found nothing.

Finally, I called Santa.

"I'm sorry Santa, I've looked everywhere and can't find a thing."

"Oh, my," Santa sighed. "Now I don't know what to do. Gus, I'm really worried. What can I do? The children depend on me so much."

Well, Santa and I talked for a long time, trying to think of something that would work. We had many ideas, but none of them seemed to be very good.

Finally I said, "Santa, why don't you get the children to help you? They really love you, you know. Besides, no one is better at finding things than children, you know that."

After talking more about it, Santa agreed that you children just might be the ones to find the missing Magic Reindeer Shoe.

"Gus," Santa finally said. "I think you're right, but you must be the one who tells the children. I just can't bring myself to ask for their help. I mean, I'm the one who does things for them."

So, that's the story. Now you know why Santa needs your help, don't you?

Somewhere, maybe near your own home, there just may be a Magic Reindeer Shoe lying in the grass, or beneath a tree. It could be anywhere. Maybe you'll be the one to find it. I hope you are.

What? Oh!

What does a Magic Reindeer Shoe look like?

Well, it looks something like this.

Wait a minute, please. There's more.

A Magic Reindeer Shoe can be any color. It can be red, or blue, or green, or silver or gold. It could have lots of colors, just like a rainbow. It could even be your favorite color.

After all it is magic, isn't it?

What?

How do you let Santa know if you've found the missing shoe.

Wait. I know.

Hang it on your Christmas tree. Then, when Santa comes to your house to deliver your gifts, he'll be certain to see it. If it's really the missing Magic Reindeer Shoe he'll be certain to see it and then be able to deliver everyone's gifts on time.

Wouldn't that be nice?

Now, there's only one more thing.

Santa will have to start delivering gifts very early next Christmas because he'll be going slower, remember?

So, won't you please go to bed early on Christmas Eve, and go quickly to sleep?

Thank you for helping Santa.

Goodbye.

On Reaching for God

Years ago I stood on a high hill and watched the sun's first rays washing the stars out of the night sky. Soon those probing fingers of light chased long purple shadows across the plains and rivers in the distance and, overtaking them, clothed them in a soft glow of acceptance and anticipation before passing on westward. Even the morning breeze, though chill, seemed excited and cheerful about the coming day.

I remembered a painting of an American Indian in my grandmother's home. He was standing just as I was, maybe on the same hill for all I knew. He was also facing east and seemed to be stretching skyward on his toes with his arms raised. Even as a child I could almost hear his chanting prayer and felt included in it. That day on the hill I again felt kinship with him and unconsciously raised my arms toward the sun in thanks to the God who rules us all.

Then I caught myself and lowered my arms thinking, Christians don't do that. They pray in a church. But something in me said God unreservedly accepts all prayer and under any circumstance as long as it's sincere, so I raised my arms again. That morning I felt kin to everything on earth, animal, vegetable or inanimate. They are all equally important before God.

I had never truly understood that before. I knew that morning that religion and belief in God are not necessarily the same thing. God is above and beyond any religion, for they change to suit man's fancies. God doesn't.

In fact, I mused, the more spontaneous a prayer is it must more acceptable, for it is not contrived, but heartfelt. And our Lord Jesus taught simplicity and purity. Now, at any hour of the day I feel like

it, I make obeisance to Him and give thanks for every moment I have lived and will live. I feel closer to God now, and I still think of the Indian on the mountaintop. Whoever he was he is my brother.

Thoughts on Freedom

The death of America's freedom lies in the fact that everyone has a strong opinion on what it is, or should be, as long as their version is the one that prevails. Government, that headless, soulless, heartless beast that says it remains removed from moral issues, and though formed to guarantee our personal freedoms, is also blind to any but its own collective sense of freedom, which it deems sufficient for all. Unfortunately, government's main concern is to provide a base of continuity for itself and its employees. It's a matter of power rather than equity.

Since freedom is based on moral principles and law, government, by having absolved itself from becoming involved in matters of morality, should therefore be totally denied any voice or influence in the matter of freedom based on principle. Such should be defined and enforced by a solid majority of the voting public. Sadly that is not the case, and will not be, unless enough dedicated and interested citizens band together to make their will become a matter of law.

That will be difficult and, unless it is done it soon will become fact that almost every freedom has been prioritized, categorized, and codified, rendering it a matter of litigation rather than moral right. We have, in recent years, seen a slow but steady deterioration of freedoms our parents and grandparents enjoyed without having to worry about them.

The most simple way to bring the matter to decision can be found in the simple expedient of setting aside the normal political promises of Senatorial and House candidates in election years and telling them what is demanded of them, with their continuance

in office being the public's club. Recall from office for breach of contract is a powerful incentive to keep promises.

The basis for elected governments in this nation lies traditionally in a single premise — the government is elected to serve the people. Even our hallowed Constitution is based on, and strongly supports, that fact of our life.

Over the years public apathy has allowed the reverse to become the way it works. The vine will continue to strangle the tree unless public awareness and concern reverse the situation by sending to Congress only those elected officials who agree before, not after, their election, and regardless of political affiliation, for a candidate's pre-election promises have even less impact and provide fewer results than the most sincere *New Year's Eve* resolutions of a child.

Jimmy

Jimmy tossed on his straw pallet for a moment before slowly opening his eyes, drowsily noting the lightening greys showing through the dirt streaked window over his head. A faint gap between window frame and sill inhaled sweet morning air into the room. Just like yesterday and the day before that, and all the days before that one too. He took a deep breath and pulled the frayed aging blanket up around his chin as he waited for the next event of the day.

He smiled knowingly and comfortably as he heard faint shuffling noises in the kitchen, then the faint metallic clink of a stove lid being lifted. A minute or so later, right on schedule, the faintest hint of wood smoke reached his nostrils. In his mind's eyes he could see the old man, his grandpa, nursing the tiny flames in the stove, carefully feeding in small, split pine sticks, "kindling," the old man called them. Soon larger pieces would be fed into the iron box. The smoke aroma would almost, but not quite, go away as the heat in the stove drove the smoke up the stovepipe and away from the kitchen and rest of the house. He felt wise with that bit of knowledge the old man had taught him.

He was far too young yet to philosophize about security, and recognize happiness as an feeling as well a feeling, but he was content knowing the next thing the day would bring would be the smell of pipe tobacco coming through the window from the porch as grandpa greeted the first rays of the sun with rich, tangy, acid-sweet tobacco as he sat waiting for the equally rich aromatic smell of fresh brewed coffee to peak.

His thoughts roamed forward a bit. As soon as grandpa had his first cup of coffee and finished his smoke, he'd come tip-toeing into the bedroom and gently shake Jimmy's leg.

"Good mornin' little man." he'd say, just as every other morning. "If you're hungry breakfast'll be ready in a few minutes. You've just about got time to wash up and make your bed."

That speech hadn't varied one word for as far back as he could remember, even before grandma went to Heaven. The memory of her was more a presence than a familiar face to him. She'd always been on hand to rub away bruises, or cut his hair once in a while. Mostly he remembered the time he'd bounced out of bed one morning to help grandpa light the fire and start the coffee brewing and sit with him on the porch to hear the first birds singing to greet the sun.

Grandma had gently told him that was a special time of day for grandpa, a time for him to be alone in peace for a few minutes.

"He don't get much alone time darlin'," she'd said. "And everyone needs a little alone time each day."

"When do you get yours grandma?"

"Oh, at odd times durin' the day. After you men folks have gone to the field. Between gettin' dishes washed and the laundry out I sit an' take a few minutes off."

"When do I git to do that?"

"You do now little one," she'd answered. "Sometime every day I see you sittin' quiet like and lookin' at things, sometimes it's just the sky I think."

"But I'm just wonderin' about somethin', or thinkin' how pretty the blue in the sky is," he'd answered.

"That's alone time," she said. "Your grandpa and I do just the same thing."

He never interfered with grandpa's alone time again. It wasn't long after that that Grandma went to Heaven. It was in the wintertime and she'd been in bed for days. The doctor, whatever that was, had come and looked, then shook his head and left. Then the neighbors had come in, in ones and twos, sometimes a whole family. Finally one morning Grandpa sent him to visit his uncle Joe for the day. "Joe has a new pup you'd best look at," the old man said.

The pup wasn't much, why it could barely walk by itself, and it piddled all over the place. Uncle Joe said it would be a good rabbit dog in about a year, but that seemed an awful long time to wait for a dog to be worth anything, and besides, Jimmy wasn't sure what a year was anyway except it had something to do with days and such. The next day Uncle Joe took him home, and it was different, kind of scary, he felt ill at ease.

Grandma was stretched out in a big box and all dressed up in her town dress and looked like she was asleep except she wasn't snoring like usual. Grandpa was dressed up too, with clean pants and a white shirt. He'd even buttoned the shirt up to the collar button and it looked like his neck was pinched in a bit. There were all the neighbors there too, each in his or her best clothes. There were even a few flowers, almost wilted now, in glasses of water and grandma's only vase, the one she put his violets in that time.

Grandma's sister, Aunt Mae, took him into his bedroom and made him put on his best pair of pants and a clean shirt. He sniffled and was red eyed the whole time. He wanted to get away from her as quick as he could, she was fat and always smelled like a wet dog to him. He didn't much like her, she always made him hug her and squeezed him half to death it seemed.

Back in the living room, where the box with grandma in it sat on two chairs, people were prayin' out loud while the preacher nodded

his head back and forth and kept sayin, "the Lord gives, and the Lord takes away, blessed be the Lord, amen."

Grandpa sat in a corner by himself, watery eyed and quiet, and watched and listened as if he wanted to remember all of it. Jimmy went over and stood quietly by him. After a minute grandpa put an arm around him then put him on his lap. That was better. Grandpa smelled clean, like a fresh breeze blowin' through pine trees, with just a hint of tobacco mixed in so's you'd know it was him.

"Well little man," he said lowly so no one else could hear. "It looks like you and me are on our own now." He sniffed a minute. "You grandma has left us to go and be with God. I wish he hadn't wanted her so quick, but we can't question His will, can we?" Jimmy didn't exactly know what that meant, but he felt grandpa thought it was all right, so he agreed.

"Who'll cook our meals grandpa?"

"I expect I will, at least till you can learn some. Then we'll both chip in on it."

Then grandpa got up and thanked everyone for coming by and folks began leaving. The preacher man stood by the door as if it was his house and bid them all to show up for the burying next morning. Jimmy wondered what a burying was that was so special that everyone promised to come.

The next day was cold and blustery, and the wind went right through his worn pants and even more worn jacket. They'd belonged to Cousin Arnie, Aunt Mae's son, years before, and it was hard to tell who'd helped wear them down since. But in spite of their worn look they were clean and neat. Grandma'd always said being poor was no excuse to be dirty or ashamed. "You must always do the

best you can with what you've got," she often told him although he didn't know exactly what that meant either since he didn't have anything that he knew of, except his few chipped marbles in the pipe tobacco can.

Grandpa held his hand as they walked behind the men carrying the box with grandma in it up to the graveyard. He couldn't see her though, the lid was closed and he hoped she wasn't scared in that tiny place. The cold must have bothered grandpa more than him because the old man kept blowing his nose and sniffing every step or two.

In winter the graveyard didn't look as nice as in the summer on Memorial Day when all the family, cousins and all, met there and had a big picnic with watermelons and put flower on something they called graves to remember other family members who'd already go to be with God. Those picnics were a break for everyone. The grown ups took off a day from work and visited and sang songs and talked while the younguns played tag among the carved wooden grave markers.

Today was different. It was scary, and sad. There was a big fresh dug hole in the ground with a little water puddling in it from the light rain falling. Jimmy almost cried out when the men carrying grandma set her box on ropes stretched over the hole. Grandpa must have guessed what he was about to do because he squeezed Jimmy's hand and looked down at him.

Then the preacher moved beside the box and began praying and saying what a good woman grandma had been. He talked and talked and talked, not minding the rain, which was coming down faster, at all. Finally he had everyone sing a hymn or two. Then the men lowered the ropes and the box with grandma in it slowly went down into the hole and the puddle of water. Jimmy began shaking

and crying with the rest of the folks. Only grandpa remained quiet, looking straight ahead as if nothing was happening.

Then, to make it worse grandpa walked toward the hole, dragging Jimmy along with him, and Jimmy didn't want to go. He stooped down and got a handful of dirt and threw it in the hole, and made Jimmy do the same. Then everyone else walked by and threw a handful of dirt on the box. Then they left, walking fast now, heads and shoulders hunched against the rain.

Halfway down the hill Jimmy looked back and saw Mike Travis, grandpa's best friend shoveling dirt in all over grandma's box.

"Make 'em stop grandpa," he tugged at the old man's hand.

"It's gotta be done little man, it's the way life is. We'll talk about it later. Right now, keep yourself in control, be a man."

Jimmy didn't feel like being a man, especially now, but to please grandpa he'd do his best to do it.

Back home again all traces of flowers were gone, and the dining table had more food on it that Jimmy believed existed in the whole world. People were still talking in low tones between bites of ham or boiled eggs, or cake or pie, and sipping on coffee.

Jimmy and all of the little ones were given plates heaping with food, even cake and pie too, and told to 'sit quiet now' near the big stove which warmed up the entire house the fire was so big. He could hear the grown up women talking about grandma, about what a Christian woman she'd been, and how ready she was to always help when anyone needed it. The men were on the other side of the room, but they didn't mention grandma. Instead they were sipping from grandpa's big jug, the one with the wooden plug with a stroke of lightning carved on it. The men were talking about crops to be planted, butchering to be done while it still was cool, and things like that.

It seemed like only minutes before the women began cleaning up plates and coffee cups and grandpa put the big jug in his and grandma's bedroom. Then folks began drifting to their homes, and suddenly there was only him and grandpa in the house. He looked outside and it was already dark.

Grandpa was quiet for the longest time. Then he sat down at the kitchen table and poured himself a cup of coffee, and, looking at Jimmy for what seemed an eternity, poured him a cup too, although it was more than half milk. It was his first cup of coffee ever, and he liked it. It made him feel warm down inside.

"Well little man," grandpa finally said. "She's gone, and that's that. I don't know how I'll get along without her. She and I bin together for over forty years. I always thought I'd be the first to go.

"But life goes on, and you and me'll get along fine as soon as we learn to do things she did for us and we just took for granted. Now, we can either enjoy the learnin' or make a misery of it. What do you think we should do?"

"Grandma always told me doin' things right was a reward," Jimmy answered. "Guess we'd better go along with her grandpa."

For the first time that day the old man smiled, a little. "She's been teachin' you right along has she?"

"I just remember what she says to me."

"That's good little man, she taught me the same way, and it seems to have stuck pretty well."

"Grandpa, can I have coffee with you in the mornin'?" Jimmy was surprised at his boldness, he seldom asked for anything.

"Not for a while little man. Tell you what. When you hit five years we'll do it."

That morning waiting for grandpa to come in and wake him Jimmy wiggled a bit in his bed. In two more days he'd be five and he

was looking forward to having a cup of coffee and sharing alone time with grandpa. Since grandma died two years ago he hadn't talked much with anyone about private things.

On a Particular Kind of Music

The music of the universe cannot be heard by closed ears or minds. Yet when others cannot hear it at the same time we do they look at us in askance when told of our experience. Soon the word is out that we're "not quite right," or "mystics," or something equally not quite acceptable. Yet once heard it is never forgotten or matched by anything else.

Everyone seeks it, but will not acknowledge it when it's heard.

Only small children will be excused from the "not quite right" category, for their minds are expected to live in such fantasy worlds on occasion. We acknowledge that as their exploration of the world around them and part of the maturing process. Others seek it through drugs, which only serve to deaden the very senses for which enhancement is sought.

"Primitive" people also are more attuned to it than we, for they recognize and accept the mysterious as part of the life and death cycle. They accept it without trying to penetrate it, letting it be because it is. They are called "primitive" mainly because of that acknowledgement and heeding of the universe's harmonics, and looked down upon for it.

We may learn from that by analysis. The minds of "primitives" and children are still open while ours have been channeled by "logic," and "rationality," and "growing up," or "scientific application," all of which narrow our acceptance of the universe as it is rather than if it doesn't conform with our measured vision of it.

In my adult life I've heard that music only four or five times and the haunting memory even now lingers with me. It can't be described or duplicated by mortals. I have tried to recall it but can't. Such

rhapsody cannot belong to humans, they must become part of it. It can only be heard when we are totally free of stress and our minds are void of worldly affairs and open to it. It's a gift. Grasping for it only drives it away, for it, like a butterfly, only lands on your shoulder when it knows you won't try to trap it, for it doesn't belong to humankind but to itself and God.

No one who has heard it can never again doubt or deny God.



As my dreams are so I am..

No Fear

I feel sorry for people who live in constant fear of real or perceived dangers; whose entire lives are spent in terror that danger may come their way. Their lives stretch longer than Methuselah's I'd imagine, and every moment of it is terror filled. Poor, miserable, jellied souls.

There are no guarantees on how long life will last, period. There probably are more dangers in the midst of Manhattan, or Paris, than in the most remote and wild piece of real estate on this globe.

Danger, when recognized and approached with intelligence, becomes adventure, and adventure is what makes life worthwhile.

There is danger in a football game, but contact sports also are adventures. There is danger in a poisonous snake lying coiled in a bush, but a judicious approach to the snake is an adventure, to be regaled later with friends, or memories.

I blame the medical profession, for all the good it does, in creating unwarranted and unbounded fears into the women, and therefore the children, of this nation. There is great profit in fear. Things that we took for granted when I was a child© measles, whooping cough, chicken pox, croup, and on and on, © in the parlance of modern medicine are evils and dangers worse than the wrath of Satan which used to be hurled down from church pulpits. Yet humanity has survived.

The politicians are in on the great scare tactic too. We hear that twenty thousand children a year die from such and such a disease. Horrible. Terrible. How can parents be so immune to dangers and let those innocent little ones die? Massive government spending

programs are instituted in the name of humanitarianism, but really they are based on fear rather than real concern.

I am not belittling death. It is a tragedy for those whose loved ones face and succumb to it. I mean no callousness toward them when I say that twenty thousand children dying from such and such is not too unusual. In fact, when one realizes that there are approximately forty million children facing the same potential risks, it's almost negligible. Twenty thousand deaths from a population of forty million resolves into one death per five thousand children; far better than any other species of animal on earth.



I must spend the days left me in making the best use possible of the temple God placed me in when I was born. To date, through both ignorance and callousness, I have sadly abused it.

But, God willing, it will finally be put to the use for which it was intended.

Progress

Progress, contrary to the captains of industry and governments, is not building more by destroying more, or the unneeded growth of technology for the sake of growth rather than actual demonstrated need, nor does it hinge on accumulating an abundance of economic wealth.

Progress is understanding, understanding the relationship and importance of our bond with the rest of this planet and all that exists on it, whether it be plant, animal or mineral. Everything has an equal place and right with man on this planet.. We are told by the best scientific minds that the universe is tightly structured, yet the same science is built on waste.

Real Progress is the growth of understanding and consideration, it has nothing to do with the growth of wealth or possessions. In the case of technology progress is most accurately defined by providing a real need with little or no damage to our surroundings instead of a frivolous, manufactured, desire which depletes something else.

Progress, in modern terms, seems to be related to the disruption, or, in some instances destruction, of the balances involving the rhythm of the universe rather than enhancing or being part of it. While our science tells us there is a measurable rhythm in the universe at the same time it interferes with it on this planet.

True progress is not waste or excess, but utility and economy. Progress is not creating abundance in one area at the expense of depleting another, for in that direction lies destruction of the very things we value most; reason and meaning in life.

The only real progress is mental growth and understanding; it is a growth of soul which generates harmony with the world around us and shows us how we can blend with it rather than how we can bend it meet our short range desires and hedonism. Since science cannot see, measure, or control the thing called soul, it simply denies its existence.

Desire has nothing to do with progress in the normal sense of today's meaning, desire for real progress is not so much physical well being as it is intellectual growth and of knowing our place and accepting it.

Progress cannot replace what is irretrievably lost or destroyed in the name of progress.

A Day On The River

The mist lifts a foot, clinging tenaciously to the underbrush and trees shivering in the pre-dawn breeze. With each foot it rises muted sounds become a little louder.

The murmur of the waterfall a quarter of a mile away becomes a low mutter, then gradually, a distant rumbling. Rustling noises in the brush increase as day animals relieve the night shift from duty. Birds chirp softly in the trees, like a church choir preparing for early services. Soft now, the songs soon will swell in volume and melody, flooding the world around them with song.

Tiny flames from the fire work with the faint breeze to dispel the mist, casting ever-brighter tongues of flame to push it away from our campsite. A bit more fuel and the flames grow still brighter, offering warmth which we hasten to accept, for it's chilly yet. The mist resists, swirling first here then there in wavy tendrils which float fluidly about us as they weave back in behind the breeze and flames. But it's a losing battle, one which has been repeated for countless years and the outcome is foreordained. The mist must go.

Day is breaking and we've been in on it from the start, savoring each new revelation as if it never happened before. But they have, many times, for us as well as the now vanishing mist. The good things of life are unfolding before our eyes and we're happy to just be alive on hand.

Shortly the aroma of fresh brewing coffee mingles with the wood smoke. Frying bacon and eggs then add their contribution to the heady perfumes of nature that man can't begin to duplicate. Overwhelmed by the forces arrayed against it, the mist sinuously

vanishes somewhere above our heads. It's gone from sight now but it will never vanish from memories.

There isn't much human sound; a bit of quiet conversation, a low laugh. We're too busy watching the magic that changes somber, dark night blues into the exultant rich browns, fire oranges, deep reds and yellows of a wakening October morning. Nature seldom paints the same scene twice, it's always just a bit different, yet always the same too; only man insists on trying to change to suit his whims what is already good. We'll take it just the way it is right now.

We're on our annual October pilgrimage, an expedition we insist on making when most others are hunting. Then the river is usually ours alone to enjoy.

What we're really experiencing is a time of renewal. The sun's first rays now disclose liquid diamonds and rubies dancing in the spray rising from the now plainly heard falls. A flock of ducks wings swift and low over the water and we're entranced by their amazing formation flying, and watch until they vanish toward the south.

Breakfast over, another cup of coffee and a cigarette serve as an excuse for prolonging our immersion into sensations that are too intense for conversation. But like the mist we will also move along.

Gear is prepared ritually, waders put on and camp deserted by slow degrees; each event of this pilgrimage must be savored fully. But it's time now to catch fish and enjoy the scenery, or enjoy the scenery and maybe catch fish. It doesn't matter much which way it works out. We're here, the world is beautiful, the sky is clear, and the smell of wood smoke enriches it all.

Walking to the river the path through the underbrush is laced with spider webs and each drop of clinging dew on them is an opal

in the brightening light. We carefully avoid destroying them. The spiders worked hard to string them out.

The roar of the falls grows louder and spume hovers almost to the treetops which are still frosted and glisten in their brilliant colors beneath the sun. The chill from the water faintly penetrates waders and wool socks as we step in. Wet footprints on rocks at the water's edge will linger longer than did the mist.

A brown ball of fur scampers up a tree; a squirrel surprised at its morning riverside ablutions, peers down at us from behind the trunk. Overhead a pink-bottomed cloud, the day's first, drifts into view.

A faint splash as the first lure drops lightly into a swirling eddy is followed shortly by an electric tug. The day's first fish, a smallmouth, fights for its life and freedom, sending flashes of iridescent green and silver through the water, its ruby red eyes flashing anger and fear. It deserves freedom and gets it. It's a ritual of thanks to release the first one. Shortly there is another bass. This one goes on a stringer. More follow.

The sun rises higher. Under its light the colors in the trees grow more brilliant. The sky becomes a deep blue background for the golden orb which eyes cannot directly scan. A smoke break on a rock is enhanced by the magic sound of the river. The sky grows still brighter and the sun warmer. The desire to take a nap is offset by the bit of chill still carried on the breeze. More fish and the sun is suddenly overhead. Lunchtime.

The campsite looks domestic with sleeping bags airing over bushes and just a hint of the aroma of woodsmoke and coffee lingering in the air. Overnight it has become our home.

A few minutes of rest and conversation, a few blatant lies about the one that broke the line (it was in reality, snagged); a cup of

warmed over coffee and a sandwich before succumbing again to the siren song of the river. Time passes, oh so swiftly, when life is balanced, and all too quickly vermilion streaks in the western sky signal the days fishing is ending. The water is colder now as slate grey wavelets crisped with pencil lines of silvery white quicken in the rising breeze.

Streaming across the water and through the trees beams from a lantern guide us home. Closer in the smell of coffee and frying fresh caught bass hurry footsteps. The vermilion is fast disappearing, replaced by a cold darkening grey. It's the quiet, slowing down, meditative time between sunlight and starlight.

Dinner completed and dishes washed, a hot toddy soothes us inside. The firewood is piled on higher and the flames help stave off a deepening chill. Stars begin to appear, brighter and closer than usual; it will be cold tonight.

The soft strumming of a guitar stays close to the fire, avoiding the chill with us. Now laughter and conversation mark the easy camaraderie of years of sharing these miracles far too many people have never bothered with, or haven't had opportunity to know. Although we're not all related we're a family, a very special family, brought together by choice and love of the same things.

The liquid warbling of a screech owl stops conversation for a moment and we share the night with it.

Sleeping bags, smelling fresh and pure from sunbathing are warm and welcome. The last glowing embers disappear, leaving only the heady aroma of woodsmoke in the night air. The roar of the falls recedes into a low murmur once more as the mist again descends and sleep approaches. In the morning when we wake the

mist still will be caressing us and everything will be new again, as it was today.

It's been a good day. There have been many similar ones before it, but fewer will follow as the river struggles for its own life against the incursions of man. No day has ever provided the exact joys this one has, so they're recorded and stored away for future remembrance along with earlier, equally intense ones.

But others equally vivid, and yet to be recorded, seem to be fading with the mist as man seems bent on destroying all he says he loves, since he cannot just change it to suit his will. I rest easy for the moment though, savoring today's joys, thankful I've been so blessed.

It's then guilt steals into my sleeping bag with me.

What we have always taken for granted is disappearing as an ever-growing population exchanges paved street for woodland paths; tall concrete and glass buildings for tall and majestic trees, and silted channels for free flowing rivers. We are losing touch with nature. That may be the greatest tragedy man faces.

What will be left for our grandchildren? What will the animals scurrying around in the dark, inherit?

It would be rewarding to me to know our children and grandchildren will know this kind of love of life and happiness. I quietly pray these things will in some fashion be here for them.

About the Author

David Hale Farley was born near Beckley, West Virginia in 1927, the oldest of three children. His father was a coal miner; his mother a daughter of the hills. His youth was spent in the factory town of South Charleston, West Virginia, where his father worked for Union Carbide. "Dave," as he became known to all, was creative, restless, bold, and possessed of a memorable sense of humor. That same creative spirit and sense of humor are his yet today.

At seventeen, Dave enlisted in the Navy during the final months of World War II. Following his discharge, he worked at Union Carbide for a period of time before joining the Army during the Korean conflict.

Upon returning to his native West Virginia, Dave enrolled at West Virginia University. He took a degree in Journalism, leading to a position with the Charleston Daily Mail, where he reported on the local scene in his boyhood town of South Charleston. Still searching, he went to work in state government as Director of Office Services for the State Road Commission. In 1972, he and his wife Joan and their children moved to Roanoke, Virginia, where Dave managed local malls and owned a tobacco shop.

During the late seventies Dave went to Arizona, thence to South Carolina, North Carolina, Arizona again, Alaska, Arizona again, working as an entrepreneur, owning several businesses and otherwise applying his ingenuity. He recently relocated to Western Tennessee, where he resides near his daughter Katherine.

Throughout his life, Dave has loved camping, fishing, photography, rocks and gems, knives, archery, musical theatre (he performed in several shows in Charleston), kids, earth's mysteries, history, good music, dancing, and being around interesting people.

His passion for the desert led him to his several residencies in Arizona. Dave says of himself, "Whatever else my life has been, it hasn't been dull." He still maintains his love for writing, his positive outlook on life, and his infectious sense of humor.

