

# Born Again

A WolfStone Ranch Musical Production

## The Birth of the Born Again Project

A Call to "Golden Rule" Activism

I experienced MY "born again" epiphany in a painful introspective moment on a quiet stretch of highway between Los Angeles and Santa Barbara... **What's wrong with my life?** Wasn't I doing everything right? At that point I'd spent a couple years in LA, pursuing my rock'n'roll dreams with Passion, Commitment and Hard Work... and I was making some meaningful progress (*although I'd move over to the Contemporary Classical world*)... But I wasn't at all happy. Something seemed seriously "off" or "missing" in my life. I felt that I was probably making some huge personal (*rather than professional*) mistakes... and yet I wasn't sure what they were... or at least I wouldn't admit them to myself.

But then, in response to my internal query, a Still Small Voice Within spoke up immediately and said, "Finally! You are finally ready to pay attention to me!" And with that, in a flash of insight that seemingly came from out of nowhere, **I realized that I had thrown out the baby with the bathwater!** What???

Until that fateful day that I'd asked myself that Big Question and, to my utter amazement, received an instantaneous Big Answer, I'd just been following my own little heart, tripping along my own little path. To begin with, I had walked away from my Christian upbringing when I graduated high school and left my small Midwestern hometown... Now, don't go jumping to conclusions! I'm NOT saying that I recommitted to Christianity. On the contrary, religion had never seemed particularly relevant or necessary to me. However...

I suddenly realized that **I was compromising my principles**, in big and small ways ~ while at the same time not being sure what my principles really were! So it suddenly became crystal clear that **what was missing in my life was a Conscious Pursuit of WISDOM and a Total Commitment to Living My Life with Uncompromising INTEGRITY.** I humbly had to admit that, in order to navigate the deeper complexities of life with any clarity and success, I desperately needed some guidance from some much smarter and wiser people than me! Like, maybe some very special people who'd devoted their entire lives to pondering What Really Matters in Life. Like, maybe I should consult some ancient texts that had been passed down by their devout followers for hundreds or thousands of years. Now, a religious person might say that what I was missing was "putting God first in my life", but I saw it from a much more secular perspective. Anyway, finally figuring out that I didn't know what the heck I was doing and that I needed some expert help in figuring it out was probably the first mature and independent thought I'd ever had!

Nonetheless, this surprising revelation didn't on the spot change my external life (*as it had my internal life*). No, I proceeded to commission the Minimalist composer with whom I'd entangled my life and career to co-write a major work with me (*he the music, I the lyrics*) ~ which became our [wolfMASS](#), about honoring and protecting Mother Earth. Because that's what my heart had called me to do!

You see, I'd always loved all animals with my whole being... and I'd always wanted to do something (*maybe several things*) to address their human-caused suffering... "someday", once I'd achieved some success and had the spare time and money to do so. But it finally occurred to me, why wait? Why not use my musical career to serve my cause? Duh!

Well, we eventually completed our collaboration, recorded our [wolfMASS](#) and performed it a few times in the US and Europe. But recognizing our diverging goals, we eventually went our separate ways... after which I found myself writing my own prayer songs of healing ~ as well as activist songs for social- and eco-justice, songs about the preciousness and "sacredness" of Mother Earth and all her "children" (*all living beings, not just people*).

But I also found myself casually exploring the major religious traditions of the world. Not deeply, as some do, but more generally... and in the process I discovered that there are several Universal Truths recognized by all of them! Over time, I came to the conclusion that I had become what I would call "spiritual", though not "religious". That is, I decided that Christianity was way too small of a tent for me. Ditto for all other religions. **And really, the only thing that makes me "spiritual" in my worldview, as opposed to "secular", is that I believe there's "Something More" than just what we experience with our five senses.** Why???

For one thing, because I so strongly feel it in my heart and in my gut. And my research has taught me that there have been so many profoundly wise and extravagantly compassionate people (*some seen as spiritual leaders*) who have believed in "God" or "consciousness"... aka "Something More". For another thing, I find I resonate with **Unity's** little monthly publication of meditations, **Daily Word**, which reminds me how to stay focused on What Really Matters in Life, expressed in religious lingo. Then there's my guru (*though only through his books and videos*) **Eckhart Tolle** and his "**Power of Now**". Everything he says rings of Truth to me, because (*as he says*) he's only reminding me of what I already know deep inside. **But where is my "church"?** Where do I feel profoundly centered in the "Sacred" within myself and within all other living beings? Where do I feel I most "Belong"? Why, the answer is **wherever and whenever I'm out communing with Mother Earth and all her precious "children"** (*all the wildlife in all the wild corners of the world*), of course!

So! While I began to feel really good about walking the right path spiritually, I was struggling to find an audience for my new spiritually-inspired music... But eventually, much to my surprise and even confusion, the universe pushed me back to my hometown... where I soon felt compelled, by the crying need I saw all around me, to finally get seriously involved in animal rescue!

At first I joined the board of a local animal shelter... but after a harrowing ten months, I simply had to resign. I had come to feel that the animals there were suffering in a multitude of ways, due to what I perceived as pervasive dysfunction in the ways the shelter was being guided and managed... but I had no earthly idea how to address the plethora of problems. And ironically, I felt alone, overwhelmed and powerless to affect any change. So I adopted a couple of traumatized young dogs (*littermates*) on the list to be “euthanized” for behavioral issues... and proceeded to start my own no-kill animal rescue! (*Denver and Durango soon learned to trust me... and became very sweet, if still skittish.*)

As for ME, I learned one absolutely invaluable lesson from that agonizing experience... one which inspired my vision of a new way to approach animal rescue... or really any mission one might pursue. **I learned that having an agreed-upon mission does NOT guarantee that all members of the organization will be unified in their approach to accomplishing said mission! OR that all members will have a clue as to how (or even a desire) to communicate respectfully or kindly or effectively, not even for the sake of the mission!**

In my search for how to resolve this universal obstacle to human cooperation and collaboration, I concluded that **creating a healthy community based on healthy communication skills should always be the first order of business for any group!** I believe this principle is the foundation upon which any “community” ~ be it a nonprofit, or a business, or a governmental entity, or a church (*or any other religious entity*) ~ should build their plans for manifesting their dreams, their goals, their vision, their mission.

Well, serendipitously, around the same time that I figured that out, I discovered M. Scott Peck’s book, *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace*... and, like a starving soul suddenly finding herself at a magnificent feast, I devoured it! Having been through what I’d just been through... having learned what I’d just learned, the hard way... this book was an answer to many an unspoken prayer!

**Unless we learn to build and maintain HEALTHY communities, groups with a compassionate mission are likely to fail in achieving their goals of making life better for those they serve (whether people or animals or Mother Earth herself ~ our only home, the very source and sustenance of all life.)** Which is precisely why I’ve wanted BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES to be the #1 priority for *WolfStone Ranch*, the tiny rescue that I founded in 2010\*. Except that’s not the way things have worked out... at least not so far!

\*In the last 15 years *WolfStone Ranch* has rescued around 500 dogs and cats. A few went directly to good homes, most went to some great no-kill shelters in the St. Louis area, where I felt sure they would go to good homes. We’ve “lost” around 20 (*mostly to cancer, but a few to other fatal illnesses*). We’re a no-kill, so of course no animal has ever been “euthanized” for lack of space or other resources ~ and not even for behavioral issues. Finally, we still have around 20 animals who are considered “unadoptable” for a variety of reasons, who will live out their lives here. But I can’t rescue any more until I have help to care for them!

You see, because I've been able to find so very little help here on the ranch over the last 15 years, I've spent the vast majority of my time (*first*) creating and (*second*) maintaining the infrastructure for the animals, on top of providing all their daily care... which has meant that I've had virtually no time to seek Kindred Spirits with whom to build a healthy [WolfStone Ranch](#) **COMMUNITY!**

On the other hand, I would be remiss if I did not make it clear that there does exist something of an actual [WolfStone Ranch](#) community ~ between me and our **DONORS!** With an unexpected inheritance from my father, I was able to buy the property, start turning it into a rescue, and cover expenses for the animals I rescued during the first couple of years... But when that money ran out, I would've had to shut my doors, had I not started to receive donations from family and friends... and over time, a few more (*very generous*) donors have come on board as well. When I say "our" in regard to [WolfStone Ranch](#), that's usually who I'm referring to, our DONORS. But strangely enough, most of them live out-of-state! And equally intriguing, some of them are actually more supportive of me, *per se*, than our mission! However, two of our biggest donors are women who truly are my Kindred Spirits. We agree on things spiritual as well as political ~ by which I mean, we support (*local to national*) policies that are aimed at addressing the needs of everyone who calls our nation "home" ~ with an emphasis on helping the poor, the persecuted, the vulnerable, the disadvantaged, the abandoned and the abused... whether human or other living beings. We focus on the principles of **fairness** and **justice** and **compassion**. Notably, we all feel a connection to the Unity community (*yes, the home of the Daily Word*). While these Kindred Spirits don't live around here, we're in touch by phone regularly... and our typical conversations are part board-of-directors topics and part spiritual topics, with no line drawn between the two subjects. And it's just this kind of relationship that I'm hoping to build with Kindred Spirits that I soon hope to find closer to home... that is, with people who can be physically involved in [WolfStone Ranch's](#) projects ~ that is, animal rescue, helping to build healthy communities (*not just WolfStone's own community, but others as well*) and, of course, our new [Born Again](#) spiritually-based, activist concert!

But back to Peck's book, [The Different Drum...](#) When I discovered this book, it reminded me that, way back in college, I'd read Peck's first best-seller [The Road Less Traveled](#). I recalled that it had made quite an impression on me at the time... although, apparently, I quickly forgot all about it! Personally, I would now describe the book as an introduction to living with **integrity** and **wisdom**. The book focuses on Peck's core (*Buddhist*) belief that "life is difficult", and that its problems can be addressed only through self-discipline. What makes life difficult, he says, is that the process of confronting and solving problems is a painful one... things like **dedication to truth, the acceptance of responsibility, delayed gratification and self-discipline** itself! The exercise of discipline, he says, is not only demanding, but also a complex task, requiring wisdom, flexibility and good judgment. Well, no wonder in my youth I'd quickly "forgotten" all about [The Road Less Traveled](#) ~ nothing about it sounded easy or fun! Until... I finally realized that NOT choosing to live

with integrity and wisdom ultimately created even more suffering in my life than choosing to live in such a mature and self-disciplined manner! Duh!

So... no wonder my Still Small Voice had been able to immediately tell me what was wrong with my life... I'd been beautifully introduced to these deeply wise concepts a long time ago... but had subconsciously chosen not to keep them front and center in my life... until I hurt too bad to ignore them any longer!

Which brings me back to the subject of music in my life! The lack of local help at [WolfStone Ranch](#) also put an end to any thoughts I might've had about continuing to sing and play my music (*whether personally or professionally*). And I have to admit, it broke my heart! But I simply no longer had time for anything other than animal care, because it was constantly "raining cats and dogs in crisis" at [WolfStone](#)! **And yet I just couldn't seem to find any partners or long-term volunteers** (*whether Kindred Spirits or not*) to join me in my mission of love and mercy. And here, let me add one crucial point... **my state inspectors have repeatedly told me that this is a classic dilemma, especially for SMALL rescues and shelters in RURAL communities.**

**BUT THEN!** One fateful summer day in 2021 ~ out of the blue, and for the first time since starting [WolfStone Ranch](#) ~ in response to something I heard on NPR\* ~ I suddenly felt compelled to write a song! THIS song, the featured song of THIS project ~ [Born Again!](#)

You see, while I have been tied down (*as with an umbilical cord*) to [WolfStone Ranch](#) for 10 hours a day, 365 days a year, this restrictive caretaker position has serendipitously provided me with a unique opportunity to listen to National Public Radio for hours upon hours, day in and day out, while performing a mountain of daily animal chores!

So instead of becoming a hopelessly out-of-touch recluse, I've actually been able to stay very well informed about national and international news ~ political, scientific, cultural, even religious ~ through such programs as *Morning Edition, All Things Considered, The World, One A, Fresh Air, Throughline, Hidden Brain, TED Talks, Science Friday, Marketplace, Planet Money & How I Built This, Storycorps, My Unsung Hero, Wild Card...* and of course, *To the Best of Our Knowledge!* Truly, NPR (*as well as PBS Newshour, The Atlantic and ProPublica*) have been my stimulating and provocative Continuing Education! And more...

Through NPR and PBS, I've felt like I belong to a very special community! Through my (*albeit parasocial*) relationships with their hosts and journalists, and all their fascinating guests, I've laughed, I've cried, I've been furious... and I've been inspired!

\*an episode of *To the Best of Our Knowledge* entitled "When Mountains Are Gods"

Now, while NPR's critics claim that they have a left-leaning bias, I totally disagree. I do admit **NPR has a bias**, BUT it's toward **TRUTH** and **COMPASSION**. They seek out and share the heartbreaking stories of those who are suffering ~ to expose their need. And they also seek out and share the heroic stories of the activists who are working valiantly, creatively and successfully to address those very needs...

Terrifying and tragic stories about the effects of human-caused climate change... about the agonizing suffering this crisis is causing for people, pets, livestock, wildlife and all other forms of life... and about the nearly irreversible devastation this is causing for all the ecosystems on our planet. Heartbreaking stories about the trauma caused by poverty and racism and hatred for the "other" and so many other forms of social injustice. Crushing stories about the unimaginable brutality of senseless wars. BUT ALSO uplifting stories about all those Heroes who are working so hard and giving so much of themselves to rescue those in crisis, to save lives and to make this world kinder and healthier and safer for all living beings! So where am I heading with this paean to National Public Radio (*and PBS*)?

My *Born Again* concert ~ the vision, the script, even the multidimensional format ~ all grew out of my ongoing reactions to this rich stew of news coverage, as well as established and cutting-edge knowledge and ideas from an incredibly diverse field of experts and deep thinkers. Strange as it may sound, **I have come to see NPR as my greatest MUSE!**

Well, NPR... in addition to all the life lessons I've just shared in this personal history. **But let me make something perfectly clear... I did NOT have the HUBRIS to think that I could create a concert to save WolfStone Ranch or to save Mother Earth.** Why???

First of all, because I haven't been a practicing singer or songwriter in at least 15 years! But also because so much of what I've written over the last three years has been more a story of me waking up in the middle of the night, in response to vivid dreams or nightmares triggered by the news... and grabbing my iPhone when surprising thoughts were suddenly pouring out of my head with such poetic clarity that I felt like I was just taking dictation from the Sacred!

But once I'd "channeled" (*so to speak*) the *Born Again* song... and then *Manifesto...* the rest of the program and the script seemed to just miraculously fall into place. A few of the spiritually-based, activist songs I'd written many years ago ~ but hadn't been able to figure out what to do with ~ suddenly seemed to fit perfectly into this project! **So here we are... a prolonged "pregnancy", to be sure, but the unexpected birth of a potentially powerful project!**

I created the *Born Again* concert project in response to these foundational questions...

**What's wrong with human beings, that we can't solve the problems of all the human-caused suffering on earth?**

What are the underlying human behavioral issues that we're not successfully addressing?

There are so many HEROES ~ individuals and organizations ~ doing so very much to make a huge difference in the lives of those suffering ~ be they people or other living beings or the planet itself! **But we're currently on track to lose so many of these interwoven existential battles!** We need something new added to the mix of solutions. We need a paradigm shift. **We need an epiphany to wake up everyone else** ~ all those who are NOT already working to change the world for the better...

So please... check out my script, as well as my (*other*) supporting documents (*link below*)... and see if you think I've come up with, in my *Born Again* concert project, any good answers to these confounding questions, and a way to inspire personal epiphanies!

<https://wolfstoneranch.org/bornagain.html>

And then, if you discover that you share my vision of “**Heaven on Earth**”, won't you join me in my mission? Correction... Won't you join US, in OUR mission???

**I'm seeking Kindred Spirit musicians and singers** (*but please note... I myself will NOT be singing in this production*). I'm also looking for all the **Kindred Spirit support personnel**. And **networking contacts** to other **Kindred Spirits** who may share our vision and mission! And, of course, **Kindred Spirit donors** as well!

And if you happen to have a personal or professional connection with the **Obamas**, perhaps you could put us in touch with their **Higher Ground Productions** company?! 😊

Also, *WolfStone Ranch* could sure use some **Kindred Spirits who'd love to help me take care of the precious dogs and cats** who call *WolfStone* “home sweet home” (*either temporarily\* or for life*).

If your answer is **YES** to any of this... then I sure look forward to talking with you soon!

*Shalom Aleichem...* Peace Be With You!

*Namaste...* I bow to the Divine in you!

Jessica Karraker  
Founder and Director  
*WolfStone Ranch*

\* Perhaps one or more of the Kindred Spirits who respond to this outreach campaign will meet and fall in love with one or more of our precious “unadoptable” fur babies and adopt him or her or them???