

WolfStone Ranch

Issue #2

January - February 2015

In his book “**The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace**”, M. Scott Peck (*bestselling author of “The Road Less Traveled”*) begins his Introduction with this...

In and through community lies the salvation of the world.

Nothing is more important. Yet it is virtually impossible to describe community meaningfully to someone who has never experienced it ~ and most of us have never had an experience of true community. The problem is analogous to an attempt to describe the taste of artichokes to someone who has never eaten one.

And then he goes on, in his Introduction, and indeed in the whole book, to try to define the true meaning of community as well as to give his readers the flavor, of what it looks and feels and tastes like.

But actually, in his Prologue to the same book, he really nails it! He also nails exactly how I envision **WolfStone Ranch's** spiritual retreat for pets (and their people) coming about... God willing! So, let me reprint for you, here and now, Peck's **Prologue...**

*There is a story, perhaps a myth. Typical of mythic stories, it has many versions. Also typical, the source of the version I am about to tell is obscure. I cannot remember whether I heard it or read it, or where or when. Furthermore, I do not even know the distortions I myself have made in it. All I know for certain is that this version came to me with a title. It is called “**The Rabbi's Gift**”.*

The story concerns a monastery that had fallen upon hard times. Once a great order, as a result of waves of anti-monastic persecution in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the rise of secularism in the nineteenth, all its branch houses were lost and it had become decimated to the extent that there were only five monks left in the decaying mother house: the abbot and four others, all over seventy in age. Clearly it was a dying order.

In the deep woods surrounding the monastery there was a little hut that a rabbi from a nearby town occasionally used for a hermitage. Through their many years of prayer and contemplation the old monks had become a bit psychic, so they could always sense when the rabbi was in his hermitage. “The rabbi is in the woods, the rabbi is in the woods again,” they would whisper to each other. As he agonized over the imminent death of his order, it occurred

to the abbot at one such time to visit the hermitage and ask the rabbi if by some possible chance he could offer any advice that might save the monastery.

The rabbi welcomed the abbot at his hut. But when the abbot explained the purpose of his visit, the rabbi could only commiserate with him. "I know how it is," he explained. "The spirit has gone out of the people. It is the same in my town. Almost no one comes to the synagogue anymore." So the old abbot and the old rabbi wept together. Then they read parts of the Torah and quietly spoke of deep things. The time came when the abbot had to leave. They embraced each other. "It has been a wonderful thing that we should meet after all these years," the abbot said, "but I have still failed in my purpose for coming here. Is there nothing you can tell me, no piece of advice you can give me that would help me save my dying order?"

"No, I am sorry," the rabbi responded. "I have no advice to give. The only thing I can tell you is that the Messiah is one of you."

When the abbot returned to the monastery his fellow monks gathered around him to ask. "Well, what did the rabbi say?"

"He couldn't help," the abbot answered. "We just wept and read the Torah together. The only thing he did say, just as I was leaving ~ it was something cryptic ~ was that the Messiah is one of us. I don't know what he meant."

In the days and weeks and months that followed, the old monks pondered this and wondered whether there was any possible significance to the rabbi's words. The Messiah is one of us? Could he possibly have meant one of us monks here at the monastery? If that's the case, which one? Do you suppose he meant the abbot? Yes, if he meant anyone, he probably meant Father Abbot. He has been our leader for more than a generation. On the other hand, he might have meant Brother Thomas. Certainly Brother Thomas is a holy man. Everyone knows that Thomas is a man of light. Certainly he could not have meant Brother Elred! Elred gets crotchety at times. But come to think of it, even though he is a thorn in people's sides, when you look back on it, Elred is virtually always right. Often very right. Maybe the rabbi did mean Brother Elred. But surely not Brother Phillip. Phillip is so passive, a real nobody. But then, almost mysteriously, he has a gift for somehow always being there when you need him. He just magically appears by your side. Maybe Phillip is the Messiah. Of course the rabbi didn't mean me. He couldn't possibly have meant me. I'm just an ordinary person. Yet supposing he did? Suppose I am the Messiah? O God, not me! I couldn't be that much for You, could I?

As they contemplated in this manner, the old monks began to treat each other with extraordinary respect on the off chance that one among them might be the Messiah. And on the off, off chance that each monk himself might be the Messiah, they began to treat themselves with extraordinary respect.

Because the forest in which it was situated was beautiful, it so happened that people still occasionally came to visit the monastery to picnic on its tiny lawn, to wander along some of its paths, even now and then to go into the dilapidated chapel to meditate. As they did so, without even being conscious of it, they sensed this aura of extraordinary respect that now began to surround the five old monks and seemed to radiate out from them and permeate the atmosphere of the place. There was something strangely attractive, even compelling, about it. Hardly knowing why, they began to come back to the monastery more frequently to picnic, to play, to pray. They began to bring their friends to show them this special place. And their friends brought their friends.

Then it happened that some of the younger men who came to visit the monastery started to talk more and more with the old monks. After a while one asked if he could join them. Then another. And another. So within a few years the monastery had once again become a thriving order, and, thanks to the rabbi's gift, a vibrant center of light and spirituality in the realm.

I'd say I don't have a clue how to get from where I'm at right now with **WolfStone Ranch** to "**The Rabbi's Gift**", but actually I do (*have several clues*)! First was the dream I had (*in answer to specific prayer*) of the spiritual retreat for pets (and their people). Second, was finding this book and this myth...

...Which I share with you here so that you, **WolfStone Ranch's** steadfast supporters, can understand why I feel that our next step is for me (*with others*) to produce a Community-Building Experience. But exactly how to make that happen, well... I only have "breadcrumb" clues... as in Little Red Riding Hood in the Wolf(Stone) Forest!

And these clues are the contacts I am making through my job for Presbyterian Children's Home... First, I will soon be going up to the Buddhist Meditation Retreat (*Dhamma Sukha*) near Taum Sauk Mountain... Second, I am in the process of planning a Drumming Circle for the kids with a really cool Drumming Facilitator out of St. Louis... Exactly how everything will end up fitting together and falling into place for **WolfStone Ranch** is still a mystery to me, as I await further developments... All in God's timing!

In the meantime, I am focusing on the Power of Living in the Here and Now, taking care of today's business... which includes not just taking care of the animals I already have at **WolfStone Ranch**, but in rescuing the new cats who have recently appeared in my cat barn! (*Oops, plus 2 Dusky Conures and a Grey Cockatiel, all of whom I also recently rescued!*)

Savannah is a beautiful and very friendly calico who was easy to catch, so she is already spayed and being integrated into the cat barn family right now. **Felicia**, on the other hand, is a beautiful long-haired tabby who reminds me of **Scooby**... who showed up in my barn a couple years ago, was transferred to Best Friends Animal Society last June and, I recently, learned has finally been adopted! **Felicia** begs to be petted, and then swipes at you! But once **Scooby**

was spayed, she calmed down and became a very affectionate companion, as I'm sure **Felicia** will, too... once her hormones are under control!!

Bill Splitter continues to volunteer twice a week... and Brittany Fillipi continues her internship... I'm so grateful for their help, since I'm away from the ranch working outside jobs so much now!

Speaking of outside work, I've found working with the kids at PCH to be very rewarding... I've had some tangible success sharing not only music and yoga with the kids, but also spiritual guidance with some heartfelt one-on-one conversations sparked by such inspiration (*that I'd posted on the bulletin board in my Music Room*) as this...

I found God in myself

And I loved her

I loved her fiercely

By Ntozake Shange

So, I'm actively building the relationship and "spiritual" skills I will need to help bring spiritual healing to the people who bring their pets to **WolfStone Ranch's** spiritual retreat! I've been told that my persistence and optimism are amazing... I disagree. I believe what I am doing is simply living my Faith.

Speaking of faith, no **WolfStone Ranch** newsletter is complete without my expressing my profound gratitude to all of you, our generous donors, for your faith in me. Thank you so very much for believing in my Mission... and believing that God is guiding **WolfStone Ranch!**

Namaste