

When I Owned the World

By Mary Jane McCormick

The tall green grass across the creek near our farm was my favorite place to hide. I would go there when things got crazy in our large Irish Catholic family that eventually numbered 15 kids and two very exhausted parents.

The nuns in our 4-classroom elementary school were teaching us that our Protestant friends would not go to heaven. They also insisted that newborn babies that died before being baptized were not allowed into heaven, but instead went to what sounded like an awful place called limbo.

So many of my trips to hide in the tall green grass were to have long and angry discourses with God. To a nine year old, God was up in heaven. So, there I was shaking my finger at the sky telling God that he was making big mistakes with these dumb rules. The power I felt in my right index finger was almost scary.

I have drawn on these memories over the years. It's true that little girl, who could tell God off, has lost some of her hutzpah but not her connection to Mother Earth.

Those innocent years were spent climbing the apple trees in the orchard, playing hide-and-seek in cornfields and trying to save birds fallen from their nest. It was as if I owned the heavens and the earth.

And now, each morning as I step out onto my lanai, these memories flood back I watch the squirrels darting up and down my Colorado pine. I listen to the finches singing their high-pitched songs, the geese honking at the sun, and sit in awe as the clouds paint every sort of image. I am transported back to that carefree, in charge little girl who believed all this was made just for her.

I have grown up, but just enough to know the Universe is not mine and belongs to all of us. But that early awareness of nature and how it nurtures my soul is both ancient and new. And by the time I finish my cup of coffee, I feel like that nine-year-old spiritual warrior who could tell God off and get way with it.