

A Life of Freedom
By Bob Bekins
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When I was ten years old, I lived an incredibly sheltered life. A small military base near Fallbrook, California housed just fifty families in its 14 square miles. Armed Marines at the gates, roving patrols, and night sentinels kept anyone but our families from entering. It was also a natural preserve for animals that would have been prized trophies for any hunter. We kids had the run of the place. My list of pets included horned lizards, a squirrel, cedar wax wing birds, a rosy boa snake, a great horned owl, and for a very short time – a rattlesnake. We saw foxes, coyotes, deer, possums, skunks, and bass in the lakes, of which there were three.

One of the routes between my elementary school in town and our house on the base was a very private dirt road just inside the security fence. On a Tuesday afternoon, as I strolled along, I noticed some black animal obscurely tucked in amongst the fragrant anise bushes. Thinking it might be hurt, I approached. Shock was followed by two screams which came from my mouth and that of the huge panther that I had stumbled upon.

The panther went west and I ran north. But, in that one moment, the picture of that glistening clean satin black fur and those clear green eyes, snapped into my memory forever. He looked right at me from that huge head.

I learned a truth that day. The untamed, free, live spirit of that animal was not similar in any respect to that of the caged cats I had seen in the zoos. Our freedom here in America is also like nothing else in the world. Our freedom leads us to become educated, to create, to invent, to relate without fear all of our beliefs and feelings. We can work as hard as we want and accomplish almost anything that we set our minds to. The caged eyes of the other men and women in our world stare out at us and wonder what life would be like if only they were as free as we are. We must never waste what we have.

Everything that we do can be honorable, productive and giving. When we perform at the top of our game, we can be the best in our field, no matter what that field is. We have the capacity for extraordinary good. It is a trust not to be spent lightly.

Proverbs 3:27 “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, if it is in your power to act.”

Proverbs 22:29 “Do you see someone skilled in their work? They will serve before kings”

Proverbs 11:25 “whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.”

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