

*“We are becoming...”* was all I could see on the side of the van that was heading north on Fulton Road. I was heading west on Highway 12, on my way to the Santa Rosa Junior College with Alex, and the rest of what was written on the van was obscured by a car in the lane between us and the van. I read what I could see out loud so Alex, who is 16 now, looked in the direction of the van to see what I was talking about. “We are becoming what?” I asked him. The traffic light for the van had turned green by now and it had begun to move forward. We both watched as the van and the obscuring car moved forward together, the rest of the phrase still hidden. Alex turned to me as I grumbled about how now we would never know what the rest of the phrase was and said, “Maybe that is all you need to know, Mom.”



As the old saying goes, “Out of the mouths of babes...” And of course, he was right. In



fact, that is the sum of what this whole year has been for me. It is a continuous reminder of my ongoing “becoming”. Only, the interesting outcome of my heightened awareness of becoming is my obvious deceleration of doing. Perhaps it is just the natural result of growing older, but 50 is NOT old and the slowing down I am referring to is more inside me than outside me, anyway. I simply find myself wanting to allow greater absorption of each moment rather than desiring the ever elusive carrot at the end of the stick.

I am not unfamiliar with the thought that once this or that is done I will be able to relax or I will be happy or I will...whatever. I had lots of *those* thoughts this year, but the thought was always followed by the realization the imagined milestone was just that, *imagined!* And, even though I still held onto remnants of belief that I truly would reach the next goal and be “done”, I also began to allow myself to experience with greater intensity the process of getting there.

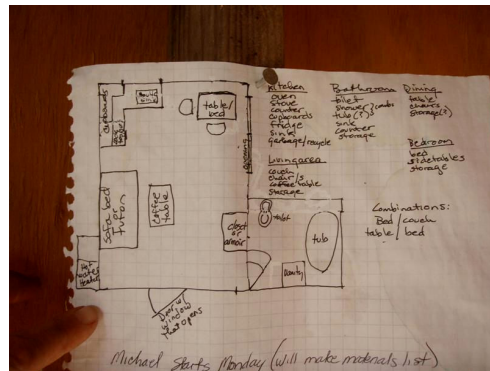
Along those lines, one of the most revealing projects I initiated this year was the building of a small studio cottage on our property, using a storage shed that already existed as our basis. I use the word “initiated” because there is absolutely no idea I have that involves only me. I dream and then I share this dream with the lucky folks in my life, like Dave, Dave and Dave. Ha! Actually, the





idea for the studio had been roiling around in my head (and heart) for several years. I was inspired to proceed by the presence of Maria Vanderham, a dynamic and resourceful woman who came down from Canada to apprentice with me and the horses for a month or so, although she ended up staying three months. This apprenticeship was based on a trade, so while Maria was here I was determined to come up with things for her to do that were challenging enough to merit the trade. Maria arrived in late March and the studio was conceived in May.

As with most of my goals, there was the vision of the finished product and a vague awareness of the steps to getting there. I just wanted the project to be done because I imagined that in the completion of this new idea I would be satisfied. Only this “little project” would have none of that unfocused, hand-it-off-to-someone-else attitude. It demanded my full attention. The most obvious shift in me occurred when I realized actions were being taken that later had to be undone to make room for steps that had been skipped. Maybe it was when I had to move the front door over three feet or maybe it was when the bathroom ceiling fan had to be moved that it hit me I should pay attention and slow down. I had never created a living space like this before and knew nothing about electrical or plumbing or heating or regulations or...



Although it would be easy to think that all this had to do with becoming better acquainted with building, for me it was more about tuning in and allowing myself to be immersed in the project without attachment to the imagined end result. I had to be OK with the completed studio just being an inspiring idea and not something that had to be a reality this red hot minute. At one point I just sent everyone home, saying I would call them when I was ready to start up again. I wanted to rediscover the fun in the process and become reacquainted with what was inspiring about the studio idea in the first place. I could have pushed on and we would have most likely had our studio sooner, but I as I mentioned earlier, I was beginning to get suspicious of the erroneous belief that simply achieving a goal equals happiness.



Maria went home in July and the studio was mostly done by the end of November. I love that it fits nicely into the bigger picture I have in my head; the vision that makes me feel good when I think of it and doesn't have to be completed now or ever. In my more lucid moments I know it will never be complete because there is no such thing. I am always getting new ideas and, no matter how

efficiently I initiate and carry out to completion these ideas, I find myself continuously inspired to create more. So, it stands to reason that is the act of becoming that is the most satisfying, not the fact of completion.



I am becoming a world traveler who coaches with horses in other countries. I am becoming comfortable with Jorge's cameras focused on me, radio microphones in front of me and a developing TV show with producer, Sparkie Lovejoy.

I am becoming a gardener and hostess who shares the wealth of farming with the neighborhood and visitor from all over the world.



I am becoming a goat handler (with Dave and Lali's help) who is expecting the first bundle of kids in May.



I am becoming a mom who lets go, watching her children grow up and develop their own "becoming" lives. I am a new friend and an old friend, a supporter of others who are becoming.



I am a lover of life who absolutely revels in the thrill that comes when I am wholly immersed in the moment with certainty that the moment is ironically the most complete experience I will ever have. And, as Alex so aptly reminds me, that is all I need to know...

