

# *From Moo's & Mountains to Dust & Deserts*

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I don't like goodbyes. Don't like change either. Guess I better get over that since life is full of both. Author Henry David Thoreau says in his book, *Walden*, "Things do not change. We do." I imagine that's true most of the time.

I remember one wrenching goodbye in May 1970 when I was leaving Michigan for Colorado where my husband waited to begin a new chapter in our lives after the Vietnam War. Standing in the airport next to my parents, I, their youngest daughter, was about to move 1200 miles west, permanently away from the comforts of my childhood home. I was scared. I was a new mother, and in spite of my preparations for child rearing, I knew nothing. Clutching my infant, I embraced my mother and father in one big hug, and the tears welled up. I could only mutter, "I hate goodbyes." Unable to speak themselves, they nodded.

Now about to embark on another new chapter in my life, leaving the Northwest and spending time in Arizona where I raised that infant daughter and a son, I'm facing change and goodbyes again. We're meant to be in community, and I feel an integral part of this one, not only through my column and readers, but also in the connections that have rooted me to this place.

Writer Sarah Juniper Rabkin, an instructor at Sitka Art and Ecology Center, with whom I studied this summer, speaks of such connection in her book, *What I Learned at Bug Camp*. She was on a two-month art and writing residency at Sitka along with three other artists in late 2007. She says most of the time the artists, intent on being productive, kept to themselves. But in December, when big weather arrived on the Oregon coast, and they were hammered for days with ninety-mile-an-hour winds, torrential rain and hail which caused trees and limbs to fall, roads to flood, and power and phone lines to crash, she

wanted to be with other members of her tribe. Despite having enough food and warmth, the need for human company trumped all else. “One stormy night we went looking for each other,” she says. I get that. Looking for each other. Here in our tiny towns, we look for each other and look out for each other as well.

Though I’m excited to spend time in the desert with my son, daughter-in-law and young grandsons, and warm winter months under a blue sky, I still feel certain sadness at leaving our little towns, even for a while. I’ll pick up my monthly column again when I return and maybe send in a few special ones over my absence.

I came across the E.B. White’s children’s novel *Charlotte’s Web* recently and decided I’d try to be like the character Wilbur in this book, a book that asks us to be content with whatever and wherever we are. I particularly loved these words, a reminder of that:

*Life in the barn was very good—night and day, winter and summer, spring and fall, dull days and bright days. It was the best place to be, thought Wilbur, this warm delicious cellar, with the garrulous geese, the changing seasons, the heat of the sun, the passage of swallows, the nearness of rats, the sameness of sheep, the love of spiders, the smell of manure, and the glory of everything.*

As I take a hiatus from what I love here in the Pacific Northwest, the moos and mountains, and replace it with the dust and deserts of the Southwest, I’ll hold in my heart the glory of everything. And I thank you, dear readers, for being true friends, lavish in your appreciation and love for my words. My Artlight calendar quotation for October is one by Persian poet Rumi: Be a lamp, or a lifeboat, or a ladder. Something for all of us to remember, wherever we are.