

## I Was Raised on Country Sunshine

One bucolic autumn day not long ago I was out in the pasture on the 4 wheeler. I nearly always take the opportunity to bird a little when I'm checking the cattle, but don't tell my husband. He thinks I'm hard at work (or maybe not). Anyway, a song from a long, long time ago started playing in my head and just wouldn't be ignored.

Dottie West would have been insulted by my incorrectly attributing it to Connie Smith, but it goes something like this: *I was raised on country sunshine, green grass beneath my feet, running through fields of daisies, wading through the creek... I was raised on country sunshine, I'm happy with the simple things, a Saturday night dance, a picture show and the joy that the bluebird brings. ..There's just something 'bout the morning that make each day a joy to see and the nighttime brings a peaceful feeling to rest inside of me.* If you go on into the chorus, it's a love song about a gal not wanting to move to the city even though she loves the fella. Well it's a love song for me too, but in a different way.

I have never taken it for granted and have always felt lucky that I got to grow up where & how I did. I feel blessed and have always felt blessed to have grown up in this place we now call the Texas Hill Country. I can remember getting my homework done on the bus so when D.O. Mace screeched to a stop at our house I could do a quick change and hit the back door and take a walk in the Brushy Trap and not come home 'til supper time. Some days I would go the other direction and have a Dr. Pepper and finish off the biscuits (that I have tried & failed to duplicate) left over from breakfast at my grandmother's house. She would always tell me to watch for snakes and, call it luck or her special powers, none of us ever got bitten.

On Saturdays when there was more time I would saddle up my beloved horse and cover a little more country. I can remember hot summer mornings when we were pretty young, we would get the cattle in the pens by my grandparents' house, then we would take a break to eat the black diamond melon my granddaddy would have had cooling in the shade with a toe sack and the well water running over it all morning, giving the grass a drink in the process. Oh, that wonderful, sweet well water. And those delightful, cooling springs we used to swim in every chance we got.

Whether it was school or my job in town, I always savored the country to the last minute which meant I was rarely (or maybe never!) early. Now I'm retired from my town job and I work mostly outdoors. It's sometimes hard, it's sometimes hot, and it's sometimes cold, but ahh spring and fall is heaven. I am rarely without my binoculars no matter what we are doing so I can take a quick look at a bird or armadillos playing or bucks fighting or a turtle making its way *down* The Ditch or a beaver making its way *up* The Ditch. Mother Nature is never boring!

I am also thankful for my friends and neighbors and growing up where everybody knew everybody for three generations. Oh, this great nation where we have the freedom to pursue our dreams and make our own choices. I hope the opportunities I have had are still here for the next generation. It's been a wonderful life.

For those of you who know the old Dottie West tune you may have it playing over & over in your head for the next day or two?! So go on, belt it out. You know you want to!

Go outside & play and count your blessings.