

Reflections of a Pasture Walker

"It's really ours now," you say?

"This land, these hills, these valleys, these views

These peaceful paths that soothe the soul,

The focus of so much energy and effort and angst

The coming together of passion and politics and unexpected partnerships...

And now it's finally ours!?"

Be careful, though, when you say this.

Maybe it's not really *ours* as in *to own*, or *to possess*.

Although we may walk there, or bike there,

Or simply know that it's there...

We don't live there.

We will never build a house there now, thank you very much.

We are but guests in the home of those who do live there—

The deer, the hawk, the coyote and bobcat

The sage and chamise, the sumac, and cactus and oak,

We are welcome to visit, but not to stay,

In this chaparral-and-meadow, fire-,water,-and-wind-designed corridor,

Narrowly perched between the rugged mountains above

And the human-filled valley below.

No, the Pasture owns itself, as it always has,

No matter which humans hold the human-created title.

What really transfers in the sale of real estate

Is not ownership, but obligation:

Responsibility to protect, to preserve, to learn and to teach,

To understand that property and plants and wildlife,

And watershed and airshed and view-shed

Have intrinsic value that cannot be owned,

But can be lost if we lose sight of our goal,

If we become weary of walking the walk.

As we celebrate our success in purchasing Johnson's Pasture

And appreciate the many folks who made it possible,

We honor them best by owning our ultimate and never-ending responsibility:

To pass on to our children and their children and their children's children

The legacy of living in harmony with the Earth

And with each other.

-B. Speak

12 June 2007