

## Following My Passions - We Find God Through Our Passions

Laurence Baer  
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I believe that we find God through our passions, when they are aligned with the larger purpose. God placed those passions into our hearts and longs to see us develop and manifest them. Father often spoke about "Hobby Life," and spent hours fishing, watching soccer, and even playing billiards. And he loved to be in nature. Growing up, one of my passions was music. My mother was a piano teacher, and I started learning piano at age 5, but switched to guitar at age 12. Through high school and college, playing guitar and singing was perhaps the foremost way in which I connected with my own heart.

I transferred to Cal Berkeley in my junior year of college, and my roommate and I formed a two-man band, "Wildwood". He played flute and guitar, and I played guitar, mandolin, banjo, and recorder. We both sang. We weren't great, but we got gigs at some of the restaurants in the Bay Area. As the band's manager, I was so excited when I landed a dream gig - 6 nights per week at the Belgian Waffle House in Berkeley, for \$10 each per night PLUS all the waffles we could eat! At the end of that year, I met our movement, and finally moved in on June 2, 1974.

Not long after that, I sold my guitar and mandolin (both Martins), and purchased a very nice watch for my trinity leader. That was my way of offering up my music, although I still played frequently at evening programs - normally a song titled "The Honkytonk Refrigerator," which I had heard from a band named Beans who played at Rutgers where I had attended before transferring to Berkeley.

Around 1998, I was living in Laurel, MD and worshipping at New Hope Church in Lanham, Maryland. Dan Fefferman and Frank Grow asked me if I would be interested in playing bass for their band together with Francis Buckingham on guitar. I had never played bass but said "sure" and Frank let me use his classic Rickenbacker bass. Francis was running a coffee house in Bowie named "The Year of the Rabbit," so we named ourselves Rabbit Stew and played there once a month. Dan and Frank were both great musical mentors and, under their guidance, my performance standards improved significantly. In addition, I started writing a few songs.

In 2000, my widowed mom came to live with us, and together we bought a home in Columbia, MD to accommodate her as well as our five children. Shortly after moving in, I met our next-door neighbor who asked what I liked to do. I told her I was trying to write songs. She said "my best friend writes music and meets each month with the Baltimore Songwriters Association." I joined that month and have attended monthly meetings since July 2000 with very few exceptions until Covid. Each month I was responsible for presenting a new song. You can do the math, but that's a lot of songs, although many were duds.

By 2007 I had more than enough "keepers" to put together a CD of 14 songs. The host of our songwriting circle had a music studio in his basement and agreed to produce that first CD. Its title song was "Across A

Bering Strait Bridge," and it included some excellent musicians whom I had met. That summer, Muriel and I joined the 25th Anniversary Cruise to Alaska and had a blast. During that cruise, I performed a concert for the other couples who were celebrating and passed out pre-release copies of my CD. While in Alaska, we took a side trip on the White Pass Railroad, which is an historic narrow-gauge railroad built during the Gold Rush in 1897. I wrote a song about it and sent it to the president of the railroad. He liked it! He agreed to pay for the rights to use it and gave me some additional funds to produce the song. I approached three artists in succession: Willy Nelson's manager said he wasn't recording other people's songs at that point. Arlo Guthrie's daughter, who ran his record label, said "yes", but she didn't know when he would be back from his tour. Del McCoury's manager said "yes," period. I went with the Del McCoury Band. After they recorded it for the railroad, they requested permission to include it on their 2009 CD titled "Family Reunion". That CD was nominated for a Grammy for Best Bluegrass CD of the Year.

Here is a fabulous video that the railroad made of that song, using archival footage from 1897!  
[wpyr.com/sights-sounds/music/the-del-mccoury-band/](http://wpyr.com/sights-sounds/music/the-del-mccoury-band/)

I recorded a second CD project of 28 original songs in 2015 titled "Across Time", and then a third CD of 18 original songs titled "Across Love".

For those two projects, I used a good friend, Justin Pokrywka, as the lead vocalist and did not personally perform on either project. Needless to say, they were significantly more professional than my first attempt.

Here is a link featuring some music videos using the songs from each of those three projects. (Note: Please don't repost them as some images I used may be proprietary.)  
[www.dropbox.com/sh/lcq01lagq27kyco/AADciMgk4uru-8tyg7BXR65ca?dl=0](http://www.dropbox.com/sh/lcq01lagq27kyco/AADciMgk4uru-8tyg7BXR65ca?dl=0)

I am currently working on several additional music projects.

Lately, another passion of mine has been journaling with God, a technique I learned from Ron Pappalardo. Each morning I write a letter to God and then write a response back to myself, based on what I feel God is saying to me, in my heart. It has become a highlight of each day, and one of the projects that has grown out of this exercise has been a new Online Holy Community that I started, in which the members offer our vitality elements to God when we read Hoon Dok Hae each day. It is growing, and is richly rewarding.

The following link includes an article about this Online Holy Community that was published recently in the Blessed Families Association newsletter, together with a copy of our "practical guidelines," which is quite brief. Through this project, we are attempting to help God in a unique and significant way.  
[www.dropbox.com/sh/1ch5nf1t82f7r1b/AABUgDqbvKo1h\\_6zri6xlpVba?dl=0](http://www.dropbox.com/sh/1ch5nf1t82f7r1b/AABUgDqbvKo1h_6zri6xlpVba?dl=0)

If you would like to learn more about this, you can find my email at the end of that article.