FREEDOM'S SONG
by Anne Byrd

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."
Matthew 6:33

This past week, WATCHMAN had the opportunity to play for the most wonderful event in Roseburg, Oregon. Several churches in the area sponsored the fourth annual "Wild Game Dinner," a father and son event that has become very popular. All of the tickets were gone after being available for only 2 days. The large room was filled to capacity with 650 men and boys who feasted on every imaginable dish of wild game. The keynote speaker, Joe Foss, is president of the National Rifle Association. He is the most outstanding Christian man, and his testimony had quite an impact, especially on those in the audience who were not believers.

For one of our selections, we chose to do a song that I wrote a few years ago to share the testimony of our family, "Freedom's Song." Because it was so appropriate for the occasion, we put together a collage of photographs to illustrate the references of the song to our home in northeastern Washington, our farm and animals, and "the deer that steal through the meadow." It was amazing to see the response of the audience to the testimony the Lord has given us as many of them rushed over to view our collection of pictures and talk with us. It was a magnificent opportunity to share some of the mighty things the Lord has done on our behalf.

We were reminded again of the power of the testimony of believers (see Revelation 3:11 and 12), and, so have decided to try to briefly share ours with you in two parts. While it is fun to walk back in time and remember how the Lord birthed the vision that we now have, I have to admit that it tugs pretty hard at our hearts and brings a few tears to our eyes. We hope that our story -- or rather His-story in our lives -- blesses you. No, we wouldn't go back if we could. There is only one place to go...full speed ahead! But step back with us for a moment as we start in the Fall of 1973...

For months before moving to Washington state, Barry and I had anxiously watched reports of "The Watergate Affair" on television, and were expecting an economic collapse at the very least. Though we were in North Carolina at the time, we had lived in Montana for three years while Barry was in the Air Force, and had imbibed a spirit of independence and isolationism engendered by that awesomely rugged and gorgeous country. We had loved the awareness of our own insignificance that contending with the harshness of the elements had imposed upon us. The reality, however, of making a living after getting out of the Air Force, even though Barry was a college graduate, as well as the desire to spend some time in closer proximity to Dannie's grandparents, had impelled us to move back to North Carolina for exactly one year while Barry went to a technical school to learn auto body repair.

The day after Barry completed his course in September of 1973, we headed west. We took everything we owned, including some mighty big dreams, in our Dodge Powerwagon and a U-Haul trailer. Dannie was 15 months old at the time. Although we had never seen the mountains of northeastern Washington, I had been offered a job there at a kennels as trainer and manager, and so we thought it a good place to begin to fulfill our vision of a simpler lifestyle -- learning to live off of the land in an isolated setting. When we arrived there, we knew that we had come home. The area was ideal in every way, from the gorgeous scenery to the growing season, but perhaps the strongest attribute was the price of land. It was a fraction of the cost of land in Montana. The Lord quickly led us to the place of our dreams...

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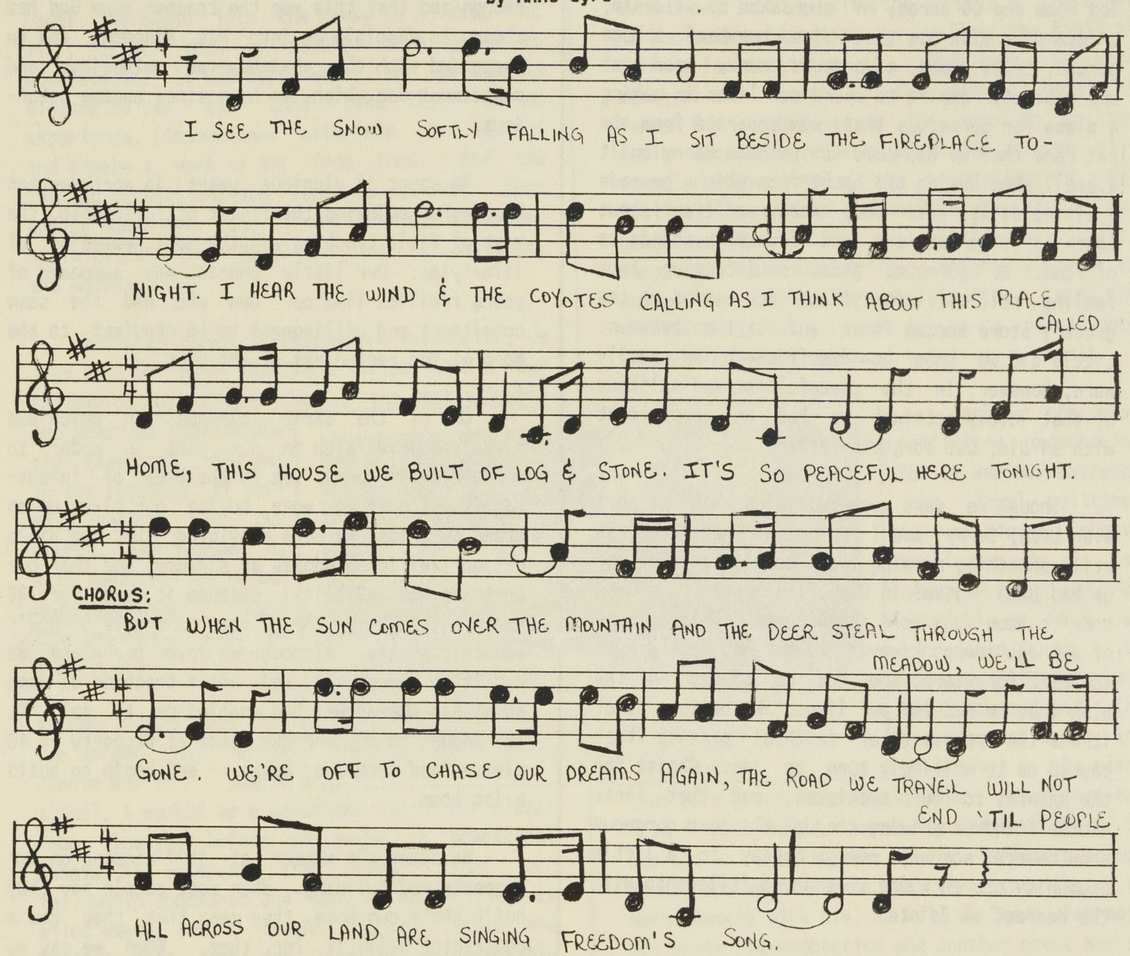
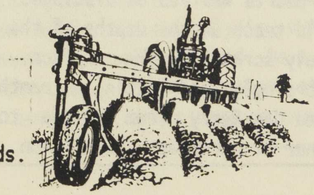


We had a dream of a farm, now,
A simple life growing what we need;
So we got some horses, chickens and a jersey cow.
We learned to pray, to work and grow.
As we raised our child we didn't know
That we were learning to be free.

Repeat Chorus

So when the sun comes over the mountain
And the deer steal through the meadow we'll be gone.
This road we travel will not end 'til we can call you all our friends.
We're travelling all across this land singing Freedom's song.

Now as we leave in the dawning
The horses race like phantoms through the snow.
Lord, in my heart there's a longing
To plant new seeds and watch them grow
In people's hearts who do not know
The joy of living free.

Repeat Chorus