

Dear Shea,

March 24, 2016

When the officer passed out the mail earlier this afternoon, I was happy to see that it contained an envelope from Between the Bars. It means that someone had not only read what I had to say, but responded to it as well. Never in a million years did I think it would have been written by you, and for that, I'm eternally grateful, in ways I could never even begin to put into words. When times were at their toughest and friends were few and far between, you and your family showed your love and support for me, unconditionally, and that's a gift that's stuck with me throughout all of these years, keeping my spirits alive and well when all hope seemed lost. Sadly, we seem to have lost contact when I was transferred and you moved, both of which happened at the same time, and for the last decade, I've thought of you and your family often, wondering how things were going, how recent changes impacted everyone, and how a certain person's heart was doing. Stuck in here, without any way to access the outside world, all I could do was sit back and wonder how you were making out, hoping and praying that you were reaping the rewards you so rightfully deserved. While most of my questions have been answered, your post at least lets me know that you're still alive, and judging from the kind and compassionate way you wrote, you seem to be doing relatively well.

Strange how a collection of words can have such an impact on someone, but impact me they did. Somehow, the sun's rays seem to be shining brighter, the blue of the sky seems to be bluer, even the prison food seems to taste better, and if you haven't been unfortunate enough to taste prison food, even on a good day, consider yourself blessed and trust me when I tell you that you're not missing anything. Either way, it meant a lot to me that you took the time to post a response, and you were indeed right about what you said. There is indeed power to be found in memories. To this day, there are certain smells, sights and sounds that always seem to transport me back in time, to a happier place. One thing in particular that seems to trigger some pretty happy memories is an episode of California's Gold, in which Huell Howser is up in Northern California visiting some small towns on 101. On the way back, he stops in an even smaller town of about 680 people to visit a cheese factory. No doubt you know exactly which towns I'm talking about. I've seen that episode maybe half a dozen times, and to this day, I can't help but look for you and the rest of the family every time they start showing the streets outside the factory, or when they're standing in front of the general store talking. For that half hour, I'm filled with memories, some happy, some not so much, but at the end of the day, I choose to focus on the good from that time, of which you were definitely a part of.

As far as showing you kindness and listening to what you had to say, you deserved so much more, but that's all I had to give at the time. I'm just glad that it seemed to help in some small way, but don't sell yourself short. You did far more for me than I ever did for you. You were an inspiration to me in so many ways, even to this day. No matter how full your plate was, you always seemed to be able to find room for more, and no matter how heavy the load was, you always seemed ready to help someone else with theirs. You did more before graduating high school than most people do in a lifetime, and not once did it ever seem to go to your head. Hanging around you, listening to what you were going through only made me want to be a better person, to be more like you, even after 13 years.

In regards to uncertainties, the situation back then was such that I was powerless to say or do anything one way or the other. Every word I spoke was recorded, every letter I wrote was photocopied. At the end of the day, all I could do was sit there in silence, hoping and praying that people would have faith in me. At the end of the day, for whatever reason, you and your family stood by me when times were roughest, even when I didn't attempt to say much to defend myself one way or the other. Thirteen years later, I wonder if I made the right decision, keeping quiet, but hindsight, as they say, is 20/20. If I could go back and do that portion of it all over again, I would, and I'd do things a bit differently, but then, if I could go back and do that portion of it differently, why not go back even further and prevent this whole situation from ever happening in the first place?

When I first started posting, my only objective was to make a new friend, maybe even a few of them. Unfortunately, while a few people here and there have left the occasional response, no one's ever taken it any further than that, yet it was still worth every post, every stamp, just to know that someone out there was listening. As if this wasn't good enough, one of the responses was from you, which has made me happier than I've been in an incredibly long time. I'd sincerely like to continue our conversation privately, as opposed to on a publicly viewed bulletin board, but if you're not interested, I'm still grateful to you for having shared your inspirational post with me.

I'm looking forward to hearing from you again...

Your old friend,

Shawn L. Perrot CDCR# V-42461
MCSP Cell# C-13-219L
P.O. Box 409060
Ione, CA 95640