

BUILDING HOMESTEADS

*Vocalist Enya created the song "Pilgrim."
Its theme is, "Pilgrim, you must travel far to find out who you are."*

Experiences are part of life's travels. They begin at childhood and move with us through the years. The true richness of life experience is often realized only when we reach our older ages. Call it maturity. As young people we tell ourselves we have a grasp on our life's direction and future. Overlooked, is that we will always learn and experience something new at every turn in our travel. "Now, I've seen everything" comes to mind, but the last "everything" is never reached. Life brings new goals and desires, and new troubles with new mistakes. There will always be changes to our lives and to the world. Gaining life experience is an open-ended activity.

As we progress to maturity, we build personal homesteads. These are developed through investments in education, work, play, duty, family, love, trust and respect. Valuable personal energy is expended in building our personal homestead. To keep our investment solid, we continually look at what we are, at what we have, and at what we can improve upon. Improvement is essential in acquiring further life experiences. Often, we evaluate the quality of our homestead and seek comparisons. When we are not satisfied with what we have built, we are tempted to look over a fence at another's homestead. What we see may look inviting. Their grass may look greener. However, that deep color might be only in our sunglasses. Looking down, we may find ours is actually more plush than theirs. When we spend too much time looking over fences, we fail to notice we are already standing on what is best for us.

Finding Enya's Pilgrim-quest of "who we are" can be difficult. Some find out, some settle for "almost," and some never get the answer. Our quest may merely require a serious self analysis, and an effort to nurture and improve the homestead that exists. This is not to say, go no further, stop looking. Before looking, however, taking the time to invest further in the homestead that is already built, could be a better decision. Stepping outside our homestead might be a good choice. It could allow a view of reality. Then again, that decision may preclude the ability for returning to what was left behind. Time could find that the homestead we left has become dismantled.

Life brings new goals and desires. Certainly there will be new troubles with new mistakes. Taking risks can be a path to mistakes. When we do take those risks and try new paths, any failure or discomfort coming from those choices must be felt only by ourselves. There is nothing fair or honorable in exposing another's personal homestead to the mistakes we make. The measure of how well we travel the path of life is how well we invest in our personal homestead. Before we act, contemplating our actions and their potential consequences is the most valuable investment we can make. The return on that investment reveals the truth about "who we are."