

# No Talent? Think Again

Perhaps, at the conclusion of a performance by a world-class violinist, you may have thought, or even uttered, these words, “Why is it that I don’t have any talent?”



Or it could be that as you gaze lovingly at a beautiful work of art and consider the gift displayed by the painter that a similar thought surfed across your mind.

You have certainly heard those words expressed by others, as have I. The truth is that each of us has been recipient of a gift from our Creator – and, in most cases, more than one.

And sometimes that talent is discovered in the strangest of ways. Mary Elizabeth Frye and her husband, living in Baltimore, were hosting a young German Jewish woman named Margaret Schwarzkopf in the years leading up to World War II. Schwarzkopf was concerned about her mother, who was ill in Germany, but she had been warned not to return home because of increasing unrest. When her mother died, the heartbroken young woman told Frye that she never had the chance to “stand by my mother’s grave and shed a tear.”

To console her, Frye found herself composing a piece of verse – which came to be known as *Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep* – on a brown paper shopping bag. Later, she said that the words “just came to her” and expressed what she felt about life and death.

The poem was introduced to many in the United Kingdom when it was read by the father of a soldier killed by a bomb in Northern Ireland. The soldier’s father read the poem on BBC radio in 1995 in remembrance of his son, who had left the poem among his personal effects in an envelope addressed “To all my loved ones.”

Frye enjoyed writing poetry, although she was not interested in publishing them. “If it helps one person through a hard time, I am amply paid,” said Frye, who never published or copyrighted her work. She received no remuneration for her writings.

“I don’t figure I have any great talent,” she said. But many people would disagree. *Don’t Stand at My Grave and Weep* has become an American classic, is used in countless funerals and other appropriate occasions around the world, and translated into more than a dozen languages.

(more)

Here is Mary Elizabeth Frye's original text, which has moved so many for so long (other versions of the poem have appeared across the years):

*Do not stand at my grave and weep,  
I am not there, I do not sleep.*

*I am in a thousand winds that blow,  
I am the softly falling snow.  
I am the gentle showers of rain,  
I am the fields of ripening grain.*

*I am in the morning hush,  
I am in the graceful rush  
Of beautiful birds in circling flight,  
I am the starshine of the night.*

*I am in the flowers that bloom,  
I am in a quiet room,  
I am the birds that sing,  
I am in each lovely thing.*

*Do not stand at my grave and cry,  
I am not there. I do not die.*

How many folks have found hope and assurance from a verse hurriedly jotted down on a brown paper shopping bag – by a woman who always professed she had no talent?

The lesson for us? Don't be afraid to identify, hone and exercise the talents you've been given. And may Frye's poem, written in 1932, speak to you in times of grief that come your way.

*As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace (1 Peter 4:10 ESV).*

– Beecher Hunter