

## **Jan Gillies Song Summaries**

### **Annie's Violin:**

This song was inspired by a former art teacher's story about her mother-in-law, who'd been a concert violinist for most of her adult life. Now in her late 80s and suffering from severe Alzheimer's disease, she was unable to remember that she even owned a violin, but if it was handed to her, she could still play it beautifully. Her music had survived the ravages of the disease, untouched.

### **Mike, the Headless Chicken:**

While working on a collection of poultry songs, I became fascinated by the true story of "Miracle Mike", a Wyandotte rooster who became famous back in 1945 for surviving the butcher's block and becoming a sideshow celebrity after being beheaded. The farmer who owned him had kept him alive by feeding him through the neck with an eyedropper filled with milk and finely-ground corn. He lived for over 18 months, gained 5 pounds, and toured the U.S. and England, earning the equivalent of over \$100,000 and becoming the 'cover-bird' for Life Magazine. A real survivor!

### **Musicians and Sailors:**

Looking back at my rather unusual life for a girl from the Midwest, I was struck by the irony of the "conventional wisdom" and the course my life had taken, as both a musician and sailor while an oceanography student and beyond. Realizing I had become those things I had been warned against was also a bit amusing. As a woman and mother, I felt I could offer a rather unique perspective from both sides, inspiring this autobiographical song.

**Snake:**

With all the hatred that seems to be filling the world today, I found myself thinking a lot about where it all comes from. It occurred to me that fear seems to be a very common source. From my life experiences, I've found the best cure for fear is understanding, and becoming familiar with things that frighten us. Never having developed a fear of snakes, but recognizing that it is a very common phobia for many, it seemed a good subject to start with.

**Lobo and Blanca:**

From Ernest Thompson Seton's 1800s account in "Wild Animals I Have Known", the true story of Lobo the wolf and his mate, Blanca, is one worthy of legend. Far beyond the dramatic tale of his impact on both ranchers and hunters, his effect on the man who finally captured him influenced generations through the ecological awareness he inspired after Seton became a wolf advocate and founder of the Boy Scouts of America.

**Ocean's Heart:**

An unusual love song, this was inspired by my years as a research SCUBA diver, sailor, and oceanography student. For me, the ocean has never been the beaches, waves or horizon view, but a living, breathing world of its own which taught me more than I could ever have imagined. When I tried to capture it in words, it just naturally came out as a love song. There was no other way to describe it.

**Swamp Song:**

Growing up in the swamplands of northern Indiana on the tip of Lake Michigan with a biologist mother, my childhood was a bit different from most young girls. The swamps in our backyard were playground, refuge, and nature-therapy as I grew into a young adult. This song traces how they influenced some key moments in my life, and tries to portray their healing side (with some humor thrown in), rather than the dismal, creepy image so often portrayed in stories and movies.