

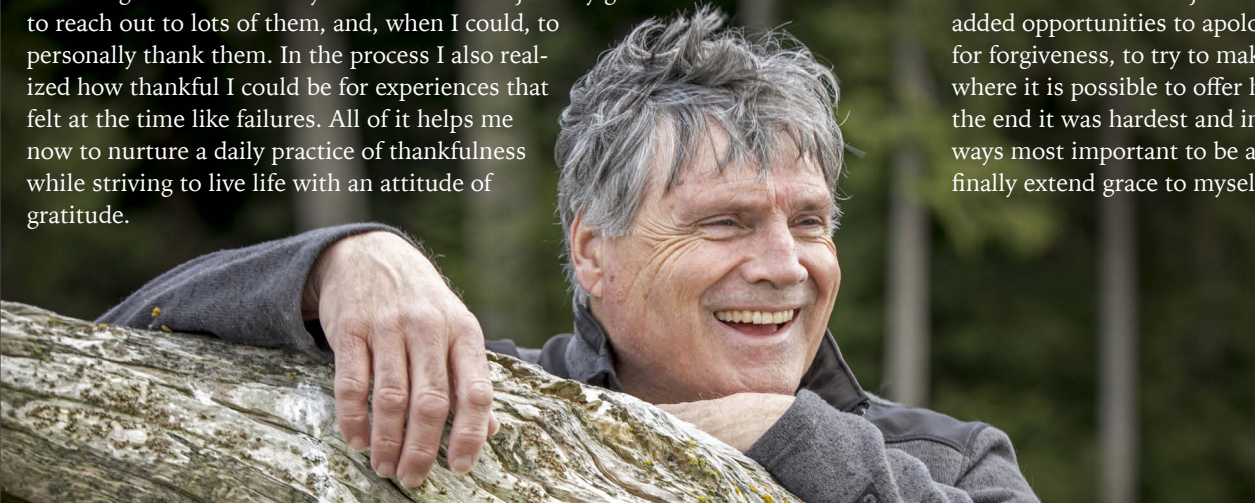
Gratitude,  
Grit, and Grace  
Mark Pearson





## Gratitude

Taking a lifetime of stories and songs and telling the story of a lifetime helped remind me of all the people who were there along the way, some who are gone and the many who remain. The journey gave me reasons to reach out to lots of them, and, when I could, to personally thank them. In the process I also realized how thankful I could be for experiences that felt at the time like failures. All of it helps me now to nurture a daily practice of thankfulness while striving to live life with an attitude of gratitude.

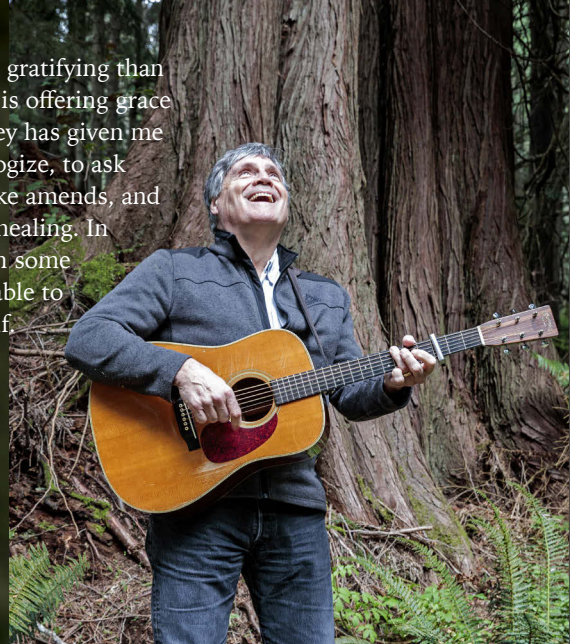


## Grit

For a long time I considered what I was doing a journey of gratitude and grace. It was only later that I realized I could not make it without grit. There were times when I was sure I would quit, when I didn't know how or why I would keep going. Somehow I found a way if not always a reason to put one foot in front of another. Eventually I knew in my marrow that to take what life gives me and go where life takes me takes grit.

## Grace

Perhaps the only thing more gratifying than having grace extended to us is offering grace to someone else. This journey has given me added opportunities to apologize, to ask for forgiveness, to try to make amends, and where it is possible to offer healing. In the end it was hardest and in some ways most important to be able to finally extend grace to myself.



## Gratitude, Grit, and Grace

Gratitude, grit, and grace were each essential components of this journey, this personal pilgrimage. I believe, however, it was how they combined and became something more that eventually led me to define, give meaning, and in time understand what it meant to face my fears, learn to love, and finally make it home.

## Blessings of the Heart

May we know we're firmly rooted also know we are set free  
Always make room for the magic marvel at the mystery  
May we hold on to each other though we're sometimes far apart  
Always find ways to stay open to the blessings of the heart

May we find the strength inside us to sustain us in the night  
May we have faith in the darkness as we struggle for the light  
May we discover joy and wonder all the places that we are  
Always find ways to be thankful for the blessings of the heart

### *Chorus*

May the road we are on be going home  
May the pieces of our lives in time be made whole  
May we trust both joy and sorrow  
Light a candle in the dark  
Embrace love receive the blessings of the heart

May we find life doesn't scare us and live fully till the end  
May we be kind and gentle we won't pass this way again  
May we know we are connected to the earth and with the stars  
And between them sense the blessings of the heart

### *Repeat Chorus*

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*This song was the final song of a musical memoir, Season of the Heart, which I wrote and performed to celebrate my father's life a year after he died. Twenty years later I appreciate more than ever the power of blessings both given and received.*

## Stories and Songs of Our Lives

We sit round the campfire reflect on the journey  
As one more day turns into night  
We see what we've gone through and where we are going  
In the stories and songs of our lives

There round that campfire shed tears share laughter  
As we celebrate and describe  
The triumphs the tragic the mystery the magic  
In the stories and songs of our lives

### *Bridge*

Somehow in the those tales told and there in the singing  
It becomes clear we are not alone  
And as that fire burns out and darkness surrounds us  
Somehow we know we're bound for home

In a blanket of starlight we take time for dreaming  
Find when a new days arrives  
There'll be reasons for leavin' and for believin'  
In the stories and songs of our lives

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*For a long time I believed we discover each other and ourselves in the stories we share and the songs we sing together. These last few years have affirmed that faith.*

## Fears Don't Scare Me

When I hear all we have to fear is fear itself  
Think of all of those times I've been afraid of myself  
Didn't know why I was feeling the way that I felt  
Or how I was dealing with the cards I was dealt  
Then one day I found both a will and a way  
To look at those fears begin givin' them names  
More that I knew them the less I was afraid  
Their power to haunt me simply was not the same

*Chorus*

My fears don't scare me like they used to  
Once I found what fears are most afraid of  
They hate being faced, exposed or embraced  
By truth, light, or love

Fears scare me most when they hide in the dark  
When I know that they're out there but don't know what they are  
To meet them and to love them that can be awfully hard  
Though to shine a light on them is a very good start  
It was something to learn how to live with my fears  
To not simply live in them as I'd done all those years  
When what I'm afraid of becomes stated and clear  
A lot of what haunts me appears to disappear

*Repeat Chorus*

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*For a long time I wanted to believe that if I found and faced and freed my fears they would no longer scare me. I learned the best I could do was go from living in fear to living with my fear. It's enough.*

## How Can Someone Love Me

I've wanted so much to be loved yet would push love away  
Love would get too close for comfort I'd call it a day  
Then later that night as a rule I called myself a silly fool  
One mornin' found a riddle was at play

*Chorus*

It went how can someone love me if they don't know me well  
Yet if they know me well how can they love me  
So long that was a riddle that I simply couldn't solve  
The questions that it asked had control of me

The answers to most riddles are right before our eyes  
I saw that I could solve my riddle once I realized  
I know myself like no one else if I could learn to love myself  
The answer to the riddle was supplied

*Repeat Chorus*

But how we learn to love ourselves can be a riddle, too  
The way we criticize ourselves makes loving ourselves hard to do  
If we take a leap of faith try loving ourselves anyway  
Who knows we might find out that it's true  
If we take a leap of faith try loving ourselves anyway  
Who knows we might find out that we do

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*The hardest thing I've ever done was to learn to truly love myself. It might also be the best thing I've ever done because once I did I could genuinely love someone else and honestly let them love me.*



## Gratitude, Grit, and Grace

Round the flickering campfire light  
Sing songs tell stories of our lives  
To help us understand define  
What's often overwhelming

It's through our stories we declare  
The truths we hold the things we share  
Who we are, how we got there  
Discovering in the telling

### *Chorus*

A journey of gratitude, grit and grace  
So much learned and so much faced  
The contours of a life are traced  
In a journey of gratitude, grit, and grace

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*A few years ago I told a friend of mine  
I was in the middle of a "thank you and  
I'm sorry" tour. After a good laugh I told  
her I also referred to it as "a journey  
of gratitude and grace." Eventually  
I learned that I couldn't have made it  
without a lot of "grit."*

There's something in the songs we sing  
That sets a heart to wandering  
And in our soul's meandering  
We satisfy some yearning

When the last campfire's grown cold  
Last song sung last story told  
It's time to find our way back home  
Better for the journey

### *Repeat Chorus*

## Asking of You Now

One of the hardest things I've done is to come face to face  
With those I know that I have somehow hurt along the way  
To ask them to forgive me, extend to me some grace  
The way I'm asking of you now

Cause simply saying I'm sorry to you will not be enough  
I'll do what I can to make amends, try to make up  
For what I've done I understand forgiveness can be tough  
The way I'm asking of you now

### *Bridge*

Part of why I'm asking for forgiveness I believe  
Is in the mystery of grace both given and received  
When those two come together something magically achieved  
As things long lost or locked away are found and then released

Oh, I know how hard it is forgiving someone else  
But sometimes not as hard as it is to forgive myself  
Can't always make it on my own I need somebody's help  
The way I'm asking of you now

Please forgive me if I'm asking too much of you now

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*I believe in truth and reconciliation. I also believe that without truth there cannot  
be reconciliation.*

## Mystery of Grace

Grace is never something we deserve  
Not something we can win, achieve, or earn  
It is not something that we may attain  
Nor is it something we can hope to gain

*Chorus*

That is the mystery of grace  
It finds us where we are and does not leave us at that place  
Moved in such a way that we will find ourselves amazed  
That is the mystery of grace

Oh the grace that you have offered me  
Cut bonds of guilt and shame and set them free  
How hard it is for this heart to believe  
That such a gift would be mine to receive  
*Repeat Chorus*

*Final Chorus*

There's magic in the mystery of grace  
To find us where we are and not to leave us at that place  
Arriving at that moment when the world must now embrace  
The mystery of grace

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*This journey, this profound personal pilgrimage, has shown me the importance of grace both given and received. While I believe I discovered the Mystery of Grace before I knew about Ann Lamott's book I am indebted to her for the idea that grace "finds us where we are but does not leave us at that place."*

## Love Abides

When I was twenty-one I had faith in God  
I had faith in my country and all she was  
I had faith in my family I had faith in myself  
And when I had all that I didn't need much else

*Refrain*

Faith is strong, hope is high  
Joy abounds, love abides

Was it just a year later the country's still at war  
Leaders are lyin' or they're dyin', I can't find God anymore  
And I learned a family secret I was feeling deceived  
I lost faith in myself, I could not believe

*Refrain*

Faith is strong, hope is high  
Joy abounds, love abides

Now all of these years later and the world is still ablaze  
When I look deep inside I can feel the faith  
I got faith in you I got faith in me  
And together we can make it but we gotta believe

*Refrain*

Faith is strong, hope is high  
Joy abounds, love abides

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*When I started to tell the story of a lifetime using a lifetime of songs and stories I thought it would be mostly a journey of memory. In many ways it has turned out to be one of discovery. One of the most important discoveries was to find out that love does abide.*



## Once We Cross that Bridge

It is early Sunday morning here in Selma, Alabama  
We're about to cross the Edmund Pettis Bridge  
We've been inspired these days and nights  
By those with faith who fought the fight  
For us it's somehow coming down to this  
The battle's far from over but their faith helps us believe  
That if we keep on tryin' we can be the change we seek  
On this Pilgrimage we're takin' something in us has awakened  
As we walk where others walked and where they dreamed the dream

### *Refrain*

Once we cross that bridge, old friend, we can't go back to where we've been  
Though we return from where we came nothin' is the same

We line up two by two and we begin to walk in silence  
Is it ours or other's footsteps that we hear  
We are now joining in the chorus  
Of all those who've gone before us  
And all those who some day will appear  
We'll cross the bridge and form a circle on the other side  
Arm in arm sing *We Shall Overcome* and realize  
Celebrate, commemorating most of all we're consecrating  
Those who crossed the bridge before and all they sacrificed  
*Repeat Refrain*

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*Over the last few years it has been my good fortune to be involved with intergenerational, interracial groups visiting sites important to our country's Civil Rights history. Crossing the Edmund Pettis Bridge together in Selma has been nothing short of life changing.*



## Never Too Late

Mom was a 90-year-old woman I was a man of 65  
A few years ago round Christmas we were talking about our lives  
Cause I was soon to be a granddad we started talking about my birth  
When something buried for so long was suddenly unearthed

She said I simply wasn't ready at the time that you were born  
With all that we had going on to handle one thing more  
As I listened to her talking I felt I was being exposed  
To both some kind of healing light and to a lightening bolt

When she finished I sat a moment making sense of what I'd heard  
And inside an understanding that went way beyond those words  
I got up and I embraced her and we both said "I love you"  
Then we sat down in the silence not sure what more we should do

It's never too late for a healing moment never too late to find our truth  
To be released, somehow to know it, to heal some primal wound

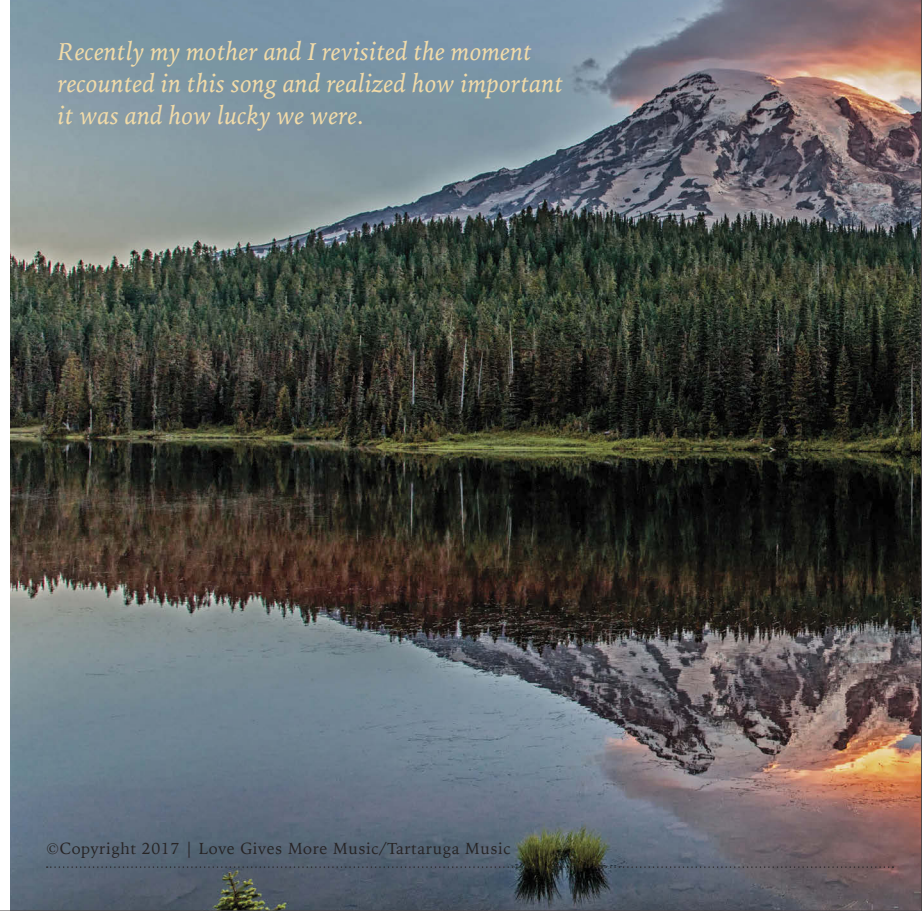
Got up went to the bedroom where the tears began to flow  
For all the things I finally knew and for what I did not know  
While I can't say what was different I knew nothing was the same  
What haunted me for all those years now finally had a name

For so long I'd been puzzled and there it was the missing peace  
Something that had been holding me was suddenly released  
Old maps and charts now obsolete, fall off the edge no more  
What once said "here be dragons" had become mine to explore

I went and found my mother and when I looked into her eyes  
I saw I was not the only one who had taken time to cry  
In a way we had been two lost souls who'd stumbled on a place  
Where we'd once been adversaries now each other's saving grace

It's never too late...

*Recently my mother and I revisited the moment  
recounted in this song and realized how important  
it was and how lucky we were.*





## Today We Celebrate

My grandsons are part of an unbroken line  
Going back to St. Thomas who when Jesus died  
Went to Kerala India teaching some to believe  
And my grandsons' ancestors were among these  
So today we celebrate  
As those boys partake in sacraments of faith  
Outward signs of inward grace

Surrounded by family they're dressed all in white  
Being showered with love, bathed in candlelight  
First baptized with water then anointed with oil  
Served their first last supper no longer just boys  
So today we celebrate  
As those boys partake in sacraments of faith  
Outward signs of inward grace

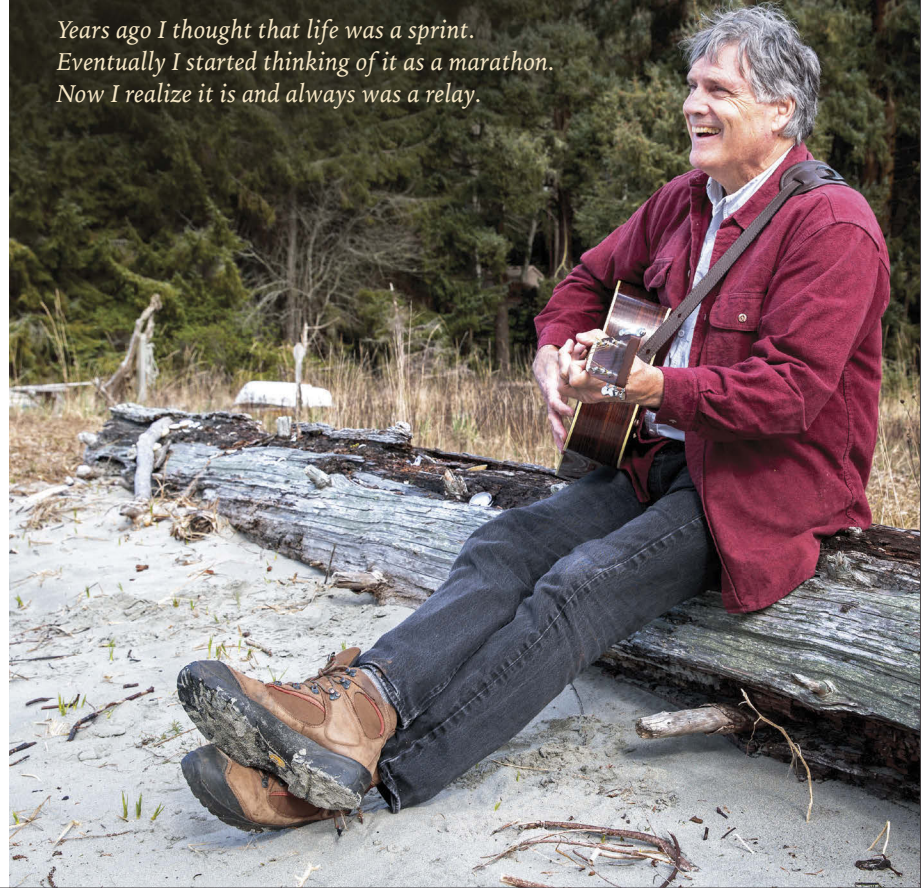
And as we bear witness to this moment in time  
To something so timeless, loving, and divine  
It's all there before us after we are gone  
That there is a part of us that will live on  
So today we celebrate  
As those boys partake in sacraments of faith  
Outward signs of inward grace

So today we celebrate  
Send them on their way  
They find their place

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*Years ago I thought that life was a sprint.  
Eventually I started thinking of it as a marathon.  
Now I realize it is and always was a relay.*



## Arrive Where We Started

I went to my class reunion summer twenty fifteen  
Half a century of memories top of fifty-year-old dreams  
Before I went looked in the mirror trying to see what all was there  
Course what I saw was a bit more weight and a whole lot of gray hair  
And that night shared songs and stories I was thankful for the chance  
Then with my high school sweetheart took a moment and we danced  
Next morning saw some buddies and we caught up with our lives  
And it was not till I was driving home I somehow realized

### *Chorus*

We arrive where we started and know it as if for the first time  
What once appeared random is part of a design  
And those things that defined us become ours to define  
When we arrive where we started and know it as if for the first time

That season also reasons there were special times with friends  
Didn't always know where we were going but we were always glad we went  
I wrote letters to my brothers where I did my best to say  
How much they mean how much they meant those nights back in the day  
That September Mike McCoy and I celebrated 50 strong  
A friendship with a concert full of stories and of songs  
In the middle of a tale that told how it all began  
For a moment I was young again somehow could understand

### *Repeat Chorus*

We could spent a lifetime out on this trail  
Lighting campfires, singing songs, and sharing our tales  
And the truth is that for all of us there comes a time we know  
It's time to leave this mountain it's time to go home

### *repeat Chorus*

*The TS Eliot quote “We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time” has inspired my journey.*





## Up on that Mountain

*What did I learn up on that mountain  
What did I find out on that trail  
What came to light around those campfires  
Singing songs and telling tales*

*I learned that when I lose my way  
If somehow I can keep the faith  
May make it to another day  
There up on that mountain  
Discovered where my fears reside  
Where faith is tested where truth lies  
And thankfully where love abides  
There up on that mountain*

*I learned the healing power of stories  
Found the magic in a song  
I learned that we are all going somewhere  
And there's somewhere where we belong*

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*When I ponder what I learned on this journey, I think of Paul's words in his letter to the Corinthians: "In the end these three remain, faith, hope and love; but the greatest of these is love." Yes, I say, but I would also add that the most important of these may be faith. Those few times when I struggled on my walk around Mt. Rainier were after I had "lost" faith.*

*I learned we first must love ourselves  
If we are to love someone else  
I found despair and hope both dwell  
There up on that mountain  
It's in the darkest quiet times  
We touch our soul and see the light  
Knowing it is enough to try  
There up on that mountain*

*It's all so clear up on that mountain  
All I've learned and what I know  
Yet easily lost or forgotten  
As I find my way back home*

## I'm Home

*It's been a long and dusty climb  
I've turned around from time to time  
Wondering if I'd ever find  
Somewhere where I knew that I was home  
So imagine my surprise  
When I looked into your eyes  
Discovered I'd been recognized  
Something in me realized I'm known*

*Chorus  
Home is somewhere we can go  
Knowing we are not alone  
We know someone and we are known  
Something inside tells us so  
Every time I hold you close  
I know I know I know I know  
I know I'm home*

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*Over the years I have written a lot of songs about "home." One of the reasons that Homer's Odyssey remains meaningful is in some way each of us is on a personal journey to find home and all that means.*

## There You Were

Fought the good fight finished the race  
Got lost a few times somehow kept the faith  
A journey of gratitude, grit, and some grace  
Back to where I started not to the same place  
There you were

Took a long time to learn how to love and be loved  
In the clutter and clatter find who I truly was  
Somehow to believe in the end it's enough  
Somewhere in the midst of such powerful stuff  
There you were

Did my best round these campfires to put it all down  
To show what I've been through to share what I found  
If I didn't know it then I sure do know it now  
Each in our own way is homeward bound

It's been quite a journey of stories and songs  
People I've met and the places we've gone  
Found enough reasons to keep going on

And then that one thing should have known all along  
There you were

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*At the end of this long journey I am more convinced  
than ever that we are not alone.*

