



MARK PEARSON  
MUSIC

## I Believe

I

*I believe life is a journey that in time will take us home  
There are lessons for the learning as we travel down this road  
I believe we all are searching trying to find some missing peace  
We may find it in each other I believe*

That's the first verse of "I Believe" a song that I wrote and recorded in 2009 with Mike McCoy. It's the last song on the "Between Old Friends" album. It's a song 40 years in the making going back to a day in June in 1969 when my parents, two brothers, and I met in Seaside, Oregon for a Brothers Four concert and when the world as I knew it disappeared forever. I remember the sun being out, how warm it felt which is a bit unusual for that time of year. We are staying in a clapboard condo near the beach. We finish a hearty breakfast my mother happily and skillfully makes. The dishes are stacked in the sink when we leave the table and find our way to the living room.

We talk about my older brother's August wedding and how he feels being at the same medical school where our dad got his training 30 years earlier. We discuss my younger brother's first year at the college and how well he's doing in school and on the baseball team. We talk about my first months of traveling and singing with The Brothers Four and about the night's concert. Mom says how happy she is to be together and how hard it is to sometimes have no kids left at home to take care of, familiar family banter that stops as soon as my dad leans forward in his chair.

"It's true," he says. "I was in a mental institution after the war and before you were born," he continues nodding towards me and just like that I blink and while nothing appears different somehow when my eyes open everything had changed. This irrepressible force of nature, center of the universe, this stable, brilliant, kind, funny, strong, wise gentle man was telling us he spent time in a loony bin? He might as well have told us he was a space alien.

He speaks in reassuring tones. "Once I realized I was sick..." he says, "...I began to get better ...for a while it was too painful to talk about...then there was no need..."

As I reconstruct that moment now I struggle with what my twenty-two year old self must to have been feeling. Confusion? Shock? Anger? Bewilderment? Fear? Terror? Some combination of those things? What I remember most is feeling nothing.

II

*I believe love is enough to find, face, and free our fears  
See the light that shines within us through the laughter and our tears  
I believe life's full of small steps and some very scary leaps  
We are born to celebrate life I believe*

I realize now how many years I spent trying to make sense of that moment and all the ways I've tried to keep or put the world together or back again. As a family that moment became part a secret we rarely talked about. I believe my father had

*Let love go forward from this time and place...*

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two great fears. One was that he might end up back in a mental institution and the other that his children might be susceptible to such a fate so I've concluded that those fears along with the social stigma and a hundred year family history of silence informed and affected the way he looked at illnesses of the mind.

For me I am finally comfortable saying that depression is part of my nature. We are all dealt certain cards in life and that one of mine is depression and while at times it can feel like getting the Queen of Spades in a Hearts game the harder part for me was feeling a need to not tell that story a need to deny that part of me.

For years I struggled with what was true, what was real, and what I could trust. I lacked a basic faith in myself. In a weird but maybe not unusual way I made myself responsible for that moment in 1969 and I ended up seeing myself as damaged goods somehow and somehow flawed. That created a riddle inside myself that I struggled for years to answer. The riddle that goes: "How could someone love me unless they know me well and if someone knows me well how could they love me..."

An unanswerable riddle that too often left me feeling apart from and different than. Now it seems like a common human riddle that many of us spend a lifetime trying to solve in our searching and in our journeys. I believe it's also a part of the human predicament to face crises of faith. It's just part of the deal. Maybe not always as dramatic as that day in June in 1969 was for me but they're often life changing none the less. Along the way we all are tested and tempered searching for what is true. While sometimes I wish that life were easier and simpler and more clear-cut, it simply isn't.

### III

*I believe in joy and wonder I believe in hope and trust  
I believe that something special lives in every one of us  
I believe faith's often tested and it's how we face our doubts  
That will explain, give meaning, define our lives somehow...*

My father died in the spring of 1997 a few months after my 50th birthday. At the memorial his minister and friend, Don Gilmore, read from my father's writings, writings that included thoughts about his depression and his hospitalization. It was the first public acknowledgement of that part of my father's full and now completed life. In the months that followed I realized that having that information publicly aired and finally shared freed me to explore and so explain my relationship with depression and more importantly with that which remained unspoken and so could never be named and the liberation and the exploration would be my father's final gift to me.

It would take me ten years to realize the extent of the gift. A gift that included acknowledging and accepting depression as part of my nature. A gift that meant

*Let love go forward from this time and place...*



being able to finally find and face and free my greatest fears, fears that for too long left me feeling I was not enough and that there was something so wrong with me that I could not at a most intimate level love or be loved.

Once those fears were faced the riddle could be solved. No longer afraid of what I might find or who I might be I was able to discover over time that I was both enough and loveable. Knowing myself better than anyone else could and finally able to love myself for all that I am the world became a different place, a world I saw in a new and different light.

#### IV

*I believe faith is exploring what is darkest for ourselves  
And that hope is somehow sharing what we find with someone else  
I believe that you have been a true and trusted friend to me  
We are better for the journey I believe*

Using the language of myth made familiar by Joseph Campbell, to face my fears and to solve the riddle meant for me entering the forest at the darkest place. My hope is that a lifetime of writing and singing songs and telling stories will help me find ways to share what I found and continue to find while being open and more understanding of other people's stories and other people's journeys.

But first I return in memory and imagination to two moments in 1969, one moment just before my father spoke and the second the moment that followed when I remember feeling nothing. I look again at those people I know and love, a love made tougher and more tender through the years. My emotions now are many. Some sadness. Wonder. Hope. Longing. Gratitude. Satisfaction.

There are things I want to say to my twenty-two year old self but I know he is in no place to hear them. I want him to know he'll be okay, that it's not going to be easy, and that I'll be waiting for him.

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*Let love go forward from this time and place...*