



MARK PEARSON
MUSIC

You Are The One

I

I've been asking questions and searching for answers

While looking for reasons for all of my life

While stumbling blindly the road's been unwinding

Not sure what I'm finding look in your eyes

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That's the first verse of a song called "You Are the One." Returning from Japan in 1990 I was sure that Pat was the one. We had met in college 25 years earlier. She'd married a good friend of mine had two girls I knew and loved from the time they were they born. How and why she and I fell in love remains somewhat mysterious and yet quite simple. Like Odysseus we are all trying to find our way home and with Pat I was sure that I had found someone to share the journey. So it was with boundless hope and complete faith in the power of love I returned to Seattle that June eager and anxious to get started.

At forty-three having lived alone for the previous thirteen years and having no children of my own but now ready to share a house with two teenagers the fact that it somehow didn't dawn on me that there would be big and important adjustments on everyone's part makes me realize in retrospect that at least in my case besides being blind love can sometimes be pretty dumb.

Ready but not prepared I magically thought that love would and could be the answer to any and all questions. It didn't take long to learn when it comes to blending a family that love is not an answer but together with laughter, luck, a lot of work, and time love can be and is the tie that binds.

II

Love is the question love is the answer love is the reason and you are the one

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As well as a new direction in my personal life the early 90's brought changes in The Brothers Four. For nearly 35 years Bob Flick, Dick Foley, and John Paine were the three recognizable faces and voices in that group and while each had added a successful second career, Bob in audio production, John in video, and Dick on TV, they had always found a way to balance the demands of those careers with their love of singing and performing as The Brothers Four.

During those decades only three of us had stood in that fourth spot. Mike Kirkland had set the standard until I replaced him in the late 60's. Bob Haworth replaced me when I went in search of a solo career and then I retook the spot when Haworth left to join The Kingston Trio. I believed there would be no further changes until some night in the distant future when Bob, Dick and John would tell me that together they'd decided to call it a day.

Then suddenly Japan couldn't get enough of the group and US audiences were

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



rediscovering us as well. In December of 1990 we returned to Japan for a third time in eighteen months this time for two weeks of hotel holiday shows.

Pat was able to come for a week of that tour. Before a show in Sapporo she was outside walking. The snow was falling gently. She saw a huge billboard with a picture of all of our faces on it. After the show she wanted us to see it and have our pictures taken underneath it. The problem was that an hour after the show our faces, the faces of our group, had been replaced by the faces of those who were going to be part of the next show. Yet another sign both literally and figuratively of how fickle and funny the music business can be.

As 1991 began there was talk of another major tour to Japan in May and more holiday shows the following December. If not yet a Mighty Wind it was feeling like a significant second wind. You can wait a long time for the phone to ring and if it finally does you need to answer it and you want your answer to be yes.

At the same time Dick Foley was hosting a successful regional television show as well as developing a second show for syndication with national aspirations. It was an abundance of career riches that now involved choices. Reluctantly Dick chose to see how far television would take him while The Brothers Four set out to replace the irreplaceable.

As a respected music producer Bob had worked with the best musicians in the Northwest. Among the most versatile and talented was a guy named Terry Lauber who became the choice to replace Dick. While Terry's roots were in rock and roll his ability and experience helped him fit in quickly and brought a new level of musicianship to the group. We also became a little more of a business and a little less of a family.

Terry's first tour with the group in December of 1991 included a week of concerts in Taiwan, Christmas shows in Japan, as well as providing music and being a significant part of the first annual Japanese-America Grass Roots Summit that took place in Kyoto, Japan. The idea of that gathering was to remember the 150 years of friendship between Japan and the US that began in 1841 when a Japanese fishing vessel was wrecked and the crew, among them a 14-year-old boy named John Manjiro, was rescued by a US whaling ship. Of those rescued Manjiro was the only one to choose to go to America and by doing so became the first person from Japan to set foot on American soil. Eventually he returned to his homeland and was instrumental in forging a lasting relationship with the US when Admiral Perry sailed into Tokyo Bay in 1853 and demanded Japan open itself to the outside world. A song Bob Flick wrote called "In the Name of Brotherhood" became a theme song for the gathering that not coincidentally corresponded to the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Our invitation to be part of that summit was yet one more example of the special relationship the group has with the country and the people of Japan.

III

*After all of the testing and all of the blessings
All of the lessons untying those knots
Learned life's about giving and truly forgiving
And loving and living with all that we've got*

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



Something I have been trying to do my whole adult life is reconcile the differences between what might be called the myth of my family growing up and what I later learned to be the truth. The truth meant beginning to discover in my 20's a hundred year family history of mental illness that included an uncle dying in a mental institution and my dad confined to one the months before and after I was born. That truth naturally involved the consequences of the disease but also contained the impacts of denial of it, not having a way to talk about it, as well as the effects of living with unspoken unspecified fears and shame that was part of it. It took most of a lifetime to get to One of Those Times in a Life where I believe I know enough and have enough faith to finally try to tell that story.

One of the things that kept me going even when I didn't have the faith besides a need to understand who I was and why I did some of the things I did was a need to understand who my parents were and why they did what they did a need simplified and complicated by the fact that I always loved them for the most part liked them and as an adult got along with them and enjoyed being with them.

That continued to be true after Pat and I got together. My folks had known her before and after we became a couple they welcomed her and her daughters into the family. Early in our relationship she and I invited my folks to come the west side for a weekend. They drove from Spokane. We went to the Skagit Valley. We saw swans and snow geese. We had such a good time we started getting together on regular basis. The next time was near Leavenworth. The highlight of that trip was the owner of a bed and breakfast cooked a private dinner for the four of us. When Pat and I visited Spokane there were frequent bridge tournaments and doubles tennis matches with Pat and my dad on one side and my mom and me on the other.

One of our best times together was in 1992 when The Brothers Four participated in the second annual Japanese-America Grassroots Summit. This time it was in the US beginning in Boston where John Manjiro spent time when he was in America. We sang at an event at the Kennedy Presidential Library and John Kennedy Junior was the guest speaker.

The summit continued a week later at Yellowstone Park and Cody, Wyoming. I'd flown back to Seattle and Pat and I drove to Yellowstone with my folks. My dad worked at the park during the summers when he was in college. We had gone as a family when I was growing up. On this trip the four of us created our own memories while doing a lot of laughing, remembering, and discovering including being horrified at the extent of the devastation the fires of 1988 had done to the park.

Everyone involved with the summit went out of their way to make my parents feel welcome. One night my mom was talking to one of the Japanese sponsors. He told her how he and three of his friends had formed a Brothers Four tribute group years earlier. They continued to singing together to this day. Each of the four guys assumed the role of someone in The Brothers Four.

"Which one are you?" my mom asked.

"Why, Mrs. Pearson," he replied his arm around my mother now, "I'm your son."

To this day his group continues to sing. We often meet with him when we're in Japan. He never fails to ask how my mother's doing.



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IV

*Love is the question love is the answer love is the reason and you are the one
Love is the question love is the answer love is the reason and you are the one*

In my life there've been a lot of twists and turns regarding songwriting and storytelling. I think the most fun I ever had working and playing with words was as a freelance verse writer for American Greetings in the 1990's. I put a portfolio together for a friend of mine who was working for the company who got it to the right people and in less than a month they got back to me saying how seldom they respond to unsolicited material how much they liked what I did that they looked forward to working with me and would be excited to meet with me whenever I was in Cleveland. They also told me they were ready to send me a check for the half a dozen verses that they wanted to use.

Having chosen the often-solitary professions of songwriting and storytelling where rejection proves the rule, being paid the exception, and feeling on the outside looking often the norm I almost didn't know what to do with such an open armed open walled response. But I managed. Over the next couple of years a relationship developed. I visited whenever I was in the area. I regularly sent them verses or ideas I had. They would ask for my input on projects that they were developing. They couldn't have been more supportive. Because I tend to be a word first songwriter a lot about rhyming verses felt familiar and playing with free verse was a lot of fun. Some of my favorite memories from that time was working on verses or projects when The Brothers Four were touring and I would look out the window of the bus or the car and simply think good thoughts about people I cared about and daydream ways to say good things to them in a greeting card form.

After six or seven years the people who championed me in the company moved on to other positions or left. The phone stopped ringing. Checks stopped coming. It sure was fun while it lasted.

During the early 90's I also created a manuscript for a second novel. It's written in the first person is called Back Before the Rain. It's about a folksinger in his late 30's down on his luck suddenly offered a chance to make some big money going on the road performing as part of a group he had grown up idolizing. They do say write about what you know about. A friend of mine whom I respect (and am happy to say is still my friend) agreed to read the manuscript and offer suggestions. The story went through more re-writes and an agent search before ending up in a drawer next to that first manuscript My Brother's Keeper.

V

By the early 90's most of the people I had worked with in Nashville and who had shown the most faith in me through the years had also moved on or up or away. With the meteoric rise of Garth Brooks and others like Clint Black, Alan Jackson, and Brooks and Dunn country music was completing its transition from regional power to international brand. An emphasis on young country made me feel a little old and out of step. While I could still get through some of the doors the buildings behind those doors appeared to get bigger and bigger none more so than the BMI and ASCAP buildings on the respective corners of Music Square East and West.

Throughout the 90's I tried to visit Nashville at least twice a year usually coming

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in on Sunday night and heading back at the end of day on Friday. Sherry Bonds' book "The Songwriter's and Musician's Guide to Nashville" published in 91 became a helpful road map. There's a saying that two weeks in New York City is too long and two years is not long enough. I suppose the same could be said for a week or a year as a songwriter in Nashville although I never did find out the difference a year or more might make.

Every time I visited Nashville I thought this could be "it." In a way I thought of my songs like lottery tickets believing this time one of them was going to be jackpot winner. The hardest part of those weeks was always mental. Staying positive. Keeping the faith. Making that one more cold call. Accepting the rejection. And sometimes I got anxious that people might realize I was anxious.

Looking back the truth is that with a few exceptions the songs I wrote in hopes of selling were not songs I wrote to sing. They lacked my heartbeat. It was like I was manufacturing them instead of creating them. Find a clever title. Mold it into a hook. Choose a song form. Study what's selling. Try to write something similar but not too similar. It was not a satisfying or sustainable way to write songs.

But not all songs I wrote were for sale. I also wrote songs to sing or simply for moments and memories and people I cared for. Never more successfully than for Pat's youngest daughter, Lindsey's, 15th birthday.

VI

*Love is the question love is the answer love is the reason and you are the one
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In the spring of 1991 after being told there would be no school play Pat took it upon herself to produce Lil Abner so that her youngest daughter Lindsey could continue to pursue her dreams, develop her talents, and maybe most important have a creative outlet for what was not an easy time in her life. On all levels the play was a smashing success none more so than the circle of friends that became part of Lindsey's life including an incredibly talented inner circle of two boys, Lindsey, and another girl. The world was simply alive and buzzing when the four of them were together.

For Lindsey's birthday in March of 92 I wrote nine songs including one for each of her three friends as well as ones for her mother and sister to sing. The original plan was to secretly record them at Terry Lauber's professional home studio and then present the finished product to Lindsey at a surprise birthday party. The plan changed in a splendid moment of inspiration when we decided instead to kidnap Lindsey and have her be there for the recording. When we took her blindfold off in that room full of microphones and headphones and now filling with that unmistakable buzz there was not a dry eye in the place and we hadn't even started to record yet.

We spent the next hour or two in a place of bliss. The studio would fill with that buzz. Then Terry would say rolling the buzzing would stop suddenly whoever's turn it was would sing right to Lindsey as the rest of us watched with open mouths and open hearts and when the song was finished it was like we all exhaled together and the room filled with yet more emotion.

When the last song was recorded exhausted and exhilarated we all went back to the house with a copy of what we'd done and listened over and over taking time only for birthday dinner and for Lindsey to blow the candles out and share her cake.

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



My memory of standing in the other room watching those four kids listening to those songs appears to me now like the final scene of a movie where just before the credits roll a voice tells us that the next year one of the two boys will go to a rival high school and that tight circle will begin to loosen. The other boy will go on to star in all the high school musicals and then tragically die in an auto accident before his 20th birthday. The other girl who loved the boy who died will go on to love again and sing songs and put on plays for her own five kids.

Lindsey would remain active in theater appearing in numerous high school and college productions before moving to New York where she ended up getting her dream job working at the New Victory Theater where part of what she does is help school kids pursue their dreams, develop their talents, and find a creative outlet for what is not always an easy time in their lives.

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