

HOW CAN SOMEONE LOVE ME?

The Summer of 2007 until the Fall of 2010

The seventh and final stage of this journey began in the summer of 2007. What became clear only later was how much of the previous ten years I had spent finding, facing, and freeing my fears. The seeds to those fears were there when I was born. My dad was in a mental institution. My parents were separated first by war and then by my dad's hospitalization. The best I can figure, my dad finally came home when I was ten week old and the family's future at best was uncertain. It would have been a most anxious time. The family did what lots of families do with painful pasts, buried the issue as deeply as possible and got on with life. The problem was that the anxieties were still there. As a newborn, I believe I understood, on some level, that something was wrong. I did what newborns naturally do: I made it about me and ended up believing there was something wrong with me.

When beliefs get covered up with secrets, silence, and the too often unspeakable shame that was, and in some ways still is connected to mental illness, fear has room to grow and it ends up with the power to control.

Eventually all my self-doubt became distilled into a riddle: *how can someone love me unless they know me well and if they me well how can they love me?* Looking back to the time the family secret was revealed at my dad's memorial, I was finally free to explore dark places inside myself. The hardest thing to accept, when I shined a light into those corners, was how I'd hurt people in order to prove to myself that they didn't, or couldn't, love me. But as I continued to look and to better understand where my fears came from, while I saw myself as someone broken and flawed, I also saw someone worthy of being loved. That realization began to sink in over time; the more I saw it, the more I believed it; the more I believed it, the more I saw it.

As I began to see myself in that new light, the way I looked at what I the things I did began to change as well. For instance, song writing. Over the years songwriting gave me a lot but always seemed to take more than it gave. Beginning in the summer of 2007 I decided I would spend a length of time, a hundred days, and see if I could turn half empty days into half full days and the creative process into something that gave more than it took. After a hundred days, my songwriting and who I was when I wrote, was changing for the better.

By the beginning of 2009 I had enough songs for at least two albums: one with my friend, Mike McCoy, and the other a solo project. Each of them felt special.



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



In 1981 McCoy and I had recorded an album called "Between Friends." The new project was to be called "Between Old Friends." We recorded it in the same building that we recorded the 1981 album, using the same musicians, the same producer, same engineer, and in front of many of the same friends. The solo album was recorded at my friend Ted Brancato's studio in New Jersey. Paul Prestopino had been one of my musical heroes growing up. He was the main accompanist for The Chad Mitchell Trio and Peter, Paul, and Mary. He lived in Roosevelt, New Jersey and agreed to add his talents to the recording project.

During the same time period The Brothers Four produced album with our newest member, Karl Olsen.

Over the years I have struggled with anxiety in recording studios. A lot of times the anxiety made me more anxious, affected who I was, and often how I performed in the studio. When the new recordings were finished, I realized that anxiety was not much of a factor, in fact I was having a great time in the studio. Discovering new ways to stay open and in the moment was exhilarating.

Toward the end of 2009, I took part in a writer's retreat and was inspired to spend the winter writing about my family's story. I also made plans and got into shape to hike around Mt. Rainier on the Wonderland Trail in the fall of 2010.

Somewhere on the trail around that incredible mountain, I realized I was developing a new relationship with my fears and anxieties. While I would accept in time that they would always be part of me, it was also becoming clear that after years of defining me, they were now mine to define.

With three new albums, a family story down on paper, and the perspective gained on Mt. Rainier, it was time to find a way to share what I was learning about myself on this amazing life's journey.



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