

WHEN WE ARRIVE WHERE WE STARTED

Summer and Fall of 2015

The mountain metaphor has proven a wonderful way to remember and discover and tell the story of a life and share the songs of a lifetime. I have struggled, however, with where the story should end, in other words, when and how to leave *the mountain*. A hint comes from the TS Eliot quote I added to the Campfire Trail Guides years before: *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*. In the summer and fall of 2015 it began to appear I was arriving where I started and seeing what I saw with new eyes.

My older brother turned 70 and my younger brother retired from teaching in June of 2015. In each case I took a few days to think about our relationships. I wrote each of these men I'd grown up with a letter and told them how much they meant to me and how important it is that we are brothers. I shared a meal and the letter with each of them.

There were letters for other people as well. When I first joined The Brothers Four I felt stuck in the shadow of Mike Kirkland, the guy I'd replaced in the group. After a while I didn't think much about him. Then not long ago I realized his spirit was and always would be a part of The Brothers Four concert, and that instead of feeling stuck in his shadow I felt like was and had been standing on his shoulders. It was liberating to reach that new understanding. I will always be thankful I found a way to thank him in letter and song.

There was also a letter I wrote to my oldest stepdaughter that helped us shine healing light into what had been for too long a hurting place in our relationship. The repair felt immediate, heartfelt and lasting.

There were letters to Chuck, my friend of more than fifty years, as he dealt with the loss of his parents and his wife. Each of them had a unique place in my life as well.

In August of 2015 I went to my 50th high school reunion. My classmates asked me to sing and to speak. It was a real gift to be able to share with them. There was also breakfast with some buddies where the conversation was more personal and intimate.

There was also a lighter moment at the reunion. In high school my favorite group was The Chad Mitchell Trio. The fact that Chad Mitchell and I graduated from the same high school gave me sort of a personal connection. In the last few years The Brothers Four have worked with the Chad Mitchell Trio. Chad and



MarkPearsonMusic.com
360.643.1705

P.O. Box 65002
Port Ludlow
Washington
98365

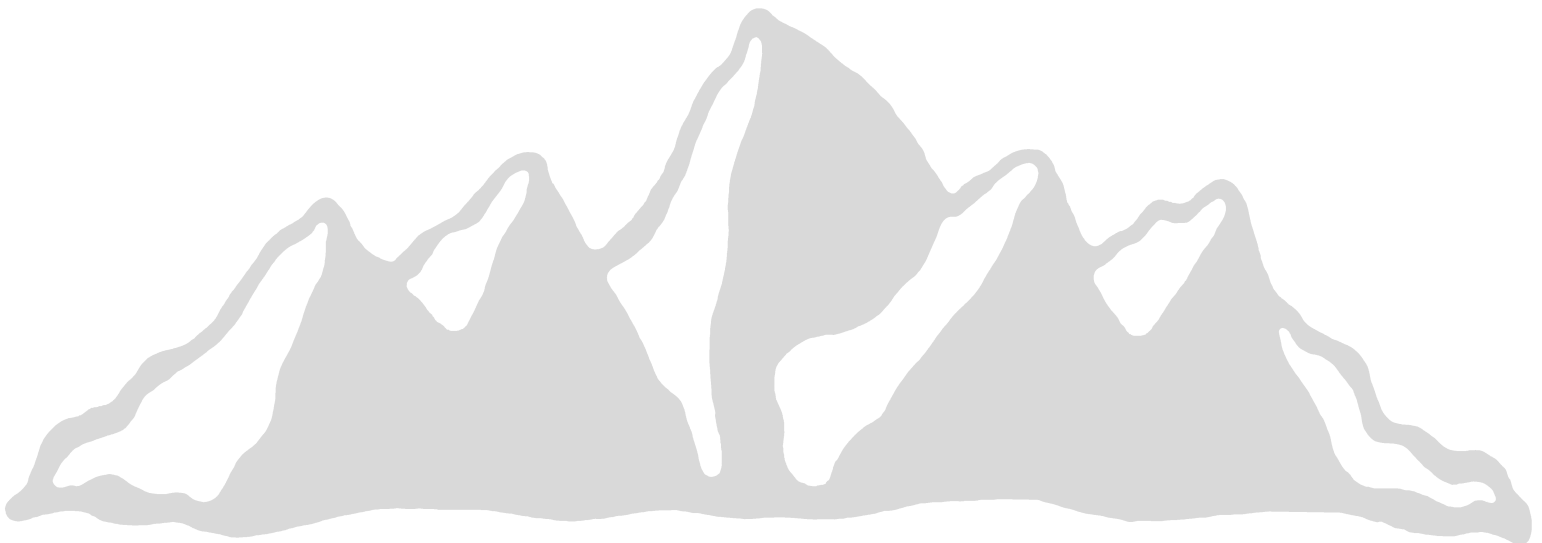
Let love go forward from this time and place ...



one of his singing partners, Mike Kobluk, ended up living in Spokane. On the day of the reunion some of my classmates saw them and told them I would be singing at the Davenport Hotel later that night. They came down to see me. I made sure to introduce Mike and Chad to a classmate I'd taken to a Chad Mitchell Trio concert when we were sophomores in high school. Who would have thought fifty years later there we would all be.

That September with a few new songs and a lifetime of old ones McCoy and I celebrated fifty years of friendship and partnership with a concert. We met in the fall of 1965. We joined the same fraternity, played freshmen college football, and began singing together. These days we sing and travel the world as members of The Brothers Four. Two albums of original songs, *Between Friends* and *Between Old Friends*, recorded nearly 30 years apart, document large swaths of our life and musical journey. We gather the Monday after Thanksgiving to remember a dark moment in 1995 when it took love, hope, and faith as well as truth and grace to make it to the light. McCoy and I talked other every day from the Monday after Thanksgiving in 1995 until my father's memorial in May of 1997. You will find that story told in McCoy's own words at the 34th Campfire.

In the summer and fall of 2015 I was having experiences with people I'd grown up with, gone to school with, and spent my life, experiences that felt connected to the times we'd first met. In other words with a number of different people I was arriving where we'd started, and I was seeing it and them and myself with new eyes and beholding it as if for the first time.



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