

# HEADING FOR HOME

*November 2015-May 2017*

In 2010 when I started out on this journey, that became a personal odyssey, I was not sure where I was going, or exactly what I was looking for. Because of that it was hard to know when or if I might reach my destination. As I talked about in the previous campfire a number of singular moments with people I grew up with, went to school with, and shared my life with, helped me realize in the fall of 2015 on some profound level I had, as TS Eliot so eloquently stated *arrived where I started and knew it as if for the first time.*

Then on the Friday after Thanksgiving in a ceremony near Chicago that included Christening, Confirmation, and a first Communion my grandson was to be welcomed into the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church. After Jesus died, Thomas, one of the original twelve disciples, went to Kerala India and established that church. Now on this November day my grandson was becoming part of an unbroken line of worshippers going back more than two thousand years. My only role during this magical and mysterious moment was to be my grandson's witness.

Growing up I thought of life as a sprint. As I grew older, I began to think of it as a marathon. At some point I realized life is a relay. As I watched my grandson begin his leg of that *relay* in spectacular fashion, I thought, *what a perfect moment to leave my metaphorical mountain and find my way back home.*

With that as a structure I began to organize the seven campfires of the seventh and final stage. At the fifth campfire I would arrive where I started. The sixth campfire, this one, will take us to a concert where we will celebrate the lighting of the 49<sup>th</sup> and final campfire. Through a combination of choice and chance and circumstance the concert became set at Benaroya Hall in downtown Seattle on May 13, 2107.

To get there life took a number of seemingly unconnected turns. The Civil Rights Pilgrimage in March of 2016 was going through Nashville. From the mid 1970's to 2002 I visited Nashville regularly as a songwriter. I had often been disappointed in the way I'd handled the pressure of being in that town. I decided to spend the winter of 2016 studying and writing for the Country Music market and seeing how it felt to return to those once familiar streets and to again make the calls and knock on the doors. It was a satisfying and challenging winter. It felt important to have one more chance to have my songs critiqued by professionals, to sing at the Bluebird Café, and, thanks to a friend in the house band, to stand at the performer's circle at the Grand Ole Opry



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



before the real show began. When I returned from Nashville I told someone I came back empty handed but with a full heart. The way I looked at it is though I might have failed as a Nashville songwriter, having a chance to return to those streets somehow helped assure me I had not failed as a person.

Sadly the spring and summer of 2016 included singing at number of memorials. It was a reminder of the preciousness and precariousness of life and the importance of the people in our lives.

That May and June The Brothers Four returned one more time to Japan for a sixteen-concert tour. As I tell anyone who asks, because of the affection we have for each other and for the music and for a chance to be keepers of memories for people in the audience, these are the good old days for The Brothers Four.

In the fall I committed three months to simply being a songwriter, to write the best songs I could to describe where life had gone since receiving my father's blessing twenty years earlier. The Presidential election results momentarily stopped me in my tracks before filling me with a sense of urgency as I resumed writing.

During times dedicated to songwriting I try to keep focused on the creative process and not worry about the quality of the songs. The author, Tom Robbins, said, when he's writing, he arrives at his desk at the same time every day, not so that he can find his muse, but so that the muse will know where to find him. Good advice.

The songs slowly began to take shape. At the end of January, I performed the more than twenty new songs for a small group of friends. The second week of February, I recorded the fifteen I felt best told the story.

That recording was followed by another Civil Rights Pilgrimage, more Brothers Four concerts, sharing my songs and stories for the first time while playing a ukulele, creating the final Chronicles, doing all I needed to do to have a new album ready, as well as promoting the May 13<sup>th</sup> concert. It was a busy time for sure.

One of the most important moments came at the end of April. Along with three musicians who will join me at Benaroya Hall, I performed a run-through of songs for the concert at a church where one of my singing partners is the director of music. The response of the audience gives me confidence the songs are worth sharing and the story is worth telling.

Maybe in the end that's all any of us needs: a sense that what we've done matters and who we are makes a difference.

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