

FEBRUARY 18th 2014

BREAKING TRAIL

Dear Friends,

Holden is filling up with snow, after several months of ice. There are 62 inches on the ground now...with a total of 137 inches this year. It is truly a fairy land of fluffy snow. Scott and I went walking recently, to Ten Mile Falls....about a mile out of the Village. At first I was reluctant, not sure how I'd plow through the snow that was tripping me up. But Scott moved ahead, and broke trail for me, and we made it to the frozen falls.

I've been thinking about how often Scott has "broken trail" for me...making the hard places easier in my life....being the loving, supportive presence that did a lot of the heavy lifting in terms of work, allowing me to continue to do what I do. We've been together 26 years now, and my love and gratitude to him grows by the year.

Over the past weeks, I've had occasion to think of others in my life who have "broken trail" for me, and for so many others. The death of Pete Seeger hit me hard, although we all knew it was coming. He kept the flame burning, demonstrating again and again how the power of song can change the world. He broke trail for so many of us who followed in his steps in my generation, keeping alive that sacred trust to keep on writing and singing songs. We corresponded some, and I had the great joy of singing for him. He liked my songs.

Another who "broke trail" for me was my beloved friend Colleen O'Rell, who died two days after Pete. She came to one of the very first Threshold Choir rehearsals I held in Bellingham, and was my constant companion and supporter through the formation of the Bellingham Threshold Singers, and then Women with Wings. When I left Bellingham, she was the one I chose to direct that choir. She suffered physically more than anyone I've known. She also had one of the most open and compassionate hearts of anyone I've known. I arrived at her bedside three hours before she died, and she was encircled by love and song throughout her last days...a gift she had given so many times to others. I've attached a photo of her leading bedside singing at our last Holden Village Compassionate Voices retreats in March of 2013.



I've been thinking more of how I might break trail for others, as I grow older. A few days ago I led a workshop here in the village on ways that music has been instrumental in the work of social justice through the various movements. I was excited to be doing it, and hope to expand on that theme. It is a theme that will be part of our Holden Village Folk Festival on the weekend of March 28 through 31st. We'll be celebrating folk music through music, workshops, dance and art, bringing in guest musicians like Scatter Creek String Band, Tom Rawson, Mike Marker, Jen & Kristin Allen-Zito. Should be a wonderful weekend!

Holden will also host the second **Compassionate Voices workshop**, March 7-10th. I'll be facilitating that, with lots of singing and workshops on bedside singing, moving through grief, dancing, art, conversations about death and dying, care giving, honoring the body, and more.



For more information about these workshops, visit the Holden Village website: www.holdenvillage.org or go to my itinerary, www.lindasongs.com/pages/itinerary.htm. I'll also be heading to Pittsburg as a presenter at the Threshold Choir Appalachian Regional Gathering, March 20 - 23rd.

These days I'm working on my archives as I can, thanks to the inspiration of Bob Nelson's excellent archiving of Northwest folk musicians over many decades, now housed at the University of Washington guides.lib.washington.edu/content.php?pid=360075&sid=2944515. Bob convinced me that the work I've collected and written over the past decades would be worth passing on. And I feel honored that Ruth Steele at the Center for Pacific Northwest Studies agreed, and now has boxes of papers from many of my projects, including the Washington Women's Heritage Project, the Washington Centennial files, the Grange Music Heritage Project, the Washington Women's Suffrage Project and more are now in their good hands, ready to be organized. I'm just beginning to do some of the audio files. I had the thrill of listening again to an interview I did with Studs Terkel back in the 80's. Great fun! I'll be able to make more progress when we leave Holden in June of 2015, and begin taking boxes out of the storage unit to wherever our new home will be in Bellingham.

We do miss our home town. Never more so than when friends die and our community grieves together. We need each other, and we share a history of love and song and struggle, built up over many years.

I leave you with some words I read this morning, coined by Ira Byock, MD, in his book *The Four Things That Matter Most*.

The four most important phrases when one is dying:

Please forgive me
I forgive you.
Thank you.
I love you.

Let us hold each other in grace, and offer these words to those we love now.

With love and gratitude to you all -

Linda

PS - If you no longer wish to receive this very occasional newsletter, please hit "reply" and put "remove" in the subject line. Thanks!