

## Pete Seeger & Pat Humphries: *A friendship from first song to last*

Emma's Revolution's 2019 shows will include songs and stories in celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of Pete Seeger, a dear friend and mentor to duo. Pete was especially close to Pat Humphries and, here, Pat tells some of the story of their times together:

"I met Pete at a songwriters' gathering in 1985. I had written my first song 'Keep On Moving Forward' (then called 'Never Turning Back') the year before and had just finished leading it in a song circle. I saw this hand come around from behind me, holding a small scrap of paper. Pete had notated my song while I was singing it. He asked, 'Is this how it goes?' I don't read music so I asked him to sing it back to me. He had it all right. Pete later said 'Keep On Moving Forward' was the best song he'd heard in 50 years and he and I remained friends for the rest of the nearly 30 years he was alive.

Over those years, I performed with Pete in places as varied as Symphony Space's stage in NYC to the dockhouse in his hometown of Beacon. I worked for the Sloop Clearwater (Pete's environmental project which successfully cleaned up the Hudson River), helped gather sap from the maple trees on his property, visited, shared meals and swapped stories with him and Toshi, volunteered at the local festivals they organized, celebrated holidays and sang at Toshi's memorial. Sandy and I later sang at Pete's, too.



When I heard he was in the hospital, I drove up to NY from the DC area, instinctively bringing my banjo, even though I hadn't been playing it much. At the hospital, a steady stream of family and friends were coming through to see Pete and sing his songs back to him in gratitude for all the times he had left home to sing to us. The day and evening wore on, until just a small circle of family and friends remained. As we sang our last songs to Pete, we sent him off onto his next adventure with our love and blessings.

The family stayed at the hospital and I went up to Pete's house to make sure everything was okay there. I turned on the lights and lit the fire from the neatly arranged pile of kindling and firewood Pete had cut and placed in the woodstove, just the week before. On the drive up to the house, I had been thinking of all the remarkable ways Pete had touched my life. I took out my banjo and began writing 'Sing People Sing'.

Pete taught us how to sing together. But he was never satisfied with us singing in unison, he wanted us to sing in harmony. And, if we weren't picking up on a part, he would teach us one. He knew the metaphor of a room full of people breathing in sync and singing in harmony wouldn't be lost on his audiences and that we would take that sense of hope and community out into the world and put it to good use."

*Oh, hear the banjo ring  
Hear the people sing  
Hope changes everything  
Sing, people, sing*

~ from Emma's Revolution's song, "Sing People Sing"

[www.emmasrevolution.com](http://www.emmasrevolution.com)