

Don't Cry

Dedicated to the Fireside Quartet

Words attributed to Dr. Seuss

By Manoj Padki

The image shows a musical score for two voices: Tenor Lead and Bari Bass. The Tenor Lead part is written in treble clef with a 2/4 time signature. It begins with a rest for 8 measures, then starts with the lyrics "Don't cry be-cause it's o-ver, but smile!". The Bari Bass part is written in bass clef with a 2/4 time signature. It begins with a rest for 8 measures, then starts with the lyrics "Don't cry o-ver smile be-cause it hap-pened!". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and slurs. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Life is full of changes. Some we welcome, some we dread. Some we see coming, some catch us by surprise. Some we control, some control us. Some we embrace, some drag us kicking and screaming. Some move us forward, some seem to pull us back. Some are new beginnings, some are solemn endings. Some creep up slowly, some roar down the track. But no matter what one does, time marches on. The seasons come and go. People enter our lives and, unfortunately, they leave as well. As Flavia Weedn has written, "Some people come into our lives and quickly go. Some stay for a while, leave footprints on our hearts, and we are never, ever the same."

In the barbershop world, quartets form and disband. They make sweet music for a while, but then they go silent. A quartet member may move away or even pass away. There may be disagreements on goals: "Do we want to compete or just do gigs?" There can be arguments over song choices, costumes, or, more seriously, how to spend the money in the quartet kitty. Even friendly break-ups can cause tension when members then go sing with another quartet. To paraphrase the popular song written by Alan O'Day and Johnny Stevenson and sung by The Righteous Brothers, "If there's a barbershop heaven, you know they've got a hell of a ring."

Each change, large or small, is a passage. We hold onto the things that are precious to us, but we all experience passages that take place despite our best efforts to fight them off. One of the biggest is that as much as we love our children, we cannot -- nor would we want to -- stop them from growing up. Our choice, then, is how to deal with such passages. Do we mourn what we no longer have? Or do we celebrate that we had it for a while?

I choose the latter. I distinctly remember watching an interview with James Taylor many years ago where the interviewer referred to his marriage to Carly Simon as "failed." Taylor interrupted. "Why did you say it failed?" he asked. "Because you're not married anymore," the interviewer explained. "We had some good years together," Taylor responded, "and we did some good things. That's not a failure."

The Fireside Quartet is no longer singing together, but this is not a failure, either. First the coronavirus knocked out our ability to get together to rehearse. Then Daniel, our basso profundo, followed through with a long-planned, year-long sabbatical with his family in Israel. We didn't cry over this, we went out to a socially-distanced, outside lunch and celebrated the wonderful journey we had travelled together. We competed at the District level and even finished in the medals a couple of times. We won the 2017 Boston Regional Harmony Sweepstakes and travelled to San Francisco with our spouses to compete in the National Finals. We produced a pretty decent CD. We entertained a lot of people and enjoyed a lot of applause. We made new friends and we deepened our friendships with each other. And at times we laughed our heads off. It doesn't get much better than that, so I reregistered the quartet just last week to keep our options open for Act II when Daniel returns. Whatever the future holds, I, for one, will always relish the great years we had singing together.

I hope that these musings and reminiscences explain why "Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened" is one of my favorite philosophies of life. May your life be full of memories, and may even the unpleasant ones enrich and shape you in positive ways. But cherish the good ones as "footprints on your heart." Not everyone gets to have such memories, even for a little while. See the blessing in having each experience, especially when it comes to an end.

— Jesse Heines, October 17, 2020

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it's over,
smile because
it happened.**

