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He had a dream



Original song that wooed a woman half a world away 62 years ago still wows her

By John Wilkens

STAFF WRITER

November 9, 2008

They dropped one atomic bomb and were getting ready to drop another, but Paul Sutton had something else on his mind.

Her name was Doris.

He sat down at a piano in the wardroom aboard the USS Wharton, anchored near Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands in the summer of 1946. He searched for the right words.

Wherever I meet you

Whenever the day

I will wait and love you

Just a dream away

They had met the previous fall, at an officer's club in New York City. She was pretty, a model and a poet. He was handsome, a Harvard-trained physicist. The air crackled.

World War II had just ended, and emotions were high, so it was hard to know whether what they were feeling was real or lasting. "One way to find out is to be apart for a while," Sutton said.

He went to Bikini for Operation Crossroads, to do more testing on the kinds of bombs that had leveled Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In between explosions, he dabbled at the piano.

For I always hear you

Any time of day



EDUARDO CONTRERAS / Union-Tribune
Doris Sutton (far left) holds hands with her husband, Paul, while they listen to his song, "Just a Dream Away," performed by singer Anthony Bollotta and pianist Marti Amado. Paul Sutton wrote the song 62 years ago when he was in the Navy.

Telling me, "I love you"

Just a dream away

When he came home at the end of the summer, "Just a Dream Away" was finished. It had a line in it about dancing in Havana, because Doris had told him about a trip she'd taken to Cuba. (It had a line in it about playing tennis in Tacoma, too, but that was just poetic license.)

They dated some more. They went to Jones Beach one Sunday and stopped at the Empire State Building on the way home. At the top, with lights twinkling in the distance, he proposed.

They got married Nov. 28, 1946, Thanksgiving Day. They raised two daughters, Pamela and Valerie. He did research for Corning Glass Works and Ford Aerospace. Doris published several books of poetry. Now retired, they moved to La Jolla 12 years ago.

While they were living their lives, the song pretty much sat in a file cabinet with Paul Sutton's other papers. Until a few months ago.

Valerie Sutton decided she wanted to do something for her father's 87th birthday, which is Dec. 3. She'd heard a bit about their courtship, and the song, and wondered if maybe it could be recorded professionally.

She contacted Marti Amado, a local composer and producer, who met with the Suttons and worked out an arrangement on the piano. She introduced them to Anthony Bollotta, a North Park singer with a flair for Cole Porter-style interpretations.

They all got together recently at Studio West, a recording facility in Rancho Bernardo, to bring the 62-year-old song back to life. "This is the last thing I ever expected would happen to it," Paul said.

Amado ran through the song a couple of times with Bollotta. The Suttons stood off to the side of the piano, holding hands.

"It's such a beautiful song," Bollotta said. "Thank you for letting me sing it. I'm honored to be here."

Then it was time to record. Paul, Doris and Valerie went to an adjoining room, where the recording engineer, Kellogg Boynton, was working. As Bollotta sang, Paul shook his head now and then. Something was wrong.

"It's hard when you've heard it in your head for so long, and then somebody else sings it," he said. He wasn't disappointed or angry. It was just different, a half-note here, a half-note there.

He got up from the couch to go talk with Amado about fixes. Doris sat and remembered. "Paul was the blondest man in New York City," she said. "People would stop and stare." She sighed. "It was such a romantic time. The war heightened everything."



Bollotta sang some more. This time, Paul nodded.

Doris said, "Anthony is a wonderful singer, and that was beautiful. But I'd like to hear Paul sing it."

So he did.

He went into the recording booth and put on headphones. He started singing, with Amado accompanying him on the piano. His words were halting, like he was a little unsure of himself, but he got stronger as he went along.

In the engineer's booth, Doris mouthed along with the words. Her eyes got shiny. "This means a lot to me," she said.

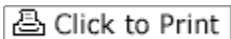
Paul finished and came over to the engineer to hear the song replayed. He held the lyrics in his hand, a typewritten sheet with his name and the copyright symbol and the date typewritten on it, right below the title: "Just a Dream Away."

He looked at his wife and said, "The dream came true."

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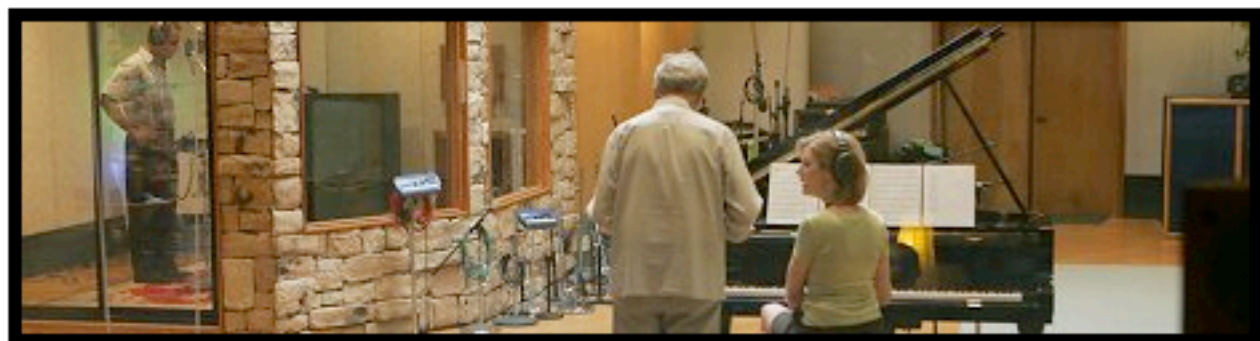
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Wherever I meet you

Whenever the day

I will wait and love you

Just a dream away



Studio vocalist Anthony Bollotta sings his version of "Just a Dream Away."

For I always hear you

Any time of day

Telling me, "I love you"

Just a dream away



Songwriter Paul Sutton's rendition of "Just a Dream Away."

"Just a Dream Away" ©1946, 2006 Paul M. Sutton. Music and lyrics by Paul M. Sutton, arrangement and production by Marti Amado. Performed by Anthony Bollotta, vocalist, and Marti Amado, pianist. Recorded and mixed by Kellogg Boynton IV at Studio West.

Just A Dream Away

Maybe 'twill be London, Maybe Central Park,
Dancing in Havana, Cocktails just for two,
Perhaps 'twill be Boston, In daylight or dark,
Tennis in Tacoma, Soft moonlight and you, but
Wherever I meet you, Whenever the day,
I will wait and love you, Just a dream away.
For I always hear you, Anytime of day,
Telling me "I love you", Just a dream away.

Alternate stanzas

Traveling to Rio,
Lolling on the sand,
Summer cruise to Juneau,
Singing with a band,
Skiing in the mountains,
Walking through the zoo,
At the ~~park~~ fountain,
I'll be sure it's you, but etc.

Paul M. Sutton
LH:MSR
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