

# *On Life and Meaning*

MARK PERES

## **Episode 18 – Deborah Bosley – Plain Language**

### *The Ink is Black; The Page is White*

And now a personal word,

Deborah Bosley communicates clearly. She makes the complex easy to understand. She edits to improve. In her is the idealism of her generation. We share influences in our youth: reading and writing, music, and a belief that we could make the world a better place.

In 1972, I lived in Rego Park in a high-rise apartment in the borough of Queens in New York City. Our building was at the end of Burns Street and Thornton Place. I was in fourth grade (which is sort of like seventh grade now). We lived on the second floor with a balcony where my father tossed quarters down to us when the Good Humor truck came by. I almost always got the toasted almond or strawberry shortcake bars, a red, white, and blue bomb pop, or a screwball if I wanted a brain freeze. After school I played street hockey, threw plastic footballs between parked cars, built models of *Creature Features* monsters, and played Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots and checkers and chess with my friends.

My brother and three sisters were older than me. They were teenagers. They went to Russell Sage Junior High School. My oldest sister had started at Forest Hills High School. They wore bell bottom jeans with patches and boots and vests with leather fringes. Their world was mysterious to me.

When I wasn't playing with my friends, I read everything I could get my hands on. We had a set of the *World Book Encyclopedia*. I read volumes from cover to cover. I looked up words I didn't know in a Merriam-Webster dictionary. I sat in my room and organized books on my shelf. I wrote stories in pencil in a loose-leaf notebook.

Then there was the music. The older kids played albums on portable turntables. The Beatles had broken up in 1970, and there were rumors they might reunite—how could

they not?—but Paul was holding a grudge. Other people blamed John and Yoko. Someone had the new release of *Sticky Fingers* by the Rolling Stones with the working zipper on the cover, but the kids who listened to the Beatles didn't talk much with the kids who listened to the Stones. Everything was in the air: Elton John and "Rocket Man," Paul Simon and "Me and Julio Down by the Schoolyard," and Carly Simon and "You're So Vain."

I listened to my own personal anthem every day on the radio: "Black and White" by Three Dog Night, about the beautiful sight of black and white children and ink on a page. All of what it meant and what the teenagers did was out of reach for me, but the soundtrack was there. There were concerts at Madison Square Garden that people talked about: the Concert for Bangladesh in 1971, Stevie Wonder and John Lennon on the same stage in 1972, something about Jose Feliciano.

The world was open. It could be made better. I grew up believing I could make a difference.

Reading and writing and the music of the early seventies have followed me throughout my life. I always have a book in my hand. I listen to classic rock and pop to inspire and move me. I serve and contribute and create work and teach with the hope and optimism that the world could be made better.

Deborah Bosley and I have idealism in common. Idealism that is beaten and battered in the rough and tumble of the times. I don't have any illusions about the world. But I do have a choice about how to live. I'm grateful that Deborah cares about words and music and helping others. Her idealism inspires. Plain and simple.

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