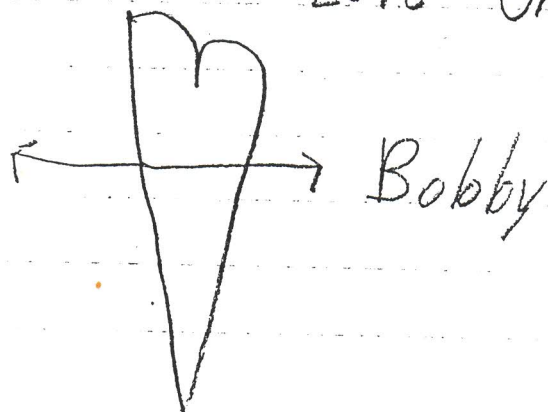


Dear Santa Claus,
Please take this to
Bobby Sherman. I love
you Bobby. I am just 7
years old. I have magazines
and records of you. If you
want to come to see
me go here, 2317 Lake Wheeler
Rd, Raleigh N.C. 27603. I have
got pictures of you on my
wall.

LOVE Sharon Leigh Johnson

To



Bobby

Sharon O'Donnell
CAROLINA VOICES



Recalling in-between innocence

I haven't explored the Internet much because I know I could easily become addicted to it. One recent night, however, my husband — in an effort to show me you can find just about anything on the Internet, said, "Hey, I bet there's even a Bobby Sherman website."

He knew I was a big fan of Bobby's when I was a kid. (Bobby Sherman, for anyone not female and between the ages of 32 and 40, was a teen idol in the late 1960s & early 1970s, with TV shows and a string of hit records.)

A few minutes later, a color photo of Bobby appeared on our computer screen accompanied by the sounds of "Little Woman", his first hit song. I was immediately transported to my childhood, to the days of going swimming in the outdoor pool at Pullen Park and listening to Bobby's records over and over with my best friend, Tina. To the days of playing Red Rover on the playground at Swift Creek School. To the days when the Vietnam War filled the nightly news, when drugs and casual sex were becoming 'hip'; yet, I was protected from it all, cocooned in an innocence that is what childhood should be. My friends and I were aware of the current events, but we did not feel threatened by them. We felt safe, lost in a world of bike riding, spelling tests and Bobby Sherman songs.

Bobby's ever-smiling face and blue eyes looked out at me from the computer. I've told my husband before that the crush I had on Bobby as a young girl has been replaced by admi-

ration. Admiration that a guy in his early 20s who suddenly catapulted to fame and fortune kept a level head and was a good role model to his adoring, impressionable fans; that he made being good 'cool'; that he helped in creating a sense of security, of innocence, for us back then. As I scanned through the Bobby web page, I read letters from other fans, all remarkably expressing this same feeling: that somehow we wouldn't have grown up the way we did, become the people we are, if Bobby Sherman had been a different sort of teen idol. He was never arrested, never in the news for hitting photographers or recording sex videos, never even said a cuss word in a song or on stage. Now he volunteers as an emergency medical technician in Los Angeles, proving what his fans knew all along: He truly cares about people.

When I was in the second grade, my mother took my friend Tina and me to Bobby's concert at Memorial Auditorium in Raleigh. He came on stage, singing "Hey Mister Sun", smiling and waving the peace sign while thousands of girls screamed at the top of their lungs. I sat in the balcony in stunned silence, waving the peace sign back to him and not quite believing that Bobby Sherman himself was there on stage in front of me. I remember trying to take in all the details, to memorize the moment. And when the music stopped and the stage was empty, I remember I felt empty, too, because I knew he would never even know that I had been there in the balcony.

My Bobby Sherman lunch box and my issues of Tiger Beat magazine are long gone; but, the memories he gave me are invaluable. In today's world, the term 'teen idol' has been replaced by 'sex symbol', a shallow term that doesn't measure up to the first. It doesn't bring to mind the same depth of devotion of fans, the same extent of excitement. Bobby was quoted on the web site, saying there aren't any 'teen idols' any more because today's pre-pubescent girls are too 'blase' about such things. He says, "Nowadays, you go from birth to puberty — there's nothing in between." I think of how much I learned during that "in between" time, about myself and about life; and, I ache for all those young people out there rushing to grow up.

Sharon O'Donnell
CAROLINA VOICES



Finally, a chance to meet Bobby

There I was at a concert in Myrtle Beach, a 30-something married mother of two, my hands shaking with nervousness, because I was about to meet Bobby Sherman, the '70s teen idol I'd absolutely adored. I had read about the recent Teen Idol concert featuring Bobby, the Monkees' Davy Jones and Peter Noone of Herman's Hermits. Wild horses and an army of tanks couldn't keep me away. I took my sister Mary along for moral support.

I managed to obtain a couple of backstage passes to meet Bobby before the concert, thus the reason for my nervousness. Though I had met other famous people before, I had never felt this level of excitement. I think that's because I had wanted to meet Bobby for so, so long; it was the culmination of a childhood dream.

When I was 7, I sent fan letters to Bobby but knew he couldn't possibly read them since he received 30,000 letters a week. Then I had an idea I thought was ingenious at the time: Knowing that Santa Claus went to everybody's house, I wrote Bobby a letter and left it on the coffee table beside Santa's milk and cookies along with a note asking Santa to deliver it.

Of course the letter was never delivered. So when I went to meet Bobby in Myrtle Beach, I took along a copy of that letter plus a column I wrote this past winter about how grateful I was to Bobby for being such a wholesome teen idol and role model. I wrote about how I had seen one of his '70s concerts, how thousands of girls screamed and some

stormed the stage to get closer, how he reached out to touch their hands, and how far away I felt from him in my seat in the balcony, knowing he would never even know I had been there.

Twelve years ago, I actually talked to Bobby on the phone after I had sent his manager some material I had written, and Bobby called to say thank you and that he liked my writing. He asked me to send some more, which I did occasionally, and once he sent me an autographed postcard.

So as I stood in a small room of the Palace Theatre, waiting with some other thrilled fans to finally meet Bobby Sherman, I wondered what I should say to perhaps trigger his memory about our past contact or if I just start from scratch and introduce myself. I decided to start from scratch since he probably wouldn't remember me at all. Suddenly, a door to the room opened and in stepped Bobby, dressed in a black shirt and silver pants, looking handsome and much younger than his 55 years. I backed up a bit, wanting to be the last fan to meet him, thinking I could have more time with him that way. But he took one look at me and stopped in his tracks.

"I know you," Bobby said, looking perplexed, trying to figure out how he knew me.

"You do?" I asked, surprised. "I didn't know if you'd remember or not, but we've corresponded before."

He smiled and nodded in recognition. "I've read some of your articles," he said. I turned to my sister, who was nervously taking pictures of me and Bobby. "He remembers!" I squealed, sounding dumber by the moment.

Bobby put his arms around my waist and hugged me. If I had only known back in 1970 that one day this would happen....

Later, he made his entrance through the audience of screaming women, stopping to sign autographs on outstretched album covers. He passed by me and smiled. "Have a great show!" I yelled. He reached over and held my hand for a moment. "Thanks, Sharon," he said. As he launched into one of his hit songs, I felt like I was 7 years old again. But this time, I wasn't sitting in the balcony. And this time, Bobby Sherman knew my name ... if only for a night.

