

## **When Nashville Calls**

*(From: Being Dad)*

With the holidays behind me, I started to focus on the one thing I truly believed would get me out of my horrible financial situation - music.

I enjoyed my work at the center, but I knew that there was no room for me up the corporate ladder. I had no college education and knew that institutions like the center had to have professional staff to justify the fees. Even at my level, I was a rarity as a counselor with only a high school education. I was well aware that the center was not a long-term solution for me.

I honestly felt that music would be my ticket out. I remember the first song I wrote for the group I performed with in the early 70s. I remember the feeling I had when Nisie, the lead singer for the song, finished and the crowd burst into a warm applause. Nisie turned to me with a smile that told me how much she appreciated my song. From that day on, I never cared about performing, I only wanted to write songs for other performers to sing.

I was making trips to Los Angeles every week on my day off to pitch my songs and try to generate some interest in me as a writer. There was one publisher that took me under his wings, so to say. Sonny Gordon left his door open to me and was always willing to spend time with me whenever I was in L.A. I learned more from Sonny than any other person when it came to the music business.

He put a couple of my songs under contract and actually came very close to getting one cut by Linda Ronstadt. I remember the day he called me to tell me that my song was one of three that were chosen out of 300 others for her new album. The bad news was that when they asked him who this Andy Smith guy was - what else has he written? - that narrowed it down to two songs.

Before I could scream too loudly, Sonny explained that this is how the music business works. Getting that first cut is the hard part because they don't know you. They don't know how you are to work with. Even though I told him that I live in San Diego and that Linda Ronstadt could sing my song any way she wanted to, he said that when it boils down to the final three songs like that, it's just a matter of finding a reason to chose

one over the other. It wasn't personal and I should at least be glad to know that the song made it that far.

I had a few other close calls and seemed to be getting in more and more doors with each visit. But I could always stop in on Sonny who was happy to talk with me.

On one particular visit, Sonny went over some of my new material and seemed to like my work. He was a bit hesitant though and finally came out with what was on his mind.

“ I know you're doing all you can trying to raise your girls by yourself and get your music going. But I can't help but think as I listen to your music that you would have such a better chance if you went to Nashville.”

That comment was out of left field. I had never thought about Nashville, Tennessee before. I was a California beach bum in every sense of the word. I knew nothing about Nashville.

But as we sat there talking, Sonny painted a picture that became quite intriguing. He wasn't pushing and had nothing to gain from me going to Nashville. He just wanted me to think about it as a possibility. L.A. was more for bands, rock 'n roll and pop music. He said I was a true writer, and Nashville would be much more accommodating for me as a writer than L.A.

As I was driving back to San Diego, my mind was in total chaos. Not only was I considering the possibility, my heart was repeating over and over again, 'I'm going to Nashville!' When I tucked the girls into bed that night, I sat out in my living room thinking about the days conversation. I made a mental list of the pros and cons of moving to Nashville.

I was a single parent solely responsible for the well being of two girls that I love more than anything. I grew up in San Diego, love the beaches, Padres, Chargers, zoos and bays. I had no savings account and was in no position to start one. I owned a '69 square back VW that ran, sort of. I had a job that I was good at and had a modest reputation around the city for my music that should keep a little extra cash coming in.

I had never been to Nashville, and had no idea what it was like. I had no connections and no job prospects. I was thinking of moving to Nashville to make it as a

songwriter which put me right up there with the other thousand young writers getting off the greyhound bus every day in Nashville looking for fame and fortune.

I smiled as I sat there alone contemplating all this. It wasn't like the odds had ever been in my favor anyway.

I think Nashville is the obvious choice, of course.