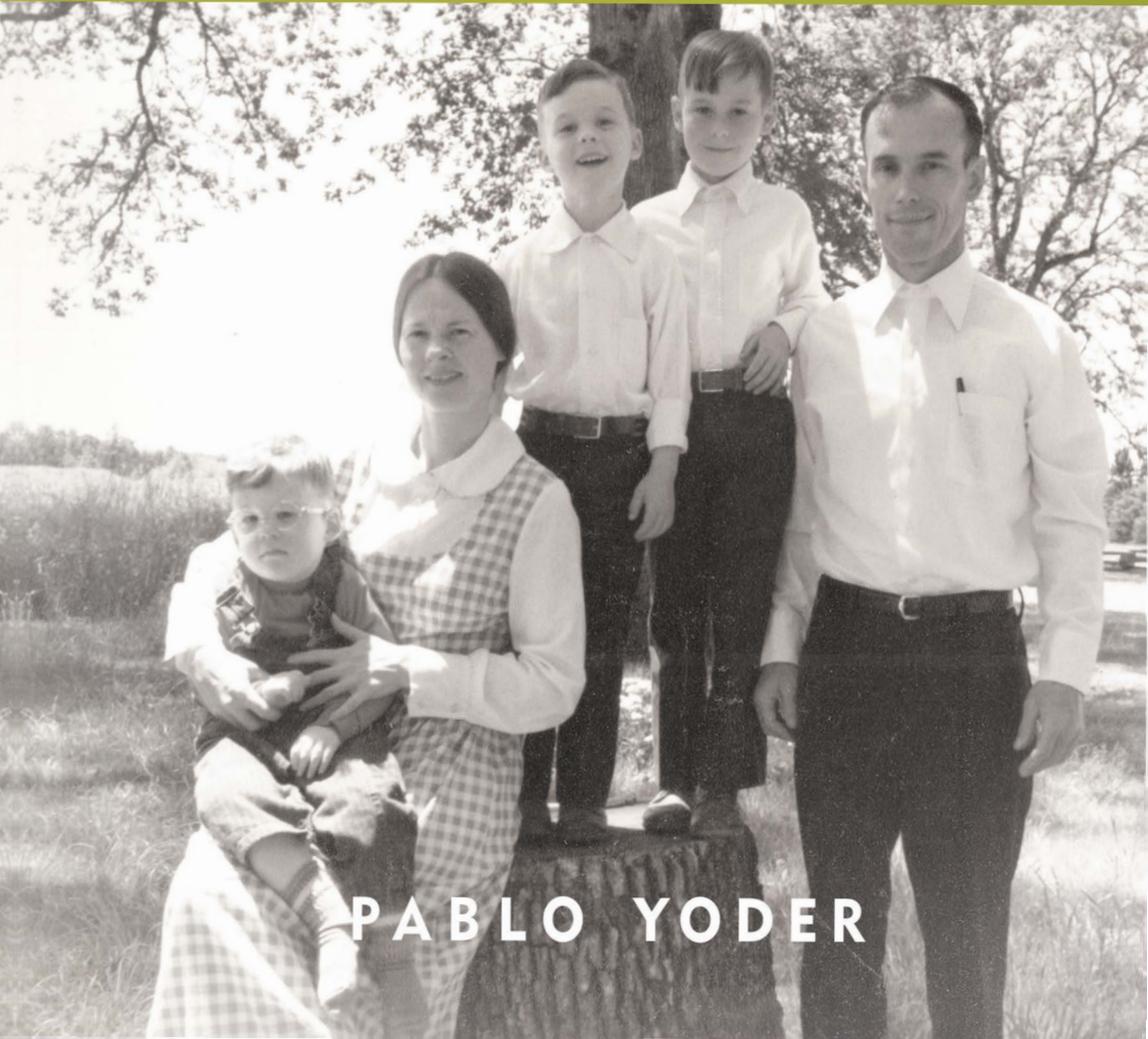




UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER



PABLO YODER



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SURRENDER

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my daughter, Luana. Of all my children, she is the one most like me in her love for nature and her care for the lively creatures God created. Like me, she could also be considered a homemade naturalist, though as genuine as any professional I know.

I love you, daughter dear!

THE MISSING LINK

INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2012 I was asked to preach during a week of meetings at Brownsville Mennonite Church in Brownsville, Oregon. I stood before the large congregation in that church house and stared at the multitude of people. I didn't recognize one face. They were all strangers, though not for long.

As I poured out my heart to them that first evening about the glorified Jesus in Revelation 1, I noticed a small man sitting right up front. You know how it is. Most folks sit in the middle of the sanctuary or in the back. Few adults brave the front, especially on the first night. But this man, dressed in a white, long-sleeved shirt, sat right up front with a sprinkling of other faithful ones.

As I preached, my eyes kept sneaking back to the man, who appeared to be in his early sixties. His hair was thinning. He sat forward in his seat, drinking in God's Word with rapt attention. I couldn't help but conclude that this was a humble saint of God. I loved him on the spot.

After the service the people poured out of the sanctuary. I stood at the doorway trying to greet them all. Then the man who had caught my attention came toward me with a big smile. As we shook hands, he said, "I'm Pete Lewis, the one who has written you several letters . . ."

My mind clicked, and I gave him a bear hug.

Months before, I had received an email from a stranger who had told me he was from Oregon, so I took a long shot in my reply and asked him if he knew Arlen Krabill, who had asked me to come preach for a week. He answered that Arlen was the bishop of his church.

The week of meetings went fast. Saturday, the next to the last day, found me buzzing across the Willamette Valley in Arlen Krabill's little car. The bright green valley fairly glistened in the early dew. The broad expanses of grass fields were sprinkled with hundreds of white sheep. Seeing a bald eagle perched in a tree close to the road, I screeched to a stop to drink in the majestic sight.

Soon I drove in a short lane and parked among the Douglas firs. Pete Lewis strode out of his doublewide, ready to travel. After seeing his place, his mare Fancy, and his barn owls in the hayloft, we left in his car for Oregon's beautiful Coast Range, and then on to the Alsea Falls.

The lovely forenoon slipped by as Pete led me along the mountain trail, pointing out countless things in nature. We watched the water ouzel (American dipper) disappear and reappear as she dipped under the water to find her food. We stood and gawked at the massive Douglas firs, the wide-fronded grand firs, and the lichen-draped red cedars that guarded the trail like ancient knights in wooden armor. We fondled the abundant moss that clothed the trees in a fine green gown. And we enjoyed the fantastic view of the sparkling falls, roaring full with the melted snow runoff from higher elevations. We both reveled in the majesty of the work of God's hands. The day was about as perfect as a day could be.

On the trail Pete shared more of his life story. How he was raised a good boy in the Catholic Church. How he followed his father's footsteps into the U.S. Navy, and then on to active combat in Vietnam. How he was dedicated to his nation, family, church, and God. He recounted his life as a wildlife manager in the highlands of Colorado. He told me only a few stories of his experiences alone on the range, but they caught my imagination.

My heart skipped a beat when Pete got a pensive look on his face as we paused on the trail. In a wistful whisper he admitted, "I have always wondered if the time would come that I would share my life story with a writer. But the timing never seemed right. And I never found the right fellow."

I could already see a book taking shape, and I wondered, *Am I your man?*

After we had seen all of Alsea, we hiked out of the forest silently, our hearts happy, our minds lost in thought.

We kept in touch after I returned to Nicaragua. When I asked about this project, he called me the "Missing Link." So that's how I ended up being

the link between Pete Lewis and . . . this biography.

Pete wrote:

Dear Missing Link,

If we can write the story of how a good boy discovered, out on the range, that he wasn't good after all, and how he cried out to God and found Him, then let's write it. If we can do it in a way that it will glorify God, and not me, I am willing.

Pete

