



A Carpenter and his cars: The singer owns more than 30—including a pink '57 Edsel—which he stores in a warehouse.

FOUR YEARS AFTER HIS SISTER KAREN'S DEATH, SINGER RICHARD CARPENTER MAKES HIS DEBUT AS A SOLO ACT

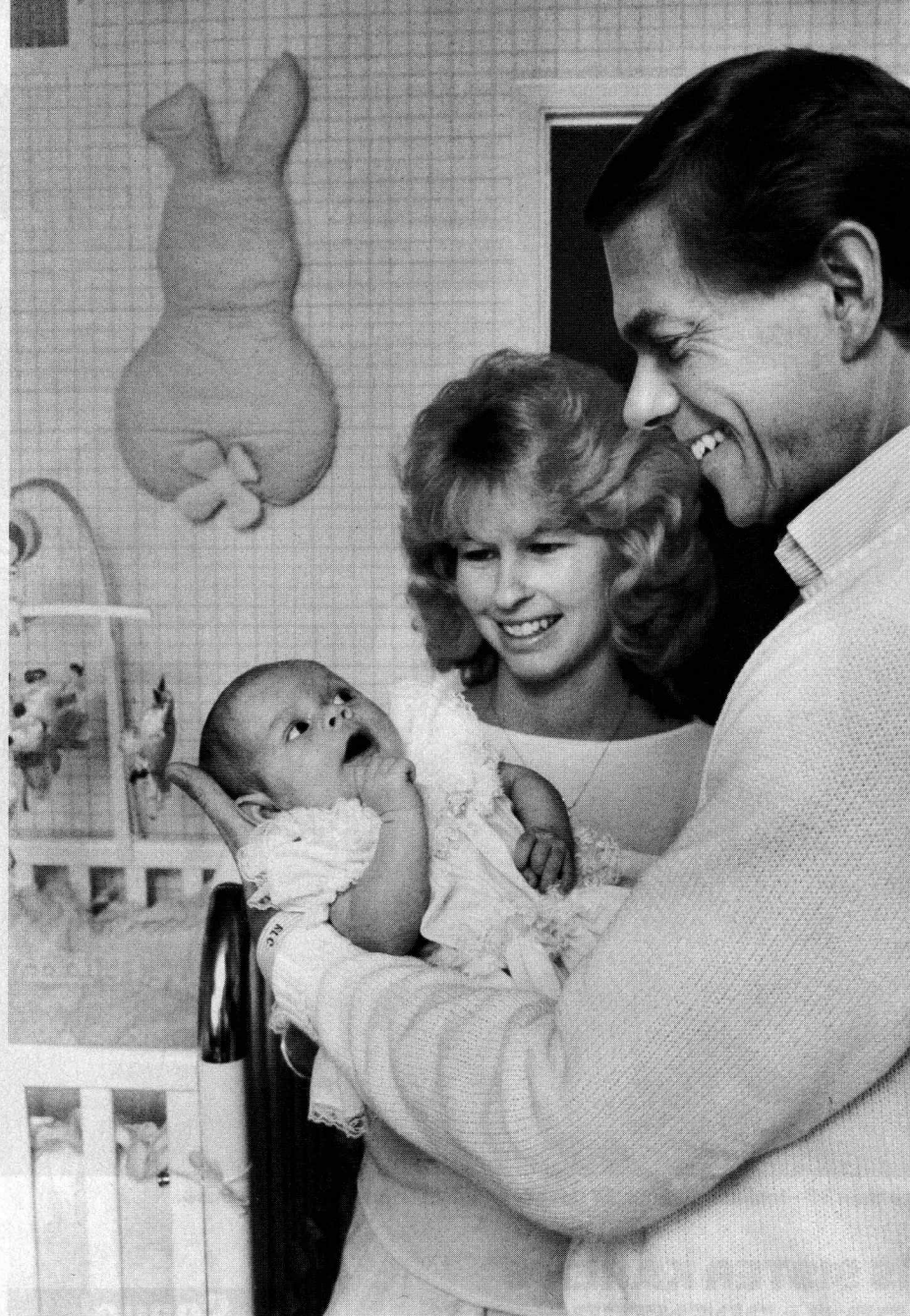
Sequel

Richard Carpenter, the male half of the successful brother-sister singing duo, the Carpenters, still looks the same: 6' tall, 160 lean pounds, a boyish smile. But at least two things have changed since the tragic day four and a half years ago when his sister, Karen, died, the victim of a heart attack brought about by an eight-year battle with anorexia. On the professional front, Carpenter released his first solo LP, *Time*, last month. But it's the home-front news that has Carpenter most excited: Eight weeks ago, at age 40, he became a father for the first time—and simultaneously a bowl of mush. "He was never real interested in having children," says Mary, 30, his wife of three years. "But when we decided to get married, I told him I really wanted to have children. He said yes, so we started trying last year. Now that Kristi Lynn is here, he adores her. He was in the delivery room. He



Carpenter's LP includes *When Time Was All We Had*, an a cappella tribute to Karen (right, performing with Richard in 1976).

STEVE SCHAPIRO



"I can be around Mary 24 hours a day," says Richard (holding Kristi Lynn). "She's a great friend and a great listener. We're like Jonathan and Jennifer on *Hart to Hart*."

Sequel

saw her before I did, changed her before I did. He's a real good father." Record business wisdom would have Carpenter go out on tour to support his new LP, but he plans to stay home for a while, he says, "because I don't want to leave my baby yet."

The album is a departure for Carpenter, who in the past always sang backup to Karen's lead vocal on such hits as *Close to You* and *Yesterday Once More*. That pattern continued in two Carpenter LPs released since Karen's death: *Voice of the Heart*, which used vocals that Karen had recorded from 1980 to '82; and a Christmas album with material left over from

their 1978 Christmas album. On the new LP, Richard sings lead on six of the 10 songs. Lead vocals on the others come from Dionne Warwick, Dusty Springfield and a 16-year-old newcomer named Scott Grimes, who remembers the Carpenter hit *We've Only Just Begun* as "the very first song I sang publicly, at a wedding when I was 7." "My intention was to get back into my music and create something new," says Carpenter. "I loved working with our older music, the Carpenter things, remixing them for CDs and all that. But I'm very much into the future too."

Still, the past was hard to forget, especially when Carpenter started to

record alone for the first time. "It struck home anew that Karen was no longer with us, and I found that very upsetting," he says. "Here I was, working alone when we had always been a team, working with the same engineer, the same musicians and in the same studios, and no Karen." *In Love Alone*, recorded on the new album, was written in 1982 especially for Karen by Richard and lyricist John Bettis, but she didn't live to hear it. "We'd invited Karen to a Christmas party we were having here so we could play it for her," says Richard. "But it was pouring pitchforks, and she didn't want to drive all the way from her apartment. I never really saw her by a piano after that where I could play it for her. She died the following February." Says Warwick of singing *In Love Alone*: "It was probably one of the hardest things I've ever done; listening to it is still difficult. But I'm thrilled Richard has gotten himself together and is making pretty music again."

A little over a year after Karen's death, Richard and Mary decided to get married, after a long, roller-coaster courtship. They first met in 1975 when Mary's brother, the Carpenters' former road manager, brought her backstage in Las Vegas. "We hit it off at that very first meeting," says Mary, "so I decided to move out here from Baltimore. I got a job in a bank, and we stayed together. He wanted to get married when we first met, but I didn't because I was only 18, and I wasn't ready. Then when I was ready, he wasn't. We went back and forth like that for quite a while." Nine years later, after Mary had moved back to Baltimore to live with her parents, Richard visited at Christmastime and proposed. They tied the knot on May 19, 1984.

They now live in Richard's comfortable but unassuming home in Downey, Calif., just minutes away from his parents, who take every opportunity to visit their only grandchild. Asked how he has changed, Carpenter, who is about as laid back as Carpenter's music, replies, "Not much—I'm still working with the same people. I'm still in the same house, still near my parents." Yet when the talk turns to marriage and fatherhood, he gets darn close to gushy. "Everything my friends and parents told me about having a child is true," says Carpenter. "It's absolutely wonderful. We definitely plan more, two or three. This is *great*."

—Written by Jim Calio, reported by Suzanne Adelson