

Farmington Observer

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opinion

Beatle illusion helped to kill John Lennon

Music never has been a big part of my life. So it was difficult for me to imagine why hundreds of thousands of persons stood out in the cold to memorialize some guy who gained fame singing "I Want to Hold Your Hand."

Initially, I tried to ignore the hysteria. But for days after John Lennon was shot, I was inundated with this Beatle thing — in the newspapers, on television, radio, in the office, at lunch — that's all anybody would or could talk about.

Greater suburbia was a large part of this strange ritual of grief.

Record shops were swamped with the bereaved scooping up Lennon hits; kids moped around the halls reminiscing about a 40-year-old who became famous before some of them were even born; suburbanites unfamiliar with downtown Detroit flocked to Kennedy Square to commiserate.

Even the president of the United States was compelled to make an official statement.

A columnist would be remiss to ignore such an outpouring of emotion. So I investigated.

For days I read and listened about and to this global strolling minstrel whom a hefty portion of the world obviously idolized.

I FOUND this rather pleasant person who possessed a somewhat above average talent to write a catchy tune and was intelligent enough to capitalize on this modest gift. He loved his child and adored his wife.

Those who worship him as the guru of the '60s are mistaken. They do him an injustice.

Rather, he was a product of his time. To some degree he was the epitome of the middle class dream.

Like many his age, he enjoyed music, smoked a little pot, experimented in trendy philosophies and enjoyed the hell out of making millions of bucks. No apologies needed.

Toward the end of his life, as reflected in the now



famous Playboy interview, he had surmounted the dangers accompanying fame, fan adulation and wealth which had destroyed so many of his musical contemporaries.

He had reached a state of maturity which many of us never attain.

Therein rests the true quality that was John Lennon and the real tragedy of his death.

"The people who are hung up on the Beatles" and the '60s' dream missed the whole point when the Beatles and the '60s' dream became the point. It's not living now. It's an illusion," he said.

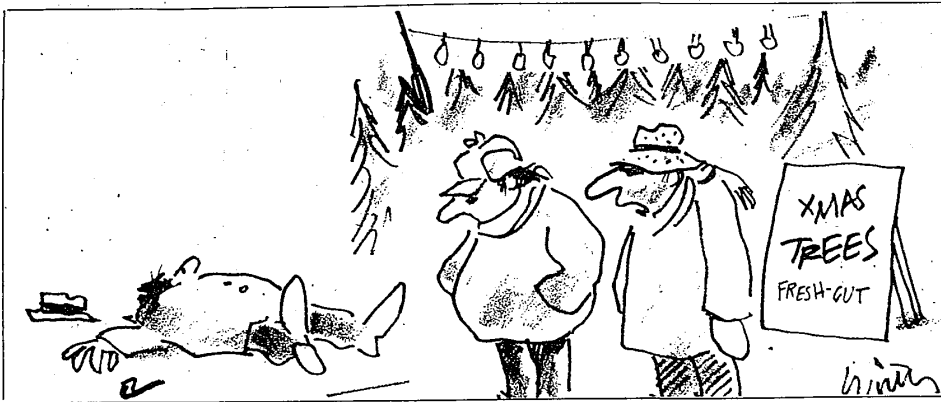
Ironically, many of his followers clutch the illusion, forsaking their reluctant master's word.

IN SOME WAYS it was the illusion which killed John Lennon. It was the naive belief that if we all closed our eyes and wished hard enough, we could be the forever youthful Peter Pans and we could live in a world devoid of violence and deprivation.

But we do live in a violent world, and no amount of singing and getting high will wish it away. Change takes involvement, a commitment to now and the future — not yesterday.

For John Lennon and thousands of others who die violently each year that change came too late, denied by those who would rather live an illusion.

"I told him the price of Scotch pine"



OU board hires prexy under cloud

It is too bad for Joseph Champagne that the Oakland University Board of Trustees elected to bring him in as president under a cloud.

The OU board has played Hide-and-Sneak for a year as it winnowed its choices for president from nearly 300 to one, Champagne, a vice-president of the University of Houston.

The board's grotesque efforts to get around the state Open Meetings Act have been pieced together by the Oakland Sail, the college paper, the state Attorney General's office, and our own staff.

OBSESSED BY a desire for secrecy, the OU board:

- Allegedly split into two committees with less than a quorum each to conduct rotating interviews with potential candidates.

- Interviewed all candidates behind closed doors.

- Continued and defended its actions when counseled by the Attorney General's office that it wasn't nice. The Open Meetings Act was constructed, not to be punitive toward public officials, but to achieve compliance with public policy — namely, that public policy shall be made in public.

- Conducted its Hide-and-Sneak interviews in a hotel at Detroit Metropolitan Airport, which is located in Romulus, more than 40 miles from the OU campus near Rochester. This made it costly and difficult for the public to nose around, though the Sail, to its credit, stalked the OU board members in the hotel corridors.

- Waited until the final exam period to unveil its



Tim Richard

choice, a timing that assured minimal audience comment and questioning from students, faculty and the public. The Sail, again to its credit, went through the expense and hassle of putting out a special edition.

The OU trustees deserve mention by name: Richard Headlee of Farmington Hills, chairman; Ken Morris of Madison Heights, vice chairman; Arthur Saltzman of Franklin; Alex Mair of Bloomfield Hills; David Lewis of Detroit, chairman of the presidential selection committee (which happens to include all eight trustees); Patricia Hartmann of Birmingham; Marvin Katke of Bloomfield Hills, and David Handelman of Clawson.

THE BOARD'S alibi was stated by Laszlo Hentz, executive secretary of the selection committee: "Every single step was taken on the advice of counsel."

Many acts require translation into plain English by a Philadelphia lawyer, but not the Open Meetings Act. The beauty of the Open Meetings Act is that it is so plainly worded that it can be understood by any literate person.

Judge for yourself:

"A public body may meet in closed session only for the following purposes: (1) to review the specific contents of an application for employment or appointment to a public office when the candidate requests that the application remain confidential. However, all interviews by a public body for employment or appointment to a public office shall be held in an open meeting pursuant to this act."

A NICE QUESTION occurs as to whether all the candidates requested secret reviews. The law gives the candidate — not the OU board — the option of asking a secret review.

Under the law of averages, many candidates don't object to public interviews. If we are told that all candidates requested secrecy, however, we must suspect that the board told them to make such a request.

At this writing, the OU board is being prosecuted. Win or lose, the board in time will no doubt inaugurate Joseph Champagne as president.

If so, Champagne will take office under a cloud. We won't know what criteria the board really used in picking him, as distinguished from the academic jargon in its stated criteria. The public won't know the true vote of the board, as distinguished from the rehearsed vote.

And the public will never be able to understand the OU board's obsession with secrecy.



Jackie Klein

These gifts are no-no's

Promise me anything, but don't give me a funky gift for Christmas.

This is the time of year we're inundated with mail order catalogues chock full of the unique, the innovative and the completely useless gift for the persons in our lives who have everything.

I don't have everything. But please don't give me a natural sponge which is billed in one catalogue as an "Oriental beauty secret." First of all, anything that would turn me into a beauty would be no secret. It would be more accurate to call it a miracle.

The sponge is hyped as a unique sun-dried plant massager which invigorates you and scrubs away flaky skin and grime. The only sun-dried plant that comes immediately to mind is marijuana. And I can do without the grime but how would I look as a skinless pothead?

You can give me Arpege but please don't give me "Hot Foot" warmer pads. The catalogue says they give you glowing warmth on body contact after you trim the pads and slip them into your shoes.

THEY'RE SUPPOSED to be great for skiers, skaters, hunters and any outdoor activity. The only outdoor activity in which I engage is walking from the car into my house after slipping into a dry martini. After the first drink, my feet are too numb to feel warmer pads.

I also don't need Pussyfoots — the "purrrfect" foot warmers for socks and lounge wear. They're cozy little mates for boots and skates and they come in assorted colors. Color them useless for me.

Another gimmick I do not want for Christmas is a Push-A-Tube. It's a plastic dispenser which guarantees you'll never squeeze another tube of toothpaste, shampoo or hair cream. Just push a button for the right amount.

The handy-dandy little gadget self mounts in a jiffy. I may be dense, but how can you put toothpaste, shampoo and hair cream in one dispenser? A woman could end up with the teeth you love to touch and the whitest, shiniest hair with no cavities.

Another goodie I can do without is a metal sculpture which whimsically portrays a gentleman on the toilet, deeply engrossed in the newspaper. I will maintain his position on the issues?

And speaking of porcelain fixtures, please spare me the dubious pleasure of unwrapping a comic Yule tissue roll which has jolly holiday messages for bathroom visitors printed in cherry red — all in good taste, of course.

ANOTHER CATALOGUE item I can live without is a bamboo back scratcher for those hard-to-reach spots with sturdy prongs for ah-inspiring relief.

Another forgettable item is a security door lock which travels with you. You can install it without tools by just pressing it into door jambs.

It says in the catalogue you can take it along to motels and hotels and feel safe because the door can't be opened from outside. To me it sounds like a subtle invitation to hanky panky.

But if you're intrigued by such suggestive paraphernalia, you might like the shapely, nude toothbrush which adds new dimensions to brushing and a new luster to a man's smile.

The crafty handle is shaped like a curvaceous beauty and cleverly stands on her own two feet. The plastic nude comes in assorted colors.

MAYBE YOU have a man in your life who'd be thrilled with a handy belt holster which holds pens and eyeglasses. No more glasses lost from top pockets when he bends — no more ink stained shirts. But what do you do about that extra waistline bulge under his jacket?

Also on my list of unwelcoming gifts I can do without are the following:

- A genuine palm leaf fan which recalls the simple pleasures of yesteryear.

- Kiddie name plaques which tell the world a room is all theirs — as if you don't know when you wake through the mess.

- Magic bath crayons which clean kids while they color.

- A drain sprinkler which unrolls when it rains to sprinkle your lawn automatically. It carries water away from your house.

- A snap-on vinyl cover-up to catch hair trim clippings.

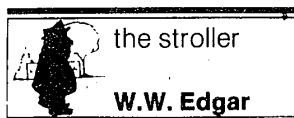
The old gent dropped the paper he had been reading while waiting his turn in the barber's chair and rather disgustingly remarked, "I don't know what the world is coming to, but I have just read a piece here that would shock most anybody."

Without waiting to be asked what was so shocking, he called attention to the story reporting that Steve Kemp, the Tiger outfielder, was asking for a four-year contract at the rate of \$500,000 a year. "Just imagine that," the old gent went on. "That's at the rate of \$2 million — and I don't think any ballplayer is worth that much, I don't care how good he is."

Well, it doesn't take much to start a conversation in a barbershop, so the discussion turned to the salaries and purses being asked by the athletes in other sports.

THE FIRST THOUGHT that came to The Stroller's mind was the purse Roberto Duran received when he quit in the middle of the eighth round in his recent bout with Leonard. He was paid \$8 million, and the money supposedly was banked on the afternoon of the fight.

It was agreed that this was one of the most ridiculous bits of sports history in years. But next to it comes the word from the camp of Leonard, who is asking a purse of \$10 million to defend his share of



welterweight championship with Tommy Hearns. As he sat there listening to these barbershop customers, The Stroller had to smile at the way things have turned in the sports world.

How well he recalls that Joe Louis, one of the greatest fighters of all time, received only a bit more than \$5 million for his entire career which included 14 defenses of the title.

BUT TO GET back to the Steve Kemp case and the sums being paid to ballplayers — or those being asked — the present day athletes seem ridiculous when one thinks that at the height of his career Babe Ruth was paid only \$80,000 a year. And he was one of the greatest drawing cards of all time.

So one must ask the question: "How good is Steve Kemp, and how many people does he draw to Tiger Stadium in the course of a year?"

The Stroller pointed out that Kemp was out of the

lineup for quite a spell last season and was of little value to the team while nursing his aches and pains. Yet, under the contract he supposedly is asking for, his \$500,000 a year would go right on. And it would be the same if he is assigned to the role of the designated hitter.

No wonder the old gent in the barbershop dropped the paper in disgust.

And when one remembers that Al Kaline, the Tigers recent inductee in to the Hall of Fame, received \$100,000 a year only for his final year in uniform, it is even more ridiculous.

Another case that came to mind in the barbershop is that of Billy Sims, the Lions' speedy back who was supposed to cure all the team's troubles.

He is being paid a sum in the hundreds of thousands, and yet he found out during the last few games that he can't get anywhere without blockers clearing a path for him. His value to the Lions has been questionable.

And so it is in all lines of sport where the athletes overlook the plight of the unemployed in ever growing numbers and demand paychecks that make the salary of the president of the United States look like laborer's wages.