



The View from Right Field

by Rick Ohler

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“The Young and the Restless”

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One of the benefits of living in a village that lends itself so well to walking comes from not having to waste the time saved by driving in a hopeless search for the increasingly endangered species called the parking space (*Jalopius sedementeris*). Another benefit comes from the salubrious (RIP Snake) effects afforded by walking, especially the aerobic activity required during the twenty-yard sprint across Main Street when you realize yet another motorist has ignored the giant “YIELD TO PEDESTRIANS IN CROSSWALK” signs. But by far, the greatest the benefit of walking in the village comes from running into others who are on foot and taking time to chat with them. Walkers, for instance, like Bob Young, with whom I often cross paths even though we live on opposite sides of the village.

Bob Young is one of those guys who interprets retirement not as a time to kick back, but rather as an opportunity to contribute to the greater good, which he does as president of the Rotary Club, board member at the Co-op, volunteer at the nursing home, loyal cheerleader for all local businesses and attendee at any event that might include dancing. Since Bob is (slightly) older than I and (quite a bit) wiser, I usually come away from our chance meetings feeling up to date about town news and edified about life in general. So you can imagine my surprise when we met by coincidence at my office last week, and I was able to tell him something he didn’t already know.

“They’re screening the Beatles movie ‘A Hard Day’s Night’ at The Show in a couple weeks,” I told him. (Note: We never called the Aurora Theatre anything but The Show when I was growing up.) “Tickets are only a buck—throwback prices (actually admission was 90 cents in 1964, but why quibble?). They’re going to have live music, beer, popcorn, and trivia. You could take home a trophy in Beatles trivia no problem.”

The Beatles are one of the ways that Bob and I connected. I met him first during the Stop Walmart campaign in the mid-1990s (the best thing this community ever did and the reason we still have a village that's worth walking), but our Beatles connection came later, in 2005, when I wrote about the 25th anniversary of John Lennon's death and made a mistake about the date the Beatles were first on Ed Sullivan. Bob knew that the date was February 9, 1964, not February 7 as I had written, because Bob stills calls his girlfriend at the time, Margaret Sullivan, every February 9 to reminisce about watching the show together, now 55 years ago.

I'll bet many of us baby boomers know exactly where we were on that Sunday night at 8:00, 55 years ago, just eleven weeks after JFK had been shot in Dallas. I certainly do. I would have been in the living room at 472 Oakwood Avenue with my dad and mom and my two brothers, everybody sporting brush cuts, except Mom, who had recently used the Sunbeam hair clippers to buzz all four of us to within a quarter inch of our scalps. In our hairless state, we would have gathered around one of a never-ending parade of used, hopelessly unreliable black and white TVs from Vernon Stock's radio and TV graveyard to watch four mop-topped English lads, whose parents had apparently not required regular haircuts, play a few songs on the Ed Sullivan Show, the variety show all of America watched together every Sunday night. On our Oakwood sofa, we could have been posing for a Norman Rockwell painting.

Then came the frenzied screaming of the young girls in the audience, and the laconic Sullivan appealing for quiet as he tried to introduce the boys, and finally the first chords of "All My Loving" and "She Loves You (Yeah, Yeah, Yeah)." My father, no surprise, thought it was awful music—in fact, it wasn't music at all, just noise, he said. But then, the last music he had enjoyed was the Whiffenpoof Glee Club at Yale in 1941. My mother pretended she was toeing the company line by agreeing with my father, but I could see she was quietly tapping her foot to Lennon and McCartney's music. By the Beatles' fifth song of the show, "I Want To Hold Your Hand," an inchoate boogie had developed in Mom and, had she been alone, I know she would have been dancing.

For me, at age 13 and understandably restless, the music and the Beatles changed my world. Not their lyrics. I mean, we're talking about holding hands, and I saw her standing there and 'til there was you—pretty innocuous stuff. Something else was in play. The Beatles weren't Elvis or Chuck Berry or the Four Tops; they just came in and took over the living room that night. Elvis, for instance, had never convinced me to adopt his hairstyle. But after February 9, I would never get another buzz cut. It would take some arguing, some "What's this world coming to?" protestations from many adults in my life and the intervention of an understanding grandmother, but I would be allowed to have more than a quarter inch of hair and wear it, more or less, Beatle style. Not a mop top, but hair nonetheless. I wasn't alone. Before 1964 turned into 1965, everyone—teachers, pastors, politicians, bankers and bakers— would have a little more hair, longer sideburns, a wisp of hair hanging on the forehead, courtesy of John, Paul, George and Ringo. Chuck Berry had never inspired me to be a

guitarist, but before February 9 turned into February 10, a million kids across the country (me included) were dreaming about getting a guitar and starting a band and ending up on the Ed Sullivan Show. I did the first two, but somehow Ed Sullivan and I never connected.

Something else changed too, though, when the Beatles came into my world. They were my gateway to rock and roll: the Stones, Led Zeppelin and the galaxy beyond. They were my window into the counter-culture, especially as they became musically adventuresome, socially audacious and spiritually aware. It's a long way from "I Want to Hold Your Hand" to "Revolution" to "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" and "A Day in the Life." It will be fun to walk down to The Show for the "A Hard Day's Night" party to see if the years have been kind to it.

I'm guessing I'll run into Bob Young at the movie. And I'm guessing he'll let me know, in his good-natured way, where I've missed the mark in writing about the Beatles and in writing about him in this column. Believe it or not, I make plenty of mistakes in my attempts to make the world's best hometown newspaper just that. My friend Bob is gentle when he ribs me about my faux pas, whether they are Beatles-related or otherwise.

Hopefully, he'll point out those missteps to me over a tankard of ale somewhere in the village. Maybe we'll have two; after all, we'll be walking.