

## *Beatles' Ed Sullivan Anniversary*

CBC Radio, broadcast in syndication (Feb. 9, 2004)

Fade in: "In My Life"

Forty years ago the Beatles landed in North America and won the heart of just about every breathing teenage girl, including me. For some, those Beatlemaniac days are a fond and blurry memory. But I have a diary that brings back the whole story.

In the previous year's diary, for 1963, my big thrill was turning thirteen in August, and in September, getting my first bra, size 32AA. On November 22, 1963, I wrote, of course, about President Kennedy. "Dear God, I can't believe it – how one lunatic could kill so great a man. When somebody told me, I laughed. I didn't, couldn't believe it."

Kennedy's death was the most shocking thing that had ever happened to my insular Halifax world. I was a good girl, got good marks, loved reading and ballet. When for Xmas 1963, I was given the splendid opalescent Five Year Diary with lock and key, the most interesting adventure I noted in it the next week was going to Simpsons to buy rollers and white lipstick, and sticking pictures into my John F. Kennedy scrapbook.

But rumours were flying in school – there was a new group, very popular in England. On January 14<sup>th</sup>, 1964, while my parents were out, I stood in the kitchen twiddling the knobs of our big brown radio, from the CBC to the local pop station. And then I heard it and my life changed, on the spot.

"She Loves You."

It was electrifying. It traveled through my body, inflamed my heart. The next day, January 15<sup>th</sup>, I snuck to the mall to buy the single, and played it a hundred times, softly, on the small portable record player in my room. That night, I didn't do homework, I played records. At school Beatle photographs were being hoarded, traded like treasure. I got into trouble for forgetting my gym suit, forgetting my Ivanhoe textbook, not doing homework. On January 21<sup>st</sup>, I wrote in a whole new voice. "Mum laughed at the Beatles. To hell with her!"

"Twist and Shout."

My evenings were now spent lying on the floor in the hall closet, the only place I could talk privately on the phone to fellow Beatlemaniacs, especially my friend Lea, who dared to wear her hair Beatle-style with long bangs drooping down her forehead. By January 31<sup>st</sup> I had saved enough babysitting money to buy my very first L.P., "Beatlemania." I adored every single song on that L.P., bursting into tears when Paul sang his ballad. I was a Paul girl.

"And I love her."

I hid the album from my mother. My parents were getting angry about all the time wasted with foolish music, giggling phone calls, the mess in my room. I had started to stick Beatles pictures on my bedroom wall, eventually filling every inch of space.

On February 7<sup>th</sup> the Beatles landed in New York; I saw them on the news on our rented TV. On Sunday February 9<sup>th</sup> 1964, forty years ago today: “Slept late,” I wrote. “Did some homework. Watched Olympics on TV. And then – Ed Sullivan! They sang three songs at first. All the girls were screaming. I was beside myself. Later, they sang 2 more. Oh Beatles, I love you – especially Paul. “

“I want to hold your hand.”

I abandoned the restricting Five Year Diary with its six narrow lines for each day. I had just read “The Diary of Anne Frank,” and wanted to write in a notebook to an imaginary friend, like Anne did. “Dear Helen,” I wrote. “I must tell you about the Beatles. I have over one hundred pictures and more articles, 1 L.P., seven singles and also Beatles books and a big pin. I sometimes hear precious interviews on the radio and their English accents are so sweet. However, I am posed by a big question: do I love them because of their looks, accents, singing and style, or is it because everybody else loves them?”

“If I fell.”

On April 8<sup>th</sup>, I wrote, “This will sound stupid, childish and completely unbalanced, but I’m Madly in love with Paul McCartney, a 21 year old man whom I have never seen in my life and don’t know. He’s tearing me apart inside. Oh I love love love love love him. I recently saw an article with a picture of his girlfriend, a 17-year old actress, and oh, how stupid I am to want him so. I mean, if I were a 17-year old British actress, and he just happened to know me, then maybe I’d have cause to adore and desire him. But I’m a 13-year old Canadian schoolgirl, nondescript in every way. So hopeless! And yet I adore him with all my heart. Oh, Paul Paul Paul.”

“I Saw her Standing there.”

The first great love affair of my life. The intensity of my feelings for the Beatles, for Paul, floated me though all the insecurity and pain of my adolescent years. As I began to learn the real scary stuff of teenage relationships, I could retire into my world of passion and glorious music, where Paul loved me with such sweetness and devotion that the real boys around me, the Daves and Dannys and Brians, faded to insignificance. And then I got older and was ready to move on to real boys. And then, the Beatles broke up.

How lucky we were to be there. Forty years ago today, Ed Sullivan said of his four mop-top guests, “Their conduct over here, not only as fine professional singers but as a group of fine youngsters, will leave an imprint on everyone who’s met them.”

He had no idea.

End of “She Loves You”: “With a love like that, you know you should be glad.”