

DECEMBER 8th, 1980

I am old enough to remember a lot of historical moments that shaped the world we live in. I remember like it was yesterday, the day JFK was killed. November 22nd, 1963. I was in 6th grade on that cold November afternoon. I remember walking home from school, and my friend Eddie Healy kept saying it was the Russians. It wasn't. It was a lone sniper who learned how to shoot in the Marines. The same Marines that Eddie and I would join 5 years later in the "buddy system" and eventually go off to fight in Vietnam.

I remember seeing the Beatles on the Ed Sullivan show on February 9th 1964. We were all huddled together in our small family den. Watching on a small black and white TV. My father kept adjusting the antennas to get a clearer picture. I remember later that night telling my brother Johnny, "This is what we are going to do someday." I remember Bobby Kennedy being assassinated. I remember Martin Luther King being assassinated. I remember the Chicago riots during the Democratic convention. I remember the TET Offensive in 1968. I remember the landing on the Moon on July 20th, 1969. I remember the Manson killings in August of 69. I remember the Beatles breaking up in 1969. I remember the Fall of Saigon in 1975. I remember it all.

But none of those events hit me as hard as Monday December 8th, 1980.

I was living in an apartment building in Beverly, MA. My roommate Steve Cataldo of the NERVOUS EATERS was playing at a fashion show in Boston. I was going to go, but changed my mind at the last minute (arguing with my then girlfriend, and being tired from the weekend from playing out with my band VINNY). Instead, I stayed home and called an old friend of mine, Larry Smith (who lived down the street from me) to see if he wanted to shoot some pool, and watch the game.

Monday Night Football. The Patriots were playing the Dolphins.

Larry was a childhood friend who grew up in the same neighborhood. Larry was also my roommate when I had my monkey "JoJo." He witnessed firsthand many of the Monkey capers that have now become bigger than life. Myself, Larry, and the monkey lived together from January 1971 to the summer of 1971. The Monkey got us both tossed out of our apartment and beyond. But that's a whole other story.

This night was all about two old friends sharing a few beers, and playing pool while watching the Patriots play the Dolphins. We were kind of halfway paying attention to the game. Both of us had a few beers and were just having fun playing pool. The Patriots had the ball and John Smith was getting ready to kick a field goal when Frank Gifford spoke to Howard Cosell, "Howard, you have got to say what we know in the booth..."

"Yes, we have to say it," Cosell replies. "An unspeakable tragedy confirmed to us by ABC News in New York City: John Lennon, outside of his apartment building on the west side of New York City — the most famous, perhaps, of all the Beatles — shot twice in the back. Rushed to Roosevelt Hospital, dead on arrival. Hard to go back to the game after that newsflash..."

Larry and I stopped playing pool and just stood there in complete shock. "What did he just say?"

I was so stunned that I looked at Larry and said "I have to leave." The rest of that game and that night was a complete blur to me. No other world news had hit me as hard as this. John Lennon of the BEATLES was dead? Why? Who would kill him? I'm not sure what I did for the rest of the night.

I know I was up all night pacing. Watching the news. Playing my Beatles records. And when Steve finally came home from his gig, I walked up to him and just burst into tears. We hugged each other for a long time. John Lennon was dead. The BEATLES would never get together again. There would be no reunion. No reconciled meeting of the four of them. No future records. No future live shows. Any and all chances of that ever happening, was gone forever that night. It was over. The dream was really over.

I remember that days that followed. The Yoko Ono inspired "Moment of Silence for John" that the whole world seemed to do a few days later. But it was that numbness. That raw utter disbelief. That incredible sense of loss, that seemed to hang in the air for days, weeks, and months. And here we are 40 years later. And that pain is still there. Just like it was yesterday.

I called my friend Larry just now. We talked about that night and other times. But he kept saying to me. "You just stopped and said I have to leave." I think he was worried about me. Truth be told, I was worried about all of us. If they could kill John Lennon, who else would be senselessly killed? I can only imagine what the other three surviving Beatles were thinking. It was all so incredibly sad.

I'm sad today thinking about that night, and the days that followed.
"And so my friends, you'll just have to carry on. The dream is over." John Lennon.