



LENNON REVEALED

BY LARRY KANE

RUNNING PRESS  
PHILADELPHIA • LONDON



A black and white, close-up portrait of John Lennon, looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The lighting is soft, highlighting his facial features.

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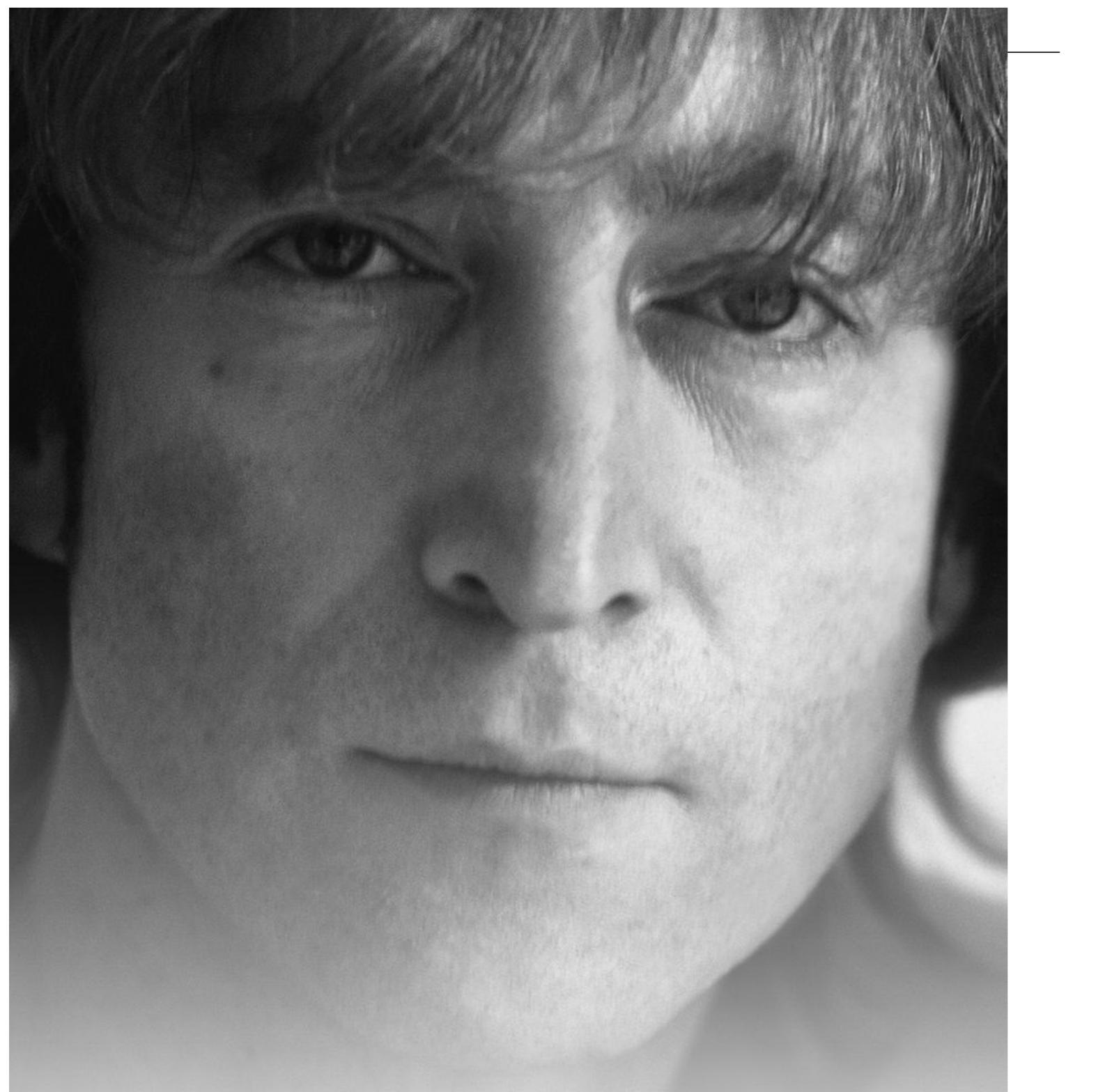
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ALSO BY LARRY KANE:

*Larry Kane's Philadelphia*

*Ticket to Ride:  
Inside the Beatles' 1964 Tour  
that Changed the World*





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FOR DONNA, MICHAEL, ALEXANDRA AND DOUG.  
AND TO THE MEMORY OF JOHN LENNON.

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## FOREWORD

I knew John Lennon. Not as much as some, but not as little as most. He was an inspiration to me and millions of others searching for truth, peace, and love. He spread the word through his music first, then by his actions. John set the tone for an entire generation to make a difference, and even when we fell short, he started chipping away at it.

I have read dozens of books on John's life, and this book has come the closest to the "truth" as far as I'm concerned. Larry Kane has put together not just his own personal thoughts on John Lennon, his friend, but has compiled an incredible lineup of interviews from John's closest friends and family. Not at all cautious, Larry has gone for what I think John would have wanted . . . the bloody truth!

You read that John Lennon was a bastard, a genius, a womanizer, a thinker, a poet, funny, cynical, sad, and a lot more. I know how *I* knew him in L.A. in the seventies: he was lost, angry, and missed Yoko more than music. He would have given anything just to go home. My friend, Harry Nilsson, was good at causing trouble, and John was looking for it. I was just a young musician hanging out with my idol. I wanted to *be* him, and I remember he would always let me ask one Beatles question every time I was with him . . . then he would tell me to f%#k off!

One drunken night, John put his arm around me and said, "Hudson," ( I don't think he knew which Hudson brother was which ) "keep looking for the truth, and when you find it, tell me where it is." I will never forget that moment.

There are a million moments like that in this book. I thought I had read it all, seen it all . . . he's my friend, I'm Ringo's producer! I thought I had all the stories—WRONG! Larry Kane revealed things I never dreamed of. On the North American tours of '64 and '65, John trusted Larry, so he opened up parts of his heart that maybe only Paul, George, and Ringo were privy too. When I read the account of John and Larry meeting for the first time, I had to laugh out loud because the impression that Larry gives is that of a hardcore news reporter—suit, tie, low monotone voice—and he has the demeanor of a Republican. Well, looks can be deceiving, and I was wrong. When you read this book, you see a man with great conviction, passion, humor, integrity, and honesty—John Lennon's kind of guy. That's why they stayed friends over the years: trust.

Larry's perspective and insights throughout this book kept me completely captivated. I relished the many nuances he revealed about the man who changed my life, and learned the kind of details that any fan would love to read about—Mario the young confidant who passed John's letters to Yoko and May Pang; Petula Clark singing on "Give Peace a Chance"; Yoko's presence in John's life even through his "Lost Weekend"; and so much more. I could go on and on, but I won't. Just read the bloody book and make up your own mind!

I only know one thing for sure: I loved John Lennon, and this book makes me love him more.

—Mark Hudson, Los Angeles, 2005

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## PREFACE

### WHO WAS JOHN LENNON AND WHY DO WE CARE?

Brash. Sensitive. Sexually empowered. A bad father and a good father. A dead poet whose language resonates with life. A rebel with more than a few causes. A rock star who entered new galaxies. Husband. Lover. Freedom fighter. Thinker, drinker, drug user and abuser. Guitarist, pianist, mouth organist. A singer of songs that haunt the mind and infuse the blood with tingles of joy and fear. A writer. A friend. A lost soul. A teacher and a student. A tiger with an intimidating roar and a cat with a soft, gentle purr. Legend in life. Icon in death. And to many, a puzzle. But was he really?

### LENNON REVEALED?

For years before and for a quarter of a century *after* his life, pundits and politicians, reporters and would-be-reporters have tried to determine: who was John Lennon? This project intends to do more—to reveal John Lennon as a man, not just a myth; to slice through the myriad legends that accompanied his magnificent and creative presence; and to discover the real person through the visions and memories of people who knew him. It is a complicated journalistic assignment, fraught with attempts by people to carefully protect their own memories and overwhelmed by people who still have agendas.

What you will find in this book is an unfettered report from all angles and every point of view about a man whose physical presence is gone, but whose talent and message still live into this century and beyond.

First, a few thoughts on how I got to this particular place.

Reporters are impressionists. Our works do not appear on canvasses, but reflect the imprints on our minds. And in 1964, my twenty-one-year-old mind held a very ambivalent impression of the assignment I had captured—to travel with and report on the Beatles throughout their first tour of North America. Trained as a hard-driving, aggressive gatherer of information, I viewed the coverage of the Beatles tour as a job for someone with a more narrow view of the world, maybe even someone with rhythm and knowledge of music—both of which were foreign to me. I did play the accordion as a child, but, well, it was the accordion, and I was not very good. Frankly, as a hard news radio reporter, I would rather have covered a bank robbery than travel with a band, any band.

Admittedly, the assignment was my fault. The radio station management had initially asked me to secure a short interview with the Beatles in what would be their closest tour stop to Miami, the Gator Bowl in Jacksonville, Florida. My letter to Beatles manager Brian Epstein included a business card that listed all seven of my company's radio stations, six of them oriented to black audiences who were hardly Beatles fans. Epstein did not know I was so young, but he did believe, mistakenly, that I was some sort of radio mogul in control of multiple stations. When the invitation came to travel in the official press party on the entire tour of North America—thirty-two shows in twenty-five cities—

was flabbergasted. I was also immediately determined not to go. My negativity was informed not only by my lack of interest in the subject, but, more importantly, by the death of my mother that summer at the age of forty after a battle with multiple sclerosis. Her death was—and still is—the worst thing that has ever happened to me. Eleven years later, John Lennon would mark her life and death in a special way. In the meantime, I had to decide what to do. Fate does not wait for indecision; indecision is the fault line for great reporting careers.

Reluctantly, I went forward. With five years of radio news reporting and anchoring behind me, I tackled what I believed at the time to be a wasted and vacuous assignment, covering what would become known as the biggest tour in the history of music—the Beatles’ “invasion” of America and Canada. It would be the first of their two tours that I would cover in full. In the end, I would watch sixty-three Beatles concerts, witness their work on a movie, engage in countless hours of conversation with the four lads who would make so much history, and see my life and my viewpoint of what is and isn’t news change forever. In the ensuing years, I have covered twenty-one political conventions, several superpower summits, seven different presidents, disastrous hurricanes and earthquakes, military combat, and the everyday ups and downs of ordinary people. Ultimately my career would take me to Philadelphia, where I anchored the TV news for thirty-seven years.

My book, *Ticket to Ride: Inside the Beatles 1964 & 1965 Tours that Changed the World*, was an insider’s account of those tours and of my personal experiences with the Beatles. Many readers got the idea that I liked John Lennon. What was not to like? Here was a man with supreme talent, ragged individuality, frailties, charisma, and conviction who was looking desperately for places to deposit the waves of love roiling inside of him. My impressions of and reporting about the life of John Lennon in this book are based not only on my own extensive experiences, but rely heavily on the thoughts of other people who encountered John in many capacities throughout his life. I also performed exhaustive investigative research to help locate the pieces of his life that escaped me after two tours, practically living with the boys, many phone conversations with John, and personal contact through special events that occurred over a period of seventeen years.

There is a subculture of Beatles journalism that seems to require authors to claim that they are the best and brightest on the subject. Despite this air of propriety over who has the real story, my circle of Beatles-connected friends is devoid of any such pettiness. But I bring up the subject of cooperation because I do not presume to be the only source of accurate information on the life of John Lennon. Each view of John’s amazing life brings us something new. My reporting of Lennon and his adult life will no doubt vary from others, but it is mine.

## **AUGUST 18, 1964. JOHN LENNON INSULTING MY ATTIRE AND HAIR-STYLE ON OUR FIRST MEETING AT THE SAN FRANCISCO HILTON.**

LENNON : *What’s wrong with you. You look like a fag ass.*

KANE: *Better than looking like a slob like you.*

The man I met and traded insults with on that summer afternoon has been depicted as rude

abrasive, hostile and unpredictable by many writers and would-be experts over the years. My view is different, firmly rooted in the belief that John Lennon was all that and more, the “more” being an extremely centered and bright intellectual who gave so much more than he took back. Some people may wonder how a man who had gone to such extremes in his own life could affect others in such a profound and positive way. I believe it is all a case of mistaken identity. John is not the only thing we see in this book. We see ourselves—our potential for good and our propensity to screw things up. That is what living is all about. John’s life, like all of our lives, was colored by serious and often debilitating flaws, some of which thwarted his creative process and threatened his very existence. And yet his talent and message prevailed.

If you’re looking for a psychological profile—including facts like the baby formula he was fed or his achievements in grade school—perhaps you’ll want to look elsewhere. And there are plenty of places to look.

What you’ll find in this book is an honest and multi-layered portrayal of a man who affected us all in different ways, and who remains a cultural icon to millions. This work does not attempt to detail the week-to-week conflicts of John Lennon’s psyche, but rather to find out how certain human frailties shaped a being that enriched so many others. It ultimately seeks to shed light on the truth, and sometimes to dispel long-standing myths about John—his loves, his sexuality, his rage, his alleged campaign against the United States, and more.

This is a true story; nothing is held back. Different points of view are not suppressed in the usual enthusiastic orgy of denial and memory lapse. It is my hope, through objective reporting, that in the pages of this book and in the enclosed DVD, John will come back to life for the reader, along with his expressions, sense of humor, and sheer honesty.

I do have to make one confession of a fact that made my job even harder. With all the brilliant irreverence, craziness and confusion, the totality of his talent and the reality of his being, I fundamentally and honestly really liked the man. After all, more than just about anyone I’ve met, he taught me by example that bullshit and superficiality are a terrible waste of time. Yet, despite my respect and unfettered enthusiasm for John and what he left behind, there is no glossing over the truth of his life here. All the periods of John Lennon’s life were marked by amazing candor. Truth, sometimes to his detriment, was his calling card—in his statements, music, and writing. This book lives up to his standards and legacy. It would be hypocritical to write the story of Lennon’s adult life by glossing over the inadequacies and flaws that he refused to whitewash in his own lifetime. After all, as Yoko Ono told me as I interviewed her for this book, “He didn’t want people to just adore him. He wanted people to know what he is made of.”

This book is a celebration of his life, but in the spirit of Lennon, none of the challenges he tried to overcome will be ignored. He was, in spite of all his genius and accomplishment, a troubled man seeking his own truth. I have sought the truth here about John Lennon, with no apologies and no regrets, just wonderful and painful memories.

My story begins with the end, and reveals how that fateful night shaped some of the participants in this story. It ends with John’s personal triumph, and then is poignantly accentuated in the beautiful writings of Lennon followers from across his universe.

# **JOHN LENNON SOMEWHERE OVER PENNSYLVANIA ON THE FLIGHT FROM PHILADELPHIA TO INDIANAPOLIS.**

KANE: *John, people loved you in Philadelphia tonight.*

LENNON: *What's the fuss, Larry. I'm only an ordinary person doing fucking extraordinary things. Get the picture, Larry?*

I got the picture all right—a teenage prodigy, a man leading the greatest rock band of all time, flawed human being desperately trying to find his way and—in the midst of a dark hole of despair—human being who ultimately experienced the triumph of the human spirit.

The irony of it all is that John Lennon is bigger in death than he was in life. And believe me, he was big in life.

Larry Kane  
Philadelphia  
September 2005

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Putting together a work like this requires an extraordinary amount of help.

I begin with the core group that assisted me so consistently. My thanks to the team at Running of the Bulls Press: Editorial Director Greg Jones who is a giant among editors, Publicity Director Sam Caggiula and the management team of Publisher Jon Anderson, former Publisher John Whalen, former Publisher Buz Teacher and former Associate Publisher Carlo DeVito. Staffers Marjorie Morrison and Tina Camma made doing business so pleasant. Art Director Bill Jones and designer Matthew Goodman were so creative. Susan Oyama's work on the photographs was, as usual, first class. The help of researcher Jennifer Romain was invaluable. And Warren Mellnick did a great job in helping me produce the enclosed DVD, along with the talented staff at Center City Film and Video in Philadelphia, PA.

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The music industry was well represented. Mark Hudson, producer for Ringo and others, is a gem of knowledge and intuition, as is Alan White, drummer for "Yes", and a man who accentuated the Lennon sound in the seventies. It was a pleasure to talk to Alan, one of the greatest drummers of a time. Photographer Bob Gruen, a close friend of John's, had invaluable information, along with photographer Allan Tannenbaum, whose picture graces the cover of this book. Legendary talk show host Geraldo Rivera and his long-time producer and confidante Marty Berman gave us a close-up view of John at work in the public sector, as did John's friend Mario Casciano. Radio broadcaster Pat Drew provided interesting accounts of John's comeback. My old friend Scott Regan has such a great

knowledge of John's music. Author Bruce Spizer, whose own chronicles of Beatles history are legendary, gave me assistance at a critical time. John's final days were given special meaning by Michael Allison, the tree man and film producer who became a special friend of John.

Thanks also go to Lauren Lipton at KYW Newsradio. Joan Erle, research director at NBC 10 Philadelphia, and Lawana Scales, program director at the same station. John Trusty, a friend from the Chicago area, is owed much thanks for his memories of John. Former Apple employees Linda Re and Arlene Reckson are owed a debt of thanks. My gratitude to broadcasters Dennis Elsas, Dave Sholin and New York anchorman Ernie Anastos, along with producer Allan Weiss who shared his memories of a fateful night. Thanks go to Lynne Sherrick, Damon Sinclair, Alan Steckler, Jeffrey Michelson, Dennis O'Dell, Scott Bluebond, Gene Vassal, Anne Gottehrer, veteran producer Vincent Calandra, and distinguished Professor Leon Wildes, the man who fought John's legal battle to stay in America.

I would like to thank Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr for all the wonderful quotes over the years. And I cherish the memories in this book of the late George Harrison, Derek Taylor, Malcolm Evans and Brian Epstein.

To Sean and Julian Lennon, I hope that this work finally clarifies what has been a conflicted view of your father's extraordinary life.

Norman Einhorn has been a constant source through his keen insight and sense of humor.

Finally, and foremost, I would like to thank my wife Donna, son Michael, daughter Alexandra, and son-in-law, Douglas Weiss, for their love, support, and patience.



**ONE:**

***Murder at the Dakota***

“I am going into an unknown future, but I’m still all here.  
And still, where there’s life, there’s hope.”

—John Lennon, interviewed by Dave Sholin of the RKO  
General Radio stations, Monday afternoon, December 8, 1980

This is the story that defines what John Lennon was all about, and it begins with the end—his assassination on December 8, 1980. To comprehend the impact of John Lennon, it is imperative to understand just how his death affected people everywhere. And how the sudden end was really the beginning of another life.

Memory is a mind game. You think you remember what happened years ago in your life, but it takes hard mental digging to recall how it really was. Sometimes you may be right on target; other times distortion clouds the memory. Yet, there are certain events where the mood of the moment remains and can come back to bring you chills inside, and suddenly, with not much effort, you remember exactly how you felt. For Americans in the 1960s, there was the JFK assassination.

everyone remembered exactly where they were and how they reacted when they heard the news. It wasn't until early December 1980, that such a universal pall would fall over the masses again. John Lennon's murder, in fact, touched the entire world.

It was an event that stunned even the most hard-nosed and stubborn people who ply the newsgathering trade. For this reporter, it was even worse, because I had spent countless hours in John Lennon's presence—in the capacity of reporter and professional friend—from the first time he set foot in America in 1964 until shortly before his death. It was a journey that I neither desired nor expected, but one that has had tremendous impact and resonance. In retrospect, it was a dream job to be able to get so close to one of history's greatest dream makers. But, as has been the custom throughout history, the dream makers often run into the dream killers. And so it was outside the Dakota Apartments, John Lennon's home, on that fateful December evening in 1980.



A hundred years before the end of John Lennon's life, construction began on the Dakota building on Seventy-second Street in Manhattan. The location was desirable because the Upper West Side was not heavily populated at the time, and the structure would stand just west of Central Park, the first urban landscaped park in America. From 1880 to 1884, construction engineers worked to complete the fashionable edifice. The proximity of the park was a new attraction in New York. Despite all of its newfangled creature comforts and location, it would be years before the Dakota would be solvent.

The Dakota is seemingly an odd name for an apartment building in the heart of America's largest metropolis. Legend says the name came from the fact that the neighborhood was so sparse at the time of its groundbreaking that it resembled the Dakotas of America's West. The name was given more direct physical representation when, during construction, high above the Seventy-second Street entrance, a statue of a Dakota Indian was erected. It has kept silent watch over the building since it opened in 1884. The building's haunting motif, designed by the architect of the Plaza hotel, included high, dramatic ceilings and floors with inlaid oak and cherry. Over the years it's been described as the Victorian Kremlin. The people who live there say the three-foot-thick walls, the forty-nine-foot-long drawing rooms, and the enriched sense of privacy and luxury is unique in Manhattan. As the twentieth century began, more and more apartment buildings were constructed on the Upper West Side. Eventually, Seventy-second Street became a major thoroughfare with the dawn of the automobile and the allure of numerous fashionable neighborhood restaurants.

The Dakota was well known for housing the famous and the artistic. The rigidity of its outside architecture contrasted with the inner luxury. Actors Boris Karloff, Lauren Bacall, Jose Ferrer, Judy Garland, and legendary composer Leonard Bernstein lived much of their lives there. Yet beyond its glamorous past and its haunting architecture, the Dakota would achieve a new and dark dimension on the night of December 8, 1980.



Alan Weiss passed the Dakota often. On the way to his job as the 6 p.m. news producer at WABC-TV on West Sixty-sixth Street, he would look up at the building and know that one of the idols of his generation was living inside. Weiss was a Beatles fan. He was particularly a John Lennon fan. Fate would have it that he would meet his idol in the twilight moments between life and death, and more than any person in the vast universe of mourners, get a genuine and unedited glance at the tragedy of a murder. He remembers how his own close call with tragedy on December 8, 1980, would seal the fate:

“I had a date that night, and I had to get to a cash machine. Normally when I ride my motorcycle, I buckle my helmet. But because I was just coming across Central Park, I got on my bike and I didn’t buckle my helmet. I’m getting to the outer drive that takes you out of the park on Fifty-ninth Street to Seventh Avenue. I’m making a right turn and a taxi on the inside of me is supposed to make a right turn but instead he decides he’s not going to and he tries to get in front of me and I hit him at thirty miles per hour, slam over my handlebars, crack the windshield on the taxi, and end up on the ground. I slam my head against the ground, but my helmet wasn’t buckled. My helmet gets knocked off and I slam my head a couple of more times like a stone skipping on water, and I finally stop spinning on the middle of the ground and I look up and all these cars are coming around the corner.”

Today, Alan Weiss is a successful independent producer in New York City, creating, among other things, edgy documentary news broadcasts. Yet nothing he has filmed could match the intensity of what he would experience that night. The shock of a serious accident was followed in short order by a different kind of anguish.



Almost at the same time that Alan Weiss lay crumpled on the pavement, John Lennon and his wife Yoko Ono were on their way home from the Hit Factory, a famous recording studio in Midtown Manhattan. The couple had spent an unusually long day at home tending to business matters, interrupted only by a prophetic interview with Dave Sholin, a programmer for the RKO Radio Network. Sholin was in New York specifically to conduct this interview with John and Yoko for his original radio series on famous couples. It was the first interview with Lennon for Sholin; it would be the last for John Lennon. Sholin remembers:

“It was a mesmerizing experience. On the afternoon of December 8, 1980, I took my shoes off, as was the custom in the Lennon household, sat down in a plush couch, and as my engineer assembled the recording equipment, stared at the ceiling. It was like looking at the sky; the ceiling was painted in beautiful white clouds. I was in their world now, and a bit nervous, but record producer (and budding multimedia mogul) David Geffen had told me it would be all right. I thought we’d be there an hour. At around one o’clock, Yoko Ono came out to greet us with a great deal of warmth. I began the interviews with Yoko, and a few minutes later, John came in and said, ‘Hey, here I am. Are you ready for me?’ We started at one and didn’t finish until after four. John loved it so much, he said he wished he could blow off the recording session. It was a great interview.”

Sholin’s interview with John was revealing. Combined with his recent return to making music, much of what Lennon said in that interview was a public tip that John Lennon’s life may have been

transition:

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“We’re either going to live or we’re going to die. If we’re dead, we’re going to have to deal with that; if we’re alive, we’re going to have to deal with being alive. So worrying about whether Wall Street, or the Apocalypse is going to come in the form of the great beast, is not going to do us any good day-to-day. . . .

“The thing the sixties did was show us the possibility and the responsibility that we all had. It wasn’t the answer, it just gave us a glimpse of the possibility . . . and possibly in the eighties everyone will say, ‘Okay, let’s project the positive side of life again. . . .’

“I don’t want to have to sell my soul again, as it were, to have a hit record. I’ve discovered I can live without it, and it makes it happier for me. . . . We feel like this is just a start now. . . . *Double Fantasy*, this is our first album. I know we’ve worked together before . . . but this is our first album. . . . I feel like nothing has ever happened before today. . . .

“You have to give thanks to God or whatever is up there that we all survived . . . the tremendous upheaval of the whole world. . . . But the world is not like the sixties, the whole world’s changed. I’m going into an unknown future, but I’m still all here. And still, while there’s life, there’s hope.”

This intense final interview gives us a glimpse of a man emerging anew just hours before his death, exiting a five-year hiatus at home, composing again, seemingly at peace with himself, and preparing for anything. A man who had always been possessed by the evils borne of insecurity appeared ready for a new fate. Or so it seemed.

Dave Sholin was pleased. A few minutes after 4:30 p.m., he looked out across the Seventy-second Street sidewalk as his crew packed up. Across the street, on the south side, he spotted a couple of young men. One of them came up and asked, “Did you just interview John Lennon?” Before he could answer, the man walked away. Sholin says there was no doubt—because the face has haunted him forever—that the man, soon to join the rogues’ gallery of cowardly assassins, was Mark David Chapman.

As Chapman walked away, John and Yoko emerged from the Dakota looking for a cab. Sholin offered them a ride to the recording studio. He was determined to make a 6:30 p.m. flight to his home in San Francisco, but how could he not give a lift to John Lennon and Yoko Ono? Sholin recalls the ride:

“I wish I had the tape recorder rolling in the van. John was so animated, so happy. He was on top of the world. Yes, he looked thin, but healthy, and I was thrilled to give him a ride, to be a part of his day. I thought of his sitting in that single chair in the apartment and how he loved talking about *Double Fantasy*, and how all of this was sort of a coming out. He talked about the rumors of a rift with Paul McCartney. He said it wasn’t true, that he loved Paul. And I believed him. And then he started breaking into some singing of hard rock songs; this was a happy man. As he climbed out of the van, he waved and Yoko blew a kiss in the air. We raced toward Kennedy airport, and we made the plane by a few minutes, which turns out to be a case of odd timing considering what would be. As the plane headed westward, I felt good about the interview. After years of seclusion, John Lennon let it all out for me. He seemed, by appearances, confident and hopeful. I felt happy for John Lennon.”

Hours later, Dave Sholin was airborne over the Rocky Mountains, thrilled with his day, and eager to listen to his interview with John and Yoko. He was tired but at peace, comforted by a job well-done.

that turned out to be more than he asked for. He settled into a light sleep at about the same moment Alan Weiss lay quite unsettled and in great physical pain back in the emergency room at Roosevelt Hospital in New York City. Weiss recalls:

“I’m lying in the gurney, the doctor comes over, and she indeed is beautiful, and she looks at me and says, ‘You know, I’ll take you in for x-rays. I have to see what’s wrong with you.’ I said, ‘Fine.’ She says, ‘You’re lucky. We’re slow tonight.’ She had no sooner said that and all of a sudden a man comes running in screaming, ‘We have a gunshot, we have a gunshot! Gunshot in the chest!’ And she says, ‘When’s he coming in?’ ‘Hitting the door right now!’ And the door slams open. Six cops come running in with a stretcher between them. And she looks at me and says, ‘Alan, I’m sorry. I gotta go. I’ll take care of this.’ So I’m lying there on the gurney and these guys run right into the room and I’m lying outside of it. So I’m lying there, my eyes are closed, two cops come out and one says to the other, ‘Jesus, can you believe it? John Lennon.’ And I open my eyes and I look up at these two cops standing over my bed and I said, ‘I’m sorry sir. What did you say?’ They walk away and . . . no more people are flying in and out of this room and they’re carrying blood, gauze, and all sorts of other things and I’m trying to speak to them, saying, ‘Excuse me. Who’s in there?’ And no one will talk to me.”



The official case number of the New York City Police Department, dated December 8, 1980, was 14854. At approximately 10:52 p.m., police officer Stephen Spiro arrived at the Seventy-second Street archway entrance to the Dakota where he found John Lennon gravely wounded, and a young man sitting a few feet away reading the J.D. Salinger novel *Catcher in the Rye*. As rescue crews arrived at the scene and quickly moved John to nearby Roosevelt Hospital, officer Spiro arrested the suspect identified as Mark D. Chapman, last known residence in Honolulu, Hawaii, and confiscated a .38-caliber snub-nosed revolver. The official police report, written early the next morning, read, “The victim was shot with the described weapon; the named suspect causing the victim’s demise.”

The police report did not explain that the cowardly Chapman shot John in the back. Assassins, many of them, always seem to act from the rear, perhaps afraid to stare their victims in the eye. At 8:02 a.m. on December 9, Mark D. Chapman was arraigned and charged with murder. He had on him the Salinger book and \$2,201.76 in cash. It was apparent from the attack, the disposition of the attacker, and the casualness of his arrest that Mark Chapman had come to kill. By December 14, according to the Twentieth Precinct detective’s report, the case was closed, pending court disposition.

The official report on any violent episode deals with the facts at hand. But there is more to the story. First of all, it has been noted that Mark David Chapman assumed a military firing position. He sprayed six bullets at John Lennon’s back. It is amazing, almost miraculous, that Yoko Ono escaped injury. The officially described crime scene conjures images of a passive Chapman reading his book upon the police arrival. But in between his savage act and the arrival of Officer Spiro, Chapman paced the area restlessly, waving his revolver back and forth. As John was helped up the stairway to the Dakota security office, Chapman remained agitated and shouted warnings at the doorman and other observers before he sat down to read. Within minutes, police carried John from the security station down to a patrol car and gently placed him in the back seat. The car raced to Roosevelt

Hospital even as the killer was led away.

Yes, it is true that Chapman had sought an autograph from John earlier in the day. And Lennon, ever approachable, fulfilled that request by signing Chapman's copy of *Double Fantasy*. John, in fact, asked Chapman if that was all he wanted. Chapman replied, "Yes, thanks John."

Obviously that was not all he wanted. When they led him away from the scene of his horror, the innocent-looking twenty-five-year-old had a smirk on his face that revealed his inner demons. The dream killer may have been reading a book about rebellion, but he was nothing but a gutless, cold-blooded murderer who shot the dream maker in the back. Case over? Not so fast. In every public tragedy there is a personal cost: a cost to the next of kin. And in the case of John Lennon and his extended family of fans, that personal cost was unimaginably immense.

*Imagine all the people. . . .*



John Lennon, whose enormous talent was at times fueled by bouts of hopelessness and insecurity, could never imagine the scene at the Dakota. Nor could he imagine the dramatic effort to save his life or the terrible suffering of his wife.

On the way to the hospital, Yoko Ono pleaded with police officer Anthony Palma, "Tell me it isn't true!" The officer later said she was "very hysterical." At Roosevelt Hospital, doctors attending Alan Weiss moved to attend to the incoming shooting victim. As the pieces quickly fell into place, Weiss realized that he was witnessing the unbelievable.

"And I hear crying and I look up and there is an Asian-looking woman in a full-length mink coat on the arm of this huge motorcycle-jacketed police officer coming in. I don't know if that's gotta be Yoko Ono. It's gotta be John Lennon. So I realized that I had to get up and make a phone call and so maybe when the adrenaline starts flowing, suddenly the injury disappears.

"So I got up and I was able to hop down the hallway. There was a glass door and outside of the glass door was a pay phone. I'd been to the hospital many times before. I knew the layout. And I was about to go through the doorway when a security guy grabbed me, says, 'You can't leave.' 'What are you talking about—I can't leave. This is a public place. I'm leaving. I'm checking myself out.' 'No, you can't leave.' And he pulled me right from the door. At that moment, the cop who brought me in at the other end of the hospital comes in the other end of the corridor; he sees me and comes running and he says, 'Mr. Weiss, what are you doing standing up? We had to take the stretcher apart to bring you in.' I said, 'Didn't you hear?' He said, 'Didn't we hear what?' 'Didn't you hear John Lennon's been shot?' He said, 'Who told you that?' I said, 'No one exactly told me that; I just heard these cops talking about it.' He said, 'Alan, you're crazy. You banged your head. Would you come lay down?' I said, 'Sure, but do me a favor? Would you let me just call my office?'

"So the cop leans over, takes the Centrex phone from the nursing stand, dials my office, I get Neil, the producer, on the phone. I say, 'Neil, it's Alan.' He says, 'Hey, Alan. I heard you had an accident, how are you?' I said, 'Neil, I think John Lennon's been shot and he's here at Roosevelt.' So they take me back to my gurney; I'm sitting on the edge of my gurney watching them working on John Lennon

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