

Old chum recalls McCartney's school days

Halifax man advised him there was no future in music

When Halifax resident Iain Taylor went to school in Liverpool, he had a classmate who drew guitars on the margins of his notebooks, sang Little Richard songs in the cafeteria and dashed across the road to play music with John Lennon after school.

His name was Paul McCartney and Taylor thought his musical ambitions were ludicrous, he told CBC News in an interview Thursday.

“I said to him: ‘Surely there’s no future in the music industry in Liverpool.’ It was all in London at the time and that seemed such a long way away,” Taylor recalled.

Those were words he’d never live down.

“I used to tell my boys, ‘Don’t come to me for advice. I’m the one who told Paul McCartney there’s no future in the music industry.’ ”

That school was the Liverpool Institute High School for Boys and McCartney later purchased it and turned it into the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts.

As McCartney prepares for a concert this Saturday in Halifax, Taylor was writing about his old alma mater.

His locker was right next to McCartney’s and they shared a homeroom and subjects such as English and geography.

McCartney was not much of a student, Taylor, a retired geography teacher [University Geography Professor in Canada], recalled. In fact, he left on a trip to Hamburg before the finals.

Taylor remembers McCartney as “quite a character.”

“I still have very vivid memories that I’m trying to put down in this history of the school. He was very artistic, a left-hander, and he wasn’t particularly good in the early part of his school days



Iain Taylor holds a 1956 photo of the Liverpool Institute High School for Boys. ((CBC))



Paul McCartney stands in the back row. ((CBC))

with mathematics and science. He hated organized sports and games. He was a bit of an anarchist and wouldn't participate," Taylor said.

Unlike his pal George Harrison, who was always in trouble with the teachers for one reason or another, McCartney seemed to fly under the radar.

"He seemed to excel verbally in being able to mimic the teachers, but do it quietly so the teachers didn't hear but everybody else did. He was kind of a rebel," Taylor said.

Harrison and McCartney were among the youngest boys to hang out in the smokers' corner, a spot out of sight of the teachers.

"George Harrison was beaten many times for many things. Paul McCartney was usually quite skilled at negotiating his way around things without feeling the consequences," Taylor said.

The cafeteria had an interesting reverb and McCartney spent his lunch hours drumming out Little Richard songs.

'Brilliant musician'

"It was clear even at this time that he was a brilliant musician because the two of them, John Lennon and he, had met a couple of years before and formed this group and they were playing at local church halls and things like that," Taylor said.

After school, he'd go across the road, to Lennon's flat, to play guitar.

Taylor remembers the day they hit on a name for their group.

"He said: 'I think we've got the name' and he wrote it out. There was a groan. We thought it was a terrible pun and it would never catch on," he said.

The name was, of course, the Beatles.

The school was officially reopened by Queen Elizabeth in 1996 as a training ground for a future generation of artists.

McCartney's hand in its creation was one of the key reasons for his knighthood.

Also known as "Paul McCartney's Fame School," it has plans for branches around the world.

[CBC Arts](#)

Last Updated: Jul 09, 2009 3:54 PM ET [Corrected Sep 07, 201]

With files from Phlis McGregor

Post Script

On July 11, 2009 in Halifax Nova Scotia.

The weather held for a special event of Halifax's summer, Paul McCartney's outdoor concert on the Commons in July 2009. It was long time rumoured but eventually it was booked!

I really must go to this one! As many know, he and I were in the same Sixth form class at the Liverpool Institute for his last two years of high school. I had last seen him back stage in Leeds in 1963 so I thought it about time to rectify the long break!

To cut a very long story short, I was able to get in touch with his publicist who, as luck would have it, called us inviting us to join Paul prior to his performance that evening. Problem was that we were already at the event when the message came through and I didn't hear (or feel) the cell-phone's beeping in the crowd! Fantastic concert (see [Mull of Kintyre](#) and [I Saw Her Standing There](#) at youtube.com) but the press got a hold of my sad story and ran front page with it! Commiserations all around! (Unfortunately this story has been electronically spiked!)

That could have been the end of the story, but in a few days we were then re-contacted and invited to his concert in Boston's famous Fenway Park the following month and so made our way down there by car, ferry and AMTRAK. We were given complimentary tickets to the warm up show - an hour in a stadium which was empty except for a score or so die-hard fans who had paid an enormous sum for the privilege. Later the publicist almost couldn't find us in the crush of 50,000 fans but eventually we found ourselves in the small reception marquee for friends of the band, talked to his event organizer who had been in the business since the Roy Orbison tour!

And then the man himself turned up to chat. He recognized me - a feat a little harder that the reverse! A grin and double grip, a non-body hug and a warm welcome to Nan. Then he and I talked for few minutes about the school history I'm preparing and I asked for his help and an interview later in Soho. Photos taken (and eventually delivered)! And that was about it - 10 minutes of fame! He seemed very slim and rather tired but to be expected perhaps on his veggy diet in the middle of a heavy multi-venue tour of the East coast.

He was wearing a version of the old lapel-less light weight Beatle suit and Cuban heels they wore in their early Epstein period! Then off he went on to the stage and was singing the opening number before we had returned to our seats! Another great concert and at two and a half hours he really does the fans proud! He has the energy of a 17 year old!

Next time in Soho - perhaps!

Iain Taylor