

# LEFT UNEDITED – Meet the Beatles! – Ringo and me

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The Villager's Peter Jones and his son David bookend some drummer who used to play with Wings' bass player. Photo courtesy of Peter Jones

Yes, I had my photo taken with Ringo Starr—but more on that later.

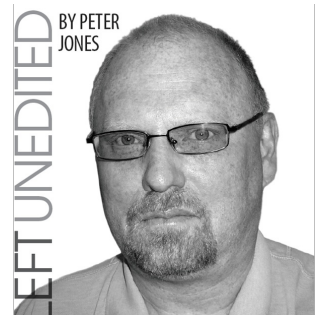
Over my years as a reporter and radio host, I have met and interviewed a broad assortment of talented musicians and even rock stars, if you will, but never a Beatle.

I've got two members of the Who under my journalistic belt, three Beach Boys, two Byrds and three Moody Blues. I've questioned Ravi Shankar, James Brown, Ted Nugent and Judy Collins, but not a single solitary Beatle.

Sadly, it was clear that Glen Campbell was on his way down when he repeated jokes during our chat, though I shared happier moments with the likes of Michael McDonald, Dan Fogelberg, Edgar Winter, Spinal Tap, Ray Davies and even Yoko Ono—but nary a mop top.

That's right, I am a Beatles virgin.

This is an admission from a Beatles collector and sometime music columnist who has reported for *Billboard* and once did music interviews for National Public Radio. In 2004, I wrote a major 40th anniversary retrospective for *5280*



about the Beatles' performance at Red Rocks.

But until recently, the closest I had come to a Liverpudlian drummer was Pete Best, who became a legend of footnote in 1962 when he was fired from the Beatles to make way for Ringo (and music history).

Needless to say, it has been on my bucket list to interview ... well, any Beatle in a storm ... since I was knee-high to a rocking-horse person. With the deaths of John Lennon and George Harrison and the miles of celebrity insulation that still surrounds Starr and Paul McCartney, it seemed I had a better chance of winning the U.S. presidency.

But then last month came a meager glimmer of scant hope. Ringo and his All-Starr Band were coming to Denver's Paramount Theater and the drummer's lesser known artwork would be making a one-day stop at Fascination St. Fine Art in Cherry Creek North. Members of the band were expected to attend the opening, but not the man himself.

My "in" was gallery owner Aaron LaPedis, a *Villager* advertiser who I have known and counted a friend for more than two decades. LaPedis had been granted one—and only one—five-minute interview with Starr to promote the art sale and a high-end \$5,000 package that would include tickets to the concert, a signed piece of Ringo art and an opportunity to meet the ex-Beatle.

The situation was touch and go for a couple of weeks as LaPedis navigated the near-impenetrable celebrity of a Beatle. Who would get the interview? Would the publicist be talked into a second interview with a certain weekly newspaper with the right ZIP code to promote a \$5,000 meet-and-greet package?

Hopes around the office for a front-cover Ringo story were crushed when powers held firm on the one-interview rule and those five minutes of Beatles elation went to *Westword*. Adding irony to injury, that one promised interview never even happened, leaving *Westword* a news hole the size of Blackburn Lancashire.

In the intervening weeks, I interviewed Neal Glaser, Starr's art publisher, for one of the few previews to hit newsstands—in this case, *The Villager*—prior to the goings-on at Fascination St.

But wait—there is a happier ending than Eleanor Rigby might have experienced. To make a long story short, on the evening of June 28, 2016, my son David and I went backstage and met a Beatle.

This was not an interview, but a fist bump and a photo op with the world's most famous rock drummer. I told Ringo I felt like we were old friends, having collected his B-sides for decades. He smiled and quickly said, "I'm gonna get in the middle" before the three of us flashed Starr's trademark peace sign and a photographer snapped a photo that will live forever in family lore and Facebook.

Before I could get it posted, I happily scribbled a status update: "Fist-bumped Ringo Starr last night. Photo to come!" Before long, I was getting responses: "Ringo will never wash that fist again."

I don't often LOL, but made an exception when someone shared a crazily manipulated posting, supposedly from Starr's own Facebook account: "Fist-bumped Peter Jones last night. Never washing it again. Photo to come!"

The chance to meet a Beatle was certainly a thrill, to paraphrase a Beatles song, and an ultimate memory that my equally excited son and I will share forever. Thank you, Aaron, for the long and winding road that got us there.

So Paul, are we going to do that interview?

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