

So Long, Farewell:  
An Ode to George Harrison and the Beatles

Today's newspapers are full of analyses of the musical genius of the recently deceased George Harrison, "the quiet Beatle." Like so many other "baby boomers," I, too, am saddened by his passing. This year of our Lord, 2001, has been one of continuous loss for me. My father died in April, my cousin, Louise, died in October and my Grandmother died on November 6<sup>th</sup> at the ripe old age of 103. Now George is gone too.

I never met him, sad to say. Yet as a pre-teen during the height of Beatlemania I was definitely "into" their music. I was thoroughly enchanted by the fabulous four, John, Paul, George and Ringo. They were divine and I committed myself to learning their music with all the enthusiasm I could muster. The Beatles and the Supremes were among the pillars of the musical reality that defined my budding adolescence. Now George is gone.

I observed the break up of the Beatles from a distance, barely touched by it. The United States government was busy chasing Angela Davis and I related more strongly with her plight. Then I graduated from college, discovered I was an adult with all the responsibilities attendant thereto and the Beatles became part of my past.

When John Lennon was brutally assassinated I was knee-deep in child rearing and thus much too busy to feel more than a fleeting sense of loss. Twenty-one years later I have reached that coveted status of mother of an adult child, no longer fully immersed in the daily challenges of nurturing a life. George Harrison is dead and now I can mourn, freely, fully and without interruption. My husband can feed and clothe himself; the rest of the world can go to hell in a hand basket and I can mourn. And right now that's exactly what I choose to do.

That a middle aged British guitarist should mean so much to a middle aged Black woman may be a question for the ages, but who cares? Strains of *Yesterday*, *She Loves You*, *Something*, *I Want to Hold Your Hand*, *Hey Jude* and *the Long and Winding Road* evoke powerfully sweet memories from which I derive inspiration that expresses itself in my writing.

I have loved the Beatles since I first heard them. That feeling has not diminished with time. And none of the articles written in the past twenty-four hours (at least the ones I've read) come close to articulating what I feel. I'm not enamored of the efforts to distinguish Harrison from John, Paul and Ringo. Each one brought something special to the group and *who they were* meant the world to me.

What I'm feeling now is a sense of my own mortality and the often stunning realization that I've reached true middle age. So much has happened to me, for me and because of me in the approximately thirty-eight years since the mop haired quartet took America by storm, capturing my heart with millions of others. When I hear their recordings I am transported back to a time that is now deliciously memorable for me.

These days I still struggle with my grief. Losing my father was devastating. I will never be the same, yet I'm determined to continue to learn and grow. My Father had so much faith and confidence in me. He knew, too, that I was crazy about the Beatles. So the way I figure it, George, my Daddy, cousin Louise and Grandma are all enjoying that precious peace that passes all human understanding. To that I say a resounding AMEN! So long and farewell.

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