

## Emily's Trip to Abbey Road: Meeting Libby Miner

Finals in undergrad are not usually a “fun time,” but for one class, Expressive Arts Therapy, I had a good feeling about my upcoming paper. I printed my “expressive arts in the community/therapeutic values” rubric, instantly buzzing with great ideas. I was on a mission to revisit the Abbey Road Studio Hair Salon in Crystal Lake, Illinois. This little salon is quite a hidden gem, and I stumbled upon it last fall. The salon is owned by Libby Miner, a vibrant artist who is more than just your everyday Beatles fan. When you first walk in, the salon looks more like a museum exhibit than somewhere you would get your hair cut. The art and memorabilia partially comes from Libby’s collection, as well things given to her from clients, friends and family, and even from people who just drop off donations that she has never met! She and her family remodeled the salon almost 17 years ago from a 12 x 64 blank space to a “spare home” for her to work her craft as a hairstylist, and substitute music studio on evenings off.

Libby enjoys learning about her clients’ lives, and sometimes even share her own exciting stories, as the life of a Beatlemaniac. The colorful artwork is a storytelling experience in itself, showcasing the Beatles in all of the eras and creative solo stages in the salon is quite the site. The first time I walked in, I was shook. I transformed from a 25 year old college student to a kid in a candy store. *Wow.*

I am a major Geek when it comes to the 1960s, and the many arts that flourished out of that decade. This is especially true when it comes to music. The 60s is such a fascinating time in history. War and worldwide trauma was abhorrent, and yet young people did their best to come together to heal and make a change in the face of the Vietnam War. From the revolution we saw in everyday fashion, to the way music production was forever changed... What’s not to love?

The Beatles played a major role in counterculture, which was the lifestyle change Americans saw beginning in the early 60s. I don't just mean the creative doors that were

opened in the world of rock and roll. American kids that were fans during early “Beatlemania,” grew up, and explored cultures beyond their own backyard. They appreciated mindfulness, meditation, and spent more time loving nature, and just slowing down. People became more open-minded and spiritual. The world went from black and white to a chromatic ray of colors -- and I don’t just mean in terms of flowery fashion! The 1960s were tough, but the Beatles inspired peace and love and compassion, when the world needed it the most. In “The Beatles,” by Bob Spitz, this psychological impact is explored in depth. That generation even says that the Beatles represent happiness for them. That’s pretty big. I wish I could go back in time and see it live, but I get a little of that feeling just by looking around this beauty shop.

Aside from entertaining stories and memorabilia, Libby provides a personalized experience for each individual. In terms of a salon, the service is exceptional. Maybe someone needs more time or accommodations to complete the service. Or another person may talk a little more. She knows what her clients need and works with them on those individual needs without hesitation.

Haircuts have always been hard for me. Aside from neurological disorders and neck related conditions, the sounds can also be overwhelming for my sensory system. Libby always is patient with me and checks on how I am feeling. We take little breaks when I need to and she makes sure to book enough time for this, so I can take it slow and receive the best service. I not only leave with a better haircut, but with a smile on my face because she makes it such a warm experience.

My grandmother lives near Crystal Lake, and I would always walk past the Abbey Road salon with curiosity. I was intrigued by the iconic Beatles’ haircut logo, and the shop’s interior 1960’s Beatle theme. I was actually taking a class about the Beatles in Fall of 2023, and I just thought it would be a fun field trip for myself. Why not give the salon a try?

I hadn't gotten a professional haircut in years because of my TBI and neck related flare ups. I have Dysautonomia, so the postural positions that come along with sink shampooing can trigger dizziness and brain fog. People are not always gentle when it comes to invisible illnesses

and disabilities that you don't really hear about much. Even when people are, visits to salons come with lot of noise and sensory processing triggers.

It was a big decision but I decided to give the place a try and call. I was nervous, but on the salon's website, I felt a message of acceptance, love and peace. The moment I spoke with Libby on the phone, I felt an immediate connection. I hoped that we would become friends, and we have become more like family than friends. We were bouncing from topic to topic, from our unique love of 60s music, to how I manage my wavy hair.

Libby is a social person, and this is important when you're running a business with people. She is beautiful inside and out, immediately accommodating with how to make my haircut comfortable. Her salon was already quiet, private and peaceful. The cacophony of 50 blow dryers going at once was finally not an issue. I said goodbye to the fog of competing color smells, that always aggravated me in Chicago salons. Abbey Road actually felt homey, and I found myself staring at all of the gallery photos throughout my time in the chair. I could have stayed there for hours, just hanging out. Libby spritzed my head with water, as I sat comfortably upright, and we gabbed about all kinds of cool stuff. Aside from being so patient and kind, Libby's passionate nature as an artist just flows through her. She loves to talk about her experiences as a musician, as she plays guitar and is a singer too. She lights up when she talks about her days working "Beatlefest" (now "The Fest for Beatle Fans") which this year celebrates 50 years of existence. She smiles when she shares that she is still plays awesome gigs with her music partner of 40 years, and prominently has a few guitars sitting out to pick up and play when she has time.

The more time I spent getting to know my new hair stylist, the more the storytelling unraveles. Storytelling in itself is an expressive art, and what an interesting life Libby Miner has lived! She got to experience two different cultures during the 1950's and 1960s, growing up as what she describes as a "half Brit, half American kid, moving from her childhood home in Yorkshire England to Willoughby, Ohio when she was 5 years old. Libby has taken in so much I her 72 year old life. She moved to California with her family at 8 years old, and said that she and

her older brothers left their British accents behind, fulfilling her dream of becoming a “California kids.” Before the Beatles exploded on the American music scene, Elvis Presley, The Beach Boys, Buddy Holly, Frankie Avalon, Patsy Cline were among the main stream music listened to by young people. (Well, the Beatles changed that forever, especially for Libby!) Between her travels during adolescent age, into her adult years, raising kids, riding horses, being a paralegal, to changing her to career as a hair artist, Libby has had quite the awesome life. She has had the opportunity to meet and connect with riveting people in the music industry, and connecting with ME, Emily from the burbs! Just kidding. But seriously -- from iconic bands whose music defined the 1960s, to talented artists who are linked to the Beatles’ community, these moments and relationships were all laced with kindness. I like to think that they had an impact on Libby's gracious personality. Hearing these stories has meant a lot to me. I always dreamed of going to California during my life. Additionally, I fantasize about what it must have been like during the rise of my favorite 60’s artists, such as The Beach Boys and The Beatles. Libby may not call herself a storyteller intentionally, or perhaps not in even in the way she is as a musician or hairstylist, regardless, her knack for passing on treasured stories make my visits so special.