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Here, There And Everywhere

As well as dealing with contracts, tax matters and various company administrative affairs, there were concerns over aspects of the Beatles' lives which required attention. The secrecy over Paul's whereabouts when he went on holiday, awkwardly for the preparations for the Northern Songs stock market flotation, was typical of the discretion which always had to be exercised over the movements of each of the four Beatles, and over all aspects of their private lives. The Press and Public Relations functions of NEMS Enterprises were exercised in two contrasting directions: Tony Barrow and the assistant who joined him sometime after I came into the picture, Keith Howell, had to operate in two opposing ways so far as their Beatles-related activities were concerned. On the one hand, they had to issue information by way of press releases and personal contacts with journalists about the Boys' professional activities. They had likewise to ensure to the best of their abilities that published information concerning tours, broadcasts, record releases and so forth was accurate – a difficult task, as I would soon realise, after reading endless stories in the music press and elsewhere which were simply made up and bore no relation to the facts.

On the other hand, Tony, Keith and everyone else at NEMS who might have knowledge of the Beatles' private lives and activities, including myself, had to exercise the utmost discretion when asked by outsiders about any such details. Brian Epstein, too, who generally

enjoyed his contacts with the press and got great pleasure in making announcements about the Beatles' and sometimes his own plans, was totally discreet about their private lives and activities.

Ringo was going to get married, his fiancée being a nice girl from Liverpool, Maureen Cox, formerly a hairdresser. It was common knowledge that they had been engaged for sometime and they were clearly in love. Some snide sophisticates in London had sniggered at their insistence on always sitting side by side when with others in restaurants or at dinner in friends' houses. When the date for their wedding was decided on, in February 1965, Brian helped to plan the affair like a military operation. I was particularly intrigued by the detail that even the name of the London Hotel where Maureen's parents, Mr and Mrs Cox, were to stay when they came from Liverpool for the wedding, was kept a secret: the press were not to know even this. More important for the newlyweds' happiness was maintaining secrecy over their honeymoon destination, and it was a fact that the newspapers had reporters waiting at stations and airports to try to find out where they would be heading, the West Indies being the favorite bet. The actual honeymoon venue was far less exotic: after the civil ceremony at Caxton Hall, London, at which Brian was best man, Ringo and his bride drove down to the quiet South Coast resort of Hove, which in the winter particularly is lacking in any glamour and is lived in mainly by a retired middle-class population. Brian's friend and lawyer, David Jacobs, had a house there which he used as a weekend retreat and he had kindly offered it to Ringo for a few days. The press were well and truly flummoxed. In fact, the house, which I visited several times myself as a guest of David Jacobs, was surprisingly glamorous inside. Behind a typically suburban exterior, David had had a rear extension built which was all white wood and mirrored glass, with a long bar taking up the whole of one wall. He entertained his show business friends and clients there a great deal. For the new Mrs Starkey it was a not inappropriate foretaste of her future surroundings and lifestyle.

During 1965 I became more directly involved in the activities of the Beatles. Their first film, 'A Hard Day's Night', had been a smash hit, and the American production company, United Artists, was anxious to follow it up. In view of the Beatles' increased fees for the second film, Jim Isherwood had devised a scheme to protect, at least in part, their film income from the excesses of British taxation. A vital ingredient of this was that much of the new film, 'Help!', should be shot abroad. This was agreed, and the Bahamas and Austria were the chosen locations. A former partner of Bryce Hanmer Isherwood, Dr Walter Strach, had recently taken up residence in Nassau, Bahamas, principally to assist in schemes involving offshore earnings of the firm's clients, and his help was sought for the Beatles. An entirely legal scheme was devised which involved substantial amounts of the Beatles' earnings from the film being paid to an account over which they had in fact no personal control, the money being held in trust for them. I was personally rather dubious about this, but everyone else, Brian included, was content with the arrangements, which in the event resulted in no loss to the Boys.

When the filming moved to Austria I accompanied Brian, the Beatles and the film people on the special plane to Salzburg, which had been chartered by the production company. There Brian and I occupied a large, two-bedroomed suite in the best hotel with stunning views on the Austrian Alps. It is true that most filming involves, principally it seems, endless waiting around on the part of the actors and everyone else, apart from the technicians. During some of the waiting time on location I fell into conversation with the actress Eleanor Bron who was appearing in 'Help!', and we agreed that it was a great pity that the filming schedule did not permit us time to leave the area where the shooting was taking place for long enough to visit the Mozarteum in Salzburg. I could have gone by myself but it would have been more fun with her. I was reminded of this agreeable encounter when, some years later, I spent a few months working with Eleanor Bron's brother, a music publisher in London for whose

father Dick James had worked with after ceasing to be a singer. Small world, especially in show business.

I visited the 'Help!' filming once again with Brian after the production returned to Twickenham Studios, just outside London. We took some LP records which Brian had promised the director of the film, Richard Lester. They were in the boot of the Bentley, and when Brian's chauffeur took them out and handed them to Dick Lester he eyed the car and said "Thanks very much, but I'd rather keep the package they came in". It was Dick Lester's innovative style of filming the Beatles running and jumping during performances of their songs in 'A Hard Day's Night' that, widely imitated, started the sophisticated style of performances which became common. Another first, set by and around the Beatles.

In the studio they were filming a scene in 'Help!' which involved Ringo traveling in a lift. This had been specially constructed on the set and Ringo got in and out of it more times than I could count until the scene was satisfactorily in the can. There was once again much waiting about and boredom. Filming is not much fun.

Around the same time I paid my first visit to the EMI Studios where the Beatles were recording – as it happened, the song 'Help!'. Their producer, George Martin, was in control. Whereas the finished recording of a pop song may last for only three or four minutes, recording it can take many hours, and it certainly did for the Beatles. On this occasion I was there for about an hour and a half, during which the song must have been performed – and taped – at least a dozen times. Often the positioning of the microphones had to be altered, or the actual performance by one or more of the Beatles was unsatisfactory, either to George Martin or to John Lennon, who was the leader, certainly on this particular recording. Finally, it seemed that everything was just right, with a perfect performance. But George Martin demanded that they take a rest and do it again, since by that time, he said, they had lost their freshness and attack. I left them to

it, realizing again the demands and time that successful performance, of both films and records, requires.

I came to know and like both George Martin and his wife Judy. He had been a salaried producer on the staff of EMI Records when he signed the Beatles and started producing their records. When they became a huge success and the mainstay of EMI he was still on his staff salary, so he asked for a share in the income from the Beatles' recordings. This was refused and he decided to leave, but with the knowledge, confirmed by Brian and the Boys, that they would retain him and no one else as their producer for all future recordings. As an independent producer, then a rarity, he was now able to negotiate the percentage which he required from his former employers. George shortly afterwards set up a production company together with three other successful record producers, who likewise left their former positions as employees of record companies. He thereby set a precedent for record producers, who today frequently enjoy percentages not dissimilar from those paid to the recording artists themselves. As with the setting up of Northern Songs, the handling of the Beatles' affairs paved the way for greater rewards for the artistic, as opposed to the administrative, side of the business.

Despite his devotion to the production of the Beatles' recordings, to which he contributed so vastly, and in spite of his genuine liking and admiration for them as people and musicians, George Martin occasionally became exasperated at their behavior, particularly when they were late for recording sessions or when they ignored – for a time – his advice. Once, over a convivial lunch, which happened to follow a frustrating session with the Boys, he burst out to me “Sometimes, when a reporter asks me for a quote on what the Beatles are really like, I'm tempted to answer: they're still the same stupid arrogant bastards they always were”. But this was a very rare outburst. For the most part, they made an excellent team of five in the studio.



**GEOFFREY ELLIS CHATS TO GEORGE HARRISON IN THE NEMS OFFICE,
WHILE JOHN LENNON LOOKS OUT OF THE WINDOW**



A vast amount of fan mail for the Beatles was received at the NEMS offices and it was sometimes difficult to sort out genuine business letters from the sacks of mail delivered nearly everyday. As well as letters obviously addressed by kids to the Beatles or to an individual Beatle, some fan letters were disguised as business letters, typically, and most often from America, by having typed envelopes addressed to Mr Brian Epstein, the contents being a request to pass on an enclosed envelope to the desired recipient. All fan letters were passed over to the dedicated Fan Club staff in their separate, scruffy office about a mile away from NEMS. Fan mail virtually never reached the Beatles, but the Fan Club sent out material to correspondents which included photographs of the Beatles either with overprinted signatures or, I regret to say, signatures forged by various members of NEMS's and the Fan Club's staff, some of whom became quite expert at this task. Those fans who joined the Club, as with its American counterpart, were charged a small subscription which did not cover the full cost of the operation; the net cost was charged to the Beatles as a promotional expense.

Occasionally, a random selection of a few fan letters, which came from all over the world, was brought to me to read. Even more occasionally, I took some action as a result of comments by a writer. An instance was a letter – I think there was more than one in similar vein – from a fan in America protesting at the sale there of post-card sized photos of the Beatles sitting and standing on the Stars and Stripes. This, it seemed, was an insult to the flag (and certainly would not have been allowed in the States). I took the trouble to write back, apologizing on the Beatles' behalf and assuring the writer that no offence had been intended. Presumably, the photograph had been taken with some idea of emphasizing the closeness and affection the Boys felt for America.

Sometimes mistakes were made in sorting the mail. In the spring of 1965 one of the NEMS staff came into my office in a late afternoon with four brown envelopes, one each addressed to Mr John Lennon, Mr Paul McCartney, Mr George Harrison and Mr Richard Starkey. These had been thought to be fan mail and had languished for a few weeks in a sack of letters waiting to be taken over to the fan club. However, someone had spotted that they looked like official letters, similar to those from the Income Tax authorities. In fact, they contained identical letters from the Prime Minister's office informing each of the Beatles that Her Majesty The Queen had been graciously pleased to accept the Prime Minister's recommendation that she should confer on him membership of the most honorable Order of the British Empire; in other words, make each one an MBE. The letters requested acknowledgement to 10 Downing Street with acceptance or otherwise by a date which I noted to my dismay was the next day.

The Beatles were still busy in the EMI recording studios in Abbey Road and it was an article of faith at NEMS – in fact Brian Epstein's strict instructions – that they were not to be interrupted for any reason while recording. Brian himself was out of town at the time, but I decided that this needed prompt action and had someone take the letters over to the studio right away. I heard nothing further that day, and knew that, since they nearly always worked far into the night, the boys would probably not get to the studio and start work until the next afternoon. I spent that day in suspense until the acknowledgements of the prime ministerial letters came back to me, duly signed by John, Paul, George and Ringo. I dropped everything else and drove straight to 10 Downing Street, about two miles away through rush hour traffic. I was able to drive right up to the doorway of the Prime Minister's residence (the iron gates at the opening of the street from Whitehall were only installed about twenty years later against the threat of IRA bombs) and handed in the Beatles' acceptances just before the deadline.

The awards, initially to be kept secret, were duly announced in the Queen's Birthday Honors in June. The announcement created a predictable furor, and the Beatles subsequently received their insignia at an investiture by the Queen at Buckingham Palace amid immense publicity, most, though not all, of it approving. Brian was disappointed, as he confessed to me and other intimates, that he was not honored himself and was not consoled by Paul McCartney's labored joke, later repeated to Brian by Princess Margaret, that in this case MBE stood for Mister Brian Epstein.

Brian had indeed become something of a celebrity. He decided that the modern flat he lived in was no longer suitable and bought an early nineteenth century house in Chapel Street, Belgravia. He engaged a fashionable decorator, Kenneth Partridge, to give it an elegant period look and greatly enjoyed buying suitable antique furniture, and choosing fabrics and color schemes. The result was a remarkably attractive interior in which he installed a Spanish couple, Antonio and Maria, as butler, always in black coat, and cook. His chauffeur, always in uniform when on duty, lived not far away and tended the maroon Rolls Royce limousine with darkened windows for which Brian had exchanged the Bentley. The L-shaped drawing room on the first floor was particularly elegant, with an eighteenth century portrait of a lady holding a peach on the wall facing the fireplace, and two full-length windows overlooking the street. The 'L' part of the room had fitted bookshelves and, the house being at the end of a row, a side window looking on to the entrance to the mews at the rear. The room was comfortable too, with chairs and sofas placed for easy conversation.

Brian loved to entertain in the house, and one of his first parties was given for the trumpeter Herb Alpert and his Tijuana Brass group. These big, brash American musicians seemed quite overawed by the splendor of this private home and impressed by Brian's own elegance and charm. They were also impressed by the presence of

the Beatles. Another occasion I remember was a dinner party for six, three of the guests being Sir David Webster, the General Administrator of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden (an old acquaintance of both Brian and myself from the time when he had been General Manager of the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra), the lawyer David Jacobs and myself. Brian decided that we needed some younger faces as well, so invited two others, one of whom – I forget the other – was Tommy Nutter, who was just starting out as a tailor independently; he soon became quite a star of the Sixties, dressing pop stars and actors as well as the rich and fashionable in his Savile Row premises.

Some months later, George Harrison married Pattie Boyd, a ravishingly pretty model whom he had first met on the set of 'A Hard Day's Night', in which she appeared as an extra. Brian gave a dinner party at Chapel Street for them after their wedding at which the other guests were Paul McCartney and his girlfriend Jane Asher, George and Judy Martin, Wendy Hanson and myself. Paul had been the only other Beatle to attend the wedding. After the usual excellent dinner, and over coffee and brandy in the drawing room, we played some silly word games, one of which involved each person confessing what his or her idea of heaven was. I forget most of the responses, including my own, but two stay in my memory: Brian's, who said that heaven for him would be having a record at number one in the charts all the time (which I thought rather sad); and George's, who simply said "Having a lot of sex, all the time". Pattie blushed prettily.

Brian's relaxation was not all at home. From time to time, following our practice of long ago, he and I would seek out a new restaurant to sample, not always in the West End, but sometimes out of the center in, say, Hampstead or Islington. A passion of his was gambling and he became a well-known figure in London's fashionable casinos and gaming-houses. Very occasionally I accompanied him, but this would only be for the preceding dinner which we would enjoy: at

Crockford's, then in Carlton House Terrace, and at the elegant Clermont Club in its William Kent house in Berkeley Square above Annabel's night-club, we would dine sumptuously without a bill being presented, Brian being a valued client in the gaming rooms, before he ascended to try his luck at roulette and the other games of chance. I would soon slip away as gambling holds no attraction for me.

Occasionally, Brian's reputation could cause embarrassment. We were dining together once in the Mirabelle restaurant, a favorite of his, when the late film star, Laurence Harvey, who had been dining noisily in a large party at a table close by, lurched past on his way to the door saying loudly to his companions while looking at Brian "I didn't know they let queers in here nowadays". This was a few years before the legalizing of homosexuality between consenting adults, and although London society and show business was generally quite tolerant, such boorishness was sometimes apparent. On this occasion it came particularly ill from Laurence Harvey, whose own sexuality was said to be ambivalent. Brian was unfazed.

When Brian became well-known, I once asked him if he had ever considered changing his name from Brian Samuel Epstein. All I had in mind was that he might have wished to avoid any anti-Semitic prejudice in his progress to success and fame. He was horrified and said that it had never crossed his mind; and there is probably less prejudice of this sort in show business, and many very successful impresarios, producers and agents are Jewish, the most notable example being the Grades (although they did change their name, from Winogradski). Brian did not in fact suffer from anti-Semitism and was proud of his fairly orthodox background, although not himself regularly practising his religion.

There is no doubt that Brian felt a great attraction for John Lennon. John was of course aware of this and would tease Brian about his homosexuality, sometimes cruelly. The story has been related elsewhere of how, when Brian was preparing his somewhat premature

autobiography in 1964, he asked the Beatles what they thought he should call it. 'Queer Jew', John shot back. (Brian eventually settled on 'A Cellarful of Noise', referring to his discovery of the Beatles in the Cavern Club in Liverpool; 'A Cellarful of Boys', another wag, this time not John Lennon, called it.) Personally, I discount the stories of a physical relationship between them. Brian was too shy, especially with John, to take such an initiative himself, and John was assertively heterosexual.

I did not particularly like John Lennon. I realize that saying so may well incur the wrath – possibly leading to book burning – of the thousands upon thousands of fans who, particularly since his murder in 1980, have virtually deified him. I admire his work – his song writing, especially of the songs he wrote with Paul McCartney, and to some extent his authorship and draughtsmanship – although I think his simple line drawings are the work of a very minor talent indeed. But his scorn of the fans, his sharp tongue and his conscious nurturing of his 'working-class hero' image, despite coming from a respectable lower-middle-class background, made him into a figure which I found deeply unsympathetic. He was, to use an overworked phrase, too clever for his own good, as he no doubt found out when he made his famous remark about the Beatles being "more popular than Jesus". Although the statement was misunderstood, particularly in America, it proved damaging and could have been disastrous. He should have known better.

John's treatment of his first wife, Cynthia, was in my view unkind and eventually beyond a doubt ungenerous. She was pushed into the background from the start. When I first met her, in the Plaza Hotel suite in New York on the Beatles' first American trip, she was being kept behind the scenes, since Brian had persuaded John that to reveal publicly at that stage that he was married would put the teenage fans off him. John could have resisted this, since by then the Beatles' popularity was so immense that virtually nothing could have

damaged them; and there were after all three other Beatles, all of them then single. (Possibly, Brian was also influenced by his feelings for John and didn't like him being married.) Cynthia's presence on that American visit was an exception. I liked the shy, vulnerable Cynthia, who happened to share the same birthday as me. She was generally left at home while the Beatles were on tour, leaving John free to womanize along with the others. When they finally divorced, leaving John free to marry Yoko Ono, Cynthia received a reported settlement of £100,000, no vast sum for a Beatle by then. Following John's death, his widow Yoko continues to receive the income from the songs he wrote and recordings he made when married to her – generally of lesser quality than the Lennon and McCartney songs and Beatle recordings – and also, much more lucratively, all John's shares of royalties from all the earlier works, written and recorded, while Cynthia was John's long-suffering wife. Yoko is as a result said to be one of the richest women in America. Life, as well as John, seems to have been unfair to Cynthia.

As to John and Yoko's posturing for peace, in and out of bags, these seem to me to have been frankly ludicrous.

John Lennon was never rude to me, or to my knowledge spiteful about me, notwithstanding that I was one of the 'suits' whom as a group he despised. Indeed, on one occasion he was, as we shall see, distinctly sympathetic to me. But I cannot overcome my distaste for his memory. I found my opinion somewhat vindicated by John's and Cynthia's son, Julian, who has enjoyed a moderately successful career as a pop artist himself. In an interview published in the Daily Telegraph in May, 1998, he expressed his opinion that his father was a hypocrite who could talk out loud about peace and love but was unable to show it to his wife Cynthia or to himself.

To revert to Brian, his London life was outwardly respectable, and he had become a well-known man-about-town, sought after by hostesses and admired for his style and charm as well as for his good looks. He was seeking at this time to extend his interests beyond management of the Beatles. Indeed, even before I joined him at NEMS he had several acts under contract: as well as Gerry and the Pacemakers, Billy J. Kramer and the Dakotas and Cilla Black, all of whom were from Liverpool and were stars in Britain, there were Cliff Bennett and the Rebel Rousers, The Fourmost, Sounds Incorporated, Michael Haslam, The Big Three, Tommy Quickly (borne Quigley) and Paddy, Klaus and Gibson. There were also, for a short period, the Moody Blues; although a star group already, their period with NEMS was not happy on either side. All these acts were signed up with a good deal of fanfare, with Brian proclaiming his devotion to the interests of each one. Naturally, they all hoped that his magic touch would transform them into stars of the Beatles' magnitude. Clearly this was impossible, even if NEMS had been a much larger, more professional organization, and if Brian had devoted as much time and effort to each act as he did to the Beatles – an absolute impossibility. So a few acts fell by the wayside, and the others for the most part jogged along, with at least the aura of Brian Epstein as their nominal manager to comfort them. Brian himself eventually realized this, and that other members of the hard-pressed NEMS staff were themselves carrying out most of the functions of the personal management which were nominally his. When, therefore, he contracted an unknown folk group called 'The Silkie', his last signing, he specifically named Alistair Taylor as their personal manager rather than himself. Alistair was delighted and carried out his functions with an enthusiasm that was not matched by much success for the group.

Exceptions to the general rule were Gerry Marsden and Billy Kramer (William Howard Ashton to his family and friends). Gerry, to this day, maintains a punishing schedule of performances worldwide, mostly on the international cabaret circuit, and is a rich man.

Brian did not make life easier for himself by the way he lived. Discounting even the problems he made for himself by his homosexuality, and his resultant guilt feelings at concealing this wherever possible, his late night gambling and socializing resulted in increasing unreliability in business activity. His private office in Hille House, Stafford Street, near Bond Street and Piccadilly, was organized by Wendy Hanson, his Personal Assistant, and his secretary, Joanne Newfield. Wendy's own secretary, also installed in Hille House, was Jody Haines; she had come to the notice of Brian and the Boys by being one of the 'Carnation Girls', two fans who turned up with carnations at as many Beatles' concerts as possible and politely handed them in. Joanne Newfield later married the Bee Gee's drummer, Colin Petersen, and moved with him to Australia. Wendy, Joanne and Jody formed an intensely loyal team to Brian which covered up for him as far as humanly possible, making excuses when he was late, sometimes for important appointments and, increasingly frequently, when he did not turn up at all.

On one of my own first visits to Hille House for a meeting with Brian and Jim Isherwood we were discussing, as so often, the Beatles' tax affairs when a messenger arrived with an acetate from the EMI studios, where the boys had been recording the test pressing of the final version of a new single record, 'Yesterday'. Brian, who of course had heard the song many times during the sessions, insisted on playing it for the three of us to listen to. He pointed out that it was the first time a quartet of classical string players had performed as backing musicians on any pop record. I genuinely liked it – still do – despite not being an uncritical fan of all the Beatles' music. So did Jim, and we both made obvious comments to the effect that it would no doubt do well. How well I don't think even Brian could have envisaged then. Quite apart from the popularity of the Beatles' own recording, it swiftly became the most 'covered', that is, performed and recorded by other singers, record of all pop songs. It is also the most performed work in the USA controlled by BMI (Broadcast Music

Inc), one of the two major royalty-collecting organizations in America. In 1989, BMI presented Paul McCartney with a special award to mark an estimated five million performances in America. BMI's executives traveled to Paul's home for this purpose as he could not attend the luncheon in London, at which I was present, when Yoko Ono graciously accepted John's award for his share in the song, widely known to have been largely composed by Paul alone. However, in the days before the split, it had been agreed between them that they would share jointly the credit and the royalty income from all their songs. Many of them were in fact genuinely joint compositions. Then, in late 1993, I was at a dinner at the Dorchester Hotel in London given by BMI at which 'Yesterday' was honored for six million American performances. This time Paul did attend with his then wife Linda to receive his award, and I told him I hoped I would be around to see him get something for the ten millionth performance.

I always Paul found very agreeable, and he can indeed be charming and co-operative. Wendy Hanson, who spent some time on tour with the Beatles, found him what she termed a typical Gemini; that is, charming and difficult by turns. He had displayed his willful side when he left the country on holiday when he was needed in Goodman Derrick's office in London to sign the Northern Songs flotation papers. He can be waspish, too. When he visited the PRS offices where I was working in the early 1990s, he charmed the delighted clerical workers by posing for snapshots with them; but when I recommended him on that occasion to read Ray Coleman's recently published biography of Brian Epstein, saying that it was a serious book "not just sex, drugs and rock'n'roll", he riposted "But that's just what Brian's life was". Now of course Sir Paul, he conducts his life with commendable discretion and relative modesty, despite being the ultimate pop multi-millionaire. It is a curious fact that when he married his first wife, the American Linda Eastman, many people in the press and elsewhere, knowing of her monied background,

assumed that she was a member of the family that founded Eastman Kodak. Not a bit of it: her father, a prominent New York music business attorney, had changed his family's name – from Epstein.