

Cynthia Lennon 1939 – 2015 “Just smile and love but do not cry”

John Lennon once said "As usual, there is a great woman behind every idiot". For a decade Cynthia Lennon was that great woman for John.

Cynthia Powell was born in Blackpool on 10th September 1939. She was the youngest of three children of Charles and Lillian Powell. The family moved to Hoylake on the Wirral during World War Two. Cyn, as she became known, was always an artistic child and at 11 she won an art prize in a Liverpool Echo competition. At 12 she began attending Liverpool's Junior Art School. "I had a fabulous childhood" she once said. Her father died of lung cancer when she was just 17 - "After that it was all change". At 18 she enrolled at Liverpool College of Art. It was there that she first met the love of her life, John Winston Lennon.

A shy girl, Cynthia was frightened of John at first. He would pick on her, calling her "Miss Prim" or "Miss Hoylake" and saying "Quiet please! No dirty jokes; it's Cynthia" whenever she walked into the room. In spite of all that she soon fell for him and their relationship began in the autumn of 1958.

John and Cyn were in love. The 8-page handmade Christmas card John gave her in 1958 is an everlasting testimony of their love. "I love you, I love you" he wrote over and over again. Cyn dyed her hair blonde for John - a habit she kept all her life. She watched as John and his friends lived their dream of becoming famous rockers. She took a back seat for most of the journey but was always



there for John, loving him and supporting him. After leaving the College of Art she began training as an Art Teacher but failed her exams. Around this time she fell pregnant with John's son. Cynthia Powell became Mrs. Lennon on 23rd August 1962 at Mount Pleasant Register office in Liverpool. John Charles Julian Lennon, known as Julian, was born in April 1963. Their marriage wasn't perfect - "I used to be cruel to my woman" John

sang in 1967. However, Cyn stood by John through thick and thin. She was by his side in 1964 when The Beatles went to America for the first time. She was there for him when touring became too much. He wrote pages and pages to her while on tour. In one letter that ran seven pages he wrote "In between the laughs there is such a drop". She was with him when he took Acid for the first time. She was with him when Beatles manager Brian Epstein died. She was with him when The Beatles went to study Transcendental Meditation in India. John never dedicated any songs to her - "Macho Northern men didn't do that in those days" she said. However, she was clearly on his mind when he wrote his early love songs.



John's affair with Yoko Ono began in 1966 and the Lennon's divorced in 1968. Cynthia married Roberto Vassanini in 1970. "It lasted three years, and I was on my own for two" she later said. They divorced in 1973. Cynthia and Julian then moved to Ruthin in North Wales where she opened a restaurant called Oliver's Bistro. In 1976 Cynthia married for a third time.

Her husband John Twist was an engineer from Lancashire. She published her first memoir *A TWIST OF LENNON* in 1978. The book tells the story of her life with John Lennon and includes several of her beautiful and sometimes funny line drawings, as well as several of his own poems. She separated from John Twist in 1981 and they divorced in 1983. Cynthia then changed her name back to Lennon by deed poll. She began a relationship with

Liverpudlian chauffeur Jim Christie in 1981. The couple lived in Cumbria before moving to the Isle of Man where she opened a restaurant called *Bunter's*. Cynthia also designed the terracotta reliefs outside Cavern Walks shopping centre in Liverpool which opened in 1984. In 1985 she designed clothes for Jeff Banks of Warehouse and the Cantona textile firm. In 1988 she released her own perfume named *Woman* and in 1989 she opened a restaurant in London named *Lennon's*. In 1995 she released her one and only single, 'Those Were The Days' b/w 'Walkin' In The Rain', though it failed to chart. She separated with Jim in 1998 and moved to Normandy.

An exhibition of her drawings and paintings were displayed at KDK Gallery in London in 1999. In 2002 she married night club owner Noel Charles. Noel passed away in March 2013. Her second biography, *JOHN*, was published in 2005 and is a must-read for any John Lennon fan. In 2009 she worked with son Julian to open the *White Feather Exhibition* in Liverpool. They unveiled *The John Lennon Peace Monument* in Liverpool in 2010. In 2011 she recorded a version of *The Beatles 'In My Life'* for David Barratt's



project *The Beatles Complete On Ukulele*, released in 2012 on "Rubber Soul". David Barratt told *The British Beatles Fan Club*: "Her simple performance on the song transformed the iconic piece into something truly her own. She wore her celebrity gently and lightly. Cynthia Lennon was grace personified and will be missed."

After a short battle with cancer, Cynthia Lennon passed away on 1st April 2015 at her home in Mallorca, Spain. Her son Julian was at her bedside throughout. She was 75. Tributes poured in from those who knew her, including statements from Paul McCartney: "I will always have great memories of our times together". Ringo Starr: "God bless Cynthia". Yoko Ono: "I'm very saddened by Cynthia's death. She was a great person and a wonderful mother to Julian" and Olivia and Dhani Harrison: "May God bless Cynthia always".

By Danny Friar

