



# First Person: The Curious Statue of John Lennon in Havana, Ham Martin's "Talk Radio," and Games for a Long Winter Ahead

(<https://www.northcountrypublicradio.org/news/story/428-person-the-curious-statue-of-john-lennon-in-havana-ham-martin-s-talk-radio-and-games-for-a-long-winter-ahead>)

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▶ Mitch Teich

On the December edition of First Person, we start with a couple of creative ventures with interesting backstories - how a statue of John Lennon in Havana inspired an Ottawa singer-songwriter; and how a class at St. Lawrence University fifty years ago kindled a life-long interest in radio. Plus, a preview of the January episode of North Country Bookmarks, and some suggestions to broaden your board game horizons in the coming year.

## "I wonder what John Lennon would think about all this?"

Lloyd Frost (<https://lloydfrost.com/home>) is something of a Renaissance man. Mild-mannered Ottawa psychiatrist by day, he also has produced award-winning documentary films, and recorded an album. His Canadian citizenship also meant he could travel to Cuba easily. One vacation there turned into more, and before long, the place piqued his creative interest. The initial result was his song and short film, "In Everyone's Eyes," in which he sought to understand the resilience of generations of Cuban people, even as so many aspects of their lives have been controlled by the regime.

As he was filming the music video, he visited the statue of John Lennon that sits on a bench in a Havana park named for the late Beatles great. Lennon never visited Cuba, and Beatles music was banned there until the 1980s. "I think the line I had," Frost recalls, "was that I look at the statue, and Carl [the videographer] pulls back, and I say, 'I wonder what [John Lennon] would think about all this?'" But the footage ended up on the cutting room floor, and didn't surface again until this year, when it inspired Frost's new song, "John Lennon's In the Rain."

The song was released on December 8th, the fortieth anniversary of Lennon's murder in New York City. Frost says he wishes that people listening to his song today hope that Lennon is at peace now. "Maybe - in sort of a naive way - perhaps people will say, 'maybe I



([https://www.northcountrypublicradio.org/news/images/johnny\\_bench.jpg](https://www.northcountrypublicradio.org/news/images/johnny_bench.jpg))

Musician Lloyd Frost sits next to the statue of John Lennon in Havana, Cuba. Photo courtesy Lloyd Frost

can be a little bit peaceful and less aggressive with the people in my life.”

► Ottawa Singer-songwriter Lloyd Frost

## How a College Class Fifty Years Ago Sparked a Lifelong Interest in Radio

Ham Martin is also a Renaissance man. Retired to the coast of Maine, he pursues oil painting (<http://www.rowinginoil.com/>), and woodwork, and... he writes novels. His latest, *Talk Radio* (<https://www.shermans.com/book/9781684336227>), has an interesting hook. It's written almost entirely in dialogue - calls to a small-town radio call-in show. The plot follows Vivien, a newcomer to her fictional Maine village, who assumes the job of talk-show host following the abrupt departure of the previous host. We're introduced to the quirky people who are regular callers to the show, some of whom are more welcoming to Vivien than others.

It's treading on familiar ground for Martin (we're tempted to call him "Ham Radio"), who hosted a similar talk show for a time in a small community in Connecticut. But it was a class he took around a half-century ago at St. Lawrence University that really piqued his radio interest. "I was a poor student," Martin admits, "but I did start to find my stride by my junior year when I found the things that interested me." One of those things was Richard Hutto's class, formally titled the History of Radio and Television, but known to its students as "Radio and Tube."

"I loved this course," Martin says. "I wasn't even trying hard to do well in it, but I just loved it. And at the end of two terms, I got a snail mail letter at the off-campus apartment where I was living. And it was from Richard Hutto, the teacher, and he told me that I had been the outstanding student of the class for that year." Martin says he's carried that kindness in his heart ever since. "I hope that if he's up in heaven, looking down on us, he'll know that Ham Martin wrote a book on talk radio."

► Ham Martin, author, "Talk Radio"

## North Country Bookmarks Preview

North Country Bookmarks ([nopr.org/bookmarks](http://nopr.org/bookmarks)) host Jessica Lawrence joins us with a preview of January's episode of North Country Bookmarks, which focuses on mental health titles.

► Jessica Lawrence, host, North Country Bookmarks