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LONG TIME GONE

Was that really Bob Dylan? Absolutely, Maureen

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Correspondent

Back when my writings appeared only between the powder-blue covers of a book with a girl in a poodle skirt on the cover, a fellow named Bob Zimmerman appeared at my school. I can still see him in my mind: skinny, very skinny, with a narrow nose and black hair slicked back on the sides with a wave that fell across his brow. He was never without his guitar; and there was something exciting about him.

Sherwood School for Boys and Girls was a private kindergarten-through-grade-12 school in the well-to-do Essex County town of Glen Ridge. Most years, there were only my friend Cyncie (Cynthia) and me in our grade. We earned awards for table manners and rode horses at recess. It was the kind of eccentric place parents might send their kids to bone up on difficult subjects or to get tested for entrance into exclusive programs at other schools. So it wasn't unusual to find strange students popping up in class any time during the year.

So when a boy named Bob Zimmerman appeared out of nowhere just long enough to arouse my curiosity and offer me one of his two creme-filled devil's food cupcakes before disappearing again, it wasn't all that noteworthy — except of course, for the cupcake — until one day while reading about superstar musician Bob Dylan, I learned that he started out this life as Bob Zimmerman.

Since then I've scanned the numerous biographies of Dylan's life, hoping to see Sherwood School in the index, and e-mailed into the abyss of cyberspace with one simple burning question: Can you tell me if Bob Dylan ever went to Sherwood School? All in vain. Then, one day a friend handed me a newspaper article about an Essex County couple who befriended the legendary folk artist Woody Guthrie, who at the time was hospitalized in the area, taking him home to their place on weekends. It was at their home that a young Bob Dylan visited and developed his life-changing friendship with Guthrie. Finally, I had another connection between the Midwest-born Dylan and my Essex County roots.

Alas, the trail went cold after that — until I read that Bob Dylan was coming to Asbury Park to perform at Convention Hall on Aug. 13. My mind began to race exploring the possibilities — a backstage pass? Perhaps even an interview with the man.

But this column is about radio. How can I justify wanting to speak to Dylan? (I suddenly feel like my old colleague who once confessed to getting an assignment to interview then-Shadow Traffic's radio traffic reporter Donna Fiducia, because he really wanted to ask her out.) Worse yet, would they see me as a stalker?

Hurrah! Radio guru Jerry Del Colliano to the rescue. On June 27, Del Colliano started off his excellent blogspot with the incredible news that singer/songwriter Bob Dylan is now a radio program director. Could it be the same Bob Dylan — was this a trick? No trick, Bob Dylan has an XM Satellite radio show called "Theme Time Radio Hour" on XM's Deep Tracks channel at 10 a.m. Wednesdays. As they say on TV crime shows, this gives me the nexus to pursue Dylan professionally. Stay tuned, folks.

Maureen Nevin Duffy created and hosted "Asbury Radio — The Radio Voice of Asbury Park," a weekly public affairs talk show at the city's WYGG, 88.1FM station, for more than six years. Please send your comments and suggestions regarding Radio Somewhere to AsburyRadio@aol.com or 3 Deal Lake Court, Asbury Park, N.J. 07712.
