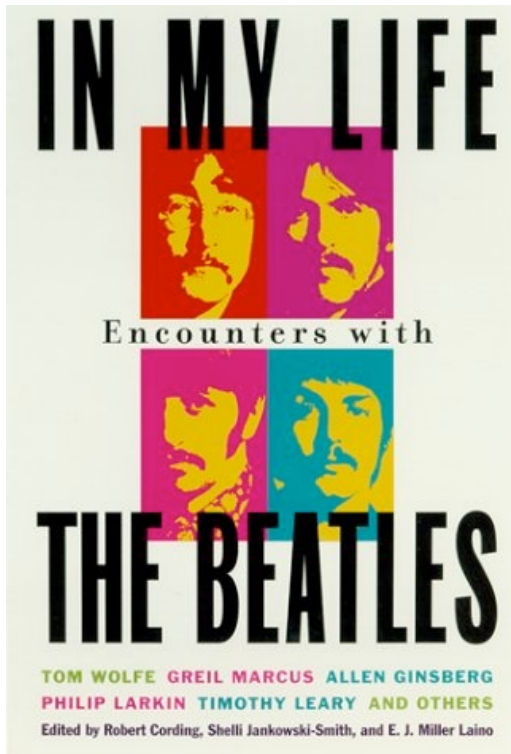




## The Ballad of Aunt Helen

by Timothy McCall, MD



My sister lifted the arm on the phonograph  
and the 45 with the green apple spun  
again and again. It was the summer  
after 8th grade and Aunt Helen  
was visiting us at the lake.

Diagnosed with her fifth cancer  
she'd left the Sisters of Charity,  
given up her black and white habit.  
*Christ you know it ain't easy*

John kept wailing.

I'd just bought the single  
at the five and dime in Hardwick.

We weren't trying to hurt  
her feelings but sacrilege  
is probably what she thought  
and never said. She just smiled  
that too-sweet smile, told us  
she loved us so much. Over and over  
the hi-fi hissed *The way things are goin'*  
*they're gonna crucify me.*



*This poem was published in the literary anthology In My Life: Encounters With the Beatles edited by Robert Cording, Shelli Jankowski-Smith and E. J. Miller Laino. Board-certified internist Timothy McCall, MD teaches Yoga As Medicine Seminars and Teacher Trainings worldwide. He is the medical editor of Yoga Journal and the best selling author of Yoga as Medicine. He runs www.MedicalVetting.com, a service that edits health-related books and articles for style, clarity and medical accuracy.*