

For a Few Hours I Escaped to a More Innocent Time in America

Editor's Note: Today's column is a departure from the usual. That's no accident. We've been bombarded recently with a lot of bad news. Depressing news. This column, I hope you'll agree, is a welcome, brief escape – as the headline indicates – to a more innocent time in this country. Let me know what you think.

I went to a concert recently to see and hear one of my all time favorite groups, the Beach Boys – or what's left of them. Several of the original Beach Boys have died; Brian Wilson, the one they call the “creative genius” isn't part of the band anymore. But Mike Love was still the front man, and he was great.

They sang all their hits, about little deuce coupes and 409s, about surfing safaris, and, of course, about girls. And, you know what? In all the songs the Beach Boys sang over all those years about girls, not one of those girls was ever called a bitch or a ho, or anything like that.

American culture has changed a lot since the Beach Boys came on the scene almost 60 years ago, and not always for the better. We're not that carefree anymore.

Before you call me naive, let me say that I know that nostalgia ain't what it use to be.

Yes, there was more discrimination back then. And the Beach Boys music wasn't about social justice or politics or the changes going on in America. That wasn't their thing. That was Bob Dylan's thing. He knew the times they were a changin' and wrote poetically about it. The Beach Boys, individually,

may have known it too, but their music was simply about good times. Their songs were about California Girls and Surfing USA, about Being True to Your School. If they sang about Vietnam or civil rights, I missed it.

It was good, for a few hours, to jump into the time machine and go back to the Beach Boys version of a more innocent time in our country.

For a while that night at the concert, there were no politics, no bickering, none of the polarization that is tearing this country apart. There'd be plenty of time for that when the music stopped playing.

The Beach Boys aren't for everybody. No music is. But as I say, I enjoyed the brief escape from the real world in which we now live – the one steeped in concoctions about collusion and non-stop talk about impeachment and wailing about all sorts of injustice, real or imagined. It's exhausting. I enjoyed the trip back to the seemingly untroubled past, even if it was only a musical facade masking a lot of what was going on during those turbulent 60s.

Like the girl who got her Daddy's T-bird and with the radio blasting cruised all over town: I had fun ... fun ... fun.