

Who In This Room Shared a Drink with Johnny Cash? (Memoir)

by Rick Rofihe

In 1960 when I was 10 years old, Johnny Cash mysteriously (to me) played the hockey rink in my small Canadian home-town of Bridgewater, Nova Scotia (population 5000). Other than that, where I grew up the only celebrity one could count on seeing was Santa Claus, and even that would be just once a year. (The actor Donald Sutherland—later Kiefer Sutherland's dad—also grew up in town, but of course was not a celebrity yet—though he was even then noticeable, unusual—and a nice guy.)

Ever since that concert in the rink back then, my much-older brother Barry Rofihe likes to ask "Who in this room shared a drink with Johnny Cash?"

The story goes, he was in the front row at Johnny's show at the rink, drinking rum straight from the bottle with his friends, and they passed it to Johnny who took a swig and passed it back. (Johnny's daughter Roseanne Cash says the re-tellings of her father's life are often exaggerated, which may be her way of reminding us to keep our "eyes wide open all the time".)

As for Donald Sutherland, it's turned out that he and I have each lived in the same two communities for much of both of our lives, the second of those places being New York City. Back in Bridgewater when I was a toddler and he—"Donnie"—was a tall teenager, he used to ride me around on his shoulders. I'd like to see him try it now.

