

ENTERTAINMENT

The real story about the Beatles fiasco

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MANILA, Philippines - "I am a big Beatle fan and when I heard they were being manhandled, I immediately ran to the airport and had it stopped." — **Madam Imelda Marcos**

On July 4, 1966, The Beatles performed two concerts at the Rizal Memorial stadium to at least 100,000 lucky Pinoys. I was there but outside the stadium grounds because I couldn't afford the P20 entrance to the concert. I contented myself with the faint inaudible sound of The Beatles drowned by hysterical screams of the fans. During that concert, The Beatles only performed 10 songs, which was less than 30 minutes and the opening acts that included the Reycards, Lemons 3, Aldeguer Dancers, Pilita Corrales and the Downbeats with Pepe Smith performed four times longer than The Beatles.

Flashback to July 3, 1966 when The Beatles first stepped on Philippine soil. Unbeknownst to them, the concert promoter Ramon Ramos committed to the

Former First Lady now Rep. Imelda Marcos being presented with a bouquet by Midas Hotel GM Angel Kanapi

Marcos family that they would eat lunch at Malacañang Palace (the official residence of the current Philippine President) as special guests of the first family. Because the arrangement wasn't made with Brian Epstein, The Beatles weren't able to attend to the disappointment of not only the First Family but also the cabinet secretaries, senators, congressmen and VIPs who were there to welcome them.

Apparently, The Beatles spent the afternoon leisurely boating in Manila Bay (back then, Manila Bay was pleasantly pollution-free and clear of human waste). Brian found out about it and attempted damage control but alas, the hurt has been done.

The two concerts the next day at the Rizal Memorial Stadium were staged successfully and without incident, but the following day when they were on the way to the airport all hell broke loose. Their security escort was gone, The Beatles had to carry their own gear and take a taxicab. All courtesies and VIP privileges were removed. Upon reaching the airport, no porters helped, the escalators were turned off so they had to lug their baggage up two flights of stairs where an angry crowd mobbed the entourage causing injury. To make matters worse, their flight got delayed due to customs officials and airport personnel hassling them. When The Beatles were finally allowed to leave, they swore never to return to the Philippines, which is a vow they have kept.

The souvenir program of The Beatles' Philippine concert on July 4, 1966

Being a big Beatle fan and an avid collector of their memorabilia, I have always wondered what the real score was. Was Mrs. Marcos really behind the unwelcome

treatment the Beatles were given upon departure as alleged by most books and Beatle historians? Although Mrs. Marcos is a personal friend and has graced my concerts and dinners, I never had the guts to ask her about the real score with The Beatles, thinking it was a taboo subject.

Over special *sushi*, which was created by Midas Hotel's Japanese chef Kimito Katagiri who used to work with Makati Shangri-La's Inagiku Restaurant and soon to oversee the operation of Midas Japanese restaurant, plus *Rib Eye Steak*, *Kare-Kare* and gourmet cheeses at the Midas Hotel coffee shop, I mustered all my guts and asked Mrs. Marcos the big question that has put me in quandary for decades: Did she have anything to do with The Beatles manhandling issue? I expected a negative reaction but I was pleasantly surprised when she reacted otherwise and started narrating about the incident. So after 45 years, Mrs. Marcos is setting the record straight with the following statements:

"Being a big fan of The Beatles, I made representation with the Philippine promoter to invite them to lunch at Malacañang Palace so that I can personally welcome them to our country together with my family and friends who are also big fans. Honestly, I was disappointed with their non-appearance but later understood that there was a miscommunication and bore no grudges.

"When I heard they were being manhandled at the airport on their departure, I immediately ran to the airport to have it stopped. I remember reprimanding the airport manager Mr. Willy Jurado.

"I would never dream of hurting the **Some of my Beatles memorabilia** world's No. 1 band. Whatever motivated the people to treat them that way was not my doing. They could have done it out of sympathy and I think it was wrong. I abhor violence."

Listening to her narration cleared the issue in my mind and I fully believe she had nothing to do with it at all. Logically speaking, had she professed anger and contemplated revenge, she could have had the concert cancelled and deported them outright but she didn't. What happened at the airport could have been sympathetic action from overzealous people who felt insulted by the snub and reacted accordingly.

Another factor that instigated the violence was how the press blew the issue out of proportion.

That's me with Mrs. Marcos and Mady

Knowing Mrs. Marcos personally and her advocacy for motherly love coupled with her love for music, The Beatles would have loved her had that lunch on July 3, 1966 happened. I'm positive about it because I've seen how she charmed my artists, from Air Supply, Matt Monroe Jr., John Ford Coley to Sir Cliff Richard, with whom she did a spontaneous duet over lunch. So there it is, after 45 years, the truth and I hope the issue against Mrs. Marcos is laid to rest. As we left Midas Café close to the witching hour, Mrs. Marcos expressed amazement at the quality and taste of the food at Midas Café.