

A WORLD OF BEE GEE LOVERS IN NEW YORK

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May 23, 2014-Mythology Tour Fan Party-New York

Being back home in New York was a thrill in itself, but I never imagined the scope of emotional blessings that were about to be shared on the day of Barry's New York concert. I should have had an inkling of how awesome the day would progress when I started out with breakfast at a local diner. My friend Debbi and I were entertained by our server, Roni, who has a blockbuster personality ("the Bee Gees are MY ERA") and a no-nonsense approach to waitressing. When prodded by a customer at an adjoining table to hurry with his coffee, Roni responded, "Keep your shorts on. I'm coming." Yes, I was back in New York where all was right with the world, and I felt that I could handle anything that came along the rest of the day.

With Roni in Wantagh



Now organizing a fan party is a challenge and a blessing in itself. One wants the fans to enjoy themselves and make great memories, but it's hard to know just what will happen or how people will interact. I chose Per Un Angelo Restaurant in the Jones Beach Hotel because of the location; but more importantly, because of Ellie the owner and the story behind the venue.

Ellie bought the restaurant 15 years ago, shortly after her 21-year-old daughter was killed in a hit and run car accident. Per Un Angelo means "for an angel" and is dedicated to her daughter. There are angels depicted in paintings, wall hangings, sculptures and knickknacks throughout the banquet rooms, most of them gifts from patrons. I hoped the angels were with us this day as Barry's fans started arriving for our gathering.

The first group to arrive included our Canadians and Marg from Toronto, who proudly wore her Bee Gee jeans jacket that all three brothers signed for her. Marg also has a license plate that reads GIBB 4U. No one will doubt where Marg's loyalty lies.



Marg wearing her autographed jacket

Then there was Beth, who first saw the Bee Gees perform in 1974 in Nanuet, New York at Theater Go Round. The opening act was Hall and Oates, and she was a giddy teen of 14.

When Debbi commented to Fanny about being impressed that she came all the way from London for the concert, Fanny elatedly replied, “Why not? It’s Barry Gibb.”

As more and more fans began to arrive, our group started to look like the United Nations. There were the “traveled the farthest” fans, including Temo from Chiba City, Japan, who has been a fan since 1971, our wonderful groups from Germany and Holland, (so happy to finally meet Anja), Fanny from London, JoAnn from Spain and Sally Ann from Grenada. Each person had a wonderful story to tell me. Sally Ann first heard Barry’s falsetto when she was 7-years-old and started collecting Bee Gee momentos when she got a book on Ebay and became “an addict collector”. It is interesting to note that the stories go back decades for most, and the non-American fans never wavered in their steadfast support of the brothers, even when there were years that American media rejected them. In a dramatic toast to all of the people representing other countries, Tom, who has always been a dedicated fan, saluted them and their loyalty. This prompted applause from everyone. I must give props to Tom as the most enthusiastic fan of the day, since he brought in Bee Gee music and hired a DJ to play for us post-concert so fans could go and sing karaoke, which turned out to be great fun. Tom’s devotion goes back to 1977 when he was 9 and heard the brothers singing on the radio while driving in the car with his mom.



Tom toasting all the fans who are visiting the U.S.

The group included two men who became composers because of the brothers' inspiration. Troy was 14 when he first heard Bee Gee music and told me, "I cried when I heard "How Deep Is Your Love" and is now a musician and composer. Georges first saw the brothers on the "One" tour and "became motivated to compose". He was 10 years-old. Sadly, he told me of his trip to Paris to see a Robin Gibb solo concert and arrived to find that it had been cancelled because Robin was in the hospital.



Georges telling me all about his passion for the Bee Gee music

I was taken aback by a surprise gift from my friends from Germany, who gave me a beautiful woolen scarf with the brothers' names and "The Bee Gees" knitted on it. Not only am I experiencing meeting fans from around the world, I have a tangible reminder that I will cherish forever.



I have been collecting stories for 15 years and thought I had become used to tributes that rip up my heart, but I heard several that had me in tears. Among them was an emotional tale from Amanda, whose grandfather was a Bee Gee lover in their early years. Amanda listened to the music with him while growing up; and the night before he passed away, he talked with her about “loving the Bee Gees”. She said it was a life-changing event for her.

Marilyn told me of her sister Nicki’s battle with breast cancer, which was happening while all three brothers were alive. Marilyn wrote to them in Miami and asked if they would send a card to cheer her sister. A week later a card arrived with all three brothers’ signatures and a message, “Feel better soon.”. What a kind gesture from our boys. Marilyn herself had open heart surgery in 1994 and told me that Bee Gee music “was my medicine”.

Perhaps the most dramatic comments came from Catherine, who told me “I can equate every important event in my life in one way or another to the Bee Gees. I have been a fan since I was 8. When I pass away I want it to be a celebration with the music I enjoy.” Catherine is planning that this will be done with Bee Gee music.



Fans chatting away, wearing their Bee Gee garb

I don't know what the remainder of the tour holds for me, but spending time with these fans in New York will remain one of the highlights of my "Barry journey" which I feel has just begun. These fans had a common bond that was expressed with passion and enthusiasm through each story, comment, and facial expression. There was no holding back, each person allowing himself or herself to be vulnerable and loving when talking about all the Gibb boys. Hugs and smiles were shared, along with laughter and tears. There were many memorable moments and comments that I could mention, but I think Georges said it best in representing this group when he said, "It's simple. They've been an inspiration every step of my life."

Thank you, New York. Now it's off to the Windy City. See you in Chicago on Tuesday.