

## BEATLES HARD DAYS NIGHT LEADS TO INDIA

By Joe McGowan

On July 7, 1966, I chased the Beatles' limo all over New Delhi until they finally stopped and agreed to an interview.

The interview took place alongside their limo, on a dirt road with the summer temperature hovering around 100 degrees.

The whole situation developed on July 4 when the Beatles were in the Philippines, ready to do a concert in Manila.

A telephone call to their hotel suite awakened the Beatles at noon. They were informed an official from the presidential palace was there to take them to see First Lady Imelda Marcos and a group of her friends. They were also told the Beatles would join her for lunch and it was hoped the Beatles would perform one of their songs.

A spokesman for the Beatles wrote later that they "politely" declined the invitation, saying they had to prepare for that night's concert.

The next morning, the Manila Times carried a banner headline "Imelda Stood Up. Beatles Snub Mrs. Marcos."

That story kicked off a furor.

The hotel refused room service to the Beatles. They decided they should quickly leave the country.

Porters at the hotel refused to carry the group's luggage. The Beatles and their entourage had to load their own suitcases onto a truck.

When they arrived at the airport, there was chaos. Airport escalators had been turned off. People hit and kicked the Beatles, knocking drummer Ringo Starr to the floor.

One published report said most of the Beatles decided to head home to England, but that two of the group planned to stop in New Delhi to buy an Indian sitar and rest a few days at the ashram of the Maharishi Mahesh Yoga.

When they arrived in New Delhi, however, they were informed they had only booked tickets to India and the plane was sold out onward. So the Beatles and their full entourage wound up staying in India.

As soon as the Associated Press learned the Beatles were heading to India, an urgent cable was sent to me, telling me of the ruckus in Manila and saying full coverage was essential.

When the Beatles entered the terminal, hundreds of young Indian girls began screaming and trying to touch the musicians. The Beatles declined to make a statement to the many newsmen present.

I called AP in New York and dictated the following lead: "The Beatles, fresh from a Hard Days Night in the Philippines, arrived in India tonight to spend a few days meditating."

I thought it was a great lead, with the play on their hit song. But a grunt on the foreign desk removed all of that and what hit the world wires was a sterile lead about the Beatles arriving to the screams of young Indian girls.

The next day, all of the newsmen were waiting outside the Beatles' hotel. I learned they would be driving out of a rear exit, so had my driver rush around there.

We gave chase at high speeds over narrow roads until finally the Beatles' limo stopped. An angry McCartney and Harrison got out and shouted at me. I told them they were big news because of the problems in Manila and I was just doing my job. I said if they would give me an interview, I would leave them alone.

So, McCartney explained the entire episode, apologizing to Mrs. Marcos and saying they just wanted to rest a few days and do some meditating. I had my story, and had it exclusively. No other reporter caught up to them.

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