

Niagara Falls Ringo Memories

As experienced by Gary Astridge

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Thursday evening I treated my 76-year-old mother and a dear friend of mine to see Ringo and his All Starr Band at the Fallsview Casino in Niagara Falls Canada. The memorable part for me was just before Ringo sang Liverpool 8. He said, "I'm going to do a song off my latest album." Then, for whatever reason, he looked and pointed at me and said: "Did you buy my latest album?" to which I promptly responded, "Of course I did!" He said "Very good!" then he started the song. My friend sitting next to me kept saying "You just talked to Ringo!" and I kept saying, "I don't know what just happened? I don't know what I said to him."

Friday morning I found myself happy about my little Ringo connection yet frustrated with the realization that for the past two weeks Ringo was residing in a hotel less than 20 minutes from my home. I decided to implement a plan that would hopefully get him to know that I was breathing air on this planet.

I designed a personalized T-shirt for Ringo that featured my Ringo drum kit collection with the words: Old tools of mine. I also included RingosBeatlesKits.com in a smaller font. I also made T-shirts for my better half, Cindy and myself.



My plan was to hopefully make contact with Jeff Chonis (Ringo's drum technician for 19 years) while he was working up on stage before the concert.

Friday evening as Cyn and I were walking through the shopping area of the casino, I saw Hamish Stuart, who is part of Ringo's All Starr Band. I introduced myself and he was very personable and charming. After some light banter, I asked if he would be kind enough to pass along the shirt that had for Ringo. He was very gracious and said that he would get it to him.

A short while later, I noticed Jeff Chonis and a guitar tech walking into a restaurant inside the casino complex. They sat at a counter and were easy to spot because the walls of the restaurant were clear glass. Cindy and I sat beside them and I introduced myself. The short of it was that we had dinner

together and spent 40 minutes in conversation. He saw that Cindy and I were wearing our RingoDrumKits.com shirts (the site is still under construction) and he was very intrigued to know more about my drum kits. At one point during our conversation, he mentioned that Hamish had given him the shirt that I asked him to give to Ringo. Jeff assured me that Ringo would get the shirt. Many topics were discussed in our time together and we exchanged personal information and agreed to stay in touch.



After dinner, Cindy and I went into the theater and took our front row seats. Shortly after being seated we saw Jeff on stage and he seemed to be looking for us. We made eye contact and he waived at us. Cindy and I waived back. A few minutes before the concert started we noticed Jeff walking across the stage heading in our direction. Standing in front of us at the edge of the stage he said, "Gary!" He extended his arm holding a pair of drum sticks and said, "This is from Ringo." I stood up and took them and went blank. I turned and saw Cindy with the biggest smile on her face crying with happiness for me.

Near the end of the show, we were allowed to stand in front of the stage. Knowing this from the evening before, we were able to get a jump on others and stood directly in front of Ringo. He was literally 2 feet away from us. As he was singing "With A Little Help From My Friends," he looked at me, pointed at my shirt, smiled and raised his head in laughter. He then looked at Cindy and smiled again. I looked over at Cyn and saw that she was star-struck and in total awe. What a great night, but there was more... After Ringo left the stage, the band members all formed a straight line and bowed to the audience. When they stood up, Hamish saw me, smiled and pointed at me saying, "Ringo has your shirt!" I yelled, "I know!" I gave him a double thumbs up and a huge smile.