

Jill Kellogg & the Beatles

Fifty years ago today the Beatles arrived in New York on Pan Am. World Wings Manhattan chapter member Gillian (Jill Kellogg) L'Eplattenier was a new stewardess on that famous flight. She shares her memories with us here.

RECAP OF BEATLES TRIP TO US ON PAA Flight 101 LONDON – New York February 7, 1964 By Gillian (Jill Kellogg) L'Eplattenier

London, February 7th 1964 – the crew boarded the crew bus at the Kensington Palace Hotel. All in order and nothing unusual. This was the second leg of my very first trip: New York/London/ New York. About 15 minutes en-route to the airport, the First Officer stood up facing the Flight Service Crew; “guess who we have on board today?” He had on a Beatles mask. Lots of “ohs, mys, yikes,” etc., etc., went through the lot of the young women. “Who are the Beatles”, I asked. Dumb question, I guess! Having been in a restrictive educational and boarding environment for a few years, I was not ‘in tune’ with current rock and roll pop songs or most popular music. Well, I thought, they are probably a passing fancy and no need to get excited about this one. However, there were two additional stewardesses from standby on the crew bus; some indication of a busy flight.



London Airport proved to be a madhouse. Thousands of fans all over the place. Almost as if we, the crew, were the celebrities about to board. In checking out the aircraft we also found the First Class configuration was not 20 seats, but 40 and I was already scheduled to work first class. "Oh boy", I thought. As soon as the "Fab Four" (which they were later named) came out of the terminal to board the aircraft, the fans went wild...and wild was a good way to describe the next 8 hours! The passengers in economy, by this time, (they had already boarded) knew about the celebrities they would be travelling with and were just as excited as the fans outside. The large configuration of seats was due to the celebrity entourage which consisted of ABC, BBC and NBC news media, the Beatles with wives and/or girlfriends, and Brian Epstein, their manager.

Twenty minutes into the flight, the bedlam began. Ringo, Paul and George were in the aisles talking to others of their group, taking pictures of everyone, many of the crew and in general, just totally enjoying the excitement of their first trip to the US to be on the Ed Sullivan show. Although they were quite young, they were all very mannerly and polite and pleasant to serve. Their excitement was infectious.

Back then, all of First Class meals were served from carts. The meals consisted of 7 courses, which meant 7 separate serving carts; drinks and beverages, hors d'oeuvres, soup, main entrée, dessert, cheese and fruit, and finally coffee and aperitif. With that many passengers in First Class, it took all of the flight from London to JFK to serve the meal!

There was absolutely no time to speak more than one or two sentences to any of George, Ringo, John or Paul. It was mostly, "we will be serving the meal with our cart service in a few minutes, so would you kindly take your seats, otherwise, we won't be able to get the carts through with you in the aisles". Or, "ok gentlemen, we are coming through, please, please sit down!"



FEB. 7, 1964 BEATLES ARR JFK

As we taxied to our gate, I could see thousands of fans awaiting us....5,000-15,000, I am not good at judging numbers, but it was a giant sea of people! Hardly many heads visible, but many hands and arms waving, handkerchiefs, (it's like, do you know how to count the number of sheep in a field? Count the legs and divide by four!). Opening the cabin door, the crew could not hear one another speak, the screams and yells from the masses outside were overwhelming. I think it was then that I realized this group of four young men was more than a passing fancy....it was truly the beginning of the "Beatles Invasion". And, it was an incredible way to begin a new career as a stewardess with Pan Am. Needless to say, I did become a fan and my enthusiasm has been passed on to my children!

YouTube link to Beatles video deplaning with Gillian (Kellog) L'Eplattenier at top of Jet Stair





The Fab Four at their press conference upon arrival at JFK

BEATLES ARRIVAL AT JFK

HERE AT JFK AIRPORT ON FEBRUARY 7, 1964, THE BEATLES STEPPED OFF A PAN AM PLANE FROM LONDON FOR THEIR FIRST U.S. TOUR, USHERING IN A NEW ERA OF ROCK 'N' ROLL AND A SWEEPING TRANSFORMATION OF AMERICAN CULTURE. THE FAB FOUR – JOHN, PAUL, GEORGE AND RINGO – GREETED THOUSANDS OF SCREAMING FANS THAT AFTERNOON AND HELD THEIR FIRST U.S. PRESS CONFERENCE HERE AT THIS GATEWAY TO AMERICA, KICKING OFF BEATLEMANIA.

DEDICATED BY THE PORT AUTHORITY OF NY & NJ ON FEBRUARY 7, 2014, TO CELEBRATE THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF JFK'S ROLE IN MUSIC HISTORY.

Thank you Gillian for sharing your wonderful recollection with our Manhattan Chapter Members.

Ann Blumensaadt – Vice President, Communications