

Dann '72 makes big proposal ♦With a Little Help♦ from his friend, Sir Paul McCartney

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It doesn't matter whether or not John Dann, AU Class of 1972, ever crosses another item off his bucket list. He's completed what might be #1 on the Bucket List of many of us "children" of the '60s! It took more than "A Hard Day's Night" worth of planning and strategizing, but the payoff turned out better than imagined.

Can you really top proposing to your intended while Sir Paul McCartney (yes, that Sir Paul McCartney) strums along as you croon "Will you still feed me, will you still need me, when I'm 64?" and some 13,500 "witnesses" chime in?

It's still surreal for John, and Claudia, his intended. She said yes, of course, but he already knew that. They'd been planning the event for months. It was Claudia who chose a concert with Paul over a cruise to mark her 60th birthday. "She'd had the idea for a couple of years. I had to admit it could work," said John.

Fresh off a virus-caused hiatus in his 2014 "Out There" tour, Paul was back on track on July 5, 2014 in Albany, NY where John and Claudia had floor tickets and a plan. Having attended a previous McCartney gig in Cincinnati in 2011, the couple knew the Beatles icon takes some delight in reading the many posters held high by those lucky enough to score space up near the stage. And late in the program he usually will select one sign-holder to reward with an invitation to join him on stage.

John is sure it was only several songs into the nearly three-hour, 40-melody show when he knew Paul had seen the day-glow chartreuse posters with bold black letters that he and Claudia had so craftily composed: She held "He won't marry me until he meets you!;" his read "I've got the ring and I'm 64!"

"I saw him really chuckle," said John, thinking they were well on their way to completing this concert caper.

But as the evening spun on and the program appeared near an end, "we'd given up," John remembers. Paul had just left the stage following the first encore when a woman in their row nudged them saying the security guards wanted them to come forward stage-right. At first Claudia thought their water bottles might have been mistaken for a more potent product and they were being "evicted," but they quickly learned their well-laid plan was actually beginning to "Come Together" the way they'd hoped in their wildest dreams it would.

At this point "our hearts were pounding." Paul had returned for the second encore and they heard strains of "Yesterday" while at the side of the stage the security contingent took Claudia's purse and asked them to refrain from "lunging" at Paul or making any sudden movements. But yes, they could take their posters with them.

While waiting for the call to walk out on stage “I thought it was so neat and honorable” for Paul to take the time to explain the two posters to the audience” and “he quoted them accurately,” remembered John. Then Paul said, “Let&s have them up here,” and John and Claudia strode out.

“It was crazy calm on stage,” said John. There was a hug for Claudia and a handshake for John. The couple&s scheme called for John to sing a verse from “When I&m Sixty-Four.” So not wasting time with small talk, John walked right up to Paul&s microphone and launched into song determined to trill in his own key. Paul, wanting to make his stage guest&s performance perfect, adeptly repositioned John to avoid mike feedback, then, not one to take offense at having his microphone usurped, listened to a few phrases, “picked up the key signature right away,” and accompanied John while the joyous crowd sang and clapped along. Sir Paul McCartney played back-up to John Dann.

That bit accomplished, it was time for the main deed.

“We&re all eyes and ears,” quipped the Beatles legend. Paul urged John to get down on one knee and “perform” this proposal properly. “What if I have trouble getting up?” John quietly asked him. “We&ll help you!” quipped Paul out of earshot of the audience (which moments later he did!). With the words “Sweetheart, will you marry me?” mission accomplished as Claudia said yes.

John had just one more goal now that he had Paul&s undivided attention. There was just enough time to let this idol hear what many others in the arena that night would likely voice if given the opportunity: “Paul, you&ve brought more joy and love to the planet than any other human being.”

Over another quick set of hugs and a high-five for John, Claudia hastily invited Paul to the nuptials. He let the audience know “I&m already booked for the wedding!” (And although no date has been set for the couple&s next big event, “If he calls I&ll say it will be whenever and wherever he&s available,” said John recounting the moment.

Seconds later they were graciously escorted off stage and The Paul Proposal Project was complete. It took John and Claudia more than two hours to return to their hotel, which was a 10-minute walk away, because they were stopped and applauded by so many well-wishers. Over the next few days the buzz continued as word of their “engagement” with a star was Twittered and emailed, viewed more than 100,000 times on YouTube and written about all over Facebook, numerous newspapers stateside, and even on the front pages in Beijing and in New Zealand.

A month-and-a-half later, John and Claudia are “still basking in the glow of a rock god.” And they have not stopped hearing from hundreds and hundreds of family members and friends, neighbors and numerous folks they don&t know, all wanting to offer congratulations and cheers.

To all those Beatles and McCartney fans out there, John wants you to know Paul is “everything you could hope he could be and more... “Anybody who has ever enjoyed his music owes it to themselves to try to see him” in concert ... yeah, yeah, yeah.

To view The Proposal, please visit (it&s the second video in the article)

<http://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2014/07/06/paul-mccartney-invites-rochester-fans-onstage-to-propose-during-concert/12264947/>

(John, an English major and retired English teacher from Newark, NY, also has “incredibly fond memories of AU. I still count those years as some of the best of my life,” he said, fondly recalling the late Gifford Hopkins, who “meant more to my life than any other man,” as well as David Ohara, and the late Mel Bernstein and Ernest Finch. Claudia is an elementary education teacher in the Bloomfield Central School District.)

(Editor&s Note: Little did I know perched on the edge of my seat in the third tier of the Times-Union Center, Albany, witnessing a couple from Rochester enjoy the thrill of getting engaged on stage with Paul McCartney looking on, that weeks later I could relive the whole experience by interviewing the lucky fella in the twosome. I couldn&t be more

thrilled to have shared a conversation with the guy who managed to get Sir Paul to play back-up for a tune at his own concert!-Debbie Clark, AU Communications director)