

ENGLER'S PARTNER PENS A BOOK TOO

By Jennifer Sopko

Behind the glitz and glamour of the stage, the larger-than-life rock stars, and the pulsating music itself, there's a machine of agents, managers, roadies, accountants, and egos that make up every successful concert. Behind the scenes there's also the promoter trying to keep this machine running at all costs. In *Hard Days Hard Nights*, Pat DiCesare shares first-hand accounts behind bringing the biggest rock and pop concerts to Pittsburgh during his 37-year career as a promoter, many of those in partnership with Rich Engler.

Growing up in Trafford after the Great Depression, this first-generation Italian boy dreamed of a life beyond becoming a schoolteacher or working at Westinghouse Electric, like so many friends from his blue-collar generation in Western Pennsylvania. Working his way up from record store stock boy to salesman and distributor and finally promoter, DiCesare built a reputation that enabled him to sell out the Civic Arena, Three Rivers Stadium, and the Syria Mosque with the most popular musical acts in America.

Through a series of vignettes, DiCesare shares some of his most memorable stories from his career that began in the rock and roll era, when he was just a teenager bussing tables at Monroeville's Holiday House, singing Doo-Wop, and writing songs with The Penn Boys.

Highlights include his tales of trying to launch the first stadium concert with Alice Cooper at Three Rivers Stadium in the midst of Hurricane Agnes, keeping a foul-mouthed Janis Joplin show on track, and getting drenched in champagne as an angry road manager smashed two dozen bottles all over Led Zeppelin's dressing room.

However, the definitive story is how DiCesare and former partner Tim Tormey enticed The Beatles to appear at the Civic Arena in 1964 thanks to a \$5,000 loan and complete faith from his father:

Dad slid an envelope across the tablecloth to me. "What is this?" I asked. "Go on, open it," he said. Inside was a cashier's check made out to me for \$5,000. "Dad, where did you get this?" I said. "You don't have that kind of money." "I borrowed it from the credit union at work. They put a lien on the house." I felt like crying. He'd worked hard all his life and still hadn't paid off the house and now he was offering me more money than he made in a year, all the money his home was worth. What if the bartender [connection] in Brooklyn just kept the money and we never booked the Beatles?

DiCesare recently told us that he didn't want *Hard Days Hard Nights* to be just about backstage stories. "I wanted to weave in stories of my life growing up in a large, poor family and how, with the love of an immigrant father, I was able to become victorious in my efforts to overcome the odds of other well-financed, experienced promoters."

He also talks about his key influences, contacts, and partners in the music business (including Dick Clark and Rich Engler) who gave him prime opportunities, as well as the hard work and grit it took to succeed in the early days of rock concerts. Yet it was the risks like The Beatles that the self-described gambler took that gave him an edge in the business, which also included booking Sly and the Family Stone knowing that the unpredictable front man may not even show up for the show (and nearly didn't).

DiCesare toiled days and nights planning concerts, fulfilling artists' demands, and challenging theater managers who hated rock and roll while screaming fans jammed the shows he never saw himself. *Hard Days Hard Nights* takes a nostalgic look back at the rise of the modern rock concert in the days of handshake deals and intimate venues. More importantly, it tells the story of how a local kid from an immigrant family overcame inexperience and hardship to become a pioneer in Pittsburgh's music industry.

Jennifer Sopko is a Pittsburgh-based writer and historian, and author of *Ligonier Valley Vignettes: Tales from the Laurel Highlands* (History Press, 2013).



Hard Days Hard Nights: From the Beatles to the Doors to the Stones ... Insider Stories From a Legendary Concert Promoter

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