

Jerry Powers Memory

I produced five concerts at the Marine Stadium. The most memorable shows were the New York Rock and Roll Ensemble and, especially, the poet Allen Ginsberg (1972).

I didn't know Ginsberg. The only thing we had in common is that we grew up in the same town, Paterson, NJ. He was a few years older than me. His name came up one day in a conversation so I called up a speaker's bureau and he said "yes" to the invite. We wanted to do it at the Jackie Gleason but the City of Miami Beach wouldn't let us, so the Marine Stadium was the only place left.

This all happened when Ginsberg was very much in the news. The Republican *and* Democratic Conventions were held in Miami Beach in 1972, and Ginsberg went to both of them. He actually set up a kitchen to serve vegetarian food at the Democratic Convention.

We had two acts that night at the Marine Stadium; a group called Bethlehem Asylum (the opening act) and Allen Ginsberg. Ginsberg began reading and he was flanked on the floating stage by four police-two on each side. It was a surreal scene. He then began reading "Howl" and early in the poem, there is a line that says something like "the police in New York are like the police in Moscow". He changed it to say "the police in Miami...."

Immediately, one of the police turned the microphone off, turned off the house lights and said "this concert is over; you guys are inciting a riot". I got on stage and had a pow wow with everyone and Ginsberg said to me "I don't need a microphone, I can project without it." He then said "Everybody, just chill out, I am going to continue." Ginsberg began reading again but about ten minutes later, the police shut us down again and arrested five of us and took us to the Miami police station.

What I remember was how calm Allen Ginsberg was throughout all of this. I was not calm-my blood pressure was going through the roof. Ginsberg was the calmest guy I have ever met.

At the police station, one of the guys in our group was Jack Gordon, who owned Washington Federal Bank in Miami Beach. He was very angry and he literally got someone to post bond and get all of us out of jail that night. Meanwhile, we still had a court date. There were two big constitutional lawyers in Miami Beach-Bruce Rogow and Tobias Simon, and we got Simon to help us out. He took the case pro bono and he brought in another lawyer.

By the next week, we were standing in Federal Court in front of Judge Clyde C. Atkins as Plaintiffs against the City of Miami. He heard the case, and he immediately decided that the City of Miami had violated our First Amendment constitutional rights and that the performance had to be rescheduled at the City's expense. So we rescheduled it about a year later. The City had to pay for everything-for advertising, Ginsberg's second

speaking fee, and first class plane tickets to Miami, and all expenses for the show including the police security.

We did have a problem. We had no way of knowing who had bought tickets to the show, so it was really impossible to provide just free tickets for those who attended. We also offered refunds-and only ten people wanted their money back.

When we finally had the event, we had a full house. He did "Howl"-this time, there were no problems-and the evening went off without incident. It was a great victory for the little guy.

I only did five shows at the Stadium. We were always worried about rain risk and the one insurance company that would underwrite "rain" policies measured rain at Miami Airport-and that's useless because in Miami, it can rain at the Stadium-but not at the Airport. But on its best nights, with the serenity and beauty of the boats and lights, you couldn't beat it. It was an amazing venue.