

More stories...



Doris Duke, Imelda Marcos and Chandi Hefner

These three ladies allowed for more stories and drama that anyone could believe.

Doris Duke, the heir to the Duke tobacco fortune spent a great deal of time at her home...**Shangri La** at Black Point off Diamond Head in Honolulu. She purchased a 737 for her private aircraft and it was about the same time she befriended Chandi Hefner and formally adopted her. So, I had to deal with Chandi regarding negotiating contracts to assist with operations of the aircraft. She did not come with experience but certainly attitude.

Doris also befriended Imelda Marcos and allowed her to use her aircraft for mainland travel.

In 1989, Imelda Marcos was formerly charged with Federal racketeering and fraud in the State of New York. She used the aircraft to get back and forth to federal court. One day the court proceedings were questioning documents that were signed by her. She stated, that was

not her signature on the document. Even though experts determined that it was, the defense stated that there was no witness to verify any signatures. On the next trip from Honolulu to New York the following week, the departure had an added element.

While sitting in the facility lounge before departure we asked her if she would sign our VIP guestbook. She recognized signatures from Ronald Regan, Prince Phillip, and others so she felt honored to add her name. We opened the book to a fresh blank page. After she signed, she boarded the plane for New York.

Immediately following... the FBI agent, who was in a Hemmeter Aviation uniform and who was holding the guest book, removed the page and boarded his aircraft and followed Imelda to the New York Courthouse. They now had the signature witnessed by a reliable source. She eventually was acquitted of all charges and as you know ultimately returned to the Philippines.

We continued to have dealings with the three ladies, it did reach a point where Chandi had a fallen out with Doris and Bernard Lafferty, the butler came into power in the household. Another element of drama.

I remember those later years, when we would get a call to get Doris's aircraft ready for a departure and then another call to cancel the previous call and then another call from what seemed like the new authority... the butler. The airplane was readied for departure. The flight crew arrived and made their preparations. Doris Duke was getting very frail, and we were told that she would need to be carried up the boarding stairs. Upon arrival at our terminal Doris's staff was boarding the aircraft with Doris still in her car. I asked, "Who would be assisting her up the stairs". Bernard said, "You can carry her". I could have denied their request, probably should have denied their request but I

knew that was the quickest way to get this aircraft on its way. I picked up the 80-year-old that weighed more like a 12-year-old. As we approached the boarding stairs, she said "I don't want you to see me like this so please close your eyes" I responded, "Ms. Duke, I need my eyes open to carry you up the stairs, so please close your eyes so you don't see that mine are open". She did. They left.

Doris died just months after this flight but the drama surrounding her death continued for years.