

# THE REPORTER

North Penn, Indian Valley and neighboring communities.

Entertainment » News & Gossip

## Lansdale native Peggy March reflects on 50 years of “I Will Follow Him”

By BRIAN BINGAMAN

[bbingaman@thereporteronline.com](mailto:bbingaman@thereporteronline.com)

Posted: Monday, 04/29/13 07:23 pm



Album cover/Peggy March. Photo courtesy of Peggy March.



Peggy March was back in her hometown of Lansdale last week, but not because it was the 50th anniversary of her number-one smash “I Will Follow Him.”

March, who grew up Margaret Battavio in one of the borough’s Italian-American neighborhoods, had returned to her old stomping grounds to tend to the estate of her mother, who passed away in November.

“I had millions of cousins (growing up) I still keep in touch with. I’ve always liked Lansdale and it’s my first home,” said March, who lives in the Miami area with her husband, Arnie Harris.

“Little Peggy March” was 15 years old, and a student at Lansdale Catholic High School, in the spring of 1963 when “I Will Follow Him” topped the Billboard Hot 100 chart for three weeks, and became a No. 1 hit in several other countries as well. The song was such a sensation that, according to the “Billboard Book of Top 40 Hits” by Joel Whitburn, it was also No. 1 for a week on the Billboard R&B chart — no small feat for a white singer in an era fraught with racial tension.

The song was featured on the soundtrack of the 2009 movie “All About Steve” with Sandra Bullock, and March has the song set as the ringtone on her iPhone.

March also had two minor top 40 hits in 1963 with “I Wish I Were a Princess,” which was featured in the film version of “Hairspray” because, March said, it’s one of John Waters’ favorite songs, and “Hello Heartache, Goodbye Love.”

“The only pitfall (of being in the music business) was I was a minor ... I had so much to learn,” she said.

For all of the adoration that comes with being a pop star, March described an unfortunate backlash in the day-to-day teenage life of Margaret Battavio at LC. Boys were hesitant to ask her out on dates for fear of being teased by their peers, she said. She wasn’t ostracized socially, but “I was put aside; somehow I was different,” she said.

A rigorous schedule of appearances and concert touring — including frequently taking the train by herself to New York — proved so disruptive to her education that by March’s 11th grade year, the school could no longer consider her a full-time enrolled student and told her family that she would have to take private courses.

Although she met the graduation requirements in 1966, March was not permitted to participate in the commencement ceremony with her friends and classmates. “I thought for sure that the nuns would let me,” she said.

Around the same time her diploma came in the mail, she was off to Europe, Asia and Japan to perform.

“I wasn’t saying: ‘Gee, what will I be doing when I’m 65?’,” March said with a laugh, referring to her continuing music career. “I got lucky, I think.”

On YouTube, there’s a 50th anniversary remix video of “I Will Follow Him,” that incorporates photos of the teenaged March and 45 rpm singles jackets.

March even has an album of new music — a blend of traditional pop arrangements and contemporary dance songs — which you can hear samples of at [www.peggymarch.net](http://www.peggymarch.net).

“Another Place in Time” is the first album of songs that March has written all of the lyrics for.

She lived in Germany for a time, and has had several German language hits. “In Germany, I’m instantly recognized. I can’t go around without makeup there,” she said.

March has an adult daughter, who works as a veterinary technician in Chicago, and a 6-year-old grandson.

***Go to WNPV radio and listen to the podcast of a Peggy March interview from last Friday 4/26, good stuff.***