

# Sharon Cuneta: Famous, Rich & Greatly Grounded

SHARON CUNETA credits her parents with keeping her head on her shoulders and her feet on the ground. She was born into the parallel worlds of politics and entertainment; anybody with a weaker foundation would have easily lost grasp of reality. But her father, the late Pablo Cuneta, who served the city of Pasay as mayor for 41 years until he retired in 1998, constantly reminded her of his humble beginnings. "He would always tell me how he had only one pair of shoes and in order to keep it good and usable, he would go to school every other day in slippers," she says. Mayor Cuneta died in 2000.

Her mother Elaine Gamboa, on the other hand, would also keep her in check with down-to-earth remarks. Sharon recalls, "Once she told me, 'What is this X-factor they keep saying? Is this what you have and why you are such a big celebrity? There are others who are more beautiful, who can sing and act better. But you are such a bigger star than all of them. Maybe you really have this X-factor.'"

Her life has always been an open book, and itself a good plot for a movie. Daughter of a powerful and rich father, a celebrity singer at 12, a mega star in her teens, married at 19 and separated at 21 with one child, and remarried at 32 - the story has been told and retold. And in each retelling, the common perception that seems to form is that she is a rich girl who got everything the easy way.

"Nothing could be farther from the truth," Sharon says. "I think I even had to work twice as hard as most aspiring singers at the start as I had to prove more and convince my detractors that they are wrong."

When her first marriage failed, Sharon worked hard again to prove to her parents this time that she can survive and take care of her daughter from that first marriage. "Remember, they did not like my first husband very much. So they were proved right. I could not go home, even if they were asking me to, and live off their generosity," she says. Only after eight years of living on her own and taking care of KC all by herself did Sharon go back to live with her parents, her pride intact. She has raised her daughter very well up to this time and has proved to her parents that she could stand up from a mistake.

Such strength of character must have been moulded in her growing-up years when values like hard work and sharing were taught her through both words and deeds.

"My parents were unbelievably generous," Sharon says. "I cannot recall any calamity or occasion when my parents did not take care of the needs of our people." There would always be a perennial assembly-line in our house for packing donated goods and I would always join."

She believes that charity work is in their blood, especially that of her mother. "Imagine, she would give away food and medicine even in Baguio where we had a summer house. If she had political motives, what purpose would charity work serve in Baguio? My parents had no political ties or interests over there and yet they would be as generous."

Then she relates one experience she can never forget that really proved to her how great her father was. On location outside Manila, she was approached by a simply clad man maybe in his mid-fifties. The man said he mustered all his nerve to approach her and tell her of how her father saved his life. The man used to live in Pasay City. One day, his house was being repossessed by the bank for failure to pay his loan. That would put him and his family of four out into the streets. He went to the Pasay City Hall, got an audience with Mayor Cuneta, explained his problem and showed his papers. The mayor did not personally know him but had the papers checked by the legal department. When Mayor Cuneta saw that the man was telling the truth, he paid off the entire loan out of his own pocket and gave the title to the man.

"I've never heard this story before," Sharon says, "and maybe my father had even forgotten all about it. But here was one family he saved. When I got home, I immediately went inside his room and embraced him."

In spite of fame and fortune, Sharon kept her humility intact - due to the influences of her own parents. Right now, her top priority is to use her God-given talents to entertain and make a lot of people happy. In fact, she sings to inspire.

On June 12, Friday, Sharon, the megastar, will perform live at the Shrine Auditorium in a special concert aptly billed *The Megathirty USA Concert Tour*. It will showcase Sharon's 30 years in the concert biz with songs that kept her endearing to her followers. Special guest is KC Concepcion, the most sought after artist these days. Louie Ocampo is musical director.



Sharon Cuneta is set to conquer LA once more via "Megathirty USA Concert Tour" on June 12, Friday, 8 pm at The Shrine Auditorium with special guest, KC Concepcion.

The LA concert is executive produced by KATZ Entertainment led by Jackie Regala and Gerry Katigbak and their associate Kaye Morales. It is co-produced by Fernando Bernabe of FLB Corp. and Brad Dizon of Brad's Entertainment. It is also presented by Seafood City Supermarket, LBC Cargo (*ang Hari ng Padala*), Western Union, Asian Journal Publications, The Filipino Channel, Weekend Balita and Tribune USA. Sponsors include Joy Silva of Century 21, Gandi Skin Care, K.M. Printing Production, Inc., O'Skin Care, Mabuhay Home Care, Clothing & Accessories, and Jimmy de Guzman (General Contractor).

Tickets are priced at \$100, 78, 68, 58 and 38. Available at KATZ Entertainment (562) 219-7235; Jackie Regala (562) 787-9030; Kaye Morales (562) 881-9712; Brad Dizon (310) 972-1178; FLB Corp (310) 816-9371; Json Arguelles (323) 599-7865; and Inihaw Karaoke Rest (562) 572-3661. ■

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