

The Hornsickle Stubfester Soggy Mountain Band (Part I of II)

Against my better judgment, last week I promised to tell this tale. I will probably live to regret it, especially if any members of the assemblage of would-be musicians ever find out that I resurrected their story.

When my no-name crew of erstwhile friends, myself included, entered our teenage years, significant changes began to take place in our bodies, minds, and attitudes toward life. As I understand it, this has been a human trait for some time.

Appearance, popularity, and other things that were of little consequence until this metamorphosis into pre-adulthood began, took on an importance that was just short of obsessive. And it



You can't beat a system you can't understand

By Sam Bari

seemed to happen overnight — to all of us.

Until then, other than being outcasts as individuals, the group didn't have much in common, but that was enough to inspire us to band together in a collective effort to survive childhood. This of course carried on into our teens, and if the truth were known, I am surprised that we were ever capable of going our separate ways as

adults without expiring from the experience.

At that time, rock 'n' roll was a really big deal, and new bands were popping up all over. Anybody playing in a rock 'n' roll band was popular, and pretty much the center of attention, which was another thing that suddenly became significant. Our quests for attention bordered on needy.

Other than survival issues, music lessons were among the few things our rag-tag group had in common. Most of us took weekly lessons on a musical instrument of one kind or another. So we decided to pool our talents and start a rock 'n' roll band. The idea was to play at school functions and become popular. Unfortunately, most of us didn't play rock 'n' roll instruments, and that was a problem.

Tank Mueller, Muffin Duffy's boyfriend, played the tuba, Pookie Grossberg played violin, Kinky Boswell played clarinet, and Chilly Mac played bass drum in the school band. Louie the Lip wasn't really a musician but he knew how to twang a jaw harp and play the kazoo, which was nothing more than humming into a piece of wax paper draped over a comb.

I played the piano, and I knew three Jerry Lee Lewis tunes, which I played badly. But at least I played a legitimate rock 'n' roll instrument. Since school bands don't have pianos, because marching while playing a piano presents a whole other dilemma, I had to play a glockenspiel, the inventor of which should suffer unspeakable torture.

The glockenspiel is kind of a portable metal keyboard invented for marching purposes. It is played by hitting metal bars with a little mallet. It sounds like a kid's toy piano that can play only one note at a time. It sounds awful.

Muffin Duffy sang in the chorus, but only because her mother made her do it. She hated it. Muffin looked at us and shook her head sadly. "How can you call a group with a tuba, bass drum, clarinet, violin, kazoo and glockenspiel a rock 'n' roll band?" she asked. "You can't have a rock band without a guitar. Everybody

will laugh at you." She was right. Somehow, Jerry Lee Lewis songs played on a glockenspiel didn't exactly rock.

All but Louie the Lip were discouraged. "Why do we have to be like everybody else?" the Lip asked. "We can be something new, different. You know — like the Spike Jones band."

"Spike Jones and the City Slickers" was a comedic band in the 1940s and 50s that featured an odd assortment of instruments. They specialized in parodies on popular songs punctuated with gunshots, cowbells, slide whistles and squeeze horns. Despite their antics, the members of the Spike Jones ensemble were accomplished musicians. We were not.

"If we have a really cool name and learn an original song, we can be just as famous as anybody else," the Lip argued. "Then we'll find a place to play where we'll be seen by lots of people. We'll be stars in no time," he said.

The Lip convinced us that we had nothing to lose, and for the next couple of days we tried to

come up with a name. Of course, the Lip thought of the most original name of all — "The Hornsickle Stubfester Soggy Mountain Band." When he told us, we were speechless. After a few minutes Kinky Boswell asked, "Who's Hornsickle Stubfester?"

The Lip looked at Kinky as if he had two heads. "That's the point," the Lip answered. "There is no Hornsickle Stubfester. It's just a name. We want a name that sets us apart from everybody else. People will come just to see the band with this great name." All Kinky could say was, "Oh." And like most of the Lip's hare-brained schemes, we bought it, and the name stuck. It even grew on us. We liked it.

The "Hornsickle Stubfester Soggy Mountain Band" was now an official entity. We didn't know a single song, but we were determined to learn one. Tune in next week and I'll tell you how the band made its mark on a system we can't understand.

Boat show coming Sept. 13

The Newport International Boat Show is a showcase of the latest boats — both power and sail — presented in the luxurious setting of Newport. Now in its thirty-seventh year, the show keeps getting bigger and show management is optimistic that every space will be filled on opening day. For anyone who harbors a passion for boating, it is the only place to be Sept. 13-16.

One of the five largest in-water boat shows in the country, the Newport International Boat Show covers over 15 acres along America's Cup Avenue, stretching from the Newport Yachting Center to Newport Harbor Hotel & Marina. More than 850 exhibitors with over 700 boats ranging in size from 16 to 85 feet are expected to be on display, including: express cruising yachts — both power and sail — Downeast style boats, multihulls and ocean-going trawlers at PassageMaker magazine's TrawlerPort, along with hundreds of sport fishing boats, runabouts, kayaks, canoes and inflatables. In addition, there are engines, sails, equipment, safety products, electronics plus thousands of accessories and marine services. There will be demonstrations, seminars, and workshops. And, for the kids, on Saturday and Sunday the WOW Mobile from the New Bedford Oceanarium will be on hand.

Tickets on Friday and Sunday are \$16 a day, with Saturday at \$18, and children under twelve are free Friday thru Sunday when accompanied by an adult. Thursday VIP Day offers special amenities and tickets are \$25 for all ages. Military personnel and Newport County residents get special half-price admission on Friday only with proper ID.

For more information call 846-1115.

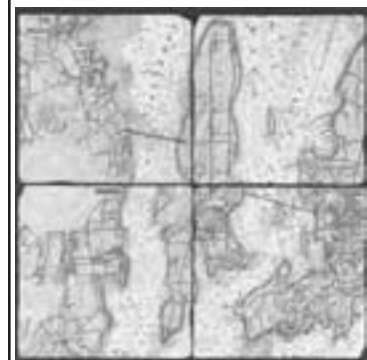
Sing with the Navy Choristers

The Newport Navy Choristers are seeking new members in all voice ranges to sing with them for the 2007-2008 musical season. The Choristers are a mixed singing group open to all members of the Newport Navy community including active duty, reserve and retired military personnel, their spouses and family members 16 years of age and older, as well as Department of Defense employees.

There are no auditions for the main chorus. While experience is helpful, it is not necessary. Rehearsals begin on Tuesday, Sept. 4, at 6:15 p.m. and continue every Tuesday night in the Quinn Lecture Room in Pringle Hall at the Newport Naval War College. The final date for members to be accepted will be Tuesday, Sept. 18.

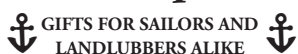
For more information, call chairman Steve Larson at 619-1606 or JoAnn Loewenthal, musical director, at 849-4823 or check out the Choristers' website at www.newportnavychoristers.org.

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