

CATAWISSA MILITARY BAND

May 2008

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 5 No. 2

Baseball is Greek to Me

by Anne Cosper, Editor

Note: This first appeared on the Bloomsburg Public Library web site, September 2007.

There's only one sports language I can speak - baseball. I speak baseball. Fluently. I am not fooled by our team's general manager and his annual hype about "veterans and prospects." Yeah, right, has-beens and kids. And I know exactly what my father means, when he says, about our team, "They won, but they tried to lose." Still, it took some time for me to realize just why Homer's *The Iliad* seems so familiar.

It is more than the characters. While sulky Achilles, egomaniacal Agamemnon and poor Hector, rendered ineffective by guilt and indecision, could easily be people we know, it is the author's description of battle that feels modern. There is something of our sports speak, or the language of baseball anyway, in the *Iliad*.

"He was like a lion that some shepherd has wounded, but not killed, as he is springing over the wall of a sheep-yard to attack the sheep. . . . Even thus did Diomedes go furiously among the Trojans." Who of the current commentators and color men could match that? Instead of Homer's deft blending of familiar situations and combat, we are treated to such insightful observations as "They need to get ahead early and hold on to the lead." I'm not making this up. That wisdom came from a commentator's "Keys to the Game" during a recent viewing.

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The (Fashion) Monster in My Closet

by Lisa Chernesky, Staff Writer

When I moved into my first apartment, it seemed so empty. How could anyone ever fill all that space? Twenty-some years later, I wonder how one person could accumulate so many things. Maybe it's because I've picked up my father's pack rat tendencies. The reality is it's an emotional link, all those objects are a connection to the past.

When the spare room started to look like a self-storage unit, I knew it was time to declutter. Thinking that it would make retrieving holiday decorations easier, I began the task shortly before Christmas. Throughout the process my "keep" pile equaled the "toss" and "donate" piles combined. Continuing on, I opened the next large box. "Halloween costumes," I thought, eyeing the bold and chaotic geometric patterns. After a flash of recognition and a flush of embarrassment, I realized they were my old clothes.

I found laced-cuffed leggings, ruffled blouses and leg warmers from the 1980's, the decade that launched Madonna as a fashion icon. Digging deeper, there were bulky shoulder pads, flouncy skirts and off-the-shoulder, a la *Flashdance*, sweatshirts.

The clothing, made of spandex and rayon (so unnatural that moths wouldn't touch it) was still bright. Did I save these thinking that they might actually be worn again? I didn't want to admit that I wore them the first time around. I quickly shut the box and debated -- do they belong on the donate or toss pile? I loaded the box along with other donations into the trunk of my car for a Monday morning trip to the thrift store. I lugged the toss pile to the trash can.

The keep pile promptly went back into the spare room. Closing the door, I abandoned the project. I didn't want to confront any other frightening images from my past -- clothing or otherwise.

Twenty-five years later, those terrible teen-age years are still traumatic. I've come to appreciate the fact that I have only a spare room and not an entire attic running amok with my past. Now, if I could only summon the courage to re-enter the room and retrieve my photo album. I want to find the pictures of me wearing those awful clothes -- so I can destroy the evidence.

Spring Concert

Tuesday, May 6, 2008

7:30 p.m.

Caldwell Consistory Auditorium
Market Square, Bloomsburg

No Admission Charge

Coming Events

May 14, 7:00 p.m., Catawissa Military Band concert in the central gazebo of the Columbia Mall, Columbia Mall Drive, Buckhorn.

May 26, The Catawissa Military Band will be participating in three Memorial Day ceremonies. The Parade and service in Mifflinville will begin at 9:00 a.m. The service in the Old Rosemont Cemetery in Bloomsburg is scheduled for 11:00 a.m., and the Parade in Catawissa, followed by a service in Union Cemetery, will begin at 1:30 p.m.

June 15, TBA, Memorial Service for John "Butch" Linn at the Catawissa Boat Club.

July 1, 7:00 p.m., Mill St. Park Dedication. Park will be dedicated to Ralph E. Wolfgang.

July 4, 10:30 a.m., Millville Independence Day Parade.

July 4, 8:00 p.m., Bloomsburg Fireworks Concert at the Town Park.

Aug. 5, 7:00 p.m., Millville Community Park concert.

Aug. 8, 6:30 p.m., Orangeville Masonic Festival concert.

Aug. 9, 5:00 p.m., Catawissa Firemans Carnival concert at CARA Park.

Aug. 12, 7:00 p.m., Danville Memorial Park concert.

Sept. 7, at Knoebels. Concerts at 3:00 and 6:00 p.m. in the Main Band Shell.

Submissions or comments may be sent to the Editor at delta2@ptd.net or Stevan Galbreath at sagalbreath@hotmail.com.

Written material may be given to Stevan Galbreath.

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In Memorium

Harry Shuman

Band member Harry Shuman died on January 4th of this year from complications following kidney surgery in November. The Military Band's string bass player, he had been a big band singer, trombonist with the Detroit Concert Band, music teacher and was also a member of the Vocal Group Hall of Fame.

Harry was born in and attended schools in Montour Township before transferring to Bloomsburg High School. While a music student at Wayne State University in Detroit, he was drafted into the Army and served in World War II. Stationed in the Panama Canal Zone, he began his performing career as a singer on Armed Forces Radio.

After the war, he returned to Wayne State and joined a group that sang in Detroit area clubs. In 1947, the group was hired to tour with Woody Herman's big band as the Blue Notes. When the tour ended, they made several recordings as the back-up group for Bing Crosby. The next year, they were engaged to tour with the Jimmy Dorsey band as the Skylarks. It was under this name that they were later inducted into the Vocal Group Hall of Fame.

Family responsibilities caused Harry to give up touring and return to Wayne State, where he completed a degree in music education. Thereafter he was a teacher and administrator in the Detroit School District for 35 years. During some of the time, he was a trombonist with Leonard Smith's Detroit Concert Band and, with the band, was an extra in the John Philip Sousa film *The Stars and Stripes Forever*.

On retirement in 1987, he returned to Bloomsburg and rejoined the band (he had played with the band from 1935 to 1939 before entering Wayne State). Harry was also a string bass player with the Bloomsburg University-Community Orchestra and sang with the Bicentennial Chorus. In 1993 he switched to string bass with the band. Harry remained active with the band until multiple health problems developed in October. He died at home at age 90. Harry is believed to have been the oldest active playing member in the band's 130 year history.

Stevan Galbreath

DID YOU KNOW

The band edition of *Carmen Suite* performed in the spring concert was assembled from *Carmen Suites No. 1* and *No. 2* collected by American-born Ernest Guiraud (1837-92). After the sudden death of *Carmen* composer Georges Bizet in March 1875, Guiraud was asked to arrange two suites based on opera themes. Ernest Guiraud was born in New Orleans and, in 1853, went to France to study at the Paris Conservatory where he would later teach. He was personally acquainted with every prominent French composer of the second half of the 19th century, including Bizet, whom he often assisted with orchestration.

Stevan Galbreath

Baseball Cont.

While it is unfair to expect Homeric skill from today's announcers, the roots of baseball commentary are in his works. "Diomedes, son of Tydeus, man after my own heart, I see two heroes speeding towards you, both of them men of might -- the one a skilful (sic) archer, Pandarus, son of Lycaon, the other, Aeneas, whose sire is Anchises, while his mother is Aphrodite. Mount the chariot and let us retreat. Do not, I pray you, press so furiously forward, or you may get killed." How's that for a scouting report?

The game's slower pace allows for strategizing, second guessing and living room managing. That is the true attraction of baseball -- at least for me, no stranger to brooding and angst. Now we have endless discussions of a batter's stats, the teams he played for previously and possible plans of action. Thousands of years of history, all leading up to the mantra of pitching coaches everywhere -- don't walk him, but don't give him anything to hit.

It is amazing how some things never change. Every spring, against all reason, I can't help feeling optimistic. Every August, when summer starts to wind down, I find myself hoping that our team will miraculously get it together and earn a chance at post-season play.

There is much disappointment in baseball. But it's okay. Nothing much is really at stake, certainly not like in *The Iliad*. I will continue to watch baseball and there will be games that feel epic, play by play commentary that reminds me of Homer, although nothing to equal "The spear of Agamemnon caught him on the broad of his back, just as he was turning in flight; it struck him between the shoulders and went right through his chest, and his armour rang round him as he fell heavily to the ground." And his armor rang round him.

* Quotations from the Samuel Butler translation of *The Iliad*.

In Memorium

John "Butch" Linn

Honorary member and former assistant director John "Butch" Linn died on April 9th from injuries received in an auto accident in February. He is survived by his wife of 28 years, Jane (Stine) Linn, a bassoonist with the Military Band.

For 30 years Butch taught at and managed Linn's Music Studio in Catawissa Township. Prior to that, he had been a part-time instructor in the Southern Columbia Schools and scheduling clerk at Geisinger Medical Center. He also directed musical theater performances at Bloomsburg University and area high schools.

Butch began playing with the band in 1968 and was named assistant director in 1974. It was intended that he take over the band when then director Ralph Wolfgang went on sabbatical leave that fall. However, work schedule problems caused him to withdraw in favor of Rick Martin after a few weeks. Butch remained an active member of the band until 1984, when the demands of managing his studio caused him to resign. During the time the studio operated, he was credited with teaching nearly 300 students.

Butch suffered from *osteogenesis imperfecta*, or brittle bone disease. Over the course of his 61 year life-span, it caused him more than 400 fractures and kept him confined to a wheel chair. That he was able to overcome these limitations to become a successful musician and teacher is a tribute to his determination and ability. He will be missed.

Stevan Galbreath

NOTES

The Band extends its thanks to assistant director Rick Wolfgang for rehearsing and conducting the Spring Concert while director Dr. Terry Oxley had teaching commitments.

The band wishes to thank Betty Hummel of Lime Ridge for donating two instruments, an alto saxophone and an Eb sousaphone. We appreciate her interest in and support of the band.

The CMB Newsletter is available on a subscription basis to non-band members who make a donation to the band. The donation will be used to cover printing and mailing costs. Contact Stevan Galbreath, manager, for information at sagalbreath@hotmail.com.

Your tax deductible contributions are gratefully accepted by the Catawissa Military Band. Donations may be sent to:

Catawissa Military Band
115 S. Berger Ave.
Catawissa, PA 17820

Thank you for your continued support.

Wings Over the South Pacific III

Note: The stand down period following World War II had its own set of problems, as evidenced by part three of band member Charlie Webb's experiences as a radio operator in the South Pacific aboard the C-46 transport plane "Baby Shoes." An earlier issue had erroneously identified him a navigator, we stand corrected. -- S.G.

Years ago, weather reports were not exactly as accurate as today. We were transporting a USO troupe to entertain the troops on Okinawa when we encountered an unforeseen typhoon over the South China Sea. The eye of a typhoon is quite calm, the perimeter is extremely turbulent. We were being pounded to such an extent that the USO troupe members were air sick, frightened and really panicky.

We entered the eye of the storm and the flying became smooth. The troupe members were commenting on how glad they were to be out of the turbulence -- I didn't have the heart to tell them, "Enjoy it now, as it won't last very long." It didn't. When we came to the other side, the renewed turbulence had the group even more upset. They (and we) were more than happy to make the landing in Okinawa.

We once encountered a severe tropical storm between Australia and New Guinea. The precipitation static along the fuselage was so intense that I could not make radio contact with Australia. The turbulence was extreme. I continuously kept handing a towel to the pilot to wipe the perspiration off his hands while he fought with the controls.

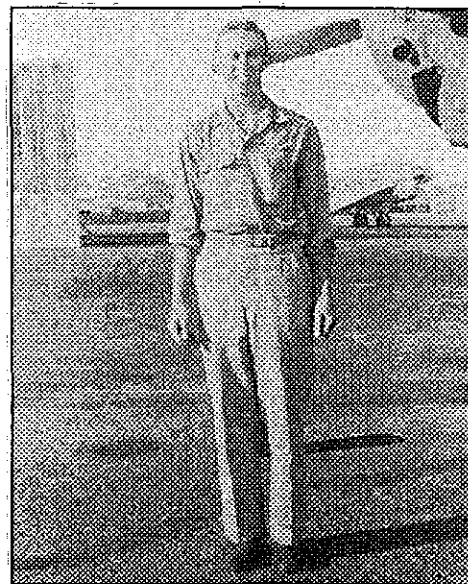
Suddenly, we hit a down draft which flipped the plane over on its side. I noticed the altimeter hand moving around rapidly in a downward direction. We dropped a considerable distance -- far enough to be in the ocean, I felt -- when just as suddenly, we came

out of the down draft and were able to resume our assigned flight path.

During a crossing of the Owen-Stanley Mountains in New Guinea, I learned how pleasant it would be to pass away from lack of oxygen. We had done a routine check on our oxygen system prior to departing Manila. I had just signed off from Biak and was preparing to change the transmitter frequency. I opened the manual to check the frequency, closed it and thought, "I'll do it later." I put my head down on the desk and went to sleep. Fortunately, the crew chief came into the cockpit, saw me and placed the oxygen mask over my face. I had failed to notice that the pilot started climbing. Normally, I need oxygen at 13,000 feet and we were already at 15,000 ft. I later found out that combat crews automatically use oxygen at 10,000 ft. As I said, "It's a nice way to go."

On one occasion, we were flying from Brisbane with approximately 15 women on board. They were headed to Manila to work as secretaries in the military offices. Regulations required that we carry a parachute for each passenger. There were back parachutes scattered around the cabin, but I always kept a seat chute in my chair in the cockpit.

We had taken off and were gaining altitude when the starboard engine began misfiring. A fully loaded C-46 can not maintain altitude with only one engine. The pilot ordered me to request an emergency landing at Eagle Farm Airstrip. Fortunately, there was enough altitude to make a straight in approach and landing. On landing, the sight in the cabin was rather unusual as the passengers were all wearing a variety of parachutes, back packs, chest packs and a few with seat packs. Happily, we didn't have to use them.



Charlie Webb
at Eagle Farm Airstrip
1946

Man-made problems were often the most frustrating. I was once assigned to a flight on a C-47 which was carrying our Foreign Liquidation Committee along with some Chinese officials who were purchasing left over military equipment. The destination was Biak, off the mainland of New Guinea. On the return to Manila, the pilot was at the end of the runway going through the pre-flight checklist, when he found the ailerons wouldn't function. They are used to keep the plane level in flight and to assist the rudder in making turns. A wooden block is slipped over them when the plane is on the ground to keep them rigid and prevent wind damage. The flight engineer had neglected to remove the blocks. The plane wouldn't have gone very far off the runway with locked ailerons.

Next: Transporting POWs and the farewell to "Baby Shoes."