From The President
BY AMY HALL

This is my final farewell letter to all of you out there in Music Land. I appreciate the opportunity to serve the BCB as president for the last year and a half. A lot of positive growth and development has occurred during my term and that of previous presidents. We have more members, have done more concerts, and successfully performed the 1812 Overture with the help of the Roanoke Guard Band, Celebration Chorus, and Roanoke Guard Infantry (The guys with the cannons!). I am hopeful that the band will continue growing and progressing to become the best community band in the state! (Oh heck, Why not the best in the country!) Maybe next year we'll perform "Night on Bald Mountain." (Right, Jim?)

With the holidays drawing near, the unity of the Band is more important than ever for spreading the Holiday Spirit throughout the community. Many community organizations and facilities do not always get an opportunity to hear live performances. The BCB fills a very important niche within the New River Valley. Many of the local nursing homes have a standing invitation for us to perform because of the joy our music brings to their residents.

Thank You and Happy Holidays

Amy J. Hall

New Members

The Blacksburg Community Band would like to welcome all of our new members from the past few months. We are starting the season with a strong group. Let's keep up the good work and have a great year.

FLUTE
Shari Barbour
Kim Calter
Danya Nunley
Jessica Smoldt
Sean Stevens
Shari Zaloga

CLARINET
Lance Matheson
Virginia Ramsey
Steve Zaloga

ALTO CLARINET
Stan Ward

ALTO SAXOPHONE
Mike Nunley
Dina Saad
Dorothy Strater

TENOR SAXOPHONE
Petie Martin
Scott Valentine

CORNET/TRUMPET
Dan McPherson

TROMBONE
Elsa Laughlin
Daniel Morgan

PERCUSSION
Brian Boshoff
Joseph M. Stacey

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Where have all the Saquebutts gone?

by John Howell

We think of today’s musical instruments as the apex of the instrument makers’ art, the final development, the Way Things Ought To Be. Sure, some of our brass players are using mouthpieces that weigh as much as a shot put, and Wynton Marsalis is playing a trumpet that looks more like a Calder sculpture. (I’m an expert on Calder because we had one in front of the Musical Arts Center at Indiana University. We all called it “The Helicopter Crash.” I think he called it something else.) And there is obviously a conspiracy that no two tubas in the entire world can ever look the same. But basically we’ve achieved perfection and we can look back at those silly Renaissance and Baroque instruments and laugh.

Right? Don’t be so sure.

This afternoon on WVTTF I heard a nostalgic recording of a piece featuring an instrument that no longer exists. And it isn’t a Medieval or Renaissance instrument. The piece was written in the 1950s. The instrument was in common use in every city and town, and most rural areas as well. Everybody knew its sound. But today—well, you might find an old one somewhere, and it might still work, but they haven’t been made for years and the technicians who used to keep them operating have retired or found other jobs.

The piece is one of Leroy Anderson’s clever compositions for the Boston Pops. The title of the piece (and the featured instrument) is “The Typewriter.” He used the three most characteristic sounds of the acoustic typewriter: the distinctive tap of the type bar impacting on a hard rubber roller, the elfin “ding” of the little bell that sounded when you approached the end of each line, and the satisfying, heavy “zip-thunk” of the carriage being thrown back to the beginning of the line—a sound that even a sickly 95-pound typist could produce with perfect clarity.

Lest you think this a one-time novelty use of the instrument, my wife points out that the typewriter was also carefully scored in the original theme music for Murder, She Wrote, and the score had to be changed when Jessica switched from her ancient Remington to a modern word processor. And the tapping of the type bars can still be heard in the leadin to the “Letters” section of All Things Considered on public radio.

Ah, the sounds we have lost! First the “thunk” of the carriage, replaced on the L.B.M. Selectric by the boring hum of a stepper motor. Then the solid tap of type bar against hard rubber, reduced to a feeble flutter on daisy wheel typewriters. And finally—surely the ultimate insult—the replacement of that melodious “ding” by an insulting electronic squawk.

Today the computer word processor has largely replaced both the acoustic and electrified typewriters with a digital, silent, wonderfully efficient and totally unmusical creature that can check your spelling and grammar and print out your writing in a cornucopian variety of oddly-named fonts, but has no musical quality whatever. The laser printer hums and clicks to itself. The daisy-wheel printer has musical qualities similar to those of the average coffee grinder. The dot-matrix printer sounds like nothing so much as the back seam of your trousers ripping out.

Yet for one shining moment the humble workhorse of the typing pool did rival the finest products of Stradivarius, Selmer, and Steinway, and for that we can only be grateful. Requiescat in pacem, ye who however humble were known as Royal. Sic transit gloria. If we have lost the saquebutt, can the saxophone be far behind?
Northwest Carols

by Lance Matheson

One Christmas in Seattle we heard these new lyrics for some old favorites developed by a local Norwegian entertainer (the Northwest has a large Scandinavian population). So try to imagine these being sung by a guy named Ollie, accompanied by an accordion.

Ragnar The Flat Nosed Reindeer

Ragnar the flat nosed reindeer had a funny looking snout. 
So Santa cut his nose off, just to try and smooth it out. 
And when he sewed it back on, Santa got it upside down. 
Now every time the rain falls, poor ol' Ragnar nearly drowns. 
Then one foggy Christmas eve Santa came to say, 
He says, "Ragnar with your nose so flat, won't you tell us where I'm at?"
Then Ragnar took a deep breath and he looked so very strange. 
He said, "We're out behind the stockyards. 
How I wish the wind would change."

Winter Underwear (Winter Wonderland)

Sleigh bells ring and I'm listening, but I am turning and twisting. 
Because I am itching up here and scratching down there,
A walking in my winter underwear. 
Now the front is all battered and then the back is all tattered. 
But when I'm cold to the core I crawl up through the trap door and up into my winter underwear. 
Well I don't care if it rains or snows or freezes, I am so warm I just don't give a hoot. I put on all the stockings I can locate and then I wear two pairs of trousers with my suit.
But when I start to perspire, yeah then it sets me on fire. 
Because I am itching up here and scratching down there, 
A walking in my winter underwear. 
(rit) I got 'em at Nordstrom's (originally a Seattle shoe store)
Walking in my winter underwear.

Up On The Roof Top

I'm putting on a big white fluffy beard 'cuz I will impersonate Santa Claus. 
Wearing my Santa Claus disguise Will give the kids a big surprise. 
To climb on the roof is a simple trick. I'll come down the chimney like old Saint Nick. 
Kids will be waiting by the fireplace To see old Santa Claus' smiling face.

Chorus

Ho Ho Ho don't you ever go. 
Up on the rooftop please don't go. 
The average rood is much too slick. You go up fast, but you come down quick.

I climbed up the ladder and I got on the roof. I am a very simple minded goof. It's very dark and I can't see, I walked into the aerial of the TV. I grab the aerial before I know, I knock it loose and away we go. I slip and slide and then I fell. I land upon my head and hear the Christmas bells.

Chorus

I fall off the roof and knock down the gate The kids run outside to investigate I am unconscious from fall on head. the kids think Santa Claus is dead. The next day kids are wearing a frown The TV aerial has been knocked down. Sesame Street we cannot see. It's a lousy Christmas without a TV.
Too many instruments?

BY JIM MARCHMAN
MEMBER, AMERICAN MUSICAL INSTRUMENT SOCIETY

I am often asked why I lug a suitcase full of horns to band practice and concerts. I suppose the typical trumpet player would respond with something about just being a "horny" guy; however, being a mild mannered cornet player at heart (cornet players are usually more "fulfilled" than trumpet players, that's why the instrument has a more pleasing tone) I'll try to give a better answer. Just why does Jim Marchman have so many instruments? Before joining the Blacksburg Community Band I usually owned only one instrument at a time, a cornet. Like most brass players who started in the 1950's, I began with a cornet, a Pan American brand student model (I think Conn made it), purchased by my parents when I was in 4th grade. In high school I saved my money and traded my then quite well worn instrument for a Connstellation "long model" cornet, a nickel and brass beauty that was Conn's top of the line and looked more like a trumpet than a cornet. This was my instrument until an arsonist burned down the music building at N. C. State and I became a man without a horn.

For the next several years (I played through much of graduate school) I played a university owned Conn Connstellation cornet just like the one I had owned. After the fire the music department furnished these for all thirty "trumpet" players in the band. They didn't allow any real trumpets in the band since the cornet, not the trumpet, is the true "band" instrument. That's why most of our music says "cornet" instead of trumpet.

So, when I left college I had no horn of my own. Today, I have 15! That's right, 15 instruments; 4 cornets, 7 trumpets, 2 flugelhorns, a slide trumpet and a valve trombone. It all started with a really cheap German made cornet my Dad gave me after I left college. This is a horn made by the K&H (KUHNLE) company with a space left in the engraving on its bell for any retail chain to stamp in their own brand. It is hard to play and the tone is bad. I painted it black and blue with red inside the bell and I have used it in a couple of our July 4th parades.

About a year before the Community Band started I got an invitation to go to a band reunion at N. C. State and play with the band at homecoming. I got sort of excited about this and went to Ken's Music and bought a used Holton student model cornet, the first instrument I used when I joined our band. After a few months with the Community Band I decided that it was time to once again invest in a good instrument, so I bought Holton's top of the line professional model Cornet which is still my instrument of choice. Now I have three cornets!

Next came a flugelhorn, a Blessing XL model, which I bought after hearing John Gregg play his flugelhorn and its wonderful deep tone. I was still the only one in the "trum-
pet” section without a trumpet. Then a friend
gave me a trumpet he had found at a yard sale,
telling me that I needed at least one trumpet to
go with my four other instruments. This was
an “American Prep” model by the William
Frank Company of Barrington, IL, a student
instrument from the early 1950’s. I’ve never
tried to use this horn in the band, but I did
decide to buy a used Blessing XL silver trumpet
that Ken gave me a good deal on and this has
joined the flugelhorn and good cornet as my
primary instruments.

Well, let’s see, that accounts for 6 instri-
mants. What about the others? At some point I
became interested in both old and different
instruments. The quest for the old has led me
to flea markets and antique shops around the
world where I have found several horns. The
best of these is a Conn Circus Bore cornet made
in 1917. It is a silver instrument with an en-
graved, gold inlaid bell and a complete
second set of tuning slides to allow playing in
either “high” or “low” pitch. Bands in those
days tuned to one of the two pitches of concert Bb
and many horns had slides made to work for
either.

Another find was a Conn 40-B silver
trumpet made in 1932. I bought this because of
its unusual shape and design which reflects the
“streamline” design fad of the early 1930’s. It
has fluted valve casings, spit valves blended
into the tuning slides, a heavily engraved bell,
and is very narrow in shape (instrument ex-
erts call it a “pea-shooter” design). An inter-
esting feature is the “rimless” bell, thought at
the time to produce a sharper, clearer tone.
This contrasts considerably with another
antique shop find, a silver King (H. N. White
Co. of Cleveland) Liberty Model trumpet made
in 1928 with an extra heavy rim on its bell, also
claimed to give a better tone. The King has
removable sections in its tuning slides to allow
tuning to C instead of Bb. Still another interest-
ing trumpet was found at the famous Hillsville
Flea Market. This is another “pea-shooter”
shape instrument with removable slide sections
for use in C or Bb but it is a real cheapie, made
in Czechoslovakia in the 1920’s with the name
Marceau poorly stamped into an oval engraved
on its bell. Marceau was a brand Sears &
Roebuck put on the “genuine European made”
band instruments sold through its catalog! I
have thoroughly enjoyed rebuilding these old
horns and making them playable again.

I was always interested in German
style, rotary valve trumpets and flugelhorns, so
when I found an affordable used one in an
antique shop in Zurich, Switzerland I couldn’t
resist. So another of my better instruments is a
rotary valve flugelhorn made by the Gebruder
Alexander Company of Germany.

Let’s see now, I think that accounts for
11 horns, if I’ve counted right. Two of the
others are C trumpets, one made in Holland
under the “Olds” brand name, and the other, a
Blessing, top of the line, model B-152. Not even
Ed Turner could get the Olds to play in tune
(maybe it would have helped if he had worn
his red, sequined vest!) so the Blessing became
my most recent acquisition. My final two
instruments were bought just because they
were different and available at a good price.
One is a valve trombone. This departure from
my usual range of instrument was the result of
an opportunity I couldn’t pass up to get some-
thing different when the Sears catalog went out
of business and everything got down to half
price. And, as long as I had a trombone made
to play like a trumpet, why shouldn’t I have a
trumpet that plays like a trombone? That
thought led to the slide trumpet I purchased
last January in Paris. It looks like a trombone
made for an elf.

Too many horns, you say. You’re right.
But it sure has been a lot of fun. My motto is:
“If you can’t play with quality, do it with
quantity!” After all, how can you be expected
to play in tune if you are always switching
instruments? See you at the next gig, perhaps
with still another horn.

P.S. Since this was written, Jim has found
another cornet; an 1893 Henry Distin. Ed.
Oktoberfest

by Mary Keffer

The Sauerkraut Band, under the direction of our own Ed Schwartz, just completed another great year of Oktoberfest. Several members of the BCB played in the band this year. In the trumpet section were Ed Turner, Russell Shock, Mike Reid, Kathy Duncan, John Gregg, Damien Wimbush, and David Jenkins, who incidentally earned his doctorate this year. Jude Raffeiner, Dan Conway, Seth Williamson, and Ed Schwartz provided in the low brass section. Mary Keffer, Bob Langford, Jennifer Wall and Jennifer Jablonski played in the woodwind section. Mary Rhoades and the Virginia Tech Folk Dance group helped out with the dancing and marching at Mountain Lake. The band played six weeks of Oktoberfest gigs in various places including the Jagerheim Restaurant in Salem, P.K.'s in Blacksburg and of course Mountain Lake. If you missed the fun you can still get a copy of the band's CD so you can do the Chicken Dance at home.

Stork Report

Angie & Scott Meller are the proud parents of Katherine Aline Meller, 10 lbs. 8 oz., born August 21, 1996.

Dan & Martha Conway added a third member to their under-4-foot basketball team. Matthew Thomas Conway, was born October 19.

Jude & Leah Raffeinner are expecting a boy or girl soon. (More accurate information will be published as soon as it is available. Ed.)

Marriages

Aasha Blakely and Michael Leahy will be joined in Holy Matrimony on November 16 at 7:00 PM at St. Francis Anglican Church in Blacksburg.

Congratulations to Jill Alberts, a long-lost member of the clarinet section, who was married last summer.
Oboist Collects Barbies

BY ELIZABETH BOWLES

Since Renee told me I could write about something non-musical, I thought I'd take a few lines to tell you about my not-quite-summer vacation. My cousin, wayward band member Terri Broyles and I traveled to Philadelphia to the National Barbie Doll Convention. As some of you may already know, I collect vintage Barbie dolls and her accessories (clothes, cases, cars - Ken). It was really exciting because only 800 people are allowed registration out of thousands that apply. It was our first convention, although it was our second attempt at registration.

As the convention was held in Philadelphia, home of "American Bandstand," its theme was "Barbie & the Bandstand," and old rock & roll was the order of the day. At registration, we got a tote bag filled with goodies like Aqua Net hairspray, our very own rat-tail styling combs and American Bandstand trading cards. We also got a great vinyl record tote (remember those?) which came in handy as at every event we went to we were given a different oldie 45 rpm record (remember those?).

There were several events that proved to be most interesting. One was a Mattel focus group. The Barbie manufacturer broke us up into small groups, showed us prototypes of ideas they had for the future and let us voice our opinions. Another was the Style Show, which is a fashion show where conventioneers make life-sized versions of old Barbie fashions and model them for the audience. This was amazing! The favorite was convention chairwoman Dick Tahsin, who made and modeled "Ken A Go-Go," a number circa 1965 that came with striped shirt ala Kingston Trio, guitar and frightful Beatle wig. He did himself (and Ken) proud. Then there was the competition room, where people could compete for best doll in a time frame or compete in certain categories, i.e., "Girl Groups," "TV Shows," "Scenes from Movies." You made your dolls fit the categories by changing hair, makeup, and designing clothes. Terri and I undertook the mammoth task of trying to enter some of these competitions, as first-time conventioneers, and to our amazement, actually won a first place ribbon in the "TV" category with our "Addams Family" (complete with Thing and Cousin Itt). We were shocked!

Of course, throughout the convention, dealers from all over the country were set up in the salesroom — a huge room wall to wall with Barbies for sale. And yes, as was reported on CNN that week, there were Barbies selling for upwards of $7,000.00 — so go to your attic and start digging.
Upcoming Schedule At-A-Glance

Full Band Schedule
1. Dec. 7, Saturday, 12:00 PM - Blacksburg Christmas Parade, Main Street Post Office parking lot, Blacksburg
2. Dec. 7, Saturday, 7:00 PM - Old Narrows High School, Narrows
3. Dec. 12, Thursday, 7:00 PM - Warm Hearth Village, Karr Activity Center, Blacksburg
4. Dec. 15, Sunday, 1:30 PM - NRV Mall Food Court, Christiansburg
5. Dec. 18, Wednesday, 7:00 PM - NRV Mall Food Court, Christiansburg

Small Group Schedule (two people per section)
6. Dec. 9, Monday, 7:00 PM - English Meadows, Christiansburg
7. Dec. 14, Saturday, 2:00 PM - Heritage Hall, Blacksburg
8. Dec. 16, Monday, 7:00 PM - Skyline Manor, Floyd
9. Dec. 17, Tuesday, 7:00 PM - Wheatland Hills, Radford

Disclaimer

The Blacksburg Community Band Newsletter is an occasional communication organ of the Blacksburg Community Band (sort of).

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily anyone’s in particular, so they are not necessarily the views of the Blacksburg Community Band, the Town of Blacksburg, the Commonwealth of Virginia or the United States of America! Believe what you wish to believe, forget the rest.

If you have a problem with anything in this rag, contact our lawyers in Boston, the law firm of Dewey, Cheetham & Howe (firm on retainer by Click & Clack).

If you decide to litigate one of our writers, let us know so we can run the slanderous louse out of town.

The Blacksburg Community Band
725 Patrick Henry Drive
Blacksburg, VA 24060

[cursive handwriting]

Spring Concert Saturday
April 12