

Holiday Trees and Redemption

by Anne Cospers, Editor

Last year I wrote about my father's attachment to "the tree." "The tree" was artificial and decorated our home for over thirty Christmases.

Assembling "the tree" was time consuming and tedious, interminable for an impatient child.

Season after season, that tree was always a part of the holidays. It became shabbier, shedding plastic needles and missing parts, but by then it was "our" tree - well, Dad's anyway.

A sentimental Christmas memory, right? I never guessed "the tree" would achieve revenge or that my own words would be used against me.

Setting up the Christmas tree at work was my job this year. It is stored in a box labeled "ugly tree." It is not a misnomer.

"Remember that article you wrote about the tree?" asked my coworkers. They were up to something, alright, and I dreaded what was coming.

Their reasoning was that since I had experience setting up "the tree", it made sense that I should also deal with "ugly tree." I still don't see the logic.

Logical or not, the day after Thanksgiving found me sorting white branches and trying to make sense of bad directions.

The tree is up, looking better with the addition of decorations.

Continued on page three

Cold Comrades

by Lisa Chernesky, Staff Writer

I like winter. I always have. I was the kid walking to school with my coat unzipped, hat and mittens in my pocket, and my face flushed pink with warmth. My friends were bundled in parkas with hats, hoods and double mittens. Except for a tiny breathing vent, their scarves were layered around their faces. And they were still shivering.

Flash forward 25 years -- I still like winter. By the end of May, I'm ready for snow. I would rather shovel the sidewalks and driveway than mow the lawn. Hot humid summer air seems so stale. There's something refreshing about being out in the cold weather.

For our 10 minute breaks, my co-workers would go out to the unsheltered designated smoking area. I would tag along for the "fresh air."

"It's cold out here," Karen complained.

"It's not cold until you inhale and your nostrils stick together," I replied.

"You're crazy," John taunted. "You don't even need to be out here in the cold. You don't smoke."

"I like this weather. It must be my northern European ancestry. Those Lithuanian winters could be pretty harsh," I explained.

"You're crazy," John insists.

"I'm Baltic," I announce in my best Michael Keaton-as-Batman voice. I slide my coat back onto my shoulders. The wind must have blown it off.

Continued on page three

Fall Concert

Sunday, December 7, 2008
2:00 p.m.

Christ United Evangelical
Lutheran Church Catawissa
No Admission Charge

Coming Events

Dec. 4, 6:30 p.m. Castle Illumination at the Bloomsburg Public Library. Children's program of holiday stories, music by Scott Atherton, and an appearance by a very special guest.

Dec. 9, 7:00 p.m., Catawissa Military Band holiday concert in the central gazebo of the Columbia Mall, Columbia Mall Drive, Buckhorn.

Dec. 14, 7:00 p.m., Touch of Brass will sponsor the 12th annual Community Carol Sing at the First United Methodist Church of Berwick. Freewill offering to benefit local charities.

Dec 23, 7:00 p.m., Christmas caroling by members of the Catawissa Military Band. Anyone wishing to sing with the band is asked to meet at the Band Hall at 7:00 p.m.

*Happy
Holidays
from the
Staff of the
Catawissa
Military
Band
Newsletter*

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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High Pitch, Low Pitch, Old Pitch, New Pitch

By Stevan Galbreath, Assistant Editor

Anyone who has that spent some amount of time around bands has probably encountered high pitch instruments. These are relics of the musical philosophy of the 19th century. Historically, tunings varied from town to town, but with little inter-urban contact between musicians, standardization was not an important issue. By the early 19th century, it was.

Influenced by soloists, who felt playing sharp carried better, tunings had crept upwards (especially for wind instruments and organs), reaching a theoretical standard of A-452.5 Hz (Hertz or cycles per second) by the 1820s. However, in actual practice, most 19th century wind instruments were tuned even higher to A-454 Hz.

Research in Germany during the 1830s proved that, by the laws of physics, the correct frequency was A-440.2 Hz (usually rounded to A-440). It would be another 20 years before the true standard pitch came into widespread use (French orchestras were the first).

In the United States, the influx of German musicians during the post-Civil War years brought in a significant group of low pitch advocates. Several musicians' organizations, including the newly formed American Federation of Musicians, joined the push in the early 20th century. To cover the fact that many American orchestras had already made the changeover, instrument makers began to provide top line-brasses with both high and low pitch tuning slides. Bands continued to play in the old A-454 Hz until the decision to stop producing and selling high pitch instruments was reached in 1921.

Over the next few years, bands converted their brasses by adding tubing to the tuning slide and the valve slides. Woodwinds could not be modified and had to be replaced. The Military Band made the switch in 1924 at a cost of more than \$400 (for the brass modifications alone).

The last organizations in the world to play in high pitch were British brass bands, who delayed the inevitable until after World War II.

DID YOU KNOW

Jingle Bells, the oldest American secular Christmas song, was written in Savannah, Georgia, by transplanted Northerner James L. Pierpoint (1822-93). First published in 1857 as *One-Horse Open Sleigh*, it was retitled *Jingle Bells* in the second printing two years later. It is believed that the lyrics are a nostalgic reference to the sleigh races Pierpoint participated in as a New England youth. The well-known chorus melody is a modified version of the original made by an uncredited arranger sometime during the 1880s. A native of Boston, Pierpoint spent most of his adult life as a music teacher and church organist in Georgia and Florida.

Redemption Cont.

As for my coworkers, no more copies of the newsletter.

Perhaps that could change in this season of redemption.

Phillies closer Mitch Williams waited a long time for his redemption. In 1993, Williams broke fans' hearts with his World Series losing pitch to Toronto's Joe Carter. The next season, after a nine run inning with the Red Barons, it was clear that Williams' pitching career was over.

He managed a bowling alley for awhile and eventually landed a job as a commentator for Comcast.

Williams regained some degree of credibility as a knowledgeable and colorful commentator, but waited fifteen years for true forgiveness. Fifteen years until he again found himself at the World Series with the Phillies.

Phillies fans have it tough, this season's World Series win was only the second in the franchise's 126 year history. While there was much for long-suffering supporters to celebrate, what really got me were the signs waved by fans at the trophy ceremony. Signs that said "Mitch we forgive you" and "Mitch you're off the hook."

Later I heard that Williams' daughter retrieved the bed sheet sign "Mitch you're off the hook" so he could display it in his house. If that isn't redemption, I don't know what is. Happy Holidays.

Answers to Christmas Quiz

1. Animal crackers. 2. The Yule log. 3. Two, one in the Pacific Ocean, one in the Indian Ocean. 4. 1937, Austria. 5. 1947. 6. Britain. 7. Norway. 8. Nova Scotia. 9. Syria. 10. *One-Horse Open Sleigh*.

Cold Cont.

John and Tanya mumble insinuations about my state of mind and mental stability. Through chattering teeth, my shivering coworkers agree. But that's ok. The teasing is all in good fun. Besides, if I can shrug off the 10 degrees, plus wind chill factor, with an open coat, I can face a few biting comments from my coworkers.

Merry Christmas everyone.

Christmas Quiz

1. What treat was designed to hang on a Christmas tree?
2. What Christmas tradition was handed down from the Druids?
3. How many Christmas islands are there? Bonus: where are they?
4. In what year was the first postage stamp commemorating Christmas issued? Bonus: name the country?
5. In what year did Toys for Tots have its first toy drive for needy children?
6. Where is it thought to bring 12 months of good luck by eating a mince pie each of the twelve days of Christmas?
7. In what country are brooms hidden on Christmas Eve to prevent evil spirits from riding them?
8. What Canadian Province leads the world in exporting Christmas trees?
9. In what country are Christmas gifts brought by one of the Wise Men's camels?
10. What was the original title of James Pierpoint's *Jingle Bells*?

NOTES

The Band thanks Treasurer Bill Rice for arranging the purchase and transporting of the replacement chairs in the band hall.

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 IV

by Charles Webb

Note: This is the final installment of Charlie Webb's account of his service as a radio operator with the Army Air Corps aboard the C-46 transport "Baby Shoes" during the stand-down period of World War II. We thank Charlie for sharing his experiences. -- S.G.

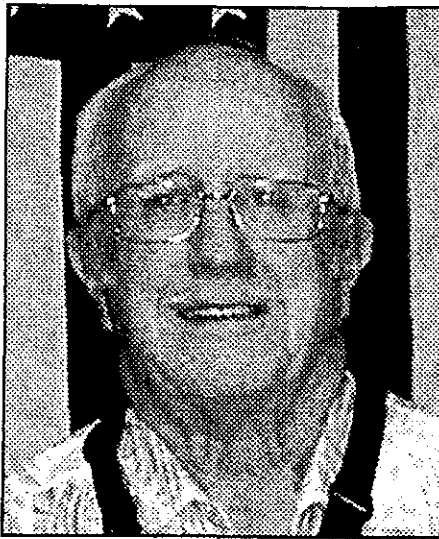
As military personnel were being demobilized, plans were made to close another hospital in the southern Philippines. A Second Lieutenant was placed in charge of this program, which included transporting the medicinal whiskey from the hospital to the officers club in Manila. This lieutenant was very short and was flying as copilot. We had two layers of whiskey cases, extending from the navigation table to the entrance door. That was a lot of whiskey. The pilot then asked the copilot lieutenant if he would like to do the take-off. Unfortunately, he said "yes."

His legs were so short that we folded a blanket to put behind his back so he could reach the rudder and brake pedals. The pilot advised him that if *Baby Shoes* should begin to yaw (swing back and forth) while gaining take-off speed, he should correct with the rudder, not the brakes.

We were on our take-off roll, approaching take-off speed, when *Baby Shoes* started to yaw. The copilot, attempting to compensate for the yaw, touched the brake pedal instead of the rudder pedal. *Baby Shoes* pivoted and headed toward the edge of the runway. The runway ran along side and very close to the ocean. Reacting quickly, the pilot shoved the throttles to full power, pulled back on the controls, and over the sand we went. I could see ocean spray flying after we flew over the beach. If we had hit the water, there would have been schools of intoxicated fish in the Leyte Gulf.

Last Flight

The C-46 was quite versatile insofar as the cargo that could be carried.



Charles Webb, 2007.

Litters could be installed on the sides of the cabin. We were transferring about 30 Japanese POWs (prisoners of war), who were combat casualties, from a hospital in the southern Philippines to a hospital in Manila. There were quite a few military police on board to guard the prisoners in the event they became troublesome.

I had called ahead to have ambulances meet us. It was during the rainy season and we would have a difficult time landing that evening. Manila Airways informed us that visibility was zero at Nichols Field and that we should proceed to Nielson Field. By the time we arrived at Nielson Field, visibility was zero there, also.

The pilot told me to ask Manila Airways to bring us in on radar at Nichols Field. Manila Airways was giving us flight directions when, suddenly, they said they had lost us on the radar screen. I won't repeat what the pilot said. We kept circling and dropping in altitude until we could see the landing lights along the runway. On landing, we taxied to operations, where the ambulances were waiting. I was opening the cabin door when I heard crunching noise and felt the plane shudder. An

ambulance had driven into our horizontal stabilizer and crumpled it.

It was one of the saddest days of my life, when two weeks later, as we were being transported to the dock for boarding our transport [ship] home, when the convoy passed *Baby Shoes* parked on the line with her tail crumpled in.

The pilots apparently had confidence in our crew as evidenced by the following:

Several times, the pilot and copilot would activate the autopilot controls and go back in the cabin to play cards with the navigator. I would assume a position in the pilot seat and the flight engineer would take the copilot seat. With the headsets on and the radio compass in the homing position, we used the fine adjustment on the autopilot to stay on course by following the homing beam as designated by morse code. Using today's terminology, this was pretty "cool" for a 19 year old crew member.

The writer hopes you have not been bored by these recollections of incidents which occurred more than 60 years ago. -- Charles B. Webb

Note -- The C-46 Commando was a military version of the Curtis-Wright CW-40, a civilian airliner placed in service in 1940. Its large twin radial engines gave it exceptional (for the time) cargo capacity and the ability to operate at high altitudes. It was widely used to fly supplies from Burma to China (Over the Hump) and on short runways in the Pacific.

The down-side was high fuel consumption, which led to its replacement by the more fuel-efficient C-47 in the post-war years. A few civilian model CW-40s are still in use as cargo carriers in remote regions of Canada and South America -- S.G.