

CATAWISSA MILITARY BAND

December 2009

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 7 No. 1

Perils of Holiday Inflation

by Anne Cosper, Editor

The Fleischer brothers animation is the stuff of dreams -- bad dreams. *Snow White* featured Betty Boop and an amorphous Cab Calloway singing *St. James Infirmary Blues*. Yep, nothing suggests cartoon merriment like *St. James Infirmary*.

Before big budget CGI disasters, there was *Koko's Earth Control*. Max and Dave's end of the world fable with truly bizarre special effects got it right.

Then there's *Bimbo's Initiation*, where the title character is chased through a maze of horrors. Capturing the twisted logic of nightmares, *Bimbo's Initiation* is the creepiest thing I've seen. Ever.

Last December I returned from morning break wild-eyed and panting, babbling that "...it felt like I was in a Fleischer cartoon."

Between my workplace and coffee, was a store Christmas display. Dozens of inflatable decorations, of the sort that sprout on lawns at an alarming rate, lined the sidewalk. I had to pass through a gauntlet of freakishly large teddy bears, menacing reindeer and leering Santas.

It was windy that day and the inflatables bobbed and lurched, straining at their tethers. An oversized snowman bounced to the ground, blocked the sidewalk, returned upright, only to repeat the routine. Again and again.

I considered returning to work,
Continued on page three

On the Road with Edvard Munch

by Lisa Chernesky, Staff Writer

I have a road rage pillow in the car. When my friend, Jeff, gave me the pillow, it wasn't intended for the car -- or for road rage.

On the front of the pillow is my all-time favorite painting, Edvard Munch's *The Scream*. It's an Expressionist painting of a black robed figure on a boardwalk in Oslo. The hands are placed along side it's skull-like face, a la McAuley Culkin after applying aftershave in the movie *Home Alone*. The sea and sky are swirls of color and it's unclear if the figure is feeling the effects of a scream or is actually screaming. When the pillow is pushed, it emits a scream of its own.

Several years ago I was on my way home from work with the pillow on the seat next to me. The car in front slammed on his brakes. He put his right turn signal on in the middle of the turn. I reached over to smack the pillow -- AAAARRRRGGHH!!! The pillow has been in my car ever since.

Anyone who's ever driven will know that I've had plenty of opportunities to use the road rage pillow. There are drivers who roll through stop signs. There are drivers who will make a right turn on red without stopping. There are drivers who turn when the sign clearly indicates No Turn on Red. There are drivers who will sit at green lights, but drive through red lights. There are drivers who will drive the shoulder to get a better position in a traffic jam, then expect to be let back in line. There are drivers who drive under the speed limit (way under) when you're late. There are drivers who will race past you in a passing zone,

Continued on page three

Fall Concert

Sunday, December 6, 2009
2:00 p.m.

Christ United Evangelical
Lutheran Church, Catawissa
No Admission Charge

Coming Events

Dec. 10, 6:30 p.m. Castle Illumination at the Bloomsburg Public Library. Children's program of holiday stories, music and an appearance by a very special guest.

Dec. 8, 7:00 p.m., Catawissa Military Band holiday concert in the central gazebo of the Columbia Mall, Columbia Mall Drive, Buckhorn.

Dec. 13, 7:00 p.m., Touch of Brass will sponsor the 13th annual Community Carol Sing at the First United Methodist Church of Berwick. Freewill offering to benefit local charities.

Dec 22, 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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Fall Concert Highlights

By Stevan Galbreath, Assistant Editor

The Catawissa Military Band will hold its annual fall concert on Sunday December 6, 2:00 p.m., at the Christ United Evangelical Lutheran Church, Church St., Catawissa. There will be no admission charge.

The program will be under the direction of Jessica Martz and will feature a variety of concert band selections and seasonal music. Among the pieces performed will be *Variations on a Korean Folk Song* by John Barnes Chance, *Sabre and Spurs* cavalry march by Sousa, a medley of Duke Ellington numbers, and the seldom performed symphonic march *Little Italy* arranged especially for the Military Band. Seasonal selections include arrangements of the traditional carols *O Holy Night* and *Greensleeves*, along with a medley of popular holiday songs from the 1940s and 1950s.

Conductor Jessica Martz is a graduate of Berwick High School and Wilkes University. A member of the band for ten years, she has been a music teacher and band director in the Sullivan County School District, and later taught at the Columbia County Christian School in Buckhorn. She now resides in the Berwick area with her husband Greg and two daughters.

Thanks

The editorial staff extends its thanks to Christopher Byerly of Bloomsburg for his gracious permission to allow the use of one of several drawings made during the spring concert. It has been reproduced on page four of this issue.

DID YOU KNOW

One of America's oldest secular Christmas songs, *Up on the Housetop* (also *Rooftop*) was written by Benjamin Handy (1833-67). Known locally as the "Stephen Foster of Ohio," Handy (no relation to W. C.) was a teacher and minister in his hometown of Westerville. Shortly before his death, he accepted a position with music publisher Root & Cady in Chicago. Written several years earlier, *Up on the Housetop* was first published in 1866 under the title *Santa Claus*. The inspiration was taken directly from Clement Moore's earlier poem *A Visit from St. Nicholas* (*The Night Before Christmas*). Handy was better known in his lifetime for the 1857 abolitionist song *Darling Nellie Grey*. -- Stevan Galbreath

Visit the Catawissa Military Band
Website at:

<http://catawissamilitaryband.com/>

Perils Cont.

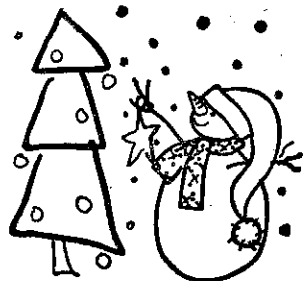
but coffee beckoned. Timing the snowman's descent, I dashed blindly for the other side.

When recounting the adventure, I imagined that this was how Bimbo felt after narrowly escaping the falling axes; that feeling of beating the odds, of exhilaration and shaky relief. My coworkers gave me an all too familiar look. Some people have no sense of the surreal.

The snowman incident confirms what I've always suspected -- the inflatables are evil. The first time I saw one of the new decorations was in an industrial part of town. It was a Santa, lit up and looming over darkened factories.

The mechanics weren't working on this particular inflatable, leaving Santa looking skinny and underfed. The lack of girth was disturbing, but it was the flailing arms that really gave Santa a maniacal, menacing look. This was no jolly Santa. It was a Santa right out of the Fleischer's imagination.

Thanks to the popularity of inflatable decorations my holiday dreams are no longer filled with sugar plums and white Christmases. Instead they feature harrowing encounters with hostile snowmen and crazy Santas. At least the soundtrack is good. I would choose Cab Calloway and *St. James Infirmary* over Andy Williams and the Beach Boys any day. Merry Christmas.



Road Cont.

then slam on the brakes in front of you to make a turn without using their signal.

Then there is my pet peeve -- the tailgater. I get uncomfortable when someone is so close that I can't see their headlights in my rear-view mirror.

Drivers using cell phones add a new dimension to rude and unsafe driving. More than once I've nearly been run off the road by a text-messaging driver. I've seen distracted cell phone users weave back and forth like they were drunk. I just want to yell "Get off the phone and drive!"

I've almost been rear-ended at stop lights by drivers who, when I glance in the rear-view mirror, have their hands up to their ears. Once, I saw a woman in my rear-view mirror with a cell phone in one hand and a cigarette in the other. How was she steering? I swear it's true, I'm not making that up!

I could continue on about distracted, inconsiderate and unsafe drivers, I know that I've omitted several situations. There just isn't enough room in this column. I also can't tell you where to get your own road rage pillow -- the boutique it came from closed. If you're on the road and you hear a scream, someone probably cut me off -- AArrghh!!

The New CMB Web Site

The Catawissa Military Band has a new web site address: <http://catawissamilitaryband.com/>. The change was necessitated by the former web host shutting down operations. Webmaster Greg Bitler located a new host and was also able to secure the more practical address. It is believed that the new address will be both easier to remember and lead to a greater level of traffic. Over the past several weeks, Greg has been working on the time-consuming task of transferring data to the new location. At press time, some features and graphics were unavailable, but basic information is posted. We extend our thanks to Greg for his efforts in setting up the new site.

*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.

A Christmas Song That Almost Wasn't: Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer

by Jef Eichner

In December of 1938 Montgomery Ward's copywriter Bob May, was in dire straits. His wife, Evelyn, was dying of cancer and medical bills had exhausted his savings, leaving him nearly bankrupt. Unable to explain to his 4 year-old daughter Barbara why her mother was so different from other mothers, he made up a story about a reindeer named Rudolf who was ostracized by the other reindeer for being different.

The story drew heavily on May's own childhood, when he had been treated the same way for being so small and thin. Barbara loved the story and asked him to tell it to her every night. The more he told the story, the more details formed. Unable to afford Christmas presents, he instead began to produce a crude book of Rudolf for his daughter.

Unfortunately, his wife died shortly before Christmas and he nearly gave up the project.

After Christmas, May was forced to go to Ward's Christmas party, where he was asked to read the book. Co-workers as well Montgomery Ward CEO Steve Avery loved it. Avery bought the rights to the book from cash starved May for a small sum, and had thousands of copies printed up to be given out to children who visited the store Santa.

By 1946, six million copies had been circulated, and Avery was besieged by publishers wanting to print a new edition of the story. Instead of selling it, Avery gave the rights back to May (imagine one of our modern CEO's doing that) who became rich from its mass release.

May then approached his brother-

in-law, composer Johnny Marks, and asked him to turn Rudolf into a song. When it was finished, it was offered first to Bing Crosby and then Dinah Shore, both of whom turned it down. Next, Perry Como was approached, but he wanted some of the lyrics changed. Marks and May, positive they had a hit the way it was originally written, refused.

Then cowboy singer Gene Autry was offered the song, but he felt that it was too juvenile and also turned it down. By now, Marks and May were convinced that Autry was the one to make the song work, so they decided to go over his head and send a demo to his wife Ina. She loved the song and insisted that he record it.

Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer was destined to become Autry's biggest hit and, ultimately, one of the best selling Christmas songs ever -- right behind *White Christmas*.

