

Rockin' with The Shan-tones ...Swingin' Sounds of Regional Success

By Eddie Collins



In the early 1960's, when the small coal region towns of North-east Pennsylvania had tap rooms on every corner, there was always a band or 'combo' as we knew them, ready to fill those seats with patrons. One of those acts was The Shan-tones from Coaldale, PA. The group was comprised of George McDonald (bass guitar/lead vocal), Pete Cheplick (guitar), Dave Raabe (sax), Bob Palinchak (organ) and Sonny Haggerty (drums).

As their popularity rose, The Shan-tones garnered quite a following during their heyday of 1960-1964, with prestigious gigs at Berwick's West End Park, and Lakewood Ballroom in Barnesville, backing up some of the biggest names, including Dion, Freddie Cannon, and Gary (U.S.) Bonds, who developed a close relationship with the band, often staying at McDonald's residence in Lake Hauto during those local appearances. (The band would later reunite with Gary for a joyous reunion in 2000 at Mount Airy Lodge.)

In 1963, The Shan-tones caught the eye of Bill Aubrey, an entrepreneur who was eager to get into the record business, whisking the band to Bell Sound Studios in N.Y.C., recording a version of Johnny & The Hurricanes "Sheba," and "Shortnin' Bread." The sides were placed on Aubrey's label Angela Records, and received immediate reaction with local radio airplay, reaching #1 on Lehighon PA's WYNS 'Silver Dollar Survey.'

With the advent of The Beatles arrival in early 1964, The Shan-tones, quickly adopted this 'new sound' that was sweeping the nation, by performing the entire "Meet The Beatles" album in full tracking order, proving they were innovators in show presentation. Later that year, the group decided to disband as a unit. In 1965, group member George Mc Donald toured nationally with another Angela Records act, Angie & The Citations (renamed then as Angie & The Strangers) and also performed with The Red Beats.



In later years, members of The Shan-tones stayed active musically, with Dave Raabe, and George McDonald playing with oldies revival units The Mudflaps, and Remember When. More recently, until George's passing in January 2014, Pete, George, and Ken Hoffman (former sax man of Angie & The Citations) teamed up for select gigs as The Shan-tations. The legacy of The Shan-tones, has been preserved with the inclusion of "Sheba," being featured on the Backbeat Records CD compilation "Surf Age Nuggets."



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KEYNOTES

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Inside...

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REMEMBERING BEN by Jack Shue

I'm sorry to say that I honestly never really knew Ben Barber. Many seemed to think that we were business partners because our KRC tables were side by side through many locations and many years. They would ask how he was doing and where he was. I didn't know.

On one of my first visits to the KRC at Lancaster Catholic as a customer, I bought a few CD singles from a vendor. Nice guy. When I began as a KRC dealer, I found myself at the table next to him. Turns out that was Ben Barber.

Ben Barber. Yes. Although I have no recollection of listening to him on the radio, I did recognize the name as a radio personality and well-known fixture on the Central PA airwaves.

Then began the departure from Lancaster Catholic HS and a succession of temporary venues before arriving at our current location. And through each move, I would find myself placed at the table next to Ben. (I know that Ben would smile with appreciation when I say - "Damn you, **Steve Yohe!**"). Ed Note: Steve assigns show tables.

We weren't business partners but we were neighbors and took care of each other as KRC vendors will often do. And we had a good time. We shared our sense of humor and we laughed. Often.

One Sunday a man arrived at Ben's table with a boxed breakfast from a Lancaster diner. He had listened to Ben's radio show every morning and wanted to thank him for hours of entertainment. They chatted for a while and then the guy left. When I asked who he was, Ben said that he had no idea. He had never met the guy before that moment.

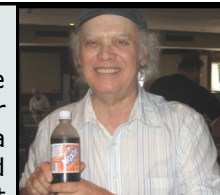
I think that was who Ben Barber was - a man who entertained so many people, made them smile, and lightened their load.

The very last time that I saw Ben was in the Continental Inn parking lot after a show. He was having car troubles and was waiting to be towed. Although he was as annoyed as anyone else might be, he really didn't seem to let it get him down. I believe that he had had his share of tragedies and I also believe that he always seemed to handle adversity with a smile.

When I read Ben's obit, I learned that he wasn't really Ben Barber. That was his radio name. He was really Ben Shatto. As I write these memories, I stand corrected: it turns out that I just didn't know his real name, but I do know that I was fortunate to have known the real Ben.

VIEW FROM THE TOP

Regretfully, we learned of the passing of long time KRC member **Ben Barber** from Carlisle. He was a Harrisburg personality at WCMB and later going to WHYL in Carlisle. I first met him when our shows were held at Lancaster Catholic High. I always enjoyed talking with him.



Make sure you say "Good job" to member **Jack Supplee** who is fast approaching his 300th show.

One benefit to all this cold weather we endured the early part of this year is, records don't freeze! Sure hope spring lasts awhile!

Dave Schmidt
2014 KRC President
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LIKEABLE LINK - RECOMMENDED WEBSITE

by Steve Yohe

If you grew up in the 1960's, you may remember having seen and maybe even purchasing those 39 cent 45 RPM records on the Hit label that sold in 5 and 10 cent stores and supermarkets. Just like its predecessors, Gateway, Promenade, and Tops - to name just a few - Hit records "covered" the hits of the day with little-known or unknown artists using aliases like Leroy Jones, Peggy Gaines, or the Jalopy Five. Because of the uncertainty of the identity of most of the artists on these discount labels, collectors have come to call them "ghost" labels.

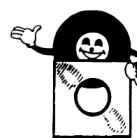


People like Bobby Russell (before he hit it big) recorded under his own name as well as pseudonyms. Sandy Posey recorded as Patty York while Alpha Zee and Herbert Hunter used both their own names and false ones as well.



To see a complete discography of the Hit label, go to <http://www.reocities.com/Nashville/stage/7799/hitrecords2.htm>, which contains the real identities of some of the artists and lots of fascinating information.

Often ignored over the years by collectors, these "ghost" labels, given a careful listen, contain some real gems. While some of the recordings are just mediocre, many are quite good, and some are excellent and therefore collectible.



KRC in 2014

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THE CONTINENTAL INN

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A REVIEW BY STEVE YOHE

It was an extremely entertaining evening! Saturday night, February 22nd I had the pleasure of attending the Sing Off Tour at the American Music Theater in Lancaster as part of a consistently enthusiastic sell-out crowd. As a big fan of the show, I was eager for the night's entertainment to begin, and I was not disappointed.

The two-hour event featured three of season four's competing acts, including the winners, Home Free. While I was hoping that Ten, Vocal Rush, the acoUstiKats, and/or Street Corner Renaissance would be there, the participating acts put on an excellent show.

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KEY NOTES

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Names in **bold** type are members of Keystone Record Collectors

As is the case in all four seasons of the show, the talented singers, vocal percussionists, and basses easily made the listeners forget that there were no other musical instruments but the human voice on stage. That's what great cappella groups do.

After a strong opening number by all three groups, Filharmonic, a lively and talented Filipino "boy band," did a set with upbeat vocals and effective choreography. They were well-received by the audience, which included many of their excited fans.

Voice Play, a five man and one woman group, took stage next. With a strong bass and percussionist holding down the rhythm, the other four outstanding singers proved to be crowd pleasers with their powerful vocals. Besides wowing us with their songs, the five men, who were the original members of the group, did a hilarious nostalgic "road trip" comedy number making clever use of a variety of song excerpts; they were pretending to be driving in a car to a gig and changing radio stations frequently. The appreciative audience laughed constantly.

As transitions between acts, there were several clever bits, including an "Ultimate Sing Off" between Filharmonic and Voice Play and a battle of the percussionists from all three groups. One of these men sounded like a complete drum set, and the other two did some terrific electronic-sounding riffs that included some very convincing "scratching."

The stars of the show, Home Free, appeared next, and besides their familiar country singing, they proved their versatility as performers with some very clever comedy skits, including some funny attempts at rapping and "twerking."

An inspired segment of Home Free's set included Filharmonic in a reprise of the "Ultimate Sing Off" from the TV competition. Battling it out with a spirited version of "I'm Alright" from Footloose, the two groups intermingled with clever dancing that had each group imitating and mirroring the movements of the other.

Filling in for Home Free's vocal percussionist (who was on "paternity leave") was "Heatbox," an incredible talent who stopped the show with the amazing sounds he created both in the previously mentioned "battle" and in the group performances.

The show ended with all groups on stage again for a closing number, which was followed by several well-earned standing ovations and encores, ending with the entire cast coming to the front of the stage for an effective unamplified version of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah," which had the audience silent with rapt attention.

The evening showcased not only the vocal talents of the groups but also the range of talent that these acts possess. Long live a cappella and Sing Off!

THE BARBERSHOP IS CLOSED - THE END OF AN ERA

KRC member, legendary radio personality, mobile DJ and all around nice guy

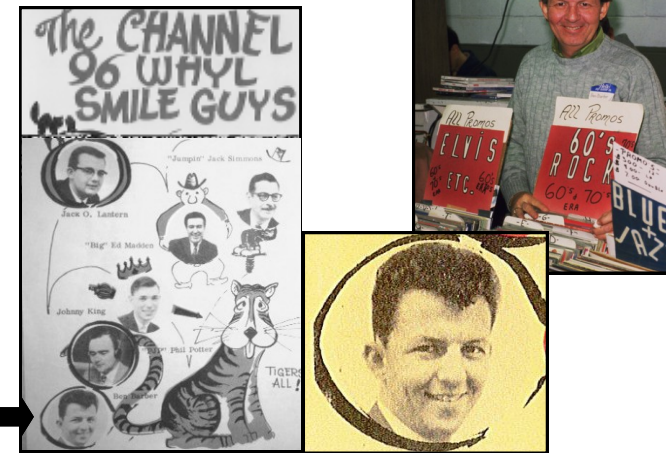
By Bill Trousdale

There was a time in Central Pennsylvania when folks from all over would visit the Barbershop. They would find warmth and fun-filled conversation, information and music. Everyone who came to visit was joyfully welcomed, and most stayed a while to enjoy a cup of coffee and a laugh or two. The atmosphere, beginning with its opening in 1960, was like a potbellied stove on a cold day, warming friends, acquaintances and an occasional stranger or two.

The Barber, was an East Pennsboro grad, who earned his professional name while at WCMB. The manager of the station wanted a younger look for his personalities. So he approached Ben Shatto, whose curly hair appeared to be unkempt, and ordered him to the barber shop for a haircut. With that, Ben Shatto became Ben Barber, a name that would be associated with music for decades to come.

At Age 70 Ben Shatto Barber has passed away.

His Career began at WPDC/WEZN in the early 1960's. During the golden age of American and British music, he was the top rated evening personality at WCMB in Harrisburg.



In 1966, Ben moved to WHYL in Carlisle, as one of the "Smile Guys". While there, he shared his talents with dozens of commercial businesses and area nonprofits. He was a fixture at dances at the Progress Fire Hall, the Psychorama in Dillsburg, Your Place restaurants, the Sierra Madre and the Mechanicsburg VFW.

Ben's loved local bands and played the hits of the day from the Magnificent Men, The Intentions, Kits Kats, The Legends with Dan Hartman, and Ronnie Dove and the Furys. His keen ear would incorporate other teen favorites by Billy Stewart, Billy Vera and Judy Clay, the Jordan Brothers and Kenny Chandler. Because he was a promoter, local bands would seek his favor to participate in "The Battle of the Bands." (Many are listed at the Facebook page of Bands of Central PA.: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/437854450486/>)

After 14 years at WHYL 960, Ben joined the cross-town rival WIOO, where he was on the air through 2004. He then returned to his home station, WHYL, from which he retired last September.



Ben's penchant for musical trivia rivaled the works of music historian Joel Whitburn. On his walls hung dozens of gold and platinum records, acknowledgements from promoters outside the region in recognition of his musical acuity. Ben, who routinely took his show on the road, was one of the area's first mobile music providers and an enthusiastic supporter of foundations and causes needing community recognition.

Ben believed in Central Pennsylvania and was always willing to support a cause. It became personal when his only son passed away. Ben and his wife, Donna, founded The Michael Lynn Shatto Foundation, shortly after his their son's death.

The goal of the foundation is to help society understand "the poison-fear, ignorance and hatred that society bestows upon the mentally ill."

Yearly in June, the "Michael Cup" golf tournament raises funds to combat domestic violence and chemical dependency. Many radio broadcast "competitors" have joined with the Shattos to promote and participate in the Michael Cup since its founding in 2000.

When the Barber shop closed in February, those who knew Ben Shatto Barber felt profound loss. The hole in our hearts can only be filled with remembrances of Ben's understanding, compassion and his life.

A memorial service for Ben was held March 16th in Carlisle.

Editor's Note: Ben was also a vendor at all seven of the Pennsylvania Music Expo locations. Below left is a picture at the 2002 Columbia Market House Reunion show with **Phil Schwartz** and below right is a picture with WSBA radio's Ed Lincoln, also taken in the Market House in the 1980's.

