

THE 'BOYS BAND' LIVES ON
By Jill Thomas
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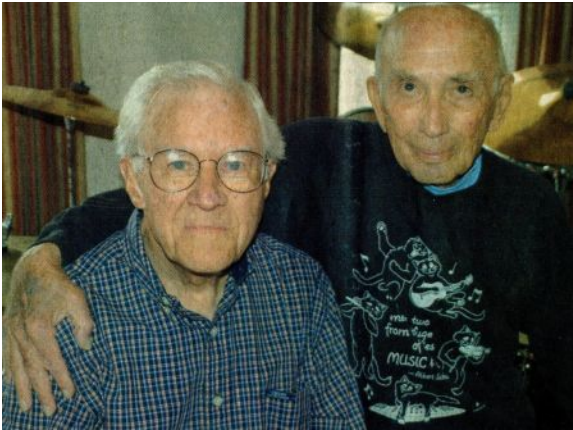
The **H. S. Barnes and Eugene Huddleston** were boys, Cookeville was struggling through the Great Depression.

There were no jobs and money was scarce. There was no television and movie houses demanded payment, even if it was only a quarter.

And even though hamburgers only cost a nickel, you still had to have the nickel.

Then along came an enterprising young man named **Albert Brogdon** who discovered the perfect way to earn a little cash and, at the same time, keep the boys of Cookeville out of trouble..

He created the Cookeville Boys Band.



(Pictured: Left: HS Barnes and Eugene Huddleston)

And for four years 13 to 20 highschool boys played at county fairs, political rallies, parades, restaurants and afternoon concerts on the courthouse square.

They traveled as far away as Celina and earned a whopping \$1.50 a day at the country fairs.

“To get \$1.50 a night during the Depression was great. We could eat our weight in hamburgers,” Barnes said.

“A five cent hamburger in a restaurant would cost ten cents at the fair, but we didn’t mind,” he said.

An undated copy of the Herald-Citizen from that time gave the itinerary for a concert the boys gave on the courthouse square where “several hundred” people had gathered.

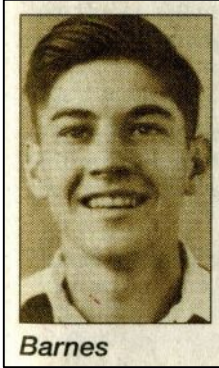
The Step Lively march
Let's All Sing like the Birdies Sing
Operatic Mingle
Activity march
Home on the Range
Comin' Round the Mountain
The Belle, overture
Indian Boy
Anchors Aweigh and Stars and Stripes Forever march
The Star Spangled Banner

According to the paper “many favorable comments were heard regarding the band’s performance on this occasion, and their next local appearance is anticipated with pleasure.”

Brogdon was a musician who played in his own band and taught the boys the rudiments of their brass instruments.

Barnes' background in music before joining the band was mostly in singing. His family members often sang at meals and get-togethers. And HS (that's his name. The H and S are not initials) also played in a band in elementary school – but not a brass band.

"It was a harmonica and ukulele band," he said with a smile.



"We made some unforgettable music."

When a cousin dug up an old trombone for Barnes to use in the Cookeville Boys Band, Barnes was philosophical about learning the new instrument.

"I think the band met two or three times a week to practice. I don't remember actually practicing at home," he said.

Huddleston also came from a musical family.

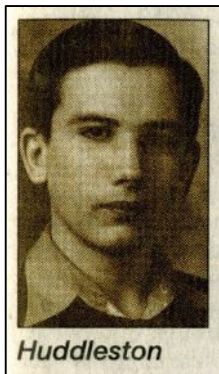
"My parents paid \$5 a month for piano lessons for my sister. And this was in the depression. They would rather have skipped a few meals than not have those lessons," Eugene said.

His twin sister, Willene, was a piano virtuoso who later played in a professional all-girl-band and played the organ in a large movie house in Virginia.

"She and the organ would rise up from beneath the floor and the college boys would cheer," remembered Barnes.

Why didn't Willene play in the band?

"Only boys played in the band," said Barnes. "Girls played the piano."



When Eugene joined the Cookeville Boys Band a friend gave him a old tenor sax.

When he played the first notes on that instrument he knew, he'd found what he wanted to do for life.

For Huddleston and Barnes, the band nailed down a lifelong love each would have with music.

Huddleston went on to play in some of the big bands of the era like Tommy Dorsey's. But he also spent 27 years in the United States Navy Band getting to see the world while he played the music he loved.

Barnes went on to earn a college degree in music education from Tennessee Tech.

He spent a year in Florida teaching music.

"That did it for me," he laughed.

"I enlisted after that first year."

After the war he came back home and enrolled in law school at Vanderbilt. Barnes spent the next 48 years practicing law in Cookeville.

But his love of music continued. He helped form the Community Concert Association and he was president of the Bryan Symphony Board.

Huddleston came back to Cookeville a few years ago after living in California for decades.

While he was happy as a teenager to get away from Cookeville to pursue his music, he remembers the town as a great place to grow up.

“You had three different cultures to learn from – the farm culture, the town people and the academic society. You can’t beat that.

“And it was too small a place to be able to get into trouble. No matter what you did there was always somebody around who would recognize you.

The men met in first grade and both turn 85 this year.

Is it the music that has kept them young at heart?

“My advice for those who want to live long is to read the paper every day and then get out and keep moving,” said HS Barnes.

“I kept young by playing golf,” said Huddleston after playing several minutes on his drum set.

“I realize that at 85 years I may have to change my lifestyle some.

“We’ll see.”

(December 18, 1941: Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, TN)

Eugene Huddleston, a sailor in the Navy Band on the battleship Pennsylvania, likewise has wired a message home that he survived the attack.

*See History, Putnam County, TN at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>



THE COOKEVILLE BOYS BAND

Members of the Cookeville Boys Band included, at left, drum major Herbie Richmond “Pip” Shanks; front row, drum majorettes Catherine Reeves, at left and at right, unknown. Second row, from left, Dillard White, Phillip Hutchison, unknown, W. C. Davis, unknown and Albert Brogdon; third row, left, unknown, John Robert Mott, unknown, unknown, unknown Akin, and HS Barnes; back row, from left, Charles Stanton, Eugene Huddleston, V. C. Allison Jr., Algood Vaden, and Ridley Parkerson.