

The Shenandoah Valley Black
Heritage Project



LEARN: I started this project in February, 2013. I wanted to learn about African-American History of the Shenandoah Valley. I also wanted to learn about the families who contributed so much to the building of the Valley. Our history books did not tell us of the many thousands of men who walked to neighboring states to serve in the United States Colored Troops during the Civil War. Nor did we learn of the hundreds of men and women who lived as Freedmen and women of the early 1800's. They were saddlers, coopers, bakers, shoemakers.

SHARE: Soon I discovered several Valley Historians and Authors. Their work is extensive and can be found in different parts of the Shenandoah Valley. This research is in local libraries, University Special Collections and Historical Societies. I wanted to share these and the discoveries I was making. I started this website, which I update regularly. I also have monthly research/resource sessions at the Simms Center in Harrisonburg, Virginia, every second Wednesday of the Month, 1:00pm - 5:00pm.

ILLUMINATE: This History's strength, love of family and faith will inspire. The "Newtowns" of the Valley, building schools, churches and cemeteries. Working hard throughout the decades, contributing to all communities, enduring injustices and remaining strong. It's time to Learn, Share and Illuminate this wonderful history!

Visit our website at

www.valleyblackheritage.org

THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY
BLACK HERITAGE PROJECT



MUSIC IN THE
SHENANDOAH
VALLEY



ACES OF RHYTHM



Source: Daily News Record

HARRY LEE SOLOMON (PIANO)

SAMMY REDD (GUITAR)

RAWLEY BUNDY (BASS)

JOHN BRUCE (DRUMS)

JIM CRAWFORD (TENOR SAX)

JOSEPH YOKLEY (VOCALIST)

WELDON "RED" BUNDY (TRUMPET)

RUTH CRAWFORD* (VOCALIST)

*Joined later

HARRY LEE SOLOMON (PIANO)

Harry Lee Solomon was born in Harrisonburg, VA on March 15th 1896 and died of natural causes on January 18th, 1960 at the age of 63.

Solomon owned a local shoe shine shop called, "Harry Lee's Shoe Shine Parlor"

Solomon had been shining shoes for most of his life.

According to an article by Bill Reilly in the Harrisonburg Daily News Record, Solomon began shining shoes at the age of ten at a local barbershop in Harrisonburg. During this interview, Solomon said, "You know, soon after the war, I decided to get out of the shoe shine business, so I pulled stakes and went

to Pittsburg for a while." "What did you do up there" Reilly asked. Solomon answered, "Shined shoes."

Upon returning to Harrisonburg, Solomon opened his own shoeshine parlor, and operated his stand for the rest of his days.

Solomon was known as more than just a shoeshiner, though. He was known and respected by the entire Harrisonburg community as a most talented musician. He sang for local quartets and at his church. Solomon was also part of the band, Aces of Rhythm, as the pianist and backup vocalist. Solomon and his fellow band members made a name for themselves in the Harrisonburg and Shenandoah Valley communities respectfully. The band was known to play at local clubs, establishments, schools, and more.

Known musical groups: Aces of Rhythm, The Shenandoah Comedy Four, Night Hawk Orchestra.

RAWLEY BUNDY (BASS)

Rawley Bundy was born in Bridgewater, VA on October 9th, 1916 and died of illness on June 5th, 1950 at the age of 33.

Rawley Bundy was a barber in Harrisonburg, VA and the brother of fellow band member Weldon "Red" Bundy.

Although Rawley died at a young age, he was well loved and remembered by his family. His wife, Julia Bundy, annually published a Remembrance on the Daily News Record in loving memory of Rawley.

Known musical groups: Aces of Rhythm.

IN LOVING MEMORY
of my dear husband, **Rawley C. Bundy**, who passed away 3 years ago June 5, 1950.
We who loved you sadly, miss you
As it dawns another year.
In our lonely hours of thinking
Thoughts of you are ever near.
Thy will be done, dear Lord,
We do not dare complain
And in our hearts we have the hope
That we shall meet again.
—By his wife, Julia **Bundy**, sons **Rawley, Jr.**, and **Dennis.** ltp

Source: Daily News Record

All That Jazz

Solomon's Reputation Still Shines

When Harry Lee Solomon died on a Tuesday in January 1960, many stores along Main Street in Harrisonburg closed the following Friday for his funeral. His death left a void in the lives of those close to him — and several generations of fans in Harrisonburg.

For three decades Solomon's band had rendered rhythms for dances around the area. And for even more decades his shoe-shine rag had snapped in rhythm across shoes on Main Street.

Born in Harrisonburg to Boss and Mary Ellen Solomon in 1896, Harry Lee began shining shoes on the street when he was 10. Next he polished his skills at Loneragan's Barber Shop at the corner of Main and Water streets, then at Hisey's Barber Shop anchoring Elizabeth and Main streets. A Bill Reilly column in the Daily News-Record gives the following exchange on his career:

"You know, soon after the war, I decided to get out of the shoe shine business, so I pulled stakes and went to Pittsburgh for a while."

"What did you do up there?" Reilly asked.

"Shined shoes," Solomon said.

So Solomon returned to his hometown and opened his own stand. And he proudly acquired the heavy oak chairs and marble stand originally in Loneragan's parlor that he'd fondly wished for in his youth. He employed six men. In 1953, Reilly estimated Solomon had shined over a half-million pairs — or a million shoes — adding, "In his long stint at brightening people's footwear, he has shined the shoes of three generations . . . possibly four." He wasn't finished. Seven more years would swell the total.

Remembrances

by
Nancy Bondurant Jones



And certainly many of those shoes glided along dance floors to the popular tunes Harry Solomon and His Aces of Rhythm provided. Weldon "Red" Bundy joined the seven-piece group when he was in high school and recalls Solomon's personal favorite was "As Time Goes By." He says his own were "Stardust" and "Tenderly," some favorites of a time when "you held your date close in — not off on one side like now."

Solomon and his Aces played Spotswood Country Club on Saturday nights. They performed at local proms, Sun Valley in Elkton, Melrose Caverns north of town, the University of Virginia, the Moose Club, and the Rainbow Room above Friddle's Restaurant. "Those were the white dances," Bundy says. "We also played black dances — Robinson's Inn in Front Royal, Booker T. Washington High School in Staunton, The Chicken Shack, and the Christmas dance every year at Simms School here. We packed 'em in." Bundy also recalls one gig at Richwood, W. Va., two weeks after jazz great Gene Krupa had appeared.

"We heard that Krupa had been there and figured

See REPUTATION, Page 10

Source: Daily News Record

Reputation

Continued from Page 9

we might as well give up and go home. They hadn't liked him — but they loved us," Bundy says. Their old standbys had won favor over Krupa's big-band jazz.

In addition to the keyboard, Solomon added vocals.

Reilly wrote: "A talented musician. . . . The possessor of an unusually good voice, he for a long time sang in local quartets and could take either the bass or tenor parts."

Whether the lyrical liets issued from Joseph Yokley, Ruth Cutledge or Solomon himself, romance was heightened for the couples swaying to his music. Longtime residents of the area treasure the memory of slow dancing to the sounds of that softer time.

But even in today's harder-edged culture, Solomon's daughter, Cathy Winston, continues his tradition. She sings in a gospel quartet and has built a musical reputation of her own. But that's for a later column.

Nancy Jones is a longtime Valley resident and historian.



Photo Courtesy of Cathy Winston

This photo of Harry Lee Solomon's Aces of Rhythm was taken in 1946 at a Christmas dance at Simms School in Harrisonburg. From left: Solomon, piano; Sammy Redd, electric guitar; Rawley Bundy, bass; John Bruce, drums; Jim Crawford, tenor sax; Joseph Yokley, vocalist; Weldon 'Red' Bundy, trumpet. Vocalist Ruth Crawford joined the group later.

Source: Daily News Record

JOSEPH YOKLEY (VOCALS)

Joseph Yokley was born in 1920 in Harrisonburg, VA.

Yokley was known for being President of the Methodist Men of the John Wesley Methodist Church.

Known musical groups: Aces of Rhythm, local church gospels.



Source: Daily News Record

WELDON "RED" BUNDY (TRUMPET)

Weldon "Red" Bundy was born June 25th, 1922 in Bridgewater, VA and died on November 17th, 2003 at the age of 81.

Red was a porter in Harrisonburg, VA and the younger brother of Rawley Bundy.

He had lived his entire life in the Harrisonburg area and graduated from the Effinger School. He was a member of the John Wesley United Methodist Church and was co-founder with his father of the Bundy 's Boys Band.

Red was better known for his involvement with music and is probably of the biggest influences on the music scene in the Shenandoah Valley.

Apart from playing the trumpet with Aces of Rhythm, Red was also the founding member of award winning musical group "Bundy's Boys Band"

Known musical groups: Aces of Rhythm, Bundy's Boys Band

12 DAILY NEWS-RECORD, Harrisonburg, Va., Thursday, Feb. 24, 1994



The award-winning Bundy's Boys Band in full marching regalia.

Photo Courtesy of Weldon "Red" Bundy

Source: Daily News Record

The award-winning Bundy's Boys Band in full marching regalia.

All That Jazz

Bundy's Boys Band Did Some Serious Playing

His trumpet is silent now but its notes linger in the memories of generations of Harrisonburg residents.

Mention Weldon "Red" Bundy to those who grew up in Harrisonburg in the 1940s and '50s and inevitable smiles break as memories carry them back to the rhythmic beat of "One O'Clock Jump," "Tippin' In" and "Huckabuck."

When Bundy's teaching began in 1945, Harrisonburg housing, schools and bands were segregated, but love of music was universal. Rockingham County had a strong music program for its white schools. Joe Wampler led the all-white Harrisonburg Boys' Band in 504 public performances between 1931 and 1944, finally donating its uniforms to Harrisonburg High's emerging band in 1945.

Before Simms School opened, blacks lived in northeast Harrisonburg and attended Effinger School. Red was in the last class at Effinger and the first class to graduate from Simms in 1939. There were no musical instruments at the school, but the Bundy household held horns under away of Daddy Dennis, who loved to play. Red caught the fever and began playing with a dance band when he was 14. Sounds of music from the household caught the attention of neighborhood children.

Duffy Smith was one of the children who hung out begging to be taught how to play; Dorothy Burgess (now Strother) was another. So Dennis and Red began passing on the basics. First they taught two, then three; then, as with the Pied Piper, the Bundys'

Remembrances

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Nancy Bondurant Jones



entourage grew and kept growing.

"Mother was used to all the noise and put up with us until we got a drummer. Then she said we had to move," Red said.

Their first move was to John Wesley Methodist Church, and the word spread through the black and white communities that a band had been born and instruments were needed. Citywide, housewives cleaned out closets to donate musical hardware to the aspiring musicians. And when HHS got new band uniforms, the old ones went to Bundy's Boys Band. The 25 uniforms and 25 instruments dictated the band's size, but not its musical growth. Melodies pushed past the basics and the band needed a new place to practice — jazz wasn't allowed at church. Soon the group moved to American Legion Post 76's hall above The Colonnade Restaurant. Taxi driver S.M. Powell solicited merchants and businessmen to donate money for new uniforms.

Shirley's Sign Co. blazoned its name on a big bass drum that soon would be seen in parades from West Virginia to Tappahannock. And Myers Bus Co. provided transportation for the four majorettes, two chaperones, 25 musicians and instruments return-

ing with trophies from those distant marching competitions.

In Front Royal they played at the dedication of Bing Crosby Stadium and in Winchester they entertained at football games, but hometown crowds cheered them on as well. When Charles Wampler wanted to draw people to the new fairground on Edom Road, he signed on Bundy's Boys Band. The contingent played riding through town on the back of an open truck and the townspeople followed.

And for the free movie the Elks Club showed each July 4, the band led the parade and finished with a concert. They played for football games, county fairs, lawn parties and led No. 4 Fire Station in the firemen's annual parade. When No. 4 moved from Elizabeth Street to the new fire station on Rock Street, it took along the band's trophies.

Red was a busy man in those days. He worked at Shenandoah Labs, Drug Fair and played with Harry Lee Solomon and his Aces of Rhythm and the 12-piece Bill Burke Orchestra from Staunton. Dennis Bundy was half the driving force behind the Boys Band. So when Dennis had a stroke, there was no way to pick up the slack.

When Bundy's Boys Band disbanded, a special era in jazz and martial music came to an end. The band's legacy? Memories savored by the several generations who played and listened.

Nancy Jones is a longtime Valley resident and historian.

Source: Daily News Record

WAIT

I'VE GOT NEWS FOR YOU



The BIG Lawn Party

Is JUNE 17-20

Main Street School Grounds



For 25 years Hose Co. No. 4 has been giving you the best in lawn party entertainment. Co-Chairmen William Braithwaite and Ernest Shifflett promise you that this will top them all. Just take a look at what they have lined up for your entertainment.



Band Concert Each Nite

WEDNESDAY NITE

Stonewall Brigade Band

Directed by Mr. Swiecki

FRIDAY NITE

Broadway Hi Band

Directed by Mr. Eddie Branner

SATURDAY NITE

Harrisonburg Hi Band

Directed by Mrs. Lucille Marshall

Bundy's Band

with Red Bundy Himself

Source: Daily News Record

THE SHENANDOAH COMEDY FOUR

KNOWN MEMBERS

GRIFFIN RAY

HARRY LEE SOLOMON

SHENANDOAH FOUR TO BROADCAST TUESDAY

The Shenandoah Comedy Four, Harrisonburg's famed colored quartet, will broadcast over Station WDBJ, at Roanoke, next Tuesday morning at 9:30. This will mark the second appearance of the harmony boys over the Roanoke station.

The Four made a decided hit when they sang for the American Legion convention here last week.

Source: Daily News Record

GRIFFIN RAY

Griffin Ray was born in Harrisonburg, VA in 1901 and died at the early age of 33 due to illness from pneumonia.

Ray, like Harry Lee Solomon, also owned and operated a shoe shining parlor.

Shoe shining, however, was not his forte. Ray was a well known musician in the Harrisonburg and Shenandoah Valley area. In fact, Ray enjoyed great success with his musical group the Shenandoah Comedy Four, which was a quartet that combined comedy acts and music in their performances.

Along with his bandmembers, Ray performed at different venues around the Valley area as well as on local radio stations--which at the time reflected great success for a colored quartet.

Radio stations include WDBJ at Roanoke and WKBG.

Known musical groups: Shenandoah Comedy Four, Night Hawks Orchestra

COLORED QUARTET TO BROADCAST AT ROANOKE

The Shenandoah Comedy Four, composed of a quartet of a Harrisonburg colored entertainers, will sing over radio station WDBJ at Roanoke next Tuesday morning from 9:30 to 10 a. m.

Source: Daily News Record

SHENANDOAH FOUR TO BROADCAST TUESDAY

The Shenandoah Comedy Four, Harrisonburg's famed colored quartet, will broadcast over Station WDBJ, at Roanoke, next Tuesday morning at 9:30. This will mark the second appearance of the harmony boys over the Roanoke station.

The Four made a decided hit when they sang for the American Legion convention here last week.

Broadcasting on the Stage and in Full View of the Audience!
SIDNEY SHEPARD,
Announcer

BROADCASTING STATION
WKBG
LICENSED BY THE U.S. GOV.

Actually Broadcasting on 216.7 Meter Wavelength
See How Broadcasting is Done

TODAY'S PROGRAM
Broadcasting at 10:00, 10:00, 10:00
Shenandoah Valley Night
Dr. Howard A. Bennett, Speaker

Made by the
Massanutten College Orchestra

By Radio Group:
Shenandoah Comedy Four
Directed by Harry Lee Solomon

And Many Other Local Artists

A Beautiful Brunswick Phonograph
to Be Given Away—FREE
Through Courtesy of The FRANKLIN CO.

Source: Daily News Record

WELL KNOWN COLORED MUSICIAN PASSES AWAY

Griffin Ray, aged 33, well-known Harrisonburg colored man who for several years has operated the shoe-shine parlor in the Virginia Arcade, died at Rockingham Memorial Hospital last night after a nine days' illness from pneumonia.

He was well known in colored musical circles, being a member of the famed Shenandoah Comedy Four.

No funeral arrangements were made last night. Ray was a member of the Baptist Church.

He is survived by a widow, four children, his mother, three sisters and one brother.

Source: Daily News Record

BUNDYS BAND MEET ON WEDNESDAY NIGHT

Former members of Bundys Band interested in reorganizing, are asked to meet at the home of Robert Fields Jr., Wednesday night at 8. He said that a number of the former members have expressed a desire to play together again.

Source: Daily News Record

Remembrances

pages from the past

50 years ago

**Band Concerts At
Lawn Fete
Series To Be Held
During Fire Co. No. 1
Firemen's Festival**

Bundy's Boys Band will provide the musical entertainment at the Fire Company No. 1 Lawn Party this evening, the first of a number of concerts to be given this week at the annual event.

Members of the unit said last night that a good crowd is expected each night the rest of the week, with the climax expected Friday night after the annual Firemen's Parade and concluding on Saturday night when Blain Smith and his radio troupe make their personal appearance.

While Bundy's Boys Band will give first concert for the firemen, Harrisonburg High's Band is scheduled to give the concert on Thursday night.

Fire fighting and rescue squad units from throughout the Shenandoah Valley are expected to march in the parade here

on Friday night, along with a number of bands and drum and bugles corps from thruout the Valley area.

Featured at the Lawn Party are hobby Horses, swings, love pony rides, a number of games and the usual menu of ham, chicken and other tasty food for which the firemen here have been noted.

— Aug. 4, 1954

25 years ago

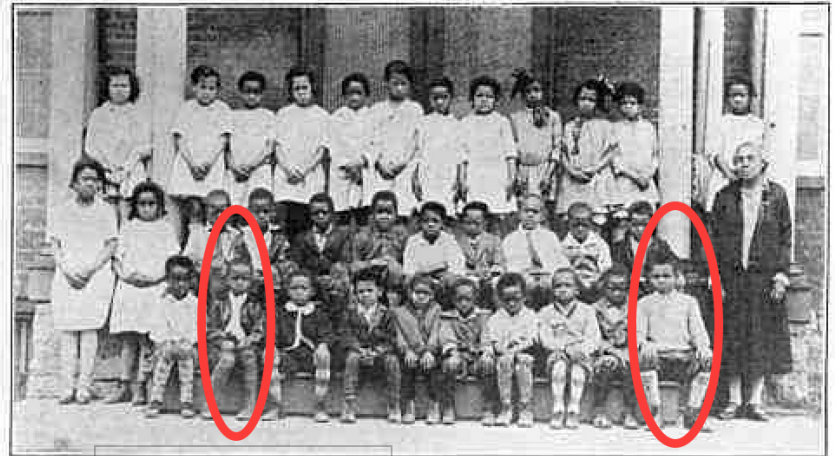
**Oak Grove Sets
Music Festival**

VERONA — Two former Harrisonburg musicians will return to the area Aug. 10 and 11 to perform at the Oak Grove Music Festival here.

Country and bluegrass performers Phil and Gaye Johnson, who hosted "Phil's Oldtime Picking Parlor" two years ago on WVPT-TV, will be joined in the Friday and Saturday night concerts by Robin and Linda Williams, blues singer Paul Geremia, banjo player Rick Seyford and John McCutcheon, who plays dulcimer and fiddle.

McCutcheon will call square

Source: Daily News Record



• Weldon "Red" Bundy •

Joe Yokely

MISS LUCY SIMMS AND HER LATEST CLASS AT THE EFFINGER SCHOOL

Source: Ancestry.com

PIPES FOR PITCHMEN FOR DEMONSTRATORS ENGRAVERS

THE COURTOTS . . .

Charlie and Mildred, who closed out a long pitch career more than a year ago, are still located in Miami, where both are engaged in commercial pursuits. They keep abreast of things by cutting up jackies with pitch lads and lassies playing the Miami sector.

HARRY LEE SOLOMON . . .

long-time entertainer of Harrisonburg, Va., and well known to the pitch fraternity, died January 19 of a heart attack in that city, we are advised by pitchman Jack (Bottles) Stover. For many years Solomon

operated a shoe shine parlor in Harrisonburg and did part-time entertaining at club dates. He started his career as a banner boy for the old Silas Green and Van Arnam minstrel shows, later becoming a drummer and vocalist with Fess Newman and His Southern Ramblers orchestra. In more recent years he organized his own band, the Aces of Rhythm, for local entertainment work. Solomon suffered a heart attack two years ago and never fully recovered from it. Surviving are his widow and daughter. Burial took place in Newtown Cemetery, Harrisonburg.

Source: Daily News Record

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Below is a list of missing information and unanswered questions we've come across during the research of this booklet:

- Information on Aces of Rhythm members:
Sammy Redd, John Bruce, Jim Crawford.
- The remaining two members of The Shenandoah Comedy Four.
- Any member of the Night Hawks Orchestra.
- Any member of the Bundy's Boys Band
- Any other Shenandoah Valley musicians and artists

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST
IN THIS PROJECT

THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY BLACK
HERITAGE PROJECT WOULD
APPRECIATE ANY ADDITIONAL
COMMENTS, INPUTS, INFORMATION,
OR CORRECTIONS IN ORDER TO
IMPROVE OUR RESEARCH.



For any questions or concerts, visit our website at
WWW.VALLEYBLACKHERITAGE.ORG