



INTERVIEW WITH
HUNTLEY JOHNSON

French Horn 1943
Three Rose Bowls

INTERVIEW WITH HUNTLEY JOHNSON

Version 3.2 (January 2012)

Date of interview: 22 Feb 2006

Interviewee: Huntley Johnson, French horn, 1943¹

Interviewer: Dan Cheatham, Drum Major, 1957

Place: Huntley's house
2095 Stratton Rd.
Walnut Creek, Calif.

Transcriber: Tanya Kulp

[Johnson edited his own remarks for clarity in late 2006 and again in July 2010]

[Cheatham edited his own remarks for clarity and grammar late 2006, June 2008, June 2010 and September 2011.]

Key words: First learned about the Cal Band, Growing up in the Berkeley school system, Audition, Navy Service, Big Game 1946, Coach Pappy Waldorf, Fellow Bandsmen, Charles Cushing, Rooters train, Clifton's Cafeteria, Parades, USC band, Life in Room 5 Eshleman Hall, Shostakovich, Dorthea Lang, Big Game night, Undergraduate life, Postwar years on campus, Origin of the Straw Hat Band, Life after graduation, Tomato contest.

Cheatham: My name is Dan Cheatham. I was drum major in 1957.

Johnson: My name is Huntley Johnson and I played the French horn at the University of California where I was a pre-dental major. I graduated from Cal in 1949 with a major in physiology.

Cheatham: How did you first learned there was such a thing as the Cal Band?

Johnson: I returned from the U.S. Navy from WWII. I left the service in late 1946. Student registration took place at Harmon Gym.²

¹ This designates his first year in the Band.

² Now called the Haas Pavilion. A canvas covering was put on the basketball court, to avoid damage, and numerous temporary tables were set up. On differing days, by alphabetic order, students would go from table to table to fill out the necessary registration paperwork. [In my student days we called it the "Men's Gym". The Hearst Gymnasium was known as the "Women's Gym".]

There was a table there for the students to sign up if they wanted to try out for the Cal Band. I had played for the Cal Symphony before, under Prof. William Denny, before I went into the service and I thought I would be interested in playing in the Cal Band.

Early life in Berkeley

When I was in the 5th grade, someone would come around to the class and say, “Is there anyone here who would like to play a musical instrument?” This was in Emerson Grammar school. I came home and told my parents that I thought I would like to play a trumpet. I didn’t know whether I would like to play a trumpet or play a trombone, but it was some brass instrument.

When I went to school Dr. Joe Ray Salisbury was the music teacher who would come around to the schools and recruit people to play. I told Mr. Salisbury that I would like to play a trumpet or a trombone. He said, “Oh that is very nice, but I am sorry all the trumpets and trombones have been taken, but if you want to play a brass instrument, we do have a French horn that we would like you to think about.” And so I said, “Okay.” I brought the French horn home to my parents. It was a single French horn and I started learning how to play. I took instructions from Mr. Salisbury.

At some point in time, my mother realized I would like to continue playing the French horn so she took me to San Francisco and we went to Sherman Clay music store with the idea of possibly purchasing a French horn. The salesman talked us into a double Conn horn. He said it was very necessary to have a double horn. So we came home with a brand-new Conn double French horn which had cost \$195.00. It was \$35.00 for the case.

I was really overjoyed to begin to tootle away on this double French horn at home. I had a nice music stand that I set up in the living room and played beginning French horn songs.

After I had become relatively proficient in playing the horn, I joined the Young People’s Symphony that was directed by Jessica Marchelli. We used to give concerts at the Greek Theater and at the Old Schwimley auditorium at Berkeley High. That is where I first met two students who went on to play in the Cal Band. One was Philip Ellwood³ who played the drums and one was Herb Towler⁴ who played the drums.

I wanted to be a better horn player, so I took some private lessons from Herman Trunter [Cal Band, 1917], Jr. who was part of the San Francisco Symphony. He would give me lessons at what I guess was his home, although I am not sure. It was just above College Avenue on Elmwood Court. So I would go there once a week. I don’t know how much it cost. It was like \$10.00 or something like that for an hour of lessons. I stayed with the Young People’s Symphony and Jessica Marchelli.

³ See his oral history. [Work in progress. October 2011]

⁴ See his oral history.

One of the big things that happened for me was when I was invited by Mrs. Marchelli to go to San Francisco and meet Paul Whiteman at the Palace Hotel. One of the things about being a French horn player is that photographer's make a big effort to get the French horn involved in some pictures. That was quite a thrill, going to San Francisco and meeting Paul Whiteman.

I had no thought of going to the Berkeley High Band, though I did play in the Berkeley High Orchestra. We performed light operas and a concert on occasion.

I had a paper route⁵ from the time I was about 11 until 13 or so for the *Oakland Tribune*. Since I had to do that every day and so there was no chance for me to go to any of the Berkeley High football games and play in the band.

When I wanted to earn some pocket money I would go to campus on game day and peddle programs. Once the game started, we were allowed to enter the stadium and watch the game. I would sell programs probably in 1938/1939. [This was very popular among school-aged kids.]

I was so excited that the Cal football team was playing.

After the game was over I would get one of the cards laying around from after the Card Stunts and I would go to the dressing room and get signatures of Johnny Meek, Bob Herwig, and Dave Devarona.

It was later on in 1939 that these same guys played in the Rose Bowl.⁶

Early days at Cal

After graduating from Berkeley high in 1943, I immediately started attending Cal and I was a pre-dental major. I also played in the University Symphony at that time directed by William Denny.

It was interesting when I applied to try out for the Cal Symphony I climbed the stairs in an old wooden building that was there on campus.⁷ Professor Elkus⁸ and the music department was on the second floor in that building and I ran into him and I said, "I

⁵ In those days, school kids would get paid to deliver daily news papers, after school, door to door, to subscribers.

⁶ As of 2011, that was the last time the Golden Bears won a Rose Bowl game. Abe Hankin was Senior Manager of the Cal Band. See his oral history interview. (Work still in progress.) Also, Jim Berdahl was Student Director. [July 2011: A brand new west coast intercollegiate conference has just been created. It is called the Pac-12. Things will never be the same again.]

⁷ The building still exists and is called Dwinelle Annex. It is located across the creek from Alumni House and at the bridge that crosses the creek.

⁸ Prof. Elkus was father to Jon Elkus, Cal Band Student 1952 and Cal Band musical arranger. His oral history is in progress. [2012]

would like to try out for the University Symphony and I play the French horn. My name is Huntley Johnson.” He said “Nice to meet you, Huntley, how do you spell that, Hurtleigh?”

I was still taking the French horn lessons from Herman Trutner and he told me one day, “Great news! I am going to be giving lessons at the University of California.” Those lessons were like Music 235A, or something like that, and they were given on Union Street.

Union street was just down from the Sather Gate.⁹ It was a clapboard building and you went up stairs and they had music rooms there. They had not done anything else than rent or buy this building. I would meet Herman Trutner there and we would play music together on the French horn.

Unbeknownst to me, in another room was a bassoonist from the San Francisco Symphony named Kubecheck and he was giving lessons to bassoonists in another room.

Just down the street from this practice room was the home of "Mother" Tusch who was in charge of a collection of music and aviation memorabilia.¹⁰ I wasn't sure if you had to pay to get in, but that was just two doors away. On the other side of the street was a playing field and that is where the Band would sometimes practice its marching.¹¹

Military Service

When you graduated from high school registration at the Draft Board was mandatory. I had a draft deferment as a pre-dental student going to Cal. But at some point they decided my deferment was not sound enough and they wanted a body so I entered the U.S. Navy. Because I had been a pre-dental student, I wanted to go into the Hospital Corps and hopefully get into the dental clinic of a hospital somewhere. And so I went through boot camp at Ferragut, Idaho. I went into the Navy in 1944 and was discharged in late 1946.

⁹ Union Street was a one-block-long street between Bancroft Way and Strawberry Creek. It bisected, north/south what is now Lower Sproul Plaza. Its "footprint" included what is now the pedestrian walkway under the student union annex. (Chavez Student Center)

¹⁰ It was a rooming house known as "The Hanger" run by Mary Elizabeth "Mother" Tusch. During WW I she opened her home to cadets training at the U.S. School of Military Aeronautics, on campus. Over time, Air Cadets signatures and photographs, and other artifacts, accumulated on the walls. As time passed, former roomers and their friends would return to visit and would bring artifacts to add to the collection. Signatures included Jimmy Doolittle, Richard Byrd, Billy Mitchell, and, allegedly, even Amelia Earhart. Its connections with military aviation lasted even into WW II. When the building was demolished in 1950 to make room for the Zellerbach Auditorium, the collection and the autographed wallpaper went to the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum. See pages 167 and 168 of *The Campus Guide: University of California, Berkeley* by Harvey Helfand.

¹¹ It was called Union Field and occupied the footprint of the present Zellerbach Hall.

I trained in Hospital Corps School. After boot camp, I was stationed at Corvallis, Oregon. There we received Marine Corps casualties from the battle at Iwo Jima. From there I went to Medford, Oregon, to Camp White Hospital Corps.

Returning to campus

Then I enrolled back into the University of California. I resumed my pre-dental studies. During that time I would go to football games and sit in the men's rooting section. It was a terrible year for the University of California as a football team. Frank Wickhorst was the head coach of the football team. Cal had a losing season. The worst of it was at the end of the season when Cal played Stanford.

The Cal rooting section got so mad about losing that they tore up the benches of the stadium and started a bonfire. The police were there and came around to get [the students] away from there. That only egged the guys on to make a bigger fire and to fight off the fire engines that would come.

Cheatham: It is my understanding that the wooden benches in the stadium had become rotted and damaged to the point that it was easy to remove them. There was also a large number of returning veterans. Among them was an element that enjoyed drinking in the rooting section and engaging in over-enthusiastic behavior.

This was in fact, a major event that resulted in Coach Wickhorst being fired by the Associated Students of the University of California, for being a losing coach and the ASUC hiring Coach Pappy Waldorf. These were major events and can be researched by consulting the appropriate copies of the *Daily Californian* Newspaper.

[The next year, with the same players, Coach Pappy Waldorf had a winning season.]

It is also interesting to note that this was during the now-forgotten era when intercollegiate athletics was "owned", financed, and administered by the Associated Students. If there was an involvement by the campus administration, it was minimal and you were not aware of it. All the intercollegiate athletics administrative offices were in the Stevens Student Union, next to what was then called Eshleman Court.

All this changed when the new student union was built on what is now known as Sproul Plaza.

What are your memories of Pappy Waldorf's first several years as coach of the Cal team?

Johnson: The day Coach Waldorf arrived at the Southern Pacific train station at the foot of University Avenue, members of the Cal Band...me, Bud Barlow, Phil Elwood, Herb Towler...greeted him as he got off the train¹² with his associates. (Bob Tessier, and others.) [...as well as a large contingent of the rooting section.]

¹² The Straw Hat Band had not yet come into existence.

We really enjoyed the arrival of Pappy Waldorf, who told the Cal Band it was as necessary for us to be at the football games as the football team was.

I remember [when the Band] had "Smokers"¹³ at the end of each summer. Pappy Waldorf was invited. He would come and talk and he established a strong rapport with the Band.¹⁴

The "Smokers" were held at the AKL house on the north side of campus. It was a time for old friends to get together for the first time since the end of classes in June. They swapped stories about their summer adventures and got in the mood for the upcoming football season and academic year.

Prior to the Waldorf era, when I enrolled for classes, the Spring Semester at the Harmon Gym enrollment tables...one of the tables had someone recruiting for the Cal Band and I went over there and decided I would like to try out for the Cal Band.¹⁵

I met several of my life-long friends through the Band. Don Lynch, who later became my best man when I got married in 1956; Don Noakes, who played the trombone and the sousaphone; Lesley Peterson, who played the trombone and Bill Fay¹⁶, who played the trombone. I would practice with Dick Auslen¹⁷, who was the Student Senior Manager of the Band at that time. He also played the French horn.

¹³ A "Smoker" was an all male social gathering with a beer keg and enthusiasm. They got their name during the 1930's when the tobacco companies would hold these gatherings and distribute free packages of cigarettes.

¹⁴ There has never since been as close a friendship with a football coach as we had with Pappy. It was strong and it was special. NHC

¹⁵ This was the era before IBM cards and computers. The enrollment procedure was quite complicated. What was then called the "Men's Gym" was set aside for a multi-day period. Tables were set up and manned by hired students. The enrolling students, in long lines, would go from table to table. Each table was a station to fill out a new form. The only words to describe it is that it was like driving cattle through a slaughter house. Each day was reserved for certain letters of the alphabet and students whose last name started with those letters would crowd up the front stairs of the gym and be met by an array of wooden barriers that would direct them from station to station, up a flight of stairs, down a hall, down a flight of stairs...from station to station. The final station was where you paid your registration fee. In my freshman year, 1954, it was \$42.00. You then exited out the large doorway that opened to the outfield area of the baseball diamond on the west side of Men's Gym. [January 2012: IBM punch cards?? What are those??]

¹⁶ Bill is credited with being the "founder" of the Straw Hat Band. See his separate interview on deposit at the Bancroft Library and on Cal Band Alumni Association web site at <http://calbandalumni.berkeley.edu/history/interviews/fay/>

¹⁷ Dick Auslen played an especially important role in the Band at that time. See his separate interview on deposit at the Bancroft Library and on Cal Band Alumni Association web site. http://calbandalumni.berkeley.edu/history/interviews/auslen/auslen_v3.0.pdf

That is where I also met Neal Lucas, Bruce Browning, Bud Barlow¹⁸, and Carl Trost and Fred Benz, who played the trumpet.

We also had a concert band in the spring. It was a formal class in the Music Department. [A large percentage of the students were Cal Bandsmen. NHC]

One of the interesting things that happened was when Director Charles Cushing told everybody in the Band we were going to have a visitor from Mills college. We were all really anxious to see this person come into the Band Room from Mills Women's College in Oakland. We were all expecting some good looking "broad" and it turned out to be a male who was going through a woman's college. His name was Dave Brubeck.¹⁹

"Cush the Bush," as we would affectionately call Prof. Cushing, because he had a goatee, was always bringing in some musical talent from somewhere. He was a very fond admirer of French composers' music. He was a personal friend of Shostakovich who, was from Russia.

While I was at Berkeley High playing in the Orchestra there was a trumpet player named Ross Taylor. He always wanted to play the French horn so he was interested in my playing my French horn. He got together two other trombone players and we would go up to Ross Taylor's house on Euclid Ave. Ross was very musically inclined and he would transpose the Baroque music and would have the parts out for the various instruments. We would play de Lassus and Palestrina and Bach and others as a quartet. It was just a joyous time to be playing.

The interesting thing about Ross Taylor was that his father was a Professor of Labor and Economics at Cal and he was married to a very famous photographer, Dorothea Lange, who had taken the photographs of the Dust Bowl people and the migrant laborers that came to California after the Dust Bowl²⁰. She had previously been married to Maynard Dixon who was a very famous Southwest artist in the 1930s. And of all things, there were Maynard Dixon paintings all over the house.

I could not believe that here, going through Berkeley High, that all these Professors' sons and daughters were all famous people or became famous. Perry Edward Byerly was with me at Berkeley High and his father was Perry Byerly²¹ who is a seismologist at

¹⁸ See his separate interview. (A work still in progress. July 2010)

¹⁹ Dave Brubeck was a famous jazz musician.

²⁰ Many of her photos are in the collections at the Oakland Museum and the Berkeley campus.

²¹ For 38 years he had supervised the University's network of seismographic stations, keeping track of earthquakes in central and northern California.

the point when earthquakes were getting to be known better. Alfred Trumpler²² was also there. His father was a Professor of Astronomy at Cal. These were all classmates of mine in school. It was really exciting.

It was wonderful music we were playing at Russ Taylor's house. Beautiful Baroque music in a brass ensemble and even now when I think about it, I become teary-eyed. While this was going on, Dorothea Lange was in the kitchen making cookies or something for us to have after practice.

Cheatham: One of the things that makes you a very special Bandsman is that you got to perform in three Rose Bowl games. But before we get to that, do you have any anecdotes to tell us building up to the time you went to the first Rose Bowl?

Football pool

Johnson: Something I remembered as I think back was when Neal Lucas had a football pool going and we would bet on the result of the game. People would fill in a square on a grid of squares that would go from one to zero on the x-axis and y-axis.²³ You could purchase a square.

It was really exciting getting ready to go down to a Rose Bowl game. But beforehand, that year the UCLA game was up here and Cal won and awhile later Cal was to go to Los Angeles and play USC.

Rooters Train

At that time, they had what was known as a Rooter's Train and rooters would pay to go to the games in southern California. The Band was also on the train.

²² Robert Julius Trumpler (born October 2, 1886 in Zürich, Switzerland; died September 10, 1956 in Berkeley, California) was a Swiss-American astronomer. After initial schooling, Trumpler entered the Universität Zürich but later transferred to the University of Göttingen where he earned his Ph.D. in 1910. In 1915, during World War I, he emigrated to the United States and joined the University of California. He took a position at Allegheny Observatory, and later went to Lick Observatory. In 1921, he became a naturalized citizen of the United States. He was elected a member of the United States National Academy of Sciences in 1932. He is most noted for observing that the brightness of the more distant open clusters was lower than expected, and the stars appeared more red. This was explained by the interstellar dust scattered through the galaxy, resulting in the absorption (extinction) of light or interstellar extinction of light. Trumpler further studied and catalogued open clusters in order to determine the size of the Milky Way galaxy. At first he thought his analysis placed an upper limit on the Milky Way's diameter of about 10,000 parsecs with the Sun located somewhat near the center although he later revised this. While cataloguing open clusters, he also devised a system for their classification according to the number of stars observed within them, how concentrated these stars are in the center of the cluster and the range of their apparent brightness. This system, known as the Trumpler classification, is still in use today. (Wikipedia)

²³ After all the squares were sold the number sequence of each axis was drawn at random, one axis for each team. The digits of the final score for each team were added to make a single digit and these square at the intersection of these two numbers was the winner of the jackpot from the funds that were collected from the sale of the squares.

The train was chartered by the ASUC. It was outfitted with one car that had a dance floor...and empty baggage car? A "pick-up" band would play music and people would dance into the wee hours of the night.

I had never been with the Cal Band on a rooter's train before.²⁴ To prepare for this trip, not only did I bring my French horn, but also a gallon jug that was grapefruit juice and gin.

After the train left at six in the evening I started drinking out of this gin and juice bottle and it wasn't long before I was getting pretty tipsy. But one thing I remember was Dick Auslen, who was the Cal Band Senior Manager, found a girlfriend, who later became his wife.²⁵

There was a lot of dancing in the "dance car" and at some point I just faded out of the scene until morning. When we got off the train at Union Station in Los Angeles I proceeded to "feed" the palm tree.

Clifton's Cafeteria/Hotel Commodore

One event was to go to Clifton's Cafeteria, in downtown Los Angeles, on the way to the game. That was a place where you go through the line and the food was in compartments...you went through the line and reached into a "compartment" and grabbed a dish and put it on your tray. The workers behind the wall of "compartments" replaced the missing dish so it would be full for someone else down the line. All of this was free for the Band and we played music afterwards...Cal Band songs.²⁶

The Band stayed at the Hotel Commodore in downtown Los Angeles. It was interesting because the Band got pretty rowdy and something was thrown out a window. It wasn't until the next day that we learned the neon sign said "Breakfast, Lunch and inner." The "D" had been eradicated by that something that had been thrown out of the window.

Cheatham: Huntley and I were talking off-tape and we are fairly sure this was the first rooter's train that was actually leased by the ASUC from Southern Pacific Railroad Company. We are pretty sure that pre-war...even though Cal rooters did go down to southern California...we don't think they went as an organized rooters' train.

The "dance car" was basically a freight car with nothing in it. The girls and boys on the rooting train would dance jitterbug and swing music while a Cal Band "Pick-up" band played.

²⁴ This may have been the first, or one of the first, Rooter's Trains.

²⁵ See Dick Austin's oral history on deposit in the Bancroft Library and on the Cal Band Alumni Association web page.

²⁶ Clifton's is discussed elsewhere.

Clifton's cafeteria is discussed in some of the other oral histories and was decorated with plastic palm trees and similar theme items to make it look like the South Pacific area.²⁷ I seem to remember hearing that Chris Tellefsen and Mr. Clifton were friends. It was through Chris Tellefsen's intervention that the Band got to have free food in return for marching up, and drawing a crowd.

This cafeteria has a history going back to the depression era. I have memory of people saying that Mr. Clifton would never turn someone away from a meal back in those depression years. Given the ethics of the day, many of these people would come back and pay years later, or would work...wash dishes...for the cost of the meal. In general, Mr. Clifton had a reputation for being a very compassionate person.

We are not sure if this was the case during Huntley's years, but during my student years the Cal Band would form up in front of the Biltmore Hotel just up the street from the cafeteria and would parade the two or three blocks, stand in the street in front of the cafeteria and play a concert and then would be allowed in to have free food. Basically the Band was helping to draw customers to the cafeteria.

It is possible that my drum major year, 1957, was the last year we did this.

Rose Bowl Games

Lets talk about the Rose Bowl games that you went to.

Johnson: I know we had to get up early in the morning for the Rose Parade. It was about 5:00 a.m. when we had to get up and have breakfast, then go to Pasadena in buses. I do not remember much other than the instructions to "keep your lines straight and march and keep your head up and act professional."

I enjoyed marching in the Rose parade. We always enjoyed being in any parade. One time later on we walked in a Milk²⁸ parade in downtown Oakland and three "homecoming" parades on campus too. In those days the "Homecoming Parade" was held in conjunction with the Cal/Stanford "Big Game".²⁹

I would like to regress back to another incident when Cal was playing USC down in Los Angeles. The Cal Band, we thought, was pretty good. The SC Band was big and had all kinds of girls who were carrying flags and banners, and all. One year, the SC drummers had a timpani on wheels that they marched with. This was the band that Herb Albert had been in. He was in the band at SC when we were in the band at Cal.

²⁷ See the photo on page 28 of the Cal Band history book, *The Pride of California*. Drum Major Bill Isbell is leading the march from the Biltmore Hotel, near Pershing Square to Clifton's.

²⁸ I wonder if he is referring to an informal parade sponsored by a milk company.

²⁹ The parade included floats constructed by the fraternities. They competed for prizes. There was also a float with the Homecoming Queen and her court. The route went up Telegraph Avenue and entered campus through Sather Gate. Sproul hall didn't exist in those days. During this era, the Band "loved" marching in parades and did it often.

It was outlandish, at the Cal/USC game, that the drum major of the SC Band kicked the point after the touchdown. He would wear a shako³⁰ and he would kick the point after touchdown and we all thought that was really hilarious. We used to make fun of that.

The name of the drum major of the SC Band, as I recall, was Tommy Walker.

That guy was afterwards chosen by Disney to do the opening of the Winter Olympics at Squaw Valley in 1960.

One thing they did at the Cal/SC game, one year, was that the players in the SC band had a little box that was on their hip. We thought that was where they kept their music. It turned out that was not so. When they played a particular piece on the field, they opened the boxes and out flew [a group of] pigeons.

Every one of those three Rose Bowl games that I participated in, the Cal Band was always out-marched by the opposing team that was from the mid-west.³¹

Classmates and Ping Pong

Cheatham: Let's return to your memories of some of your fellow Bandsman who are prominent in your mind.

Johnson: The first name that comes to mind is Leroy Klekamp. He had a Model A ford. He would drive into Eshelman Court where the Cal Band had it headquarters.³² He would play the "Star Spangled Banner" on his gears.

Cheatham: That sounds a little hard to imagine. What Huntley is trying to describe is that he could grind his gears by operating his gearshift lever as well as his clutch and gas peddle to make it sound like musical notes.

³⁰ Huntley is referring to the tall, furry "hat" that drum majors wear.

³¹ In the era that Huntley participated in, the annual Rose Bowl football game was the end-of-year wrap-up to the intercollegiate football season. It was played between the champion of the Big-10 conference and champion of the west coast teams. The name of the west coast conference varied over the years. Currently the Rose Bowl game is controlled by commercial interests and bears no resemblance to the nostalgic era we are referring to.

The point Huntley is making is that the Big-10 bands had developed a high-stepping marching style, with white spats and white gloves, that was so flashy and eye-catching that our slow-paced, military style of marching, with plain uniforms, was sorely outclassed. This, and the resulting change in our marching style is discussed in many of the other oral histories.[NHC June 2008]

As far as I know, in those days, this was the only "premier" post-season game. The others came along later and "borrowed" the word "Bowl" as a means of trying to add stature to their event.

³² The was located in Room 5 Eshleman Hall...now called Moses Hall.

Johnson: Another person I remember was Dick Auslen³³, who had a tomato-colored ford, which we called the Tomato Can. He would drive up to the stadium when we practiced our stunts. He would park his car in Eshleman Court next to Leroy Klekamp's Model A, at the stairway leading to Room 5 Eshleman Hall.

A favorite thing about the Band Room was the ping-pong table on which we would have ping-pong contests. Bob Desky was a very good ping-pong player, although there were several other good ones as well. I was not too good at it.

One of the funny things that happened to me was when I brought a modeling clay figure I had made in the Architecture 14 class I was taking as part of my pre-dental curriculum. I brought it to the Band Room. It looked like a woman's breast. Some guys stuck drinking straws in it, like whiskers, and called it a mouse's nose.

Recreation time

In the Band we were a close-knit group. We would get together in the evening and go down on College Avenue and drink beer. But the favorite place we would go was on Adeline and Alcatraz called "Hank and Mabel's."

The beer was in a coke tub that had ice water and ice cubes in it. The labels of the beer would get wet and tend to come lose. The beer was ten cents a bottle. We got the beer, took the label off and put it on the backside of our wallets, to add mass, and threw it at the ceiling. We had Lucky Lager and Golden Glow and Acme Beer labels stuck to the ceiling in "Hank and Mabel's" place.

Another favorite memory is when a group of us decided to go to Edward's Track Field to watch the relay races. We especially wanted to see Steve Prefontaine³⁴, who was a miler from Oregon. We were sitting in the west side of Edward's Field. One of our new arrivals was Don Noakes, who had a box over his shoulder, which had a label saying "milk." As we watched him coming up the steps with this box, it slipped off his back and hit the sidewalk of the stairs. People were yelling, "Oh look, he dropped his milk." What actually happened was several bottles of beer broke and the beer was flowing down the stairs and somebody else said, "Oh no, look, it's beer!"³⁵

³³ See his oral history.

³⁴ Steve Roland Prefontaine (January 25, 1951 – May 30, 1975) was an American long distance runner. Prefontaine is considered to be among the greatest and most inspirational runners of the modern era by many of his fans. [Wikipedia] There might be a mistake here. Prefontaine was not born until 1951. The event being described here would have happened in the late 1940's.

³⁵ Bear in mind that this was the immediate post WW II years. Not only were there a large number of drinking-age students on campus but, yes, they were rowdy to a degree you are not likely to see today. Students today direct their energies differently.

Night before Big Game

Cheatham: Something else that was very important in the life of the campus and the life of the Cal Bandsman was the evening before the Cal/Stanford football game. What are your memories of that?³⁶

Johnson: I remember being down in the Jackson Square area off Broadway, in San Francisco. There was a club where we went to play Cal Band songs. They had bouncers at this club. When we finished, we were walking out and someone was trying to walk out with a barstool. The bouncer stopped him from leaving.

On one of our forays into downtown Oakland we went to the Moulin Rouge, which was a strip joint down there. We were drinking beer. On the way home we were on Telegraph Avenue going north. Near where the White Horse Bar³⁷ was, there was a sign out in the middle of the block which said, "Stop for walkers" The cars slowed down and stopped and this arm went out and grabbed the sign and pulled it in. The sign ended up in the Cal Band room³⁸, but they added, "Stop for Johnny Walkers."³⁹

Campus Life

Cheatham: Describe what campus life was like during the midst of those war years before you went in the Navy? What was it like after you returned from the Navy?

Johnson: When I went to Cal after graduating from Berkeley High, all you had to have was a C average to get into dental school at U.C. San Francisco. After the war was over, you had to have at least a B average. When I was a freshman I got C's because it was easy as pie to get C's. I was on the Freshman Council and on the Rally Committee. I went up the night before a game we played against St. Mary's and guarded the Big C against vandalism by the opposing school. Vandalism on campuses by opposing schools was fairly common in those post-WW II days. Even little-old St. Mary's would try and paint the Big C [from gold to red].

Something else about St. Mary's. They had such a small student body that they had hire union musicians in order to put a marching band on the field. They wore chrome plated WW I-style helmets.

³⁶ In those days, before the distractions of television, the "Big Game" was a major Bay Area event. On Friday night San Francisco was overwhelmed with class reunions from both schools. After the bonfire rally in the Greek Theatre, the Band would visit the Cal reunions with great festive mood. The two bands would often cross paths.

³⁷ It still exists at 6551 Telegraph Ave., just north of Alcatraz Ave. When I was a kid, it shared the building with a Chinese restaurant. NHC October 2011

³⁸ Collecting signs for Band Room was a hobby-like activity of the Bandsmen. There came a time when the clutter needed to be removed. See the photo on page 29 of the Cal Band history book. It could be easily be stated that as the years went by, it got out of hand.

³⁹ Reference to a brand of whiskey.

I was a “man about town”...of sorts. I went to all the sororities because it was real easy to get dates, as there were not a lot of men around at that time...still in the military.

After I came back from the Navy, all my C's had to be improved to A's. This was really hard work to maintain so I could obtain a B average to get into dental school. I did continue playing in the Band, but this was my only other social outlet since I had to concentrate on my studies at that time.

In my freshman year, before going into the service, the only men on campus were either midshipmen in the Naval ROTC or ROTC students going on the way to active duty or visiting officers who were studying meteorology at Eshleman Hall.⁴⁰ These guys were on campus by special assignment from the military and didn't stay long.

For the most part, all student-aged guys were on active duty.

After the war, I did not see many amputees or other war-injured people on campus. But there was a guy in a Marine uniform who had the most beautiful handlebar mustache. It was really something.

One person of note was a fellow who would walk past Wheeler Steps. He would usually have two or three calla lilies. He would hold them up near the flower itself and let these stems hang down below. He would have a book in his other hand. It was said as long as he would go to school he would be given a stipend of money to live on, perhaps from his family.

He had been there for years and all he was doing was taking different classes. It was said that he kept changing majors in an effort to not graduate.⁴¹

A woman who was there would walk around wearing crazy clothes and weird makeup. The story about her was she had been in an automobile accident and only had about half of her brain, but she wandered around.

There was another guy I thought had been injured in the war. He was badly burned. He was a teaching assistant in class at Cal. You would see him every now and then walking on Telegraph Avenue or around campus. I did not know about him until one of my close friends said he remembered as a child in Berkeley that this guy lived across the street when he pulled a large tub of scalding water on himself and disfigured himself terribly.

⁴⁰ There were a lot of classes on campus specifically for service personnel, as part of their training.

⁴¹ No calla lillies, but even into the 1950's, I remember seeing a guy who just never seemed to graduate and was subject to the same rumor. I wonder if it was the same guy.

Founding of the Straw Hat Band

Cheatham: You participated in a very significant event involving the Cal Band. Tell us about the origin of the Straw Hat Band.

Johnson: In 1948 a bunch of us were sitting around the Band Room. We decided it would be fun to go to the State Fair in Sacramento. I raised the problem that the distractions of the Fair could easily separate us from each other, so we should wear straw hats, as markers. We all decided we would get a straw hat and meet and go up to Napa where Don Lynch's parents lived. We would pick him up and go to the Fair from there.

At that time fashion protocol in the general population dictated straw hats were worn from spring to Labor Day. Since it was September, all the straw hats were on sale. I bought my hat from Moneyback Smith, in downtown Oakland. I think it cost eight dollars.

Bill Fay had a straw hat he found in the "Dickey Club", the Delta Tau Epsilon House when he started going to Cal.⁴² He found it in the closet in his room. So he had a hat to wear.

Bud Barlow and I got our hats, and we all drove up to Napa, picked up Don Lynch and drove to the Fair.

We had a wonderful time. We drank beer, we played horses and Bill, as I recall, won some money on a horse.

A photographer walking around the Fair took our picture, which we all got a copy of. That was the first group of Straw Hatter's from the Cal Band getting together and going on a trip.⁴³

When we got back to the Band Room and told of our exploits, everyone thought it was a terrific idea and should be done again next year. The following year, more of the guys got straw hats there were about 17 of us including Carl Trost, Don Noakes, and several more. We had a really nice time again.

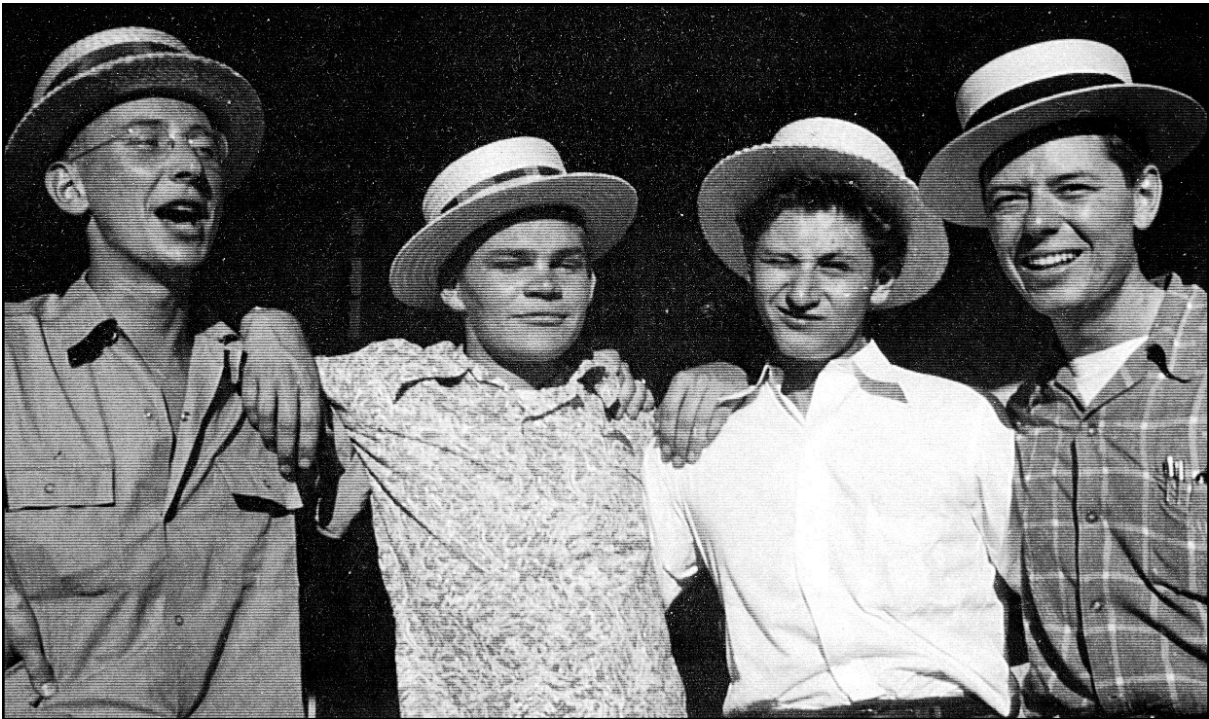
Because of that, when we would play in a pep band for basketball games, guys would start wearing the straw hats and we became known as the Straw Hat Band. We started decorating our straw hats with [ticket stubs and similar things].

Around this time, Don Lynch invited me to go on a blind date. We were to pick up the girls from Mills College where he was courting the girl he later married. Her nickname was Muggins Lynch. We took corsages for the girls. He brought a *Strelitzia* plant, the

⁴² See the separate interview with Bill Fay on deposit at the Bancroft Library and on Cal Band Alumni Association web site at <http://calbandalumni.berkeley.edu/history/interviews/fay/>

⁴³ I would go further and say this was the origin of the Straw Hat Band. [NHC October 2011]

**ORIGINAL FOUR
STRAW HAT BANDSMEN**



Bill Fay

Huntley Johnson

Bud Barlow

Don Lynch

bird-of-paradise. He pinned that on her shoulder. It made it hard for her to dance, as it was so big.

As a note, when Don Lynch was killed in an automobile accident about 1961, his straw hat and a *Stralitzia* bouquet were placed on his casket by Muggins.

Wheeler Hall steps were the site of impromptu pep rallies during noontime. Bandsmen would be there in their straw hats and play in order to gather a crowd.⁴⁴

To go to the basketball games it became customary for the Band to wear white shirts and bow ties along with our straw hats. Thus, *all* the Bandsmen were now purchasing straw hats.

One of the guys who was very active at the basketball games was Art Robson (SM 1952).⁴⁵ He played the bass drum. He had a confederate army hat and sleeve garters he wore. In time he switched to a straw hat too.

Cheatham: You might be interested to know that the only straw hat currently in the University of California archives is my own straw hat. In the 1960's my professional life was taking me to the Pacific islands. I realized that there was no Cal Band straw hat in the archives and decided to give them mine rather than run the risk of having it get lost or damaged. [Still true in 2012.]

I think it would be really neat if your, original, straw hat were to someday wind up there too. It has extra value as being one of the originals, perhaps the last of the originals.

Johnson: I plan to give it to the powers that be so it does end up in the archives. There are no more original straw hats other than the one that was on Don Lynch's casket. Mallory Lynch, his daughter, has this hat.

Barlow's hat was given to somebody else and we don't know what happened to it.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ This was the forerunner of similar events now held at the steps of Sproul Hall.

⁴⁵ See Art Robson's own oral history. A work still in progress. [October 2011] Also see the photos on page 27 and 167 of the Cal Band history book.

⁴⁶ See Barlow's oral history. A work still in progress. [January 2012]

Cheatham: Bill Fay's, the original straw hat, came out of his fraternity house closet basically got worn out and disintegrated.⁴⁷ After graduation, Bill became a minister for the Episcopal Church and was assigned to one of the Indian Reservations in the mid-west. For no particular reason he wore the hat around the reservation, and it just wore out.

As we approach the end of this interview, do you have any thoughts you would like to share with us that I have not asked about.

Johnson: I am going on 81-years-old now, and after graduation from Cal in 1949, then going through dental school and graduating in 1953, and getting married to Mary in 1956, all of my friends I was with in the Band are still my friends. We get together frequently. John Hornback, Carl Trost, Dave Wenrich, Fred Benz, and Bud Barlow and I still get together. Unfortunately Bruce Browning is no longer with us and neither is Don Noaks. His wife Jane is also passed away as well, but she came to all our parties.

As we have gone through our lives, their children would come to these gatherings and we came to know their children. Now they are grown and they have children and we still get together. It has been wonderful.

The Cal Band has been the most wonderful organization I can think of. It has been way better than being in a fraternity house. This has been a terrific experience.

Cheatham: Give us a brief synopsis of your life subsequent to your graduation from Cal?

Johnson: Since graduating from Cal and going on to dental school at the University of Pacific, which used to be called P&S (Physicians and Surgeons in San Francisco) where I graduated in 1953, I started my dental practice in Berkeley on Telegraph near Ashby.

⁴⁷ Here is an excerpt from Bill Fay's oral history. *We had a joke about my straw hat: Huntley Johnson would call out "Hey Bill, how's your old straw hat?" And I would answer back "Never been felt!" (Explanation: felt hat, not a straw hat!!). My original straw hat, from the Deke House closet, had a bright red hat band. I wore it to the Virginia Seminary in the Fall of 1948, but it finally disintegrated from old age. I later bought other straw hats in San Francisco and later at Dayton's in Minneapolis (there were none available at any stores in South Dakota!). For many years, a straw hat was a sort of trade-mark with me, and I wore one every summer until the late 1960's. These hats (called "sailor straws" in those days) were very popular with San Francisco business men in the 1930's, and at the end of each summer, after Labor Day, they would sail them off the ferry boats into the Bay on their way home from San Francisco, and buy a new one for the following summer. As a young boy, I can remember several San Francisco lawyers and business men on our street, who would wear their straw hats to work every day in the summer time (this was before the bridges, when everyone rode the trains and then the ferries to San Francisco)*

I also taught at Children's Hospital in Oakland for two or three years. I was on the staff at University of Pacific for 19 years in operative dentistry. I attained the position of assistant professor.

Lo and behold, my son Whitney grew up and decided to be a dentist as well. He has now taken over my practice after we shared the practice for a number of years. The office is now on the 7th floor of the Huntmont Building, which was a building put together by Jerry Patmont, M.D. and myself, and we lost our shirts on it. One of the lots this building was built on was the house I grew up in.

Continuing my friendship with the Cal Bandsman, we wanted to get Bill Fay to marry us when we were getting married. It was all set for February 4th. For some reason or another, we changed our plans and neglected to notify Bill Fay. We changed it to June 16 and called Bill to come, and he said, "I'm sorry, but I am the Secretary of the Episcopal Diocese and I can not attend because I have a meeting that weekend." So we had to get another minister to perform the ceremony.

We celebrate fifty happy years this June 2006 and were blessed with three sons, Whitney, Darien, and Barrett.

Bud Barlow lives in Pleasanton and I live now in Walnut Creek. In 1988 the two of us decided to have a contest growing tomatoes. The idea was we were each to plant a tomato, from seed after January 1st to see who had the first red tomato. During the episodes of growing these seeds into plants, we would call one another and have what we called "TU's" or tomato updates.

One year, I think 1988, Mary and I went to Montreal. At a store there, Mary found a plastic tomato. We decided to make a trophy cup. I bought a bowling trophy from the Goodwill and cut off the bowler's body and we affixed the plastic tomato to it. This became the tomato trophy we have been passing back and forth all these years since 1988. We still are having the contest. The only thing that has changed is Bud won the contest with a tomato called Jiffy. It was about the size of a large pea. The ritual included the contestants' wives gathering to judge the winning tomato-to-be and make sure it was proper because tricks were played at the time. Bud Barlow once wired a red tomato to the vine to pass it off as a winning tomato. Another time he painted a tomato with red finger nail polish to try to pass that off as a winning tomato.

After checking out the tomato, we cut it off the vine and cut it in four parts so each of us would have one fourth of the tomato to sample as the fruit of the new season. That one pea-sized tomato he won with made me so mad that we had to make up new rules. Now we have a "tomato meter" which is a piece of wood with a $1 \frac{7}{8}$ inch hole in it. If the tomato passes through the hole, even if it is red, it is not a winner. It must be able to sit on top of the hole. So we again are embarked on this tomato contest. It has been lots of fun.

Cheatham: As we sit here doing this interview, on the nearby windowsill happens to be a couple of seedling trays where Huntley is sprouting this year's entries to the big tomato plant contest.

Huntley, I want to thank you for spending some time with me to capture these recollections of your history with the Cal Band. This information will eventually be bound and included with the rest of the oral histories of this series located in the University of California Archives.

Johnson: Dan, I think you have done a wonderful job in getting these oral histories together and I really commend you for doing this. It is a hard job to do and you are doing a great job.

Note: Huntley finished off this interview with the standard greeting among Bandsmen of his acquaintance.

BLEE DEEP!⁴⁸

⁴⁸ In Huntley's own words: "Blee Deep is a yell that I started during football games. It was hard to yell Hey!, Go!, because one would lose their breath saying the word. I started yelling Blee Deep because it was a forceful yell. We would say it after a touchdown or necessary first down. Anyway we all(?) started saying it. And we still yell it when we are on a ski slope or are calling trying to get one's attention. Now all my friends still use it when we end a letter or say goodbye. I have it on our phone answering machine and also on our automobile license plate."