



Grand Reunion of the Bands Performance for the Oak Ridge High School Class of 1968 Reunion

## 2013 and 2014



BNO 30 Year Anniversary Concert at the Historic Grove Theater in Oak Ridge, Tennessee

Batchelor was simply too difficult for just two trumpets – that a third was needed to trade off on the many high notes. "That, or the guy playing the high parts all night would find his chops completely shredded by the third set." is the way it got put. So it was for some performances in the 90s and early 2000s, the band would have a seven-piece horn section. "Big and loud enough to blow your socks off." was the way Tim Hughes, a trumpet player from Athens that eventually replaced Kasten, put it.

After a few years with Tim Hughes as the band's high-note trumpet player, in 2001 Tim was replaced by Rick Carl, a Knoxville attorney and, in an earlier life, band director at the Webb School. Rick joined the band just before BNO went into the recording studio to make their *Beach Music in My Soul* album. In more recent years, when either Hugh or Rick faced a conflict for a gig, a very competent trumpet player named Michael Hulsey, from the "Little Big Band" (which had evolved from, you guessed it, the Music Crafters), gets called into action.

### Playing Out for 30+ Years

After several "showcase" gigs and their early appearances in the Alexander Inn ballroom, the band's first big break came in 1986 at the City of Knoxville's "Saturday Night on the Town" (aka "SNOTT.") Radio station WYSH, aka U-102, invited BNO to "warm up the stage" for their headliner band "Charmer." The SNOTT crowds were huge and did a lot to give the band's name broader awareness in the east Tennessee area. The second year BNO participated in SNOTT, they backed Knoxville's own Clifford Curry who successfully sang his two best-known songs, *She Shot a Hole in My Soul* and *Baby Won't You Shag with Me*, "without no rehearsal" as Clifford said in his follow-up thank-you note to the band. U-102 also invited the band to play for the River Feast and Trash Bash events at the old World's Fair Site. A few years later came the opportunity to play on the main stage for Boomsday. In successive years at Boomsday, BNO was the warm-up band for the Impressions, Jan and Dean, General Jackson and the Chairmen of the Board, Lee Greenwood, and B.J. Thomas. Great experiences all. One year, BNO was invited to warm up for Eddie Rabbitt, who in turn warmed up for Wynona and Naomi Judd, at a big summer afternoon event out back of the Auditorium/Coliseum.

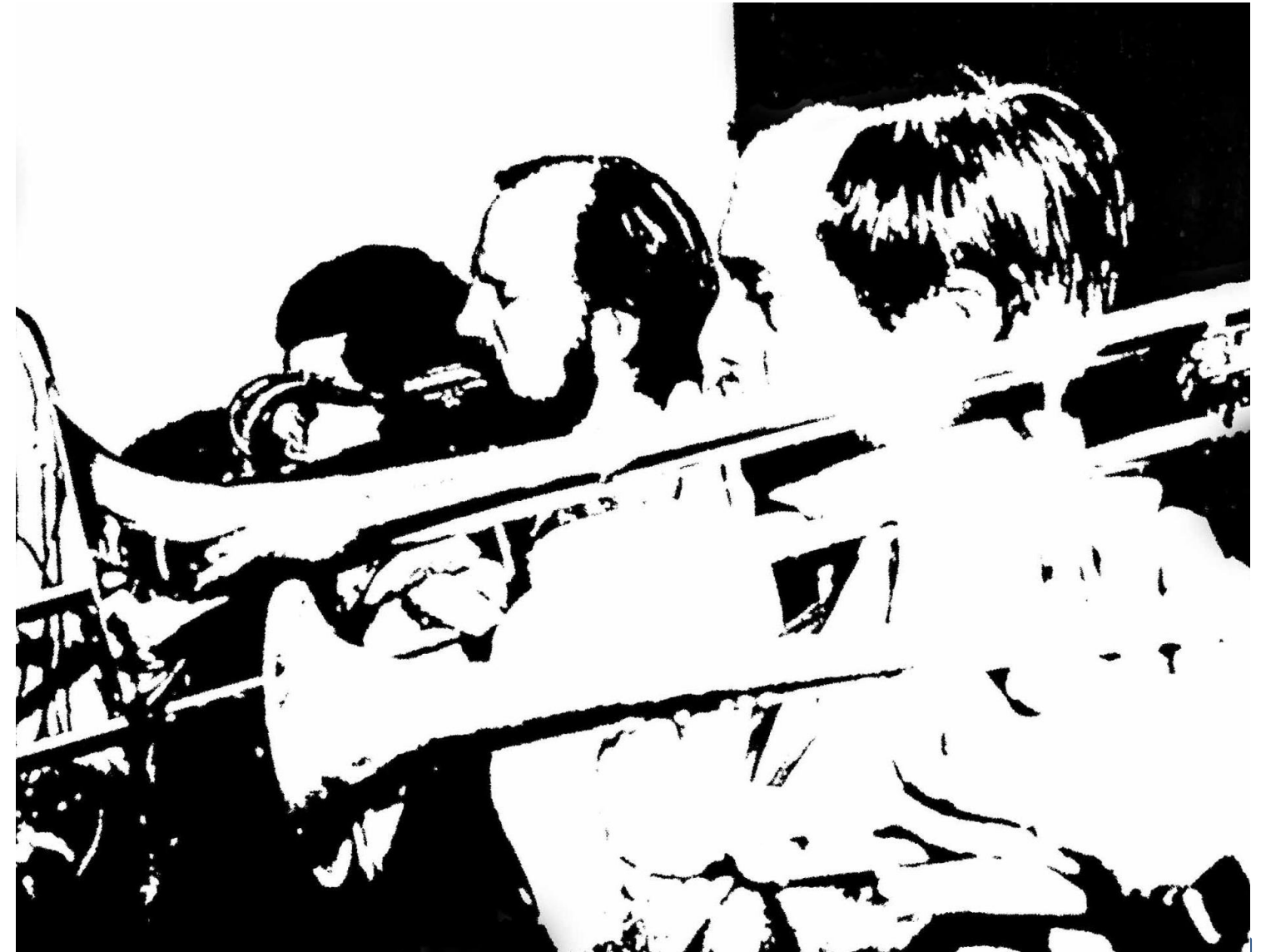
During the band's early and middle years, they became the annually recurring band for the City of Oak Ridge's Mayfest "Party in the Park." They played this party for 15 years, with little or no compensation, and had great fun doing it.

Other bands, or relatively big names, for whom the boys warmed the stage over the years include Nell Carter, the Buckingham, Marcia Ball, Julio Iglesias, the Oak Ridge Boys, The Platters, Mickey Thomas and Starship, Steve Jarrell and the Sons of the Beach, and the Tams. On two occasions, BNO was honored to back Archie Bell (*Do the Tighten Up, Going to Be a Showdown*), who graciously dubbed several of the boys "the honorary Drells." At one of the Archie Bell shows, the band also backed the legendary Barbara Lewis (*Hello Stranger*). Perhaps their pinnacle event as a backup band, at one of the Hooray for Harriam events, they played behind R&B legendary icon Percy Sledge (*When a Man Loves a Woman*).

### The Band of Brothers

So except for drummers and high note trumpet players, for over 25 years Boys' Night Out has been stable with five of its original members: Jake Alexander, Jeff Ginsburg, Bruce Giles, Hugh Nichols, and Vaughn Leslie; and four second-generation, post-Pastels, "Johnny come lately" members: Clint Eskew, Ed Winebarger, Larry Bray, and Don Batchelor. Drummer Richard Neubert and trumpet player Rick Carl have both been onboard for at least 12 years. This is an exceptionally long period of association for musicians in a completely amateur "hobby band." The familial bonds are strong in this group. And as Ginsburg likes to say: "Hell, this band has outlasted all three of my marriages."

Although none are what a casual observer might characterize as a very demonstrative bunch of guys, the trust is obviously there. Alexander puts it this way: "In the last 30 years, I've lost all the family I grew up with. Particularly hard was the loss of my only brother, Marty, back in '05. Now I consider these guys my brothers. That said, let it be known that sometimes brothers get really angry with each other and would, if not restrained by the conventions of civilized society, try to beat the crap out of each other."



# An Imprecise History of Boys' Night Out

*As told to Foxy Funderburk, staff writer for the east coast quarterly publication, "The Beach Music Scene"*

*Boys' Night Out – An Improbable Notion Brought Forth Beneath a Partially Eclipsed Sun*

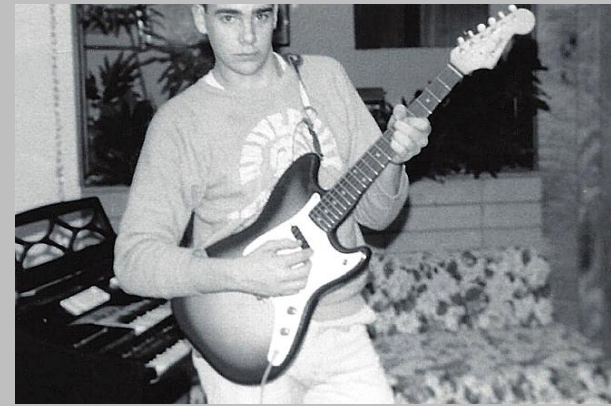
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Marty and Jake

1965



Jeff and the Fender DuoSonic that started it all

It was a cool, crystal blue-sky day in the Fall of 1983 when Jake Alexander went into his old friend's thriving business in the old Downtown Shopping Center, the Camera's Eye. There, Alexander presented owner Jeff Ginsburg with a proposal to undertake the formation of a new rock and roll "hobby" band.

Only a week or so before, Jake had gone to the Downtown Shopping Center in the early afternoon to decompress a little after a particularly difficult "policy meeting" he had been forced to endure in at his place of employment, the Department of Energy's Oak Ridge Operations Office. He was stressed to the max, almost angry enough to punch somebody, and knew it was time to take a break from his profession.

About two years earlier, Alexander's last attempt at a local semi-pro band, "The Worlds' Fair Five," had gone down in flames over a collective lack of enthusiasm, but mainly his. Before that, in the early 1980s, he had been with "Kathy Hill and the Elks Lodge-a-Rhythm Band." Preceding that group, in the mid-70s, there had been the "Alexander Brothers." In high school and college, Jake had played mostly rhythm and blues (R&B) with Caledonia (aka the "Clinton Embers") and the Soul Sanction.

It occurred to Alexander that fateful afternoon in 1983 that, perhaps, getting another hobby band going, this one entirely focused on fun stuff to play rather than the rapidly degenerating Top-40 fare, might give him something else on which to expend pent up energy, providing some relief from the stress associated with his difficult job.

It was at that moment Alexander noticed that the sunlight that afternoon was a little different than usual. Under the seemingly bright sun, the sky seemed a deeper shade of blue and the edges of shadows seemed slightly diffused. Something weird was definitely happening. His thoughts under the intense emotions he was experiencing that day were along somewhat irrational lines for him - might this be a sign from divine providence that forming a new band, one focused totally on junk music and fun, might truly be a mission from God?

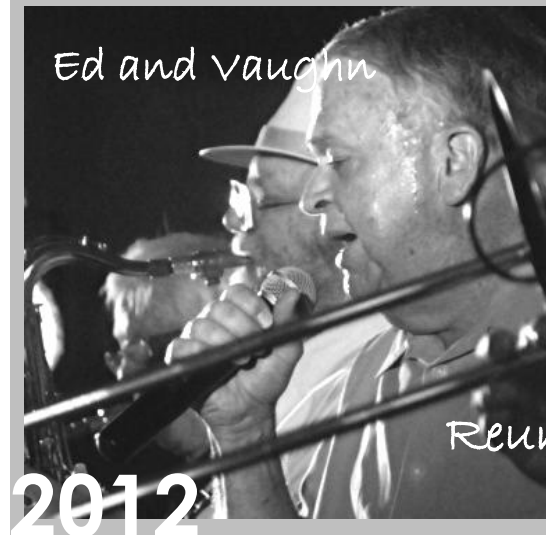
In something akin to a hypnotic trance, as Alexander approached the corner of the shopping center where the Camera's Eye was then situated, he noticed a telescope was set up in front of the store, pointed directly at the sun.

From the eyepiece of the telescope, an image was being projected onto a piece of paper that showed a dark circle being increasingly shadowed on one edge. Unknown to Alexander, mainly because all he had been paying attention to lately were the problems associated with his work, was that east Tennessee was experiencing a partial solar eclipse that afternoon. Ginsburg had set up the telescope rig to allow passers-by to observe the eclipse without looking directly at the sun, which isn't a smart thing to do.

Jake went into Jeff's store to thank him for setting up the telescope rig and, as always, to reminisce about their formative years spent on Oklahoma Avenue in the old "Oak Hills Estates" neighborhood. Jeff had lived at 106 and Jake at 110 Oklahoma. Both nice houses, but neither was an "estate" really. Whatever.

Jake's older brother, Marty Alexander, by age 15, had gained some guitar playing skills and had, by 1962, acquired a Fender DuoSonic electric guitar and a small Kay amplifier. In spring of 1963, he introduced Jake and Jeff to electric guitars and the joys of self-made rock and roll music. Jeff was already a skilled accordion player by this time, obviously having an innate knack for music, and picked up guitar skills quickly with only rudimentary guidance. Different story with Jake - no innate skill there, just an enthusiastic student who knew that playing rock and roll might increase his relatively diminutive stature with the girls he knew at Robertsville Junior High. Leading up to that time, Marty had become increasingly annoyed by the limited choices for a reliable bass player among friends his own age. Marty's thinking might have been: "Damn - If I'm going to have to deal with some annoying, apathetic dumbass to have a bass player in my band, I might as well teach my obnoxious little brother to play bass."

And so it began. In 8<sup>th</sup> grade it had been Jake on guitar and Jeff on bass (mostly playing only one song - *Pipeline*, by the Chantays), but by 9<sup>th</sup> grade the roles had reversed. Made more sense that way, or so it seemed at the time. Jake and Marty's mid-60s band was The Earls, one of the regular bands at the ORHS Wildcat Den.



2012



Reunion of the Bands performance for the Oak Ridge High School Class of 1970 Reunion

Now BNO had its first configuration of the six-piece section that would become standard. After one of the shows featuring all six horns, Alexander, in a typical colorful mood, was heard to say to one of his old buddies from the original Soul Sanction: "I tell you what, when those six horn guys all hit on time and in pitch, and the rhythm section has found its groove, Boys' Night Out's got a sound powerful enough to turn goat piss into gasoline."

#### The March of Time - Drummers Come and Go, and Come and Go

As the band entered the 90s, and after a few false starts with drummers who couldn't or wouldn't get with the program, Ken Keever successfully replaced Charlie Valentine on the drums. Ken's style was louder and faster than Charlie's, heavy handed like Gary Young's, and after getting his self-taught, intuitively solid fill techniques properly oriented in each song, it was observed that Keever more or less "led Boys' Night Out around by its nose." "Never much doubt about where the vocal was supposed to come in, when it was time to go to the bridge, or when the song was drawing to its close when Keever was there banging it out for us," the guys would say. In addition, Ken was the indisputable master of the "double time" tag at the end of certain songs. He also sang Louis Armstrong's plaintive *It's Wonderful World* with the delicacy and serenity of original recording. During Ken's 10+ years with Boys' Night Out, the band's popularity and showmanship continually improved.

After Ken, the band's next drummer was a jazz-style player named John Hawkinson, who played with the band several years before he left to become a commercial airplane pilot. John developed some dramatic, subtly complex drum rhythms for some of the band's more "up town" offerings - e.g. Van Morrison's renditions of *Someone Like You* and *Have I Told You Lately That I Love You*. He was a good drummer and the boys were sorry to see him go.

Another drummer that had grown up in Oak Ridge, one Dr. Richard Neubert, had often appeared in the wings at BNO's shows and repeatedly expressed interest in becoming the band's drummer. Many years earlier, Neubert had played in the popular mid-60s band, Little Joe and the Apollos, As a music student, he had acquired some of the same technical skills as Valentine and Hawkinson. Where Keever and Young had lacked certain technical skills and were never, ever, subtle; Neubert was subtle, perhaps a bit too

much so for some of the guys who identified with the "loud and garish" type of R&B that Johnny Pirkle had spoken of so many years earlier. Although some of Neubert's instincts seemed counterintuitive to other band members, they all agreed: "That guy can play the hell out of Otis Redding." But whatever - except for about 14 months back in 2011 and 2012, when a different professional drummer, Jeff Hauschildt, briefly played with the band, Richard has been the man with the sticks. It is Neubert playing on BNO's 16-song CD recorded in 2002.

#### Trumpet Players - So What's It All About With Those Guys?

Other than drummers, for the last 30 years the only other part of the band to experience occasional change was the trumpet player standing beside the stalwart Hugh Nichols. After two or so years with the band, Dave DeArmond began to experience some health issues that interfered with his ability to make a solid commitment to the band's busy schedule. Accessing the ranks of John Mitchell's Music Crafters once again, Alexander talked to friend and neighbor Paul Burn about "helping out" on trumpet. Although Burn knew, and told Alexander so, that R&B wasn't then, nor would it ever be, "his thing;" he was nevertheless willing to step in and do his best until we could get somebody else. After Paul, yet another of the Music Crafters' deep bench of trumpet players, and a friend of Alexander's since childhood, Kim Kasten, joined up and stayed with the band a number of years.

During this period, the band also began to somewhat regularly draw on the reserves of semi-professional trumpet players based in and around Knoxville - guys who had well-honed playing skills, broad experience, could damn-near sight-read the charts, and, above all, make the trumpet "scream" the high notes. Ray Brooks, notoriously willing to play with anyone as long as the money was right, was perhaps the most notable "trumpet whore" Boys' Night Out would employ during those middle years. Some others were Thom Fox, Jeff Watkins, Tom Payne, Stewart Cox, and, on one or two occasions, Dave's son Davey DeArmond, who obviously inherited his dad's skills on the horn. During these years, Kasten took the position that the trumpet book for Boys' Night Out, now packed with many very challenging medley arrangements written by Clint Eskew or Don



Vaughn and Don

Hugh and Rick

Performance at the Knoxville Civic Auditorium

2010

Somebody within this complex communications string evidently told Larry he might call Jake Alexander to get a better idea of what the BNO horn section was all about, possibly because Alexander had prepared the band's horn charts up until that time. Larry was concerned about the challenges that might have to be overcome for him to bring "added value" to the band. He explained to Alexander that he was terribly out of practice and he had concerns about the quality of his instrument. Alexander, knowing that John Weber was contemplating leaving the band in order to better focus on his profession, made most of the ordinary comments about the humble beginnings and limited experience of several of the bands members, intended to convince Bray to stop worrying about such things. Finally, somewhat in exasperation, Alexander said something like: "Look man, just get your ass and your horn to practice next week and you'll see. I remember the Sierras from when I was a kid. (again from a mid-60's Chilhowie Park event sponsored by WNOX). It may take a few weeks to get your chops back, but you'll be plenty good enough, take my word for it."

By this time, Ginsburg had closed the Cedar Bluff store and the band was practicing in the garage of a house owned by one of the band member's friend, Lynn Chilcoat. Clint and Larry arrived for practice at Lynn's house with some degree of anticipation and skepticism. Clint was probably surprised to learn that, for some reason, this band provided instruments for its keyboard players. The Porta-B, the Leslie Cabinet, and an early model touch-sensitive electronic piano made by Roland, also belonging to Alexander, were already in place and ready to go.

Although Clint wasn't as committed to the Hammond B-3 sound as Alexander and some of the others might have initially liked, his immense musical talent was obvious. A lot of R&B is limited to major and minor chords, with a few 7ths sparingly thrown in. As Clint got worked in to the band, more major 7ths, 9<sup>th</sup> chords, and diminished and augmented chords began to creep in. Many of the horn parts required retooling so as to eliminate "anguished and demented" chords that would result from something simple being imprecisely transformed into something more complex. However, this was, overall, a very healthy musical evolution for the band. Eskew also had great insight into the more complex chord structures and

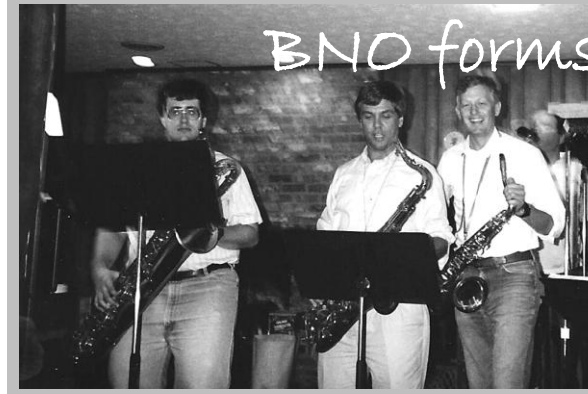
progressions utilized by the Beach Music bands.

Despite his initial concerns, Bray was able to hit the ground running with little or no trouble. After playing a gig two weeks later, for which there had been trouble getting a firm commitment from any one of the three tenor players then associated with the band, but at which all three men eventually participated and played quite well together into single mic, Weber regrettably gave the band his notice. John was to be missed, both for his unconventional sax solos (that boy could absolutely tear up a riff in E, not an easy key for the tenor) and excellent falsetto background vocal. With his departure, the initial "Pastels Soul Survivor" period for Boys' Night Out came to an end and faded into history.

And so the band's next semi-stable configuration was formed: Charlie Valentine still participating as "acting drummer" until another could be found and worked in, Clint Eskew on keys, Ginsburg on guitar, Alexander on bass, Vaughn fronting the band, and five horns: Hugh Nichols and Dave DeArmond on trumpets, Ed Winebarger and Larry Bray on tenor saxes, and Bruce Giles on baritone sax.

No one in the band has a clear recollection of what happened next, but at some point a consensus was formed that "it might be fun" to add a trombone to the horn section. Advocates pointed to the fabulous six-piece horn section James Brown used in his '60's concert tours, and the presence of a trombone (Tom "Bones" Malone) in the Blues Brothers' band.

Again with shy timidity and characteristically poor form, Alexander approached Don Batchelor, a fusion energy Ph.D. physicist at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and only a casual acquaintance from the Music Crafters, the Oak Ridge Community Band, the Oak Ridge Playhouse, and the Oak Ridge Symphony, with an offer to join BNO. After getting the standard screen to determine compatibility, a few days later Don arrived at Lynn's garage, perhaps feeling a bit like a fine piece of china thrown into a bull pen, and immediately began finding good notes in the horn arrangements well suited to the trombone. One particularly notable addition was blowing the rather prominent 7<sup>th</sup> in the big horn chord that kicks off *The Horse*. This guy obviously had a good ear.



a basement rehearsal hall



Bruce



Jake and Jeff

1983

Fast forward about 20 years and there's Alexander telling Ginsburg there might be fun to be had forming a "rough-edged garage band" that would mostly play oldie/goldie novelty songs, aka "junk music," things like *Louie Louie*, *Twist and Shout*, *Double Shot of My Baby's Love*, and *Wha'd I Say*. Their target territory would be the plethora of stinky dives that then existed in and around Oak Ridge. "You mean play for beer?" Ginsburg replied. "That way no one is likely to have any unrealistic expectations." Jake also proposed the band start playing out on what was then known as the "animal club circuit" – the bars in the Eagles Club, the Moose Lodge, the Elks Lodge, the Am-Vets, and seemingly everybody's favorite venue for a drunken brawl, the American Legion Post. Alexander told Ginsburg that he already knew a good drummer, Charlie Valentine, who had played in the Alexander Brothers, Kathy Hill's band, and the ill-fated Worlds' Fair Five, that would be perfect for this new band. "Guy's very low-key." Alexander said. Often, rock and roll drummers can be somewhat problematic with regard to intelligence and ego. "Not Charlie. Guy's solid." Alexander assured Ginsburg. At the end of this somewhat rambling formative conversation, Ginsburg responded that he was nominally interested, would think more about the concept, and get back to Alexander soon. Alexander left the Camera's Eye that day with palpable excitement and renewed enthusiasm. "Something to do besides banging my head against DOE's walls every day."

### The Concept Changes When Steve Seivers and the Pastels' "Soul Survivors" Get Onboard:

Within a week after Alexander's post solar eclipse conversation with Ginsburg, Jeff had spoken to ORHS Class of '68 classmate and fellow Oak Ridge business owner, Hugh Nichols, about participating in the new band. In high school, Hugh had played trumpet in the Impacts, a competitor to Alexander's Soul Sanction. Ginsburg had also broached the subject with another friend, Oak Ridge attorney Steve Seivers, who had played trumpet in yet another late-60's local R&B band, this one based in Clinton, the Pastels. Seivers had contacted two other former members of the Pastels, John Webber on tenor sax and Dennis Poly on organ, to see if they had any interest. They did.

Once Ginsburg had reported back to Alexander that

several people were interested in getting onboard, three of them horn players; and that Dennis Poly, an excellent organ player in the R&B tradition, would round out a powerful four-piece rhythm section; all credited to Seiver's vision, the new band's charter officially morphed from the "novelty-song garage band" concept to a "blue-eyed soul band revival."

At first a bit skeptical, Alexander could not resist the enthusiasm being exhibited by the other "soul survivors" that had become interested. Remembering the afternoon in 1966 when he had had his try out with the Clinton Embers, and Tom McBryde had taught him to play Wilson Pickett's 634-5789. He had never played R&B with good horn players before, or with other musicians as good as the Embers. His life was changed forever that day. He never felt as good as when he and his fellow R&B musicians could "find the groove" and get everybody dancing. After several years of playing a lot of Top-40 stuff, some of it pure crap, maybe it could be possible to recapture that old soul band feeling.

A few nights later, Ginsburg and Alexander were playing a gig at the Oak Ridge Civic Center with John Mitchell's excellent swing band, the Music Crafters. These guys played the greatest music from the greatest generation: Glenn Miller, Artie Shaw, Count Basie; and the Crafters were pretty good at it depending on who John could get to play. The Music Crafters had a fully mature, five-piece saxophone section, including Bruce Giles, a young man still in his 20's, playing the baritone. On something of an impulse, Alexander asked Giles, whom he only barely knew, if he'd be interested in playing some R&B. Giles kind of stood there blinking – it occurred to Alexander that this kid might know what R&B is – before Bruce said: "Sure. I'll give it a try." Conferring with Ginsburg, Jeff added to Alexander's concern about Giles' youth and having no roots in R&B. Jake's answer was: "Yeah, it could be he won't take to it. But it's a bari man, and I always wanted to be in a band with some low-end growl." Ginsburg agreed. "What's the harm in trying?"

### The First Practice Session:

One night in the late Fall of 1983, in the basement of a house Ginsburg was renting in the Burnham Woods subdivision, the new "revival" blue-eyed soul band organized for the first time.





John Pirkle recommends C. Vaughn Leslie as lead singer

1984



An early performance at the Candy Factory in Knoxville

Steve, Hugh, John, Bruce and Jeff

Ginsburg on guitar, Alexander on bass, Dennis Poly on a really cheesy-sounding Lowery organ Alexander had acquired at some time in the past (and for no explicable reason), Charlie Valentine on drums, John Weber on tenor sax, Bruce Giles on baritone sax, and Hugh Nichols and Steve Seivers on trumpets. The band mostly played the chord progressions and horn parts for songs all of them really liked: Eddie Floyd's *Knock on Wood*, Wilson Pickett's *In the Midnight Hour*, Chuck Jackson's *I Don't Want to Cry*, and the Temptations masterpiece, *My Girl*. The quality of the sound was variable, but good enough for all these eight guys to know that this undertaking might eventually bear fruit. It was apparent that, despite his tender age, Bruce Giles was a natural when it came to the baritone sax interpretations appropriate for R&B. The band had its "berr-ump-er" from the get-go.

After a few practice sessions, discussions turned to the need for a good singer to front the band. Alexander had an acquaintance, a teacher at Robertsville Junior High School, where his wife, Kathleen, taught; one Julian Daniel, formerly of Julian and the Epics back in the early and mid-60s, but there seemed little real interest there. He got a similar reaction from the Soul Sanction's principal front man, Bill Capshaw: "Nope. Not interested." Jake also spent some time trying to track down a guy named Terry Milligan, a singer who had artfully fronted a band he'd briefly played in 15 years earlier, the Plebeians, but could find no trace of him. Nobody had Google or Facebook back then, and hiring a private detective would have been cost prohibitive.

#### A Singer Is Found:

After chasing dead ends for a while, Alexander had the idea of calling local radio station owner and band promoter and DJ extraordinaire from the 1960s, Johnny Pirkle, to tell him about the existence of his new band with a "powerful, blazing" four piece horn section, and its need for a front man. Alexander could practically hear Pirkle's eyes rolling, but persisted in his exhortations for Johnny to try to think of someone. After discussing this person and the other, some dead and some in jail, Johnny remembered that the singer for the mid-60s band, the Sleepless Knights, out of the Johnson City area, had recently set up his insurance claims business in Knoxville and might be inclined to join a band capable of

producing "that overbearing, garish sound" he associated with the Sleepless Knights. The Knights were the only other band besides the Soul Sanction that Johnny could recall having more than three horns. Pirkle said he'd speak to this singer, a man that had gone by the name "C. Vaughn Leslie" in reference to the Sleepless Knights, to see if he might be interested.

Alexander dimly remembered a WNOX "showcase" performance by a band billed as "Sivon Leslie and the Sleepless Knights" he had attended with his brother at Knoxville's Chilhowie Park in the summer of 1964. He remembered the singer had nearly shoulder-length hair, quite cutting-edge for those days, and a necklace sporting a large bone. The Knights quite ably performed Smokey Robinson's *Mickey's Monkey* with four horns (one of them a bari) and a powerful four-piece rhythm section that featured the ultimate rock and roll musical instrument, a full-size Hammond B-3 organ connected to a Leslie Cabinet.

After Pirkle provided Alexander with a phone number, and after taking a few deep breaths and closing his office door, Jake called Appalachian Claims and asked the lady "If he's not too busy, may I please speak to Mr. Leslie for a few minutes."

After Alexander had made his timid and relatively disjointed pitch to "Mr. Leslie," Vaughn somewhat reluctantly agreed to attend a practice session, i.e., "to get a feel for what this band might be able to do." His skepticism was pressed hard, speaking to the demands of family and running a locally-owned business in a competitive market. Alexander made supporting comments, explaining that the motivation for starting the band was to provide an outlet from stress associated with the member's challenging day jobs: "Think of it like a bowling team or a poker club that meets once a week to relax." "We won't be doing it for the money." Alexander must have said a least three times, and "And we want to focus strictly on 60's vintage R&B." So about ten days later, C. Vaughn Leslie attended his first band practice with "the boys." The first song up was Chuck Jackson's *I Don't Want to Cry* in C. This was an exceedingly good start. Most singers require this song be taken down at least one whole step, to Bb; but even woefully out of practice, Vaughn had the range to hit every note solidly in the original key.



Ed



Rich



2008 Performance at Knoxville Museum of Art

#### Dave DeArmond and Charts

With the void left by Seivers' departure, Alexander got in contact with a trumpet player he had met in John Mitchell's Music Crafters, a former road-band professional named Dave DeArmond. Dave wanted in and, after the standard interrogative to determine that he properly understood BNO's goals and purposes for existence, the first practice session with him was put on the calendar. To facilitate the learning curve for Dave, and to address the increasing frequency at which the horn players, playing their parts from memory up until this point, would forget which notes to play, Alexander took two days off from work and wrote some relatively crude, often defective, but otherwise usable charts for the trumpets and the tenor sax. From this time forward, most of BNO's horn section would become, and always remain, generally dependent on charts.

Charts for the horns, and eventually for some of the other instruments as well, are a curse that most hobby bands have to bear. But there are blessings – the horn players don't have to remember their notes from one gig to the next. Also, charts give the arranger the power to voice the parts, assigning notes in the chords so as to maximize the aesthetic effect. When there are five or six horns and the chords are just majors and minors, the guys will sometimes begin to bicker over exactly who has "claimed" this note or that note in the chord. A predetermined arrangement will allow the arranger to more thoughtfully assign "doubled-up" notes. He can also throw in 6ths, 9ths, or other embellishments in a creative way, leaving the sound of the entire horn section less up to chance.

#### Ed Joins the Fray

DeArmond brought a lot of leadership ability to the band and things quickly got back on track with regard to the band's focus – hard-driving R&B. By the late 80s, Ginsburg had expanded his business to open a second Camera's Eye store in the Cedar Bluff Area of Knoxville. This location became one of a long series of places the band would use as its "practice hall." On one occasion, Jeff had given some friends who had another band going, a contemporary Top-40 group, permission to use the Cedar Bluff store as a place to audition for a gig. These folks were very good, but a stand-out among them was a tenor sax player named Ed Winebarger. After the other band had completed its audition, members of Boys' Night Out began

to arrive for their semi-regular Monday night practice session. The boys got cranked up and played one of the songs they were working on at that time. Ed was favorably impressed with the power and precision of BNO's four-piece horn section, and somewhat casually made the comment that, if we might ever entertain the notion of adding a second tenor, he'd be interested. Some follow-up communications quickly took place to make sure Ed understood BNO's focus was not on making money, but having fun, and that we were strictly an R&B and Carolina Beach music band. Compatibility was confirmed and shortly thereafter Ed came aboard. Now BNO had a five-piece horn section, certainly the biggest in the area. Alexander took the set of charts he had prepared for the single tenor sax and simply added a second part above or below John's notes for Ed to play. It was at this time that it had to be clarified that Alexander's charts, fraught with errors, were offered only "as a guide" as to what notes the horns might play – that nothing in them was "chipped in stone." Both DeArmond and Winebarger came from a talent and experience level significantly above average for the band, so neither had any difficulty finding notes to enhance the horn section's overall presentation.

#### Clint, Larry, and Don Get Onboard

Somewhere in this stage of the BNO time continuum, Dennis Poly was offered a professional career position in Omaha, Nebraska. He took the job and told the band when he'd be gone. This was a serious blow to band's basic foundations. It was hard to imagine what BNO was going to sound like without Dennis on the Porta-B. An intensive search for a replacement keyboard player was promptly initiated and a trumpet player Vaughn knew from his old life pointed him to a guy named Clint Eskew that had been a sax player with the Sierras, a very powerful mid-60s R&B band in and around Knoxville that sometimes backed Clifford Curry. This trumpet player explained to Vaughn that, despite his established history of playing tenor or alto sax, Eskew was a consummate musician and an excellent keyboard player. Vaughn contacted Clint, gave him the, by now, standard spiel on BNO's stated purposes and philosophy, and Eskew agreed to give it a try. Clint then told Vaughn of another potential resource for the band, an excellent sax player from his Sierras days, now a Ph.D. in economics at TVA, Larry Bray.



Band performs at the Museum of Appalachia



L to R - Ken, Clint, Bruce, Larry, Ed, Vaughn, Don, Hugh, Ray, Kim, Jeff and Jake with bass guitar

BNO 7-horn band configuration

1992

Around this time, a rather serious performance issue began develop. Boys' Night Out had formed up as almost a classical example of a full democracy. No one held absolute control, and forward progress was sometimes slowed by repeated failures to gain a full consensus on this issue, or that. At the Alexander Inn in those early days, it wasn't unusual for the band to play a four-minute song, and then argue for five minutes among themselves about what song to play next. A pattern emerged that, while the band stupidly argued on the stage, the crowd would leave the dance floor, or worse, the entire building. So a decision was made to develop medleys of songs, ostensibly with similar themes and styles, to keep the fans on the dance floor for 15 or 20 minutes at a time.

The band's first medley was called the "Sweet Soul Medley." It began, appropriately, with Arthur Conley's 1967 hit *Sweet Soul Music*, followed by Wilson Pickett's *Midnight Hour*, which morphed quite naturally into James Brown's quintessential funk classics, *Out Of Sight* in tandem with *Papa's Got a Brand New Bag*. After these four songs, they knew the crowd would be desperate for a slow song, so it was decided the medley should end with James Brown's mournful *Try Me*. The signature tag at the end of each chorus of *Papa's New Bag* is a guitar solo featuring a full measure of sixteenth notes on an E-9th chord, followed by the whole band blasting a huge B-7th chord on the next beat. The transition that was formulated for the medley was, on the very last chorus, after the guitar E-9th solo, the band would play a softer C-major chord instead of the stabbing B-7th. After the C chord would fade a bit, Vaughn would begin singing *Try Me*. This transition was somewhat unorthodox, to say the least, and the band member that formulated it has taken untold amounts of grief over years because of it. That said, although BNO doesn't often play this old medley anymore, the crazy transition from *Papa's New Bag* to *Try Me* still stands.

### Mo-Better Equipment, Songs; and Members Begin to Go and Come

Going into 1985, BNO began to really "play out" more and more, and special care had to be taken to keep things under control. Alexander almost got fired from his job because people would call him at his office to inquire about hiring the band. Differences of opinion about the

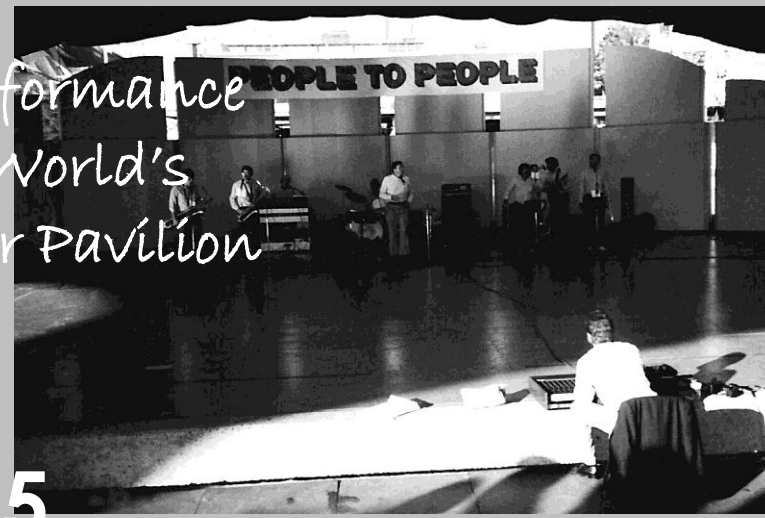
meets and bounds on the band's repertoire and its musical focus began to emerge. The band had been created for the purposes of stress relief and fun, and internal acrimony was simply not part of the equation.

Sometime in this period, the boys junked the two old and unreliable mixers and acquired a somewhat odd, 18-channel-in/five-mix-out mixer board made by a strange little company called Carvin. Just about all boards come manufactured in standard multiples: - six, eight, 12, 16, or 24 channels; but not that goofy Carvin. Nichols and Seivers bought components and built a unique 100-foot snake to go with this mixer. In addition to lead vocal and horns, all the rhythm section instruments were now being routed into the board, and additional mics began to be positioned for Poly, Ginsburg, and Alexander to sing background vocals. The band also purchased about ten Electro Voice "Black Knight" condenser microphones, many of which are still working to this day.

After the first couple of years, Charlie Valentine, wanting to have more time to pursue various other personal and professional interests, gave the band notice and very amicably departed. The band's second drummer, a guy from Maryville that had played R&B for many years, came aboard. It was soon discovered that this guy, Gary Young, had very strong views about an awful lot of things. Although a competent drummer, he just wasn't a good fit with the personality profile that had been established for the band. This wasn't a fun time for Boys' Night Out.

It was also at about this time Steve Seivers began developing fundamentally different ideas about what he wanted to accomplish with a hobby band and decided to leave Boys' Night Out and start his own band, and he took Young with him. Abruptly withdrawing from a commitment to play a gig on relatively short notice; or in the worst case, with no notice, is what is known in the hobby band business as "getting stiffed." Stiffing one's band is usually a one-time occurrence. It is an absolutely unforgivable betrayal of trust. Over the years, BNO has been stiffed a few times but, for the most part, disinterested members or support people have left the band with an appropriate degree of dignity and decorum, not creating any sustained discontinuity, and with no hard feelings.

Performance at World's Fair Pavilion



1985

Next the band figured out that the key they had chosen for Eddie Floyd's *Knock on Wood*, Bb, wasn't going to work. It was promptly moved back up to F, a key Alexander had assumed an average singer would have trouble with. But again, Leslie was able to handle it with no special effort. After that it was Major Lance's ultimate range-challenging mega-hit *Monkey Time* in the original key of F. And once again, Leslie was able to hit all the high notes with no noticeable strain. Sam and Dave's *Hold On, I'm Coming* and the Temptation's *My Girl* also worked well. The practice broke up with all parties agreeing to "think about" merging the band and singer; but the guys in the band were all certain that, even if they looked for another six months, or even six years, they'd not likely find anyone better. Leslie reported back a few days later and told Alexander he was willing to give the band a try. Alexander's response: "Yay!"

### Spring of 1984 - Picking a Name and Coming Out Rough

After a half a dozen more practices in the Burnham Woods basement, the band decided they had enough songs and it was time to find somewhere to perform. Ginsburg was well connected with Oak Ridge City Council and the City's various recreational events, including the Azalea Festival that took place every April. He made a call and got the band a mid-afternoon, 45-minute segment in the schedule for the "main stage," a rapidly deteriorating wooden structure located behind the Civic Center that predated the massive concrete Pavilion (artfully designed by Oak Ridge architect Doug Janney) the band helped raise the money to build a few years later.

Playing in public required the band to come up with a name for itself. Band members sometimes come to blows, and premature self-destruction of new bands has been known to occur, while arguing about what the band should be named. There was the normal number of lame suggestions and bad ideas from the nine guys involved. One idea was to resurrect either the Soul Sanction or the Sleepless Knights name, but no one got very excited about that. The movie "Ghost Busters" was popular at the time, so the name "Soul Busters" was put on the table. Naaa. That didn't work either. One of the guys was into things from the odd end of the spectrum. He suggested "Gomer Gilliam



Dennis and Vaughn

and his Go-Go-Gophers," but "that dog won't hunt" was John Weber's assessment. One of the guy's wives, noting the majority of the boys now carried pot bellies, suggested the name "Vanilla Pudge", but that was only a joke. From somewhere, the world of country music perhaps, Ginsburg had latched on to the notion of "Boys' Night Out," which seemed to pair well with the band's intended purposes. So they decided to go with that.

### First Public Performance - A Huge Egg Gets Laid

The band's first public appearance was an unqualified, unmitigated disaster. For the Azalea Festival, they had cobbled together some low-end Peavey speakers Alexander had been using in small rooms for his late '70s and early 80's club bands, driven by a Peavey 6-Channel 150-watt amp that was way, way too weak for an outdoor venue. Four antique Shure 664 microphones ('50's vintage) were placed directly in front of each horn player, with instructions for each musician to blow directly into the mic. There was no out-front sound operator to properly balance the mix, and the speakers were well out in front of the band members, all of whom remained somewhat oblivious to the badly distorted sound that was coming from the horn section.

After the first song, Cliff Nobles' instrumental masterpiece *The Horse*, one of the guy's wives came up and somewhat angrily offered a chilling assessment that may have gone something like this: "The sound is horrible. You guys totally suck. You shouldn't be doing this in public! What the hell is the matter with you idiots? I'm taking my children away from here so they aren't emotionally scarred for life."

The "it sounds horrible" criticism, while completely valid and totally factual, lacked sufficient specificity for the band to determine any appropriate corrective actions. The guys blew off the woman's assessment as being negatively biased (and come on - what woman would be happy her husband had chosen to play in a band called "Boys' Night Out?") and blithely went on with the show. Next, as Vaughn took the stage with a sheaf of papers with the words to all the songs he planned to sing, pages that had been painstakingly placed in precise order only that morning, a strong gust of wind came and blew his music off his stand, which was now completely and totally mixed up.

News  
Year's Eve  
at the  
Alexander  
Inn



Vaughn, Don, Hugh  
and Charlie



Don, Vaughn and  
Jake

1986

Perhaps the pained, wincing expressions on the audience's faces when the horns played should have told the guys something was terribly wrong, but listeners off to each side of the stage who, like the guys in the band, were well behind the sound gear and couldn't really hear the horribly distorted sound, began shouting encouragement; so the badly mixed sound just went on, and on, and on.... If only someone had been present who might have simply called out: "Hey you empty-headed jack-asses – turn down those GD mics on the horns!" things might have been different. But they weren't. Friends and family brave enough to stick out the entire ordeal had no idea what to say, but the Boys' went away feeling good about the whole experience. They were especially pleased with their rendition of the Soul Survivors' number one hit from 1967, *Expressway to Your Heart*. They just didn't understand how bad the whole thing had sucked.

#### BNO's Second Public Performance – This Time with Uniforms and a Sound Man!

For the band's second outing, at a venue yet to be determined, the support services of a "sound man" were procured. The band also bought a Peavey 8-Channel Mark II mixing board that, at the time, they believed would allow as much control of the out-front sound the band would ever need. (They now use a 24-channel board and eight separate monitor mixes.)

Hugh Nichols was, at that time, still the owner of the Music Box in Jackson Square, a retail business that sold sound equipment. Hugh, with support from Ginsburg and Seivers, took the initiative to begin assembling additional, more powerful sound gear to bring the band's sound reinforcement up to suitable standards for the early 1980s.

With no specific event to play for next, Alexander brought forth his recollections of Johnny Pirkle's willingness to successfully promote R&B bands back in the '60's. "Pirkle used to get my bands some great showcases." Alexander said. "And besides – that guy still owes me money!" So Pirkle was contacted again on the band's behalf. "OK," Pirkle said after being brow beaten for a few minutes. "I'll book a place for you nut jobs to play, and I'll spread the word. I don't think you're going to gross dollar-one, but if you do, I'll want a taste of the action." (Note: These might not have been Pirkle's actual words, but they're typical of

what he might have said.)

So, on a warm day in the early summer of 1984, Boys' Night Out set up to play its second "showcase" gig in front of the Candy Factory at the, by then, mostly inactive Worlds' Fair Site. Even with only about fifty people there (mostly the band's friends and relatives) this show went much, much better than the first. How could it not? It was also the first gig where the band wore the uniform that would become its standard in the early years: light blue, button-down collar oxford shirts and khaki pants. The boys all looked like arrested-development frat boy preppy/yuppies, which was the intent. At least one member of the band, who thought the uniform a bad idea, simply refused to wear the get-up – an early sign of growing fractures within the band's management ranks. Later, the boys would adopt a different uniform for more casual gigs, Hawaiian shirts over khaki pants. BNO also offers a tuxedo uniform, with snappy red bow ties and cummerbunds, for more formal affairs; but some of the boys have been known to react coarsely when they get mistaken for waiters.

This Candy Factory event would be the last time Poly would play Alexander's Lowery, fondly dubbed "that lousy chunk of s\*#!" by Ginsburg, an assessment that was right on the money.

#### Boys' Night Out Becomes the "House Band" at the Alexander Inn and Gets a Porta-B

The next stage of development for the band was playing in the "Ball Room" of the Oak Ridge Alexander Inn on a Friday night, roughly once a month. In its earliest days, it had been the plan for Boys' Night Out to "play for beer" in lieu of pay as a means of getting the band going. However, the managers at the Alexander Inn soon figured out they couldn't afford the band on this basis. So the contract was changed to convey a portion of the "door proceeds" to the band, with the understanding that the band had to pay for the beer they drank. This was difficult economic setback for the guys, but the band survived it. Another important development at this point in time was the acquisition of decent-sounding instrument for Dennis Poly to play. Recognizing that the band couldn't continue to play in public using the Lowery, Charlie Valentine called Alexander one day from his office at ORNL to report that his friend and co-worker, John Williams, keyboard player and

Band  
performs at  
the Oak  
Ridge Civic  
Center



L to R - B ROW Charlie, Clint, Vaughn, Jeff, Jake and  
1987 Alex - F ROW Ed, Bruce, Larry, Hugh, Don, and Paul

singer in the extremely competent hard rock band "Mandrake," had decided to sell his Hammond "Porta-B" organ, equipped with an 820 Leslie cabinet. "Goes to the first person to show up with \$600." John had told Charlie. The Porta-B was Hammond's attempt to scale down the incomparable, but very, very massive, and almost prohibitively expensive, Hammond B-3 (the Green Onions organ) into a configuration that might be sellable as "portable" to musicians that just had to have that authentic Hammond sound. Portable or not, it was still the biggest and heaviest item of gear Boys' Night Out ever used, and strained the backs of many unfortunate loaders, unloaders and luggers.

Alexander, highly motivated to make BNO a success, quickly arranged to take half the day off, went to the DOE Credit Union and withdrew \$600, and drove straight to John William's house to buy the rig. This was just one night before the band's first gig at the Alexander Inn. Some band members expressed concern that Dennis wouldn't have sufficient familiarity with the Porta-B to just walk up and successfully play it at a gig. Alexander's response: "If Dennis just pulls the draw-bars to totally random settings, or even if a chimpanzee does this, this rig is still going to sound 10-times better than that damn Lowery." And this was exactly what happened. It turned out Dennis had natural instincts when it came to pulling the draw bars, and with switching the Leslie's speaker rotation from slow to fast, and back again, to bring about dramatic chord changes. The quality and authenticity of the band's R&B sound took a quantum jump that night. It was only a few months until the sound of the awful Lowery had faded away like a bad dream.

#### What BNO Doesn't Play

After playing at the Alexander Inn for a while, and playing out in general, a reporter for the Oak Ridger got with Ginsburg and Seivers to do an interview about the band and an up-coming charity fundraiser BNO had booked to play. During this interview, Seivers explained the band's existence and motivation this way: "We don't play country. We don't play Top-40. We don't play no music by no white people." Words that would live in infamy. A few years later, during an interview by a very beautiful black woman that was a reporter for one of the Knoxville television stations, Alexander repeated Seivers' infamous quote. After the utterance, the camera panned back to the

reporter's face, who sported a whimsical, puzzled smile and a raised eyebrow. This interview was featured the next day on several of the station's news broadcasts, and Alexander learned that just about everybody in east Tennessee had seen it. He got called into DOE's human resources department (then called "Personnel") the next day to make assurances that Boys' Night Out did not constitute a "second job" for him, something professional government employees are not permitted to have. The manager of the Personnel Division, whom it turned out was a country music fan and intensely disliked rock music, had found the news quote to be "offensive." He asked: "You playing in this band isn't going to reflect badly on DOE is it?" This was at the time DOE-ORO was experiencing a terrible public relations situation related to the tons of elemental mercury that had been released from Y-12 in the '50s and '60s. Alexander responded: "Hey look – when it comes to ORO making itself look bad, you sure as hell don't need any help from me or Boys' Night Out."

#### Sound Reinforcement and the Repertoire Both Begin to Evolve

As the months went by in 1984 and into 1985, the band's popularity began to increase. To better control the sound, a second out-front mixer was acquired, this one a four channel model; and the band started running the bass, guitar, and organ through the sound system, in addition to the vocals and horns. Hugh Nichols had put together a modest Peavey Bi-Amped system; two homemade cabinets for the Peavey 15-inch "Black Widow" speakers and two of Peavey's remarkable MFX-1 high frequency drivers, with a Peavey CS-400 solid state stereo amplifier to drive them. The band also started using two wedge monitor speakers so the horns and vocalists might hear themselves better when the band's power level would inevitably begin to "ramp up." The band's repertoire also began to mature a bit about this time. Chuck Jackson's *I Don't Want to Cry, Beg Me, and Any Day Now* were always crowd pleasers. Eddie Floyd's *Knock On Wood* and Wilson Pickett's *Midnight Hour* and 634-5789 also worked well. Major Lance's *Monkey Time* and James Brown's *Papa's Got a Brand New Bag* were both often played as "extended versions." Beach Music hits like *May I* and *With This Ring*, and several of the Tams' best songs, gave the band some musical diversity.