

“A Gig in the American Legion Hall”
Where We Played, Part One
(1945 to 1975)

I had a gig in the American Legion Hall /
It was a dance for the Volunteer Ambulance Corps /
She was sitting in a corner against the wall /
She would smile /
And I melted all over the floor

Ariel, Dean Freidman (1977)

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Chapter 1

Rock n' Roll? (1940's)

Where in Scarsdale was rock n' roll first played, and when? We know for sure it wasn't at the American Legion Hall (that was later). As for when, because there is no consensus on when rock n' roll separated from boogie-woogie, it's not possible to say. A good argument could be made for 1945, in the Harwood Building.



Harwood Building. Credit: [Scarsdale Historical Society](#)

In 1945 “Harwood Bowling Alleys — an [eight-lane bowling alley](#) in the basement of the 1928 [Harwood Building](#) — was converted into a “youth center.” The teens named it “The Hangar.” It [opened](#) to great fanfare on February 24. As the *Scarsdale Inquirer* reported, “from 7:30 until midnight, balls rolled continuously down the highly polished bowling alleys. Charlie Strong’s band furnished music for the dancers while a juke box in the corner gave silent assurance that music will be had at the pressing of a button.”



Teens working to convert the “Harwood Bowling Alleys” into “The Hangar.” Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)



Teens working to convert the “Harwood Bowling Alleys” into “The Hangar.” Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)



Detail from Harwood Bowling Alleys ad (1933). Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

We don’t know what music was on the Hangar’s juke box, nor what music the Charlie Strong band played. But a Hangar dance two months after opening night was said to have featured “[‘jive’ music](#).” Jive suggests boogie, and some [boogie](#) — as early as [Strange Things Happening Every Day](#) (1944), even [Roll ‘Em Pete](#) (1938) — is considered by some to be early rock n’ roll.



Credit: [Scarsdale Library / Flickr](#)

The Boy Scout House (many years later, the site of the [Scarsdale Alternative School](#)) was another venue where Scarsdale bands could play, as the Hangar hosted dances there as well. In fact, the Boy Scout House was one of the sites considered for the teen center. Other choices had been the Board of Education’s “[Maplelawn](#)” building on Post Road — a boarding house which,

“given the scarcity of rooms in Scarsdale, and the high price of commuting,” had been [established](#) in the 1920’s as a home for Scarsdale’s teachers; [Lawrence Ottinger’s](#) real estate office in Fox Meadow; and the bowling alley in the basement of the firehouse at Popham and Post Roads. (We know that the firehouse bowling alley continued to be a fixture for many years, because Thom Pernice and Wayne Torzilli of the Scarsdale band The Del Rays would have jobs setting up bowling pins there in the early 1960’s).

One teen dance held at the Scout House featured [Bob Wilson](#) and Company; another featured [Johnny Marshall](#) and his Band. The Hangar’s final dance of 1945 was held back at the Harwood Building. That one featured [Amy Lee](#) and The Playboys. (Amy also played piano in Charlie Wilbur’s “Scarsdale Jazz Band”).



Westchester County Center. Credit: [Westchestergov](#)

Another venue (for a few very good and lucky bands in the 1940’s) was the [Westchester County Center](#). The Scarsdale / Hartsdale band “[Johnny Glasel’s Rhythm Aces](#)” played there in front of a crowd of 10,000 on December 8, 1945. Representing the Hangar, “The Rhythm Aces” won first place in the county-wide battle of the bands there billed as “[The Jam Band Contest](#).” Four of the band members — Johnny Glasel (trumpet), Ed Hubble (bass), Charlie Traeger (trombone), and [Dick Wellstood](#) (piano) — soon joined Scarsdale clarinetist and saxophonist [Bob Wilbur](#). By the following December “Wilbur’s Wildcats” were playing [Jimmy Ryan’s](#) in the city.

The Hangar was clearly attracting major talent. And it was attracting a lot of members — an astounding 500 members within a few months of its opening. And that was the problem. The Hangar became a victim of its own success. Sponsored by the Recreation Department — and backed financially by the Scarsdale Woman’s Club and then by the Community Fund — it was unable to secure facilities in the Village adequate to accommodate its programming.

Another challenge was that, all along, the Hangar had seemed more attractive to boys than to girls. The Village Board voted to close the Hangar in the Harwood Building effective March 1, 1947.

By July, E. Robison, Inc. had leased the old bowling alley space for storage. Support for the Hangar was formally discontinued in February of 1949.

Chapter 2

Rock n' Roll (1950's)

Fortunately, by 1950 Scarsdale bands had a venue again: the high school auditorium. In 1950, the Recreation Department initiated an annual Talent Show, as a benefit for the Boy Scouts. Holding the show in the auditorium meant there was a lot of space for the many performers, and plenty of seats for those wishing to hear the local talent.

A few pictures from annual talent shows are below.



The entire cast. On the left (behind drum set) is Tom Hertel's Sunspot Band.
February 11, 1953. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)



Larry Elliot's Dixieland Band, February 11, 1953. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

But the talent show ran only once a year. And it wasn't meant for dancing. And it didn't allow a band to perform more than one song. All in all, not a great venue for a rock 'n roll band. Fortunately, another venue opened up in 1954.



New Year's Eve Dance Party, Scarsdale High School gymnasium. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

In 1954, the “The Hangar” was reincarnated as “The Canteen.” Sponsored, as before, by the Rec Department, the dances would now be held in the high school gymnasium. The gym was not an ideal location for a teen center (the teens had wanted an off-campus location), but it was certainly large enough to hold the dances.

The bands booked to play the dances were not exclusively rock n’ roll. Tom Hertel’s Sunspots which played the January 1954 Scarsdale High School “Winter Carnival” dance was variously referred to as a “jazz band” and “dance band.” (Three of The Sunspots — Tom, piano; John Freie, trumpet; Tom Putnam, saxophone — can be seen on a school trip [here](#)). The November 5, 1955 Harvest Moon Dance was “reminiscent of the days of the late Glenn Miller. ... An eight-piece band, “The Moonlighters,” from White Plains, swung through old and new favorites.” The Canteen’s New Year’s Eve Dance (pictured immediately above) featured The Peter Hynes’ Band.

Nor did all Canteen dances feature live music. The smaller, weekly Canteen gatherings (held in “Gym X”) featured recorded music. Over the years, that music would be played on increasingly sophisticated equipment. An article on the front page of the November 19, 1954 issue of the [Scarsdale Inquirer](#) announced: “Dance Music: The latest recordings in 33-1 /3, 45 and 78 RPM are available and may be played on the [victrolas](#) in the canteen.” By February 1956, the victrolas had been upgraded to “a recently purchased [juke box](#) for dancing enjoyment.” A Canteen party on March 17, 1956 included a screening of the movie “Magnificent Obsession” followed by “dancing to the Canteen juke box.”



Jukebox (illustration) Credit: [Jitterbuzz](#)

Jukebox dances were known as “sock hops.” The term was made famous by Danny and the Juniors’ 1957 record *At the Hop* — the same year *American Bandstand* debuted on television. Hosted by Bronxville-born Dick Clark, the show was seen on broadcast television nationally over the ABC network. Records were played, rated, and danced to. Occasionally performers would appear in person to lip-sync to their latest record. Watching American Bandstand was one way for Scarsdale bands to hear the popular songs.



Dick Clark, American Bandstand, 1958. Credit: [groovyhistory](#)

Another way to hear the latest songs was by listening — on one of the new, hand-held transistor radios (bought perhaps at the Torzilli family’s local “Garth Radio”) — to one of the popular New York City radio stations of the day: WINS and by the late 1950’s WMCA. (77-WABC would not go Top-40 until 1960.)



Garth Radio. Credit: Scarsdale Rocks

Band members also might buy a 45 rpm recording of the song — either at Garth Radio (74 Garth Road) or Scarsdale Records (50 Christie Place). A little further afield were Hunt's on Mamaroneck Avenue in White Plains; the Boss Record Shop on Main Street in White Plains; Robison's on East Hartsdale Avenue; and E. J. Korvette's on Central Avenue.



E. J. Korvette's. Credit: [Westchester County Historical Society](https://www.westchesterhistory.org/)

The “45” featured the popular song on the “A” side, with another recording on side “B.” But increasingly, the desire was also to hear rock n’ roll music played live. A few churches, civic and social welfare organizations opened their doors.



St. James the Less. Credit: [businessyab.com](https://www.businessyab.com/)

On January 13, 1956, St. James the Less welcomed The Savoy's — who played to seventh through ninth graders at the church's Friday the 13th “[Jinx Party](#).” Decorations included “black cats, ladders, open umbrellas, and numerous other ill omens.” (The Savoy's saxophonist [Steve Franz](#) would be back again the next year playing with his next band, “Steve Franz and His Blue Notes”.)



Scarsdale Woman's Club. Credit: [Wikipedia](#)

The [Scarsdale Woman's Club](#) opened their doors, too. The Savoy's played the Scarsdale Woman's Club two weeks after having played St. James the Less, on January 28. The occasion was the monthly party “given by the Westchester Home Committee of the Committee of 100 under the chairmanship of Mrs. Gibson M. Allen.” They were [described](#) as “a dance band of Scarsdale High School students known for their popular ‘rock and roll’ music ... Steve Franz plays the tenor and alto saxophone; Dave Hertel the drums; Eric Wilson, piano; Jim Brown, trumpet; and Peter Rappaport, electric guitar.” (Dave Hertel was, perhaps, the younger brother of The Sunspot's Tom Hertel.) The Savoy's are the earliest group in Scarsdale to be identified as “rock and roll.”



Children's Village. Credit: [Westchester County Historical Society](#)

Children's Village in Dobbs Ferry was, on occasion, another venue for Scarsdale bands. [The Savoy's](#) — fresh off their St. James the Less and Scarsdale Woman's Club gigs, and sporting bow-

ties — played a mixer there on March 2, 1956, a dance for Cottage School boys, and girls from the Jennie Clarkson Home in Valhalla, an event sponsored by Scarsdale Woman's Club.



The Savoy's at Children's Village, March 2, 1956. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)



Credit: [I.H.M. Parish](#)

In the fall of 1956, Immaculate Heart of Mary Church on Post Road opened their doors, too. The Church's Newman Club sponsored a "[Rock 'N Roll Dance with live music](#)" on November 30, 1956, from 8 to 11 pm, in the Church Hall. The dance was "open to club members, their guests and high school students and there is a small admission charge." I.H.M. would continue to be a venue for Scarsdale bands for years to come.



Yoko Ono (right) at Sarah Lawrence College (1952-1956). Credit: [Erica Abeel](#)

Although [Yoko Ono](#) did not attend Scarsdale High School (her younger brother Keisuke did), Yoko lived with her parents in Scarsdale from 1952 to 1956, reportedly on Carthage Road, behind Heathcote Elementary School, while attending Sarah Lawrence College. She left in 1956, marrying her first husband, avant-garde composer [Toshi Ichiyanagi](#) who was studying at [Julliard](#), located then in Manhattan's Morningside Heights neighborhood. Ono, an avant-garde artist, would later marry [John Lennon](#) of [The Beatles](#) and together create [The Plastic Ono Band](#).

Over the course of the 1956-1957 academic year, another future Beatle-adjacent rocker was performing from the stage of the Scarsdale High School auditorium — although she wasn't performing rock n' roll. In the 1957 Bandersnatch yearbook, this four-year member of the Scarsdale High School Chorus — who would go on to have multiple platinum albums to her credit — can be seen standing with the other members of her sophomore class. In the picture below, in the second row from the bottom, the fourth student in from the right, is Linda Eastman — after marrying The Beatle's Paul McCartney, Linda McCartney — of [Wings](#).



1957 Bandersnatch. Credit: [PicClick](#)

That year, 1957, the Canteen featured the “Daddy Ohs” — comprising Scarsdale High students vocalist John Duval, pianist Stu Schirota (he later married Barbara Rose, daughter of legendary cellist [Leonard Rose](#)), and drummer Dan Folk — and “The Up Beats.” The first dance of the 1957–58 academic-year featured “The New Tones.” Even more rock n' roll performers were on stage for the annual Talent Show.



Two unidentified rock n' roll performers are backed by Ted Mack's Original Amateur Hour Orchestra at the February 11, 1958 SHS Talent Show. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)



Unidentified trio performing at 1959 Talent Show. Likely: Dick Samotus, Steve Sheridan and Ted Howard, who performed "[St. Louis Blues](#)." Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)



Unidentified quartet performing at the 1959 Talent Show. Likely: “Ali and The Gators,” Jeri Goodwill, Joan Strassburger, Pam King, and Carol Wolf, who performed “[Lollypop](#).” Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

Chapter 3

“We Need a Teen Center” (1960-63)

The Scarsdale “Canteen,” which had been running programs and dances at the high school, seems to have fizzled out by 1960. But in February 1961, the annual Talent Show went off as usual.



“The Jesters” rehearsing for the SHS 1961 Talent Show. Left to right: Steve Peiser, Louis Briganti, Ron Cummings, and Steve Frumin. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

Then, unexpectedly, pent-up desire for an off-campus Scarsdale teen center (as the Hangar had been when it operated out of the Harwood Building basement in the mid-1940’s) exploded in the spring of 1961, sparked by an anonymous Letter to the Editor, published in the May 25 edition of the [Scarsdale Inquirer](#).



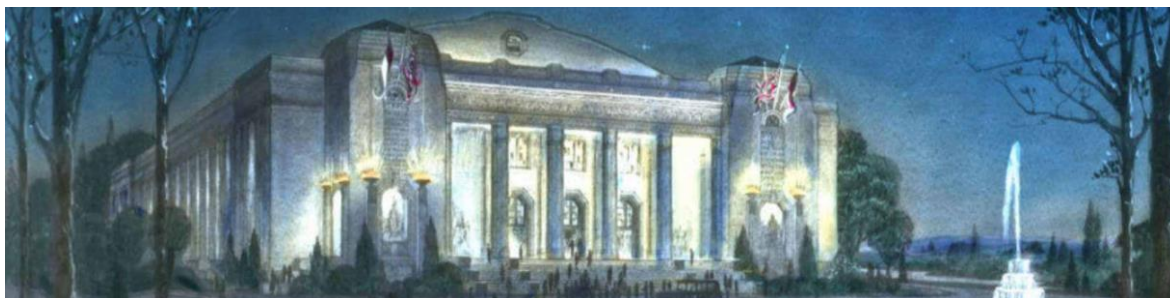
Headlined “Advocating for a Teen Center,” the [letter](#) complained that “the people of our town are forever saying that something should be done” about how “teens are forever causing trouble, such as crashing parties, making public disturbances, and just plain being trouble makers” but “balk” when it comes to funding solutions. What was needed? A recreation center, “where kids

can come in and sit down and talk, dance or listen to records... That's my idea." It was signed "A KID."

Hard as it may be to believe, controversy over whether to fund an off-campus teen center would consume the Village for the next two years. After public debates; rancorous letters to the editor pro and con; offers by teens (this being Scarsdale) to help fund the purchase of a building themselves; a petition signed by 1,000 students presented to the Village Board; back-room [discussions](#); referral of the matter to the Scarsdale Community Council for study; and the publication of an official report, the idea was finally formally [rejected](#) in June 1963.

Over the two years, dances continued to be held in the high school gym, sometimes under the auspices of a newly-revived Department of Recreation "Teen Center." At these dances, girls were expected to don "school clothes" (meaning skirts or dresses); boys were expected to wear sports jackets and ties. Some of the featured rock n' roll bands of academic year 1962 – 1963 included [The Shepards](#) (sic, of White Plains' Stepinac High School); [Eddie Smith and his Surf Riders](#); [The LaSalles](#) (of Norwich, CT); [The Silvertones](#); [The Nomads](#); [The Gems](#); [The Adelphys](#); and [The Camelots](#), featuring [Al Torzilli](#).

Al Torzilli's impact on Scarsdale rock n' rollers is hard to overstate. As an eighth-grader, Al had performed on the high school auditorium stage singing Chuck Berry's "[Sweet Little Sixteen](#)" at the community's ninth annual Talent Show, emceed by [Ted Mack](#) of [The Original Amateur Hour](#) (February 11, 1959). Al sang and played the guitar, and his friend Ed Jackson played the snare drum. Also on that bill was future NPR correspondent [Nina Totenberg](#) who sang "[If I Loved You](#)" from *Carousel*. And then it was announced: Al was one of [five winners](#) who would go on to the finals at the Westchester County Center in May. There, with Ed Smith on snare drum (Ed Jackson had come down with the mumps) Al competed valiantly against the great Davis Dixie Band of Mount Vernon. At the time, that seven-piece band included [Danny Kalb](#), later of [The Blues Project](#) (Kalb left the group by the time of the 1960 nationally-televised Amateur Hour [finals](#).)



Credit: [Westchester County Center](#)

A year later, Al returned to perform [Way Down Yonder in New Orleans](#) at the February 11, 1960 [Talent Show](#) (with Ed Jackson back on the snare drum). Thom Pernice remembers the girls were screaming — and cites this as the impetus for Thom's forming his own band. After Al and Richard Schweitzer formed the Camelots, the band rehearsed in the high school's Music Tower. They gigged constantly. Al was the first rock n' roller from Scarsdale to play and to record professionally.

Civic and eleemosynary groups would sometimes book a teen band to play a dinner dance or other function. Such was the case with the [Scarsdale Kiwanis Club](#) which invited the Camelots to play their November, 1962 meeting at the Piedmont Inn.



The Piedmont Inn. Credit: [NewYorkYIMBY](#)

The Piedmont Inn had been a speakeasy during Prohibition. Built in 1924 as [Donnybrook Lodge](#), it became the Piedmont in 1960. (It was later [infamous](#) for reputedly hosting a “house of ill repute” upstairs, and it closed in [1977](#).) In addition to their Piedmont Inn gig that month, the Camelots also played the High School Teen Center’s [dance](#), officially sponsored by the “Teenage Advisory Committee in cooperation with the Village Recreation Department.”



Hitchcock Presbyterian Church. Credit: [Scarsdale Public Library](#)

On [Saturday March 9, 1963](#), the busy Camelots played a dance at Scarsdale’s Hitchcock Presbyterian Church. A week later, Friday March 15, they played the Scarsdale High School [Campaign Dance](#). On Saturday March 30, they played the Scarsdale Teen Center [dance](#) in High School gyms A and B — attended by 350 people. This last one featured a [dance marathon](#) (sponsored by the dance committee) which ended in a tie between two couples: Lynn Constantine and Richard Burke; and Pam Steele & Dave Burke.



Juniorettes and Merchant Marines. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

On Saturday April 27, the Camelots played one of their last dates: a buffet-supper dance at the [Crestview Nursing Home](#). There the Juniorettes of the Scarsdale Woman's Club (sponsor of the event) entertained the United States Merchant Marine Academy Glee Club of Kings Point, Long Island. The Camelots provided the dance music, and the Glee Club performed.



The Nep-Tunes, *Surfers' Holiday*. Credit: [Discogs](#)

By late spring or early summer 1963, Al Torzilli and Richard Schweitzer had formed a new band: The Nep-Tunes. After the Beach Boys #1 record "Surfin' USA" (January, 1963) surf-music had become all the rage. The Nep-Tunes capitalized on the excitement, and recorded an album called "[Surfers' Holiday](#)" — even though the closest beach to Scarsdale was in Mamaroneck (which is where the album cover photo of the boys on a beach, holding their instruments, was shot). In 2022, Nep-Tunes drummer Eddie Hawkins recalled "the huge waves at a Larchmont country club" where the cover photo was shot (Larchmont is a village in the Town of Mamaroneck) and the "recording studio that had no air conditioning" where the album was recorded. "It was an exciting time for sure."

Eddie added: "We also had an audition at the Copa in NYC which was quite a big deal at the time. Even had a crowd outside the door wondering who the hell we were. Playing in front of all our friends at SHS proms and Sock Hops was always special."

One of The Nep-Tunes' Al Torzilli's most memorable gigs was a private party in the backyard of a home on Corell Road, off Rock Creek Lane. It was for young girl (perhaps her sweet sixteen party?) whose older sister had graduated Scarsdale High School a few years before. Thom

Pernice recalled the young girl's name as being Louise. Both men recalled her older sister's name: Linda Eastman (later, after marrying Beatle Paul, Linda McCartney).



Left to right: Al Torzilli, Jane Foley, and Lynn Constantine. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

In October 1963 Al, then a freshman at the University of Connecticut, teamed with two Scarsdale High School seniors, Jane Foley and Lynn Constantine (she of the March 30 dance marathon, above). Calling themselves “The Spotlights,” they recorded “[I Love the Way You Walk](#)” — a song written by Al’s guitar-playing fellow SHS-student Paul Smith, and backed on side-B with Al’s own “[That Song](#).” The record was produced by [Gerry Granahan](#) who would go on to produce Jay and The Americans (“[Sunday and Me](#)”). It was released on United Artists — no small label. Jane Foley’s father worked for a music publisher in the city and had put it all together — including arranging for the recording session (at Empire, or perhaps Regency Studios).



Credit: [We Rocked Your Mother](#)

The Nep-Tunes then landed a regular gig playing the Fore n’ Aft in White Plains for a couple of years. (A sign in the window advertising their Wednesday night appearance can be seen in the picture above.) During another period they played Friday and Saturday nights. In 2022 Eddie Hawkins recalled: “I had to set up my drums right in the front window which was a perfect spot to watch all the good lookers on their way in. We played until 3 AM and then usually headed out to Jones Beach. WOW.....those were the days!”

The Fore n' Aft (which had opened in 1960) was the preeminent room for local bands. A couple of years later The Nep-Tunes would play the Scarsdale High School prom (alternating with Claude Thornhill and his Orchestra, 11 PM until 3 AM). And then, two years after his graduation from Scarsdale High School, Al retired from the band. The Nep-Tunes were such a fixture at the Fore n' Aft, though, that they carried on there without him for another couple or three years. An impressive run.

Rock n' roll was so popular in 1963 that Scarsdale's venerable Fort Hill Restaurant (on Jackson Avenue, just off Central Avenue) began to feature "[Rock and Roll for teenagers](#)" on Tuesday nights. [Louis Armstrong](#) had played there just the year before.

But there was still no off-campus teen-center for the youth of Scarsdale.



Fort Hill Restaurant. Credit: [Soyosunset](#)

Nature abhors a vacuum.

On October 21, 1963 the American Legion on Mamaroneck Avenue opened a teen center [canteen](#), which became an off-campus venue in which Scarsdale bands could play. American Legion Post 52 stepped into the breach after a letter to the editor was published in the [Scarsdale Inquirer](#) in July calling on community leadership to “take a realistic look at what can be done for recreation without beer or liquor.”

(The phenomenon of rock n' roll bands of the era playing American Legion Halls “deep in the bosom of suburbia” was later memorialized by local singing sensation Dean Friedman in his song [Ariel](#). “I had a gig in the American Legion Hall / It was a dance for the Volunteer Ambulance Corps.” Dean would be a frequent performer at the Y's Second Story on Wilmot Road. That part of the story, coming up.)



The “[old](#)” American Legion Hall is above. The “[new](#)” American Legion Hall — built after the bulk of the property was sold to the village in 1968 as a site for the village pool — is below.



Even after the opening of the American Legion teen canteen in October 1963, dances would still be held at the high school. The high school’s next scheduled dance would however be cancelled abruptly. Set to once again feature [The Adelphys](#), it had been scheduled for Saturday, November 23, 1963. But on Friday, November 22 President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, and a shocked nation went into mourning.



The Adelphys. Credit: Thom Pernice

In December, 1963, a new venue opened in nearby New Rochelle. Called “[The Apogee](#),” it was a very early “teen coffee house” (or “teen night club”) of the era. It was held in the basement of a church at 472 North Avenue. At the time the church was known as North Avenue Presbyterian Church, or simply North Avenue Church. The club operated there for years. Thom Pernice recalls “the stage was set up in black with [DayGlo](#) stars painted all over it and DayGlo planets hanging down from the ceiling above the stage lit by [blacklight](#). I don’t remember if there was a spotlight for the band but it was pretty cool, lots of dancing and band loving girls! I know The Del Rays played there on many occasions.”

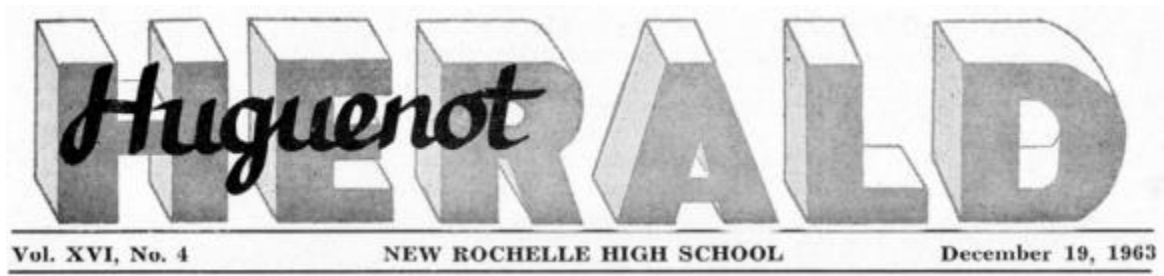
Other bands that played The Apogee (according to a local musician, [Phil Seiflein](#)) included Yonkers’ The Chain Reaction featuring Steve Tyler, later of Arrowsmith (about whom, more below).



North Avenue Presbyterian Church. Credit: [Iglesia Refugio de Esperanza](#)

The Apogee was one of the most popular venues for high school bands to play at the time. There was no alcohol, and teenagers were officially encouraged to attend. When it opened,

however, it was met with a less than warm welcome from the students of nearby New Rochelle High School. Below is what the teens had to say in December, 1963.



About 'Apogee'

"The Apogee, a 'nightclub for teenager,' opened in New Rochelle this month. Undoubtedly this is a well-intentioned organization, for it has received approval from almost every religious and civic group in the city. As a newspaper written and published by teenagers, however, the HUGENOT HERALD feels compelled to point out what we consider a number of imperfections in the set-up of the Apogee.

The club was founded largely to help combat juvenile delinquency, according to North Avenue Church, sponsors of the project. But the rules of the club do not actually seem to further this end. Regulations discourage a teenager from joining unless his parents are willing to serve as chaperones, he can pay membership and entrance fees, and he is attending or has graduated from high school. Thus, many teenagers who might be prone to juvenile delinquency — those who have hostile home backgrounds, who have financial shortages, or who have had to drop out of school — are severely penalized by the club rules.

The entire attitude of the club, moreover, seems to be negative, and displays little trust in the teenagers it proposes to serve. A prospectus distributed at NRHS last month, for example, contained two pages of description and seven pages of rules. Among the regulations members are subject to are these bureaucratic provisions: Members must wear identification buttons, they must register upon arrival, and they must not touch or damage off-limit signs. The over-all effect seems to be an implication that young men and women cannot be relied upon to regulate their own behavior in the least.

No matter how artistic the setting, how varied the program, or how lively the atmosphere, the Apogee is sure to suffer from this distrustful attitude. It is hoped that its organizers will effect a change in its membership rules and other regulations to let them conform more truly with the needs and natures of New Rochelle's population."



The Nep-Tunes, 1963 Scarsdale Woman's Club Christmas Gala. Credit: Eddie Hawkins

Finally, also in December of 1963 — closing out both the year's social and rock n' roll seasons — the Nep-Tunes played the Scarsdale Woman's Club annual Christmas Gala. The Club's motto could have been: Scarsdale Woman's Club — hosting Scarsdale teen rock n' roll bands since 1956.

Chapter 4

Garage Bands and Portchester Bars (1964-65)

1964 was the year rock n' roll bands started to form all across the country, following the Beatles' first appearance on the [Ed Sullivan Show](#) (February 9, 1964). Sales of [electric guitars](#) that year went through the roof. In 1960, electric guitar sales nationwide had been about four hundred thousand a year. In 1964, they were *one million* four hundred thousand.



Credit: [Trulia](#)

Countless talented (and not-so-talented) teens formed “[garage bands](#)” — playing (as per the name) in their parents' garages and, when the weather turned cold, in their parents' finished basements or “recreation” rooms. If they were good enough, they might also play dances. The garage band was a famously if not exclusively suburban phenomenon.



Hackley School, Tarrytown. Credit: [American Bluestone](#).

Scarsdale boasted some amazing talent at the time, whether or not we think of the bands they played with as “garage.” Thom Pernice’s Del Rays (with Al Torzilli’s brother Wayne on drums) played their first gig for the Scarsdale Teen Center in February, 1964. By April they’d been booked for a dance at the Hackley School. Like brother Al’s band, the Del Rays played “surf” music. Different than Al’s band, they wore gold lame jackets, which they’d bought in the city. Later a harmonicaist, at the time Thom played a [Hammond Chord Organ](#). Wes Farrell produced a record with them: “[The Way You Look at Him](#).” Farrell had co-written the hit “Boys” (recorded by the Beatles and the Shirelles); would later co-write the hit “Hang on Sloopy” for the McCoys; and was soon to have success producing records on the Cowsills and the Partridge Family. He was a

talented guy. But the Del Rays' parents would not let them sign the contract: it required that they could be taken out of school for performances.



The Del Rays in 1963, l t r: Thom Pernice, Chris Gitzen, Ray Strohmeir, Wayne Torzilli. Credit: Thom Pernice

The Del Rays have the distinction, by the way, of being the only band to have ever played the Candlelight Inn. The [Candlelight Inn](#) has been operating on Central Avenue in Scarsdale since 1955. (As of this writing, in 2022, it is still operating). Anyone who grew up in Scarsdale throughout those decades would remember it, not only musicians. They had a great jukebox back in the day, although the room was way too small for a band.



The Candlelight Inn. Credit: [Facebook](#)

But one summer (perhaps the summer of 1964, perhaps a year later) the Del Rays were invited to play the Candlelight Inn's annual clambake, held under a tent on a flat area near the garage by the parking lot behind the building. But before they could plug in the skies opened up — a huge summer storm. Everyone piled back into the Inn, including the Del Rays with their amps and instruments. As far as we know, that was the only time a band ever played the Candlelight Inn.



Billy Cross (right) in The Esquires. Credit: Thom Pernice

In addition to the members of the Del Rays, other talented players of the day were: [Billy Cross](#) (nee Schwartz, later in 1977 – 79 in Bob Dylan’s band) of The Esquires (pictured above); [Rob Stoner](#) (nee Rothstein, New Rochelle High School Class of 1965) who would come home from college to gig with a version of Scarsdale’s Overdue Experience (also later a member of Dylan’s band); [Steve Love](#) of The Nightwalkers (later of [Stories](#)); [Tommy Mandel](#) of The Nightwalkers (later of the [Bryan Adams Band](#)); and [Jay Shulman](#), lead singer of The Offbeats (later a professional cellist who would play on John Lennon’s “[Walls and Bridges](#)” album).

Quite a talent pool! And all of this before the arrival, beginning in 1966, of a younger generation of talented players.

The “Teen Center” at Scarsdale High School continued to be venue for many of these talented bands. In 1964, the high school hosted [The Adelpheys](#), who played along with folksinger [Nancy Obin](#), on March 2; and [The Valiants](#), who played on October 17.

On December 19, 1964 there was a “[Battle of the Bands](#)” at which Al Torzilli’s Nep-Tunes played back to back against Thom Pernice’s Del Rays (in which Al’s brother Wayne played drums). The Del Rays, still in high school (with the crowd on their side, therefore, according to Wayne) won.



Rapson’s. Credit: [New York Times](#)

A different sort of battle was happening over in Port Chester. New York's State's minimum drinking age in 1964 was 18, while in Connecticut it was 21. That made the "border town" of Port Chester an enormously attractive place to own a bar. Once their members crossed the 18-year-old threshold, Scarsdale bands would want to play those bars.

One of those bars was Rapson's, described in the [New York Times](#) as "a small, dimly lit bar with college banners on the walls and red-checkered cloths on a dozen tables" with "noise and loud singing that goes on until the early hours."

A week later, a follow-up article on the Port Chester bar scene in the [Times](#) pictured Rapson's as filled to capacity by 10 PM, with 15 teen-agers — "who had arrived in Connecticut cars" — waiting outside for others to leave so they could get in. In addition to the drinking age, another draw of Port Chester, according to the *Times*, was New York State's 3 AM curfew. Connecticut closed its bars at 1 A.M.

The increasingly rowdy scene led Port Chester's Mayor Messina to declare (in language perhaps not heard since 1964) that out-of-state teen-age "roisterers" might be held at police headquarters until their parents came for them.



Another view of Rapson's. Credit: [Nostalgia Greenwich!](#) | Facebook

Hartsdale's Billy Vera and The Boogiemens would, for a time in the 1970's, be Rapson's house-band. Billy Vera was a star (indeed, he has one on Hollywood's [Walk of Fame](#)). In 1967 he and his singing partner Judy Clay had a top-20 R&B record, [Storybook Children](#). And in 1987 he had a number-one record with his band The Beaters, [At this Moment](#), — recorded in 1981, reissued six years later after having been popularized on the TV show [Family Ties](#). Rapson's attracted real talent, including the Scarsdale band Crescent (more on them, below).

Another Port Chester bar Scarsdale bands played was called The Stumble Inn (Crescent would play there as well). The Stumble Inn was around the corner from the 1926 [Capitol Theater](#). The Bronx's [Ace Frehley](#) (later of [Kiss](#)) played there with one or more of his pre-Kiss bands. "As I got older," Frehley recalled, "we played a lot of bars and clubs. There was one place called the Stumble Inn in Portchester [sic], New York. ... I used to stumble in and stumble out. We'd go down to the

basement and steal the beer. That was a fun place” (*Kiss Behind the Mask*, by David Leaf and Ken Sharp, 2003, p. 38).

But in the mid-1960’s, while Rapson’s and the Stumble Inn were packing them in in Port Chester, the under-18 crowd in Scarsdale was going to dances at the high school’s “teen center.”

[The Renaissants](#) played a dance there in February; [The Playboys](#) a dance there in March. Then came the prom on June 25, 1965, (mentioned above) with music provided by Claude Thornhill and his Orchestra and The Nep-Tunes.

One of the irritants for the teens was that not only at the prom but at all the school dances in 1965, boys and girls were required to “dress.” At regular teen center dances held by the recreation department at the high school, that meant that the boys were expected to wear jackets and ties, and girls were expected to wear “school dress.”

That’s how it was back in the day.

Chapter 5

The Spider's Web (1966)



Harrison High School (old building). Credit: [Wikiwand](#)

Scarsdale bands whose members were too young to play the bars (meaning, almost all of them) played dances — not only at SHS but at nearby high schools as well. The Del Rays played Harrison High School (the old building) on Saturday night February 12, 1966.

The bands also played private parties. Some of those parties were so-called “open houses” — often held when parents were away. The Offbeats’ Jay Shulman recalls that off-duty Scarsdale police would sometimes be hired by the teen party-throwers to “direct traffic.”

Bob Elliott (that year of the band Stanley) recalls that the large formally-organized fraternities and sororities which existed at Scarsdale High School in those days threw *massive* parties at private homes when the parents were away, charging \$1 per person to get in — with which they would buy kegs of beer (imagine \$400 worth of beer in those days).

Scarsdale bands would also play private parties at local restaurants.



Leighton's Woodland Lake Restaurant. Credit: [Ebay](#)

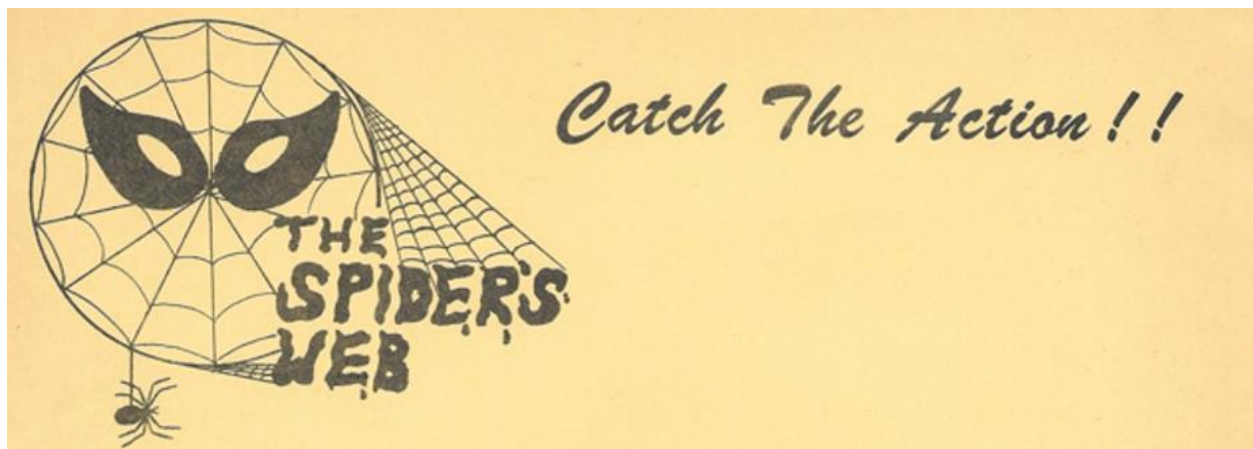
One of the restaurants which booked a lot of private parties was Leighton's Woodland Lake Restaurant in Ardsley. Since the 1940's, Leighton's had been a popular spot for “dining and dancing.” They made a point on their [matchbook](#) advertising of noting that they were [conveniently](#) located “directly on the Saw Mill River Parkway.”

The Offbeats played a sweet-sixteen party there on May 14, 1966, with their original guitarist and founding member John Moses. (John had founded The Offbeats as an instrumental group in 1964; Jay Shulman joined as lead singer in 1965; John then went off to Suffield Academy after their 1966 junior year). May 14 was the week before lead singer Jay Shulman and drummer G. V. Rapp got beat up by some guys from White Plains who crashed a party The Offbeats were playing in Scarsdale. “Things got so out of hand,” according to Jay, “the police shut the party down.” And this was not the last party to end thusly. There was a big one on Murray Hill Road that got crashed, where people got hit in the head with quart bottles of Miller beer. Some really crazy stuff.

The “Sayonara” dance (yes, that’s what they called it) was held at the Junior High each year in the spring, to say goodbye to the eighth graders who would be heading off to high school in the fall. The Offbeats played that year’s dance on Friday, June 17. Their opening act was an eighth-grader named Debbie Levine who, accompanying herself on the guitar, sang Malvina Reynolds’ [Little Boxes](#). (Many years later Levine, as Deborah Frost, would front the heavy-metal band [The Brain Surgeons](#).)

And there were still all the dances in the high school gym for the bands to play. The last dance of academic year was held in the gym on Saturday, March 12, 1966. According to the [Inquirer](#), three bands were on the bill that night: The Night Crawlers, The Night Walkers, and The Jagged Edge. But already by that spring, the high school teens were talking about how they might once again have their own off-campus teen center. By the following fall, those plans were close to ready.

“The Spider’s Web” debuted in October of 1966. It was described in the [Scarsdale Inquirer](#) as a “teen club” which intended to hold bi-monthly “discotheque” evenings “featuring a band, [Go-Go girls](#), and M.C.’s who are high school students themselves. All this over the normal din and uproar that ensues when teen-agers, food and music conglomerate into a one-room, semi-informal atmosphere.”



The Spider’s Web stationary. Credit: Fran Ramer.

“As yet, ‘Spider’s Web,’ has not been able to obtain a permanent residence, but a plan is in the transitional stage at this date, it was reported. However, the high school has volunteered its Gyms A and B for the occasion.”

The first Spider's Web dance, October 14, was in fact held in the high school gym. The [Inquirer](#) reported: *"450 Teens Pack Opening Of 'Web'!* A large room encompassed in a webbing strangely resembling that of a spider's; dark blue and red illumination creating shadowy purple figures on the walls; two M.C.'s on a loud mike; go - go girls dancing; the 'Overdue Experience' playing the latest and loudest in rock and roll set the scene for the opening night of the Spider's Web. Over 450 teenagers came to the High School gym to enjoy an evening of social mixing, dancing and fun in a supervised Recreation Department program."

But the Spider's Web team still wanted the teen center to be "off-campus." Organizer Fran Ramer recalls that the planning meetings were held "after school in the nearby Boy Scout house." But the dances — perhaps given the numbers of attendees at the first event — were never held there. The locus then shifted from the high school to the junior high school (later known as the middle school) gym.



Credit: [The Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

A picture of the Spider's Web team ran in the November 3, 1966 edition of the [Inquirer](#). From left to right: Pam Moore, publicity chair; Gabrielle Long, secretary; Stephen Elkins, Recreation Department advisor; Fran Ramer, president; and Mace Freedman, vice president. The poster on the table reads "The Spider's Web Awaits You."

Fran Ramer recalls that Gabby Long's younger sister was involved as well. That would have been Scarsdale folksinger Cecily Long. Gabby and Cecily's father — who famously dressed in distinctive 1890's barbershop-quartet-style clothes, red-and-white striped shirt and straw hat — had the immensely popular "[Daddy Michael's Old Fashioned Ice Cream Parlor](#)" on Mamaroneck Avenue in White Plains, across the street from the YMCA, [remembered](#) for its penny-candy and old-fashioned [nickelodeon](#) movies.

The Spider's Web's junior high school location was a hit. The [Inquirer](#) reported that at the November 7 dance "the girls' gym furnished a much warmer atmosphere than the previously used Scarsdale High School gymnasium.... Music was furnished by a six - piece teenage band, The Next of Kin."

A third dance was scheduled, featuring Edgemont's The Night Walkers "to manufacture the rock n' roll sound," as the [Inquirer](#) put it. "For the past two dances, the teen turnout has exceeded 450 and the go-go girls, emcees and bands have roused the party spirits of Scarsdale teenagers to a swinging pitch."

After three dances, the Scarsdale Junior High School gym became the de facto "off campus" location for all dances held by the Spider's Web teen center, although admission was reserved for the high school students.



Spider's Web dance featuring The Night Walkers, November 23, 1966. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

Above is a photo from the Spider's Web Wednesday November 23rd dance. The caption in the [paper](#) read: "SPIDER'S WEB swung into action once again last Wednesday, this time to the beat of the Night Walkers of Edgemont [the band, in matching outfits, can be seen at top right]. Manny Rebelo and Jerry Parnel the Web's emcees, exchanged jokes with the crowd and danced with the go-go girls [visible on the platform in the center, dressed in matching spider shirts]. Approximately 400 high school students turned out for the event at the Junior High." Bob Elliott later recalled that The Night Walkers was formed by Steve Love (guitar), and featured Tom Mandel (organ) and Bryan Madey (drums).

Chapter 6

The Summer of Love (1967)

Of course, the junior high students got to enjoy their own venue, as well. The junior high school gym continued to be the site of the junior high school winter “Snowball” dance.

As evidence of (well, I’m not exactly sure of what) the *Inquirer* covered the story of the 1967 Snowball dance three times. On January 26, it noted that “the annual Snowball Dance for eighth graders at Scarsdale Junior High School will be held tomorrow (Friday) from 7:30 to 11 pm. The rock and roll group ‘The Offbeats’ will provide entertainment. Boys have been asked to wear suits and ties, while girls have been asked to wear dresses.”



Snowball Dance, January 27, 1967. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#).

Then, the *Inquirer* ran the above picture in their February 2, 1967 edition — captioned “SNOWMAN CHAPERONE watches over eighth graders at the annual Snowball Dance last Friday at Scarsdale Junior High School. ‘The Offbeats,’ a rock and roll group, provided the musical entertainment.”

Finally, a story on the dance ran in their February 16, 1967 edition. That article was headlined “Snowball Dance Attended by 325.” It noted, “Scarsdale Junior High School recently held its annual snowball dance in the gymnasium. The ‘Offbeats’ provided the music for 325 students. Refreshments included cake, punch, fudge and cookies. Among the decorations was a large papier mache [mâché] snowman and strings of blue and white paper snowballs. To insure [sic] that no party crashers entered, every student was given an S.O. (Student Organization) card that he had to show when paying admission.”

The Offbeats were extremely popular (indeed, they had played the previous year’s Snowball as well.) A month after the 1967 Snowball, The Offbeats were back again in the same gym playing a Spider’s Web dance. The Spider’s Web was now attracting between 300 and 600 youths per dance, and it was clear that no smaller venue (such as the Boy Scout House) would suffice. ID cards were

issued, and were required for admission to the dances. Entrance fees were “standard at \$1.50 [stag](#) and \$2 [drag](#).”

It was around this time that the last “open house” of the era was held, played by The Overdue Experience. “The cops,” as Bob Elliott recalls, “insisted that the party end on time!” (a comment perhaps on the complicated relationship the local police had with the teenage children of the Village’s taxpayer-citizens). After this last open house, closed, private parties continued to be a venue for bands to play. Below is a picture of The Offbeats (booked constantly) the next month, on March 11, 1967, playing a Bar Mitzvah party in a basement in New Rochelle:



The Offbeats. left to right: Bailey Spencer, bass; Jay Shulman, vocals; Don Fitzwater, rhythm; Ray Strohmeier, lead; G.V. Rapp, drums. Credit: Marvin I. Sameth

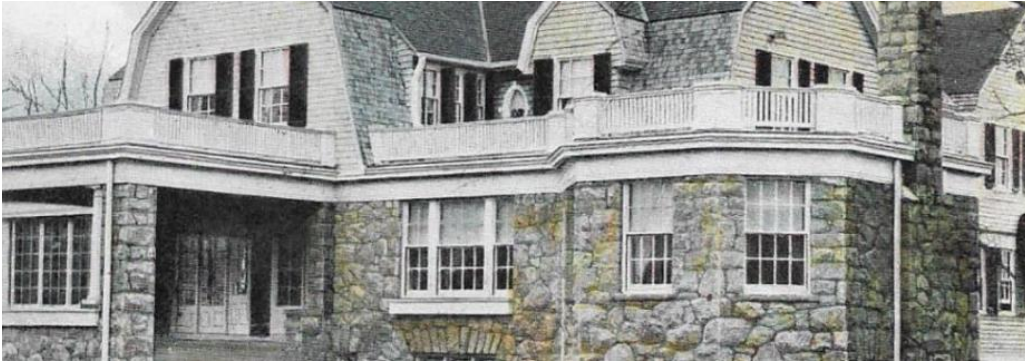
Scarsdale bands also played clubs — not as in *night* club, or *jazz* club, but as in *country* club. The Offbeats, according to Jay Shulman, played many of the Westchester country clubs, including Manursing Island, Bronxville Field, and Apawamis.



Manursing Island Club (Rye): Credit: manursing.com



Bronxville Field Club. Credit: bronxvillefieldclub.com



Apawamis Club (Rye). Credit: circle7framing.com

According to the [Inquirer](#), The Night Crawlers played Bonnie Briar Country Club (Larchmont) on Wednesday July 26, 1967 — a dance for high school and college students to which members of the Larchmont Yacht Club, Larchmont Shore Club, Orienta Beach Club, Wykagyl Country Club, and Scarsdale Golf Club were invited.



Bonnie Briar Country Club. Credit: Circle7framing.com

Years later, [Loudon Wainwright III](#) would write [Westchester Country](#) (a folk song? a protest song? a [gab](#)?) about growing up in such an environment: *I was raised here in Westchester County / I was taught in a country day school / We were richer than most / I don't mean to boast / But I swam in the country club pool.*

Wainwright grew up in Bedford, just north of the Town of North Castle. The area's "country club money," and the fact that North Castle shares a border with Greenwich, Connecticut (where the drinking-age was higher than in New York), helped to fuel the success of a few extremely popular music clubs: Willow Inn and Deercrest Inn.

The Willow Inn was located on Old Route 22 in Armonk (a hamlet in North Castle) — a famously popular place to drink and dance dating back to the days of the [big bands](#). Still very popular in the 1960's "with one church and fifteen bars," as Will Risley, Greeley High School, Chappaqua, Class of 1960 quipped, it should have been named "[Barmonk](#)."

Scarsdale's The Del Rays played Armonk's Willow Inn *three nights a week* in 1966. Thom Pernice recalls that the club could legally hold 200, but that they would pack 400 in — with another 200 waiting outside. When the Del Rays broke up that year, Thom formed The Overdue Experience which continued play (and pack) the club throughout 1967. Rob Stoner (nee Steiner) of New Rochelle (later of the Bob Dylan band) would, when he was home from college, sometimes sit in with one version of the band.



The Willow Inn. Credit: [Westchester County Historical Society](#)

Don Ogden (not a musician, but contemporary with many of the early players) has written elsewhere: "The Overdue Experience was doing regular weekend gigs at The Willow Inn in Armonk, NY attracting the leading lights of the drug culture, hipsters and hippies, as well as wannabes, the just plain curious, and the law. You had to drive through the dead of night around Kensico reservoir to get to The Willow, which loomed out of the darkness like an oasis of rainbow-colored light."

Another Thom Pernice band, Nozmo King — featuring Thom on harmonica and lead vocals; Willie Sol on rhythm guitar; Sol Scheps on bass; Dick Ehrlich on drums; and Gary Hurst on lead guitar — played there as well. Thom had named the band after a sign which hung in Dick Ehrlich's basement where they used to practice: "No Smoking." Gary recalls the post-Woodstock progressive-rock band performing "for a winter of Sunday nights at The Willow Inn in Armonk in 1970, among other memorable venues."

In their parody Passover *haggadah* “For This We Left Egypt?” Armonk-born humorist Dave Barry and co-authors Alan Zweibel and Adam Mansbach muse how the shank bone (or beet) on the seder plate brings to mind ancient memories — “it just does, similar to the way the song ‘Hanky Panky’ by Tommy James and the Shondells reminds us of throwing up Singapore Slings in the parking lot of the Willow Inn in Armonk, New York.”

Bassist David Bartky unabashedly credits his circa 1969 band [Smack](#) (with Eric Carr, later of Kiss, on drums) for the Willow Inn’s success. “We took the Willow Inn, in Armonk, New York that was an empty eatery to a very successful crowded night club in a matter of months,” he [writes](#). “The dance floor became a place for people to dance to a size that was way too small to dance on. Victor says the place is still there but it is more of an upscale place than when we used to play.”

That’s how Bartky remembers it. But in fact, Thom Pernice’s Del Rays and Overdue Experience had been packing the club years earlier. It was still the Willow Inn in 1997, when it was reviewed in *The New York Times*. But sometime later it became “The Beehive.”



Country House / Deercrest Inn. Credit: [TheRealBillyVera/Facebook](#)

The other major club in northern Westchester was the Deercrest Inn (earlier known as the Country House) in the North Castle hamlet of Banksville. Deercrest Inn was notable for being able to attract and present major, national acts: In 1963, [Patti LaBelle along with Little Anthony and the Imperials](#) performed. [Smokey Robinson and the Miracles](#) performed there on June 12, 1965 (the year of their big hit [The Tracks of My Tears](#)). Other major acts to perform at the Deercrest included [Gary US Bonds](#) (who had [headlined](#) in Europe over the Beatles in 1963); [The Isley Brothers](#) (whose 1962 hit [Twist and Shout](#) was covered by the Beatles); and [Cannibal and the Headhunters](#) (who had opened for the Beatles on their second American tour, including at Shea Stadium). The Overdue Experience alternated weekends at the Deercrest for some time with Cannibal and the Headhunters. Other acts which played the room included [Gary DeCarlo and the Orchids](#) (Gary sang lead on the 1969 [Steam](#) hit [Na Hey Kiss Him Goodbye](#)) and [The Rascals](#). Billy Vera (whose band was the house band from 1963 – 1967) recalls that [other acts](#) included The Coasters, The Drifters, Fats Domino, Jerry Lee Lewis, and The Dixie Cups. Loudon Wainwright recalls Mitch Ryder, Bobby Hebb, and the Duprees.



“A State Border is a State of Mind,” May 27, 1977. Credit: [New York Times](#)

In his 2017 book [Harlem to Hollywood](#) Billy Vera wrote:

“Of all the clubs we played in Westchester County, the greatest, bar none, was the Country House, later known as the Deercrest Inn, in Banksville, New York, just across the border from the wealthy town of Greenwich, Connecticut. We played there from 1963 until late 1967, when “Storybook Children” became a hit and I had to hit the road.

Patrons came from as far away as New Haven or the Bronx. Part of the attraction was the hit record acts that the owners, Mike and Maghee, with the help of our guitarist, Bobby Power, booked each Friday and Saturday. The club was home to the best bands in the area.”

In his 2017 book [Liner Notes](#) Loudon Wainwright wrote:

“Fifty-something years ago I saw and heard some great bands at the Deercrest Inn in Banksville, New York. Back then the drinking age for kids from the Empire State was eighteen, but it was twenty-one just across the border in Connecticut, so a lot of the Deercrest’s younger clientele drove over from towns like Greenwich and New Canaan...

One night in 1964, I went with some friends to hear the legendary Isley Brothers, and featured in their backup band was a skinny young black left-handed guitar player who was dressed in a tight-fitting Eleganza suit (“For the man who knows style when style is so right”) and sporting what used to be called a fifty-dollar process. Even more noticeable than his flashy threads and conked hair, though, was the way this kid could play, effortlessly squeezing, almost shaking, the riffs and fills out of the electric guitar, and doing it behind his back if and when he chose to. The expression on his face was haughty and gleeful...

The guitarist whom Wainwright and his friends (“affluent white suburban kids for whom the height of style was tasseled Bass Weejuns, no socks, and madras Bermuda shorts”) were experiencing that night was the yet-to-be-discovered rock phenomenon, “arguably the greatest instrumentalist in the history of rock music” (in the opinion of The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame): [Jimi Hendrix](#).

The Deercrest and Willow Inn were extremely popular in the summer of 1967 — the so-called [Summer of Love](#), when everything changed again. On June 2, the Beatles released their genre-bending *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, a culturally (and now historically) important psychedelic “concept” album which featured rock, orchestral, vaudevillian, and Hindustani classical-style sitar music.



The Beatles, *Sgt. Pepper's* gatefold. Credit: indiewire.com

Two weeks later, the [Monterey Pop Festival](#) was held in Monterey, California. Like *Sgt. Pepper's*, the Festival was also noted for its broadly eclectic musical range: from folk ([Simon and Garfunkel](#)); to R&B ([Otis Redding](#)); to South African jazz ([Hugh Masekela](#)); to Hindustani classical music ([Ravi Shankar](#)); to rock ([Jimi Hendrix](#)).



Jimi Hendrix's guitar ablaze, Monterey Pop. Credit: chordify.net

Such eclecticism could be heard in New York that summer on [WOR-FM](#), which had been pioneering “free form” radio for less than a year. (WOR-FM had inaugurated its format by playing *Wild Thing* by the Troggs — written by Hartsdale's Chip Taylor.) By the summer of 1967, already [93%](#) of Columbia University college students reported listening to the station every day.



Ad for WOR-FM by [Milton Glaser](#). Credit: [nyradioarchive.com](#)

Presenting long-form recordings, poetry, social commentary, and what [Murray “the K” Kaufman](#) called “[attitude music](#)” (no matter the genre, be it folk, rock, jazz, R&B, or Country), the station’s influences can be said to include [Pacifica Network](#) stations (locally, [WBAI-FM](#)); college radio stations (locally, including [WKCR-FM](#) and [WFUV-FM](#)); non-commercial [Educational Radio Network](#) stations (locally, [WRVR-FM](#)); other [public broadcasting](#) stations (locally, [WNYC-FM](#)); other non-commercial stations (locally, [WQXR-FM](#)); R&B stations (locally, [WWRL-FM](#)); and jazz stations (locally, [WLIB-FM](#)).

The [WOR-FM deejays](#) all had Top-40 backgrounds: Murray the K (from WINS); [Scott Muni](#) (from WMCA and WABC); [Rosko](#) (William “Bill” Roscoe Mercer, from KBLA, Burbank); and [Johnny Michael](#) (from Westchester’s WFAS). But that summer, they were making the same [cultural shift](#) the Beatles were making.

By the end of the summer, WOR-FM’s management had pulled the plug on the experiment. But freeform radio was immediately picked up by WNEW-FM (they also picked up Scott Muni and Rosko). Beginning October 30, 1967, WNEW-FM was the only commercial station in town where you could hear The Beatles’ [A Day in the Life](#) (almost six minutes long) or Arlo Guthrie’s [Alice’s Restaurant](#) (almost nineteen minutes long). WNEW-FM would later be the only commercial station in town to play Joan Baez’s recording of Dylan’s [Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowland](#) (almost twelve minutes long), or Jaimie Brockett’s [Legend of the USS Titanic](#) (almost fourteen minutes long). Every once-in-a-while there’d be a commercial.

Quite the party!

(WPLJ’s “progressive rock” and “album-oriented-rock” formats came later. A more complete telling of the story is captured in the PBS documentary [Rock Jocks: The FM Revolution](#) on [YouTube](#); and in Richard Neer’s book [FM: The Rise and Fall of Rock Radio](#).)



Discount Records ad (recolored). Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

Scarsdale teens looking to buy the new albums that summer had a new store in which to shop: Discount Records at 800 White Plains Road in Eastchester. This was the site of the old Scarsdale Lanes, and an indication that the trend among American youth was toward albums and away from bowling. The teenage staff at Discount Records is remembered for having been particularly knowledgeable; many were members of local rock bands.

By the summer 1967, Scarsdale teens were about to have a whole new host of venues in which to play music and listen to it. The line between folk and rock had by this time been blurring for a couple of years — ever since Bob Dylan had “[gone electric](#)” at the Newport Folk Festival and The Beatles had released their folkish “[You’ve Got to Hide Your Love Away](#)” in summer 1965. Many Scarsdale players had long had a foot in both worlds. The Offbeats’ founder John Moses, lead singer Jay Shulman, and a third friend, Kenny Neigh, had had a folk group from 1961 to 1963 called “The Long-Lost Trio.” In the fall of 1967, the first of the “teen coffee houses” would arrive in Scarsdale; other nearby coffee houses soon followed.



Scarsdale Congregational Church. Credit: [Scarsdale Public Library](#)

The first coffee house — the “Coffee Ground” — rotated locations. It debuted at Scarsdale Congregational Church, in Dyckman Hall, on Friday, September 8, 1967, and attracted over 200 people (a “people happening”). Featured were “the [Scarsdaliens](#), led by Nada Mangialetti, Patsy Kimble, Mike Mark, Mark Alexander, Steve Real, Joel Feinberg, Charlie Weiss, Jim Pullman, Dinny Sweeny, and Bill Greenthal.”



Practicing for the September 8 Coffee Ground, left to right: Charlie Weiss (piano); Mike Alexander (banjo); Patsy Kimble (guitar); Dinny Sweeny (vocalist) and Joel Feinberg (bass). Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

The program seems to have been the brainchild of [Mangialetti](#), who — along with a committee which included the Spider's Web's Gabby Long — had put on a [folk music show](#) at the Junior High the previous February.



Planning the February folk show, left to right: [Stan Greenthal](#), Nada Mangialetti, Paula Porchenick, Joel Sturz. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

The Coffee Ground was a cooperative coffee house sponsored by the Scarsdale Rec Department and various youth groups and houses of worship throughout the Village. The location rotated each month.



Westchester Reform Temple. Credit: [Westchester County Historical Society](#).

A second Coffee Ground event was held October 8, 1967 at Westchester Reform Temple. Once again, over 200 people attended. The performers that night included Nada Mangialetti, Mike Mark, Joel Feinberg, Patsy Kimble, Dave Schubert and Dave Smolover.



Left to right, center stage, October 8, 1967: Nada Mangialetti, Mike Mark, Joel Feinberg. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

A third Coffee Ground event was held at Hitchcock Presbyterian Church on November 4 (the [performers](#) were not listed in the paper). Then, over the next [months](#), the Coffee Ground offered events at Immaculate Heart of Mary (I. H. M.), St. James the Less, and St. Pious X Church.

Meanwhile, another “teen coffee house” had opened nearby in White Plains. This one was being held at the YWCA’s new building on North Street across from White Plains High School. A good number of Scarsdale families belonged to the White Plains Y and word had spread quickly.

The YWCA coffee house had previewed the past July. Scarsdale students involved in that venture included Nada Mangialetti (founder of the Coffee Ground) along with Linda Auerbach, Ann Axtel, Barbara Cohen, Stan Greenthal, Paula Porchenick, Trudy Schleifer and Andy Wetmore.

Temporarily billed the “[You Name It](#)” coffee house, the teens soon chose the name “[The Din of Iniquity](#).” Cute. But apparently it met with adult objection. By September, it had been renamed “[The Wrynoceros](#)” (and was quickly known as “The Wryno”). Different than Coffee Ground, the Wry did not limit itself, strictly speaking, to “folk” music. [The Electric Chair](#), a blues band, was one of the early featured performers. The atmosphere was decidedly un-school-gymnasium-like: “Chess and checkers are available for the thinking man [sic]. For people with a creative bent, drawing easels invite inspired masterpieces. Finished products are framed and hung on display to enhance the decor. Low wooden tables topped with candles are scattered in front of a small entertainment platform along with floor pillows for the groundlings. This sets the physical atmosphere but the real charm of the Wryno is set by the people who attend the festivities” — all of this according to a later description in the [Inquirer](#).



The Second Story, Eastchester YM-YWHA. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

Then came the Mid-Westchester YM-YWHA's "Second Story" in Eastchester. Soon known as one of the "big five" teen coffee houses in the county, when it opened it eschewed the term "coffee house." The teens thought that term too much associated with folk music, and the Second Story teens had a more eclectic vision in mind. They called the Second Story a new "thing." Opening night featured Scarsdale's The Night Crawlers (a rock band, with a folky side) and [Harriet Scheim](#), a folk singer. Later gatherings would feature "underground" movies. When this new "thing" opened on November 4, 1967 it was in the Y's old frame building at 575 White Plains Post Road, across the street from Eastchester High School. Scarsdale teens on the Y's "[Teen Planning Board](#)" at the time included The Night Crawler's Gary Kemp, along with Jill Garson, Margo Gross, and Teddy Milton. (In addition to their clip on the Scarsdale Rocks website, The Night Crawlers can also be heard on the [Ren-Vell Records Battle of the Bands](#) LP.) Gary Kemp's 1967 bandmates included the band's founder Geoff Greenburg, drums; Bob Bloomfield, guitars; Roger Altman, electric bass. The website also credits Donny Spitzer. Later Otis Moore joined on lead vocals.

From having no off-campus teen center before the Spider's Web opened, Scarsdale teens could in the fall of 1967 choose amongst *four*. A look at the calendar for the first weekend of November, 1967 gives a good picture: Friday November 3, Scarsdale's Spider's Web hosted a dance in the junior high school gyms featuring two bands, "The Tyndal Effect," and "[The Mystics](#)" (from White Plains, or perhaps Valhalla). On Saturday November 4 no fewer than three coffee houses were offering programs: the Coffee Ground (held that month at Scarsdale's Hitchcock Church); the Wrynoceros at the YWCA in White Plains (which was now billing itself as a coffee house for high school and college age); and the grand opening of the Second Story at the Mid-Westchester YM-YWHA in Eastchester, featuring The Night Crawlers and Harriet Scheim.



The Night Crawlers. Credit: Thom Pernice

Rock bands started getting booked to play school assemblies. Edgemont's The Night Walkers were invited to play before one SHS [assembly](#). The Uncouth Youth played before another. At one assembly, I played as a duo with the Uncouth Youth's Richard Davis. And then the Uncouth Youth (which along with Davis included Bob Kan, Andy Kreeger, Ken Midtbo and Steve Hillman) played an "[Oblivion Dance](#)" (whatever that was) in the parish hall of the Church of St. James the Less that fall. And there was yet more.



The Ethical Culture Society. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

A group called "Sixteens in Service" hosted a "[Battle of the Bands](#)" at the Ethical Culture Society on Saxon Woods Road. Six bands competed: The Nickle Bag (Port Chester), The Societies (White Plains), The Night Crawlers (Scarsdale), The Other Half (Hartsdale), The Enchanters (White Plains), and The Other End (Ardsley).

And the winner was: [The Other Half](#).



"Sixteens in Service" adult organizers with Ed Sullivan at White Plains Hotel. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#).

On Saturday night November 18, 1967 "Sixteens in Service" held their second annual charity ball at the White Plains Hotel. [Ed Sullivan](#) awarded commemorative charms as honorariums to the girls. The Other Half played, alternating with the society band, The Herbie Rose Orchestra. The event netted \$400 for the Chronic Dialysis (Artificial Kidney) Center at Grasslands Hospital.



White Plains Hotel. Credit: [Westchester County Historical Society](#).
[Tuttles](#) bar there was later home to the Westchester Songwriters Guild.
 Much later it became The Esplanade Senior Living Residences.

The White Plains hotel may have been new territory to the Scarsdalian. But Scarsdale bands were not unfamiliar with White Plains. Although Sam Ash Music did not open their White Plains store before the early 1970's, Newcorn Music had been at what would later be the Sam Ash location for years. (After Sam Ash took over, they called themselves Sam Ash / Newcorn Music for some time, seeking to hold their old customer base). Scarsdale musicians also frequented White Plains' [independent Liberty Music Store](#) at 236 East Post Road.



Archbishop Stepinac High School, White Plains. Credit: [EduOne](#)

White Plains was also home to Archbishop Stepinac High School (est. 1948) — a popular place for Scarsdale bands to play. The Del Rays played there in February of 1966, with The Offbeats vocalist Jay Shulman.



White Plains High School. Credit: [Cardcow](#)

White Plains High School was another popular venue. Bob Elliott of the Brass Blues Band recalls the Night Crawlers (runners-up in the 1967 Battle of Bands) playing at least one dance there.



Church of St. Pius X. Credit: [DCAK.MSA](https://www.dcaakmsa.org/)

Bob also recalls the Night Crawlers playing a dance at St. Pius X Church, in Scarsdale, near the border with White Plains.

Chapter 7

The Raid at the Junior High School (1968)



Scarsdale Drop-in Center. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

In 1968, the various area high schools, churches, and synagogues continued to offer opportunities for Scarsdale bands to play. So too, the Spider's Web. Still, there seems to have been a felt need for a venue closer than the Eastchester or White Plains Y's, to which teens could walk after school and just "hang out." In January 1968, the Congregational Church (catty-corner from the Village Hall) opened the (short-lived) "Scarsdale Drop-In Center." In some ways it was a throw-back to "The Hangar" — a place to listen to records, dance, and socialize, albeit with psychedelic posters on the wall. The Recreation Department partnered with the church in making it happen. The Department's Greg Prout can be seen above (in tie) with, from left to right, high school students Bill Bellsey, Bruce Bradley, and Gabby Long. The role of the Drop-In Center, Coffee Houses, and Spider's Web would be a topic of public [discussion](#) at the Village Club in March. "What Kind of Recreation Do Scarsdale Teenagers Want?" was held on [March 19](#).

Music was everywhere. In February, the Spider's Web featured the band [Grapes of Wrath](#). At the same time, interest in "folk music" (or at least music by singers who accompanied themselves on acoustic guitar) continued to grow. The local coffee houses were a consistent draw. On April 6, 1968, the Scarsdale High School Arts Council presented [Phil Ochs](#) in [concert](#) in the high school auditorium. Ochs was a writer and singer of original, topical, political, anti-war (or "protest") songs. Did that count as "folk" music? "You're not a folk-singer," Bob Dylan is [reported](#) to have said. "You're a journalist!" But Ochs was proud of his moniker. His early shows billed him as "[the singing journalist](#)."

Debbie Levine (by this time, co-chair of the Teen Planning Board of the YM-YWHA) was booking [rock acts](#) for the Second Story. The appetite was there: for traditional folk music, for topical songs, for rock bands to dance to, and rock bands to listen to.



Credit: [Fine Art America](#)

By the summer of 1968, yet another “venue” opened up. On June 6, 1968, it was reported that the County Parks and Recreation Department would cosponsor a series of four Friday night folk concerts over the summer of 1968 at the plaza below the Kensico Dam. According to the [Bronxville Review Press](#) “cosponsoring these ‘groovy events’ will be five teen-age coffee houses.”

A typo in the paper corrupted the list, which was meant to read: Wrynoceros, Second Story, Queen Mab, Coffee Grounds, and the Bedpost. Four “Folk Music Sing-Ins” were held at the dam, on July 5 and 19, and August 2 and 16, as reported in [Scarsdale Inquirer](#). (The Bedpost may have been out of Temple Israel of New Rochelle on Webster Avenue. Queen Mab has yet to be identified.)

This was not the first time local performers had gathered at the base of the dam. Kensico Dam Plaza had been the site of the county’s [teenage jazz combo](#) “[battle of the bands](#)” in 1965. In the summer of 1966, the Plaza had been the site of auditions — “[tryouts](#)” — which would determine who would go on to open for the Beach Boys at Iona College. The winner was Yonkers’ The Chain Reaction, fronted by Steve Tyler, later of Arrowsmith (about whom, more below).

The July 5th, 1968 Kensico Dam concert was given the name “Folk Stop.” It featured sitar-playing Mace Freedman, who also acted as emcee. The idea for the series, according to the [Inquirer](#), had originated in Scarsdale, where “in April, Mace and folk fans Devvie Rose, Nada Magialetti, Pam Moore and Andy Wetmore, then seniors at Scarsdale High School, met with officials to discuss the idea of a folk festival. The idea of one festival was expanded to four concerts, and ‘Folk Music at the Dam’ became a reality.”



Mace Freedman, second from left, with The Chord Jesters. Credit: [Scarsdale Rocks](#)

Mace, a cofounder of Scarsdale’s Coffee Ground, was also a member of the Scarsdale rock band “The Chord Jesters.” At the time, it was unexceptional for boys to play in both folk and rock arenas, while for girls it was still unusual. While there were plenty of girls playing and singing folk music, the only girl rock n’ roll band at the time was The Time Being from Rockland County. There had of course been girl vocal groups — like Scarsdale’s [Depippo Sisters](#), who’d had a record

produced by [Joe Renda](#) (later [Chip Taylor](#)'s partner at [North Lake Sound](#)). But The Time Being stood out for playing their own instruments.



Credit: [TheTimeBeingBand/Facebook](#)

In August 1968, The Time Being — [Linda “Sylver” Marshall-Smith](#) (lead vocals and guitar), Jeanne Sutera Zimmer Sellers (bass and vocals), Linda “Leni” Mencaccini Blanch (keys), and Ruth Binder (vocals and drums) — competed in that summer’s Battle of the Bands at Playland. The local press took to calling it a “[fight between the sexes](#).” This was the era before the Runaways, GoGos, and Bangles, and none of the powers that were seemed to know what to make of them. But The Time Being could draw 1,000 people to the Glen Island Casino, when management only expected 600. The Time Being lost the summer’s battle to a Port Chester band, “[The Entertainers](#),” but went down in local music history.

In September, when school resumed again, folk concerts, dances, and performances continued as in the past. The biggest change in the musical landscape in the fall of 1968 was the emergence of an important new Scarsdale band: The Brass Blues Band.

The Brass Blues Band is arguably the best-remembered Scarsdale band of the late 1960’s through mid-1970’s. It grew out of “Stanley” — formed in 1966 by Larry Cohen (lead guitar/vocals), with Bob Elliott (lead vocals), Steve Schnur (rhythm guitar/vocals, and later Farfisa organ), Ted Spencer (drums), and Craig Fisher (electric bass).

Bob Elliott began fronting Stanley as a 9th grader in the fall of 1966. The band went on to play many of the “open houses” at private homes thrown by the SHS fraternities and sororities. Then, in the fall of 1968 Bob’s bandmate Larry Cohen started taking classes at Manhattan School of Music on Saturdays. He let it be known that he no longer had time to play in the band. Bummer. Fortunately, Larry needed a project to do for his MSM studies, and hit on the idea of charting horn arrangements for a new band Bob and his friend Andy Kreeger were in the process of forming. Thus was born the Brass Blues Band. Bob (vocals, harmonica) and Andy (guitar) brought in Gary Lachman (drums), Gary Hurst (guitar), 10th grader Marc Shulman (guitar), and a three-piece horn section: Sally Abt (trumpet), Chuck Kestenbaum (trumpet), and Bobby Auerbach (alto sax). Talented players, all. And with Larry’s charts the Brass Blues Band was an overnight sensation.

Peter Berkey joined them on Lowery Organ at their first gig, at the Congregational Church at Post and Heathcote Roads. Soon, Ted Spencer (formerly of Stanley) took over on drums. Later members would include Danny Sofer, and J. P. James (trumpet).

Marc Shulman recalls: “The Brass Blues Band played a few of our most memorable early gigs at The 2nd Story, on the second floor of a wooden house on Post Road just north of Eastchester High School, sponsored by the YM-YWHA on the west side of Post. There were no chairs... At one, some 80 people packed in and sat on the floor.” Bob Elliott recalls the three gigs they played at the Second Story at the old YM-YWHA in Eastchester (1968 – 69) as their best. The Second Story was a great sounding room: small, with old wooden floors. Larry Cohen had turned them all on to the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, and “Larry’s arrangements and song selection [Butterfield; Blood, Sweat, and Tears] were impeccable.” Ted Spencer was recalling the old Second Story when he wrote: “My second SHS band, The Brass Blues Band, fronted by Bob Elliott (vocals, harp) and featuring Marc Shulman on guitar, played some **very** well attended shows... at an upstairs venue in Edgewood, very close to the Eastchester border. I remember one in particular, which would have to have been around spring ’69 or so, where the place was **packed**. We were a ‘listening’ band, not a ‘dancing’ one, so everyone was sitting on the floor, in particularly rapt attention to Marc’s fiery leads and Bob’s soulful harp soloing. A night I will never forget as long as I live. :)”

Pretty much all that might be remembered about the 1968-1969 Scarsdale music scene would be The Brass Blues Band, had it not been for this: At the close of the calendar year, on December 24, 1968 the headline in the [Scarsdale Inquirer](#) read *“Police Raid ‘Drug Party’ At Jr. High.”* “Acting on information telephoned to them by Mr. Richard Morris of the Rec Department, Scarsdale police raided a ‘drug party’ at the Junior High School on Saturday night. Approximately 50 teenagers were present at a Web Dance at the school, when Mr. Morris called the police to report that several teenagers appeared to be under the influence of drugs. When the police arrived they found that some of the children had taken seconal capsules, which they called ‘Red Devils’. One 14 year old girl who had taken a near-fatal dose, was taken to White Plains Hospital, where her stomach was pumped. The children, all minors, were released in the custody of their parents.”

Chapter 8

Folk-Rock, Blues-Rock, Acid-Rock (1969)

Given the upset, the Rec Department's Ritchi Morris, in advance of the February 1969 dance, tried to establish a "soothing" tone: A blurb in the local paper advertised the coming dance this way: "Ritchi Morris and the Spider's Web gang present a massacre - on St. Valentine's Day. All the lost "Souls"" may come dressed in apparel appropriate with the theme. That means no rough, grubby stuff allowed!!! Be soothed by the sounds of "The Staff of Life" - smuggled to you by mad Mike Rosenberg" ([Scarsdale Inquirer](#), February 13, 1969).



Scarsdale Junior High School. Credit: [Scarsdale Public Library](#)

The February 1969 Spider's Web dance at the junior high was, [reportedly](#), the "largest crowd to participate in a Web function since its inception." The next month it was announced that Ritchi Morris of the Scarsdale Dept. of Parks, Recreation and Conservation would "initiate a Coffee House season, where a cafe atmosphere will prevail and creative people will be encouraged to do their own 'thing.'" The new coffee house, "[Aquarius](#)," was set to open at the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) on Friday, March 14. Opening night seems to have taken place a week later. "Last week saw the inception of the Scarsdale Recreation Department's Coffee House season," the [Inquirer](#) reported on April 3, "with the opening of 'Aquarius' at the IHM church. The featured duo, Shelley and Don, delivered renditions of Simon & Garfunkel tunes. Among the other entertainers were singers Cecily Long and Debbie Kan, Paul Luple, a jazz pianist, and a show provided by the members of the "Cup Cake" jugband, David Pollack, Dave Dupont, Steve Cohan, Elliot Sharp and Joel Edchans. Steve Wein, Gall Montgomery and 'Max' Berg sang several folk standards."

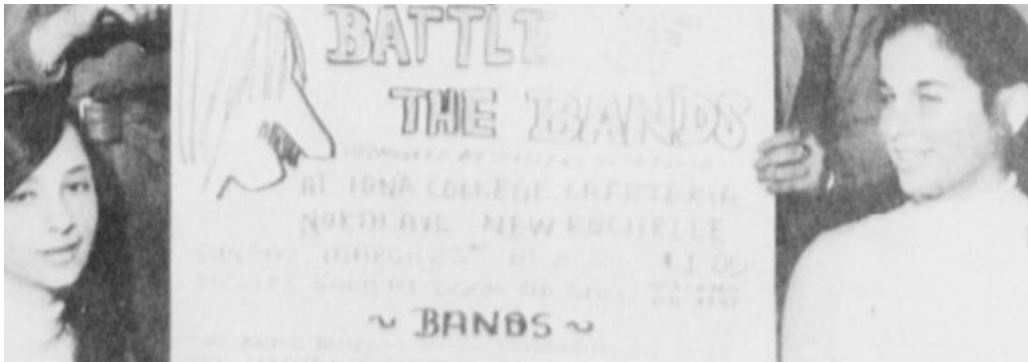


The Brass Blues Band. Credit: [Scarsdale Rocks](#)

The good news for the Spider's Web was that they had been able to book the most popular local band of the day, The Brass Blues Band, for their Friday, March 21 event. Ritchi Morris — still

working to appease the public over the near-tragic December incident — did his best to assure everyone that the Web was now attracting a more “mature” crowd. From the [Scarsdale Inquirer](#): *“Large Crowd Attends ‘Brass Blues’ Web.”* Enthralled by the pulsating beat of the ‘Brass Blues Band,’ an unusually large crowd of some 300 youths rocked, socked and moaned their way to a groovy ‘happening’ last Friday night at the Spider’s Web!! Adding to the tempo were eye piercing lighting effects created by ‘Max’ and the decorations committee. Ritchi Morris, Scarsdale Parks, Recreation and Conservation coordinator for its youth activities, stated, ‘We’re very pleased-with the rising attendance rates. More importantly, we’re attracting the older, more mature youths in greater numbers each time and this is delightful prospect. This means that we can afford entertainment of finer quality and interest and therefore continue to be attractive to Scarsdale’s older youths.’ The next Web will be held tentatively on March 28.”

In the meantime, “Sixteens in Service” (the group that had sponsored a Battle of the Bands at the Ethical Culture Society the past October) had planned another “battle” for Sunday, March 23.



Left: Pam Castriota. Right: Jody Newman, with “Battle of the Bands” poster. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

This “battle” was scheduled to take place at Iona College’s Spellman Hall in New Rochelle — well-accustomed to rock music. (The Beach Boys had played there on July 24, 1966; the Lovin’ Spoonful on July 22, 1967; and The Young Rascals either in the fall of 1968 or spring of 1969.)

Twenty bands auditioned. Six made the cut: The Brass Blues Band (Scarsdale); Cristopher Rabbit (White Plains-Scarsdale); The Circus (Pelham); The Crystal Ship (Yonkers); The Toad Crud (White Plains); and Venom (New Rochelle).



Spellman Hall, Iona College. Credit: [Westchester County Historical Society](#)

“The winning band, chosen by a panel of distinguished judges,” the [Inquirer](#) announced, “will play on May 3 at the Ridgeway Country Club.”

And the winner was...

“Brass Blues Win at Benefit Ball,” the [Scarsdale Inquirer](#) reported. “An all-Westchester rock band competition sponsored by Sixteens-in-Service took place on Sunday, March 23 at Iona College. Chairman of the event was Mrs. Juliette Castriota, and cochairman was Mrs. Arlene Shub, both of Scarsdale. The Brass Blues [Band] from Scarsdale took winning honors. Runner-up was the Christopher Rabbit group from White Plains. An exciting performance was given by the winning band featuring Bob Elliott, harmonica and vocalist; Bob Auerbach, saxophone; Chuck Kestenbaum and Sally Abt trumpets; Gary Hurst, rhythm guitar; Andy Kreiger [sic], bass guitar; Marc Shulman, lead guitar; and Ted Spencer, drums. The group will perform at the Sixteens-in-Service Spring Ball on May 3 at the Ridgeway Country Club.”



Ridgeway Country Club (White Plains). Credit: whiteplainscnr.com

Ridgeway was itself no stranger to rock bands. They had hosted a sweet sixteen party two years earlier, on June 10, 1967, at which The Offbeats had played.

The Brass Blues Band were local rock stars. They were also underage high school students who were limited in where they could play. Even had they been old enough, some of the rooms the earlier bands had played had gotten a bit “tougher.” Marc Shulman recalls: “We were aware of a club on Post Road at the south end of the White Plains business district called The Fore ‘n Aft that had live music, but it was a fearsome place, with bikers parked outside... We were too young to venture in, hang out or play there, until many years later.” The Brass Blues Band didn’t need to play bars; they packed the room at the Second Story, and every school dance they played.

As for Ritchi Morris’s attempts to rehabilitate the Spider’s Web: Ritchi [announced](#) that “the next Web will be held tentatively on March 28.” That date was changed from March 28 to April 11 — moved, perhaps, in order to accommodate the schedule of the band they were presenting: “Aerosmith.”

It doesn’t seem possible. Aerosmith at Scarsdale Junior High School?! But it’s attested to twice: once in a promotional blurb that ran in the [Scarsdale Inquirer](#) on April 10, which described Aerosmith as a “hard rock group” (that’s on the money). And then in a follow up article which ran in the [Inquirer](#) on April 24 confirming that a band “Aerosmith” had in fact played the Spider’s Web dance at the junior high on April 11 in front of 200 Scarsdale youths.



Scarsdale Junior High School. Credit: [Westchester County Historical Society](#)

If the band had rather been named “Arrowsmith” (spelled as in the Sinclair Lewis novel) that would be one thing. But “Aerosmith” is understood to have been a name invented by that superstar group’s drummer Joey Kramer of Yonkers (a nonsensical word, inspired by Kramer’s obsession with the 1968 Nilsson album [Ariel Ballet](#).) Moreover, we know for a fact that Aerosmith’s lead singer Steve Tyler of Yonkers had already played a Scarsdale High School prom with his band [The Chain Reaction](#) in 1967. The Chain Reaction had had a huge local hit “[The Sun](#)” in 1966, which also charted nationally. (To appreciate how entirely of another era all of this is, the letter from the Chain Reaction’s manager which accompanied the contract requested that a room be set aside for the band “on the eve of the dance, to use as a [drawing room](#).”)

Bottom line: there is no reason to think the band that played the April 11, 1969 band was not Aerosmith. Top talent was not new to Scarsdale. In fact, on the same prom night that the Chain Reaction played Scarsdale High School Gyms A and B, the nationally-known Spanky and Our Gang performed a concert in the High School Auditorium, just after the release of their top-ten single [Sunday Will Never Be The Same](#). A year earlier, [The Cyrkle](#) — another huge national band which had opened for the Beatles throughout their 1966 tour and had had a number 2 record with [Red Rubber Ball](#) — had played the prom.

This was the caliber of talent being booked.

Hard as it may be to believe, Aerosmith — some early version thereof, certainly with Joey Kramer on drums — does seem to have played a Spider’s Web dance at Scarsdale Junior High School in 1969, a year before Steve Tyler and Joey Kramer joined forces in Boston with Joe Perry, Tom Hamilton, and Ray Tabano to form the band which, with one personnel change, would go on to superstardom.

The Aerosmith dance seems to have been the last of the Spider’s Web dances. After that, the Rec Department’s Ritchi Morris organized a few “street dances” in the high school parking lot, one on Friday night, May 23 featuring Battle of the Band runners-up “[Christopher Rabbit](#)” (“dress for boys will be tie and jacket, skirts and culottes for girls”); and one on Friday night, June 13, promoted thusly: “[The Citadel](#) will be socking their groovy sounds to all presentably attired (jacket and tie or turtleneck, skirts) teenagers.” Groovy *and* presently attired?

Two weeks later, on Saturday June 7, back at the high school, the Scarsdale High School G. O. sponsored a concert in the auditorium the [Paul Butterfield Blues](#) band. The opening act was the county-wide battle-of-the bands winner, Scarsdale's Brass Blues Band. The Paul Butterfield Blues band had just completed engagements at the Filmore West, Filmore East, and Café Au Go Go. They were working on their fifth album. In about two months, they would play a music festival upstate New York:

Woodstock.



Credit: [mycoastnow](#)

When Scarsdale students returned to their classes in the fall of 1969, the Spider's Web seemed to be over. But there was a new venue for local rock bands and folk performers. The [YM-YWHA](#) Klingenstein Building had just opened on Wilmot Road in September — a much larger facility than they'd had in Eastchester.



Illustration of The Y's Klingenstein Building. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

Local musicians now had *two* rooms in which to play at the Y. Downstairs on the main floor was a large auditorium, perfect for large events. Upstairs, on the second floor, around the corner from the social workers' offices, was a multi-purpose room which, on designated Saturday nights, was transformed into The Second Story coffee house.

The new building was very utilitarian, white-painted cinder block all around. But on *Second Story* nights the teens would reset the upstairs room with small folding tables and chairs; place red-and-white checked table-cloths over the tables; and upon each one would set an empty [Chianti](#) bottle, into which an old-fashioned drip-candle would be placed and lit.

All of this — that the empty bottle had to be [Chianti](#); that the [dripped-candle wax](#) which had accumulated on the bottle could never be scraped off — was apparently a folk tradition of its own, the origins of which were lost in the mists of time. (In fact, the tradition had begun in Italy during WWII, before moving to trattorias and bohemian coffee houses such as could be found in Greenwich Village in the 1950's).



Golden Horseshoe. Credit: [The Daily Voice](#)

The new Mid-Westchester “Y” was located across the street from Scarsdale’s [Golden Horseshoe](#) shopping center (so-named for having, in the early 1900’s, been home to a privately-owned racetrack.) This new, more centrally located Y (later renamed the JCC) attracted lots of new members and many participants to its activities.



The Second Story, November / December 1969, l to r: [Mark Sameth](#) and [Michael Berman](#)

The convention at the teen coffee houses of the time was, in addition to presenting teen performers, to show short “underground” films or early silent “shorts” (mostly Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton [two-reelers](#)). In keeping with this convention, a portable pull-up movie screen was set against the back wall of the Second Story upon which the movies could be projected. On Second Story nights, the room was always full. Performers included bluesman [Bob Halperin](#) (SHS ’72, he a student of [Reverend Gary Davis](#)) and the aforementioned [Dean Friedman](#). The Brass Blues Band — a *major* draw, as they had been in Eastchester — played the new Second Story four times that year (1969 – 1970). Marc Shulman, as Bob Elliott recalls, “was killing it on guitar!”

All told, throughout academic 1969 - 1970, even with the loss of the Spider’s Web, there were more than enough places in Scarsdale to play and hear music, including at the high school’s annual [Sadie Hawkins’](#) dance (about which no comment need here be made). And there were even more venues — if one considers the “Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam” events in the Village “venues” for the Village’s musicians of the time.

On the morning of October 15, 1969, folksingers protesting the war sang at [Scarsdale Railroad Station](#). At Noon they sang from the steps of [Brewster Road Lobby](#). In the evening, they sang at a candlelight vigil in [Chase Park](#).



October 15, 1969, 7:30 – 9:30 AM, northbound side of Scarsdale Railroad Station. The fifth person visible in from the left, wearing glasses, is Second Story co-chair Debbie Levine (later, rock journalist and performer [Deborah Frost](#)).

Chapter 9:

Prog-Rock, Country-Rock (1970-72)

Perhaps it was how “heavy” the times were, perhaps it was how many other venues were now available, but no one seemed inclined to pick up the mantle of “teen center” after the folding of the Spider’s Web.



Scarsdale High School. Credit: [Maroon](#)

To be sure, dances were held at Scarsdale High School in academic year 1969-1970, although under whose auspices it is not entirely clear. A [“Raider’s Dance”](#) to celebrate the football team was held on November 8, 1969. In early 1970, some person or persons managed to organize a [“Close of Second Marking Period High School Dance,”](#) held January 23, 1970. The annual [“Election Dance”](#) to honor the G. O. presidential candidates and their staffs was held on March 20, 1970 in Gyms A & B. (This last one was organized, we know, by “The Scarsdale High School [Social Planning Board](#)” — a group that had been around since at least 1942).

The sponsorship of and responsibility for the high school dances seems to have been in flux. So too at the [junior high](#), where the sponsorship of dances shifted in April from the Council of P.T.A.s to the Junior High School P.T.A. itself.

And while at least one “coffee house” was held by Recreation Department at its [“teen center”](#) this semester, it’s not clear where (or even what) this was.

Still, music was everywhere, with folksingers and bands performing ever more frequently at high school assemblies. And folksingers were especially prominent at the anti-war demonstrations which, by the spring of 1970, were drawing increasingly large crowds. One Westchester-wide demonstration at Crossway Field the week of the May 4, 1970 [Kent State Massacre](#) drew 1,000 young participants.

By then, the thought had already occurred to bring the teen community together for one long night of music: four rock n’ roll groups and five folk performers performing from 8 PM to 1 AM, a musical extravaganza to be held in the auditorium of the Mid-Westchester YM-YWHA. Billed as “Uncle Hymie’s Kosher Meat Show,” the May 9, 1970 show was the brainchild of Jimmy (“Hymie”) Handelman (SHS ’72). In the wake of the anger and upset following the Kent State massacre, it

turned out to be a cathartic gathering as well. (Hymie would soon be instrumental in bringing a “teen center” back to Scarsdale High.)



Aileen and Mark, [Crossway Field](#), week of May 4, 1970. Flier for Uncle Hymie's Kosher Meat Show, May 9, 1970.

Featured at the May 9 show were Nozmo King: Thom Pernice (lead vocals and harmonica), Gary Hurst (lead guitar, formerly of the Brass Blues Band), Willie Sol (rhythm guitar), Sol Sheps (bass guitar), and Dick Ehrlich (drums); as well as the bands Hero, Revenge, and Poltergeist; as well as folk performers including Mike Berman, Evan Stein, Cecily [Long] and Aileen Barron and myself. Two comedy acts were also on the bill: Hymie's Helicopters, and Peter & Brian. The flier for the show — with stylized balloon lettering and a caricature of “Hymie” — was signed “L. Greene,” and was the work of New Rochelle drummer [Larry Greene](#).

Meanwhile, concern over drugs (which had erupted after the near-fatal death of the 14-year-old and the police raid at the Junior High, December 1968) gave rise to any number of community initiatives and fora in the Village in the spring of 1970.

Public sentiment at the time favored [stricter drug laws](#) — even classifying marijuana as a “narcotic.” Appearing at a [panel](#) discussion at the Town Club, [Dr. Marvin Moser](#), Chair of the Board of Education's Drug Abuse Committee (later the Narcotics Guidance Council) opposed this, while encouraging parents whose children were on drugs to learn why. Then came a [letter to the editor](#) penned by a high school student who said she was “getting very frantic over this drug scene!” The YM-YWHA provided a series of programs, “[More On Drugs](#),” facilitated by in-house social-worker Joel Carp. And the Scarsdale Junior and Senior High School [P.T.A.s](#) hosted their own meetings and workshops, presided over by Dr. Moser, featuring Joel Carp and Dr. Meyer Rabban, professor of psychology from Sarah Lawrence. A [handbook](#) of information was prepared — “Drugs: A Community Problem, Scarsdale, New York” — and was mailed to every household in the Village. A few of the students who assisted in the preparation of the booklet then took part

in yet another panel discussion, entitled “Will Your Child Choose Drugs,” at the annual meeting of the Greenacres P. T. A.



Included amongst those pictured above are SHS students/panelists (left to right) Tom Vogel, [John Leventhal](#), and Lori Weinstein. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

Concern about drugs on the part of the P.T.A. seems to have been an impetus for the revival, within nine months, of the teen center with active adult supervision at the high school.

In the summer of 1970, the [Second Story](#) screened the Jean-Luc Godard film “Sympathy for the Devil” starring the Rolling Stones; there was no live music on the bill. When school resumed that fall, the Second Story announced that it would continue to sponsor what it now called its “[lounge programs](#).” The Second Story continued to present [programs](#) at least through December 30, 1972 (see the flier for “Friends,” below) but they seemed to promote them less. Perhaps they didn’t need to. Many events were carried by word of mouth, and in the fall of 1970 — even without an official “teen center” in Scarsdale — there was a lot going on.

The high school and junior high school gymnasiums were still popular venues, and dances with live bands were held at high schools in other towns, affording Scarsdale bands ample opportunities to play. Below is a photograph of the band Jeremiah playing a dance in the fall of 1970 at Yonkers’ Roosevelt High School (the school from which Aerosmith’s Steven Tyler had been [expelled](#) in 1966).



Left to right: Michael Berman, Don Levy, Jimmy Stasiak, Bobby Blasetti (obscured), Eddie Sabol, and Mark Sameth. Credit: Barbara Soares

And below is a picture of Scarsdale's Doug Lombardozzi (later, of the band Bedlam) at the Scarsdale Junior High School "Snowball" dance, December, 1970 — leading a train of dancers as Jeremiah plays the Box Tops hit "[Choo-Choo Train](#)."



The Scarsdale Junior High School "Snowball" dance. Credit: Marvin I. Sameth

The same month as the December, 1970 "Snowball," two Scarsdale bands — one of which we know was The Little Queenies — opened for Poco when Poco played a concert in the Scarsdale High School Auditorium. That December 20, 1970 concert was put on by the G. O.

"I was recruited to play bass," Andy Kreeger recalls. "Marc [Shulman] and I sat next to Rusty Young's amp with the Leslie during the show." ("Leslie" refers to the revolving [Leslie-tone cabinet](#) through which Rusty Young would sometimes play his pedal-steel guitar, to mimic the sound of a Hammond organ.)

[Poco](#) was a country-rock group which comprised Buffalo Springfield's Richie Furay and Jim Messina (the latter, later of Loggins and Messina) on guitars; Rusty Young on pedal-steel; George Grantham on drums; and Timothy B. Schmit (later of the [Rock & Roll Hall of Fame](#) band the Eagles) on bass.

This was not a band to dance to, but rather a band to listen to. Poco, in fact, had a clause in their contract (4b): "IF, AT ANY TIME DURING THE PERFORMANCE OF POCO, MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE BEGIN TO DANCE, POCO WILL STOP PLAYING."



Poco. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)



The Little Queenies' Abby Weissman (bass, center) and Ricky Heller (organ, center). Credit: Abby Weissman

The desire for more teen dances, and for a new — well-supervised — “teen center,” was met by the efforts of a new committee. That committee included the aforementioned Jimmy “Hymie” Handelman. This time, the Village’s Recreation Center was not involved. Rather, it was the P.T.A. Taking a leadership role was “PTA Recreation Chairman Mrs. Stanley [Eda Loeb] [Newhouse](#).”

‘Asmodeus’-A Place To Go And Things To Do

March 18, 1971. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

On Saturday night, February 27, 1971, the “Asmodeus” Committee put on its first dance. The headline on the front page of the next *Scarsdale Inquirer* read: “[‘Asmodeus’ Packs Them In!](#)” The article ran: “Opening Night’ last Saturday of the weekend recreation program for youth of all high school age was virtually a ‘standing room only’ affair, with over 700 young people as enthusiastic participants. There was something for everyone. A Jules Feiffer play, a Peter Sellers movie, basketball, volley ball, and ping-pong, music for dancing and for listening, plenty of refreshments. It is planned to hold these Saturday night programs through this month. Beginning in April, Fridays will alternate with Saturdays. The time and place will remain constant — 8:00 P. M. at the High School. Next Saturday, again basketball, volley ball and ping-pong will be available. [T]here will be a premiere of a student-produced film, a bank and a light show. The musical group will be the ‘St. James Infirmary Group.’ The Light show will be provided by ‘Nightshade and Dark Productions’ under the direction of [Mark Linett](#). [More on Mark — later, groundbreaking engineer for the Beach Boys — below.] Admission is \$1. Refreshments are free. The program series has been named ‘Asmodeus’ for some unfathomable reason. Asmodeus was a demon in Hebrew mythology!”

The second [Asmodeus](#) was held on March 13, 1971, and boasted “no less than four folksinging acts.” They were: “The Immaculate Conception Folk Singing Group; Chris Lagey & Company; plus two Scarsdale singers, Julie Gutwillig and Cecily Long.” The Asmodeus after that was the teen center’s first “blues night,” with the group ‘Time and Changes’ playing in Gyms A-B. At this

time, the committee was said to be chaired by “John Lichten, Bob Landau and Cobey Weisman. all SHS Juniors.” “Food and fraternizing in the Faculty Dining Room was one of the most popular ‘sports’ of the evening,” reported the [Inquirer](#) (March 18, 1971). In [April](#) the rock group Fluid performed, and there was “a premiere showing of the latest student films. “That was followed by a night of “[do-it-yourself music](#),” where students were encouraged to bring their own instruments; with space “provided for ‘jam sessions’ and checking instruments.”

[Fluid](#) had grown out of the earlier band The Night Walkers — led by guitarist Steve Love (a picture of them performing at a Spider’s Web dance appears earlier). In addition to Steve, Bryan, and Tommy, it featured Johnny Sarlo (vocals), Jon Lehr (guitar), and Rickey Albert (sax). A few years later Steve Love would reform the band as [Stories](#) (with Bryan Madey on drums); they’d have a number one record in 1973 with [Brother Louie](#).

The band Yellow Belly and the folk singer Cecily Long were featured at the May 1 [Asmodeus](#). And then — due to a scheduling conflict with [senior class weekend](#) activities — the next Asmodeus was held on a Sunday. The venue shifted as well. On May 9, from 12:30 to 6 PM, an [Asmodeus](#) concert was held on Brewster Road lobby steps. Admission was free. The scheduled performers were The Little Queenies, Cecily Long, Yellow Belly, Jon Willinger and The Lethargo Blasters.

Someone took an [8mm movie](#) (unfortunately, silent) which shows The Lethargo Blasters joined at times by a horn section — the nucleus of another band-in-formation: the Spike Jones-influenced “Teddy Turners Bunsen Burners.”



The Lethargo Blasters, l to r: [Frank Canino](#), Pete Goldberg, Bob Giges, John Davis. Credit: [YouTube](#) (Note: On YouTube the video is misdated “1972-1973.” The film was shot May 9, 1971.)

The final Asmodeus event of the season was scheduled for [June 11, 1971](#) to be held in the courtyard of the Scarsdale High School Brewster Road Entrance. In case of rain, the event was to be moved into the gym. “Several bands and singles are to be entertaining, among whom will be ‘The Little Queenies,’ Cecily Long, and ‘Yellow Belly.’”

Cecily Long. Chris Lagey & Company. Fluid. Immaculate Conception Folk Singing Group. Jon Willinger. Julie Gutwillig. The Lethargo Blasters. The Little Queenies. Time and Changes. St. James Infirmary. Yellow Belly. Proto-punk, folk, country-rock, blues. That’s a lot of music in one short season. In the late fall of 1971 or early winter of 1972, the hard-working Asmodeus Committee posed for a photograph for Bandersnatch:



Asmodeus Committee, front row, l to r: Ann Lehrburger (posters and leaflets); Mr. Wilton (advisor); James Handelman (movie selection); Doug Landon (lights and sound); Bruce Black (band selection); Mrs. Newhouse (PTA Recreation Chair); Back row, l to r: Doug Newhouse (tickets); Robert Landau (program coordinator), Cobey Weisman (program coordinator), James Lehrburger (tickets), and Patrick Houston (movie projection); Picture Credit: Bandersnatch, 1972

Asmodeus put on another academic year of music, dances, and social events over 1971 – 1972. The first to perform was [Yellow Belly](#) (at another outdoor evening concert, Saturday, September 18).



Members of Yellow Belly performing at Asmodeus concert. l to r: Mark Horowitz, Greg Kirkpatrick, Artie Schatz. Not pictured: Rod Funston, Rob Wolfson, and Randy Hampton. Credit: Bandersnatch, 1972

Asmodeus then moved indoors — not to the “old” gym (A & B) but the “new” gym (C & D), at the south end of the campus. There the performers included: [Fluid](#); [St. James Infirmary](#); [Band of Joy](#) (from Chappaqua); [Lephargo \[sic, Lethargo\] Blasters and Friends](#); [Lethargo Blasters](#) (again); [St. James Infirmary](#); [Barry Lipman and Larry Young and Friends](#); [You, Me, and Newrock](#); [Yellow Belly](#); [Irving Street](#); the [Lord Vohn](#) group; [Dick Salkin with May Stroup](#); and [Joey Olshan](#); [Irving Street Band](#); the [Gravis](#) group; [Bedlam](#); [The Dinner and Turkey Band](#); and two more nights with [unnamed bands](#).

On December 31, 1971, The Overdue Experience — long broken up — played a New Year’s Eve reunion show at their old stomping ground, The Willow Inn. The show was so successful that

Herbie, the club manager, booked them to play every Friday and Saturday beginning that February. And they kept packing them in.

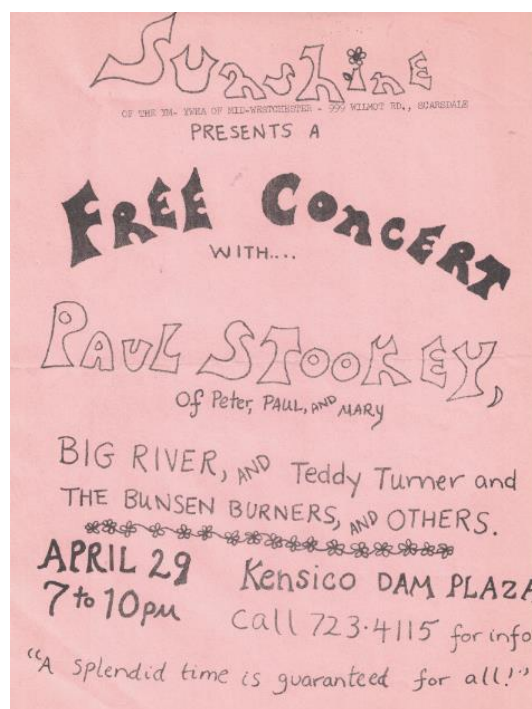


Core members of The Overdue Experience, l to r: Robby Harper, Don Lackritz, Thom Pernice, Wayne Torzilli

Meanwhile a teen-to-teen help-line run out of the YM-YWHA — called “Sunshine” — seeking to gain visibility hosted a free concert at the Kensico Dam on Saturday April 29 (7 to 10 PM) starring Paul Stookey of Peter Paul and Mary. Local opening acts included Big River ([Guy and Pip Gillette](#)’s band, from Yonkers), and Teddy Turner’s Bunsen Burners — Scarsdale’s Spike Jones-inspired big band, comprising mostly Lethargo Blasters and Scarsdale High School Band members. Flier for these early 1972 events are below:



The Overdue Experience (recolored). Credit: Thom Pernice



Sunshine Concert. Credit: Mark Sameth

On Friday evening June 9, one final musical event of the year was held: “The Teddy Turner Revue to Benefit the Nyack School Bus Victims.” Held in the Scarsdale High School Auditorium, it starred Teddy Turner’s Bunsen Burners, and featured two opening acts: You, Me, and Newrock, and (unadvertised) The Larry Pines Trio. Plus, there were two silent movies: Charlie Chaplin’s [The Immigrant](#); and Buster Keaton’s [The Balloonatic](#). The MC was WPLJ (later Peak-107) disc-jockey [Jimmy Fink](#).



Teddy Turner’s Bunsen Burners, *The Teddy Turner Revue to Benefit the Nyack School Bus Victims*, June 9, 1972, Scarsdale High School.
Left to right: Mark Sameth, Bill “Teddy Turner” Cox, Bob “The Duke” Giges, John “Boo Boo Codfish” Davis,
Ken Lee, Curtis Brown, Martin Whalen, Rich Wolloch, and Warren Cunningham.

Chapter 10

Jazz-Rock (1973-74)

Almost all of the founding members of the Asmodeus team graduated Scarsdale High School in June, 1972. But younger students stepped in, and the program continued on. David Spielvogel (later known professionally as [Dave Keyes](#)) took over booking the bands that year. In time, if not right away, Sally Schwab headed the committee.



Undated Asmodeus event (probably late, 1972) with, left to right: David Sameth, (unidentified), Andy Potter, and Bob Giges. The photograph appeared in the January 18, 1973 edition of the *Inquirer*, promoting the upcoming January 20 dance with a different group, “Friends.” Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

Asmodeus continued to offer music in variety of genres: folk, rock, even 1940’s-style “big band” swing. One of the bands was “Lowdown,” which featured (future rabbi) Sim Glaser (guitar, vocals); Bob Miller (bass); Bob Breen (drums); and a three-piece horn section comprising Laura Garwin (trumpet); Dave Hardwick (trombone); and Keith Ritter (tenor sax; also: piano, guitar, and vocals). The horn parts were all charted, using charts from a book provided the players in the SHS Stage Band. (Garwin’s father, by the way, is the physicist [Richard Garwin.](#))

On March 24, 1973, the Scarsdale High School Stage Band, under the direction of Dr. Joseph Albright, performed at an Asmodeus event — a week after having played their annual “In the Mood” fundraising dinner-dance on March 17 in the Parish Hall of Immaculate Heart of Mary. (The proceeds from the fundraiser that year were used to send the band on a “[good-will concert tour](#)” to Toronto.)



Scarsdale High School Stage Band rehearsal. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

That September, the 1973-74 Asmodeus season kicked off with [ARC](#) — an Eastchester band led by bassist [Bart Dellarmi](#). In October, Asmodeus and the G. O. co-sponsored a Halloween dance featuring the band “[Copias](#).” In November, the featured band was Doug Lombardozzi, Cary Masters, Billy Lachman, and Lee Seacord’s “[Bedlam](#).”

The [Asmodeus Committee](#) at this time consisted of Sally Schwab (head coordinator); Jim Salkin and Steven Meshekow (coordinators); Ann Lehrburger (tickets); Ruth Hatcher and Ron Soltzer (refreshments); Marianne Goldstein, Beth Rosner, and Dana Franklin (publicity); Karen Anderson and Chris McGowen (movies); John Dempsey and Bob Abrams (bouncers); David Spielvogel (bands); and Michael Getlan (Radcom).

“Radcom” had been around since 1972. But it was still an unfamiliar enough term in 1974 that the [Scarsdale Inquirer](#) devoted space to explain it: “A small group of high school students can be readily identified by fellow students by their dark blue garb, citizen band radios, flashlights, name plates, first-aid pins or emblems and American flag insignias. These are the young people active in RADCOM Radio Communication Services. Members of this group are dedicated unpaid volunteers who wish to provide first aid, transportation and security at local functions. Like their spokesman, Barbara Spaet, they take their work seriously. They are not narcotics agents, nor do they set out to spy upon classmates, she insists. RADCOM is not affiliated with the Police Department, the Fire Department or the Scarsdale Volunteer Ambulance Corps. It is not an official body of the high school, stresses Principal Norman Bussiere, who claims that sometimes the members tend to be overzealous in offering assistance.” (Two years later, in a story about a Black transfer student who attended Scarsdale High School, the [Inquirer](#) reported that “Rad Com officers [student police at the high school] would not admit him to Asmodeus until he could prove his residency.” The *Inquirer* also reported that the future-Williams College biology major they had

stopped had likewise been “stopped on the street by [Scarsdale] policemen many times and required to show his I.D.”)

Irony anyone? It was [Frank Foster](#), a Black resident of Scarsdale, who was responsible for bringing Count Basie to Scarsdale High School in March of 1974 — arguably the highlight of Scarsdale High School musical history.

Scarsdale musicians and music lovers could hardly believe their good fortune. Foster — who had been Count Basie’s arranger for ten years and had played with Woody Herman and Lionel Hampton and led his own bands, as well — had convinced the maestro to bring his 16-piece orchestra to play a fundraiser to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Scarsdale Parents Athletic Association, “[Maroon & White](#).”



Scarsdale High School Jazz Band at the official opening of the Harwood Building box office.
January, 1974. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

A few extremely talented and lucky players — members of the Scarsdale High School Jazz Ensemble — got to open for the Basie orchestra at the March 2 concert. On piano was David Spielvogel (later [Dave Keyes](#)), who (as per above) was also in charge of booking the bands for the Asmodeus committee. Dave was an extremely and multi-talented player. He played French horn in the orchestra, baritone horn in the marching band, piano in the stage band, and also led Womboogie, a rock group (with Bob Greene on drums, Steve Levy on bass, a couple of guys from New Rochelle on guitars, and Dave on keyboard). In living in more than one musical world, Dave was like Jay Shulman (SHS '67), lead singer of The Offbeats, who was also the high school orchestra’s first chair cello, and who went on to a career with the [Long Island Philharmonic](#) orchestra. Scarsdale high school musicians often lived in more than one musical world.

Before the sold-out concert in the high school auditorium Saturday night March 2, Spielvogel posed for a picture with fellow Scarsdale musician Sarah Bell, high school band leader Dr. Joseph Albright, and Count Basie himself.



Left to right: David Spielvogel, Sarah Bell, Dr. Albright, Count Basie. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)



Count Basie and his Orchestra, March 2, 1974. Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

Asmodeus finished out the year with dances featuring “[Bush Terminal](#),” “[The Tomato Band](#)” (a band with two drummers, one of whom was [David Zimelis](#)) and finally “[Spoonfeather](#)” (an out-of-town band which had opened for Mountain, Spooky Tooth, The Steve Miller Band, Badfinger, and The Edger Winter Group, featuring [David Abair](#), later of Adams, and [House on Fire](#)).



Spoonfeather: Credit: [YouTube](#)

The last notes of the 1973 – 74 academic year were played just before dawn on June 22 at the Village pool — at the senior class breakfast / after-prom party — by one of the Village’s long-time favorites, [Crescent](#), a band which had grown out of the 1968 Brass Blues Band. “Crescent” was named after one of their favorite bands at the time, “[Full Moon](#)” (led by [Buzzy Feiten](#), who had

replaced Elvin Bishop in the Paul Butterfield Blues Band), as well as John Coltrane's album "Crescent." Crescent was Bob Elliott, Marc Shulman, Dave Donaldson, and Steve Petegorsky. A later iteration featured Frank Canino on bass (more on Frank, below).



Senior Class Breakfast / After-Prom Pool Party, June 22, 1974. Credit: [*Scarsdale Inquirer*](#)

In the fall, Crescent returned to Scarsdale High School, where they played two dances in the high school gym: one on Columbus Day, Monday, [October 14](#) and another on Saturday night [December 7](#).

Other bands to play Asmodeus dances that fall included [Thrush](#) and [CWT](#).

Chapter 11

30 Years of Rock and Roll (1975)

The second half of academic year 1974 – 1975 was heavy with jazz. The school was still in the glow of the Count Basie Orchestra concert of the year before. Moreover, by 1975 jazz-rock fusion was an established “thing.” The Tony Williams Lifetime’s *Emergency* (1969); Miles Davis’ *Bitches Brew* (1970); an eponymous album by Weather Report (1971); The Mahavishnu Orchestra’s *The Inner Mounting Flame* (1971); Return to Forever’s eponymous album (1972; US release 1975); Herbie Hancock’s *Headhunters* (1973); Steely Dan’s *Pretzel Logic* (1974); and Joni Mitchell’s *The Hissing of Summer Lawns* (1975) had retuned young ears. Audiences were receptive.

The year got off to an early start with the first-ever Scarsdale High School Alumni Jazz Concert — with former SHS Jazz Band members returning to pick up their horns, joining current members, everyone in a celebratory mood.



Practicing for the concert, l to r: David Spielvogel, Keith Ritter, Sim Glaser, Jeff Crohn, and Laura Garwin.
Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

The current students and alumni joined together to perform classics such as Glenn Miller’s “Moonlight Serenade,” along with “the latest jazz-rock arrangements of such popular tunes as ‘Get it On’ and ‘Midnight at the Oasis.’”

The next month, the Junior High Stage Band, and the High School’s Jazz Ensemble and Stage Band staged a [concert](#) at the High School, mixing 40’s-style big band jazz with “today’s rock forms.” (A Charlie Chaplin movie was screened as well.)



Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#).

And then, in March, the Scarsdale High School Jazz Ensemble combined with the Scarsdale High School Stage Band (above) for another “In the Mood” fundraising dance at the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) Parish Hall. Joining them was a swing group made up of SHS parents called “Three Shrinks and a Fink” (below).



“[Three Shrinks and a Fink](#).” Credit: [Scarsdale Inquirer](#)

In April, 1975 Asmodeus presented a “coffee house” (meaning a concert, not a dance) with the soon-to-be-graduated jazz pianist [Felix Endico](#) (class of '75). We don't know who played the night, but Felix's typical lineup was Felix Endico (piano); Billy Lachlan (drums); Joe Castriota (guitar); Baron Raymonde (sax); Jim Nehring (trumpet); Wilhelmina Elsiver (violin); and Mark Retallack (Moog). Felix Endico went on to be a popular “society” band leader (of [Felix and The Cats](#)), and was the pianist at [Barbetta's](#), a highly upscale Italian restaurant favored by the likes of the Rolling Stones.

Chapter 12

A Few Final Words

Before closing, a few other venues from the 1970's deserve mention.



The Ground Round, Yonkers. Credit: [Yonkers, NY and Westchester in Pictures / Facebook](#)

Scarsdale bands in the late 1970's were playing [The Ground Round](#), 1113 Central Avenue in Yonkers, just north of the Cross County overpass over I-87. It was an improbable venue for rock and roll bands — a family-style restaurant chain owned by Howard Johnson's, whose shtick was to place baskets of peanuts on each table and encourage the kids (and adults) to throw the empty shells onto the floor — it faintly echoed the coffee houses of the past, with its red-and-white checked table-cloths, and old silent movies (and cartoons) projected onto a screen.



Rising Sun, 767 Yonkers Avenue "1 block West of Yonkers Raceway." Credit: [Rising Sun Facebook](#).

The other big Westchester [rooms](#) in the late 1970's were [The Fore n' Aft](#) (White Plains, chronicled above); Rising Sun (Yonkers); and Gemini II (Yorktown Heights). That's where you'd go to hear the top bar bands of the day: Rat Race Choir, Prophecy, Twister Sister, Tommy "Coco" Percoco's Squirt Band, and Heaven (featuring the soulful [Lorraine Frisaura](#), also of Pleasantville).



Gemini II Rock Ballroom "In the Mall, Triangle Shopping Center, Yorktown Heights, NY." Credit: [@TS Clubs 7683](#)

Port Chester was home to two other big Westchester rooms: Happy Daze, and Gulliver's. Gulliver's was the scene of a [deadly fire](#) in 1974. The drummer in the band that night was the aforementioned [Eric Carr](#), later of Kiss. Carr's band — whose members all barely escaped with their lives — was called [Creation](#).



Gulliver's, after the fire. Credit: [myfirefighternation](#)

Regarding the teen coffee houses that had come about in the late 1960's, we know that one of them, Wrynocerus, was open until at least January 1973. On [Saturday, January 6, 1973](#) two local guitarists — Richard Greenop and Joey Olsham — played the Wryno. Two bands were on the Wryno's bill the night of Richard Nixon's second inaugural on [Saturday, January 20, 1973](#): Snidely Whiplash and Mudshark. The Wryno may have existed for some time after that, but those are the last bands identified in the local newspapers as having played the room.



John Lennon in NYC. Credit: [MorrisonHotel](#)

By the 1970's, the next "venue" for many Scarsdale High School alumni-musicians was New York City.

In 1971, Linda Eastman (by then, Linda McCartney) played and sang with her husband Paul on [Ram](#) — an album they recorded in the city whose songs Linda co-wrote, including the #1 single [Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey \(Hands Across the Water\)](#). Later that year Paul and Linda formed [Wings](#).

In 1973, Debbie Levine (later Deborah Frost, [rock journalist](#) for Rolling Stone and vocalist for [The Brain Surgeons](#)) was living in a tenement building on East 10th Street with [Alan Ginsberg](#) and his partner [Peter Orlovsky](#), performing with Ginsberg and her early band [Flaming Youth](#).

In 1973, Steve Love and Bryan Madey (of Scarsdale's The Night Walkers and Fluid) had their own #1 single, "[Brother Louie](#)," with their New York-based band [Stories](#).

In 1974, Jay Shulman went into a New York City recording studio to play cello on John Lennon's "[Walls and Bridges](#)" album. The album was released on September 26, 1974, and went to #1. Jay played cello on Shirley Bassey's Live at Carnegie Hall album; played Madison Square Garden with Rod Stewart; backed up the Moody Blues, and Brian Wilson, and went on to 36-year career with the [Long Island Philharmonic](#).

In 1974, [Tommy Mandel](#) was playing CBGB's and recording with [The Miamis](#). Later he recorded and played with [Bryan Adams](#); as well as Ian Hunter, Cyndi Lauper, The Pretenders, and many others.

By the early 1980's, [John Leventhal](#) (SHS '70), [Marc Shulman](#) (SHS '71), and [Zev Katz](#) (SHS '76) were — individually and collectively — working with singer-songwriters emerging out of the Greenwich Village [Fast Folk](#) music scene. The first of those artists to get a major label record deal was [Suzanne Vega](#). Marc played guitar on her [Solitude Standing](#) album (1987). The album went [platinum](#), produced the #3 single [Luka](#), and Marc joined her touring [band](#). John had success with [Shawn Colvin](#), producing her Grammy award-winning debut album [Steady On](#) (1989) for which he co-wrote six songs, and on which he played multiple instruments. Zev played bass on [Lucy Kaplansky](#)'s critically acclaimed [Flesh and Bone](#) album (1996) (Marc played guitar on one track), and toured with John in the Shawn Colvin band.

John, Marc, and Zev had known each other since the 1970's. Marc and then John had played guitar in the Billy Vera band. Later John, Marc, and Zev formed "Mr. B." (named by Zev after a character on the TV show [Hazel](#); with Frank Vilardi, drums; and Pete Yellin, vocals). The band in time morphed into the Shawn Colvin Band. Regarding John, Marc, and Zev the story is told that one day, in 1977 or '78, the formidable guitarist/bassist [Tommy Wolk](#) dropped by John's house in Quaker Ridge where the three of them were doing some playing. After a bit Tommy exclaimed "Wow! Must be something in the water here — you guys are like the Scarsdale Jewish Guitar Mafia!" The moniker, according to Shulman, stuck.

John — with 200 recorded songs and multiple Grammys, including a Grammy award-winning album with his wife [Roseanne Cash](#) — has too many credits to mention. John's performance with Shawn Colvin on "The Late Show with David Letterman" (1997) can be seen [here](#). Marc — who went on to record with Cheryl Wheeler, Patty Larkin, Edie Brickell, and Celine Dion, to name just a few — also has too many credits to mention. Marc's performance with Suzanne Vega on "Late Night with David Letterman" (1987) can be seen [here](#). Zev — who toured for many years with Judy Collins; and recorded with her, Elton John, Hall and Oates, and Bettye LaVette to name just a few — likewise has too many credits to mention. Zev's performance with Steven Tyler of Aerosmith at the Kennedy Center Tribute to Sir Paul McCartney (2011) can be seen [here](#). "Something in the water," indeed.

[Billy Masters](#) also played with Suzanne Vega — on her "[Live at the Stephen Talkhouse](#)" album. Billy also played on the "[Cry Cry Cry](#)" album by the folk "supergroup" Richard Shindell / Lucy

Kaplansky / and Dar Williams; and on Dar Williams' [The Green World](#); and on Anne Murray's [Duets: Friends & Legends](#) album.

[Andy Korn](#) (Billy Masters' bandmate in "[Graffiti](#)" at Scarsdale Junior High) produced an album for [Angela Bofill](#) in 1990's, drummed for [Bobby Lyle](#) and then drummed for [decades](#) for Rock and Roll Hall of Famer [Ronnie Spector](#), including on her 2006 album [The Last of the Rock Stars](#).

[Bob Halperin](#) (one of [Rev. Gary Davis](#)'s last students) played and taught traditional blues to a new generation of blues players. Bob's recording of his song "Breakfast in Bed" appears on a Boston edition of *Fast Folk Musical Magazine* (vol. 3, no. 4), April, 1986. This is the album on which appears the first recording by [Tracy Chapman](#) of her song "For My Lover" — exactly a year before it was released it on her debut Elektra album. Bob's guitar-playing sometime-partner [Barry Lipman](#) is (as of this writing, 2022) a luthier in Connecticut.

[Bob Elliott](#) performed to great acclaim at the Bitter End and elsewhere with the Marc Shulman band, and continued performing publicly for many years. With Lee Williams for three years, Bob was on the road between 1981 and 2001, and settled in and performed in Las Vegas, before returning to Scarsdale.

[Ted Spencer](#) was a recording engineer for The Hit Factory and Ted Spencer Recording, and worked on albums for Harry Chapin, Roberta Flack, Shawn Colvin, Muddy Waters, and many others.

[Frank Canino](#) played bass for [Ray Charles](#) at Radio City Music Hall, for [Joe Cocker](#) at B. B. King's, and with many others including Gladys Knight, Rick Springfield, Melba Moore, and Felix Cavaliere.

[Dave Keyes](#) ("one of the USA's finest keyboard guys," per [Blues Magazine](#)) played keyboards for Ronnie Spector, Bo Diddley, David Johansen, and with Popa Chubby.

[Felix Endico](#) was a popular "society" band leader ([Felix and The Cats](#)), and the long-time pianist at the upscale [Barbetta](#)'s — a New York City Italian restaurant favored by the likes of the Rolling Stones.

[Mark Linett](#) (who did the Light Show for the 1969 SHS Poco concert) had a PA company in college, and worked with Seals & Crofts, Sha Na Na, and Livingston Taylor. He was a [staff engineer](#) in New York in 1973 and later moved to LA, where, amongst other projects, he performed the highly technically-complicated task of mixing old monophonic Beach Boys albums into stereo for the first time — a herculean task for which he won multiple [Grammys](#) and much critical praise.

[Al Torzilli](#) became a biologist, and was professor of environmental science at George Mason University. As of this writing (2022), retired from teaching, he is still [playing](#) with his band, named (what else?) "Natural Selection."

[Thom Pernice](#) (who created the Scarsdale Rocks website) shifted to visual arts, and [studied](#) at The School of the Boston Museum of Fine Art. In the early 1970's Thom was involved with the burgeoning underground video movement in New York City, and later became a photojournalist

and video producer — while keeping his hand in music as the Executive Producer of the Peekskill Jazz & Blues Festival.

My sister Ilene was the only one in our immediate family to [perform](#) professionally (a cousin, Bart Goldberg, played bass in [Creation](#), the band that survived the 1974 Gulliver's fire; and cousin Dan Bernstein, who played with Billy Masters and Andy Korn in the band Graffiti in junior high school, is at the time of this writing playing guitar with [The Del Bocas](#)). Both my brother and I enjoyed working from the wings. David produced [MTV](#)'s iconic video launch in 1981, before moving to LA where he established a [career](#) in the movies. Before my life took a different turn, I wrote songs for [Loretta Lynn](#) and other country singers — one of which, recorded by [Bettye LaVette](#), ended up on the disco charts. Co-writing with songwriters and rock and rollers of my youth — [Lee Pockriss](#) and [Lou Stallman](#) of New York's famed [Brill Building](#); and [Dickey Lee](#) and [Johnny Cymbal](#) in Nashville — was one of the great joys of my life.

Scarsdale's players — professional, semi-professional and amateur (in the best sense of the word) — long before they played wherever their careers and lives would take them, played wherever the Village would host them: in the basement of the Harwood Building; at the Boy Scout House; in the High School gym, and on the stage of the Auditorium; on the steps of Brewster Road Lobby and in the Junior High (later Middle School) gymnasium; at "open houses" and sweet sixteen parties in private homes, restaurants, and country clubs; in coffee houses at the Village's churches, synagogues, and Ethical Culture Society and the YM-YWHA's Second Story; at the Scarsdale railroad station, in Chase Park, by the Municipal Pool; and at the nearby YWCA's Wryno, Westchester County Center, and at the foot of the Kensico Dam. Some really good music got made; some really good times were had. And that's just the first thirty years. The story of where Scarsdale's players played while at high school doesn't end in 1975, of course. Hopefully, someone younger will want to pick up the story and tell it from there. — [Mark Sameth](#), August, 2022



Lute player, [Tell Ishchali](#), 2000 BCE – 1600 BCE.
Credit: [Wikipedia](#)