



Grand Forks Rocks

The Origins of Small-Town Rock 'n' Roll
in Grand Forks, British Columbia



A 50th Anniversary collaborative project by former members of The Nocturnes Band

The Kettle River

Lifestream of the Boundary Country

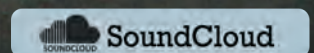


Once a Post Office - now the Grand Forks City Hall



Grand Forks and the Sunshine Valley looking west - Ken Hand photo

The online version of this booklet at gfrocks.kalmakov.com includes button links to a number of SoundCloud audio clips. These same audio clips can also be directly accessed online at SoundCloud.com by searching for "gfrocks" and "jkstrat".



Grand Forks Rocks

If you're young at heart and really like something, you might say it's "Cool". And if it's really "Cool" you might even say it "Rocks". Well ... Grand Forks "Rocks", and has pretty much done so ever since the 1950s, in more ways than one.

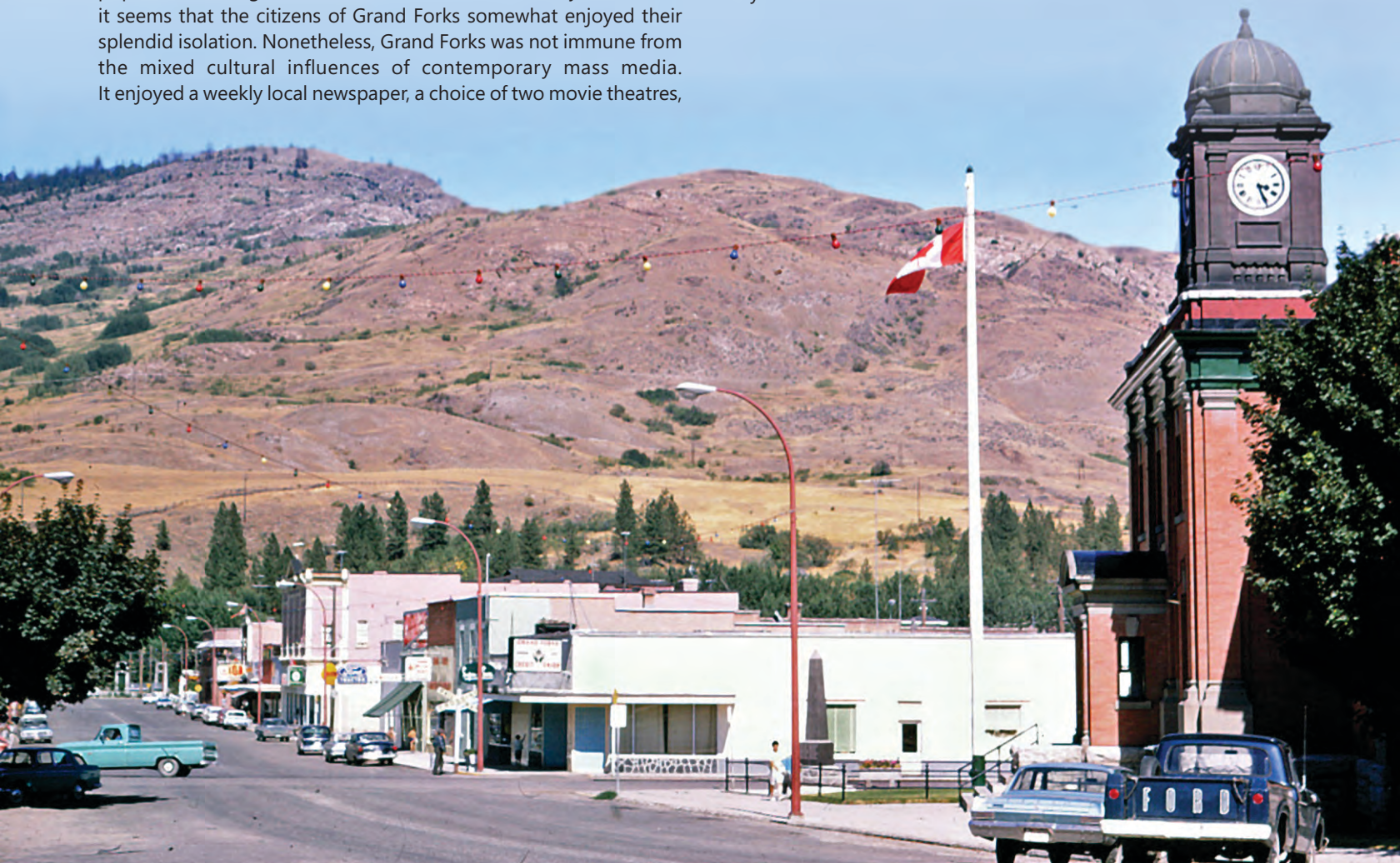
In many respects, Grand Forks in the 1950s was a typical Western-Canadian small town. Yet to its residents, it seemed to have a certain endearing personality of its own that found a special place in their hearts and minds and likely remains there to this day. Its uniqueness and charm could arguably have been attributed to its quiet, peaceful ambience and scenic location at the confluence of two lazy rivers, the Kettle and Granby. Or perhaps it was partly due to its history as an old railroad and smelter town, with its abundance of ornate, historic main street buildings, and mountains of black copper slag that served as reminders of a proud and prosperous heritage. But the Sunshine Valley itself, the surrounding natural and predominantly agricultural cultural landscape, was also unique because of its Doukhobor influences, most visibly, the numerous iconic Doukhobor villages and orchards that were scattered throughout the valley.

Despite their considerable distance from the more densely populated Okanagan in the west and the West Kootenays in the east, it seems that the citizens of Grand Forks somewhat enjoyed their splendid isolation. Nonetheless, Grand Forks was not immune from the mixed cultural influences of contemporary mass media. It enjoyed a weekly local newspaper, a choice of two movie theatres,

a drive-in-theatre, and access to remote AM radio stations, mostly wafting in on the evening air waves from Colville, Spokane and other American towns south of the border nearby.

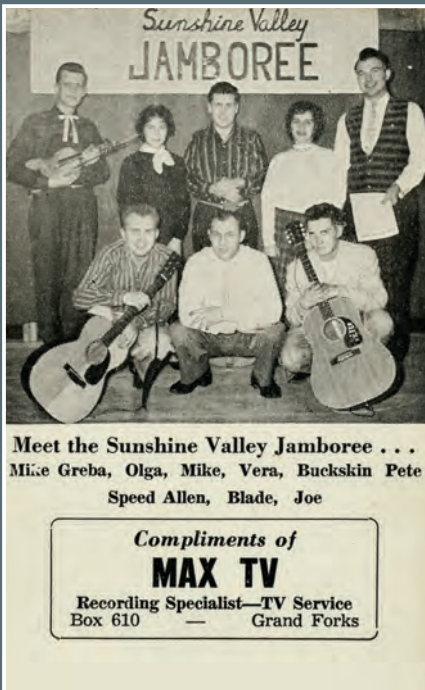
American TV network broadcasts were also streaming into town from a locally operated repeater station planted on a mountain top in Washington State and by the end of the decade, CBC television was also available via rooftop antenna. Local music lovers were routinely watching Country Music Hoedown, Don Messer's Jubilee, the Ed Sullivan Show and yes, a new form of entertainment, Dick Clark's American Bandstand. In short order Grand Forks "Rocked Around the Clock" as did most of North America, with a new phenomenon and form of popular music called "Rock 'n' Roll".

Notwithstanding its popularity with the younger generation, it would be several years, however, before local musicians could adapt to this new style and Country Music was to remain the dominant form of live music at community events and local dances until the early 1960s.



Market Avenue looking north east ca. 1963 Victor Stevenson Photo

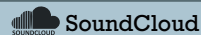
Sunshine Valley Jamboree



Postcard courtesy of Andy Kurenoff

Performers: Speed Allan Demosky, The Prairie Pals (Mike Greba and Joe Kanigan), Blade (John) Rezanoff, Mike Varabioff and two sisters, Olga and Vera Novokshonoff and their announcer, Buckskin Pete (Koftinoff) standing at right.

Two 1956 tape recordings by Speed Allan and the Prairie Pals, which include vocals and a rare demonstration of their fine instrumental talents, featuring fiddle, mandolin, harmonica and guitar, are posted on SoundCloud at the following link:



Click link for Audio



Boundary District Arts Council photo

Looking back at the 1950s, we tend to underestimate the role of technology in the rapid growth of the music and entertainment industry. The “next big thing” at that time would surely have been the invention of the transistor in 1947, followed by the portable transistor radio in 1954. An estimated seven billion of these devices were manufactured worldwide in the following decades with an extraordinary impact on popular music culture that was unmatched even by the appearance of the much applauded Apple iPod 50 years later. Almost coincidentally, the 7-inch 45-rpm vinyl record medium was introduced in 1949 and quickly adopted by millions of music fans. This in turn further motivated the recording industry to keep generating new releases and the next big singing star. It's not at all surprising that the enjoyment of popular music would play as much a part in people's daily lives in the 1950s as it does today.

Listening to music, in itself, was a cross-cultural experience in Grand Forks but its creation and live performance was initially embraced most enthusiastically by certain members of the local Russian Doukhobor community. Two popular local attractions, the Molly Plant group and the Troubadors, included Doukhobor participants with guitars, fiddles and accordions. Their music could perhaps be characterized as a blend of Bluegrass and Country with a little bit of post Big-Band-Era Pop, occasionally even in both languages.

Peter Koftinoff was not a musician but he played a very significant role in the evolution of live music in Grand Forks. An electronics and radio enthusiast, he recognized and appreciated musical talent and organized a venue and process for recording and broadcasting local musicians on radio. Arrangements were made with the Granada Theatre (previously the Empress, now the Gem) for the use of this facility on Sundays where groups performed their music on a live stage in front of a live audience, under the Sunshine Valley Jamboree banner. He engaged members of the Troubadors band (photo next page) as the regular house band and guest appearances were made by other vocalists and bands. Often attired in a tan deerskin leather jacket, he assisted with program announcements and became affectionately known as Buckskin Pete.

Peter had previously acquired recording experience in 1951 using a Webcor 288 steel wire electronic recorder and when magnetic tape recorders came on the market in 1953, he purchased a new Webcor 210. This machine was used to record the Sunday programs in their entirety, and the tapes were then edited down to 30 minutes and delivered by hand to Colville, Washington. The first broadcast aired on Colville Radio CKVL at 10:00AM on a Monday morning in 1954, sponsored by Max TV, a local sales and repair service. Grand Forks did not have its own radio station until much later, but Peter continued to pursue a career in radio broadcasting elsewhere until the late Fifties, occasionally meeting actual country music stars from the Grand Old Opry, including George Jones and others of similar fame.



Tastie Treat ...

Soft ice cream, coffee sodas and a juke box, since 1959

Grand Forks Has Talent

The Sunshine Valley Jamboree experiment was short lived, cut short when the Troubadors dissolved as a group in 1957 and the two Prairie Pals, Mike Greba and Joe Kanigan returned to the prairies. But the experiment truly “rocked” in a general musical sense, because it validated Grand Forks as a “little town that could” and encouraged other singers and musicians to dig a little deeper and develop their own skills and confidence to create and perform popular music.

The Molly Plant and Fast Eddie Group

Molly's solo fiddle performances were a popular feature at Grand Forks Fall Fair Talent Shows at Firemens' Park in the 1950s. But she also appeared in other local venues with fellow musicians, Andy Vereschagin (accordion), Eddie Plotnikoff (guitar & vocals), Bill Beasley and others. Eddie was a recognized country music vocalist in his own right, with a pleasant outgoing personality and sense of humour that served him well as a performer. He later recorded a set of his own original creations (Fast Eddie's Collection) with the “Livewires” in 1993. His son Fast Eddie Jr. has maintained and even extended the family's musical tradition as an extraordinary fiddle player, guitarist and recording artist.

The Popoff Brothers and the Williams Lake Starlighters Band

The second oldest of five brothers in a musically gifted family, Peter (Chico) was the first to demonstrate his vocal talents by appearing on Colville radio as part of the Buckskin Pete experience. His younger brothers Cecil and Larry also enjoyed singing as youngsters, their duet performances characterized by such outstanding harmonies that they were sometimes referred to as the second Louvin Brothers (popular country stars of the 50s), and they could just as easily do amazingly authentic covers of the Everly Brothers and many other pop stars. They performed throughout the Cariboo region of BC in the 1960s and later joined their older brother Peter, who had by then formed the Williams Lake Starlighters Band.

Speed Allan and Alexander Lebedoff with the Delrays

Inspired by the success of the Troubadors and their radio experiences, Allan Demosky continued performing with a newly organized group of musicians called the Delrays. This group originally included Colin Bunt (stand-up bass), Harvey Popoff (rhythm guitar), and Lawrence Demosky (on drums). Alexander Lebedoff, who had acquired a reputation for his accordion skills yet as a 14yr old, playing with Buddy Marr's band in the West Kootenays, also joined the group as an accordion and steel guitar player in the mid 1960s. The Delrays disbanded in 1972 but Alexander organized and played with other groups over the years and collaborated with others as a recording session musician. (A Delrays photo next page, and a full band photo on Photo Page One near the end of this booklet).



Three Popoff Brothers with the Williams Lake Starlighters

1st, 2nd, and 4th from left: Peter(Chico), Cecil and Larry, (others unknown)



The Troubadors - (Speed) Allan Demosky, Pete Mitin, Mike Greba, RM Regenall ca. 1955



Fast Eddie Plotnikoff



Cecil and Larry Popoff

 **SoundCloud**

Click link for Audio

The Fender Telecaster

A Country Guitarist's Instrument of Choice Since 1951

Very popular in Nashville and Bakersfield, perhaps, but very few Telecasters, or Stratocasters for that matter, ever made it to Grand Forks in the Fifties.

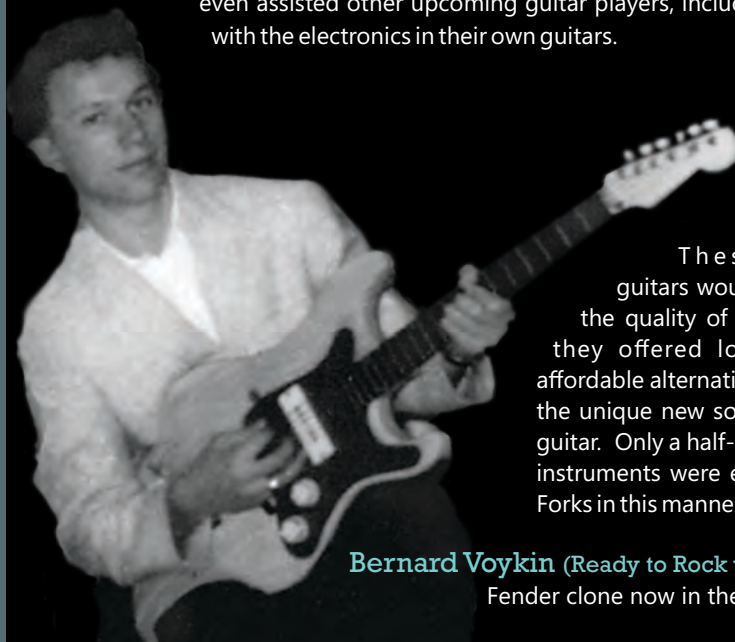
Not to worry ... ever resourceful, local musicians crafted their own Fender knockoffs.



Grand Forks is Electrified

With the sound of hand-crafted electric guitars

When the new solid body electrics, the Gibson Les Paul and Fender Telecaster, first appeared on the North American guitar market in the early 1950s, local musicians took notice but were not in a hurry to buy them. With a little bit of ingenuity and an abundance of local hardwoods, a few adventuresome guitar players attempted to make their own guitars. Allan Demosky is known to have designed and assembled the earliest Fender copies, carving their bodies and necks from solid maple or birch and fitting them with commercially-available guitar components procured by mail-order. Allan personally hand-wound single-coil pickups, wired tone and volume pots and even assisted other upcoming guitar players, including the Nocturnes, with the electronics in their own guitars.



These home-made guitars wouldn't have matched the quality of actual Fenders, but they offered local musicians an affordable alternative means to explore the unique new sounds of the electric guitar. Only a half-dozen or so of these instruments were ever made in Grand Forks in this manner.

Bernard Voykin (Ready to Rock with the Nocturnes)
Fender clone now in the Chernoff collection



Allan Demosky and the Delrays ...

Sporting two hand crafted electric guitars, at the Odd Fellows Hall ca. 1960

Colin Bunt (stand up bass & vocals) Lawrence Demosky (drums & vocals), (Speed) Allan Demosky (lead guitar, pedal steel & vocals) Harvey Popoff (rhythm guitar, accordion & vocals). Alexander Lebedoff appears on Photo Page One (pedal steel & accordion)

The Anatomy of a Hand-Crafted Fender Clone

Creative local solutions to guitar-making challenges



The "ChernoCaster"

A one-of-a-kind guitar in the Chernoff collection

This guitar is an exceptional example of a locally hand-made Fender clone. It was a gift from Willie Chernoff, a local woodworker, to his teenage sons in the early 1960s. The design of the "ChernoCaster" (Fig. 2 & Fig. 3 - front and back views) has clearly been inspired by the factory-made Fender Stratocaster (Fig.1). And Stratocasters were duplicated for good reason, as they looked appealing and their body contours could be easily traced and cut from solid blocks of wood with a bandsaw. Their necks and headstocks could likewise be fashioned as separate pieces and then bolted on afterwards.

This guitar appears in its original natural wood finish in Bernard Voykin's hands on the previous page, and it has since then, as seen here, been professionally restored, repainted and upgraded by the Chernoff family. It originally featured a home-made Allan Demosky pickup, although its other components, the fretboard, tuners (Fig. 5), bridge and tailpiece were most likely commercially available addons. Aside from its new black lacquered finish, this guitar has been retrofitted with a modern adjustable Gibson style steel bridge, two updated Fender style single-coil pickups and new volume and tone knobs (Fig. 4).

A unique musical instrument and an amazing family keepsake, the "ChernoCaster" remains a perfectly playable electric guitar to this day.

Fender Stratocaster features

The iconic double cutaway Strat body shape, a rounded contoured back for player comfort, three single-coil pickups, a 5 position selector switch, 2 tone and 1 volume control knobs, a proprietary adjustable steel bridge with tremolo arm, an adjustable bolt-on maple neck with integrated frets or a slab rosewood fingerboard.



INSPIRING
GUITAR MAKERS & PLAYERS SINCE 1954

A typical 1960's American Standard *Fender Stratocaster*

Available with a maple or rosewood fingerboard and a variety of striking body colours

The VENTURES



The sensational new instrumental band
The Ventures album cover, 1961



Bernard Voykin, Jack Chernoff, and John Kalmakov at the Odd Fellows Hall, 1962

The NOCTURNES

Two original tape recordings
from a 1963 practice session



SoundCloud

Click link for Audio

Grand Forks Rocks

With the sound of the Nocturnes

The first Rock 'n' Roll Band in town

As young Doukhobors, Bernard Voykin and John Kalmakov were encouraged to sing hymns and folk songs in the traditional a cappella manner without instruments. Although they were happy and reasonably able to do this, they were also typical Canadian teenagers and were attracted to guitars for accompaniment and as solo instruments. They initially became acquainted at high school while taking a few noon-hour strumming lessons from Mr. Bill Khadikin, a local teacher and talented musician. Yet at the same time, they were both, as individuals, sufficiently motivated and confident that they could progress on their own ... learning the basic scales, chord relationships and practical fretboard skills, beyond just strumming three chords. Their earliest stylistic influences were mostly tuned in via AM radio, but the two would also learn from each other, occasionally meeting in person on weekends to jam, share riffs and "compare notes".

Like many teenagers in Grand Forks in the early 1960s, they gravitated toward Christina Lake on Saturday evenings to enjoy the music and live dance bands at the Pavilion. They paid special attention on one occasion, to a group from Castlegar, the "Invaders", who like themselves were Doukhobors, but their music was a mix of new Country and Rock 'n' Roll. The apparent success of this group, at least in their minds, confirmed that their own vision of such a band in Grand Forks would be a doable enterprise.

The two approached Jack Chernoff, another aspiring musician, to join them as their drummer and together, they spontaneously organized what would become, in 1962, the first Rock 'n' Roll band in town. John became the lead guitarist, Bernard played harmony or rhythm, and they occasionally interchanged roles. The Nocturnes took their name from a bluesy Ventures' cover of an old jazz standard, "Harlem Nocturne", and John patterned their logo and its typeface after that of the Ventures. They enjoyed considerable local support playing popular instrumental hits at various wedding and dance venues in the Kootenay-Boundary area in this format until the fall of 1964 when John left the group to attend UBC. Deeply moved by the trust of his high school classmates, John played his last gig with the Nocturnes for their (and his own) year end grad dance of '64. Despite the loss of their guitarist, Bernard and Jack were determined to continue, making arrangements with other players to maintain the momentum and further progress of the band.

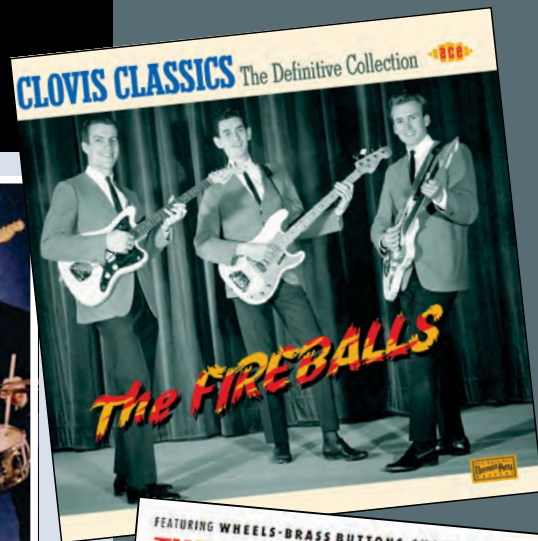


Kaslo, British Columbia - New Years Eve

Royal Canadian Legion Hall, 1963. John's white Fender Duo-Sonic was donated (courtesy of Bob Fujimoto) for this event.

1960s Rock Instrumentals

The Big Guitar Bands and their Classic Hits



The earliest popular Rock 'n' Roll instrumentals were recorded by experienced professional musicians and often retained their jazz or rhythm and blues influences. Bill Dogget's saxophone hit, "Honky Tonk", appeared in 1956 as a single on a 45 rpm record and soon became an instrumental standard recorded by other performers, as did "Harlem Nocturne", by Jazz musician Earl Bostic. Guitar instrumentals however, became popular a bit later in the 1950s and early 60s and were often recorded by somewhat younger and obscure musicians.

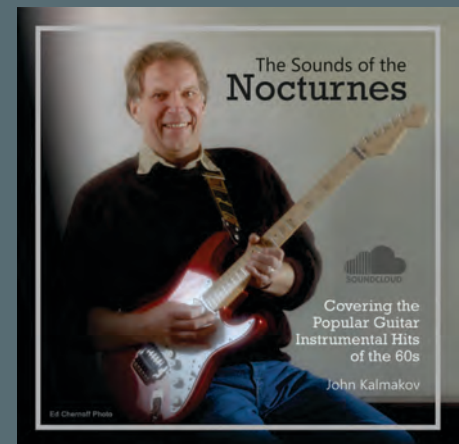
A young band from New Mexico, the Fireballs, was one of the first instrumental groups to use electric guitars exclusively, in the 4 piece combo format - lead, rhythm and bass, along with drums. Their simple 1959 classics "Torquay" and "Bulldog" inspired thousands of teenagers across the planet to pick up the electric guitar. The String-a-Longs from Texas recorded the instrumental, "Wheels", in 1960 and it also became an instant hit in North America and Europe, selling over a million records.

The Ventures guitar band was formed in Seattle by Bob Bogle and Don Wilson in 1958, and with the addition of the versatile guitarist Nokie Edwards and others became undoubtedly the most influential Rock Instrumental group of all time. Their first classic hit "Walk Don't Run", a 1959 rock interpretation of a Chet Atkins song played in finger-picking style, is claimed to have inspired 1960s "Surf" music in California and empowered electric guitarists worldwide in all genres. They have sold over 110 million albums since then, adapting their style and sound over the decades to appeal to changing trends. The Ventures continued to perform, particularly in Japan, to this day and have been inducted into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame in 2008.

Their European counterpart, the UK Shadows group, was initially formed in the late 50s as a backing band for vocalist Cliff Richard. They later became an instrumental combo with Hank Marvin as their featured guitarist. "Apache", their 1960 cover of a Jerry Lordan instrumental, "Wonderland" and "Peacepipe", were recorded with the use of custom engineered tape echo units to generate their familiar signature sound.

The Sounds of the Nocturnes

The Nocturnes happened to own a number of LP albums by these popular bands and adapted many of their instrumentals into their own repertoire. John has recorded a few examples of these songs as an audio supplement to this booklet, played in the original style of the Nocturnes.



- | | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| 01 Perfidia | 09 Walk Don't Run |
| 02 Runaway | 10 Bulldog |
| 03 Pipeline | 11 Maria Elena |
| 04 Wheels | 12 Rambunkshus |
| 05 Peacepipe | 13 Buckeroo |
| 06 Apache | 14 Guitar Boogie |
| 07 Honky Tonk | 15 Sleepwalk |
| 08 Last Date | |

The "Recording Studio"

A Fender Strat with a tiny Yamaha THR 10 USB amp, wired to a laptop with multi track recording software



 SoundCloud
Click link for Audio

The Original Nocturnes 1962-64

Three players and their instrumental sound



Bernard Voykin, Rhythm & lead guitar player with talented vocalist and soulmate, Millie



Jack Chernoff, the Nocturnes drum machine



John Kalmakov
Lead guitarist, photo 1964

Bernard Voykin

Music is his world and Bernard enjoys every note of it. He owns over a dozen guitars, can play a variety of styles and is presently learning to play classical music. After the Nocturnes disbanded, he organized another band called the Morticians and has played with several other groups over the years. He also enjoys playing piano at home. An avid music collector, he owns hundreds of hours of music on reel to reel tape as well as LPs, in various genres, including Jazz, Rock, Oldtime, Classical, and Ethnic. His wife Millie also comes from a musical family and their interests and talents complement each other. They joined Serge Plotnikoff in the 1970s as the "Chosen Ones" in an LP recording of several original songs, with Millie as a featured female vocalist. Bernard now occasionally teaches guitar and continues to perform live music with Millie, at weddings and other local events as an acoustic duo.

Jack Chernoff

Jack was the first of the three to own an electric guitar, a hand-crafted gift from his father. But as it turned out, he was convinced instead, to be a drummer, and being a cousin to the two Demoskys, he proved to be an invaluable asset to the Nocturnes as they initially borrowed their drum kit and guitar amplifiers. As a drummer, Jack was a very important component of the Nocturnes' sound, well beyond just maintaining the groove, with his signature drum rolls and extended drum solos. He likewise contributed his talent and expertise to other local bands and recording sessions over the years. He's now retired and a "golfer". But rest assured, if there is to be a local party or event with music, "let there be drums" and Jack can be there without skipping a beat.

John Kalmakov

John has retired from a 25 year career as an art teacher but continues to maintain an interest in visual arts and graphic design. And not surprisingly, music has also been a "part of the picture". He has designed promotional materials for music festivals, illustrated musical instruments, created logos and ornamental inlay patterns for acoustic guitars, and most recently, designed this very booklet. As for music itself, John is certainly no longer an aspiring "Rock 'n' Roller", but he and his wife, Luba, occasionally spend winter months in Arizona where he enjoys jamming with other snowbirds and has been learning basic audio recording techniques. Having appreciated music and enjoyed guitar as a lifelong hobby, he is likewise encouraging his young grand-kids, Tatum on fiddle and Oliver with piano, to persevere with their own instruments.

The Source of the Nocturnes Sound

Though the instrumental guitar hits of the Sixties were relatively simple by modern standards, their uniqueness was their tone. Guitar amp effects like reverb, tremolo and echo were a recent phenomenon and various bands, to some extent, became defined by the tonal characteristics of their music. The Ventures had a clean, heavy reverb sound. The Fireballs and String-a-Longs were well known for their hand-muted guitar sound and the Shadows, a haunting reverberating deep echo sound. Originally using home-made electric guitars and borrowed gear, the Nocturnes were clearly at a disadvantage as they attempted to emulate these sounds but their tone improved as they acquired modern amplifiers and gear which included many of the new sonic effects.

The Nocturnes' repertoire included several dozen "Guitar Rock Instrumental" covers of the mainstream bands as well as a number of waltzes and polkas in a more traditional country style to accommodate the "older crowd" at local weddings and dances.



SoundCloud

Bernard and Millie



SoundCloud

Arizona Jam Sessions 2013



SoundCloud

Grand daughter Tatum's fiddle

The Later Nocturnes 1964-65

Four players, new voices and a new sound

Two additional players joined the Nocturnes band in late 1964, stylistically transforming it into a local version of the British Fab Four. Bernard assumed the role of lead guitar and vocals, Jack continued as their drummer and a new player, George Ogloff, joined the group as a vocalist and bass player. Alfred Podovnikoff, their new lead vocalist, had several years of previous stage experience, performing at local talent shows as a youngster, and even as an occasional guest vocalist with the early Nocturnes. His solo covers of Elvis Presley, Little Richard, Chuck Berry and other contemporary stars were always a local sensation and likewise became a popular feature of the new Nocturnes' sound. Vocal harmonies were a central part of the Doukhobor a cappella tradition and adjusting to the style of the new British bands came naturally. As Beatlemania stormed North America in 1964, the Nocturnes quickly adapted many Beatle smash hits into their performance routine, soon adding popular songs of other vocal groups like the Rolling Stones and the Dave Clark Five.

With renewed enthusiasm and optimism about their musical future, the band arranged for a press photo, adopted a standard dress style and embarked on a publicity initiative to improve their visibility. Reaching high, they made arrangements to audition for the upcoming Spokane KXLY TV March of Dimes Telerama and subsequently made their television debut at that event in February, 1965. They also played numerous local venues ... at the Grand Forks Arena, the Legion Hall, the Christina Lake Pavilion, the Trail Cominco Arena, Castlegar's Playmore Junction and even ventured out to the Okanagan.

The Nocturnes however faced an unforeseen challenge in late 1965 when Alfred, their lead vocalist, left the group to pursue other interests. The three remaining players, under Bernard's leadership, immediately initiated a new local "talent search".



George Ogloff
Alfred Podovnikoff

Jack Chernoff
Bernard Voykin



Alfred Podovnikoff, Bernard Voykin
Jack Chernoff, and George Ogloff, 1964

While preparing this article, we were saddened to hear that George Ogloff passed away in September, 2015. We offer our sincere condolences to his family and hope that this article, in a small way, may help document his contribution to the Nocturnes band and the evolution of popular music in Grand Forks, his home town.

Nocturnes Press Photo - Sporting a new look

Black blazers with silver buttons, white turtleneck sweaters and high heeled shoes became standard attire for Nocturnes Performances. This studio photo was prepared in readiness for their Spokane Telerama appearance in 1965.

Recordings

Very few audio recordings of the Nocturnes have ever been made - two low quality taped recordings of a practice session from the Nocturnes' instrumental period and a single 45 rpm vinyl record from the Spokane Telerama experience, converted to digital audio and posted here:

 **SoundCloud**
Click link for Audio

The Nocturnes as TV Stars

KXLY TV Spokane March of Dimes Telerama

A Close and Personal Account - by Alfred Podovnikoff



It was 1964, and I was almost 19. George, Jack, Bernard and I decided to go to Spokane to audition for the March of Dimes Telerama, an annual event in Spokane to raise money for a children's hospital. Bernard took his dad's 1955 green Dodge. He had a trailer attached to it and we loaded up our band equipment and made our way to Spokane. Jackie Chernoff was barely 16 years old but he was our drummer and we, The Nocturnes, couldn't be without him. Because of his age, I became his "step brother" for the border people and we were allowed to go on. We stayed at the Coeur d'Alene, a lower class hotel where most Grand Forks Doukhobors stayed at that time. We were ecstatic about our visit to the KXLY TV studio for the audition, and even more so, when we finished our number and were told that we were accepted for the upcoming Telerama. We were given a later date for the program and drove back to Grand Forks, as high as could be.

In early 1965, we returned to Spokane for the Telerama. Jim Nabors from the Andy Griffith Show, a very popular star at that time, was hosting the program. We met him in person and even shook hands and had pictures taken. In our introduction, he couldn't pronounce my name, Podovnikoff, correctly and after messing it up a few times, announced me as Alfred with the Nocturnes. This was live TV and people who had television in Grand Forks at the time all watched. This time we stayed at the

Ridpath Hotel which was of a higher class, and of course we were "stars". As we sat around the swimming pool smoking our huge cigars, we talked loudly of our fame and of our appearance on TV!! Especially Jackie... who would come up to me while I was basking in a recliner by the pool smoking, and say loudly, "So how many millions will we make on this record?" People's ears would perk up and I would casually say something like, "We'll see, we'll see, I hope as many as we made the last time."

After our Telerama performance, a man approached us and gave us a huge compliment and invited us to come to his place. He claimed he had a friend who owned a night club in Stateline Idaho and would like to meet us. He also knew of a TV contest (forgot the name) where he thought we might like to perform. His name was Don Slater and we would become great friends, with him and his wife Sue, for many years afterwards. They had a daughter who was about 14 and was an upcoming dancer. When we returned for the program, we met her and she quickly

Continued ...

The Spokane March of Dimes Telerama was usually scheduled at the end of January or early February and spanned two days, televised from the Spokane Coliseum. After KXLY opened their new TV and radio studio on Boone Avenue in late 1964, the 1965 Telerama, in its fifth consecutive year, was hosted at that new location.



The Nocturnes as TV Stars

KXLY TV Spokane March of Dimes Telerama

became a kid sister and a fan!! Slater's place was in Greenacres, a suburb of Spokane closer to the Idaho border. They were Mormons and were surprised that these boys from Canada were all of Russian background and were so well bred. They couldn't believe that both Bernard and I were also vegetarians.

At any rate, Don and Sue asked us to go with them to their friend's night club at Stateline Idaho. It happened to be a pizza place and a dance hall. This was the first time I had ever seen or heard of pizza. So Bernard and I didn't try it as it may have had meat in it. The club was called "The Rock", an old barn renovated with a rock exterior and rough wood interior. It looked great. The club band, "The Good Guys" was playing there at the time. They were brush-cut dudes with bow ties and were playing "elevator" music. We came dressed in our tight stretched pants, white socks, high heeled boots, white turtle necked sweaters and black blazers with three large silver buttons. We thought we looked super. We didn't have long hair as yet. It was normal length, mostly with a wave. We also smoked Player's cigarettes which were new to the Americans and our accent was a hit with them as we spoke a different kind of English!! The house band was using modern equipment that we had never seen or used before. The microphone system, the professional drum kit and Fender guitars, were something we had only dreamed about, and I recall Bernard's smile as his fingers later graced the strings for the first time.

So when it was break time for the club band, we were asked to do a few numbers. After stroking the strings on the guitars lightly, we hit them hard with "No Time To Lose", a super fast

rock 'n' roll number. And the crowd was stunned. We followed up with "Twist and Shout", and the crowd went wild!! We continued with "Ready Teddy", "Boys", and so on as the girls were lining up in front of us and drooling by the stage. Dancers were rocking and the joint was swinging. We finished our set with our usual "Last Date" number and began our way off the stage. The management insisted we do a few more numbers and the crowd clapped and cheered. We did a few more. When we finished the girls especially asked for autographs, the guys for Canadian Player's cigarettes and conversations took place. In Idaho the liquor consumption age was 18, so we of course drank beer like it was water, as at that time American beer to us WAS like water with 5% alcohol. We were used to Canadian beer at 8% !! And even Jackie was allowed. We were instant Rock stars and were high on ourselves!!

Don Williams, the manager (not the famous singer, just a businessman), actually offered us a job. He wanted us to sign up for a month with his establishment and said he also had other contacts and would circulate us there. What could we do? Jackie was 16 and in grade 9, the rest of us were still in high school, but we went to a local recording studio and recorded a few vinyl records and gave Don Williams a copy. But we never did hear from him since!!

So much for stardom ...



The Nocturnes Become the Morticians - 1966

A new name, additional players and another new sound



The Morticians: A practice session at the Roxy Theatre, Grand Forks, 1966
Jack Chernoff, George Ogloff, Norm Andreassen, John Froese, Bernard Voykin

With Alfred's departure in 1965 and the very survival of the Nocturnes band at stake, Bernard invited two talented local newcomers to join the group. Norman Andreassen, although not as strong a vocalist as Alfred, was an aspiring radio DJ- broadcaster and had a suitable personality and confidence with a microphone to serve as the band announcer or frontman. He also had experience as a keyboard player. Local guitarist, John Froese, likewise had previous experience, accompanying his father in a country style combo playing small private venues. Froese's country guitar influences were a welcome addition to the Nocturnes repertoire, his blazing instrumental cover of the Boots Randolph saxophone hit "Yakety Sax" being particularly impressive, although he was equally competent in other genres including Rock 'n' Roll.

This new group initially played under the Nocturnes name for a brief period of time but as the players developed their unique new sound and style, they also adopted a new name. They became known as the Morticians in early 1966, so named by an aunt who suggested that such a name might help attract more attention and interest in the band. The Mortician sound was largely influenced by Andreassen's keyboards played in the style of Booker T's 1962 hit, "Green Onions" and the Animals' "House of the Rising Sun". But all five players contributed vocals, most often covering the popular hits of the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and various blues bands. Being "Morticians", the band was also known to occasionally wander off on lengthy jam-like improvised instrumentals incorporating spooky organ effects and ominous deeply reverberating guitar solos.

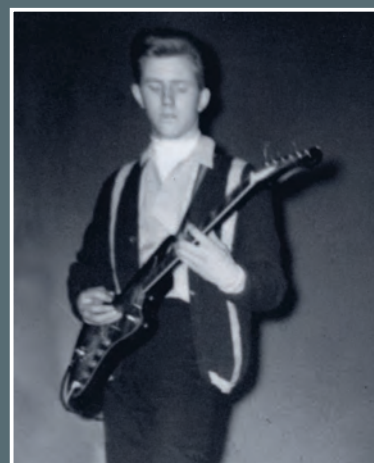
Although Fred Fofonoff replaced Jack Chernoff, the original drummer, for a short time, the Morticians remained intact as a group until mid-1966 when Bernard took a leave of absence to attend trade school in Vancouver. The rest of the group disbanded afterwards, but Bernard returned to Grand Forks months later where he has continued to be involved in the local "music industry" in his spare time. He is currently the "one and only" remaining musically active member of the original Nocturnes.

Recordings at the Roxy

Jack Chernoff was an employee at the local Roxy Movie Theatre in the 1960s and was able to facilitate the use of the theatre for practice sessions, one of which was casually taped at that time. Although the original tape has degraded considerably, a few selected tracks were extracted and have been posted online in their raw form.



"Green Onions"
1962 hit single by Booker T. and the MGs



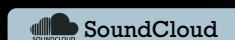
John Froese Guitarist and Bass Player

Combo-organs (compact portable electronic keyboards) appeared on the consumer market in the early 1960s. Although not technically synthesizers, they offered keyboard players certain sound effects like vibrato, tremolo, pitch-bend and wah-wah. The Vox Continental was used by the Beatles, Animals, Monkees, the Dave Clark Five, and numerous other Rock Bands in the 60s for live performances and recordings.

The Vox Continental
Combo Touring Organ



[Click link for Audio](#)



Other Performers

West Kootenay bands referenced in this booklet



The Invaders



Buddy Marr and the Versatiles



Millie Voykin, featured vocalist



Click for selected tracks
from "The Chosen Ones" LP



The Chosen Ones

The Invaders (West Kootenay) - (l.to r.): Allan Markin (lead vocals, rhythm guitar), Walter Wishlow (drums), Mike "Minnow" Halisheff (lead guitar), Walter "Rex" Markin (bass guitar).

Buddy Marr & the Versatiles (West Kootenay) - (At back, l. to r.): Dick McLeod , Serge Plotnikoff, Johnny Philipoff, (In Front) "Buddy Marr" (Nick Keraiff)

The Chosen Ones : Serge Plotnikoff, Millie Voykin, Doug Rutledge, Bernard Voykin

The Nocturnes

Boundary's First Rock 'n' Roll Band

Newspaper
Clipping
Boundary News
August 15, 1989



A poster from the heyday of The Nocturnes (L-R): George, Alfred, Jack and Bernard.



Four of the original Nocturnes (L-R): Bernard Voykin, Jack Chernoff, John Kalmakov and Alfred Podovnikoff pose beside another nostalgia sensation, Bernard's brother Paul's immaculately restored classic - a 1958 Corvette convertible!

Celebrating a 25th Reunion

Our Sunshine Valley summers attract an annual assortment of colorful reunions and this year is no exception.

Among recent gatherings was an especially unique one - involving the members of the first ever Rock 'n' Roll band in the Boundary Country - the early Sixties group famed throughout the region as "The Nocturnes."

In 1962, even before the Beatles had become a household word, a trio of local teenagers with homemade electric guitars and a modest set of mail-order drums, formed a band which became an overnight sensation at local dance halls, weddings and high school socials.

With John Kalmakov and Bernard Voykin on guitars, and Jack Chernoff on drums, The Nocturnes developed a talented repertoire patterned after such famous groups as The Ventures of Rock's Golden Age, and including original improvisations, such as their stylized Russian folksong "Korobushka." Soon The Nocturnes were playing at gigs as far afield as Kaslo and Penticton.

In 1964, John left to attend UBC, and the band acquired Alfred Podovnikoff and George Ogloff, with Jack on drums, Bernard taking the lead guitar role, George on bass, and Alfred doing rhythm guitar and lead vocals.

The style of The Nocturnes now incorporated the new Rock 'n' Roll wave of the Beatles' sound, and the gigs became more frequent and better paying, including frequent performances at the Christina Lake Pavilion, Trail's Cominco Arena, and two appearances on T.V. in Spokane.

An especially memorable highlight was their performance on a Spokane Telethon where The Nocturnes were introduced

to the T.V. watching thousands by none other than Telethon host Jim Nabors, of Gomer Pyle fame!

By 1966, schooling and out-of-town jobs had separated The Nocturnes, but Bernard, the ever-driving force of the group, formed another band called "The Morticians'," which also enjoyed immense popularity throughout the next few years, although by then other bands, with ever more sophisticated equipment, were competing for available engagements.

Also by then, Bernard had found a true soulmate in his wife, Millie, who, with her exceptional vocal talents greatly added to the musical repertoire and eventually Bernard and Millie were featured in a regionally distributed LP released as The Chosen Ones.

The Chosen Ones were a relatively short-lived phenomenon, but "Bernie and Millie" were a popular singing duo at numerous events right into the mid-Seventies. The years rolled along ...

Then, more than a quarter century after they had last been together, on July 29th, Bernard managed to reunite the original Nocturnes for a day-long nostalgia feast at his home in West Grand Forks. About 30 assorted band members, spouses, associates, and other friends and relatives gathered for the enjoyable get together and "jam session."

Lo and behold, the years just dropped away, and the fortyish musicians were once again "teenage rock stars."

In fact, so successful was the reunion, that The Nocturnes have vowed to do it again, but not with such long intervals - maybe even as an annual event.

Editor's note: The above feature was supplied by former NEWS columnist Jim Popoff, a childhood friend of the band members and their first "manager" (by virtue of being the only one with "wheels" - a 1952 Ford "hot rod!")

Photo Page One - the Troubadors and Delrays

The Nocturnes' 25th Reunion - Grand Forks, BC July 1989



Delrays Colin Bunt, Alexander Lebedoff, Allan Demosky, Lawrence Demosky, Harvey Popoff playing at Jim and Lil's wedding June 11, 1966



Photo Page Two

The Nocturnes band - 1962 to 1965



Photo Page Three

Members of the GFSS Grad Class of '64 - supporters of the Nocturnes band

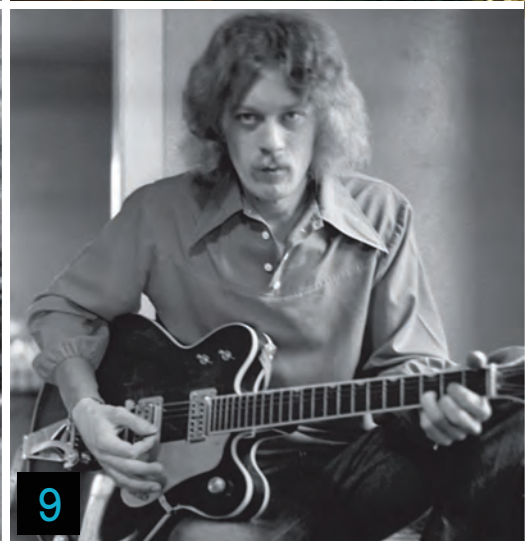


Previous page: 1. Original Nocturnes, Jack, John & Bernard with guest vocalist, Alfred Podovnikoff, 1963 practice session. Two instrumental recordings from this session are posted on SoundCloud (the small portable tape recorder itself is barely visible at lower right) 2. Jack, Alfred, Bernard and George, posing with Bernard's green Dodge, 1965 3. Studio photo for Spokane Telethon, George, Alfred, Jack and Bernard, 1965

Current page: 1. A few members of the 1964 GFSS Grad Class. Back row: George Fedorak, Brian Thompson, Jim Popoff, Harold Beliveau. Front row: Gary Thornhill, John Kalmakov, Luba Skripnikoff, Geri Chernoff, Shirley Strukoff and Erling Skands. John and Luba, in a steady relationship at the time, were the only two grads from their class to be later married. 2. Hallway shenanigans outside Mr. Kanigan's classroom. Sporting their flashy red grad jackets, Lorraine Chursinoff, Shirley Strukoff, Luba Skripnikoff, Vicky Kazakoff, and comfortably seated at front, Laverna Chiveldave. 3. Aside from the grads in Photo 01, this photo includes: James Plotnikoff with Coke bottle, Fred Konkin at back & Michael Soukoreff, seated on the front fender of Brian Thompson's old Chevy 4. Luba Skripnikoff dressed for Grad Night. 5. "Talking strategy", 1963. Jim Popoff, John Kalmakov & Lil Popoff. A life long friend, Jim was closely associated with the original Nocturnes, assisting as publicist, occasional cashier/"bouncer", and chauffeuring the three musicians and their gear to out of town gigs, on his customized '52 Ford coupe.

Photo Page Four

The Nocturnes and other performers and friends referenced in this booklet



1. Alfred and Elaine Podovnikoff 2. Millie & Bernard Voykin 3. Bernard's first "band" (summer '59), with childhood pal Jim Popoff on accordion
4. Cecil & Larry Popoff 5. Nick Persoff, Peter (Chico) Popoff, 1954 6. Bob Fujimoto, GFSS Grad 50th Reunion, evening live music, 2014 7. Speed Allan with Bernard 8. Alfred Podovnikoff rehearsing his Fab Four moves, beside his 1951 Ford coupe, 1964 9. Paul Novokshonoff occasional Nocturnes participant, 1966

Photo Page Five

The Nocturnes and other performers referenced in this booklet



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8

1. John Kalmakov with Strat 2. Aspiring Violinist, grand daughter, Tatum 3. The Nocturnes, Kaslo gig, 1963 4. The Nocturnes, Midway gig, 1965
5. Larry Popoff 6. Sunshine Valley Jamboree Musicians, 1955. RM Regenall (Mike Rezansoff), Peter (Chico) Popoff, Lloyd Chernoff, Joe Kanigan, Mike Greba 7. Lillian Popoff, Nocturnes Kaslo gig, 1963 8. Sunshine Valley Jamboree Musicians & Friends, 1955. (At back, l. to r.): Peter (Chico) Popoff, Mike Greba, Andy Kurenoff, Lloyd Chernoff, RM Regenall (Mike Rezansoff) (Front): Joe Kanigan, John (Blade) Rezansoff

About “Grand Forks Rocks”- the Booklet

A few personal comments and acknowledgements

“Grand Forks Rocks” is in one sense, the story of small-town resourcefulness ... about our home town, Grand Forks, British Columbia, finding its place in the rapidly evolving popular music and entertainment culture of the 1950s and 60s. It’s also the story of our band, the Nocturnes, within the context of that time and place. Our band ceased to exist after 1965, but three of us, Bernard, Jack and John, reside locally and have over the years occasionally reconnected in person, by phone or email to reminisce about the good old days.

This project materialized shortly after John’s 50th anniversary Grand Forks High School grad reunion in 2014, when Bernard revealed that he had found a couple of old tape recordings from a Nocturnes practice session. With memories rekindled, we began scrounging through dozens of other reel to reel tapes and photo albums and talked to people in an attempt to reconstruct the sequence of events and the details of our shared band experiences. A month or two into that process, we were saddened to hear that George, our former band mate, passed away just as we began preparing this story. Alfred is alive and well, living in Moscow with his family and he’s also been enthusiastic about this project and has contributed his own recollections.

We are also thankful for the involvement of other local contemporary musicians and friends who have graciously contributed information or photos toward the development of this story. Most notably, these include Buckskin Pete Koftinoff, Lawrence Demosky, Alexander Lebedoff, who sadly passed away as we prepared this document for print, and Jim and Lillian Popoff, who have remained dedicated supporters and friends of the Nocturnes to this day. Aside from supplying numerous excellent photos, Jim has contributed to the quality of this booklet as a consultant, proof reader and fact checker.

But there is certainly much more to this story. Grand Forks has fostered a respectable number of other bands, talented musicians, song writers, sound recording engineers and guitar makers since the 1960s. And while some may be familiar and deservedly recognized for their talent or success, others have been less visible, yet their unique musical experiences are no less worthy. We are hopeful their stories will also be told.

The influence of popular culture on Doukhobors is potentially a story in itself and far beyond the scope of this booklet. But it does appear that a lot has changed since the 1960s. From a musical perspective, we are pleased to see that, despite some resistance to change, there is now a baby grand piano at the Brilliant Cultural Centre, first put to use in a concert featuring an accomplished young Doukhobor pianist. And there have been a number of successful country music festivals hosted by Doukhobors at their Grand Forks Community Centre - “The Festivals of Freedom at the Forks”, featuring Doukhobors with guitars, alongside other professional musicians. None of this would have been possible in the 1960s.

Alfred, Bernard, Jack and John

A 50th Anniversary collaborative project by former members of The Nocturnes Band

For more information about this booklet or this project visit: gfrocks.kalmakov.com

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Back cover photo ... the Candy Apple Red Strat.

This 1987 E Series MIJ Stratocaster is John’s first ever Fender electric guitar, a birthday gift from Luba in 1989, and now a priceless “keeper”. The E Series Strats were manufactured in Japan for three years as an interim measure between 1984 and 1987 as the US Fender factory was being refurbished and retooled. Made to high quality “American Standards”, these unique guitars are now highly regarded and are becoming collectable among Fender enthusiasts worldwide.

FESTIVAL OF FREEDOM

At The Forks



July 25, 26, 27 2003
Grand Forks, BC Canada



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Bobbi Smith
Brisas Del Palmar
Danny Freeway
Dana Lyons
Dave Soroka
Dr. Fun & The Nightcrawlers
Evans Sisters
Fly By Night
Hill Billy Sweethearts
Jamphibian
John Who
Jana Keeley
Midnight Harvesters
Millie & Bernard
Power Plant
Remnants
Ricky & The Blue Cats
Rosemary Phillips
Shari Ulrich
Sue Medley
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Terry Jacks
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Trillium
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Historic Grand Forks CPR Railway Station



Site of Historic Doukhobor Jam Factory



Gem Theatre 1950s

Marshall

Grand Forks Rocks

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