

[Bandworld](#)[Previous](#)[BW Vol. 21 #3](#)[Read/Print PDF](#)[Next](#)[Select Page](#)**BW 2006**

The American Bandmasters Association

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to a Band Rehearsal

by M. Max McKee

From the time I was a very young child, my dad took me to his band rehearsals, pep band in the stands gigs, and even musical production prep. Little did I know that it was just the first "funny thing" that happened on the way to a band rehearsal.



Looking back to 1950, I realize that in that 55 year period I've luckily crossed paths with some of the most interesting and influential people in our business while learning the trade long before I even knew that I was interested in doing so. Many of those people made an enormous impact on my life and in major ways determined much of what Bandworld Magazine, the American Band College and Western International Band Clinic have become.

Some of those CONNECTIONS now serve as the foundation of our teaching in the ABC masters program and the ongoing re-presentation of important teaching concepts through Bandworld Magazine that otherwise would likely be lost to future generations.

Many of those CONNECTIONS were nothing more than fortuitous happenstance that subconsciously contributed to my later decision to become a band director, a publisher, and a teacher.



FUNNY #1 CONTINUES

Bandworld Circus Issue (Vol. 9#4)

[Bandworld](#)[Previous](#)[BW Vol. 21 #3](#)[Read/Print PDF](#)[Next](#)[Select Page](#)

Bandworld


Previous

BW Vol. 21 #3

Read/Print PDF

Next

Select Page




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– FUNNY #1 CONTINUED –







Left: Merle Evans

Below: Evans with clown, Emmett Kelly


In 1950, I was an 8-year old kid. That year my dad took me to see the Ringling Bros-Barnum and Baily Circus in Seattle, Washington. The director of the circus band was none other than Merle Evans, the famous trumpet player/conductor who fronted the band for 50 seasons. He had also been inducted into the American Bandmasters Association; so, at the 1987 convention in Tennessee (where my wife and I were making final preparations to host the next ABA convention in Ashland, Oregon), we met Merle while sitting on a park bench outside the hotel. We asked him about his days with the circus; coincidentally, at that very moment we saw the Ringling Bros-Barnum & Baily Circus trucks arriving for an appearance in Knoxville that evening. Merle, who had retired from the circus some 17 years earlier and was now over 90 years of age, suddenly got very excited (like that excited 8-year old kid I was years before when I first heard his circus band) and said, "Wow! They're in town tonight; I'm going!!" And he did. He died just a few months later. A minor CONNECTION I'll never forget.

Funny how the circus image played such an important role in my early years. My dad was a band director and always had the Selmer Bandwagon Magazine (1954-1980) on the coffee table. It's famous logo was distinctive.






Bandwagon Magazine (#72, 1974)



THE ETUDE
Music Magazine
September 1930 Price 25 Cents

Also on that coffee table was my mother's current copy of Etude Magazine (1899-1957), a publication with printed music (mostly for piano) that you could use immediately.

Most remarkable is the fact that the band pages were written by one William D. Revelli and were presented on the oversize pages of Etude Magazine.



Curious, isn't it, that when we started Bandworld Magazine in 1985 we decided to make it oversize and to include lots of useful materials and printed music? Probably all coincidental CONNECTIONS!

NEXT TIME: The Amazing Gunnison Music Camp CONNECTION

Bandworld

Previous

BW Vol. 21 #3

Read/Print PDF

Next

Select Page