

The Birth of the Couriers by Neil E. Schuck

I would like to begin my story with the original Couriers 5, because that is what we were called at the beginning of this experience. (For about 5.5 months) Now the reason we are no longer known as the Couriers 5, is because there are now 6 members in the group. The sixth member is our new organ player, Dave Johnson.

As I write this story, which is all about the birth of the Couriers, (I am a member of this great band), it is New Years Eve 1965 and in exactly 24 minutes it will be 1966 and we will celebrate our 6 month anniversary on January 8, which begins the whole story. When I say it begins the whole story I mean that exactly 6 months ago we began to perform as the Couriers 5 and January 8 also brings to my mind my brothers' birthday. You might be wondering why I bring up my brothers' birthday or why I even bring up brother. So I will tell you the story of the Couriers from the very, very beginning.

It all began when I wanted to learn to play the guitar and my best friend always wanted a set of drums, seeing that it was right before the Christmas of 1964, we both asked our parents to buy us these instruments for Christmas. And they DID! Now we both began to take lessons. And about one month after Christmas we began to look for a singer, bass guitarist, lead guitarist, and a organ player, which we had no luck, but we didn't give up and I hope we NEVER will! Then it happen at last we found a lead guitar player and a singer. Now the lead guitar player wasn't too good, so we kept on looking, but the singer was pretty good, so we kept him.

Happy New Year!!! It is now 1966 and I hope it is as good as 1965 was for us.

So we continued our search for the other 3 players, but it seemed impossible. We searched and searched all through the Winter. By the Spring we were both playing pretty good! Now doing all that time we must have put together at least 4 bands, if not more, but nothing really clicked. To me it started to look like my best friend, who played the drums, was beginning to get sick of the drums, and I was right, it was about May 1965 when he traded in his drums for a guitar and an amplifier. And our search for a lead guitar player was solved, but now we needed

a drummer, plus the other 2 players. We tried out about 2 other drummers, but none of them were any good. But we were still sticking together, the 3 of us. And here is where the first bass player comes in. We met him at the first drummers' house. He lived up the street from the kid that thought he could play the drums so well. Poor boy! We worked with this bass player for about 2 weeks, but no go, we found out that he was playing with another band, so we told him to get lost. It was now June 1965 and school was out for the Summer. And this really begins the birth of the Couriers.

It was on June 19, 1965 when my friend got a phone call from that guy who played lead guitar, the one who wasn't too kool, he wanted my friend to play rhythm guitar for his new band, and so he said he would, if he could play lead guitar sometimes. He then went over to the guys' house that day. And found out that they also needed a bass guitar player, so my friend called me that night and asked me if I wanted to play bass in that band. Now I'm not a bass player, I don't even have a bass guitar, but I wanted to be in a band so bad, I said yes.

(By this time you are probably wondering who my best friend is, so I will tell who he is. He goes by the name Hoagie (Harry Strother) and now he is our lead guitar player:)

So the next day we went over together and everybody was there except the lead guitar player, which was one of the main reasons we got rid of him in the first place, so my friend and I, along with a pretty bad singer and a half decent drummer began what is known today as Lancaster's fastest growing Rock & Roll Band! The next day the lead guitar player, if that's what you want to call him, finally came to practice. It was pretty good for the first day, but I didn't dig playing the bass part and I told Hoagie that. The next day we took a day off and we decide to get rid of our wonderful lead guitar player (again), but he beat us to it this time. He called the singer and told him he had to drop out of the band, because he went surfing on the day we took off and he broke his little leg, so that was it for him in our band.

Now for the so-called singer, who could only sing about 3 songs pretty good, but that was about it. He wasn't our usual singer, he was a friend of 'your boy' lead

guitar player. Our usual singer was at Summer Camp at this time for about 2 months. He finally came back early in August 1965. By the way his name is Steve Kurtz. Now we had to get rid of the bad singer, so we told him that Hoagie was going to California to live and so we decided to break up the band until we found another lead guitar player. That's how we got rid of him. As you can see all this music/band shit is based on a lot of lies! But before we got rid of the bad singer, there was also an organ player who was playing rhythm for us on his organ for about 2 weeks and I was still stuck playing the bass part. Now the reason we got rid of him, was he could not take his organ out of his house and that a pretty good reason I think. Don't you?

Now the only one we kept was the drummer. So now we had a lead guitar player, a rhythm guitar player, a drummer, and 2 singers. Here is where you can see the original Couriers 5, but we didn't have our name yet. And now we moved everything over to Hoagies' house, set up in his basement, and began to practice. The four of us practice there for the most part of the Summer, then our lead singer, Steve, finally came back from camp in August 1965. And then we practice the rest of that Summer together.

We kept on practicing during the months of July and August and we became well known in Hoagies' neighborhood and we soon played in front of our first audience, which was just the neighborhood kids, and each day there was more and more people and they were starting to get older too. And so we named Hoagies' basement "The Cabin" it was like a small night club. To us it was "The Cavern", which was the birth place of the Beatles. The Cabin was our birth place! They began to like us so much that we had to move to the backyard, because the basement wasn't large enough for all the people who came to hear us practice. And whenever we played out back we always had a large crowd. We even played just down the street from Hoagies' house, at some girls' house, which was more like a performance than a practice. We played down there for about one week. And then we took a two week break, that's when one of our background singers' and our drummer went to the beach for two weeks. When the two weeks ended only one guy came back, he was our drummer so we continued practicing and one week later our background singer finally came back home.

When he came back he did not come to practice for about two weeks. He was counted as a drop out of the group. In fact the first two and half gigs were done without him. In his place we had a guy, who was singing background for us, his name was Denny. He was a former member of some of the other bands we had put together before. But the original guy finally came and sang with us for the second half of our third performance. And his name is Carl Beyer. So now we had another problem. Who to get rid of, Carl was actually a member, but he did not perform with us during our first two and half gigs, and Denny did, so we didn't know what to do. We only wanted five guys in our group. So we said whoever gets a bass guitar and learns how to play it, we would keep and the other guy was out. (How nice we were-HUH?) It was a very close race, Denny had one on layaway at a music store, but the bank did not ok the loan, so that was it for Denny. But it did not solve our problem. So we had six guys to work with. And whenever we practiced, it seemed that everyone hated each other. Which was not too kool! (This happens a lot in bands-what a shame!)

At the same time all this was happening we got our first manager, who was really my big brother Ray, and his birthday is January 8 (The same as Elvis) and that's why I said January 8 begins everything because he got us, our very first gig, even though it was a free gig, we gained some real experience playing in front of a real audience. Our second gig was for \$18.00, which we got from the singer we first kicked out. Anyway, we talked to our manager about our problem about the bass player, so he said that if we wanted a bass player so bad, we should buy a bass guitar and then vote on who we wanted to play it. So we did it, we got one and we voted for Carl to play it.

After our first gig we signed our own contract, it was signed on August 9, 1965, we played our first gig the day before on August 8, 1965. It was a ball, but it was just the beginning.

By now you are probably wondering where we got the name the Couriers 5 in the first place. Well the drummer and Carl brought it back from the beach. They met a girl down there who belonged to a folk singing group, which was called the

Couriers. (Hell we even stole the name!!!) We all like the name so we used it, but added a 5 to make it different. (As we all know, that didn't last too long)

So now we had five guys in our band and finally a name for it. The members of the band are: Lead guitar- Hoagie, Rhythm guitar- Butch Schuck (yours truly-Neil), Lead singer- Steve Kurtz, Drummer- Dick Dunkle, and finally Carl Beyer, who now played the Bass guitar and also sings background.

It was our fourth performance, which was at the Schick Company Picnic, (both my Mom and Hoagies' Mom worked there), on September 10, 1965, when Carl first used the Bass guitar we all got him. We were supposed to play for free, but we put on such a good show, that they paid us \$25.00 for the gig. We really went over big there! It was after the Schick Picnic that we began our so-called big money. You see we became good friends with the manager of the group called the Embers. He is also an owner of a local music store. He also gets some other bands gigs. Kind a like a booking agent, I guess. It was a Saturday night and we did not have a gig, so he called us and asked us if we wanted to play that night and we said YES!. He told us that the band that was supposed to play didn't show up and he wanted to hear us play anyway. When he told us how much we would get paid, we almost went crazy, because at that time we thought that \$60.00 was real big money for doing something we loved to do. So we went and played the gig, it was a college frat party and they just loved us, so did the guy who got us the gig, who is actually Tony Mariani.

On the following Monday we all went down to Tonys' music store and he said we were pretty good and that he would like to manage us. It was ok with us, we were getting rid of our other manager anyway, not because of Tony, but because we believed that he might be keeping some of the money for himself, instead of putting it all towards the balance for the equipment that he bought for us. You see he bought us a PA system and microphones and all we had to do was pay him back, so it was ok with us, but when we found out that he might be pocketing some of the money, that we were giving him for our bills, that meant the end for him. We had Dick called him up and tell him that we would like to be on our own. He seemed not to be upset, but went over to Dicks' house and took the PA system

and microphones. He also took our bass guitar, which he was also buying for us. That very weekend we had a gig to play and we needed all that equipment back. Dicks' mother and Hoagies' mom got together and lend us some money, so we could at least get the bass guitar back, but he said he wanted to keep the PA system and the microphones until we paid him in full. We did not have any more money to give him, so we only got the bass guitar back. But we still needed a PA system so I went down to the electronics distributors' and bought one with some money that all our parents lent us. I got the PA system and microphones, but they didn't have the speakers, they needed to order them. And that weekend we had to use two old 12" speakers, it didn't sound as good as it did with the original speakers, but we didn't have any choice, we had to use them.

Now at this time we are under the so-called management of Tony Mariani, who is more like a booking agent than a manager. He is just gets us gigs sometimes to play. We get most of our gigs ourselves, but he helps sometimes.

The main reason why Tony wanted to manage us is because he thought that we would buy our equipment at his music store, but so far the only one that bought anything there is Hoagie, he bought a Fender Mustang and Ampere reverb. Our new organ player did buy everything he has there, which includes organ, Cordivox reverb, and a Magatone M15 amplifier.

This is another reason why Tony gets mad at us. You see he gets 10 % of what we make. He is not really supposed to get anything by law, but we still give it to him anyway, just to make him happy. We were planning to drop him after Christmas, but decided to keep him just a little longer. You see he is supposed to be our manager, but he never ever comes to any of our practices or any of our gigs, but the very first one. All he cares about is his 10% of our money.

We just recently added a new member to the Couriers, which I have been talking about almost all through my story. I guess you know by now he plays the organ for us. His name is Dave Johnson, he has been with us for about one month now.

Now as a group we practice every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday nights, from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm. You can see we believe that practice makes perfect. We

practice at Dicks' house, in his basement, which is not too big. Our practices are just a mess, where everybody is trying to tell each other how to play and WHAT to play. We usually get about an hour and half, if not less, of real good practicing done. We usually tape record the songs we do at our practices, the tape recorder belongs to Dicks' cousin, who is more of a manager than Tony. I mean that he is always at our practices and he always tries to go along with us to all our gigs, not just to record us, but I believe he really likes to travel around with us. We like him being there too. His name is Sonny Dunkle, but we just call him "ship", because he is always talking about when he was in the Navy and about the ship he was on. It seems that he always has a story when someone talks about something. And it always begins with, "when I was on the ship" or "there was this guy on the ship". So now I think you see why we call him the "ship".

We have played all over town and out of town, even out of state. We play at college frat parties, dances, hops, fairs, and private parties. Hell, we even played on an Island once! AC power by generator! We had to use boats to get there. We planned to go back to the "Cabin" this Summer for two weeks. Also we want to perform at the beach for another two weeks and then finally take a two week vacation.

At the present we are still under Tonys' management. Just last week he asked us, if we still wanted him for our manager. So Carl's father contacted all our parents and they all got together and had a so called meeting. At the end of the meeting, they decided to keep Tony. And Tony was also there, but he said he wanted to manage us, only if all of us wanted him. This was last Saturday night, January 15, 1966. On the next day, Carl's dad got all of us together at Steve's house, which was Sunday, and told us to decide if we wanted Tony or not. The only problem with this so called meeting was that if we did not decide to keep Tony, Dave would have to leave the band, because his mother said his amps and organ would go back to Tonys' store! But this was only the half of it. Carl's dad also said that if we decided not to keep Tony, he would not drive us around to our gigs and he was not going to help pay Carl's Vox amp off. So that would have been the end of both of the Carls, which meant no transportation and no bass player. So all we had to do was say YES and we did. We kept Tony.

We used to dress all in black, but our wonderful parents decided we should wear something else instead. They decided that we could keep the black suits, but wear white shirts with black neck ties. They also said that we should get our hair cut short. We said we would give up our all black suits, but we wanted to keep our hair long. We all agreed that we keep our black a go-go boots, except Steve's mom. So we now dress in black suits with white shirts and black neck ties with our old black a go-go boots. Most of us still plan to keep our hair long.

So that about does it for my little story about the birth of the Couriers.

I hope you enjoyed it. Some of the stuff might hurt some people, but all of it is true, as I lived it.

Neil (Butch) Schuck

Here are some interesting facts about the Couriers:

From our very first gig on August 8, 1965 to the last gig, that I played with them, on December 18, 1966, we performed 135 gigs!

The grand total of what we made during them 135 gigs was \$9464.00.

Our range of money we got paid to play was from free (a lot of them) to a max of \$212. The average was about \$75.00.

We appeared on WGAL-TV Channel 8 Noon Day Show on September 9, 1966.

We won a Recording Contract from C.V. Records at the Moose Hall battling against all the other local bands in the area, on March 25, 1966.

We recorded 3 songs in a Philadelphia Recording studio on May 15, 1966, the first 45 was released on June 29, 1966. The A side is "Stomping Time Again", the B side is "Feelings" (and yes they can kill you). The third song was called "Thursday Night" this was our Theme song, it was written by Dave Johnson, and like Dave, God bless him, it lays in a vault too, in Philadelphia. These songs have reappeared on LPs, CDs, and are now on the WWW thanks to YouTube.

We made it to Number 194 of WLAN 1390 "200 Million Dollar Hits of all Time", with "Stomping Time Again". And now (2026) our record, the "45" is selling on ebay for \$16.00 each!

