TRUMPETER EDITORIAL—To anyone living in or around Klamath Falls during the 1940s the name Baldy Evans will have a familiar ring. Little matter that one might never have attended any of his dances or come out to the Armory to be entertained by one of the star attractions he regularly brought to town. Simply put, to live in the area was to be familiar with the name. "Music by Baldy Evans Band," His name could be found tacked to telephone poles, fence posts and bulletin boards, taped to store windows and printed in the newspapers. There was a dance somewhere in the area nearly every Saturday night in those days and people went around putting up posters advertising these dances with the same abandon they put up yard sale posters today. A great many of these advertisements either opened with the words, "Baldy Evans Proudly presents..." or closed, "Music by Baldy Evans and his band." Although your editor grew up in this area and attended some of the performances brought to town by Baldy I was never privileged to hear Baldy's Band, and yet the words are as familiar as if they had appeared in last night's newspaper, "Music by Baldy and his band." The performers brought to Klamath Falls by Baldy Evans both during the big band era and the country-western period that followed were the very best. He learned early that there was no substitute for excellence and that the people of Klamath Falls would support quality performances. From that time on, that was what he brought to town. In this issue of the Trumpeter, we reminisce a little about that good old music.
“BALDY EVANS PROUDLY PRESENTS.............”

William R. (Baldy) Evans began promoting big bands in his home town of Roseburg in 1927. The following year he came to Klamath Falls where in 1929 he formed his own band which entertained Klamath Basin residents for over a quarter of a century. During his early years in Klamath Falls he began promoting local band appearances, packing crowds into the old Altamont Ballroom and other area halls. His first real success came in 1940 when he moved his performances to the Klamath Armory and booked Duke Ellington and his band for an appearance. He later told a reporter from the local newspaper that this was the first time he ever made any money on his promotions. Baldy learned a valuable lesson when he booked Duke Ellington. If he was to succeed in this business he must book the very best performers, regardless of the cost. If he was willing to pay the price to attract top notch bands, the people of Klamath Falls would support him. It was a lesson he never forgot.

From a band leader’s point of view, this city’s geographical location was ideal. Located as it was, roughly half way between the population centers of California and those of the Pacific Northwest, Klamath Falls was a natural stopping place. Baldy stressed this point in promoting appearances at Klamath Falls, but promoting bands in the Rogue Valley but without success. He just couldn’t draw the large crowds at Medford that he did at Klamath Falls.

More than any other one thing it seems to have been the willingness of the people of Klamath Falls to plunk down their money, and come out and be entertained that kept the big bands coming back to the local Armory time after time. He couldn't
prove it, but Baldy felt certain that Klamath Falls was the top drawing city of the entire nation in proportion to its population.

After his success with Duke Ellington in 1940, Baldy was able to resign his job at Balsigor Ford and devote his full time to music, performing with his own band and promoting performances by visiting musical groups.

During the ensuing years Baldy delighted in bringing the elite of the music world to the Klamath Falls front door. Not only did the “greatest” play Klamath Falls, many of them played Klamath Falls first. Well known Canadian country-western entertainer Hank Snow, for example, made his first appearance in this country right here at the Klamath Falls Armory.

And of course, Baldy’s own band also entertained the local citizenry. For years advertisements appearing in the newspapers, on telephone poles, in store windows promoting the Fireman’s Ball, the Wooden Box Campaign Social, or just about any other local event of note ended with the familiar words, “Music by Baldy Evans and his band.”
WHEN THE BIG BANDS PLAYED
KLAMATH FALLS

The Big Band era is said to have had its beginning in the mid 1930s, as the nation was recovering from the Great Depression and ended approximately ten years later shortly after the end of the Second World War. During the intervening years the names of band leaders such as Glen Miller, Artie Shaw, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Woody Herman, Harry James, Sammy Kay and a host of others became musical legends.

was a new and exciting time for music lovers. Spurred on by skyrocketing phonograph record sales and the proliferation of radios, for the first time, perhaps, popular music was available to people living in the most remote corners of the nation. In a few short years this new music became such a part of the nation that on the eve of America's entry into World War II, Time Magazine reported that to the German masses the United States meant "sky-scrapers, Clark Gable, and Artie Shaw."

The entire country seemed to be caught up in this new music. It made little difference whether one preferred to "Swing and Sway with Sammy Kay," listen to Benny Goodman, "The King of Swing," or dance to the music of "Les Brown and his Band of Renown," there was something here for everyone and it

Although all of the bands were affected in one way or another by the war, big bands popularity remained high. Glen Miller, for instance enlisted in the U. S. Army in October 1942. After completing basic training, he was transferred to the
Army Corps, where he organized the Glenn Miller Army Air Force Band. The following year he and his band were shipped out to England to entertain the troops. In less one year the band engaged in over 300 performances, with a gross attendance of over 600,000.

One might have expected the citizens of Klamath Falls to be content to sit back, listen to their radios and watch from the sidelines as the bands played the hotels and ballrooms of the larger west coast population centers. Nothing could be further from the truth. Thanks to its strategic location, the enthusiasm of the local citizens and the efforts of a local promoter by the name of Baldy Evans, many of the bands not only appeared live in Klamath Falls, but returned time after time because, as Baldy put it, "They loved to play Klamath Falls." This was no one sided love affair. The people of Klamath Falls loved the big bands and showed it by their enthusiastic response.

Consider this: Jimmy Dorsey once played at Portland on a Friday, drawing a crowd of 850. The following Tuesday (Mid week) in Klamath Falls, he drew 1,060. Tex Williams played to a crowd of 250 at Jantzen Beach, and a couple of days later at Klamath Falls, drew a crowd of over a thousand. Ray Anthony and Ralph Flanagan both drew larger audiences in Klamath Falls than they had in Oakland. These are not isolated occurrences. In 1952, twelve years after he promoted his first big band appearance at the Armory, Baldy estimated that paid admissions to the dances he had promoted in Klamath Falls had averaged around 1,100.

And then it was over, almost as quickly as it had begun. By late 1946, it was becoming apparent that "Big Band" business was on the
decline. In the single month of December 1946, eight top bandleaders announced they were calling it quits: Woody Herman, Benny Goodman, Harry James, Les Brown, Jack Teagarden, Benny Carter, Ina Ray Hutton, and Tommy Dorsey.

At the same time big bands were in decline, western and country bands began to increase in popularity and in 1945 Baldy booked his first western band at the Armory. Once again Klamath Falls responded with enthusiasm. In one performance Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys brought out a crowd of 2,719. The flood gate had been opened and in the ensuing years one star attraction after another "packed them in" at the Armory. Tex Ritter, Hank Snow, Tennessee Ernie, Merle Travis, Hank Thompson, Maddox Brothers and Rose, Lefty Frizzell, Wes Tuttle, Spade Cooley, The Sons of the Pioneers. These and a myriad of others all played Klamath Falls, many returning as often as six or eight times. By 1952, Bob Wills and his band had played Klamath Falls no less than eight times, averaging 1,700 paid admissions per show.

No wonder the bands liked to play Klamath Falls. It had a reputation for outdrawing just about every other city in the state. When Evans attempted to promote similar performances in Medford crowds were disappointingly small and the only thing that saved him from large financial loss was the large number of Klamath Falls people who drove over the hill to take in the performances.

Gene Krupa and his band play to a sell out crowd at The Armory, August 11, 1947.
The Klamath Armory, the building in which the Klamath County Museum is now housed, was opened on Armistice Day 1935. Although it was ostensibly built to serve as the home of Battery D, 249th Coast Artillery, the local unit of the Oregon National Guard, promoters were quick to point out that the structure was designed to serve as an all-purpose facility to fill the needs of the entire community. That this was true, is evident by the nature of the facility that was built.

In addition to the features designed especially for the use of the local national guard unit, such as officer’s quarters, locker rooms and showers, the new auditorium was provided with a large stage, ample dressing rooms, and a small banquet room, capable of seating 150 persons. A kitchen was strategically located to serve either the small dining room or the main auditorium in the event a larger group of people was to be accommodated. Lest even this should prove inadequate, plans were made to leave room for an upstairs kitchen that could be added later should the need arise. The main floor of the auditorium which measured 72 x 120 ft, provided ample space for dancing or would seat 1,200 persons. An additional 700 people could be accommodated in the balconies.

Before it was built backers stressed the point that the structure would benefit the entire community as a much needed, all purpose auditorium. Even a partial list of events that took place in the building in the ensuing years would quickly convince the most skeptical observer that this was no idle boast. Such a list would be noteworthy not only for its length, but for its variety as well.

-8-
While many will be familiar with the musical concerts and dances that regularly took place in the armory building, a somewhat lesser number know of the multitude of other activities that were enjoyed there over the years. The circus, drama, boxing, wrestling, commercial presentations and an infinite variety of other activities all occurred within these walls.

All was not fun and games either. It was here that names were once drawn to determine which of Klamath’s young men were to be inducted into the armed forces to be sent away to war at the far ends of the earth. On a happier note it was in this same building some of those same names were later drawn to be the lucky winners of homesteads located right here in the Klamath Basin.

From a musical standpoint the opening of the Armory in 1935 could hardly have come at a more opportune time, coinciding as it did with the birth of the so called, “Big Band Era.” Perhaps it is with the names of some of those big bands that the armory is most closely associated in the memories of most people. Others will remember the great names in country western music that made their appearance in later years. Surely a great many will associate the armory with the regular Tuesday night wrestling and boxing
matches that were such an integral part of armory activity for years.

In 1969, the Klamath Auditorium, as it was then called, became home to the Klamath County Museum. What could have been more fitting? A building steeped in local history became the repository of local history. The planners and promoters of this grand old building would be pleased to know that nearly seventy years later, the building they worked so hard to secure for the benefit of the entire community continues to serve us all.

Attend the Buckaroo Days

Queen's Ball
See One of These Candidates Crowned Queen of Buckaroo Days:

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<th>Candidate</th>
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<td>Margaret Brown</td>
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At the ARMORY Saturday Night
June 21

Music by Herb Cochran's Band
Dance 9 to 1
Admission $1—No Tax
Ladies Free

MCA PRESENTS
AMERICA'S ACE

DRUMMER MAN GENE KRUPA
AND HIS FAMOUS ORCHESTRA

SEE GENE AND HIS WHIRLWIND “DRUMATICS”

ARMORY
Wed., Sept. 10
Dance 9:00 'til 1:00
Sponsored by
Junior Chamber of Commerce
Memorial Dinner for Wayne and Lois Ann Scott at the Klamath County Museum

On May Day 2003, a memorial dinner was held for Wayne and Lois Ann Scott. The sale of tickets to this dinner raised money to reissue Volume Number 7 of the Klamath Echoes. This issue will be dedicated to the Scotts. About 80 people joined together in remembrance of the Scotts. There were Historical Society people (who hosted the dinner) telling about Wayne's tenure as president of the society and about Lois Ann's family playing such large parts in our local history (Melhase-Soule.) There were Auduboners telling how much Wayne loved birds (especially pelicans) and how he and Lois Ann were deeply committed to Audubon Education programs. There were Klamath Union High School students, basketball players (champions) telling of the great influence Wayne had in their lives, both as coach and mentor; and girls for whom Lois Ann was not just a PE teacher, but a guide and support. And then there were the family members who reminded us of their great loss; for a sister and brother-in-law, and aunt and uncle, like Wayne and Lois Ann, will be sorely missed.

Christine Chance catered the dinner, donating her services so that our funds would cover publication costs. The food was great! Several Historical Society members and friends were servers. Liskey Farms loaned beautiful flowers for this May Day event, and Donna Skudstad played heavenly harp music throughout the evening. Nancy Sieverts donated the rental of tablecloths and silverware. Thank you to all of you who made memorial donations. Thank you to all of you who made it such a wonderful evening. Thank you to the family, Barbara and Murel Long and their children, Lynn and Linda Long and Ann McGill and family friend Terry Clemens, for joining with us to speak about our dear friends. Thank you to Mr. Murel Long for reading Wayne's last poem (see next column). And thanks to Ann McGill for choosing this time to tell us that Wayne and Lois Ann had made a gift of $20,000 to the Klamath County Museum's endowment fund. We will miss these two very lovely people, Wayne Scott and Lois Ann Soule Scott.

Weep no tears
This is a happy day
I've had a good life
Now I must pay.

I was blessed with good health
A wife that was true
What more can you ask
For a life that is through.

I had a good family
Both my wife's and mine
Always supportive
Loved reigned sublime.

Friends were many
And very good ones, too
Life without friends
Would be rather blue.

From now on I will join
My dear Lois Ann
Without pain or suffering
I will be a new man.

I will go to visit those
Who went before
Like my dear parents and sisters
And a good many more.

Do not feel sad
For a lucky man am I
I will reap the rewards
Of being a good guy.

I've done my best
To help students in schools
And to have them learn
The Golden Rule.

I enlisted in the army
In World War II
I served my country
The best I knew.

I loved my wife
For she was always a dear
And now I will always
Have her near.

So now rejoice
And wish me well
Just celebrate
And don't raise Hell.

H. Wayne Scott
1915-2003
Shaw Stationery Company sells the "Klamath Echoes" in their store at 729 Main Street, and they take no commission. All profits on the sales go directly into the fund for publishing additional volumes of the Echoes. So for all your stationery supplies at a convenient downtown location, remember our friends at Shaw Stationery Company.

Living History Day at Collier State Park June 15, 2003 saw the Klamath County Museum staff and volunteers doing laundry for the loggers in the logging camps using several antique washing "machines" from the Merit Smith Collection.
Memorial for Pearl Bodenhamer Nason held at the Klamath County Museum May 17th

Pearl Bodenhamer Nason was born Dec. 30, 1921, in Klamath Falls to George and Ola (Smith) Bodenhamer. She died March 22, 2003. Her life touched many people here in Klamath Falls in her several careers: She took over the motorcycle business when she was 24 and became owner and operator of Bodenhamer Cyclery in Klamath Falls. She obtained her license as a registered nurse through Oregon Institute of Technology at the age of 56 and worked as a registered nurse at Merle West Medical Center until her retirement. During her retirement years, she was a volunteer for the Klamath County Museum, United Way, and Amtrak. In 1999, she was honored as United Way Volunteer of the Year.

It was through her work here at the Klamath County Museum that many of us came to know Pearl. We all remember Pearl whizzing around the museum on her little indoor motorcycle. She used that little motorcycle to extend her mobility and continued to enjoy traveling and the outdoors for most of her years. And she continued to be productive, cataloguing accessions, being an Advisory Board Member, being the secretary of the Advisory Board, working on Appraisal Night, taking care of the Amtrak volunteers, and a myriad other activities pursued in the support of her beloved museum.

She had a wealth of stories about her motorcycle stunt rider years. Most of us knew she had been a catcher on the softball team. And we all heard about her beloved family. It was a special privilege to meet Stevie, Robin and Kevin at the memorial held here at the museum on May 17, 2003. Alice Burnett, Pearl’s sister, was here too (the family resemblance is very strong). We wish to extend our thanks to the family members for coming to the museum to share warm memories of Pearl. She was a pearl.

Announcing the Klamath County Historic Photo Album – Volume II. Presented by The Herald and News and the Klamath County Museum. If you have photographs of bygone days in this area, would you share them with us. Simply drop off your photo(s) along with a brief description, your name, phone number and address to The Herald & News by Wednesday, August 6. Or you can bring your photos to the Klamath County Fair on Thursday, August 7 through Saturday, August 9 and we will scan them while you wait.

Klamath County Historic Photo Album – Volume II
Please enter my order for:
____ copies of Klamath County Historic Photo Album – Volume II at the pre-publication discount price of $29.95 each. I understand that I will be notified when the books are available and will pick up my order at the Herald and News.
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