

REACTIONS REVIVAL

Popular local band from the 1960s reunites more than four decades later

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

The ReActions, Wallowa County’s premiere rock ‘n’ roll band of the late 1960s, recently reunited after a 46-year hiatus. The group reformed for an Aug. 6 performance in honor of a class reunion for both Enterprise and Joseph high schools of the era. More than 100 Wallowa County graduates from the late 1960s attended the reunion/rock concert that proved rock ‘n’ roll isn’t just the music of youth.

Band members Henry Kinsley, Dave Morgan and Andy Gilbert attended EHS with Kinsley and Morgan graduating in 1968 and Gilbert graduating in 1970. Kinsley’s stinging lead guitar, along with Morgan’s piano and organ skills and Gilbert’s pounding drums, led the group to working several gigs per week during their heyday.

The band played its first gig in October 1964 at a Sadie Hawkins dance in the EHS little gym. Kinsley played a Fender Duo-Sonic, Gilbert a red sparkle Sears drum kit and Morgan a de-tuned electric guitar to substitute for bass. The school canceled a planned DJ for the event and paid the band \$75 for their performance.

The ReActions had a 12-song repertoire at the time that included Beatles numbers and such garage rock staples as “Louie, Louie.” Several numbers were played twice to fill out the night. It didn’t matter — a girl at the dance called her father, who presided over the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and had him



Steve Tool/Chieftain

The ReActions today — still rockin’ and rollin’ at the Joseph Community Center on Aug. 6.

listen to the band’s performance. As a result, the band played a dance at Cloverleaf Hall the following weekend. Morgan borrowed a real bass for the next few gigs with the band eventually buying him a Baldwin piano on the installment plan.

The band didn’t encounter adult resistance to their rock ‘n’ roll music. The EHS band teacher allowed the boys to practice in the school’s music room. They also practiced at the Jaycees and Cloverleaf Hall while becoming adept at picking locks and breaking and entering as the boys had problems remembering to bring building keys.

“We used to do it all the time,” Kinsley said with a laugh. “It wasn’t that we weren’t supposed to be in there, but we’d get tired of waiting for the key.”

Kinsley and Morgan found the band name by searching encyclopedias. The name was initially spelled “Re-Actions,” but the band later settled on “ReActions” as the official spelling. They played nearly all of the EHS dances and many at Joseph High School. As a crowning

achievement they served as the main band at Chief Joseph Days in 1970, which garnered the group more than \$2,000.

As a top 40 cover band, they couldn’t wait for Hazel Foster’s “Music and Plumbing” store, located at the space occupied by Blue Mountain Computers, to open in order to peruse the latest hits. The store offered both recorded music and instruments and gear. Gilbert got his first guitar there, and the band bought nearly all their instruments and amps through the store.

The band eventually incorporated a number of originals, and their popularity reached such heights locally that they had the option of choosing which dances they wanted to play. They once recorded a 2.5-hour live performance that Wallowa High School paid to use at a dance.

Although the ReActions eventually wrote 50 to 60 original songs, the idea of recording demos for a record label never surfaced.

“We were waiting to be discovered,” Kinsley said. “We were just having a good time playing.”

Growing success took the

band to playing gigs in La Grande and Baker and traveling to Idaho for Boise and Orofino performances. After Kinsley and Morgan graduated, the band members stayed in touch to a limited extent but never again discussed music in a ReActions context.

“This is our first conversation about this in 46 years,” Gilbert said at the band’s second rehearsal. “We never discussed it; we just went on. This is a holy moment, sir.”

Morgan’s father lived in Imnaha for many years and during visits occasionally played with Kinsley, including several stints with John Fogerty when Troy had a music festival in the late 1970s.

After the individual band members settled down, Kinsley worked in local mills and even tried his hand on the Nashville music scene, eventually owning a gift and music shop in Joseph. Morgan became an electrical engineer in San Diego, where he still lives, and Gilbert became a staff member at a Eugene church.

At their second band practice the band had found their groove, making flawless runs

through “Spooky” and “Goin’ up the Country” before launching into other gems of the era.

The moment of truth at the reunion dance proved the band hadn’t lost their touch, as they played “Midnight Hour” and a number of ‘60s pop and rock classics for their three-hour performance. The size of the dance floor crowd and the kitty stuffed with bills showed the ReActions still have something to offer.

Two days later, Kinsley marveled that the performance went so well.

“It was good. We made a few mistakes here and there, but we were pretty good considering the short practice time we had. It was fun and we enjoyed ourselves.”

Gilbert returned to Eugene the following day, while Morgan planned to stay in the area until September. Kinsley said he and Morgan may perform together locally in the next few weeks.

Although nothing is set in stone, the ReActions discussed the possibility of reforming to play local gigs during summers when Gilbert and Morgan visit the area.

Thunder Run results

The third annual Thunder Run Biker Rally brought hundreds of visitors to Wallowa County Aug. 25-28. Here are the winners of the event’s biker games:

- Weenie Bite: Karen and Clint Formanski, British Columbia
- Ring Toss: Karen and Clint Formanski, British Columbia
- Slow Drags: Gary Bethscheider, Joseph
- Barrel Races: Steve Warnock, Imnaha
- Potato in the Haystack: Kim Hanson and Wendy DiBene, Nampa, Idaho
- Hot Rod Harley Drags: Wildman Greg Horrell, Elgin
- Show and Shine winners:
 - Class 1 (rode in): Cotton Bill Moore, Enterprise; Soft tail custom.
 - Class 2 (trailer in): Wildman Greg Horrell, Elgin; 1952 flathead in 1948 frame.

New fall arrivals!

Sweaters, leggings, jackets & boots!!!

New Summer Clearance added daily

Stop by today!

Open Daily
10 am – 5 pm



Uptown Clothing & Accessories
in Downtown Joseph
12 S. Main St. • 541-432-9633

Samples a winner at Juniper Jam

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

Sunny skies and the sounds of open-air music welcomed several hundred attendees at the third annual Juniper Jam on Saturday at the Wallowa County Fairgrounds. Eight bands and several songwriters performed at the event, which serves as a fundraiser for the Wallowa Valley Music Alliance.

WVMA Director Janis Carper, who coordinated the festival, saw a lot of things to like about this year’s event.

“I was absolutely pleased with the festival and attendance,” Carper said. “There were people coming in all day. Looking at pictures, everyone looks happy, like they’re having a good time, and that’s the point.”

This year’s festival featured the inaugural T.R. Ritchie songwriting contest. Ten finalists, including local musician Caleb Samples, played their entries

for a panel of three judges. Samples was chosen as one of the contest’s two winners for his song “Thunder Rolling from the Mountains,” which he says describes his feeling that the Nez Perce tribe still maintains a presence in the Wallowas. For his efforts, Samples won \$200 and a featured spot on the festival’s main stage.

Songwriter Rob Kneisler of Washington won the other prize for “Grasshopper Baggage.”

“I probably wrote the song

two months ago,” Samples said. “Chief Joseph was my inspiration for writing it. I wanted my kids to have a little better understanding of the Nez Perce here. I admire their way of life and the simplicity of it. Many things about it just feel more normal to me.”

Carper said the success of this year’s festival ensured its future return.

“I was really glad we did the songwriting contest because it put a focus on the songwriters.

Jane Kirkpatrick's latest book
The Road We Traveled
is available now



THE BOOKLOFT
Across from the courthouse in Enterprise
107 E. Main • 541.426.3351
always open at www.bookloftoregon.com • booklofteoni.com

I’m really thrilled we had nice weather and that people had fun.”

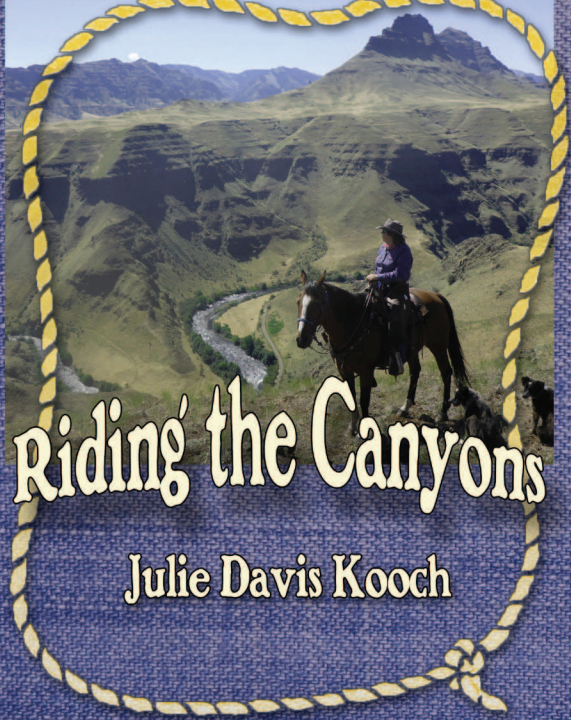
See Philip Ruud at
Wallowa Valley
Eye Care
(Dr. Baileys Office)
September 14th

519 W. North St.
Enterprise, OR 97828
Call 800-678-3155
for appointment



**Ruud's
HEARING AID
SERVICE**





Riding the Canyons
Julie Davis Kooch

Sequel to My Life on Joseph Creek

BOOK • Josephy Center in Joseph
SIGNING • September 20th at 7:00 pm

**STOCKMANS
LOUNGE**
formerly Lears

Open Mic every last Friday of the month
starting in September
First Open Mic Night hosted by
JORDAN MASLACH

HOURS: SUN-TUE 7AM-8PM
WEDNESDAY CLOSED
THURS-SAT 7AM-10PM
SAT - LIGHT MENU 8PM- CLOSE & SUN LIGHT MENU NOON - CLOSE
SUNDAY: TV SPORTS · Afternoon bar menu

111 W. Main in Enterprise 541-426-3300