

## The History of Little Red and the Rocking Hoods By Wayne McGee

It all began with my 11<sup>th</sup> birthday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1964. You can see the Kay 6 string flat top behind me. That was my birthday present.



I played it until my fingers got sore. Then I quit. Joe-Ann McGee, my mother, was a great pianist and did not want it to go to waste, so she learned to play it. And then Joe McGee, my Dad bought her a shiny red Gibson Les Paul Jr. electric guitar and amplifier from Louis Johnson Music. I wanted an electric guitar so I knuckled down and got sore fingers again until they toughened up and I learned to play that flat top. During that time, my middle brother Joey got a snare drum, my sister Julia got a beautiful Martin tenor ukulele and my baby brother Eddie got a baritone ukulele. And I got a gorgeous Fender Jazz Master. The McGee Family Band was born.



In 1965, we started playing in Columbia, SC for church socials, sub-teen groups at Earlewood Park and the Veterans Hospital. At that time, we played mostly folk and country music. On October 22, 1965, we played at the State Fair on the WCAY bandwagon. For a while, Sandy Joyner played drums with us and our neighbor's daughter Kathy Wooten would occasionally play her guitar and sing a song at the VA hospital. She did not understand why the Vets cracked up when she stated that her G-string might break during her song. ☺ My mother had to explain after the show. We started playing Top 40 and Rock & Roll and played regularly at the Memorial Youth Center at Maxey Gregg Park. The McGee Family Band was now Little Red and the Rocking Hoods. Julia now had a Mostrite bass guitar and Eddie had a 1965 Vega Folk Ranger 5 string

banjo. Joey had a full drum kit now and took lessons from Jamie Boozer's drum teacher, Mr. Marden. My Dad had to buy a Chevy van to haul all of the gear and the band.



Shortly thereafter we had to buy a second van for the people. By 1966 we were playing nearly every weekend. After trying several different keyboard solutions, we settled on a Hammond Spinnet Organ with a Leslie tone cabinet for Little Red on February 7. Sandy's parents had issues with so many gigs that we looked for a replacement drummer. On February 12, 1966, we played our first gig with Jamie Boozer, who became our second drummer. We discovered he and his sister Donna could sing. Donna joined us as well. On April 2, 1966, we were featured on the Old Sarge Jamboree on TV.



Now Little Red was playing a 1966 Gretsch White Falcon. Louie Johnson liked us a lot. ☺ June 4, 1966 was a marathon. We entered the Belk Teen Time talent contest hosted by Woody Wyndham, played in the afternoon at Trenholm Plaza and then a private party that evening. We won the talent contest both for the week and the Grand Prize!



On June 13, 1966, we were on The Shimmy Show. We started playing regularly at Midlands Shopping Center and Wells Marina at Lake Murray. On August 18, we played at a Fish Fry for Senator Fritz Hollings. By now my Dad bought me a white 1966 Joe Maphis Mostrite double neck guitar. Donna's daughter Pebble joined us as "the world's youngest go-go girl".



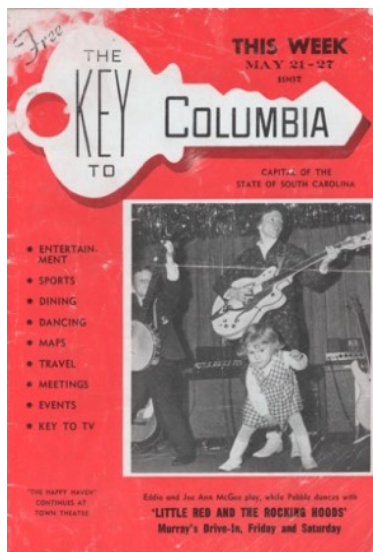
The week of October 17<sup>th</sup> we played at the State Fair on the Grand Stand with Bobby Bare, Stonewall Jackson, The Harden Trio, June Black, Arthur Smith and the Crackerjacks and the Swinging Medallions. November 26, we auditioned for the Columbia Exchange Club Statewide Talent Contest and were accepted. The winner got to go to the Ted Mack Amateur Hour show. We had also started to regularly play for the Quaker Oats "Aunt Jemima Bandwagon" program. It consisted of a "Pancake Jamboree" and live entertainment. We were one of several bands chosen to play. The Quaker Oats agent cooked and served pancakes, bacon and sausage while we played in the parking lot or on a flatbed trailer. And just like playing at Midlands Shopping Center it was rain or shine, hot or freezing. My Dad and Jim Boozer made wind curtains and bought a space heater to keep us warm in the winter. December 23, 1966, we played our first gig at the NCO Club on Fort Jackson. Playing the military circuit would become a large part of gigs. I know all of these dates because I kept a log in the beginning. I don't know why I stopped.

February 11, 1967, we played at the Exchange Club Statewide Talent Contest. And came in First Runner Up.



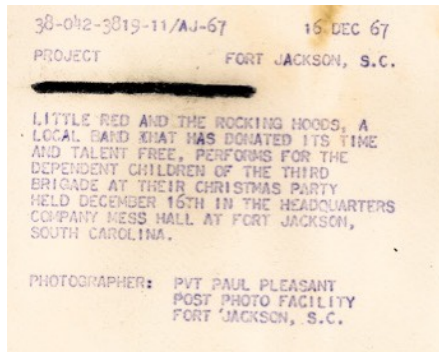
May 12, 1967 we played the first of many gigs at Murrays Hamburger stand in West Columbia. The policeman who patrolled the lot while we played was James Metts, later to be Sheriff Metts.

May 24, 1967 we were featured on the cover of The Key To Columbia magazine.





We also started playing Sunday afternoons at the Service Clubs and the Induction Center at Fort Jackson. This gave us the opportunity to try out new songs. On November 6, 1969, we received a Certificate of Appreciation from the Third US Army Headquarters for our volunteer work with the Army Service Club Program.



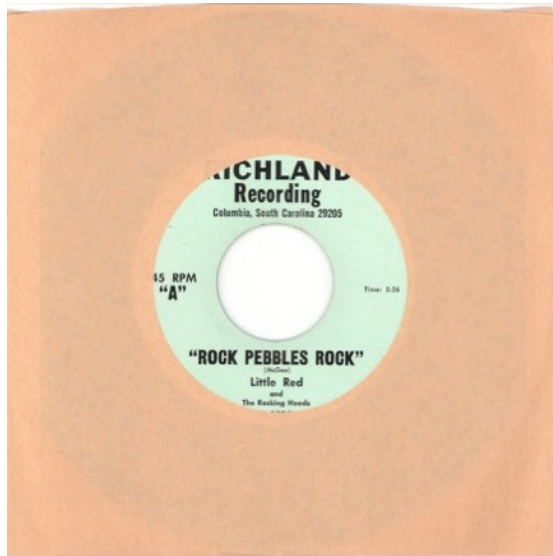
We also played a number of times at the Carolina Children's Home and Epworth Orphanage.

Jamie and his parents lived in a house on Lake Murray. When the weather was good we would practice on their patio facing the lake. There were frequently many boats in the cove getting a free concert.

In addition to the ukulele and banjo, Eddie started played bass trombone and I started playing organ and tenor sax.



Little Red wrote a song about Pebbles called "Rock Pebbles Rock". We went to Homer Fesperman at Richland Recording Studios and recorded it as well as "Twist and Shout". We got some airplay on WCOS and sold the records at our club dates.



One of these records made it to Europe where “Rock Pebbles Rock” was included in 2004 on a 33-rpm vinyl album called “It’s A Go-Go World”. You can find several video compilations on YouTube including a video that I made. There are multiple videos on my YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2X3cXGikoZAYwPGMWN5r5w>



From 1968 through 1970 we played a lot of gigs at Midlands Shopping Center and across the state with Quaker Oats, various teen clubs and military base clubs. Donna’s son Bobby was born with some health issues and Jamie’s other sister Sandra Boozer Lyles started singing with us. This made it easier when Donna was unable to be with us. When she was with us we could now do 4 part harmonies. Sandra also had a son, Little Chris as he was known then, and joined Pebbles as a go-go boy. Little Chris and Pebbles would sing a song when they were there. Pebbles sang “The Good Ship Lollypop”, “These Boots Are Made For Walkin” and “The Little Blue Man”. Little Chris sang “Animal Crackers in My Soup”. The mother of the Boozers, Ruth, would sometimes get up and sing Tiny Tim’s version of “Tip-toe Through the Tulips” or “I Like Onions”.

In 1969, we started occasionally playing during intermission at the Starlite Drive In.



The military bases usually had at least 3 kinds of clubs, Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO) and Servicemen's clubs. Large bases sometimes had multiple Servicemen's clubs. We played them all, and there were very different musical tastes at the different clubs. Navy bases called their NCOs Chiefs. We played the clubs at Fort Jackson, Sumter AFB, the Charleston Navy Base, The Paris Island Marine Camp, Fort Bragg, Aiken Radar Station, Myrtle Beach AFB and Fort Gordon. We would leave right after school, drive 2 or 3 hours, set up, change clothes and play 4 hours. Then tear down, pack up and drive home. We frequently got home about dawn. We would get some sleep, get up and do it all over again. We usually packed dinner and ate in the van on the way down.

On May 8, 1970 tragedy struck. Joey was driving the equipment van with Donna, Jamie and Julia. One of the front tires blew and the van rolled. Jamie's right arm was severely injured and Julia was pinned under the van. Thank God she was in a sandy ditch or she would have been crushed. We lifted the van up and pulled her to safety. A Paris Island Hospitalman, Charlie Neal, Jr., on leave stopped and administered first aid. It took 45 minutes to get an ambulance onsite. Charlie was awarded the Navy Commendation for his actions.



Julia and Donna were badly bruised from head to toe. Jamie's right arm was too damaged to repair and was amputated below the elbow. Coyne Bain wrote a column about the accident in The State newspaper on May 18, 1970. The van was totaled and much of the equipment suffered some damage. While Jamie and the girls healed, we repaired the equipment and replaced the van. In the videos we are publishing, Jamie's right sleeve was pinned up until his artificial arm arrived. On a number of occasions Jamie went to visit with a new amputee to give them hope. In spite of the loss, he could shoot pool, drive a stick shift car and barefoot water ski.

On February 10, 1971, we were contracted to play for 2 weeks at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba. This was the result of some of the Navy Exchange upper management seeing us perform at the Beaufort Naval Hospital. We drove from Columbia to the Naval Air Station at Norfolk, VA on March 25, 1971 and spent the night in the Ely Hall barracks on base. The following day we boarded a Military Airlift Command (MAC) flight to Cuba. We got these stickers to put on our equipment and baggage.



I think this one we got at the PX.



For 2 weeks with one day off we played every club on the base. One night at the White Hat club our performance was taped. Selected songs from the tape are posted on my YouTube channel. This was a great gig. We stayed at a house with multiple bedrooms and a fully stocked fridge. We had all base privileges and a bus with assigned drivers. We could explore, swim, snorkel whatever all day as long as we were ready to perform usually at 5:30. We were also assigned to a mess hall for dinner before the shows.





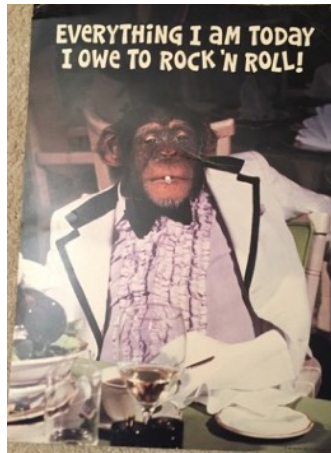
Upon our return, we were invited to the S.C. House of Representatives and introduced to the members by State Representative Arnold Goodstein.

There are lots of photos of the tours that I have scanned and posted at [http://rwmcgee.com/Little\\_Red\\_and\\_the\\_Rocking\\_Hoods.html](http://rwmcgee.com/Little_Red_and_the_Rocking_Hoods.html)

The next big band event at least for me happened when in June of 1971 my Dad told me to follow him over to the mechanic's house that did work on the vans so he could drop one off for maintenance. Just as we drove up his step-daughter walked out the front door in her Spring Valley High JV cheerleader outfit. I didn't leave the yard until I had a date with her. Three years later we married on June 22, 1974. As of this writing we just celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Here's the outfit:



and



On September 22, 1971, the band received a Certificate of Achievement from the Midlands Center for retarded children for 25 hours of volunteer work at the center. We gave free concerts to the children that were mobile and played acoustically for the bed-ridden children in the wards.

The November issue of Ties magazine carried a feature story of the band. My Dad worked for the railroad.



We continued our weekend gigs mostly in South Carolina until November 18, 1971 when we flew a MAC flight from the Charleston Naval Air Station to Ramey AFB in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. This is on the far northwest corner of Puerto Rico. We then traveled by Navy school bus to Roosevelt Roads Naval Base at the east side of the island. We played for 2 weeks spending Thanksgiving there. We got to see the rain forest El Yunque, took the ferry to Vieques where we swam and snorkeled at Green Beach. We were invited to tour many of the ships in port including the German destroyer SS Mölders. One of the sailors sent us souvenir lapel pins a few weeks later. I still have mine.



Here we are at the Mariposa Chalet where we had Thanksgiving dinner and a photo of the stickers we bought while there.



We returned home on December 2, 1971. The Navy Exchange was so pleased with our tour that on January 7, 1972 we were put under contract to the NATO base at Keflavik, Iceland in June and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba in August. We continued to play every weekend. Eddie added playing guitar to the instruments he played, Jamie acquired a Moog Synthesizer.

In the spring, we played for a week at the Galaxy Club on the same show with Jackie Wilson. That was killer because I was taking 21 hours that semester at USC and had 8:00 AM Psych and Calculus classes.

Many of the Officer's and NCO clubs we performed at would have the main act as well as a guest act in the middle of show. On June 3, 1972 at Shaw AFB, the guest act was Lou Rawls. We got his autograph on the calendar.



Other acts were The Harmonica Rascals, The Human Lightning Rod (huge tesla coil lightning machine) and Pat Garrison, a belly dancer.



On June 11, 1972, we loaded up and drove to McGuire AFB in Wrightstown, NJ. The next day we flew to Iceland for 2 weeks. Notable events during that 2 weeks, we were there over the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Bobby Fischer was playing chess for the world championship against Boris Spassky in Reykjavik and the Surtsey volcano erupted off the coast. Major communication breakdown on how to dress. Little Red in Columbia, SC asked the Navy Exchange in New York how to dress. The response was early spring. But that was early spring in NY, not Columbia. We went to the PX and bought some warm sweaters upon arrival. The temperatures were around 50°F, greater than 70% humidity and a constant wind made it feel like it was in the lower 40s. It never really got dark, it just went from daylight to dusk to daylight. You would come out of the clubs tired after the performance, the sunlight would hit you and suddenly bowling seemed like a good idea. ☺

Note: When I posted the rest of the photos on my web site, there is a separate folder of the trip to the whaling village. Not for the faint of heart. One awesome sight we saw was the Gullfoss waterfall.





The sailors donated some hats and one of them personalized them for each of us. I still have mine.



And of course, a shot of us in concert:



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Posing with the entrance sign and on a ramp.



In 1973 Donna was unable to continue playing with the band.

Jamie had a hook made to fit on his artificial arm. We went down to Charles Towne Landing and dressed up like pirates for a promo shoot. We performed as Captain Hook and the Pirates for grins. And money.



For a while in 1974, Robbie Hazle joined us. On advice from an agent we briefly performed as "Krystal" to shed the kiddie band image. Everyone knew who we were, so that was dropped. Now we looked like this.





1974 saw us return to touring Puerto Rico and Cuba. This was a 4 week tour starting in the middle of March and ending in April. The first week was in Puerto Rico, then we flew via C-130 from Roosevelt Roads to Guantanamo Bay. Two weeks in Gitmo as it is nicknamed and then another C-130 flight for another week in Puerto Rico. This trip we played all over Puerto Rico. We played Fort Allen in Ponce. I learned to drink rum at the Don Q distillery there. We stayed several nights at the Hotel Borinquen in San Juan. The Black Angus Bar (brothel) was across the street. Back then the Navy had a station in Old San Juan where we performed. This was our last international tour. We continued playing clubs upon our return. Joan and I were married June 22, 1974. Later that year we returned to our very first line up. So now we looked like this.



We continued to perform, but on a reduced schedule. All of us had full time jobs that made scheduling gigs difficult. We played through 1975 and called it a career. Jim and Ruth Boozer have both passed. Most of us are on FaceBook. Eddie's wife Lynn is on FB, so he does see some of the posts. Joey, Julia and I retired at the end of 2016. Now I have had time to write the history, scan and post many of the pictures of our adventures with our fans. We had a great time entertaining you. It was a magical time that allowed us to see and do many things we never dreamed of. The skills I learned performing and speaking to groups had a great influence on my career. For all of you who came to our performances, wherever, the McGee and Boozer families thank you.

Little Red (and Joey)

& the Rocking Hoods





### 2019 Reunion Concerts

In October 2018, I raised the prospect of a band reunion with all of the McGee members. We all agreed. We started a song list and also contacted Sandy Boozer Lyles who also agreed to join. We started practicing separately as we are now spread out between South Carolina and North Carolina. Our December rehearsal had to be cancelled due to winter weather, so our first face to face rehearsal was in January 2019. We started face to face rehearsals monthly at Eddie's house in January 2019. We settled on a 31 song 2-hour playlist of mostly 60s and 70s rock. As the first concert date approached, we had more frequent rehearsals until we were satisfied that we had regained the sound we were proud to present.



On September 21 we played our first concert in nearly 45 years at the Doko Park Amphitheater in Blythewood, SC.

That was followed by concerts in Greenville, SC and Willow Springs, NC.





We were adding additional songs and planning for potential 2020 concerts.

Then Covid-19 hit. Practice was delayed and then Sandy had a stroke. We restarted practice after getting vaccinated on September 20, 2020, with Sandy coming back in October. We continued to practice monthly, but Sandy's health was not good due to the stroke. On May 30, 2022, Sandy decided to leave the band. We had to add new songs to replace her missing songs.

Little Red finally retired from Blue Cross/Blue Shield and we played an acoustic concert at here retirement party on April 14, 2023.



Retirement Party



On October 21, 2023 we played at a music festival for the HOA at Oak Ridge Hunt Club in Hopkins, SC.

Sadly, Pebbles passed away in 2024. For 2024 we are adding additional songs for a fall concert.

And the beat goes on....



Little Red



Wayne





Joey



Eddie and Julia