

The Storm Also Rises

by Tom Scheft

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“You guys [the Rising Storm] really helped define the ’60s for me ... much more than the super groups like the Beatles and the Stones.”

Ron Fantasia, record collector

“[We’re] like a dancing bear.

It’s not how well it dances, but that it dances at all.”

Bob Cohan, guitarist for the Rising Storm

“I certainly can’t explain it. It’s curious and amazing - and obviously flattering - to think that something six high school seniors did for fun 25 years ago now is considered valuable to anyone other than those six people.”

Todd Cohen, bassist for the Rising Storm

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A while back, a friend showed me *Goldmine’s* 1989 article on the top 100 collectible record albums. I had been told the Rising Storm was a perennial pick, and there we were:

The Rising Storm. Remnant 3571. A Calm Before The Rising Storm. 1968. \$500. Mono. One of the collectible garage/frat records of the ’60s. Recorded by a group of college students in Massachusetts, this album features covers of Love’s “Message To Pretty,” the Remains’ “Don’t Look Back” and Wilson Pickett’s standby, “In The Midnight Hour.” The group got together a few years back for a reunion and recorded another album.

Well . . . almost. First, the title was just Calm Before. Second, the year was 1967. Third, that 500-buck tag sounds reasonable, although an Italian collector recently paid \$1,300 for an unopened copy. [*Editor’s note: All prices in the article quoted were based on near mint quality, not mint -- i.e., unopened -- and were compiled from 1989 sales figures.*] Fourth, the Storm did covers, but there were also five originals on the album. Fifth, we weren’t college students; we were “preppies” at Phillips Academy -- commonly referred to as “Andover,” since the school is situated in Andover, Massachusetts.

Ahhh . . . Andover in the ’60s: coat-and-tie dress code most of the time, button-down shirts and Weejuns, haircut and sideburns length requirements, no girls, rich kids, teachers called “sir,” demerits, curfews, required morning chapel, the rumor that putting aspirin in Coca Cola could get a girl “high,” terrible food. Let’s face it. If somebody is going to set the record straight (no pun intended), why not me? I was/am the drummer.

A Little Bit About Me

The visions that rock 'n' rollers like to talk about -- those epiphanies that tell them, hey, I want to make music, they're pretty clichéd: Somebody saw Elvis in Memphis, Muddy Waters in a little Chicago blues club, the Beatles or the Stones on Ed Sullivan. Typical.

Not me. My cousin Gary's bar mitzvah reception. 1962. Four guys. Black chinos and white shirts. Ventures wanna-be's. "Walk Don't Run" was playing 26 hours a day. These guys had the sound -- all instrumentals. Right there in my cousin's basement. I was an extremely cool 13-year-old, cool enough not to let anyone know my heart was doing paradiddles (drum talk) as I stood six feet away and watched. I mean based on the way I felt, these guys were the Ventures.

I have no idea what the name of the group was. I just know I was hooked -- hooked in the purest sense - in love and energized with a sound and a beat. Simple and undeniable. Literally and figuratively electric.

So why did I gravitate toward the drums? I've got a couple of theories. First, the drummer in the group was wearing a bright red blazer. Cool. (A few years later, as drummer for the Storm, a favorite outfit of mine would be brown boots, red jeans, white belt, white Merimekko shirt with red polka dots, red tie with white polka dots and -- small world -- red blazer.)

Second, realism and economics. I didn't own a guitar, wasn't sure I could master the guitar (small hands). But the drums . . . every song was basically bop-bop...bop. Remember those Ventures hits? bop-bop...bop, bop-bop...bop, bop-bop...bop Hey, I could do that!

With no money for a guitar and no idea how or where to get drumsticks, I improvised. Using an extra pair of oversized wooden salad utensils - a fork and spoon - I'd sit on the floor of my room and play along with a Ventures album, trying to keep my right hand (the fork) steady (16th notes), while the left hand (the spoon - held in the traditional grip) went bop-bop...bop, bop-bop...bop, etc.

By the time I was a freshman at Andover, I could bop-bop...bop with the best of 'em. I'd go on to hone my "chops" by jamming with my younger brothers, Billy and John (seven and nine years younger, respectively). We'd play along to records -- me wailing on a cardboard box, while they strummed tennis rackets. (During a recent conversation, Billy -- now a writer for "Late Night with David Letterman" said I expanded my kit with a plastic trash can [turned over] and on occasion used a different brand of drumstick [the green roof slats that came with Lincoln Logs].)

At this time it never really dawned on me there were other beats, other *important* beats that I might want to learn. It never really occurred to me that one's feet might be involved on any kind of meaningful level. But make no mistake. While I never told anyone specifically, I knew one thing for sure: I was a drummer . . . a good drummer. Hey, I could play with the Ventures, couldn't I?

Before you dismiss that last sentence, there's an importance there that should be acknowledged. In some ways it is the essence of a lot of rock music and undoubtedly the catalyst for many (most?) rock bands. It is the simple, honest (yet distorted) belief: I can do that. Sometimes it's said (or thought) excitedly; most often - I believe - it's said arrogantly: "I can do that . . . and *better*."

Kenny Aronoff, an exceptional drummer known primarily for his work with John Mellencamp, talked about this briefly in a 1990 article for *Modern Drummer*. To paraphrase: As he was growing

up, he knew he was as good as Ringo; if only those other three guys in the group could see him drum, if only he had the *chance* to show them, then he would be a Beatle. John, Paul, George and Kenny? Naw. But ... John, Paul, George and ... *Tommy*. Yeah! (Or perhaps it's best to write Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!). And if it didn't work out with the Fab Four, I could easily take over for Charlie Watts.

Looking back, it's funny to think how strong those feelings were, how true they seemed, how unfair fate was... and how incredibly ignorant I was. But such is adolescence. It's taken me almost 30 years of practicing, studying, working briefly with a fine teacher (Larry Duckworth), playing, and *learning to listen* in order to understand my limitations as a rock drummer, as well as my strengths. I've also learned to appreciate the talents of drummers I'd failed to recognize in my throes of teenage *hubris*. But, at the ripe, old age of 15, study music? Study drumming? Really practice? Get real. I was great!

The Guys

Bob Cohan. Then: Lead guitar. Bright. Funny. Animated. Sensitive. Mischievous: Got his father in a French restaurant to call for a waiter by snapping his fingers and saying, "Cochon!" ("Pig," as opposed to garçon, "waiter"). Two of my sisters, Sally and Andrea, had big crushes on Bob. He would often perform wearing a blue belt with red polka dots. Had a Carolina blue guitar cord. Performed in bright yellow vinyl pants once. (Encountered a little perspiration problem about three songs into the first set.) Now: A lawyer. Married to Cheryl (a venture capitalist). Five children.

Todd Cohen. Then: Bass. Bright. Nice. Vulnerable. My sister, Harriet, had a big crush on Todd. My favorite story: Todd came from a household in which only classical music was played. When he was seven or eight years old, he was outside one day when a convertible full of teenagers came screeching around the corner with Elvis blaring from the radio. Revelation. After that, Todd -- ever fearful of his father finding out -- would sneak into the family car and hunt for rock 'n' roll on the radio, which -- fortunately -- operated without a car key. Now: A business editor for a major North Carolina newspaper, *The News & Observer* (Raleigh). Married to Elaine Westarp (also a journalist). Three children.

Charlie Rockwell. Then: Organ. The only musically trained member of the group. Quiet. Serious. Bright. Soft-spoken. Great athlete (skiing and baseball). Now: A ski instructor in the winter. A surveyor most of the year. Races motorcycles. Also, a lieutenant colonel in the Vermont National Guard. Married to Madeline (an ex-motorcycle racer, a ski instructor, and mom). Two daughters.

Rich Weinberg. Then: guitar, backing vocals tambourine. Brilliant. (early acceptance at Harvard. SAT scores: 800 math, 790 verbal; 800's on three achievement tests.) Funny. Animated (did a hilarious impression of Love's Arthur Lee singing "My Little Red Book."). Many thought Rich and I were brothers - a comparison that used to amuse me yet mildly irritate Rich. Perhaps it went back to the day when, as he wandered into the Andover infirmary, a big nurse grabbed him, said, "You were supposed to be here over 15 minutes ago," and dragged him off for a shot. She socked it to him over his babbling protest, then said, "Next time, Scheft, I expect you on time."

I always admired Rich for several reasons. He never flaunted his intelligence. He had a great sense of humor. And he was definitely his own man - especially when it came to fashion. Rich was one of the first people I ever saw wear bell-bottom pants; they were electric blue, purchased in "The Village." His typical performance outfit consisted of those pants, a bright blue shirt, a white tie with

blue polka dots, a navy blue double-breasted blazer, and black Thom McAn boots. And in what had to be to the Andover crowd the equivalent of James Dean's red jacket, Rich sported a green and gray paisley blazer his senior year, an inimitable act of sartorial revolution that unquestionably horrified the student and faculty ranks of the prep school fashion police, driving them to grope frenetically for TUMS and/or smelling salts.

Now: A doctor and chief of gastroenterology at a North Carolina school of medicine. Married to Cath (also a doctor). When he turned 40, his loving wife surprised him with his "wildest adolescent fantasy": a Fender Stratocaster and Fender Twin Reverb amp. Rich hightailed it to the nearest music store and bought every special effects pedal in stock.

Tony Thompson. Then: Vocals, guitar. The leader of the group. Bright. Artistic (designed the album jacket). Sensitive. Creative. An early experimenter with instruments and tape recorders. Now: A lawyer. Married to Mady (also a lawyer). Three daughters. "Born again" musically, thanks to MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface, a system of integrating computers and music).

Andy Paley. Then: No idea. He didn't go to Andover, although rumor has it he was booted out of a Vermont prep school. A little bit later: Legendary Boston rocker with the Sidewinders. Brief "teen idol" career with his brother, Jonathan, as the Paley Brothers; they released an album on Sire in the '70s. Now: Filled in on bass at our 15th reunion (1982). Played and toured with Jonathan Richman. Helped produce the Brian Wilson comeback album. Produced the music for "Dick Tracy." Really is a friend of Madonna. Has also worked with Little Richard and Jerry Lee Lewis. Lives in California. Big guy with Warner Brothers.

Tom Scheft. Then: Drums. Funny. Mischievous. Creative. Now: A teacher in a school of education at a small North Carolina university. Married to Laurie (also a teacher). One son (very handsome -- whom I'm grooming to be another Andy Paley).

Erik Lindgren. Then: A preppy at Northfield Mt. Hermon School in western Massachusetts, 1969-72. Keyboard player for TNT, a Harrisburg, Pennsylvania garage band, 1969-76. Now: A musician who actually makes a good living at it. He performs with Birdsongs of the Mesozoic, a four-piece instrumental group described as "the world's hardest rocking chamber music quartet," with albums on Rykodisc, Ace of Hearts and currently Cuneiform; he scores films and commercials; he produces and records countless bands from the New England area on his label, Arf!Arf! Records. Erik is the one most responsible for keeping the Storm alive, kicking and available on album and CD. Married to Derel Lee (who raises ponies).

In The Beginning

To the best of my recollection, before the Storm, the seminal "band" began sophomore year (fall 1964) with me banging on textbooks with drumsticks while Todd played the chords to the instrumental "Wild Weekend" on a borrowed guitar (cheap) and amp (even cheaper). After literally hours of that, Bob joined in one day on lead with an acoustic guitar. Bob was a determined player who, as was the trademark of millions of aspiring guitarists in '64, could pick a pretty decent version of "San Francisco Bay Blues."

I don't remember exactly how Tony became involved, but it was a short time later that the four of us were making sounds in the basement of the Music Building. Particularly memorable was Tony's incomparable one-finger lead technique on "The McCoy," a Ventures tune. In addition to that song

and “Wild Weekend,” we added an original, “Cherokee,” another instrumental ditty whose main riff was brazenly stolen from the hourly chimes which emanated from the Andover bell tower.

None of us owned any of the equipment used at those sessions. I borrowed the drums of Cai Underwood, a particularly talented drummer recorded for posterity on the two Apostles albums which came out of Andover. Underwood was a powerful, yet lyrical player who was not content to simply lay down a backbeat. He influenced my technique a lot. I spent a lot of time just watching him practice with the Apostles. At the time I was still a “hands only” player. By the end of the school year, Charlie, a guy with actual years of music lessons on piano, had joined. Rich was hanging out with us.

By fall '65, we returned to school with our own equipment. I had a set of Kent champagne sparkle drums and a cymbal that was probably made from old tin cans. (It came with the set.) Bob had a new guitar and amp. Tony came with two microphones and a desire to be the lead singer. And Todd, our bass player, came with . . . not a bass guitar. Some salesman had sold him a regular electric guitar and told him just to use the top four strings. (Honest.) Tony ended up buying that guitar from Todd, who then bought a real bass guitar.

I had spent a good bit of the summer honing my right foot. I'm sure my parents still wake up to cold sweats and sounds of kick boom-boom, kick boom-boom (snare and bass drum) reverberating inside their skulls. While my left foot remained idle, my other three limbs had religiously worked out to the Kinks' “You Really Got Me” and Paul Revere and the Raiders' “Just Like Me” over and over . . . and over and over and over.

Our first practice that year was magical. It was immediately obvious how much we'd improved, and we were thrilled. We were playing songs like “Louie, Louie” and “Little Latin Lupe Lu.” I had added an 18-inch Zildjian sizzle cymbal. (I just loved the sound.) We spent the year practicing Friday nights, Saturday afternoons, and Sunday afternoons. During that time Dean Schroeder, a classmate and a fine drummer who played in a couple of Andover rock groups, showed me a few things . . . such as how to do a drum roll.

By year's end we'd played at a couple of dances. There were three excellent groups light years ahead of us, but on two weekends four dances had been scheduled. Lucky break. We started out as the Remnants, which Bob says came from a Sunday School textbook title, but it was later decided that name was too much like the Remains, the already legendary Boston group. Todd had been leafing through a senior history syllabus and came across a heading describing the prelude to the American Revolution as . . . (drum roll, please) . . . *The Rising Storm*. The name change was unanimous.

Rich was now playing tambourine and doing back-up vocals. A couple of would-be singers had come and gone, but Tony had turned into a terrific vocalist and took over that job.

We left school that summer with a firm resolve to improve. I'd buy a new set of Slingerland drums (with a red swirly finish), a 20-inch ride cymbal, and hi-hat cymbals. I'd actually learn to incorporate my left foot. (Move over, Ginger Baker!) However, we knew in our hearts that no matter how long we practiced, no matter how much we improved, no matter what new equipment we bought, when fall '66 rolled around, we'd be the number two group and quite a ways back from the Trolls, our peers. They would be the group to play at the annual fall mixer for Andover and its sister school, Abbott Academy.

Fall '66. We were in Tony's room when Bob burst in. One of the Trolls was on academic suspension; they couldn't play the dance. Our reaction? Imagine Christmas to a five-year-old. Receiving an Academy Award. Your first kiss. Winning the Publishers Clearing House Sweepstakes. This was better. We practiced hard to get ready for this, our first major gig. Tony helped add a flair by bringing each of us a different sample of Merimekko fabric, which we then used to cover our amplifier speakers and the front of my bass drum. My cloth had bright red splotches on a bright yellow background.

As for the Andover-Abbott Mixer, we were a hit. A lot of people were amazed at how much we'd improved, and we heard high praise from our peers, such as, "Hey, you guys don't suck at all." As to that occasion, an apocryphal story has surfaced that we won the hearts and minds and hormones of our teenage audience by playing a 45-minute slow song. Not true. (But such is the stuff legends are made of.) However, we did distinguish ourselves by playing a couple of much-longer-than-usual slow songs toward the end of the dance. Looking out from the drum riser, I saw a sea of tightly held couples with closed eyes and satisfied smiles. Ahhh . . . memories

Record an Album? Get Serious

It was a tradition at Andover for groups to record "vanity" albums or 45s during the senior year. You'd run 500 to 1,000 copies and sell them at school and neighboring girls' schools. And, of course, there were relatives.

As I recall, in the fall of 1966, only Bob had this fervent vision of how well we could do on vinyl; the rest of us were pretty skeptical. By November, we were all believers, although 500 seemed like an awful lot of albums.

Of course money was a concern. The Andover administration had passed a rule that groups could only charge \$50 to play at a dance. The album would cost \$1,000. We figured that if we charged \$3 an album, which was reasonable for those days, we'd have no trouble breaking even and there might even be a little profit. We'd saved up a lot from playing dances at Andover and local girls schools, but we still had to borrow a few hundred bucks from our parents. So, armed with "Honest, Mom and Dad, we'll be able to pay you back," we went to our folks. They cooperated. We did pay them back.

Recording the Album

Continental Recording in Framingham, Massachusetts was the site of Calm Before. I don't remember much about Continental, except the deal was that for a flat fee of \$1,000, we could record as long as we wanted (about a week). The studio was painted an institutional dull green -- that same green used in school classrooms, that same green that makes time drag on forever. Joe Flynn, maybe in his early twenties, was the engineer. Nice guy.

It all happened during spring break, about five days. We put down the instrumental tracks, then overdubbed the vocals and any effects. We got the opportunity to name the production company anything we wanted. Remember our first name, the Remnants? That's how we got Remnant Records.

Five-hundred albums were pressed. Sales were good. However, an awful lot of parents and relatives bought an awful lot of albums. Rich's grandmother bought at least 25. (If only I knew then what I know now.)

Calm Before: Side One

1. "Don't Look Back"

A Barry and the Remains song we all loved by a group that was a tremendous influence on us and probably 99 percent of the kids in the Boston area who played rock 'n' roll in the mid-to-late '60s. I first heard the Remains album with Todd in an Andover record store that had a booth in which you could play records before buying them. After we heard "Don't Look Back," we played it four more times in a row. Then Todd bought the album, and we ran back to the dorm to play it for the other guys.

We took the Remains' ending for "You've Got A Hard Time Coming" and tacked it onto our version of "Don't Look Back," then finished things off with a Yardbirds-inspired "rave-up." Our version is fast, and Tony really had to struggle to get all the words in during the talking part. By the way, I'm the second yell in the first little break; Tony is the first yell.

2. "To L.N./Who Doesn't Know"

A Bob original. The L.N. was really "Ellen," the middle name of Bob's girlfriend at the time. I recorded some backing tom toms with mallets, but they don't come across well in the mix. (Wait a minute . . . subliminal drums! Talk about innovative.)

3. "I'm Coming Home"

A group original. Great story. The tune was first titled "My Girl Joan." The lyrics, probably a very accurate reflection of the male prep school mentality, were filthy, thus meshing wonderfully with the "Louie, Louie"-inspired melody. We wanted to put the song on the album, but the lyrics had to be "cleaned up." There we were, in Tony's room, sitting around while Tony strummed an acoustic guitar and sang the original words, lyrics that might have made Dr. Ruth blush. We were howling. Basic comments were, "We can never record this!" "This song is disgusting!" "Do you eat with that same mouth?" However, Rich was particularly adept at coming up with new, "safe" lyrics. "Hey," Rich would say, a radiant grin emerging, "what about 'kissin' your lips'?" Yeah, we'd say. And slowly but surely, the good replaced the bad and the ugly . . . and Tony slurred the rest.

4. "A Message To Pretty"

Nice harmonica by Rich. Tony turned us on to Love's first album. We listened to it for hours and hours, and performed several of the songs.

5. "In The Midnight Hour"

With all due respect to Wilson Pickett, our more dominant influence was the Rascals. We performed lots of their songs. Dino Danelli was (and continues to be) a huge influence on me. He got me started twirling my sticks.

6. "Frozen Laughter"

The mystery voice at the beginning belonged to some woman who happened to be at the studio. No one seems to know why she was there; two theories remain: custodian or secretary. But *why* she says *what* she says and *how* she says it are another story. Here goes: After the instrumental and vocal tracks had been completed, Tony woke up one morning to hear a voice in the distance say, "Henry . . . is that you?" He thought *that* would be the *perfect* opening to the song. He left instructions with Continental, but things got lost in the translation. "Henry" became "Honey" and the voice from afar came through the speakers with the subtlety of a bludgeon.

When Tony first demoed the song, I thought it was terrible. Then he informed me there would be no drums on it. I knew it was terrible. But the boy was way ahead of his time, wasn't he? In my defense, Tony's first version was just Tony strumming an acoustic guitar; the song had a very incomplete feel. Charlie camp up with a wonderful keyboard part. Nice acoustic picking by Bob. Nice backwards guitar by Hcir Grebniew. And nice lyric contribution from T.S. Eliot. (Didn't he later play bass with the Marshmallow Overcoat?). What's that percussive "pop" sound in the beginning? It's Tony's right index finger inserted in the left side of Tony's mouth and pulled along the left inner cheek -- with some reverb and echo thrown in. This song has shown up on numerous bootlegs. One time Tony showed me such an album whose cover bore a picture of a syringe injecting some kind of dope into a vein. Tony looked at me and shook his head slowly. "Isn't it wonderful how some people have chosen to portray my music," he said.

Calm Before: Side Two

1. "She Loved Me"

A Bob and Tony original. (My favorite.) Another great story: We were in the studio. The instrumental and vocal tracks were done. We were listening to the playback when Bob said, "Whoa! There's supposed to be a moan before Charlie's break." A what? we said. A what? the engineer said. "A moan," said Bob, "a sexy, orgasmic moan." So the engineer rigs a solo mike and sends Bob back in the studio. Bob steps up to the mike. He's got on headphones. The rest of us are in the engineer's booth, separated from Bob by a big pane of glass. The song starts. Bob is concentrating, head bobbing to the beat, eyes closed in concentration. I don't remember who, but someone says, "Hey, guys . . ." and starts making faces at Bob. In a matter of seconds we are all pressed against the glass, pulling on our cheeks, sticking out our tongues, and inserting fingers in various facial orifices. Bob still has his eyes closed. The music builds. Cuts. Bob opens his eyes. Sees us. And lets out a shriek of laughter -- kind of like Phyllis Diller being goosed. The rest of us wanted to keep it. Bob refused. He and the engineer kicked us out of the studio momentarily. The moan was recorded. If you listen carefully during the fade out, I'm doing a Love "7 and 7 Is" drum part.

2. "Mr. Wind"

A Rockin' Ramrods song written by Ron Campisi. We loved the Ramrods, another very influential Boston band. One guy at Andover thought R. Campisi was a pseudonym Todd was using. Nope. It's-a-small-world" story: My mother's maiden name is Wind. One of my uncles actually said to me, "How nice of you to include a song about your grandfather on the album."

3. "Big Boss Man"

We got most of the arrangement from the Syndicate of Sound. It was Bob's idea for the whimsical, off-pace beginning. Rich reminded me recently that at the dances I used to ask a girl to walk across the floor before I started the "strip joint" cymbal lick -- verrrry embarrassing. (Hopefully I've matured since then.)

4. "Bright Lit Blue Skies"

Another Ramrods song. No, Todd didn't write this one either.

5. "The Rain Falls Down"

A Rich original. His first lyrics were pretty weak, according to the rest of us, so he went back to the drawing board. He wrote this about a girlfriend. He says it always rained when they got together. (Yeah, right. He was probably reading Hemingway for an English class.) He used a glass ashtray for the middle part on a Fender 12-string someone had left in the studio.

6. "Baby Please Don't Go"

Rich on vocals. Bob with the blazing guitar . . . which reminds me: As usual the tempo is fast. Bob worked long and hard on the opening riff, and it didn't always go flawlessly. We'd usually wait to do "Baby" until our third set, after Bob had warmed up all night. Even then, the speed of the song and the fact that Bob was right there in the glare of the spotlight continually exerted a persistent, nagging pressure on his teenage psyche. On our first attempt in the studio, he hit it perfectly, but I screwed up on the drums, thus killing that take. (Tape slicing wasn't part of the deal.) Bob was livid. "I get that opening perfectly and you stop!?" he blared at me, a mixture of rage, agony and incredulity. "Don't ever do that again!" I believe things went fine on the next take, although the harmonic Bob hits in the beginning was pure accident . . . another example of rock 'n' roll serendipity. At the end Rich yells, "Torque out!" For a short time the group tried to coin a new slang term: to torque. ("Boy, I really got torqued on that test." "Check out the torques on that babe." "Hey, buddy, torque you!") It was our little joke. Never caught on.

The Making of the Album Cover

One thing some people like about our album -- perhaps more than the music -- is the jacket. If, as one of my current students did, you take a quick look at the cover today -- six high school kids in suits and ties -- you might say what she said: "Oh, I see you used to be in a gospel group." But back in '67 I imagine the Association influenced the album dress code. We even tried a picture (like on the Association's first album) with everybody running and jumping in the air. But each of us wanted to be first, so there were a bunch of pictures taken on a beach (and never used) with various ones of us leading the pack and managing to block out somebody else. One more thing about the suits: We never wore them when we played, except for a "battle of the bands" competition at Where It's At, a short-lived Boston music club. We advanced after the first round, but lost after that. The pictures were taken in Barnstable, a small community on Cape Cod, Massachusetts. The photographer was Bobby Byers. The front cover was developed by Bobby and Rich. The overall album layout was conceived by Tony.

Breaking Up Is Hard To Do

In my 28-year history of playing in various groups and with various people, I've learned that there are plenty of people out there who can play, but that doesn't mean you necessarily want to be around them. There was a lot of magic surrounding the Storm that kept it from falling prey to the evils that destroy many a group. First, we were high school kids, unburdened by a lot of the responsibilities older people have. Second, money wasn't an issue; the school had its hard and fast policy: \$50 a dance; period. Third, we never considered ourselves hotshots; we had several big breaks, and we felt fortunate to get where we got. We had a lot of respect for other bands; we weren't "put-down" people. We definitely had our favorite groups and rock heroes, and while we thought we were a good band, I don't remember any of us talking about the Storm as a great band. Fourth, we liked each other . . . a lot; we spent an amazing amount of time together talking, eating, practicing and performing; it's no exaggeration that from sophomore to senior year at Andover, we almost always met together at lunch and at dinner. Fifth, none of us considered music a career; it was fun, creative, exciting, and powerful, but mostly fun. Our parents expected us to go to college and become the doctors, lawyers and professionals we became. And we expected that too. (If only I'd known then what I know now.)

The Reunion

Saturday night, June 13, 1992, Andover, Massachusetts. In the big gym. The Storm will play three sets. We'll include a lot of songs from our 1982 "world tour": the Remains: "Don't Look Back" and "Why Do I Cry"; the Animals: "We Gotta Get Out Of this Place," "It's My Life," and "I'm Crying"; the Ramrods: "Mr. Wind" and "Bright Lit Blue Skies"; the Rascals: "Slow Down," "Good Lovin'" "Midnight Hour," "Mustang Sally" and "Come On Up"; the Stones: "You Better Move On," "Reelin' And Rockin'," and "Route 66"; the Outsiders: "Time Won't Let Me" and "Respectable"; the Storm's "I'm Coming Home." And there'll be "Gloria," "Louie, Louie," and others.

It was 11 years ago when the word first broke to us that we had released what was now "a collectors' item." Jubilant, yet in a state of disbelief, the Storm began to brew (thanks in great measure to Boston musician/producer Erik Lindgren, record collector Ron Fantasia, and my sister Harriet). In early September 1981 we met in Boston and rehearsed for two days, then shared the stage with local band the Neats at a Boston bar, then shared the bill with several other bands at the Rat, and finished things off with an afternoon session at an outdoor café in Faneuil Hall.

The first gig was an evening straight out of a Fellini film. The crowd was either in its twenties and dressed in black (there to see the Neats) or it was friends and relatives of the Storm (ranging in age from mid-twenties to low-eighties). As we started our first song, the cheers were resonant, the flashbulbs binding. Talk about a rush. There were other highlights that evening. Rich ran into a young woman who insisted she wipe the sweat off his neck. Charlie was approached by a young woman desirous of an autograph. "What should I sign?" he inquired. "How about this," said the woman, sticking out an ample T-shirted chest.

The gig at the Rat was strange, a real hodgepodge of musical styles from the four groups that evening. The bands shared a "dressing room," an unfinished area in the back with a few chairs and no door; a stack of broken glass was neatly swept into a corner. But when it was showtime, there we were - on the same stage that had launched the Remains. (Our enthusiasm did get a bit dampened.

Our second set was delayed a bit, thanks to the preceding band blowing our bass amp speaker, breaking the bass drum pedal, and – in the true spirit of musicianship -- getting the hell out of there.) We played; we survived. I remember finally getting to bed at about four in the morning.

The third gig at the Flower Garden Café found a big crowd surrounding the outdoor eating area. We drowned out the traffic noise nicely. The next summer, June 1982, we played at our 15th class reunion. Erik recorded us.

The Present

It's still fun for us, a lot of fun, a fantasy come true, but a fantasy that doesn't get out of hand. When we played together in 1981, several people wrote articles about us. Nathan Cobb, staff writer for the ***Boston Globe***, had a particularly memorable section: "The fact that the Rising Storm was back last week at first seemed significant only to the small number of people who knew they went away in the first place, which was mainly their friends and relatives. But one other group of fanatical fans took notice: hard-core record collectors."

We are energized by the enigma that lets us continue to be a band -- even if it means 10 to 15 years between gigs. To get ready for our upcoming reunion, we practiced this past January -- four days, at least eight hours a day. Lots of lozenges and Advil were consumed. We were a little rusty, but things began to gel quickly. It was a wonderful time, in spite of sore backs and sore throats. Charlie helped salvage Rich's blistering fingertips by acquainting him with "Tuf-Skin," a product found at sporting good stores and a dandy remedy for kids' blisters from new shoes.

Erik has mapped out a pre-and post-reunion itinerary for what Rich has dubbed the "Ain't Dead Yet" tour: Thursday, June 11 - afternoon rehearsal in Boston; Friday, June 12 - morning rehearsal, afternoon recovery period, 10:30 p.m. set at T.T. the Bears; Saturday, June 13 - late morning set-up at Andover, sound check, reunion gig; Sunday, June 14 - recording date (two to three songs) in a Boston studio; Monday June 15 - drive to Hoboken, New Jersey for a 10:30 p.m. set at Maxwell's.

Trying To Put It All In Perspective

Only eight days after last January's rehearsal ended and the six of us returned to real life, an article by Todd appeared in ***The News & Observer***. His managing editor had told him to come up with a piece on the once-and-present group. Most of the article reiterated the Storm's high school history and brought things up to present weird cult status. But Todd also offered up a lot of his feelings and some interesting bits of analysis - interesting, perhaps, to the casual reader and Storm fan, but probably quite sobering to Storm members.

He describes the four days as "an exhumation of sorts" and reports the obvious physical changes: "The faces were more haggard, the jaws fuller, the hair thinner and grayer, the waistlines larger." Okay, that's expected, but other points emerge: "But despite the outward changes, the reunion seemed to revive our former personalities. The group leader still led; the comedian still quipped. The group's social structure and dynamics seemed eerily frozen in time. Old jealousies and insecurities seemed intact. "We bickered about the same things we had bickered about 25 years earlier. Who should play which guitar riff? Who should sing which harmony part? This band member's playing wasn't funky enough. That one's amp was too loud."

To those who are in bands, the above probably comes as no surprise. For while bands may start with the purpose of making music (or making money or attracting the opposite sex), they are forced to become relationships -- often intense ones. Consider: When John Lennon announced the break-up of the Beatles to his fellow band mates, he specifically said, "I want a divorce." Some might call that ironic; I find it all too literal.

I've thought a lot about Todd's above three paragraphs, and I've wondered how they came across to the other guys in the group. At first the tone seemed too somber, too brooding, too introspective. Perhaps that's just Todd. Or was it me and my spin? However, the article was full of other moods, some quite inspiring in their eloquence:

"But the music itself - a hard rock/rhythm and blues blend - was visceral and organic, as if we'd injected pulsating rock 'n' roll into our veins, and were recycling it back into the environment through our instruments and amps. And it told me that, while we'd gone our separate ways, the music still was in our blood, uniting us. Far more intriguing (than any Storm hype), though, is the chance that half-a-dozen middle-age men are getting to live out a '60s dream, playing that old rock 'n' roll one more time."

Amen. And that's why this month, when the six of us take the stage, we will take it -- and everything else that's part of this latest episode -- very seriously. This is our "fantasy camp," but better, because we don't play ball alongside the pros; we're right smack in their positions.

In the 25 years since Andover, we've put aside the music (to a great degree) for the fairly typical mainstream that our parents -- and we -- expected. But unlike so many past rockers who used to be in a group, we've had the glorious good fortune -- thanks to Calm Before -- to never stop being the Rising Storm. What a gift. What a miracle. After June I'll still climb the stairs to my attic, pick up a pair of sticks, and bang away on my practice set while a tape recorder plays '60s songs. Because Todd is right: It is in the blood. And I want to be ready. Because I'm betting the Storm will rise again . . . and again . . . and again . . .