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### Band takes step back in time

'1915 March' to debut; written by long-ago resident  
By Soumitro Sen

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Saturday, July 22, 2006

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Dave Bridges  
County Concert Band and his father's piece.

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Burtis Chapman Bridges is a name that is unlikely to ring a bell in anyone's mind in Nevada City today.

That's not surprising. Bridges was born in Nevada City in 1892 and had relocated to the Bay Area by 1915. All that remains of his native property is Bridges Lane off Red Dog Road, once a driveway to his father's shop and barn.

But Bridges will be re-introduced to residents of his birthplace on Sunday at the third annual Summer Musician Invitation Pioneer Park Picnic Pops concert. The Nevada County Concert Band will introduce a march, composed by Bridges in 1915, at the concert.

The three and a half minute musical piece, primarily written for a brass ensemble, was discovered by Bridges' son, Dave, in the late 1960s, soon after his father's death, among his personal belongings. But it was only in February 2004 that the son was able to find a link between the Nevada

According to Cheryl Baker, conductor of the band, the march manuscript had a subtitle which read "for the Grass Valley band." And Dave Bridges, while browsing the Internet one day, came to know that the Grass Valley Band was a precursor of the Nevada County Concert Band. He contacted Baker, who introduced some more instruments to the piece and made it suitable for a full orchestra performance.

"It's a fairly difficult piece and is a real crowd pleaser," Baker said. "I'm considering making it a signature piece for the current band."

Baker said the composition "moves very quickly and has a lot of scales in it."

Mary Whitmore, a band member, publicist and former president of the Nevada County Concert Band, said the music reminded her of the compositions of John Philip Sousa, the famous American march composer.

"I've played it in rehearsals ... and it makes it even more special that it was composed by someone in our community," Whitmore said.

But composing music was just one of the things B.C. Bridges did. Bridges was a true Renaissance man with various interests. He was a poet, a short story writer, a pianist, a clarinetist - with the Grass Valley band - but most importantly, a stalwart in criminology, with groundbreaking work in finger-printing. Dissatisfied by the extant texts on the topic in his time, Bridges wrote a book called "Practical Fingerprinting" in 1942. The book went on to become one of the bibles in the discipline and Bridges even taught summer classes in criminology at the University of California, Berkeley.


"He took whatever life gave him and created something amazing from it," Baker said. "When he wrote this march, he was only 23. He had so many more things to accomplish later in life. Just the direction that he went was intriguing."

Dave Bridges, 85, remembers his father as a very busy man he didn't get to see very much.

"He was always into writing literature - short stories for magazines, poems and stuff like that," he said. "He did get tuberculosis once and had to spend two years in an establishment (where patients were

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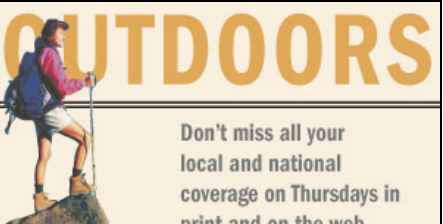
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treated). I was in there, and he made up a book of comic sayings and illustrated the whole thing."

The strange thing is, the son does not recollect the father, who died in 1968, delving too much into music.

"I saw him play the piano a couple of times," he said. "He used to play the tin flute sometimes, never saw him play the clarinet. Maybe he got interested in literature and other things and put music aside."

The march that will premiere at Sunday's concert is called the "1915 March." A total of 17 compositions will be played at the two-hour concert. Some of the other pieces that will be performed include "Folk Dances," by 19th century Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich; "First Suite in E Flat," by late 19th-early 20th century British composer Gustav Holst; and "March of the Toys" by the American composer, Victor Herbert, from the same period.

What is special about the Summer Musician Invitation Pioneer Park Picnic Pops Concert is that musicians from all over Northern California and western Nevada are invited to perform. This year, about 30 out of the 45 band members, will be coming from Reno, San Francisco, North Bay, Poway, Sacramento and Southern California. The concert starts at 5 p.m. on Sunday.

"Our concert is called 'Step in time,'" Baker said. "It will be filled with marches and dances and, of course, a time capsule when we go back to the history of the band in 1915.

"We usually get more than 500 to 700 people. We won't let the heat stop us; we'll keep cool."

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To contact staff writer Soumitro Sen, e-mail [soumitros@theunion.com](mailto:soumitros@theunion.com) or call 477-4229.

WHAT: Nevada County Concert Band's Pioneer Park Picnic Pops 'Step in Time' concert

WHEN: 5 p.m. Sunday

WHERE: Pioneer Park, Nevada City

ADMISSION: Free

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