

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

To those of you attending the North Coast Music Festival this past weekend, I hope that your weekend was enjoyable. I did not attend this year but have enjoyed many of the past events. I have been reminiscing about the years when the "Big Bands" were popular. During those days many of the great bands such as Gene Krupa, Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey, Tex Beneke, Benny Goodman and other big names visited our area with "one night stands". They played at the Eureka Municipal Auditorium, The Ferndale Fireman's Pavilion and the Loleta Fireman's Pavilion. I remember the first big band dance that I attended. It was held at the Eureka Municipal Auditorium in the Nineteen Forties. While a student at Eureka High School, I played the trombone in the marching band, the orchestra and the dance band and was very interested in the music of that era. This was my first chance to see and hear a professional dance band at work. The group playing that night was Ted Fiorito and his Orchestra. Ted and his group were very popular on the radio in the Nineteen Twenties and was very active for several decades. His bass player that night was a man who was famous in his own right. His name was Candy Candido. Not only was he an excellent bass player, he was famous for his voice range (from a very low gravelly bass to a startling high pitched falsetto). All in all, it was a very entertaining evening for me and one of my fellow high school musicians. We did not dance that night but stayed glued at the base of the stage so as not to miss any notes. That was the beginning of many memorable nights for me as the Big Bands found their way to our area. Another night stands out in my mind that took place in the late Forties. As vivid as the memories are of that night, I am not completely sure of the band involved. I think it was either Stan Kenton or Les Brown and his Band of Renown. The crowd was pumped up that night as the band was rated as one of the best. We showed up early at the Loleta venue so as not to miss anything. At 9:00 PM, the usual starting time, we had an empty stage and as the clock pushed 10:00 PM the band arrived full of apologies. Their bus driver got lost and could not find the Loleta Pavilion. We were assured that the band would extend their stay for an extra hour, which they did. It was worth the wait. I don't know how many bands I saw over the years but there were many. I could not start to name them all but most any famous Big Band that you might name in that period played in our area. It was a very wonderful part of my life.

Fred Nelson for Community Comment