

# Now We're Talkin

By Helen Marketti

## THE CYRKLE

### An interview with Don Dannemann

On Sunday, July 28th, I attended a show at Valley Dale Ballroom in Columbus, Ohio. Performing that day were Pete Best and his band. Opening for Pete Best was THE CYRKLE. They rocked the house! It was an amazing show! THE CYRKLE was a 60s band that have a memorable history with their hits, Red Rubber Ball and Turn-Down Day. They also toured with THE BEATLES in 1966.

After the show, I was able to get in touch with original and founding member of THE CYRKLE, Don Dannemann. We spoke by phone a few weeks later. Not only does the band still perform but they released a new CD this year called, REVIVAL. It is a 15-track collection of songs with a 60s vibe and feel. Goin' Steady with You, Dance with Me Tonight and We Were There are reminiscent sounds of the 60s which includes narratives of THE CYRKLE history. Listeners will be finger snappin', hand clappin' and toe tappin' in no time! Also included are 21st Century versions of Red Rubber Ball and Turn-Down Day. A fan favorite is We Thought We Could Fly which is a beautiful combination of 60s influence, Beatles and Beach Boys influence as well as remembering a time, a place and a friendship which will be discussed in detail. The song brought tears to my eyes during the show at Valley Dale as it can transcend to anyone feeling a love, loss and memory of people who were in their lives. The current line up for THE CYRKLE is Don Dannemann (vocals, guitar), Mike Losekamp (vocals, keyboards), Pat McLoughlin (vocals, guitar, hand percussion), Don White (vocals, guitar), Dean Kastran (vocals, bass) and Scott Langley (vocals, drums).

Don shares early memories. "I get a kick out of telling this story. My mom has always told me that when I was about ten months old, she hummed the song, Little Brown Jug to me and I hummed it back to her. So, I guess I was musical my whole life. My mom played piano and listened to classical music."

"One of my most vivid memories is sitting on our back porch in Brooklyn (New York) in 1955. I was listening to my new transistor radio that I had received for my birthday. I came across Alan Freed's Rock and Roll Show on station WINS. A doo-wop song came on that was called, A Story Untold by The Nutmegs. I loved it. I was listening to one great song after another

and missed my favorite television programs. I enjoyed listening to Elvis Presley and Little Richard. I originally started playing piano. But once I saw Elvis with a guitar, I felt that looked much cooler!"

Don started attending Lafayette College (Pennsylvania) in 1961. He majored in Industrial Engineering. His father had a small, sheet metal manufacturing company so it felt like the right fit.

"Lafayette was a big fraternity school," remembers Don. "As freshmen, you were not permitted to mingle with the fraternities. I remember hearing rock bands and rock music coming from the frat houses and thinking it was cool. I did attend what was called a freshman mixer and they had a band that was playing. When the band took a break, a couple of other guys started playing some songs. A friend suggested I join them with my guitar. I asked them if I could join and we started playing together. It seemed to unfold like magic because we all knew the same songs, the harmonies and so forth. That was the very beginning and we called ourselves The Rhondells."

He continues, "We started practicing together and they wanted to start playing gigs. But at the time, I had a girlfriend back home and I didn't really want to be in a band. Well things changed when I went home to visit and she told me we were through because she had a new boyfriend. I was heartbroken. So, when I got back to college, I told the guys I could be in the band since I no longer had a girlfriend. We started playing at frat parties."

"In the spring of 1964, we performed at what was called The Interfraternity Weekend. We actually did a cover "Beatles show" which was very successful. That weekend we met Warren Covington who was the leader of the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra. He thought we sounded great and invited us to play in Atlantic City!"

"So, Tom Dawes, Marty Fried, Earl Pickens and myself were playing at a place called the Alibi Bar. One night a gentleman walked in and introduced himself. His name was Nat Weiss who turned out to be a friend and business partner of Beatles manager, Brian Epstein! Nat said they were forming a management company in the United States and thought we sounded great. He gave us his business card but to be honest, we really didn't believe him at first."



Don continues, "Once we were back at Lafayette College, I decided to call Nat to see if he was really legit. Lo and behold he remembered me. He invited me to a party on the Upper East side in Manhattan. A buddy and I went to this party. I met up with Nat where he took me downstairs to a limo that was parked in an alley. The moment was surreal because sitting across from me was Beatles manager, Brian Epstein! He was a sweet and gentle man. We spoke briefly and he mentioned about getting something going with the band and to stay in touch then I stepped out of the limo and watched it pull away from the curb with my jaw down to the ground."

The excitement felt by Don and the rest of the group was unimaginable. A golden opportunity had fallen into their laps. "We recorded Red Rubber Ball which was a demo by Paul Simon. It became a huge hit for us. We had a contract with Columbia Records and signed with Nat Weiss and Brian Epstein's management company," recalls Don. "At this point, we were still The Rhondells and we agreed that we needed a new band name. We met with Brian Epstein and he handed me one of his business cards, told me to turn it over and there was THE CYRKLE written on the back. This was our new band name, complete with the unique spelling. The name and spelling were given to us by John Lennon! I'm proud to say that John Lennon gave us our name. I love telling this story."

"We recorded Red Rubber Ball in 1966. Then I joined the Coast Guard. While I was in the Coast Guard, Nat called and wanted THE CYRKLE to appear on the Hullballo television show and sing, Red Rubber Ball. Believe it or

not, I was granted leave for a few days to do the show. It was an amazing experience."

The excitement did not stop there. It was about to get even better.

"Nat then told me that THE CYRKLE were invited to go on tour with THE BEATLES!" said Don. "Thankfully, I had just finished active duty with the Coast Guard! We played about 17 cities with THE BEATLES. When we actually met them, I believe we were in Cleveland! I remember shaking each of their hands and had a wonderful conversation with George. He really took a genuine interest in us, our career and how we got started. Also on the bill with us was The Remains, Bobby Hebb who was best known for his hit, "Sunny", and The Ronettes but without Ronnie Spector. Ronnie was married to Phil Spector at the time and he wouldn't let her go on tour."

After a few whirlwind years, THE CYRKLE disbanded in 1968.

"After THE CYRKLE, Tom Dawes and I each started our own commercial jingle companies and had quite a bit of success creating memorable tunes for products and companies," said Don. "For each of us combined we created jungles for 7-Up, Nationwide Insurance, Swanson dinners, Continental Airlines, Coppertone, Alka-Seltzer and many more."

Around 2007, Tom Dawes got together with Don and suggested they get the band back together again just for fun. "We were excited about doing some shows together," said Don. "But sadly, Tom passed away from complications from surgery and we never got to do the reunion shows as we had planned."

This is where the song, We Thought We Could Fly fits perfectly into the story. "A photographer named; Daniel Coston showed up at one of our shows in 2018 maybe. Introduced himself and asked if he could take pictures. He then became a friend to us and he suggested we create a new album and that's how REVIVAL came to be. We Thought We Could Fly was a song recorded by Andrew Sandoval and Tom Dawes had sung background vocals. So, this was a way to create singing with Tom again and we adjusted the song with Andrew's permission. The song is a narrative of our days and memories together as THE CYRKLE. You can have the best instruments, the best sound engineers, the best studios, the best producers and so on but what you can not manufacture is the magic."

Fans can find REVIVAL on [bigstirrecords.com](http://bigstirrecords.com) (Big Stir Records)

ITUNES and other streaming services.

[theyrkle.com](http://theyrkle.com)

[helenrosemarketti.com](http://helenrosemarketti.com)