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I played alto sax for the first time in public recently. We outnumbered the audience, but we played with vigah. (Not viNEgah.) I’m a regular member of the Starlight Orchestra, specializing in foxtrots and a little Dixie with arrangements from 1927 to 1938.

Starlight is actually the EPA Starlight Orchestra, the renowned successor to our Hazardous Wind Ensemble. It got me back to the old clarinet axe after too long a layoff, let me work up sax, and keeps me heading in to the Environmental Protection Agency, where we practice at lunch.

What’s the path from our “Creeping Communism” and “Yale-Vassar- Merger-with-Bass Drum-as-Spermatozoon” formations to the Starlight Orchestra?

Start as Best Third Trumpet, subtle scriptwriter, and announcer for the Penn band in 1970 and 1971. (“THE PENN BAND: THE BAND THAT MARCHES BEST ON GRASS.”)

Meet Peggy in the Penn band. (“We don’t indulge in prepubescent humor like other bands,” she told the Philadelphia Inquirer.) Peggy, like me, has attended four YC reunions. Pick up the Ph.D. and discover the Baby Boom has already filled most slots teaching linguistics at “name” schools.

Next try the Pennsylvania National Guard Band (much preferable to the Saigon National Guard Band) in the seventies. The National Guard is especially notable for unfashionably short haircuts and a supreme waste of government money.

Lay out of music for a few years. Do environmental consulting. Do management consulting. Join the Agency. Play bridge on the weekends. Hone that twenty-two golf handicap. Get an insider’s view (from the budget biz) as the Gorsuch crew downsizes EPA.

Pick up the clarinet again after too many years. It’s like riding a bicycle— fingers go where they ought to and all the bad habits disappear. But the chops go far south. Nothing like fighting the embouchure while your fingers are wiggling right. Embouchure? “Just pucker up and blow,” as Bacall said to Bogey.

Have a girl (E’beth, YC ’04?). E’beth, now ten, has already been to two reunions. Twitch as your daughter plays more sophisticated music on her violin, better too, than you can play NOW.

Back to the Starlight. Most of us were minus-teenagers when those tunes were written and don’t know them firsthand. Some of them end up on endless playback in your brain. I walk around humming “Three Little Words” and “All the World Says I Love You,” the last courtesy of the Marx Brothers.

Here’s a way to spoil the day of anyone from our generation. Hum “The Candy Man.” (“Makes the world go ‘round/yes the Candy Man can...”) Now try to STOP humming it.