

Was speaking to my friend Seppo yesterday, and he asked me if I remembered the guys that we played with, during the life of the band The Edge of Time. That was easy for me, as it was the best time of my life. I have to start at the beginning though. The third Sunday in February of 1964, Seppo showed up at my house, and asked my parents if I could join his band. The reason I remember that Sunday, is because we had just got home from Sudbury, where I had sung in the Kiwanis Music Festival Gala. I had scored the highest mark in the festival that year, and was the closing performance. Not long after we arrived at home, there was a knock on the door. My dad answered, and what happened afterward would change the direction of my life forever. There stood Seppo. He got right to the point, and asked my dad if I could join his band. A discussion between my dad, and mom ensued. Dad felt it would expand my musical experience, and supported the idea fully. Mom on the other hand was worried about that terrible drug marijuana, and her son being influenced by it. Right then and there I should have told her that ship had already sailed. The final vote was counted, and that afternoon, I became a member of The Edge of Time. 14, and a burgeoning rock star. Gimme a couple of days, and the story continues, whether you like it or not.

So, here it is, the last Saturday of Feb. 1964. My very first rehearsal with the band "The Edge of Time". Nervous? You bet. 17 Riverside drive, Dowling Ontario. Spent many hours at that address. Doing what, you say. Going deaf. Amplifiers volume dials go up to ten. If they'd have gone to twelve, that's where they would find themselves. Met my bandmates that day. Seppo Valjakka, Denis Bodson, LenMaki, BobbyLarocque, and me. The very first song I ever learned was a song by a group in Toronto at the time. It was entitled "Nothing". The group was The Ugly Ducklings. Simple, but loud. I was to share a mike with Denis. He liked smoking the odd joint, and eating pepperoni. A sentiment shared by both. We ran thru a couple of other songs, by the Stones, and The Yardbirds. I learned that day that Seppo loved to cover Canadian bands, and I was to have the same love for Canadian music. Got home about nine thirty that evening, and realized on the ride home, my absolute love of performing was to take a turn, that I would be able to look back on in years to come. I just didn't realize it at the time. I've never asked Seppo why he chose me, but will be forever thankful, he did.

March of 1964. Azilda winter carnival. St. Agnes parish hall. The band arrives. I am now officially a for real, rock star. A rock star that has to yo heave ho the equipment to the stage, in order to play the gig. Gig, that was a new word i learned that day. Cool word eh?

Anyway, we had been rehearsing for three weeks before the so called gig landed in our lap. Got there at 7:00pm, set up, soundcheck, rocked our asses off till 9, and took a pause for the cause. I was as giddy as a school girl. Nothing against school girls, politicallycorrect, and all. The hall was full of insane teenagers, catholic teenagers. We went back on about 20 minutes later. First song "We gotta get out of this place", and I couldn't remember the lyrics. At that very moment, I wanted to do what the ltitle of the song said. But like a good Marine, ladapted, overcame, and made emup, asi went along. Learned another new word that night "Improvise". Nobody knew the difference. I don't know if i ever did learn the proper lyrics. It was like doing a new song every night. All in all it was a terrific night. WE had about 28 songs in our set list then, and many more to come later. Seppo, Len, Denis, and Bobby liked this new guy, that was gracing the stage with them. In celebration of our first gig together, we piled into our vehicles, and went to Deluxe drive in just outside of Copper Cliff, and, scarfed down about 20 cheeseburgers. Lots more stories to tell, andhopefully, lots more time to tell em. And by the way, Big D was the carnival queen. She was a fairly robust girl. Her name is Diane Paquette. I've stayed friends with her, to this day. We no longer call her Big D. She changed it, cause now, she's little D

So far, so good. The Edge of Time is churning right along. Rehearsals are going well, and were starting to get tight, and by being tight, doesn't mean we all require rehab. The sound has no bare patches. Our booking agent is keeping us busy, and our reputation is growing. Our next booking took us to the town hall in Skead. The following Friday, Espanola, and Chelmsford Mine Mill hall, on Sunday. That particular hall was home territory. Seppo, Bobby, and I all went to high school there. If we did well there, the opportunity to play with home court advantage would garner favor with the student council. Roger Couvrette, student council Pres. was a friend of mine. Case closed. Just before Dec. of 64 we went through our first lineup change. Our drummer Bobby was fealing pressure from his girlfriend to leave, as his time away was distancing her from him. Along comes Hughie Teske, a guy from my home town

Levack. A withdrawn kind of guy, but a fairly decent meter keeper. Plus he came with brand new Ludwigs. Our set list was now up to about 50 songs. Beatles, Yardbirds, Stones, Gerry, and the Pacemakers, Manfred Mann. The British Invasion had hit Northern Ontario, and the Edge was not going to be left behind. The only drawback of being in a band, is you never get to go on dates, cause your always playing at the places you'd take your date to. But I'm loving it. Seppo and I had taken on the habit of reinvesting the majority of our earnings, on expanding our equipment. We did that, until I left the band 13 yrs later, but we'll get to that. Life is better than good, and I was starting to see just how talented Seppo was with the technical side of the band. He had a million ideas, and over the next 13 yrs, . I was going to be witness to that talent.

Do you Believe in Magic? Well, The Edge of Time did. A good booking agent can work magic, and our was doing, just that. A weekend didn't go by without us being booked for Fri., and Sat. for months on end. Even the odd Sun. would find us playing. During the week we'd rehearse, and add to our set list, and when that wasn't happening, it was off to Sudbury to hang with our kind. Other members from other groups. Frank's Deli was where we congregated. Pastrami on Rye, and talk about what you say? The latest in equipment, whatbritish album was coming out, orsometimes, even girls. Go figure. For most of us, this wasn't a hobby. This was a vocation. Late summer 1965, one of our gigs was at Loellen High School. The gang, Seppo, Denis, Hughie, Len, and me. We arrive around 6ish to set up. No Denis? No problem. We don't start worrying until about 7. Plan B. We don't have a plan B. Seppo gets on the phone, and calls Dave Dunn. His band wasn't playing that night, so he came to fill in. Not so tough, as all the groups were playing the same material anyway. Only thing we had to determine, was the key we were going to play it in. Key of E for me please. Evening went off without a hitch. Didn't see or hear from Denis, for a couple of years, and second lineup change. In comes Joe Sawicz. Went to the same high school, asSeppo, and I. Funny guy. Came from Polish, and Scottish heritage. His family although great, put the funk, indisfunction. Joe just took everything, with a grain of salt. I always felt great knowing joe was looking after our bottom end. Couple of yrs. later, I ran into Denis at Frank's Deli. He was wearing a United States Army uniform. 101st Airborne Shoulder patches. He'd gone to

Buffalo, and enlisted. He was just coming home from Ft. Campbell Kentucky on leave. When he went back, he was getting his deployment orders for Viet Nam. The story continues.

While memory serves me, 1966 was going to be a year of change for the Edge. Music was taking a sharp right hand turn towards Psychedelic flow. With that, music such as Cream, Hendrix, Spencer Davis, were opening up new horizons in sound. Another band had established themselves as the sound from California. The Byrds. Our band had a habit of playing music that for most seemed non commercial. We did the songs, that other bands weren't. My Back Pages, Mr. Spaceman, Sunshine of your love, we were risk takers. I loved the chances we were taking. It sort of set us apart from some of the other bands, and kept us fresh. With as many bands as there were in Sudbury at the time, we were unpredictable. Sound predictable, we changed the name of the band to "The Chocolate Stop Sign". The first gig we played with the new handle, was in Espanola, at their community center. The band had a great direction, and with the change in the music we were covering, opened up our choices in music that would please everyone. A shakeup that no one saw coming, happened at the end of that night in Espanola. Hughie, our drummer was going thru some difficult times, in his marriage, and had a hard time focusing on laying down a solid groove for us. That night would be his last with the band. I missed him. Guess who showed up to replace him? Bobby, our first guy. He had a renewed spirit, and his sense of humor was great on trips to , and from gigs. He knew the dialogue from every Bill Cosby album, and entertained us to the point of tears, everytime. He could sound just like the Cos too. Being the true hippy that I was, I started to wear burlap shirts, stripped pants, and an attitude of "What me worry" I was getting cocky. A time that I look back on with embarrassment. Going thru a phase I guess. Went from a humble 14 year old, to a pain in the ass 16 yr. old. Trying to be an adult at 16, was not easy. I'm still workin on that one. Times to play in Sudbury were getting exciting. I call those days, The Joint Days, and it's not what you think it was?

Hey Hey were the Monkees. Who cares? Stop Sign, actually played their instruments, and well I might add. The summer of Love, 1967. Sgt Pepper, Doors, Jefferson Airplane. So much to choose from, and

now more places to play that music. Sudbury music scene was electric. Places like The Inferno, TheHub, and The Joint, had opened their doors, and the local groups were being booked to play those places. We were to frequent The Joint on more than one occasion. We became almost the house band there. A couple of weeks into that summer, Len Maki left the group, and another of our high school buddies joined our merry band. Larry Shaver. A very talented guy, with a great sense of humor. We also changed our drummer. A guy from Copper Cliff, and an alumnus from our high school. Ken Bois. He was to say the least, nuts. A good drummer, and loved to have fun. Beginning of July, we got a booking out of town. Friday night, the Arena in North Bay, and Saturday, The arena in Cobalt. WE rented a Chevy van in order to complete, this trip. Picture it, 7 guys, all the equipment, no hotel reservations, and no plan. Lets just go play music. And play, we did. North Bay was great. WE finished up at midnight, packed the gear, with a little help from our friend. We had a roadie. We'll call him Larry. His dad was a top Cardiologist in Sudbury. Larry was a student at Laurentian UNiv. Larry also liked to partake in the hemp. Larry was always happy. We got to Cobalt at about 4 in the am. Parked the van, and all it's inhabitants on a lookout over the town. About 7 that morning, I crawled out to see what kind of day it was, only to find an OPP cruiser parked behind us. When I opened the side door, not only I emerged □, but a waft of blue smoke, billowed out behind me. The officer asked me what was going on, and I imparted the info. He smiled knowingly, got into his cruiser , and went on his merry way. we didn't make much money that weekend, but we sure made a lot of memories. The Arena in Cobalt was an icebox, with no ice. Frigid to say the least. They had booked two bands, and we were to be the group to play the last half. We blew the doors off that place, and the kids loved us. First time I ever signed an autograph. I almost didn't fit in the van for the ride home. Ride back to follow.

Memory being what it is, Joe Sawicz had to leave the group, and we hired a new guy, MauriceChaput. Great bass palyer. Moe was slim, to say the least. Seen more meat, on a hockey stick. He wore Beatle boots, and couldn.t fill them.

Coming back from our Northern Ontario weekend, Seppo had been driving for Quite a while. Drove from Sudbury to North Bay Fri, played the gig in the Bay, packedequipment, then drove to Cobalt. We slept

in the van, all 7 of us, if you could call that sleep. Arrived at the Arena, 2 in the afternoon, setup, soundcheck, go for dinner, back at arena at 7, played from 9:30 to 1 am, packed equipment, drove to Markstay, and it's now 11 am Sunday morning. Stopped and had breakfast, and Larry drove the final leg of the journey. Arriving at Seppo's we all contemplated suicide, as we were whipped like rented mules, but boy that was fun, and we lived to tell about it. Moe Chaput wasn't with us for long, and Dominic Fragomini filled in on bass, for a good portion of that summer. More evenings at the Joint, and the Lakeview Hall in Azilda. We liked playing that place, cause most of the people that frequented that place went to high school with us, and they really supported our band. One of my favorite places to play was The Elks club on Windy lake. A beautiful place with great acoustics. We did a four piece one night as we were short one guitar player, and had a great night. It's fun to challenge yourself, and that night we met it, and put it to bed. Before the end of that summer we were back at the Lakeview. When we got there, the room was double booked, with two bands. Oh Oh, what to do? Dave Dunn had showed up, but the rest of his band didn't and we all showed up short of one guy, guess who. Our bass player, so again Dave played with us. This time though we had our equipment, and Dave had all of their equipment, and what ensued was LOUD, very LOUD. What a great night. I still can't hear as a result. Seppo was on his game that night. The Karma was just right, and I believe to this day, one of the best gigs we ever played. At the end of the night we probably did about 5 songs beyond shuttiner down. When you least expect it, sometimes Buddah smiles down on you, and great things happen.

How can I go on, in a world that's constantly changing? The amount of changes in equipment when your around Seppo, sure kept me on my toes. During the life of The Edge of time, Necessity was definitely the mother of invention. We were playing at the employees club in Levack. One of the songs we played that night, was by The Spence Davis group. I'm a man. Seppo had seen a group playing one night, and they were using a strobe light. WE didn't have a strobe light. So he got Pat Serpell to Switch the stage lights off, and on, while we played that song. Hokey, you say? The next gig we played, we were the proud owners of a strobe light. Seppo built one. Not only did he build a strobe, but a complete light system, with a guy to run them. Only group in town with that technology. Went with him to prom music

one day. He purchased a brand new Single pickup Fender Esquire. We went back to his place. We went downstairs, and he took the strings off of it, laid the guitar on the basement steps, took a blow torch, and burned the finish off, while scraping it off with a butter knife. When I saw the guitar, a couple of days later. It had turned into a Rickenbacher, with two pickups, a built in fuzz tone, and rather than a regular Fender white cream finish, Candy apple red. It was a guitar of beauty. Seppo was 17 when he did that. I was to learn the name James B. Lansing quite well, as every cabinet Seppobuilt, had those speakers in them. Phil Smith loved to see Seppo come through the doors of his business. We played quite a few songs by Cream. If the song required a WahWahpedal, we had one. Our PA system was second to none 4 eight foot columns with 10 inch JBL's putting out my voice. 200 watts of power, not to be outshone by the guitar amps. He took an old set of Remo drums, and completely refinished them in naugahide. If the band needed anything, and it could be built. Seppo built it. Everthing he did was self taught. I'll have to talk to his wife Claire, but I don't think there's anything he can't do?

Ride Captain Ride, upon this mystery Ship, The 60's, and 70's being what they were, for musicians of the time, it was magic. Our guide, was our imagination. Lennon, and McCartney paved the way, for the dreams, that were about to unfold. From sitting on my front step in Nov. of 63, and listening to my Sony transistor radio. Hearing Love Me Do, on CKLW from Windsor, a new dream was taking shape. Living the dream, was an appropriate saying. In our lives, people come, and people go, but for those who play music, our thinking is frozen in time. I now know why my father, and my mom would gravitate to their songs, and smile. I'm smiling right now, as I think of The Ugly Ducklings. For me, that group was a beginning, and led to many years of creating something, that couldn't be achieved alone. It was going to require hard work, dedication, but most of all, a little help from my friends. There were many friends along the way, but in the end, there was SeppoValjakka, LarryShaver, LenJonasson, HarveySchofeild, and me. The Chocolate Stop Sign. It has been 44 yrs, since the whole group played it's last gig together, at the Lakeview Hall, inAzilda Ontario. The hall no longer stands. It's been gone for at least 20 yrs. Maybe 10 yrs ago, Chemmy high got ahold of me, and asked if there was any chance the boys would reform for the 50th anniversary of the school. Larry, Lennie, and myself were living

in the area at the time. I contacted them, and they were in as soon as I mentioned it. Seppo couldn't attend, as he was living in Woodstock Ont. A couple of our musician friends filled in, to complete the quintet. We rehearsed for about three months. Beatles, Hollies, BeachBoys, was what we played. Harmonies were tight, backing music was professional, and for us it was pure joy. Seppo was on stage with us, as the guitars that were being played, he built. Go figure. His spirit was our guide that night. Love the man, like a brother. His company, as he is a master Luthier, is called Dr. Frankenstein Guitar Works., inPorta Plata Dominican Republic. I want to thank all of my friends, for indulging me for the last week, as I've shared these memories. They've meant the world to me. Love ya Sep.