

GREELY MOSS

Tony Texley- January 2022

A couple of years ago I was chatting with fellow PHS alumni Scott Beyers about Midwest Rock & Roll history and some of the bands he was a member of such as, “The Vanishing Americans,” “Cinema,” “Minnesota Blues Brothers,” “Don’t Look Back,” “Silent Street,” and “Sammy Jensen Band.” But the one I never heard of was the Pipestone high school rock & roll band, “Greely Moss.”

It sounded like a band I needed to write a story on, so here it goes.

In 1972 Scott Beyers started gathering fellow classmates who were interested in music to see if they could form a band. Quickly a central core of members came on board. Scott Beyers- lead guitar; Greg Bleeker- keyboards/piano; Bill Hicks- lead vocal/horn; Bruce Erickson- bass guitar/vocals; Brad Olson- drums. Shortly thereafter, Paul Ekstadt came on board as a horn and the rounded the group sound out.



The first practice was around winter of 1972-1973 in the basement of Scott Beyers’ house in Pipestone. When summer rolled around, practice sessions were moved to the garage. This arrangement was jeopardized when neighbors complained to the police about the loud noise. Pipestone Officer Gregg Christ was dispatched to check out the neighbor’s complaint. In the mid 1960s Gregg himself was a member of a Pipestone rock & roll band, the “Rebels” and had played lead guitar. Gregg also taught guitar lessons at the local Juricks Music Store in Pipestone.

Upon arrival, Gregg was complacent to stand and listen to the band practice. Gregg let them practice for another 15 minutes and then told them it was time for them to wrap it up. No mention to discontinue practicing in the garage was ever given. Maybe the fact that Gregg had given Scott guitar lessons led to his decision to be so lenient on the loud noise the band was creating.

As with any band, they purchased the records of the groups they wanted to play, then listened to them over and over to help their band get their sound down. Bill Hicks remembers getting cassettes from Scott containing the “Chicago” material he needed to learn. He would give them to his mom,

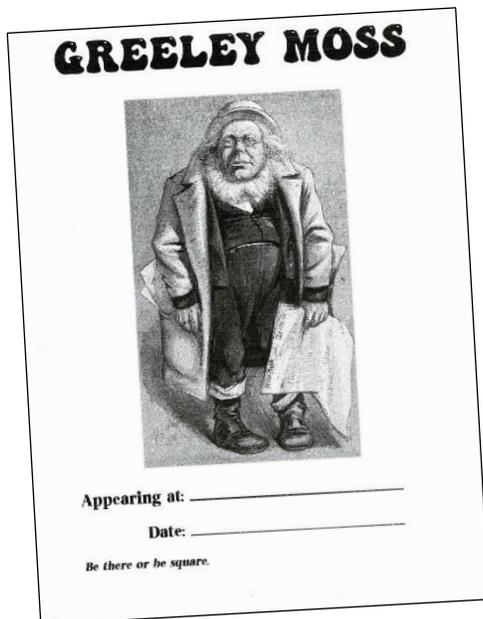
Donna, to listen to. Playing the piano and listening to the trumpet parts over and over again, Donna wrote out all the sheet music for Bill's parts. One day Scott took a trip to Schmidt Music in the Twin Cities and purchased a book that had all the scores for Chicago songs for each instrument. Bill also mentioned years earlier he would walk over to Bill Stone's house across from the Pipestone Hospital to listen to Bill's band "Hallucination Generation" practice, which ironically had the same issues with loudness and police that "Greely Moss" encountered.



I asked the guys how they came up with the name "Greely Moss." After much discussion on the matter, it was decided they had looked in a dictionary and saw Horace Greely. They dropped the Horace and ended up substituting the word Moss at the end instead.

In 1974, "Greely Moss" first gigs consisted of dances at Dolson Hill and Alexander Brown Elementary Schools. In these early gigs, the sets lasted about a half hour consisting of 7-8 songs. They would then play the same set over again.

Songs by the group "Chicago" were often lengthy and more complex in arrangement to learn but their set list continued to expand, and they were getting tighter as a band. Next up was a show for middle school students at the Pipestone High School auditorium with a large number of parents also in attendance in the balcony. This performance was actually recorded on Paul Ekstadt's reel-to-reel and is still available for worldwide distribution!



During this time, the band's set list included material by "Chicago," "Grass Roots," "Turtles," "Safaris," and Paul McCartney to name a few. They also included a number of songs from the hit movie *American Graffiti*.

One particular gig was mentioned by all members of the band during interviews for this story. In 1974, Greely Moss played a surprise birthday party for fellow classmate Jane Yseth out at her family's house in the country. A great time was shared with good food and great entertainment. I asked Jane what she remembers about that night, she said, "I just remember feeling how awesome it was to have such talented classmates and a group of friends that got along so well."

Greely Moss did have their own groupies called the “Moss-ettes” made up of friends, fans, and classmates.

Time constraints due to girlfriends, sports, choir and school band started taking a toll on the members’ time to practice and do gigs. Performing for the Minnesota State Historical Society meeting in Pipestone during the summer of 1975 turned out to be the last public appearance for the band, and then it was all over. One of the “Moss-ettes” recalled that final performance: “The ladies were very complimentary, but not sure they understood the lyrics or the music. The band was very loud, but the ladies were very sincere and listened and clapped politely.”

I was given the privilege of receiving a copy of a Greely Moss Live show from 1974 and I must say my favorite song was the ever popular “Wipeout.” They truly were a talented group of high school students who came together to enjoy their love of music and entertaining.

Scott Beyers sums it up: “We were a different kind of band in that we never really played a club, dance circuit or got paid much of anything, but, hey, that’s rock and roll.”

Maybe the “Moss-ettes” will organize a re-union of “Greely Moss” in the future? Only time will tell. I hope you enjoyed this blast from the past on the Pipestone high school rock band, “Greely Moss.” If you have any additional info or pictures to share, please contact the Pipestone County Historical Society.

