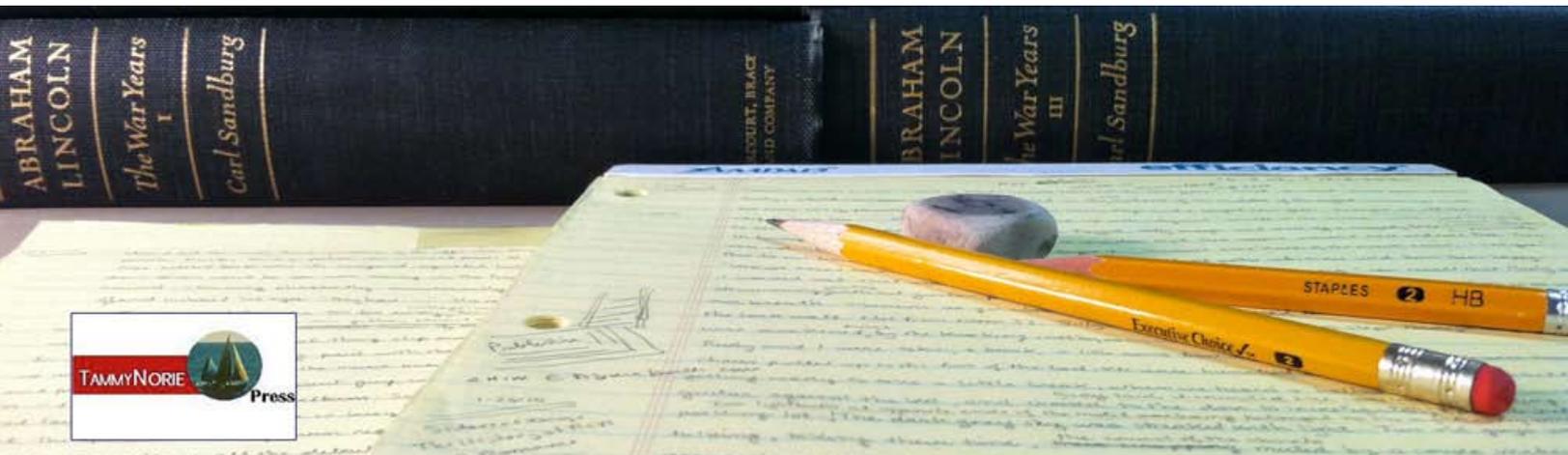


# Tammy Norie Press

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## Recollections and Inspirations

Posted on [August 7, 2012](#) by [Earl B. McElfresh](#)

A fictional band from Rochester called The Buicks figures in my novel *Sidereal Days, The History of Rock & Roll, A Romance*. The Buicks are modeled after an actual Rochester-based band called The Invictas. The real Invictas came along a bit later than the band in the storyline and, unlike the fictional Buicks, the Invictas are still a going concern.

Jim Kohler, Mark Blumenfeld, Dave Hickey and Herb Gross were students and fraternity brothers in Phi Sigma Kappa at RIT. They gained local fame as the bar band at Tiny's Bengal Inn where they built a devoted fan base and then branched out. Their song *Do the Hump* or simply *The Hump* was a regional hit and they released an eponymous album. As with the fictional Buicks, the draft hovered in the background of any footloose and fancy-free bunch of guys and service in the National Guard cramped the band's style a bit.

They traveled to their gigs in a big old Cadillac hearse with "THE INVICTAS" emblazoned on the side. They appeared at my high school, Olean High School, in January 1965. Our typical high school dance bands were pretty amateurish, they were high school kids. Hair: "short back and sides," with amps the size of a Cracker Jack box. For our high school dance we went way out on a limb. We put up a lot of money and with great trepidation hired a professional band. We hired The Invictas. The week before the concert an actual recording of their cover of Bo Diddley's *I'm All Right* with one of those laconic, beckoning lead guitar openings, was played morning and night on the high school intercom.

A cold January night. The huge crowd we generated packed close to the band, shocking with their long hair, and they obviously weren't kids. The Invictas were men and they were professionals. They had pulled up in their hearse. They wore riding boots. When the Invictas let loose, the crowd staggered back, almost knocked over, blasted by the power of their playing and the wattage of their amplifiers. It was quite a night. To top things off, all the money that was made that night went missing in the fall and was never seen again.

The Invictas have reunited periodically over the years. In 2006 their longevity and continued local popularity came to the attention of NBC and resulted in a *Today Show* segment. *The Today Show's* taping included some background coverage and a live performance by the band in front of 5,000 people as the group opened for the Beach Boys. The Invictas have reunited on a regular basis ever since and as recently as late-July 2012.

My fictional band the Sparrows record at Gobi Desert Studio in Buffalo, NY.

The Invictas recorded at Sahara Records in Buffalo. Several other incidents that befall the fictional Sparrows "on the road" are mostly amusing and are inspired by my cousin Jim Kohler's (Invictas bass guitarist) recollections and reminiscences. My own murky recollections of Jim's learning to play guitar while night clerking at downtown Rochester's Cadillac Hotel inspired the hotel lobby chapter of *Sidereal Days*.



— Surrounded by admirers from left to right Mark, Jim, Herb and Dave.