

A COUPLE OF TIMES THIS WEEKEND, PEOPLE RAN INTO ME IN PUBLIC, AND THOUGHT I WAS A MEMBER OF A ROCK-AND-ROLL BAND. NOT JUST ANY BAND, BUT THE 50'S NOSTALGIA GROUP SHA NA NA. IT'S AN HONEST MISTAKE, BECAUSE I WAS HANGING OUT WITH THE BAND IN MILWAUKEE THIS WEEKEND.

THIS HAPPENED BECAUSE ONE OF MY BROTHER ERIC'S FRIENDS IS A GUITARIST NAMED GENE WHO HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF SHA NA NA FOR SEVEN YEARS. THE BAND WAS IN WISCONSIN FOR NEW YEAR'S WEEKEND TO PERFORM POP CONCERTS WITH THE MILWAUKEE SYMPHONY. SO ERIC AND I SCORED FREE TICKETS TO THE SYMPHONY'S NEW YEAR'S EVE CONCERT.

IT'S PROBABLY THE BEST SYMPHONY CONCERT I'VE EVER ATTENDED. EVEN BEFORE BACKING UP SHA NA NA FOR A SHOW OF 50'S FAVORITES, THEY DID IRVING BERLIN AND SHOW TUNES...OLD T-V THEME SONGS, AND 'ON WISCONSIN' IN HONOR OF THE ROSE BOWL. LEADING THE WAY WAS THE M-S-O'S POPS CONDUCTOR, MARVIN HAMLISCH. NOW, THAT GUY KNOWS HOW TO ENTERTAIN AN AUDIENCE. AND SO DOES SHA NA NA.

THREE OF THE SEVEN GUYS IN SHA NA NA HAVE BEEN WITH THE GROUP SINCE THE LATE 60'S, WHEN IT STARTED AS A SPIN-OFF OF THE GLEE CLUB AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY. NO KIDDING.

ERIC AND I BROUGHT IN THE NEW YEAR AT A BREW PUB IN DOWNTOWN MILWAUKEE WITH GENE AND A COUPLE OF OTHER BAND MEMBERS. BUT THERE WAS MORE ADVENTURE TO COME. THE BAND WAS PERSUADED TO MAKE AN APPEARANCE AT THE BIG NEW YEAR'S DAY POLAR BEAR PLUNGE ON LAKE MICHIGAN. SO ERIC AND I SPENT ABOUT THREE HOURS SATURDAY, MOSTLY IN A BIG HUMMER LIMO, WITH FIVE MEMBERS OF SHA NA NA. THE BAND PERFORMED ON THE BEACH FOR ABOUT FIVE MINUTES, DOING A POLAR PLUNGE VERSION OF 'SPLISH SPLASH.' HARDLY ANYBODY NOTICED. SINCE I WAS WITH THE BAND MEMBERS, A COUPLE OF PEOPLE MISTOOK ME FOR SHA NA NA VOCALIST SCREAMING SCOTT SIMON. GEE, I COULD HAVE PERFORMED WITH THE BAND ON THE BEACH, AND NOBODY WOULD HAVE KNOWN. NAAAAH...BUT MAYBE I SHOULD PRACTICE SINGING DOO-WOP, IN CASE THEY EVER NEED A QUICK REPLACEMENT.