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# THE WEEKLY PACKET

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## NEWS FEATURE

### BLUE HILL

Originally published in *The Weekly Packet*, August 25, 2011

### Flash! celebrates 20th anniversary with community party

by Jonathan Thomas

With near perfect weather, Flash! in the Pans steel band held its 20th anniversary celebration on Monday evening, August 22, at the Blue Hill town park.

The event started at about 5 p.m. with a picnic with band members and friends. More than 40 past and present members of the steel band checked in on the register.

During the early evening, attendance grew as potential new members tried out the drums in a practice session. The concert began at 7:30. An estimated 250 to 350 enthusiastic fans attended, although some left before the last notes were played under a star-lit sky shortly after 9.

As they were setting up their staging and instruments under the late afternoon sun, several band members acknowledged that the heavy rain of the previous night and early morning had brought fears of having to relocate the event indoors.

The band's founder, Carl Chase, was presented with a quilt made from 25 different Flash! T-shirts that the band has used over the years. In making the presentation, 20-year player Mariah Hughes said that band members were literally giving Chase the "shirts off our backs" to make the quilt.

In accepting the honor, Chase said that the success of Flash! was "not about me, but all of you," and the many supporters of the band over the years. With Chase were family members and friends, including his son Nigel, and Butch Czerwinski. Chase and Czerwinski reminisced about their early days with steel bands in Brooksville before the



[Dancers make their way toward the stage as night falls over the Blue Hill town park.](#)

Photo by Jonathan Thomas

[View the gallery of photos](#)



[Eighteen-year-member Courtenay Haight serves pieces of anniversary cake.](#)

By Jonathan Thomas



[Flash! founder Carl Chase thanks band members for a quilt made from band](#)

Flash! in the Pans band was formed in 1991.

A colorful commemorative booklet telling the band's story in words and photographs was also displayed prior to the concert.

Chase learned to make the steel drums in Trinidad, where they were first made from 55-gallon oil drums abandoned after WWII. According to the anniversary booklet, "The instruments in a typical steel orchestra cover a tonal range of five octaves," in several groupings running from tenor through bass. These drums, also known as "pans" can create a "new sound" as "the players coax singing tones reminiscent of woodwinds and cellos from their instruments...even a piano in the upper registers," according to a quotation in the booklet.

Flash! also has a rhythm section called the "engine room," with a standard drum set and a variety of other percussion instruments.

The result is that Flash!, with about 30 or 35 members in place, generates an intoxicating sound that repeatedly draws people of all ages to its concerts. Self-described "groupie" George Foley of Charleston has come to so many concerts over the years, that the band has given him a T-shirt.

Many of attendees to these concerts can't sit still for very long. In the early evening, pre-school boys and girls ventured onto the asphalt "dance floor" and tried out new steps, along with some adults. They included Serita Westfall, who said she has been dancing to Flash! since its early days 20 years ago in Brooksville.

As dusk fell, more and more young adults arrived, bringing an intense enthusiasm to the pounding rhythms and driving melodies.

Approximately 12 original members of Flash! from 20 years ago attended, including three, in addition to Chase, who are still playing.

[T-shirts. The quilt was presented to Chase at a community picnic.](#)

*By Jonathan Thomas*



[Hundreds of people gathered at the Blue Hill town park to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Flash! in the Pans on Monday, August 25. The steel drum band has been entertaining folks, inspiring dance and helping local organizations raise funds across the peninsula at various locations throughout the summer months for two decades.](#)

*By Jonathan Thomas*

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