

Ashburn Octogenarian's Rock 'n' Roll Star Past

Neil Arena launches autobiography about touring with some of the biggest names in 1950s music



Ashburn, Virginia Jan 6, 2023 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - Ashburn resident Neil Arena, 82, has amazed neighbors in his senior community with a new book about his little-known past as a rock 'n' roll star.

The autobiography *Tonite, Tonite* is named after a famous song by the Mello-Kings, the popular five piece doo-wop group in which Neil sang baritone. The group, formed in Mount Vernon NY in 1956, toured alongside greats including Jerry Lee Lewis, Bobby Darin, Paul Anka, Frankie Avalon, Andy Williams and Buddy Holly.

Described as *Happy Days* meets *Jersey Boys* meets *Green Book*, Neil's story details juggling high school with appearing at legendary venues such as DC's Howard Theater, New York's Apollo and Chicago's Regal, as well as on the big TV shows of the day, including *American Bandstand*.

Melissa Owusu, of the Potomac Green Community Association, said: "Very few of us knew about Neil's rock 'n' roll past. The book has been a real eye-opener. We're delighted he's finally shared his story."

Signed to the Herald label, the Mello-Kings grew to become one of the best loved modern harmony groups at the peak of the rock'n'roll explosion. *Tonite, Tonite*, the first of a string of fan favorites, would later be covered by superstars Frankie Valli, Dion and many others.

"It was a huge privilege to be at the heart of pop music when it really took off," said Neil. "I was blessed to share a stage with some of the industry's biggest names and hang out with them on tour. Sure, life on the road was very hard work and often unglamorous, but it was more fun than I could begin to tell you."

Neil's retirement has included working part-time at Ashburn's Belmont Country Club, where he has completed 21 years of service. A new, official version of the Mello-Kings still tours, with no original members, but Neil is still in touch with other doo-wop recording stars from those days.

"Neil has brought to life a bygone era when every neighborhood had kids singing on the streets," said Larry Chance, lead singer of The Earls. "He is a brilliant musician who taught us so much. If you love the music, you'll love the book."

Tonite, Tonite by Neil Arena is available at Amazon, Barnes & Noble and elsewhere in paperback or e-book

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