



THE GREAT ESCAPE!*

*“Anything that is good Jazz is a great escape. When you’re involved in playing or listening to great Jazz, no one can get to you.” -Woody Herman

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Presented by: www.dixieswing.com

Gene Krupa: A Centennial Tribute

By Browser Perry Huntoon

January 15, 2009 marked the centennial of the birth of jazz drumming great Gene Krupa in Chicago. From his first recording session on December 8, 1927 with the McKenzie-Condon Chicagoans to his final public appearance on August 18, 1973 with the original Benny Goodman Quartet in Saratoga Springs, Gene personified the image of a musician who could drive a small group or big band and inspire it to new heights. He, single-handedly, turned the drummer from a simple timekeeper to a high-priced musician. His showmanship and musical abilities made him a giant of the Swing Era and beyond.

Sunday, July 15, 1973 was a special day. My wife and I detrained from Amtrak’s Texas Eagle at Chicago’s Union Station and, with a brief stop to check in at a nearby hotel, boarded Metra for the train ride to Ravinia to see the reunion of the Benny Goodman Quartet in concert that night. The music was awesome, but the event was bittersweet, as most of us knew we would never see the likes of Benny Goodman, Lionel Hampton, Teddy Wilson and Gene Krupa together on a stage again. Down Beat honored Gene that night by inducting him into its Hall of Fame. At that point, Gene was in very bad health suffering from both emphysema and leukemia. Benny paused many times between numbers just to give Gene a chance to recoup his strength. Visiting Gene on stage afterwards, it was obvious that he had not long to live. Nevertheless, Gene had given it his all; it was a stunning capstone to a great career.

Little did anyone realize on that December day in 1927 when Gene hauled his bass drum into the OKeh studios in Chicago that history was to be made. No one had recorded a bass drum before as it was feared that the sound would knock the needle off the wax. It didn’t and the resulting records, Sugar and China Boy, established “Chicago jazz” as a new style. Transplanted to New York by mid 1928, Gene continued recording that style with Eddie Condon and other such luminaries as Miff Mole, Bud Freeman, Wingy Manone and Fats Waller. Between 1929 and 1931, Gene recorded many sides with Red Nichols and His Five Pennies and made his first recordings with Benny Goodman as well as dates with Hoagy

Continued on page 2...

In This Issue: After a one issue hiatus we’re back and packed with: “Gene Krupa: A Centennial Celebration” by Browser Perry Huntoon, a remembrance of piano great Dave McKenna, by Browser Dick Parker, our quizmaster Joe Carlton offers a “Sneaky Quiz.” (The answers are on page 8.) So no peeking!

Also, more “Greasy Sack News,” a bit on The Page Cavanaugh Seven, “Ketter’s Corner” and Browser President Phil Holdman remembers the Browsers and Eddie Hubbard ‘live’ from Chicago’s famous Blackhawk Restaurant.

Dave McKenna

By Browser Dick Parker

My favorite pianist is gone.

Dave McKenna passed away October 18, 2008, at age 78. Born in 1930 in Woonsocket, R.I. (The same birthplace as Chicago Cubs great “Gabby” Hartnett), his piano training came early and a career which included work with Charlie Ventura and Woody Herman was underway in 1949. After military service during the Korean conflict, he returned to the music he loved and progressed into a superb soloist and then on to numerous small groups which he certainly made better. While performing almost exclusively in the New England and the Boston area specifically, his piano style drew the plaudits of his peers, critics and a devoted fandom and George Shearing called him the best. The respected New Yorker Jazz critic Whitney Balliett once wrote that “A great many Jazz musicians of the middle generation consider him the best pianist alive, and it is easy to understand why”.

Whether as a soloist, as he was as the resident pianist at Boston’s Copley Plaza Hotel Bar for most of the 1980’s or when making records with highly regarded instrumentalists, he invariably produced awesome sounds. He called himself a “saloon piano player” but that surely didn’t cover the spectrum of his skills. His unique and distinctive style made him a must-hear for his many devoted followers. It was gospel that his left hand all but negated any need for a bass player and many listeners thought two pianists were working when he alone played.

My first awareness of Dave McKenna came with the hearing of a tune recorded when he was part of a Benny Goodman small group session. It was 1955 and the tune was “Soft Lights and Sweet Music.” Dave’s half-minute solo really got my attention. After checking out the group’s piano player identity on the LP, I sure wanted to hear more of this truly fine piano man.

Researching and acquiring most of the available work of Dave McKenna, I found that only infrequently did he take leave of the Boston/Cape Cod locales which were strongly tied to his roots, and, as might be assumed, he was an ardent Boston Red Sox fan with all time great Ted Williams being his favorite player since he was a young man. As a tribute honoring Ted, Dave composed the tune “Splendid Splinter” and such a fan was he that, even while performing, he was able to listen to Red Sox games through a transistor radio and earphones.

Several years ago, I was given the name of one of Dave’s Chicago friends and boosters. Good guy that he was- and is- he gave me Dave’s phone number since I had indicated what a kick it would be to say hello and convey my

continued on page 2...

McKenna continued...

appreciation for his many terrific records. I did give him a call and, happily, reached him easily. At this point, his working life had come to an end due to diabetes problems. We chatted for a time and I posed some questions about his piano works and that of others. He was most agreeable in this and I commented about having read that the piano records of Nat "King" Cole was a big favorite and a major influence in his style. We got in some baseball chat and, of course, it included Boston's Fenway Park, a hallowed edifice with inhabitants of the Red Sox world. I told him that I had grown up a block from Chicago's Wrigley Field but had long since ceased being a Cub fan due to some unacceptable player trading. In any case, on this occasion and several others, Dave McKenna was a totally friendly and delightful guy. The chats will always be recalled as very enjoyable. It seemed that he didn't mind spending a bit of time talking to a sincere golly-gee fan. When the premium cable channel HBO showed a fine documentary called "The Curse Of The Bambino," it had to be a frustrating reminder to Red Sox fans of the extensive period without a World Series championship. The documentary's title derived from Red Sox owner Harry Frazee's fatalistic decision to sell Babe Ruth to the rival New York Yankees for \$125,000. This was 1920 and the young Babe Ruth went on to an incredible career as a Yankee. I sent Dave McKenna a copy of this video and he really enjoyed...subject matter notwithstanding.

Unaware that I was at the time, Dave made a Chicago appearance as part of a "Red" Norvo combo at a club called "Rick's Café Americain," so named after the Humphrey Bogart owned club in "Casablanca." Regrettably, I missed out on catching this booking. Fortunately, it was recorded and is a prized item in my Jazz collection. (Live at Rick's Cafe Americain (1979) with Red Norvo, Urbie Green, Buddy Tate, Steve LaSpina, and Barrett Deems. Flying Fish FF-079)

Finally, it was only in recent weeks that fellow Browser Perry Huntoon alerted me to the release of a double CD package of the combined pianos of Dave McKenna and my #2 favorite, stride pianist Ralph Sutton (in the manner of legends such as "Fats" Waller and James P. Johnson). The CD's are from a live concert recorded in Denver – but no date provided. It's called "To Sunnie (Ralph Sutton's wife) With Love." (Victoria Records #4371) It is a truly superb occasion and contains some of the most exhilarating, up-tempo work I've ever heard. The chemistry between the two greats is as good as it gets.

Editors Note: Frances McKenna, pianist Dave McKenna's widow, known affectionately as "Frankie," died Wednesday, Jan 28, 2009 in Wilmington. N.C. She was a big part of Dave's musical life.



Recommended Chicagoland Happenings...

"The Browsers", experts in the big band era, meet the last Friday of every month @ 6:30 PM "for pizza, beer and good conversation". The group is pleased to announce their new headquarters: [Paterno's](#) Pizza 5303 N Milwaukee Ave, Chicago, IL 60630 (773) 631-5522 Dues are six dollars and include a share of the pizza. Details subject to change. E-mail the Browsers at thebrowsers@wijgam1530.com

Disc Jockey "Rowdy" Ron Richter plays big band and jazz the second Sunday of every month at Gusto Italiano Ristorante, 1470 Waukegan Road, Glenview, IL 60025 Tel: (847) 729-5444 Fax: (847) 729-5447 4:00 PM - ? Attendees are invited to bring a favorite CD to play and comment on. Call ahead. Details subject to change.

Krupa continued...

Carmichael and Bix Biederbecke. As the depression hit and recording dates and jobs became scarce, Gene joined the more commercial bands of Irving Aaronsen and Buddy Rogers. When Benny formed a band for the weekly Let's Dance broadcasts on NBC radio, John Hammond persuaded Gene to leave Rogers in Chicago and return to New York. That created the spark the Goodman band needed. Following the Let's Dance series, the band made a tour to the west coast and hit it big at the Palomar Ballroom in Los Angeles in August, 1935. That established the Swing Era, and Gene was so prominent that he was labeled "King of Swing" in one promotional billing before Benny appropriated the title.

I was too young for the Swing Era and didn't discover Benny Goodman until the release of the B.G. in Hi-Fi album on Capitol in 1954. As good as that was, my mother insisted that I had to hear the original band with Harry James and Gene Krupa. That led to my buying Columbia's albums of the 1938 Carnegie Hall concert and 1937-38 Jazz Concert #2. Hearing the band in full cry on these live performances being driven by Gene made me a fan for life. I played numbers like Roll 'Em, St. Louis Blues, Caravan and Sing, Sing, Sing over and over. To this day, they are still my favorites and, to my pleasure, I can still listen to some of them on the jukebox at my favorite Chicago bar.



Gene and Roy Eldridge

When Gene's popularity became so high, friction developed between him and Benny and a few weeks after Carnegie Hall, Gene abruptly quit and formed his own band. It opened at the Steel Pier in Atlantic City in April 1938 to a crowd of thousands. But it wasn't until 1941, when Roy Eldridge (breaking the color barrier) and Anita O'Day joined the band that it achieved its greatest popularity. Tunes like Let Me Off Uptown, Thanks For the Boogie Ride, After You've Gone and Rockin' Chair gave the band an inimitable identity. Unfortunately, the infamous Petrillo recording ban beginning on August 1, 1942 shut down the studio dates for the big bands and there are only a few relatively poor quality airchecks extant of the Krupa band during this later period. Also, a bizarre drug bust case in San Francisco, in which Gene was accused of **continued on next page...**

contributing to the delinquency of a minor, led to the disbanding of Gene's band in mid-1943.

Thinking his bandleading days were over, Gene was offered a job with Benny and rejoined the Goodman band in late 1943 in New York where it had settled in for a long residency. This was also a terrific band, but, without being able to record, its legacy is left to a handful of airchecks. Rather than go on the road with Benny at the end of the year, Gene turned to Tommy Dorsey and was a featured performer with that band during the first half of 1944. Finding his popularity restored, Gene then formed the financially disastrous "band that swings with strings." Musically inventive, it featured great arrangements by Eddie Finckle and the tenor sax blowing of Charlie Ventura. Anita O'Day returned, but the strings were scrapped after a few months and Gene continued with a conventional big band. Bebop entered into the equation and young arrangers like Gerry Mulligan and George "the Fox" Williams had a chance to display their talents. A good friend, Buddy Hughes, joined the band as boy vocalist for a year or so and Roy Eldridge returned in 1949. Very danceable, the band lasted until 1951 when economics forced Gene to disband. Toward the end, Gene even had a charted hit with Bonaparte's Retreat, made with an all-star group of Chicago style players including Wild Bill Davison.

Later featured with Norman Granz' Jazz at the Philharmonic and with his own trio and quartet, Gene continued performing. I caught him in 1956 with JATP at the Mosque Theater in Newark and with his quartet at Basin Street in NYC, the Adams Theater in Newark and most memorably during the summer of 1957 at Lower Basin Street in New York offering a 20-minute version of Sing, Sing, Sing with clarinetist Gail Curtis being really put to the test. Another memorable occasion was a jazz fest at Lewisohn Stadium at Columbia University in 1967 featuring a Lionel Hampton big band reuniting Hamp with Illinois Jacquet and featuring Teddy Wilson and Gene as guests for some small group numbers. The show, unfortunately, not recorded, was dynamite.

Gene left us on October 16, 1973, but his recorded legacy survives. Nobody drove a band like he did. It is doubtful that the Swing Era would have ever taken off as it did without his talents and showmanship. A few years ago, I was talking to a Canadian distributor of the French Classics label, which was producing CDs in chronological order of most of the important jazz musicians of the past. He advised me that the absolute best sellers were those of the Gene Krupa band, a fitting tribute to an incredible performer who was also a genuinely nice guy and accessible to his fans to the very end.

Ketter's Korner

By Browser Warren Ketter

♪♪ Billy Vaughn was the first artist, anywhere, to receive a platinum record for 3 million sales in the U.S.A with his "twin sax sound" on Dot Records for "Sail Along Silv'ry Moon".

♪♪♪ Eddy Duchin wanted Frankie Carle to take over the Duchin band when Eddy went into the service.

♪♪♪ Former "Tonight Show trumpeter "Snooky" Young turned 90 on February 3, 2009. He still practices everyday.

♪♪♪ Harlem's Cotton Club on West 142nd street, New York City, was owned by gangster, Owney "The Killer" Madden, who bought it as a place peddle his "Madden's #1 beer".

♪♪♪ It sounds odd, but avant-garde painter and filmmaker Andy Warhol has written about how he enjoyed seeing Frank Sinatra sing with the Tommy Dorsey band in Pittsburgh as a lad.

Greasy Sack News

I didn't know this, did you? According to www.thisislondon.co.uk, Goodman is a chain of US-style steakhouses, created in Moscow in 2003 by a businessman, Mikhail Zelman, who named them after **Benny Goodman** in honor of the clarinetist's Russian-Jewish heritage as well as his music. There are nine branches in Russia and they have opened recently in Kiev — and in London, just off Regent Street. One London un-hip restaurant reviewer referred to Benny Goodman as an American Jazz singer.

The **Thilo Wolf Big Band** appeared January 16, live on TV for the second time at the Bavarian Film Awards Night from the Cuvillies Theater in Munich.

This year, the **Pasadena Roof Orchestra**, based in the UK, celebrates its 40th anniversary. The band with a blend of swing and hot dance music has recorded 40 vinyl LPs, singles, CDs, and DVDs containing over 300 titles since the band's beginning in 1969. The Orchestra is busy on its anniversary tour, opening with a full house in Switzerland at Zug, followed by a sell-out at Newcastle-under-Lyme two full nights at the National Concert Hall in Dublin. <http://www.pasadena.co.uk/>

It's reported that the BBC has decided to axe **British Dance bands** from their regular Radio 2 spot at 10.00pm on Sunday nights. Although the program has a very loyal and committed fan base, The days when millions tuned in are now over. However, A BBC Executive Producer says "As things stand, this program has been commissioned until at least April of 2010."

Sigh! I guess the young folks now think Beyonce invented the song "At Last" sung at the recent Obama inaugural. Alas, "At Last" was written in 1941 by Mack Gordon and Harry Warren for the motion picture "Orchestra Wives." It appeared in the movie and on record by **Glenn Miller** and his orchestra, vocal by Ray Eberle & Pat Friday. The song was a big hit, rising to number fourteen on the Billboard pop charts in 1942.

Passing: Drummer **Louie Bellson** died at the age of 84. The big band drummer played with Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey and Harry James. From 1951 to 1953, he was the drummer on the Duke Ellington Orchestra, contributing his compositions "The Hawk Talks" and "Skin Deep". Ellington said of Bellson, "Not only is Louie Bellson the world's greatest drummer...he's the world's greatest musician!"

The singer and pianist **Blossom Dearie** died at the age of 82. After classical piano lessons, she was drawn to jazz and started her career as a member of the vocal group for Woody Herman's big band in the mid-1940s. In the early 1950s, she moved to Paris and performed both with the vocal group The Blue Stars (which later became the Swingle Singers) and with Annie Ross.

Frances Lynne, Jazz vocalist, died on Dec. 4, 2008. She was 82. Ms. Lynne, began singing professionally at age 5 on "The Kitty Club," a Texas radio show and later worked with a young Dave Brubeck and Paul Desmond in the San Francisco Bay Area in the late 1940s. She went on to sing with the big bands of Charlie Barnet and Gene Krupa; touring with GK for a year. After departing Krupa's band, Lynne worked with top Jazzmen like Bobby Hackett and Zoot Sims and sang with clarinetist Jerry Wald's orchestra.

Three saxophonists who were key members of Ray Charles' band in the late 1950s and '60s died in January. **Hank Crawford**, who also wrote arrangements for Charles died January 29, was 74. **Leroy "Hog" Cooper** who joined in 1957 and stayed twenty years on baritone saxophone died on **continued page 4...**

Greasy Sack continued...

January 15 at age 80. **David "Fathead" Newman**, heard on many of Ray Charles' hits such as "I Got a Woman," "What'd I Say" and "Lonely Avenue," died January 20 at 75. The nickname "Fathead" came from his high school band teacher because he refused to learn to read music, preferring instead to play by ear. This author heard him several times in the 70's as he appeared with Herbie Mann's band; as one-half of a dual flute front line.

Trumpeter **Irving Bush** has died. He was 78. Bush played with many leading big bands, including Harry James and Nelson Riddle. He also played on recordings by Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, George Shearing, Sarah Vaughan and Nat "King" Cole. For several years, his family said, he was the trumpet player Cole would call on first for a recording or playing date.

-Compiled by Bob Knack

*What other Jazz band plays to over
40,000 adoring fans at every gig?*



Pictured: T. Bartlett E. Wilkinson T. Butterman J. Kuncl J. Blegen

The Cubs Dixieland Band has been playing to packed houses at the 'friendly confines' of Wrigley Field for over a quarter of a century, the Major League's longest-running baseball band. Our foot-tapping aggregation consists of Trumpet, Trombone (or Tenor Sax), Clarinet, Banjo, and Tuba. We have appeared on TV hundreds of times over the years on many local and nationally broadcast programs.

Now Chicago's most listened to Jazz band can light-up your next happening! The band performs at any kind of function, limited only by your imagination, including picnics, Bar-B-Qs, pool parties, Mardi Gras, conventions and wedding receptions. We have even performed at five funerals. We appear in Cubs uniform unless otherwise specified. **Book the band for your next event! Bring the excitement of Wrigley Field musically to your event.**

Contact Ted at TBBands@aol.com 847-255-6448 for details.
[Click here to see the Cubs band in action!](#)

Ted and the Cubs Dixieland Band are featured prominently in this ABC News Ben Bradley Cub's playoffs interview:

Click: [View Ted and the Cubs Band on TV](#)

Letters E-mails, Errata Etc...

(Keep those cards and letters coming folks!)

Class, Polish, Integrity

Clif Mercer, once dubbed by (Chicago Sun-Times) radio critic Robert Feder as "The Golden Voice of Chicago Radio," passed away on Nov. 27, 2008 at age 81. His voice was one of a kind and second to none. His diction, enunciation and rich, deep voice were so easily recognized when he spoke, you could almost hear every letter in a word!

Clif had a lot of class and a lot of polish and, most important, the highest form of integrity. He personified everything that a radio personality should be.

**Virginia Gora,
Calumet City, Illinois**

Audio: The Aragon ballroom closed February 16, 1964, Hear WGN Radio's Clif Mercer and Franklyn MacCormack announcing: [Click Here](#)

Dear Great Escape;

I recently ran across two issues of "The Great Escape" – Vol.1, No.2, and issue No.8, third hand, I think. Very interesting. I like it.

The Gateway City Big Band (St. Louis) also has a publication – "Quarter Notes." We are a smaller group than yours just the active players and alternates, and a board that includes two general public members. However, we do have a large readership- 1200 plus. It started out as a mailer, and we've just started trying to convert to an e-mail document.

There seems to be similarities in our content, though we seldom have major articles because of size limitations. "Legends of Swing" are contributed stories; "Sideman," is a pseudonym used to describe actual experiences (for those who know nothing of road life), a lot of trivia picked up from various web sites...

The oldest guy in the GCBB is 82 – a saxophonist- in the oldest section of the band. The band includes guys who played professionally; some were on the road when younger; some played in military bands; some are music educators (doesn't every local band include educators?) Some have played in various "ghost" bands.

Herb Booth and I took over the "Quarter Notes" in 2006-the band's 40th anniversary. Also, check out www.GatewatCityBigBand.com, our website.

**Phil Vonder Haar
Gateway City Big Band**

On the Radio: "Carousel Bandstand" Returns:

(Thursday 10 to 11 a.m.): Our good friend Ken Meyer draws from his own vast, personal music library to present an hour of the best of the big bands, standards and great vocals of that golden era of music. Ken also presents many of the big band radio shows from the Aragon, Waldorf Astoria, and network radio studios. [WEPS-FM 88.9, Elgin, Illinois](#)

Tell Your Friends!

We'd love to increase readership of "The Great Escape" newsletter. Why not send this issue to a friend who may not be aware of us. If everyone does that, we'll double our audience! Thanks.

Swing Band for Rent... Ted Buttermen's Neo-Passé Swing Band



Pictured from left: Russ Phillips, Ted Buttermen, Scott Black and Eric Schneider

Specializing in swing music of the 30s and 40s, ala Benny Goodman the group is versatile and their repertoire reaches back to the 20s and onward to the 50s, 60s, and some later, excluding rock.

The band performs at any kind of function limited only by your imagination. This includes picnics, Bar-B-Qs, pool parties, Mardi Gras, conventions and wedding receptions. The band consists of piano, bass, drums, rhythm guitar and features a variety of horn players on different occasions including reed players, trumpets, trombones, vibes, and other instrumentalists from time to time. Expect guest artists to sit in occasionally!

[Check out the Ted's song list here! They know 'em all!](#)

To book the Neo-Passé contact Ted at
TBBands@dixieswing.com

Mission Statement

This newsletter, created by Bob Knack and friends, remembers The **Browsers on the ABC network and contains articles for all aficionados of big band, swing and traditional Jazz worldwide. It is an attempt to fill the void left when periodicals such as the **Browser's Notes ceased to publish. We will concentrate on, but will not be limited to, fun-to-read articles on the music from "back in the day". Letters, articles, suggestions or any help whatsoever is appreciated. Send inquiries to bobknack@hotmail.com or PO Box 642012, Chicago, Illinois 60664. B&W printed copies of past and this current issue are also available in booklet form for \$2.00 each from the above PO Box. [Click here to subscribe to the newsletter](#)

****A Browser** is a dedicated devotee of the truly American art form known as the Big Band. Some years ago, Phil Holdman, founder, often visited record shops seeking rare examples of LP's and 78's to add to his extensive collection. Here, he also met other collectors who sought similar discs or tapes. Phil's wife, Alberta, named the group "The Browsers" because "they are always browsing in record shops"

We wish to acknowledge the many contributions made by readers to help defray expenses.

"I don't know anything about running a newspaper; I just try everything I can think of."

-Charles Foster Kane

The Sneaky Quiz

By Browser And Quizmaster Joe Carlton

Be careful! There may be some quirky ones in here,

1. Ann Shelton, the famous British vocalist, made her first recording with Ambrose and his Orchestra. The song was "Begin The Beguine". How old was she when she made this recording?
2. Who are the following people?
 - A. The Velvet Fog B. The Divine One C. The Heity Ho Man D. The First Lady of Song E. Pops F. Banjo Eyes G. Lady Day H. The Band That Plays The Blues.
3. Benny Goodman recorded a song entitled "8,9 and 10" How many other songs can you name with numbers in the title?
4. Think about the song "Happiness Is Just A Thing Called Joe" Can you name songs in which the last word is a person's name?
5. Gene Krupa recorded the song "Bolero At The Savoy" with Anita O'Day on the vocal. Who introduced the dance called the Bolero?
6. What were the original titles of the following songs? A. "Don't Get Around Much Anymore" B. "Moonlight Serenade" C. "Contrasts"
7. Speaking of Jimmy Dorsey's theme song "Contrasts", when Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey were originally the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra, what was their theme song?
8. When Tommy Dorsey recorded "Boogie Woogie" it turned out to be a million dollar seller. What other T. Dorsey recordings sold over one million?
9. "Sleepy Time Down South" is a "sleep" related song. Can you name any others?
10. Helen Forrest was one of the best big band vocalists. Can you name any others who's first name was Helen?
11. "Star Dreams" was Charlie Spivak's theme song. Were there any other songs with "star" in the title?
12. When Harry James recorded "I Can't Begin To Tell You" what was the name of the vocalist on this recording?

ANSWERS PAGE 8

Land of Linkin'...When you're done here, some other good places to visit.

Illiana Jazz Club <http://www.illianaJazz.com/> For concert info:...708-672-3561 -or- 708-425-4596 -or- 219-923-6775 Held at the Glendora Ballroom 10225 S. Harlem Ave., Chicago Ridge, IL.

The St. Louis Jazz Club: www.stlouisjazzclub.org

[Jazzlives](#) : Michael Steinman's outstanding Jazz blog.

[Friends of Big Band Jazz](#) – Swingin Bands of Today.

The Wrecking Ball Swings

By Browser Bob Knack

It's not the stage door swinging but the wrecking ball in New York these days.

Developer Vornado Realty Trust has filed an application to rezone the site of the historic Hotel Pennsylvania, whose telephone number was the inspiration for Glenn Miller's hit song Pennsylvania 6-5000, to make way for a new office tower.

Preservationists fighting to make the 90 year old hotel a landmark were disappointed recently when they received a message from the Landmarks Preservation Commission--"At this time, the property does not appear to meet the criteria for designation and will not be recommended to the full commission for further consideration as a New York City landmark." Vornado executives had previously indicated they were considering renovating the iconic hotel. Last year, the hotel brought in nearly \$38 million, \$10 million more than in 2006, according to Vornado's annual report.

Meanwhile, the four-story buildings between 45 and 55 West 28th that now contain a bevy of wholesale clothing and jewelry stores with apartments upstairs are in danger of being raised. To fans of popular music, these structures are well-known beginning in the 1880's as Tin Pan Alley. The careers of songwriters whose names and tunes are still familiar today began at this location. So many of these composers were thumping on upright pianos and drums at the same time in those offices that a newspaper writer, Monroe Rosenfeld, described the racket like people pounding on tin pans.

The buildings were put up for sale for \$44 million. When the economy tanked, the plan to replace them with a high-rise development went with it. The idea of losing these buildings, however, stirred preservationists to act.

According to a spokesperson for New York's Landmark's Preservation Commission, the commission is researching the history of the buildings and reviewing whether they'd be eligible for landmark designation.

The Hits Of Tin Pan Alley

"The Band Played On" (Charles B. Ward & John F. Palmer, 1895)
 "A Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight" (Hayden & Mertz, 1896)
 "Mighty Lak' a Rose" (Ethelbert Nevin & Frank L. Stanton, 1901)
 "Bill Bailey, Won't You Please Come Home" (Huey Cannon, 1902)
 "In the Good Old Summertime" (Shields & Evans, 1902)
 "Give My Regards To Broadway" (George M. Cohan, 1904)
 "Shine on Harvest Moon" (Nora Bayes & Jack Norworth, 1908)
 "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" (Albert Von Tilzer, 1908)
 "By The Light of the Silvery Moon" (Edwards & Madden, 1909)
 "Down by the Old Mill Stream" (Tell Taylor, 1910)
 "Let Me Call You Sweetheart" (Whitson & Leo Friedman, 1910)
 "Alexander's Ragtime Band" (Irving Berlin, 1911)
 "Some of These Days" (Shelton Brooks, 1911)
 "Peg o' My Heart" (Fred Fisher & Alfred Bryan, 1913)
 "The Darktown Strutters Ball" (Shelton Brooks, 1917)
 "God Bless America" (Irving Berlin, 1918; revised 1938)
 "Swanee" (George Gershwin, 1919)
 "Way Down Yonder In New Orleans" (Creamer & Turner Layton, 1922)
 "Yes, We Have No Bananas" (Frank Silver & Irving Cohn, 1923)
 "I Cried for You" (Arthur Freed & Nacio Herb Brown, 1923)
 "Everybody Loves My Baby" (Spencer Williams, 1924)
 "Sweet Georgia Brown" (Maceo Pinkard, 1925)
 "Baby Face" (Bennie Davis & Harry Akst, 1926)
 "Ain't She Sweet" (Jack Yellen & Milton Ager, 1927)
 "My Blue Heaven" (Walter Donaldson & Richard Whiting, 1927)
 "Happy Days Are Here Again" (Jack Yellen & Milton Ager, 1930)

A Must for Your Collection! Ted Butterman's Neo-Passé Band Live At The Village Tavern



Pictured L to R: Russ Phillips, Scott Black, Dave Elias, Ronnie Baron, Ted Butterman

© 2001 dixieswing.com

CD Baby Price: \$15.00

Order now, supplies are limited!

Four rhythm; piano, bass, guitar and drums, and one of four different world-class horn players on each track .

The over 73 minutes of music includes:

- 1 When You're Smilin', 2 The One I Love, 3 Sweet Georgia Brown,
- 4 China Boy, 5 On The Alamo, 6 I Can't Believe That You're In Love With Me, 7 After You've Gone, 8 These Foolish Things, 9 Rosetta, 10 Undecided, 11 Let Yourself Go, 12 Three Little Words, 13 It All Depends On You, 14 Some Of These Days, 15 Lester Leaps In

Ted's band, with a four-man rhythm section, and a rotating horn player, usually stays in a mellow relaxed swing mode. The group, particularly with a clarinet lead, often has the sound of a small group Benny Goodman session.

Ted recorded the band over several weekends between February and June of 2001 and thus captured the best of four Chicago area musicians on the front line. With 15 standards featured over a generous 73+ minutes, the average tune plays for over five minutes, affording the horn players ample room to show their talents.

Eric Schneider, well known around Chicago, played with Basie for a couple years in the early 80's. A wonderful, perhaps underrated talent, Eric has the ability to take a tune and swing hard with seemingly little effort. Featured on six of the tunes on the CD, Eric takes "Three Little Words" at a nice mid-tempo on the tenor and just rolls with it in very much a Chu Berry style. On "China Boy", he switches to soprano and can be compared favorably to Sidney Bechet. Kim Cusack, long time veteran of the Salty Dogs, plays clarinet on three tunes while Stu Genovese is the featured tenor on "Sweet Georgia Brown" and "These Foolish Things". Russ Phillips, son of Russ, Sr. who played trombone with Louis Armstrong's All-Stars after Teagarden left, capably offers a change of pace with his trombone on three titles notably, "Undecided".

With a rock solid rhythm section, this band cooks. Highly recommended for lovers of small group swing.

--Perry Huntoon

International Association of Jazz Record Collectors Journal

www.cdbaby.com for ordering info or

[Click to See the Neo Passé Band in Action!](#)

Closing The Book On "Page Seven"

By Browser Bob Knack

Jazz pianist Page Cavanaugh led a popular Southern California nightclub trio beginning in the 1940s. Movie goers recognized the group in "Romance on the High Seas" with Jack Carson and Doris Day, "A Song Is Born," "Big City" and "Lullaby of Broadway." They were known to radio listeners with appearances with Frank Sinatra on his "Songs By Sinatra" and "The Jack Paar Show." Their recorded hits included "The Three Bears" and "She Had to Go" and the naughty novelty tune "But She Had To Go And Lose It At The Astor." Cavanaugh has died at age 86.

But my fondness for Cavanaugh's music began with my purchase of two LP's by his group "The Page Seven", the septet with a big band sound formed January of 1962 recording for RCA in the early sixties. He said he wanted to make an "impact" with this smaller band. He certainly did. The sound is almost mini-Kenton like with its strong bottom sound power which Cavanaugh preferred, saying he really wanted a sound like the Tommy Dorsey-Sy Oliver band of the 40's.

The three-man front line consisted of Dave Wells and Lew McCreary, trombone and bass trumpets, and Bob Jung on baritone, alto and flute. The rhythm was provided by Don Bagley on bass, guitarist John Pisano, and Jack Sperling on drums.

McCreary came from the big bands of Glen Gray, Claude Thornhill, Charlie Barnet, Harry James and Ray Anthony. Wells had been on the stand with Alvino Rey, James, Barnet and Jerry Gray. Jung played with Les Brown, Barnet and Luis Arcarez. Sperling pounded out a beat with Bunny Berigan, Tex Beneke, Barnet, Brown and dixielander Pete Fountain. Bagley put in time for Stan Kenton, Barnet and his own big band recorded on Dot records. While Pisano and his guitar backed such stars as Peggy Lee, Juile London, Joanie Sommers, Frankie Laine and later the Tijuana Brass.

The band even made an appearance on Ed Sullivan's show in 1963. The now very rare RCA albums are "The Page Seven, An Explosion in Pop Music" (RCA LSP2734) and "Impact, At Basin Street East" (RCA LSP 2810.) The tunes include "Walk Right In," "Our Boys will Shine Tonight," "It's All Right With Me," "Barefoot Adventure," "The Preacher", "Pick Yourself Up," and "Blues in Hoss Flat."

This Edition's Woody Shot...



WOODY HERMAN

exclusively on

M-G-M Records

Here's a publicity shot of "The Woodchopper" during his days with MGM records when the Herd issued recordings like these:

On January 4, 1951 Woody's Herd backed Billy Eckstine on "Here Come the Blues," "Life is Just a Bowl of Cherries," "As Long As I Live" and "I Left My Hat in Haiti."

The eight-man Woodchoppers group waxed "Brother Fats," "Three Headed Woman," "My Baby's Gone" and "Dandy Lion" on June 19, 1951.

In October of 1951, Woody vocalized in New Orleans with Leon Kelner and Orchestra on "I Cried for You" and "Livin' On Love."

March 3, 1952 combined Woody on alto sax with David Rose with strings on "Harlem Nocturne" and "Nostalgia."

And September 30, 1952 brought the Third Herd into the studio consisting of jazz stars like Don Faquerquist, Ernie Royal, Carl Fontana, Urbie Green, Arno Marsh, Dick Hafer, Bill Perkins, and Nat Pierce with Ralph Burns arrangements.

--Source: Joyce Music, Woody Herman discography

Chicago's
Original Hits Station

WJGG
AM 1530

featuring **THE BROWSERS**
from Trivia Tower

Mike Baker
and the
Forgotten 45s

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Saturdays and Sundays, the music starts at 4pm CST.
Saturday evenings will be the oldies "ABC GOLD" style format
and Sunday through Friday will be the "ABC STARDUST" style.
Mike's request line is 708-493-1530.

Click to [Listen to Mike on the internet](#) at the times listed above.

In response to your many requests: The Browsers theme song "Browsin' by Ronnie Kole is available at www.ronniekole.com

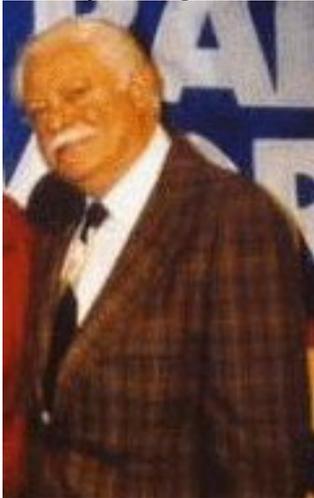
Twenty-Five Years Ago

The Browsers "Live" From the Famous Blackhawk Restaurant

By Browser President Phil Holdman

On January 20, 1984, it was ten degrees below zero, the coldest night of the New Year. That did not deter the 276 Browser fans from attending a memorable night of big band nostalgia put on by Eddie Hubbard and the popular Browsers. It was the largest crowd ever amassed at the famous eating spa-the Blackhawk on North Wabash Avenue in downtown Chicago.

Owner Don Roth thought it would be a great idea for us to put on a show of chatter and music, just like we did every Saturday morning on local radio station WAIT-AM.



Some big name people who braved the cold to attend the gala affair were: Frankie Masters and his cute wife and vocalist, Phyllis Myles; popular big band broadcaster of WGN, Mike Rapchak and his bride from Houston, who he called "Texas;" singer Gloria Van and husband Lynn Allison of Glenn Miller's Crew Chiefs; Henry Cuesta, the famed clarinetist from Lawrence Welk's band; movie mogul Bennie Stein; Downbeat editor Tom Herrick; and well known Chicago Sun-Times columnist Irv Kupcinet.

A week before the big occasion, the flashing marquee of the restaurant said: "Make your reservations now to see and to participate with the worlds famous Browsers-at 8 p.m.-on January 20th."

I was thrilled about the whole affair for we were going to perform in front of such a large crowd-and then get in one of their famous dinners (for free). I could hardly wait to dig in to that 2-inch thick juicy prime rib, bone in, and with all the trimmings. And how about their renowned famous "spinning salad bowl" that contained 23 ingredients, tossed three times not to bruise the tender greens(get the doggie bag ready).

A roaring round of applause came about as Eddie introduced the Browsers individually-there were eight of us at that time. The show was taped so that it could be heard the following Saturday morning on WAIT. We were pretty good that night as we were only stumped once-by a guy named Joe Sperry. Joe was so good that I immediately made him a Browser.

Don Roth came up to the microphone and told about the great bands that appeared throughout the years and why this historic location became the most popular entertainment center in the country.

He also related the story about the famous "coin toss." It seems like, through a clerical error, he had booked the bands of Glenn Miller and Jack Teagarden. Glenn hollered "heads." The coin came up as "tails." So it was Teagarden who got the plum job for a week. Miller had to settle for a gig at the Panther Room of the Hotel Sherman.

Of the octet of Browsers who performed that blustery January night, many have joined "that big band in the sky." Milt Heilborn passed away on March 2nd (a week before our next

and last appearance at the Blackhawk). Eddie Hubbard dedicated that broadcast to Milt. He loved the sweet bands like Art Kassel and Guy Lombardo. Then there was Dick Scher. We called him "Mr. Memory." He knew every song that was ever written. Allan DeWitt was our biggest Browser celebrity. He sang and recorded with Tommy Dorsey, Tiny Hill, Jan Savitt and Frankie Masters. Frank D'Urso was our Sinatra buff, while Ray Ludtke was our Sammy Kaye aficionado. Now they are all gone, but not forgotten.

***Editor's note:** Eddie Hubbard passed away Monday March 26, 2007 from injuries sustained in a car accident the prior week. All the old buildings have come down now near the corner of Randolph and Wabash, including the one that housed The Blackhawk, being replaced with high-rise "ultra luxury" condominiums with a view of the new Millennium Park. (The Blackhawk restaurant survives in a new location, 61 N. Milwaukee Ave. Wheeling, IL. 60090)The old buildings' facades were saved and incorporated into the new design to give it a "retro" look, at least at street level. All other evidence of that celebrated downtown venue for good food and better music has disappeared except for as Phil has said 'Just echoes of Jack Teagarden's trombone playing "Ol' Rockin' Chair Got Me."*

Sneaky Quiz Answers

1. Ann was just TWELVE YEARS OLD when she recorded this song. When Ambrose told her Mother , who had brought her to the audition, that Ann would appear on the stage with the orchestra, her Mother was appalled but Ambrose told her "she's a big girl and no one will notice".
2. A. Mel Torme B. Sarah Vaughan C. Cab Calloway D. Ella Fitzgerald E. Either Louis Armstrong or Paul Whiteman F. Eddie Cantor G. Billie Holliday H. Woody Herman
3. "Tuesday At Ten", "Tea For Two", "For or Five Times", "Six Flats Unfurnished", "One O'clock Jump", "Six Flats Unfurnished"
4. "I'm Just Wild About Harry", "Oh, Johnny", "Don't Bring Lulu", "Oh, Marie", "Second Hand Rose", ""Am I Blue" (hey, remember Blue Barron?), "April In Paris" and "Clap Hands Here Comes Charlie".
5. George Raft introduced this dance in the 1934 movie "Bolero". He danced with Carole Lombard.
6. A. "Never No Lament" B. "Now I Lay Me Down to Weep", C. "Oodles of Noodles"
7. "Sandman"
8. Million sellers: "Marie" in 1937, "There Are Such Things" in 1942 and "Sunnyside Of The Street" in 1944
9. "I Couldn't Sleep A Wink Last Night", "Sleepy Lagoon" and "Sleep" which was Fred Waring's theme song.
10. Helen Ward with BG, Helen O'Connell with Jimmy Dorsey, Helen Humes with Count Basie, Helen Young with Johnny Long and Helen Southern with Larry Clinton
11. "Star Burst", "Stardust", "White Star of Sigma Nu", "Star Eyes" and " Stars Fell On Alabama"
12. Ruth Haag. Ah, yes, you thought I was going to say Betty Grable, didn't you. Well, it was Betty but she used the name Ruth Haag on this recording, which she made with her then husband Harry. Haag was Harry's middle name . They were a star-crossed couple: Harry was reportedly an addicted gambler and Betty an alcoholic.