



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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My Favorite Record Stores

by Bob Knack©

I read with interest the recent news item regarding the demise of the compact disc. Didn't they just get here? Now, apparently, technology will enable us to pull any song, any time, right out of the ether. This report will come as a surprise to those of us who still cherish our vinyl. When the CD does go the way of the buggy whip, I don't suppose the public will do much kicking and screaming. There just isn't as much sentimental attachment to them as there was with our dusty old LP's.

The reason may be that CD's are purchased more often than not at those impersonal big box outlets that don't carry with them many fond memories. The kids today never spent their afternoons at those wonderful old record stores that we old timers had. In fact, even though I never visited it, at least one famous vinyl shop even gave birth to a famous record label.

The Commodore Radio Corporation, was a radio shop located on East 42nd Street in New York City. At fifteen years of age, Milton Gabler began working at this location owned by his father. He soon renamed the business the Commodore Music Shop, featuring Dixieland records for sale, and it became a hangout for music fans and even musicians eager to hear and buy the latest jazz recordings. By 1937, Gabler started hosting and recording local jam sessions thus setting up the Commodore label. The world's greatest Dixielanders recorded for Commodore such as Eddie Condon, George Brunies and Pee Wee Russell. Billie Holiday released "Strange Fruit" on the label greatly boosting her career.

I got to thinking about the record shops that fueled my collection when I was growing up on Chicago's Northwest side. Boy, do I miss them.

The first one was Little Al's near the intersection of Lawrence and Kedzie Avenues in the Albany Park area. Albany Park is one of seventy-seven designated community districts, or neighborhoods, within the Chicago city limits. The neighborhood is famous, in part, for producing a wonderful singer by the name of Lani Hall, who, after attending Roosevelt High School, would go on to star with Brasil '66 and fall in love with and marry trumpeter Herb Alpert. I would walk the several blocks from my home through what was, at that time, a delightful Jewish neighborhood past the many little shops. One of these, Kaufmann's Bagel Bakery, vented the smell of the warm onion bagels directly out on the street. That aroma would grab you buy the collar and pull you in. Next door, Ada's Fishery provided fresh lox for the bagels. A couple doors down from the record store was a little ice cream shop that featured for the first time...bubble gum ice

cream. I never knew whether you were supposed to swallow it or just chew.

Al's was a Bohemian style affair—nowadays one might use the word "funky"—the records were arranged on dusty shelves from floor to ceiling. One of those tall shaky ladders on wheels leaned against the wall for the customer to carefully climb while browsing...self-service before society became so litigious. To the right of the door was a counter where Al sat at the register. In all the years I did business there, I never saw him come out from behind that counter. For all I know, he might not have been wearing pants. He did have, however, a superb selection of jazz records. One of my many excellent discoveries there was a Dot Records release by Chicago pianist Larry Novak produced by another fine piano man, Donn Trenner. It was years before I saw another copy of that LP. I still listen to it now 40 years later.

I don't know what happened to "Little Al". Many years later I read in the local newspaper that on one sultry summer eve while Al was watering his front lawn, someone came up and shot him in the leg. I'm told Al recovered. The neighborhood was getting rough even back then.

Another exceptional record shop was Deluxe Music, at the "six corners" shopping area of Milwaukee and Cicero Avenues and Irving Park Road. It must have been there a long time because the giant neon sign outside boasted "square dance music" was available inside. Incidentally, the shop was very near the 1,938 seat Portage Park theatre. It opened in December, 1920 as part of the Ascher Brothers theatre chain. This was another venue where I spent many a happy hour as a kid watching my favorite movie hero, Duke Wayne. It's still operating today.

The owner of Deluxe kept that store immaculate and he always was first to get the new releases. In the back, there were stairs leading to a small balcony. At that time, that's where a music lover could find the best selection of 45's. I bet back in the older days that was the area that had the listening booths where you could take a record and put it on a player to preview it before purchase.

Every time I'd come in, the owner would hover over me like a mother hen. I guess he was suspicious of a teenager spending so much time in the jazz section, but I sure did find many great records there.

continued on page 3...

While You're Reading...

a trivia question. How many cities along "Route 66" are mentioned in the famous ode to that great road written by Bobby Troup and recorded by Nat 'King' Cole in 1946? Answers follow later in the issue.

More Favorite Instrumentals

By Browser Joe Carlton

In the last issue, Dick Parker wrote about his favorite vocal-less tunes, this time we hear from Joe. (And he never spills a drop!)



When I read Dick Parker's excellent story about some of his favorite instrumentals in the last issue, it started me thinking. Dick named a good many of the songs I like also, so I jotted down a few of my favorites. He's right: "How much time do you have?" My

list starts off with **Benny Goodman's "Benny Rides Again"** which is a song so difficult to play with a clarinet lead, that most orchestras don't even try to play it; also, Goodman's "**Love Walked In**" which he recorded with his band as an instrumental on March 17, 1945. He also recorded it with a vocal by Bob Hayden on April 27, but the latter one was never issued. The instrumental version has six of the best, sweet solos I've ever heard.

Ted Heath's version of "**Mirage**" is a smoothly swinging song with good section work that I always stop and listen to when I hear it played. I also like a trio of **Harry James** songs such as "**Flash**", "**The Mole**" and "**Ultra**." **Syd Lawrence's** swinging "**My Favorite Things**" which starts out slowly before getting into the groove, is another one as is **Duke Ellington's "The Mooch"**, a song the Duke started playing in the 1920's and which probably played at Ellington's last gig. Duke also wrote and played a tender song, "**Prelude to a Kiss**", as a piano solo or with his full orchestra.

Glenn Miller is next on my list with a song entitled, "**I Dreamt I Dwelt in Harlem**". This easy swinger has neat trumpet work done by Billy May, who might have arranged it. Ted Heath's arranger and former section man **Johnny Keating** plays another one of those easy and swinging songs "**Heading North**." **Art Mooney** arrived on the big band scene late but his haunting theme song "**Sunset to Sunrise**" is another favorite.

Rob Parton and his Jazz Tech Orchestra is a Chicago based band that has issued several CD's. On one of them, they play "**Laura**" in an arrangement that is brilliant. (for info; www.rparton.com.) French orchestra leader **Claude Bolling** has a unique song that started off as a riff used by band members to tune up. It is entitled "**Warm Up To the Band**" and it gets things going very quickly.

My last favorite songs are played by the **Glenn Miller AAF Orchestra**. One of them "**Jeep Jockey Jump**" was written and arranged by Sgt. Jerry Gray. The other one is a slinky song, "**Blue in My Heart**".

Wait a minute! I just thought of another 20 or 30 songs. Sit down and I'll tell you about them.

Editor's Note: Author Joe Carlton has written an excellent book, "THE BROWSERS AT LARGE: Phil Holdman's Tall Tales and True." This book containing lots of stories by Phil and other Browsers, along with many, many photos, is still

available. Phil and this cadre of big band experts aired a popular big band trivia show on the ABC network with Eddie Hubbard for over twenty years. If interested, please send your check in the amount of \$17.00 made out to Joe Carlton, 317 Cottage Avenue, Glen Ellyn, IL 60137 and your copy will promptly be mailed to you.

Recommended Chicagoland Happenings...

"**The Browsers**", experts in the big band era, meet the last Friday of every month @ the Villa D'Oro Restaurant, 5531 N. Milwaukee Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, and (773) 775-2820. Dues are six dollars and include a share of the pizza.

On the Radio: Carousel Bandstand: (Thursday 10 to 11 a.m.): "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. Sometimes if it sounds a little scratchy. It's because Ken plays much of the music from original 78 rpm records." **WEPS-FM 88.9, Elgin, Illinois.** (Information subject to change)



The Browsers, experts in the big band era, return to the Chicago Airwaves Sunday evenings this summer via Mike Baker and the Forgotten 45's and Music of the Stars from 5:00pm-7:00pm on WJGG-AM 1530, Elmhurst/Chicago (708)-493-1530. The station is heard in most parts of a four county area including Will, Kane, Dupage and Cook. www.wjgam1530.com

To Mike:

Your show is the salvation of antique radio owners here in the Chicago area. The last oldie's station couldn't be listened to on my Zenith Royal 500 8E from 1959. The frequency was too high! I also listen to your station on my Zenith 7S529.

From: Stanley Moskal II

Hi Mike-

I just wanted to drop you a line and thank you for your show. My boyfriend and I love to listen on Sunday evenings. We really enjoy hearing music that has been neglected on other stations' playlists. Some of these songs were even once in the Top Ten! Yet too many stations play the same old songs over and over. I am in my early 40s and it has been so fun to hear stuff for the first time!

Sincerely,
Ruth from Berwyn

The Browsers theme song "Browsin'" available at www.ronniekole.com

Do you have your copy yet?

Ted Buttermen's Neo-Passé Band Live At The Village Tavern



© 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

This Swinging CD was recorded live at the legendary Village Tavern in Long Grove, IL., a Northwest suburb of Chicago, where the Neo-Passé Swing Quintet performed for many years, prior to that venue discontinuing jazz.

Playing in the spirit of the 1930s, '40s, and '50s, with a sprinkling of the 60s thrown in for good measure, the group's rhythm section is comprised of Piano, Acoustic upright bass, Drums, and Acoustic rhythm guitar.

♪ Six of the tracks feature **Eric Schneider**, an Earl Hines and Count Basie alumnus, on tenor, alto and soprano saxes, and clarinet.

♪ Three tracks have the long time Chicagoland reed legend, **Stu Genovese**, whose insightful approach to the art has been heartily received and accepted even beyond the shores of the U.S. Stu shared the stage with some of the greats in jazz including Oscar Peterson.

♪ Three more show the swing side of **Kim Cusack**, long associated with the Salty Dogs Dixieland band, on clarinet.

♪ The final three tracks have the internationally renown **Russ Phillips** exhibiting his amazing prowess on trombone.

Leader and guitarist Ted Buttermen has assembled a group of players dedicated to the genre but who do not intentionally copy the founding fathers. As an aside, Ted changes hats in the summer, plays trumpet, and leads the Chicago Cubs Dixieland Band and who are now in their twenty-sixth year at "The Friendly Confines". Information about this CD, a must for any jazz collector, can be found on the web site www.cdbaby.com or [Click to See the Neo Passé Band in Action!](#)

"Record Stores" Continued from page 1

I suppose the mother lode of old record stores was Rose records under the train tracks on Wabash Avenue at Adams Street in the loop. Historically, if it had anything to do with music you found it on 'music row', Wabash Avenue... pianos, brass instruments, sheet music, and records of all kinds. Every collector I know has innumerable LP's purchased from Rose, that venerable 3-story emporium. It was a treat to take the "el" train downtown on a Saturday afternoon with my friends and spend all day just browsing. The first floor had the newest releases. In later years one-half of the floor sold records in monaural, the other half a mirror image but in that new fangled stereo. We spent most of the time upstairs on the cutout floor where everything was drastically reduced. I think the lower back problems I have today originated from the hours bending over the bins at Rose. The store was bought out by Tower Records a few years ago and alas, Tower recently also went belly-up. When you walk past the location now you see a sign in the empty window thanking the customers and informing all that the location was a music store for over 100 years. It's enough to bring a tear to your eye.

♪♪

The Used CD Shops Now Endangered Also...

Merchants buying and selling used CDs across the country say they are troubled by stepped-up pawn-broker-related laws recently enacted in Florida and Utah and pending in Rhode Island and Wisconsin.

The Florida legislation requires all stores buying second-hand merchandise for resale to apply for a permit and file security in the form of a \$10,000 bond with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Stores would also be required to thumb-print customers selling used CDs, and acquire a copy of state-issued identity documents such as a driver's license. Furthermore, stores could issue only store credit -- not cash -- in exchange for traded CDs, and would be required to hold discs for 30 days before reselling them. New CD sales are down 20 percent from 2006, and an average of 550 record stores have closed each year since 2003.

♪♪

The Proprietor of Beverly Records ...

Christine E. Dreznes who in 1967 along with her husband, John, bought a candy and card store and turned it into Beverly Records, another of our favorite record stores, has died. She was also a member of The Browsers music club.

The used record aspect of the business came about when a customer came in asking for a Four Seasons LP and Ms. Dreznes found it in her sisters record collection,. She sold it to that customer and realized that there was potential in the used record business.

The 78's, 45's and LP's at Beverly numbered in the hundred's of thousands. The store is still in operation at 11612 South Western Avenue in Chicago. It is a favorite source of music for collector's as far away as Europe and Asia. www.beverlyrecords.com

Attention Readers! Send me a list of your favorite Big Band and Jazz Christmas Songs for inclusion in our next issue! bobknack@hotmail.com PO Box 642012 Chicago, Illinois 60664

These Pictures of the Herd Worth 717 Words



In our last issue, we used this picture of the current Herman Herd directed by Frank Tiberi. We couldn't remember when it was taken. It prompted this e-mail exchange with the Herd's Mike Brignola and John Fedchock:

-From Mike Brignola

Thanks Bob. Nice job writing that article on (<http://www.dixieswing.com/vol3.pdf>). I have never seen that particular news letter before. I noticed that you took the photo also . What concert was that? I notice the saxes are Tiberi, Gunther , Nugent and me so I guess I can narrow it down to sometime between 1988 and the present!

Later,
Mike

-Hey Bob. Was that picture this gig? **Editor's Note:** yes!

SATURDAY APRIL 17, 1999

Waukesha Wi. High School South, (auditorium)
401 E. Roberta Ave.

dress: Tuxedo

Trumpets: Joey Tartell, Scott Wagstaff, Art Davis, Mike Plog,
Tito Carillo

Trombones: John Fedchock, Tim Coffman, Tom Matta

Sax: Frank Tiberi, John Nugent, Pat Mallinger, Mike Brignola

Piano: Chip Stephens Bass: Jeff Hamann Drums: Mike Fiala

John Fedchock pointed out to me that some of the guys in that picture are guys who have only worked with us on gigs within shouting distance of Chicago. Great, I'm glad we now know the exact gig for the picture in question. Fedchock called it, and he even knew it was during Blue Flame (Theme) since the bones were standing with plungers!

Thanks,
Mike

Hi Bob,

At around the same time as I got the article from you , Frank Tiberi was asking me if I had a pic of him and Woody together and him wearing a tux. This was the only one I could come up with and I'm guessing it as being 1986 and the song being maybe near the end of Woodchoppers (although Fedchock will likely be able to tell me the exact tune and measure). Maybe he will also know the gig!



-From John Fedchock

Okay, Mike - here goes:

This is also Blue Flame. The trombones only use plungers on Blue Flame & Apple Honey, and we never stand on Apple Honey. Plus, Woody never really called Apple Honey that often back then.

This is definitely from 1986. Obviously, the stands tell me that, but also, by 1987, Woody had already had one short bout in the hospital, was more feeble looking, and had a beard. He looks pretty healthy in this shot.

I don't think this is in a club. From the look of the ceiling, the size of the stage, the type of chairs we have, and how close our heads are to the ceiling, it is probably a safe bet to say it was a hotel ballroom. The stage looks too big to be a club, and looks to be one that isn't a permanent structure. It also looks like we may have had an upright piano. Definitely signs of a "dancert". It looks like Barati on bass trb. (not Kugler or Bob Heller) because he is taller than the other two, and that looks like his hand. The scene with Kugler happened on September 8, and Barati started on September 20, 1986. Woody had his first little spell at the end of the year. He got the flu and left the band for about a month. Frank led the band from November 13 to December 9. Then Woody returned (with a beard) for a gig at the Waldorf with Richard Stolzman on December 10. So, this photo has to be somewhere between Sept 20 and Nov 12, 1986. The hotels we played within that time frame are:

Sept 23: Camel Back Inn - Phoenix, AR

Oct 30: Hilton Hotel - New York, NY (pretty sure it's not there)

Nov 1: Lynchburg, VA - Radisson Hotel

Editor's Note: John has the observational powers of Sherlock Holmes!

-**"Mike Brignola** has been the baritone sax player and bass clarinetist with Woody Herman's Orchestra for 27 years. He has also been the road manager and personnel director of the band since 1991. Mike played close to 1000 engagements with Woody leading the band in the 1980's." see: www.woodyherman.com

-**John Fedchock** toured with Woody's "Thundering Herd" for seven years, during which time he was musical director and a featured soloist." See: www.johnfedchock.com John's composition "The Great Escape" written for the album "Woody's Gold Star" ties in nicely with this newsletter.

They Got “Steверino-ed”

By Bob Knack

Steve Allen, famous television comedian and jazz musician was also a confirmed practical joker. For example, early in his radio broadcasting career, as the continuity director of a station, he'd slip phony commercial copy into the announcer's stack and listen at home to the hilarious results as the hapless DJ spewed nonsense over the air. Also as a commentator on professional wrestling programs, he made up the names of wrestling holds to make things more interesting. Apparently, nobody ever caught on.



But Allen outdid himself in 1959. He surreptitiously recorded a boogie-woogie record and called it “The Discovery of Buck Hammer” on Hanover-Signature records. (HM-8001). The liner notes explained that Hammer was a dead, black boogie-woogie piano master who'd lived in a small Mississippi town and due to emotional peculiarities refused to record his music. As a favor to his

brother, however, Hammer went to Nashville and recorded the album--and since he was dead, the album was all the world would ever hear of him.

Allen himself was a writer of over 7,000+ songs. Some of the more memorable ones were his theme song, "This Could Be the Start of Something", "Pretend You Don't See Her" which was a hit for Jerry Vale, "Impossible", and "Gravy Waltz" co-written with bassist Ray Brown and a top-40 instrumental hit for Allen in 1962.

According to Allen's book, “Bigger Than a Breadbox”, the character of Buck Hammer was based on the life of Meade Lux Lewis, who had been discovered washing cars in a Chicago garage by record producer John Hammond who immediately arranged a recording session for him and the boogie-woogie era had begun.

The critics raved about “The Discovery of Buck Hammer”. This review appeared in the New York World Telegram: “Buck was a boogie-woogie piano player who could hold his own with such top men as Pete Johnson, Albert Ammons and Meade Lux Lewis” In the Downbeat, October 29, 1959 issue, “Hammer plays with both hands and has the elements of a vital blues attack in either of them”...“This is a worthwhile edition to a jazz piano library as an example of an unusual basic-blues pianist”.

However jazz critic Nat Henthoff noted that it seemed as though Hammer “had been born with three hands.” Allen had actually over-dubbed himself to achieve that effect. Eventually Allen ‘fessed up’, admitting it was really he playing on the disc. A buck hammer is, in fact, a surgical tool used to test a patient's neurological responses. “As a living white man, I was never appreciated”, lamented Steверino, “but as a dead black man, I got all kinds of honors.”.

At about this time, Allen was doing a Sunday night prime-time TV program opposite The Ed Sullivan Show. Not stopping there, Allen pulled off another ruse a few months later. He cut an album satirizing modern piano trends of the day under the pseudonym of Maryanne Jackson. He dressed up his maid in an evening gown and photographed her at his

living room piano for the album cover. The magazine Jazz Review gave the LP a serious analysis. Both albums are included on an alphabetical list of all 74 of Allen's records and CD's on his website www.steveallen.com

Tracks on “The Discovery of Buck Hammer”: 1. Blues's Blues 2. Hackensack Train 3. Jungle Boogie 4. Frank's Blues 5. Ridiculous Boogie 6. Golly Gee Boogie 7. Fink's Mules 8. Minor Boogie 9. Tenderly Boogie 10. Practice Boogie 11. Tea for Two Boogie

“Ladies and gentlemen, it's wonderful looking into all your faces again this evening, and believe me, I see some faces out there that could stand some looking into!”

-Steve Allen

Attention Readers! Send me a list of your favorite Big Band and Jazz Christmas Songs for inclusion in our next issue! bobknack@hotmail.com PO Box 642012 Chicago, Illinois 60664

Swing band...

FOR RENT



Ted Buttermann's Neo-Passé Quintette

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

Make your next event a winner...



The Cubs Dixieland Band has been playing the 'friendly confines' of Wrigley Field for over a quarter of a century. 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.

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

Mission Statement

This newsletter, created by Bob Knack and friends, remembers The Browsers on the ABC network, Bob's radio shows on WJGG-AM 1530, Elmhurst, Illinois; 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". Initially, we intend to publish as an E-letter only. Letters, articles, suggestions or any help whatsoever is appreciated. Send inquiries to bobknack@hotmail.com or PO Box 642012, Chicago, Illinois 60664. Thanks for reading!

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

-Charles Foster Kane

Route 66 Answer...

Were you able to count all the stops along the way on Route 66? Chicago, L.A., St. Louie, Joplin Mo., Oklahoma City, Amarillo, Gallup, Flagstaff Arizona, Winona, Kingman, Barstow, San Bernardino, Here's the second verse Nat didn't record-Springfield Illinois & Missouri, Tulsa Oklahoma, Albuquerque, Tucumcari, Needles, Essex, Amboy, and Azusa in Bobby Troup's lyric.

That Big Band Singer's Column

By Walt Andrus



I'm a trivia buff as some of you may know...Some stuff that's never gonna be in books. For example: Louis Armstrong AND Bing Crosby were ALLOWED to have marijuana by the Government.

When Phil Harris befriended Bing, they were on a golf outing and Phil got embarrassed because Bing wasn't tipping. Phil tipped all the guys along the way and

Bing saw this and said "What are you doing? All the staff here get custom made suits from my tailor for Christmas, and other gifts and flowers for their wives" Not only did Bing do well with singing and recording, movies and TV specials, he was a MAJOR stockholder in MinuteMaid Orange Juice.

Buddy Morrow recalled the last time he personally spoke with Frank Sinatra...Having a meal at Patsy's restaurant in New York City. Buddy was working on The Perry Como Show and Buddy said 'Hi' to Frank on his way out of Patsy's. Frank asked "Where you workin'?". "Perry Como Show", said Buddy. Frank's reply, "Say hello to 'The Barber' from me."

Buddy was also at that time on staff at NBC and played in The Tonight Show band when Skitch Henderson was leading it. Skitch got fired and Buddy claims he was offered the bandleader's job but refused it because his own band was still working weekends and he didn't think The Tonight Show would last. The Tonight Show moved to California...The bandleader job went to Doc and the rest is history. Buddy was also offered a LIFETIME contract at The Roseland Ballroom in NYC and turned that down too.

He was working with his band at the Statler-Hilton (Hilton had just bought out the hotel) "Cafe' Rouge" in NYC and the announcer was late so...Buddy does the announcement on a LIVE radio broadcast and says "This Is Buddy Morrow coming to you live from the Hitler owned Statler Hotel"...OMG!!!

I was on the SS Norway Big Band Cruise, it was Buddy Morrow and the TDO, The Harry James Band led by Art Depew, Erskine Hawkins and Sy Zentner... Sy and I were lurching and chatting (a great story teller) and he mentioned his first day on The Harry James band...Sy is warming up on his Trombone and Harry James asks him, "what do you play?"...Sy says I think trombone"...Harry James says " no BASEBALL... What position can you play? " The bands of the time had baseball teams for days off on the road. When I was with the TDO we at one point had six sets of golf clubs in the containers under the NIGHT TRAIN bus and when we arrived after a long overnight "Hit and Run" we'd head to a local golf course and play 18 holes... sometimes we were comped for the golf since we were playing there that night for a dance gig.

Vocalist Walt Andrus joined the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra directed by Buddy Morrow as their 'boy singer' in 1988. We're happy to announce that Walt will be a regular contributor to "The Great Escape" Check out his web site at www.thebigbandsinger.com

On Johnny Frigo...

By Bob Knack

Johnny Frigo was born Dec. 27, 1916 on Chicago's South side. He played bass with the big bands of Jimmy Dorsey and Chico Marx. As a composer, he co-wrote such songs as "Detour Ahead" and "I Told Ya I Love Ya, Now Get Out!" as well as the Chicago Cubs fight song "Hey, Hey, Holy Mackerel," in honor of the teams aborted pennant race in 1969. Since he had violin lessons since age seven, when the growth of rock and roll music made it difficult to get bass playing gigs, he again began concentrating on jazz violin resulting in a career reborn. Frigo died July 4 at the age of 90.

In addition, Frigo was an accomplished artist working in pastels. Vocalist Buddy Hughes who was Frigo's room mate on the Jimmy Dorsey band recalls Johnny had an unusual method of indulging in his art work while on the road. "He would lift up the toilet seat in the hotel room" recalls Hughes, "and put the easel on the toilet so as he worked the dust from the chalk would fall in and not soil the room."

While working with Chico Marx the two worked out a running gag for the act: Marx would say, "Aye, Johnny, bringa da violin down. Do you know 'Gypsy Love Song?'" Frigo replied: "I don't know the verse; I know the chorus. If you play the verse, I'll noodle on the violin." "Okay, you noodle on the violin, quipped Marx, "and I'll spaghetti on the piano."

Frigo spent five years with the critically acclaimed Soft Winds jazz trio after leaving Dorsey in 1947 along with guitarist Herb Ellis and pianist Lou Carter. They recorded 16 sides for Majestic and Mercury records in 1947 and 1949.

A personal note; I remember enjoying being in the weekly audience and hearing Frigo playing country violin with his brother Leno's house band, "The Musical Wheels" (or maybe they were still called "The Sage Riders"...the memory fades) during weekly 90 minute broadcasts of "The Barn Dance" heard over WGN Radio in the 1960's. He began his country fiddlin' gig on WLS radio in 1948. I mentioned this to him years later, while he was playing a regular jazz date at the famous Green Mill Jazz Club in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood. He didn't seem too happy I brought it up!



Johnny Frigo

Ted Buttermen adds this about Frigo; "He was the violinist on the Jim Kweskin "Jump for Joy" album featuring our Neo-Passé band. He was THE finest violinist perhaps of all times in my humble opinion but probably, or rather won't, be recognized as such. His tone was very dark (a good thing) as opposed to Joe Venuti. Even darker than Stéphane Grappelli. He could hold his own with Eddie South, et al. If you haven't heard the Kweskin album, particularly

"Melancholy Baby" and his work on that, you're in for a treat."

He twice appeared on "The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson." When Carson asked why he'd waited so long to become famous, Frigo said: "Because there won't be enough time left for me to become a has-been."

Source: www.washingtonpost.com and www.wlshistory.com.

Big Bands Today...

-From Germany, bandleader Thilo Wolf:

Thanks for your mail and congratulations on your really interesting newsletter.

What's new in Germany? We refreshed our homepage and meanwhile we also have English information there. Have a look: www.thilo-wolf.de Next week we are going to the Wigan Jazz Festival in Great Britain with the whole big band and after that we will record a new album.

-From Vegas bandleader Walt Boenig:

What is the difference between a Blues musician and a Jazz musician??

Answer: A Blues musician plays 3 chords in front of 1000 people. A Jazz musician plays 1000 chords in front of 3 people.

The Walt Boenig Big Band will be in concert September 8th, 2007 at Spring Mountain Ranch State Park in Red Rock Canyon co-sponsored by Super Summer Theatre and Las Vegas Jazz Society. www.waltboenigbigband.com

-From Don Pentleton:

Hi Bob;

I'm the current leader and drummer for the Hal McIntyre Orchestra based in Boston, MA. I received your email regarding your project. I think it's a wonderful idea, we need more in the way of ongoing big band information. I'll certainly keep you informed as to our comings and goings. Good luck and best wishes.

Don Pentleton
The Hal McIntyre Orchestra
Boston, MA
www.halmcintyre.com

We extend an open invitation to leaders of all "name" bands to let us know what you're doing. bobknack@hotmail.com

This has been floating around the internet, we thought it was hilarious...

The Top 15 Things You'll Never Hear on a Musician's Tour Bus...

15. God, what a kick playing all those old Glenn Miller stock arrangements.
14. I love it when the trumpet players lay back like that...it makes playing drums so easy.
13. Wow, everyone played perfectly in tune all night long, again.
12. The leader got all the tempos exactly right, again!
11. Why is that cigarette shaped so funny?
10. Should we go back for the drummer?
9. Checkmate!
8. Go roll 'em down the aisle all you want. They're only cymbals.
7. So, I just walked her home, kissed her goodnight, and came back to the bus.
6. No, the monitor mix was perfect. I just screwed up.
5. Why is there porno in the VCR?
4. Can you believe all the money we're getting?
3. Boy, I can't wait till we get to Omaha!
2. No thanks, I don't want another beer.
1. Ladies, I need to see some proof of age please.

Frankie Masters Remembered

By ©Chuck Sengstock

Whenever you hear the song "Scatterbrain", you immediately think of Chicago bandleader Franking Masters. This cute and bouncy tune, written by Masters with words by Johnny Burke, became Masters' theme song. It was such a hit in 1939 when it was introduced that it remained on the Hit Parade for 20 weeks.

Masters was popular for more than five decades and became a favorite with audiences everywhere. Although Frankie and his band were well known for his many radio broadcasts and recordings, he began his career as a banjo-player at Indiana University. He moved to Chicago in the early 1920s and quickly became a sideman with several café and big theater stage bands.

Masters' youthful good looks and performances with Benny Meroff's north-side Granada Theater stage band caught the attention of owners of Balaban & Katz, the giant Chicago theater chain. B&K theaters competed directly with the Marks Brothers-owned Granada and other theaters.

B&K hired Masters to work at their south-side Tivoli Theater as part of the Benny Krueger stage band. Soon Masters, then playing banjo and singing, moved up front as leader, a heady experience for a twenty-something-year-old kid from Indiana.

Masters quickly became a local celebrity and worked at many of the B&K Chicago theaters. But the stage presentation policy bubble had burst by 1930, succumbing to the effects of talking pictures and the Great Depression.

Masters, who occasionally made guest appearances at the downtown Morrison Hotel, was offered a contract to organize a dance band for their popular Terrace Garden night club. His experience in the theaters plus his natural charm and good looks made him an excellent front man and master of ceremonies. Here again his experience as a stage-band leader and emcee, his ability to conduct a variety show with its assorted music, and his instincts for keeping the patrons entertained all served him well.

From that point on the Masters band became closely identified with hotels. One of his earlier specialty numbers called for the musicians to stand in front of the bandstand holding bottles filled with colored water tuned to notes of the scale. They would play songs by blowing into the tuned bottles. Beneath each bottle they held a flashlight that they lit whenever they played the note. This was done, of course, with the house lights off. Sounds pretty corny by today's standards but it was a clever bit of theatrics in the 1930s.

After leaving Chicago in the late thirties, Masters and company spent nearly ten years in New York. Major stops there were the Roosevelt, Essex and Taft Hotels. At the Roosevelt he alternated engagements with the Guy Lombardo band. The Taft Hotel job was unusual in that the band played from about 6 p.m. to 9:30 every night.

By this time he had been recording for Okeh, Vocalion and, later, for Mercury. He introduced "Scatterbrain" while playing at the Roosevelt Hotel.

Following World War II, Masters came back to Chicago where he spent much of his time between 1948 and 1957 playing for the many ice shows at the Conrad Hilton Hotel. During this period, too, he and his wife, vocalist Phyllis Miles, co-hosted several Chicago television shows.

The big band era had ended by 1957, about the same time the Conrad Hilton engagement came to a close.

Masters resumed playing one-nighters but still played for industrial shows and many political gatherings. For years he and his band furnished the music for Bob Hope whenever the comedian played guest appearances in the Midwest.

Masters moved back into a hotel in 1974, this time the Palmer House in Chicago, where he backed the shows and played for dancing at the famed Empire Room. That engagement concluded at the end of the season in the spring of 1975.

Masters retired from the band business in 1980 after more than five decades of playing music and entertaining audiences from coast to coast.

Editor's Note: Chuck is the author of *That Toddlin' Town: Chicago's White Dance Bands and Orchestras—1900-1950*, published by the University of Illinois Press (2004).

Our Neighboring Jazz Clubs...

The Illiana Club of Traditional Jazz: presents excellent concerts monthly at the Glendora Ballroom, 10225 S. Harlem Avenue, Chicago Ridge, Illinois. Sept. 16-John Skillman with Franz Jackson. Oct. 21-Australian Reunion Band from Chicago. Dec 16- ICOTJ Christmas Party. 708 425-4596.

The St. Louis Jazz Club: www.stlouisjazzclub.org
An outstanding web site and club with lots of events and info. Check out the site.

The Brookfield Jazz Society meets every Thursday in the Cottage at Irish Times, 8869 Burlington Avenue, Brookfield, Illinois (708) 268-7873, with live jazz and other happenings. Thursday, September 20 The Joel Moore Quartet. October 4, 2007 (Thursday) The BMX Band (The music starts at 7.30 p.m.)
www.brookfieldjazz.org

Mailbag: "The Woodchopper"

"One of my treasured remembrances of Woody Herman goes back to the summer of 1942. On a warm summer night in June or July, about four of us left the Sunday night dance at St. Sabina and went down to the College Inn (Chicago) where Woody was performing. During the break, he came over to our table and spent a good 15 minutes with us and naturally, we were in awe."

-Jack Hogan

Yet Another Editor's Note: Browsers club member and vocalist Jack Hogan performs on his own CD "All About Love". Contact us at The Great Escape for details.

Back issues available...

Our first three issues of The Great Escape Vol. 1 No. 1, 2 & 3 are available for free downloading at www.dixieswing.com. Vol. 1 has articles on the quotable bandleaders, Warren Ketter's Chicago Memories, a salute to Liltin' Martha Tilton and more. Vol. 2 features the quotable Eddie Condon and a salute to radio great Eddie Hubbard. Vol. 3. features fun articles on Woody Herman, Phil Harris, and Phil Holdman's "My Dinner with Satchmo" Check us out today! Printed copies of the above and the current issue are also available in booklet form for \$2.00 each. Send your requests to PO Box 642012, Chicago, Illinois 60664.