



April 2011
Vol. 26 No. 3



www.wmichjazz.org

AN ALL-VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION

Retrospective

25 Years of Keeping Jazz Alive

WMJS: 1986 - 2011



City of Grand Rapids, Michigan

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

GEORGE K. HEARTWELL
MAYOR

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, the West Michigan Jazz Society was founded twenty-five years ago with the goal of promoting, preserving, and perpetuating jazz in the Grand Rapids area; and

WHEREAS, the Society has been administering jazz education programs in area schools to introduce live jazz to students; and

WHEREAS, the Society administers a Scholarship Fund which awards scholarships to aid in the education to students who wish to pursue their studies in jazz music; and

WHEREAS, the Society has been presenting free jazz concerts at John Ball Park each summer for the past ten years as a musical contribution to our community;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, George K. Heartwell, Mayor of the City of Grand Rapids, do hereby proclaim April 21, 2011, as

JAZZ APPRECIATION DAY

in Grand Rapids in honor of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the West Michigan Jazz Society, and ask all citizens to thank the Society for their significant role in the culture of our city.



George K. Heartwell

Beginnings

By Betty Forrest

Quite often a good program, an organization, or even a business, is developed out of what was essentially one person's individual, even selfish, motive. Mine was to establish a support group to help promote an annual **Jimmy Forrest** Scholarship Fund concert. After Jimmy's death in August 1980, I had established a fund through GRJC to award monies to students majoring in jazz studies by presenting an annual concert featuring popular jazz stars that he had known or played with during his own 40-year career on tenor saxophone.

Successful concerts were given each of the following five years, with the **Count Basie Orchestra** appearing on his behalf both 1981 and 1983 (Forrest had performed as lead tenor with the band from 1970-77). Unfortunately, the 1985 concert featuring **Stan Getz**, at the height of his popularity, drew an audience of only 200, which caused a loss of over \$4,000 to the scholarship fund.

Ray Gill, Director of Jazz Studies at JC at that time, blamed a lack of advertising and communication with jazz fans. He had a list of 20 names of people who had previously tried to establish a jazz society, so letters went out to them in January 1986; a meeting was called; a dozen interested parties came out, and the nucleus of what soon became the West Michigan Jazz Society was formed.

Seven of our original 13 jazz lovers who attended our organizing meetings in January and February 1986 still maintain their membership. We call them our Founding Members, and they are:

Betty Forrest, Ray Gill, Jim &



Jimmy Forrest

and a membership of nearly 150! We call these our Charter Members, and of these, 90 were still with us nearly 10 years later. While only 34 remain – many have retired and moved to warmer climates, many have passed away – we think these loyalists deserve attention, so here they are, our Charter Members:



Ray Gill

John & Jacki Bartley
 Bill McFadden
 Maxine Corder
 Trudy Lynn Newland
 Rafael Diaz
 Bob & Helen Nolan
 Jack Hoppus
 Lee & Carol Rozelle
 Joyce Racette
 John Shea
 Dan Kovats
 Jerry & Judy Subar
 MargEd Kwapil
 Marv & Donna Veneklasen
 Dan & Mary Lee Lynch
 Gordon Vonk
 Kathleen Maguire
 George & Yolanda Williams
 Tom & Cleo Mitchell

The first five years

From our first public event in April 1986, it was decided that we should have a monthly newsletter and present monthly events, starting with featuring popular local artists such as the **John Shea Trio**. Our May 1987 scholarship fundraiser featured **Hank Crawford** and **Jimmy McGriff**, and in November we were thrilled to have the great combo of **Houston Person** and **Etta Jones**. Nationally-known jazz stars could still be booked for fairly reasonable prices in those days! We also held our first jazz picnic in June of '87 on the banks of the Thornapple River where members **Bob & Pat Good** supplied their premises and the **John Shea Trio** supplied the music.

By 1988 we had formed a partnership with radio station WGVU, which at that time was primarily a jazz station, and the St. Cecilia Music Society. We booked our first "Classic Jazz in a Classic Setting" concerts featuring trumpeter **Art Farmer** in October and pianist **Tommy Flanagan** in November. Former Grand Rapids pianist **Clare Fischer** was featured in Feb. '89, vocalist **Susanah McCorkle** in September, and the **Ramsey**



John Shea

Lewis Quartet in November. We were flying high, and presenting local and area jazz artists at various locations the months big concerts were not scheduled. Our 1989 picnic in July was held at Caledonia's Emmons Park, which became its "home" for the next 18 years.

1990 gave us a new look for our Jazz Notes when **Chuck Neller** became our publisher, giving us a larger size with much better graphics and pictures. He has continued to perform in this

capacity for the past 20 years. Our Classic Jazz concerts this year included the **Amad Jamal Trio** in August, guitarist/vocalist **Henry Johnson** in October, and pianist/vocalist **Dave Frishberg** in November.

Continuing into 1991, we presented Detroit tenor saxman **George Benson** in January; pianist **Oliver Jones** in February, and the **Danish Radio Big Band** in March. The fall season brought the **Joanne Brackeen Quartet** in October, and the highlight of the year was the **Ray Brown Trio** with **Gene Harris** on piano for the Jimmy Forrest Scholarship Fund concert at the end of May. What a group! They even accepted an invitation to an "after glow" party at my house after the concert where our Board members got to hear lots of great "jazz on the road" stories.

Years six thru ten: 1992-1996

Our St. Cecilia concerts began their fifth year with the return of pianist **Oliver Jones** in January, the **Brad Goode Quintet** in March; and an overwhelmingly popular presentation of the **Four Freshmen** in September. **Guido Basso Quintet** appeared in November, and **Gene Bertoncini** in April with our own popular bassist **Paul Keller**. A highlight for many members was **Bob MacKercher's** organization of a bus trip to Mt. Pleasant to hear **Phil Woods** with the **Boss Brass**.



Paul Keller and Cary Kocher

1993's concerts were highlighted by **Houston Person** and **Etta Jones**, and **Oliver Jones** making his third appearance in six years. Our annual holiday party featured pianist **Eddie Russ** at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, and that summer's picnic in August was huge due to the **Keller-Kocher Trio**.

Jan. of 1994 started with a standing-room-only concert by the **Four Freshmen**; guitarist **Herb Ellis** was a huge hit that March. Our co-sponsors (WGVU and St. Cecilia) wanted to try a blues act, so vocalist **Johnny Adams** was featured at our October concert, and very poorly received!

Oliver Jones made his fourth appearance in November and we closed the year with the **Keller-Kocher Quartet** for our holiday party at Club East. Society member and pianist **Dick Reynolds** brought his Chicago-based Latin jazz group **Chizil** for our January concert; the **Turtle Island**



Chizil

String Quartet (an odd choice) performed in February, and everyone fell in love with pianist **Monty Alexander** who performed for our March concert. The great **Nat Adlerly Quartet** filled the auditorium in November, and our 10th holiday party at the Harley House featured Detroit vocalist **Harvey Thompson** amidst a winter storm.

Ten takes us to fifteen: 1996-2001

Just before she hit the big time due to a feature article in *Time* magazine, we managed to book **Diana Krall** for our January 1996 concert with **Paul Keller** on bass and **Russell Malone** on guitar.

March brought back pianist **Gene Harris** and in April we had a very poor turnout for nationally-known alto saxman **Phil Woods**. The month of May we celebrated our 10th anniversary with a huge event at the Charlevoix Club (no longer in existence) on 28th St. Held on Sunday, May 19, it featured the **Keller-Kocher Quartet**. Recognition was given to our founding mem-



Paul Keller, Diana Krall, and Russell Malone

bers as well as past and present Board members and Presidents. A special "history of us" edition of the *Jazz Notes* was given to all attending, which totaled over 200! Our November concert featured **Amad Jamal**, and this historic year ended with vocalist **Margaret Carlson** from Chicago entertaining us at our holiday party at Sayfee's.

Our 10th year of Classic Jazz concerts was kicked off by vocalist **Jeanie Bryson**, followed by bassist **Christian**

McBride in February, the **Jacky Terrasson Trio** in March, and the **Nicholas Payton Quartet** in April. **Horace Silver** was scheduled for May, but had to cancel due to illness.

Paul Keller's "Bird of Paradise" orchestra performed for our January '98 concert, **Kurt Elling** in March, and pianist **Bennie Green** in April. Two of our founding members, **Bruce Early** and **Thelma Benchick** passed away, but his Big Band lived on with **Tim Froncek** as leader for our holiday party at Rembrandt's that December.

Our 12th annual picnic in August '99 featured the **Paul Keller Ensemble**. Classic Jazz brought back the ever-popular **Oliver Jones** as well as the **Dave Holland Quintet** and the **T.S. Monk Ensemble**. We celebrated the beginning of a new millennium with a January party at Centennial Country Club featuring vocalist **Edye Evans Hyde**. That June we began

Continued on next page

what has become an annual event, honoring one of our local jazz artists as “Musician of the Year.” Our first was tenor saxman **Curt Purnell** (now deceased) and was held at Sayfee’s. Although we didn’t know it at the time, what was to be our last “Classic Jazz” concert presented pianist **Bill Charlap** in October. Our co-sponsors, WGVU and St.Cecilia, had to withdraw their financial support and the price of bringing in nationally-known artists had become too expensive.

Edye Evans-Hyde

Another five: 2001-2006

The newly renovated Wealthy Theater was our venue for a February 2001 SRO concert featuring Detroit trumpeter **Marcus Belgrave** in a “Salute to Louis Armstrong”



The Four Freshmen

program. March brought back the **Four Freshmen** for a concert at Fountain Street Church, and our 15th Anniversary party held in May at the Charlevoix Club was a blast featuring great swing music by the **WMU Jazz Orchestra**. The Jimmy Forrest Scholarship Fund presented tenor saxman **Pharoah Sanders** to a full house at the Wealthy Theater in May, raising over \$2,000. This year’s “Musician of the Year” was bassist **Paul Keller** which brought out a full house, including his and Michelle’s infant daughter. This summer marked the first season of what has become one of our most successful ventures, “Jazz at the Zoo” concerts at John Ball Park. A September concert featuring Betty Joplin, held just two weeks after the fateful 9/11 disaster in NYC, brought out an audience of only 60 people. This happened to public events all over the nation... people were in such shock over the Twin Towers death toll.

We kicked off 2002 by presenting two great vocal jazz groups – WMU’s **Gold Company** and GRCC’s **Shades Of Blue** at Central High School auditorium. In March, thanks to pianist **Dick Reynold**’s friendship with him, we were able to book the great jazz violin virtuoso **Johnny Frigo** at the Wealthy Theater. His performance blew everyone away, with his 86-year-old talent and showmanship! In April we supported the Greenville Band Boosters’ presenta-

tion of the **Count Basie Orchestra** by buying a block of prime seats for our

members. In June we had **Mel Dalton** as our “Musician of the Year” and kicked off our second season of Jazz at the Zoo. Our August picnic featured **Paul Keller**, **Dick Reynolds** and trumpeter **Rob Smith**.

President **Jim Akins** surprised me by putting together a “Salute to Jimmy Forrest” program for a February concert at the Wealthy Theater. It featured two short films of Jimmy playing with the **Count Basie Orchestra** along with the live performance featuring Detroit tenor saxist **George Benson** playing Jimmy’s part in replicating a concert Jimmy gave at Fountain Street Church 25 years ago with **Elgin Vines** on bass and **Tim Froncek** on drums – both of whom played at the original concert with **Bruce Early**. 2003’s honoree in June was **Ray Gill** at a party at the Pen



Tim Froncek and Jim Akins

Club. Jazz at the Zoo’s crowds had grown from 100 to 600 each Monday mid-June to mid-August, and in September we began a new series: Jazz Gumbo cabaret-style events each third Monday at the Kopper Top Guest House. Our holiday party at the Pen Club featured the **Beltline Big Band** and our membership topped 400 for the first time!

Our January 2004 Jazz Gumbo was a “goodbye” party for **John Shea**, who moved to Phoenix that same month. Our “Musician of the Year,” **Tim Froncek**, was ill in the



hospital on the date set for the event in June, but by August he was back on stage leading the big band for its annual “closing act” spot for our zoo concerts. Back in town for the holidays, **John Shea** provided the music for our holiday party at the Pen Club. The 2005 year was highlighted by

Rick Reuther’s performance at our March Gumbo in a tribute to Bobby Darin. Selection of **Elgin Vines** as our Musician of the Year brought out a full house to the Pen Club in June, and our grande finale concert by the GRJO at the zoo brought out our first crowd of over 1,000.

The past five: 2006 thru 2010

We celebrated our 20th anniversary in April with a banquet at the Kopper Top Guest House featuring the **Claude Black Quintet** with two of our former “Musician of the Year” recipients, **Elgin Vines** and **Mel Dalton** forming part of the group. In June **Mary Rademacher** was celebrated as our sixth honoree at an overflow banquet held at Aquinas Donnelly Center. Highlight of the evening was a duet she sang with her mother, **Pat Rademacher**, and the partying went on long after our scheduled closing time. This also marked our last year for having an annual jazz picnic. The huge success of the Jazz at the Zoo concerts that run thru mid-August created a conflict with trying to put this event together along with starting our new season of Jazz Gumbo in September.

Our 2007 “Musician of the Year” was **Tom Hagen**, whose party was also held at Aquinas with **The Fred Knapp Trio** supplying the music at Tom’s request. Our 21st annual holiday party, also held at Aquinas, featured a salute to our guests, jazz history-makers **Count Fisher** and his wife, **Eve Rene**. **Mary Rademacher** introduced them with some great biographical data on their joint careers and then they joined the **Terry Lower Quartet** with 84-year-old Count on the drums and 80-year-old Eve on vocals. The years had not diminished their talents!

As our monthly Jazz Gumbo events entered into their fifth year, we added chili and salad to the menu, and much like our Jazz at the Zoo concerts, attendance was growing at each performance. Our March event featured the popular **Fred Knapp Trio** playing the music of Cole Porter. Our 2008 “Musician of the Year,” popular pianist-composer **Steve Talaga**, was honored at Aquinas Wege Center with four of our previous honorees performing: **Tom Hagen**, **Tim**

Froncek, **Elgin Vines** and **Mary Rademacher**. Usually a June event, Steve’s party was held on May 29 since he was leaving for England in early June. Last year’s honoree, **Tom Hagen**, pretended to pout over having to relinquish his crown a few weeks early! The year ended as it began, with the **Beltline Big Band** inspiring our members to crowd the dance floor during our holiday party at the Kopper Top Guest House.

Our 2009 March Gumbo was outstanding with **Tom** and **Cherie Hagen**, **Elgin Vines** and **Mike Lutley** backing **Rick Reuther**, dressed in tux and top hat, performing a tribute to **Fred Astaire**. Known mainly for



Elgin Vines and Rick Reuther

his superb dancing, Astaire was the choice of many songwriters to introduce their latest compositions because of his unique styling. Our “Musician of the Year” honoree was pianist **Dick Reynolds**, who took over the keyboard from **Tom Hagen** for the second set while Tom took up his guitar. Several other of Dick’s musician friends joined in a jam session to make it a real swinging evening. Our zoo audiences have grown so large that the management made us hire parking attendants. We are now averaging audiences of over 1,000 each and every week. Our November gumbo featured the **Grand Rapids Jazz Orchestra** and brought out our largest crowd ever with everyone going

wild at the band’s finale of “Sing, Sing, Sing” featuring the amazing drum solo by **Tim Froncek**. Our 23rd annual holiday party also broke all records as a welcome for the **Keller-Kocher Quartet**.

The January 2010 Jazz Gumbo marked the return of **John Shea** exactly six years after we had him at the same venue to say “goodbye” upon his moving to Arizona. We were so glad to have him back that he became our honoree as “Musician of the Year” at our June event held at Centennial Country Club. The summer season marked the 10th anniversary of our Jazz at the Zoo concerts. From a humble beginning of

Continued on next page

50-100 patrons, we now have a weekly attendance of over 1,000, and our regular closing act of the GRJO in mid-August drew an estimated audience of 1,700! Our rather sneaky Board of Directors took the occasion to present me with a wonderfully designed quilt featuring pictures taken over the past 10 years at the zoo of our performers along with their CD cover photos to credit me with the success of

these events. It is now converted to a beautiful wall hanging above the two-story stairway landing in my front entry. The **Beltline Big Band** provided lots of swing dance music and special arrangements of vocal numbers by their pianist **Jack Kimmel** for our 24th annual holiday party held for the first time at the very deluxe University Club in downtown Grand Rapids.

Onward into 2011

As our Jazz Gumbo events enter their eighth season, our audiences are growing in size and appreciation. The January show featured Rick Reuther in an outstanding tribute to Frank Sinatra's Vegas years. Our February program brought us a new face, vocalist Kathy LaMar, whose voice and personality delighted everyone with her unique way of selling such songs as her



The Fred Knapp Quartet

own favorite, "Smooth Operator." March featured the Fred Knapp Trio Plus One (tenor sax-man Ben Jansson), with the Board deeply involved in planning our April 25th Anniversary celebration.

President's Message

As we celebrate the anniversary of the West Michigan Jazz Society, we look back on the last 25 years full of great music, and forward to serving our membership and community in the years to come.

My first experience with WMJS was a free concert at the zoo. My husband and I had just moved to the area and were checking out the local music scene. We became members and I joined the board in 2005.

What impresses me about this organization is the people. Those attending our events have fun, including the couples dancing to standards at Jazz Gumbo or kids hopping around in the grass in front of the band shell during Jazz at the Zoo. It's rewarding to see our regulars at each event and meet new jazz fans who become members.

The talent of our area musicians is amazing. We are fortunate to live among such talent, and privileged to enjoy them on a regular basis.

Thank you to the founders of our organization, who 25 years ago had the vision and drive to get things started. Without their leadership we would not be where we are today. Thanks to the many Board members over the years, volunteers, and members who have devoted their time and energy. Thanks



to the musicians who have provided us years of entertainment and continue to engage us with their talent. A special thank you goes to Betty Forrest, who has been a consistent force in our organization for the past 25 years. Betty has done it all, big jobs, little jobs,

and everything in between. It's hard to imagine the last 25 years would be the same without her energy and commitment.

As we look to the future, continuing to do long range planning, we remind ourselves that WMJS is still an organization of volunteers promoting our numerous events to support and celebrate jazz. We depend on the creativity, energy and vision of our members. So spread the word, get your friends and family involved—for the love of jazz.

Dona Raymer, President, WMJS

Who we are... what we do

Jazz at the Zoo

When we began these Monday evening summer jazz concerts 10 years ago, most of them had to be held on the deck of the picnic shelter adjacent to the duck pond at John Ball Park. The Circle Theater building across from the band shell was used on many Monday evenings for children's theater programs, and our music was loud enough to create a conflict. This was no problem for the first year or two, since our crowds seldom exceeded 100, but once the theater programs ended by year three our audiences grew and grew. We now attract over 1,000 each week, made up of a wonderfully diversified crowd that includes all ages, races, ethnic groups; senior and handicapped brought by bus; kids on bikes and roller skates; families with their picnic hampers – all coming to enjoy the music that helps keep jazz alive! Our food vendors are popular with those who do not bring a picnic; our parking attendants help our patrons find their way smoothly and politely; and they respond with generous donations at intermission to aid us in our presentation of these great, but expensive, productions.

WMJS scholarship fund

Our well-endowed scholarship fund is available to area-wide students who wish to continue their studies in jazz music. Applicants may attend the college of their choice, and are awarded up to \$2,000 per year by our scholarship committee. Many of them have chosen to attend the excellent jazz studies programs in Kalamazoo at WMU. Last year we had three past and current winners performing in their highly rated jazz orchestra.

Our current recipient is bassist Jordan Richards, who is also attending WMU. We are proud of the fact that we have assisted in the continued education of 22 students over the past 25 years.

Musician of the Year

Our annual June award banquet is a salute to a local or regional jazz musician or performer being recognized for their talents and contributions to live jazz. Our 11th honoree will be selected by your Board of Directors and celebrated this summer.

Those honored thus far are:

- 2000 – Curt Purnell, saxophone (deceased)
- 2001 – Paul Keller, bass
- 2002 – Mel Dalton, saxophone (deceased)
- 2003 – Ray Gill, saxophone
- 2004 – Tim Froncek, drums
- 2005 – Elgin Vines, bass

2006 – Mary Rademacher, vocals

2007 – Tom Hagen, piano

2008 – Steve Talaga, piano

2009 – Dick Reynolds, piano

2010 – John Shea, piano and vocals

Each of the above has received an Honorary Life Membership to the Jazz Society, in addition to a plaque and a Proclamation from the Mayor of Grand Rapids designating the date as “their” day, along with a framed poster of their bio in that month's Jazz Notes.

Jazz in the Schools

Jazz educator and WMJS founding member Ray Gill led our jazz education program for over a dozen years, concentrating on sharing his passion for jazz with students at the middle school level. He would take a rhythm section with him to perform for more than 1,000 students at area-wide schools during the fall to spring season. Now age 85 and having health problems, Ray had to retire from his beloved role a couple of years ago, and the Jazz Society is now in the process of reinstating our education program under the direction of educator, trumpet player, and Board member James Sawyer. Our companion Jazz Society in Pensacola, Florida has just begun a new program which directs their efforts to music students in both middle and high schools, involving the services of the many professional jazz musicians in their area, and we are planning to emulate their success.

We are most fortunate to have so many excellent artists in our area to call on to participate in this most worthwhile activity.

Jazz Gumbo

This marks our ninth year in presenting monthly cabaret-style jazz events from September through May at the Kopper Top Guest House. From an average of 50-80 patrons joining us on the third Monday evening each month, our January 2011 program drew a full house of over 200 for the great “Salute to Frank Sinatra” program featuring Rick Reuther and the Tom Hagen Septet. We book a variety of local and regional jazz combos and bands for these events, and hold a 50-50 raffle for the benefit of our Scholarship Fund. Along with hearing great live jazz groups, our patrons get a tasty bowl of gumbo or chili plus salad as part of their admission price. Our host, owner Marc Stewart, provides us with a very reasonable cash bar, great service, and a friendly atmosphere for these events. Our only problem is the eagerness of our attendees in arriving to establish themselves at a table at 5:30 when the doors are not supposed to be opened until 6 pm!

Still with us after all these years *Founding* & Charter Members*

Seven of our original 13 jazz lovers who attended our organizing meetings in January and February 1986 still maintain their membership with WMJS. A year later we were proud to count 150, including our Founders, and they were designated as Charter members. Of these, over 90 were still with us in 1994; 53 remained in 2004. Many moved to warmer climates when they retired; many have passed away. While only 34 remain, that still represents 44 per cent – not too shabby. Here they are:

John & Jacki Bartley
Maxine Corder
Rafael Diaz
*Betty Forrest
*Ray Gill
*Jim & Nancy Gould
Jack Hoppus
Joyce Racette
Dan Kovats
MargEd Kwapil
Dan & Mary Lee Lynch
Kathleen Maguire

Bill McFadden
Trudy Lynn Newland
Robert & Helen Nolan
Lee & Carol Rozelle
John Shea
Jerry & Judy Subar
*Kathy Swets
*Bob & Ginny Taylor
Marv & Donna Veneklasen
Gordon Vonk
George & Yolanda Williams
Tom & Cleo Mitchell

Life members

Five years ago, when we celebrated our 20th anniversary, we were proud to include a listing of our 30 Life Members in the Jazz Notes, plus six former “Musician of the Year” recipients who receive an Honorary Life Membership as part of their awards. Of these six, two are now deceased (Curt Purnell and Mel Dalton).

The number of Life Members has doubled in just the past five years! We now have 52 Life Members and 9 Honorary Life Members, with Dick Reynolds appearing on both lists since he had already become a Life Member prior to receiving his Honorary one.

We believe that this represents a great show of confidence in the WMJS, that it will keep going and growing, and that it will continue to fulfill its goals of presenting and perpetuating live jazz through their social and educational programs.

Ronald & Judith Beatty
Chris Bickley
Ben & Gretchen Birkbeck
Fred & Gina Bivins
Mary Clapp
Tom & Judy Coby
Kay Courtney
Jon & Kayne Ferrier
John & Edna Fogarty
Betty Forrest



John Miller & Barb Keller

Jeff & Georgia Geitzen
Steve Hilger
Jack Hoppus
Bill McFadden
Larry & Shirley Manning



Jack Hoppus



Jack and Marry Morrison

John Miller & Barb Keller
Jack & Mary Morrison
Steve & Carole Pence
Tamara Baldwin Raglin
Tim & Dona Raymer
Dick Reynolds
Charles & Roberta Ryman
Reuben Smartt
Darmin Smith
Jay & Helen Smith
Bill Steininger
David & Mary Stickney
Gordon & Shirley Vonk
George & Yolanda Williams
J. Winans

...and the beat goes on

What fun! I slip through the side door employee entrance of the Kopper Top Guest House, select a central table against the north wall for myself and three friends, and settle in for the January Jazz Gumbo. Someone else is working the admission table; someone else is selling the raffle tickets. I happily enjoy my bowl of chili while listening to a great program of Tom Hagen arrangements for Rick Reuther's showcase of Sinatra during the Vegas years. What made this carefree evening possible? A little lesson called learning how to delegate duties.

Those who remember me from early days will remember that my father was L.V. Eberhard and that he built a chain of supermarkets throughout West Michigan. Known as a charming tyrant, he became head of his family at age 14 when his father died. He was the epitome of the self-made man who did it all... and did it his way. Unfortunately, as in many such cases, after age 80 his abilities to handle the myriad duties and decisions for a successful corporation were failing, but he was incapable of delegating. I saw it all from close at hand, as I was his Personnel Director throughout the '70s and '80s. By the time he passed away in 1991 at age 89, what was left of a 45-store business had to be sold off, and the Eberhard name no longer appeared on a Michigan marquee.

Although accused by some of inheriting a few of my father's least charming traits, one lesson I did learn was "don't stay too long at the fair." Thus, by spring of last year, soon after my own 80th birthday, I started making detailed lists of the things I had been doing for the past 24 years to run the Jazz Society's business. It was an eye-opener as pages of detail on how to handle membership, finances, event planning, publicity, booking artists, and other such matters got reduced to "to do" lists.

My first "pass off" came last June when Treasurer Pete Proli took over responsibility for monies collected each Monday evening from our Jazz at the Zoo audiences. Dragging home buckets of cash and coin may not sound like a chore, but getting it all counted and deposited each week was not really fun... and all I had to do was ask the Board for a volunteer and the job was delegated!

It didn't take much looking around to see the bright light

shining on my right... our President, Dona Raymer. She retired last June from her school principal duties and was now in her sixth and final year as a member of our Board of Directors (after two 3-year terms a member must step aside for at least a year to make room for new faces) and her third year as our very capable President. She is the ideal person to take over the position of Executive Manager. While lacking in some of my more forceful characteristics, her executive experience in the education system has accustomed her to directing many and varied activities without enlisting Eberhard dramatics.

Dona has already made improvements in managing our events. She is the main lady at the admissions table for our Jazz Gumbos and has set it up so that members trying

to pay their renewal or guests deciding whether to join are smoothly moved down the line to another volunteer while those eager to get their admission paid are not delayed. She already has her first "biggie" (special event) under her belt, having put together the highly successful December holiday party at the University Club.

The hardest trial has come with handing over the myriad steps and record-keeping involved in

memberships – both new and renewals. She already has ideas on updating antiquated methods that I took over from Phyllis MacKercher about 15 years ago. Seems a lot of things formerly done by hand can now be handled on computers! All this transitioning and delegating is going to lead to improvements that will keep us going and growing for another 25 years... and it leaves me exactly where I want to be... as Editor of our *Jazz Notes*. I was always, from day one, confident that if we could produce a good newsletter to communicate with our members that we would succeed. Being the link between members and management has always been my most fulfilling duty. It's the one I will retain, until someone taps me on the shoulder to tell me "time to go home – you have stayed too long at the fair."

Betty Forrest, Editor WMJS Jazz Notes



WMJS Board presented Betty with memorial quilt picturing many zoo performers to celebrate our 10th year of the program she started.

Jazznotes Media Design
by Positive Images <http://home.comcast.net/~positive.images>
Chuck Neller • cneller@comcast.net • (616) 304-5461

Jazznotes

April 2011

Articles, photos and comments are welcome! Send before the 20th of the month to:

Editor, Betty Forrest
West Michigan Jazz Society
304 Paris S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Information from another publication used in JAZZ NOTES approved by the publisher and credited.

West Michigan Jazz Society Board Members

Board Meeting: Tues., Apr. 26, 7 pm at Great Lakes Steak House

Dona Raymer - President735-4744

Craig Benjamin - Vice President....233-9829

Betty Forrest - Executive Director..458-0125

Mary Rademacher ...364-6609

Deb Snow243-5226

Marilyn Tyree363-7322

Jim Reed942-0239

Pete Proli866-0147

Darryl Hofstra648-5489

Jack Morrison949-6339

James Sawyer460-4433

Barb Keller949-7633

Address and e-mail changes: Please notify Dona Raymer at 735-4744.

Student

\$10

☐

Single

\$25

☐

Couple

\$35

☐

Donor

\$50

☐

Patron

\$100

☐

Life Member

\$250

☐

Make checks payable to
 West Michigan Jazz Society

and mail to:

4144 Bulrush NW

Grand Rapids, MI 49534

Name

Address

City

ZIP

E-mail Address

Phone ()

Interested in working on a committee? Yes

☐

No

☐

Later

☐

JAZZ NOTES is sent to all members of the West Michigan Jazz Society to inform members of area jazz and to promote jazz in general.

Your contribution to the West Michigan Jazz Society is Tax Deductible.

JAZZNOTES is designed and produced by Chuck Neller of Positive Images, under the conceptual and editorial direction of Betty Forrest.

Grand Rapids, MI 49534
 4144 Bulrush NW

