

THE CAT'S MEOW



PO BOX 50806

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Larry Conger and a "Seminar on Jazz"

Capital Senior Center at Maxcy Gregg Park (just off Pickens near Blossom)
2:30-5:00 pm Sunday, April 7, 2013

Larry Conger will be back with us once more this month. Dick says I love playing with Larry because I feel like I'm attending a graduate seminar. Larry can bring you sounds you might have heard listening to Buddy Bolden in the 1900's or Bunk Johnson a bit latter; powerful horns that really drive the band. But Buddy and Bunk were largely self taught or tutored by working jazzmen. Larry on the other hand, has a degree in music from Ithaca College in New York. And it may be a surprise to some of you, but Larry played violin with the Greenville Symphony for a number of years.

Dick adds that members of the band find Larry a delight to work with – a true gentleman.

As if that's not enough, Larry has been a good friend to the Club. Maybe it is time to remind everyone of the influence Larry had on the Carolina Jazz Society (in addition to holding a Patron Membership. First, he has always donated his performance fee back to the club). But as those annoying TV commercials say "WAIT! THAT'S NOT ALL!!!"

When Larry moved to this area and wanted to form a band, he found the best musicians were playing at the Carolina Jazz Society concerts. He recruited key members to form the "Two Rivers Jazz Band". That gave them a lot more gigs and more practice. Plus he brought the knowledge accumulated by playing with Turk Murphy at EarthQuake Magoons in San Francisco. It widened the group's repertoire and added to the fun. And it made the band members both more cohesive and more versatile.

I was surprised when I asked Larry what horn player he had looked to for inspiration; his answer "Harry James". Not only that, they were friends. When Harry and the band played in Columbia, Harry came over and had dinner with Larry and Mary. After dinner, Larry suggested to Harry that he stay in their guest cottage for the night. But Harry said, "No, I stay where the band stays when we're on tour. If they're staying in a hotel, I stay in the same hotel".

The Carolina Jazz Society Now Has It's Own Web-Site and Facebook Page

We have joined the new information age thanks to Rowena and her friend Steve Hait. Steve has developed a nice, useable, well designed website for us. And if you go there you'll see a Bio of Larry and a copy of this newsletter. We've needed a website for a while and I hope it gives us more exposure. If you are a Facebook user, be sure and like us to see the latest news. There will be more in the future but you can check us out at: www.carolinajazzsociety.com
www.facebook.com/pages/Carolina-Jazz-Society/139716539538011

THE CAROLINA JAZZ SOCIETY was founded in 1958 to enjoy Dixieland Jazz, one of America's original art forms.
Concerts are \$10 for non-members, \$5 for members, free for Patrons and young people under 18.

CD Sales

Dick Goodwin and Reggie Sullivan will bring CDs for sale at the next concert. Bring some extra cash so you can enjoy their fine music every day.

Renewal and Mailing of Newsletter

We are sending out a number of newsletters to recipients who have not renewed. This is the result of our membership database loss with the passing of Patty Davis. It is unknown if the recipients are still in the area. If you wish continue to receive the "Meow" please renew.

More on Harry James

Some years ago, Larry lent me a book about Harry's life & career:

Where was Harry born? Answer, Albany Georgia. His parents were with a traveling circus and that's where the circus was performing when his mother went into labor.

What did his parents do with the circus? His mother was an acrobat and "daredevil" horseback rider. His father was leader of the circus band.

What was Harry's first job? You'll have to trust my memory on this. I haven't been able to double-check this. But Harry showed great musical talent from an early age and I think he led a small circus band by age 6.

What did Harry aspire to be? A baseball player and apparently he was pretty good.

As a kid, what did Harry have to do to play baseball? He had to master a new page every day in "Arban's Complete Conservatory Method for Trumpet" (Harry's father was a very stern taskmaster and each assignment had to be mastered completely before Harry could play baseball or do anything else).

What age was Harry when he started playing professionally? He was 15 and played with local dance bands in Beaumont Texas (his family had settled there after leaving the circus).

What did Harry say to the other musicians in Benny Goodman's band as he was leaving? You'll be surprised by the type of music my band will play! Of course, Harry was best known at that point for his spectacular, jazzy solo on "Sing, Sing, Sing" with Benny Goodman. They and we were surprised but most of the nation was enthralled (remember "You Made Me Love You" or "I'm Beginning to See the Light" or "Ciribiribin").

What was Harry's nickname? The Hawk; because he could sight-read anything (remember all that practice his father made him do as a kid).

Red Smith, Editor

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