

THE CAT'S MEOW



PO BOX 50806 Columbia, South Carolina 29250 803-432-1504

Charlie Willbanks & His Banjo Featured

Lourie Center at Maxcy Gregg Park (just off Pickens near Blossom)

2:30-5:00 pm, Sunday, May 3, 2015

It is our great pleasure to feature Charlie Willbanks on this, our final concert before the summer break. Charlie is a key member of the Windjammers, a dixieland band in the Spartanburg Area. And he has also trekked down from Spartanburg to sit in with our guys for many years. It is high time we featured him.

Charlie is a man of many talents. He was a key person with Milliken Research and holds a pot-load of patents. For people in industrial research, a good set of patents is on a par with a Nobel Prize (at least, that was true before the internet and social media became so prominent).

And patents are part of the US Constitution. This illustrates to me what a wise choice we made in our forefathers. It encouraged inventors like Edison, and corporations like DuPont, Bell Telephone & GE, to pursue inventions vigorously. They knew they could commercialize those ideas and recoup their investment before someone else grabbed the idea and ran with it. A patent gave the inventor 21 years to commercialize the idea without the threat of competition. But after that, other's could use the idea. New users often made improvements to the invention aiding the rapid rise in technology. One other thing, during the time when Charlie got his patents, he was operating under the original strict US Patent rules requiring the idea to be new, novel, useful and non obvious. But impressive as this is, it is not the reason we are featuring Charlie. We're featuring Charlie because he is one doggone good banjo player.



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.

Big Noise from Winnetka

The audience gave a rousing reception to the band's rendition of Big Noise From Winnetka last month. What impressed me most was Dick's arrangement. He captured the sound of Bob Haggart's whistling so well. It was amazing.

The origin of the piece is just as interesting. Winnetka is a somewhat posh suburb of Chicago on the shore of Lake Michigan. Haggart was bassist and Ray Baduc was the drummer with the band at the top hotel in Chicago. At that time (long after Al Capone) alcohol could not be served on Sundays and that meant teen-agers could come to the Sunday dances. A big, enthusiastic contingent arrived from Winnetka each Sunday.

After a break one day, Haggart and Baduc got back on the bandstand ahead of the other band members and faced a sea of expectant teen-agers. Ray picked up his sticks and started drumming. Then Bob joined in. Bob had a piercing whistle and in the absence of other instruments, he started whistling a simple refrain. It fired up the teen-agers even more and they insisted the duo play it at every concert. I don't remember how the bit started with Ray drumming on the strings while Bob fingered the notes with his left hand. But it was an inspired piece of showmanship. Here's a link: www.youtube.com/watch?v=KfFBdViZHzk

After our concert Chuck Braun added a nice coda to the story. Chuck said that at some point in Dick Goodwin's career, he was playing bass as part of a Teddy Wilson trio (**how cool is that!**). The sponsor discovered that the drummer was Ray Bauduc and said "You are going to play Big Noise aren't you?" Dick asked "Can we fake it?" Ray said "No, there are too many parts to learn, but I have the chart in my room". Dick laid the sheets on the floor of the stage and moved the bass across the floor while he played, giving a new meaning to "walking bass". Dick chimed in to say that he was playing an un-amplified bass and that meant the sound man had to walk along holding the mike as they played.

For many years Bob joined our guys twice a year. By that time, Bob was semi-retired, spending the winter in Florida and summers in New York. But he stayed overnight with Jack Howe on Lake Murray each time he passed through our area. Jack was a member of the jazz club and often sat in playing sax. If I remember correctly, Jack had been a lawyer in Chicago and had let Haggart and friends practice in his basement when they were teen-agers.

What I didn't know until I did some research was that Bob did a lot of studio work when in New York, arranging for people like Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holliday and Benny Goodman and according to the one article, for Duke Ellington (can that be right?).

Bob was also a co-leader with Yank Lawson of "The World's Greatest Jazz Band" a name bestowed by the promoter of a series of concerts in Colorado. But neither Lawson nor Haggart liked that name and they quickly reverted to the Lawson-Haggart Jazz Band.

Bob has also written some fine songs including "South Rampart Parade", "Dogtown Blues", "What's New" and "My Inspiration".

Like most of the musicians I've known, Bob was a real gentleman in the truest sense of the word.

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