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# VJAZZ

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE VICTORIAN JAZZ ARCHIVE

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## CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

By Ray Marginson

Well, another Annual General Meeting (our fifth) has come and gone.

This one was particularly noteworthy in that it was held away from our Wantirna headquarters. We felt it essential to shift to the Rosstown Hotel Function Room because, on that Sunday, some momentous events were scheduled. First was the celebration of Keith "Honk" Atkins' 80th birthday as well as the 70th birthday of Rob McCulloch. A further great occasion was that George Tack, despite emerging from hospital just that morning, not only arrived but also sang for us. It was great to see him and Lorna, and we wish them both well in the difficult time they are going through.

Although the venue was changed we were able, with the support of Rob McCulloch, still to have the planned performance by the junior and senior groups from the Victorian Jazz Club Workshop Band. It was great to see and hear these young (some very young) players developing their performances under the V.J.C.'s excellent initiative. Thanks to Marg Burke and Marina Pollard who are two of those doing the hard work of encouraging and guiding these enthusiastic players.

2001 saw the complete remake of our visitor listening and video facilities. Also we received a second grant from the Trust Company of Australia, through our good friend Barrie Dermody, which enabled us to equip our photographic area and to commence the digital transfer of our large photographic collection.

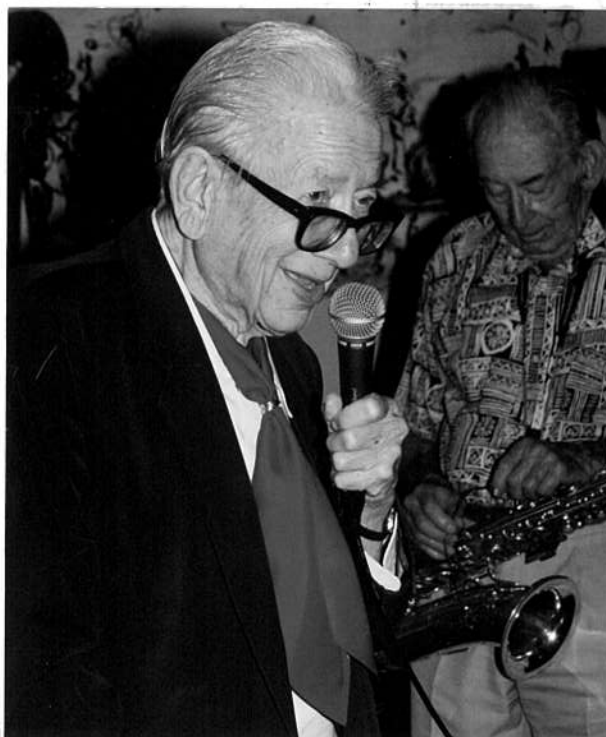
In recalling sadly the death of Ron Halstead at last year's A.G.M., I also commented on the delay in the executor making available Ron's generous bequest of \$20,000. Happily I can now report that this has been received and that our capital fund now stands at just on \$55,000. I again emphasised that our financial situation is still precarious. With present interest rates the capital we have only yields about \$1,650 a year.

We have a membership of 174 members, of whom 41 are Life Members. The \$220 each for these latter is held in our Capital Fund, so with 133 annual payments of \$22, our certain income, with the interest, is only just over \$5,000.

We therefore have a significant amount to raise each year to meet the \$9,000 it costs to operate the Archive. This will rise when we finally put our first data base entries on the web.

2001 was marred by some significant losses to the Jazz community. Obituaries for Tom Pickering and Tom Baker appear elsewhere in the newsletter. The committee has been substantially re-elected save for one significant change. John Rippin has generously offered to act as auditor thus saving us \$400 a year. To do so he has resigned from the committee and as secretary. He will attend meetings as an observer but will give up his editorship of the newsletter. Gretel James was elected as secretary.

2001 was a good year, with the success of the Exhibition, so much of which was due to our Collection Manager, John Kennedy. It is perhaps invidious to mention only one or two of our dedicated band of volunteers, but I need to stress how much we owe to the consistent work of David Ward in sound recording. It is a critical aspect of the work we do. But warmest appreciation also to the twenty or so regular hardworking participants in the creation of our Victorian Jazz Archive. The Jazz community owes you a great deal.



Right: George Tack at the AGM with Keith "Honk" Atkins  
Photo by Jeff Blades

## FAREWELL TOM BAKER

14.9.1952 – 23.10.2001

After three months we are only just coming to terms with the fact that this last trip of Tom's was not just an extended tour overseas but was his final tour. There can surely be no-one connected with the Jazz family, especially in Australia, who has not been affected by the untimely death of Tom in Breda, Holland, at the age of just forty-nine. Not only was Tom one of Australia's finest and most-loved jazz musicians but one only has to look at the internet to see just how popular, revered and loved he was the world over. Although he had appeared in just about every corner of Australia, he had gained worldwide fame, having played in thirty-six countries during his all too short lifetime.

Born in Oakland, California, Tom came to Australia with his parents at the age of nineteen. How lucky were we that when they returned to the U.S.A. Tom decided to stay and make his home in Sydney. Although Sydneysiders knew him first, the rest of us probably first heard of him with his now legendary San Francisco Jazz Band. I know that was the first time I heard him, when Roger Hudson took me to the Esplanade Hotel, St Kilda in April 1977, and I was introduced to the T.B.S.F.B. On 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2001, at precisely the time that Tom went to the big band in the sky, David Ward, our sound recording engineer at the Archive, happened to put on the reel-to-reel tape recorded by the late Ron Halstead of that very performance. We realised afterwards how uncanny that was.

We usually thought of Tom playing trumpet, alto saxophone and trombone, but it soon became evident that he was a master of just about anything he chose to play, and he was just as talented as a singer. Musicians the world over looked to Tom for inspiration and were more than happy to have him play with them. Festival organisers knew what a drawcard he was whether with his own band or as a guest with other bands. He was always happy to play with everyone – and imparted valuable help and guidance especially to the younger up-and-coming musicians. Other musicians respected his various styles, from his considerable knowledge of the Lu Watters music, to his Chicago Seven, his place in big bands, trios and his Swing Street Orchestra in which he played with his "Countess", Pat Qua, on piano. Theirs was a truly remarkable relationship in which each had found their soul-mate, living together happily for nearly thirty years.

At the various tributes, farewells and wakes there have been numerous anecdotes and stories told about Tom and I would just like to tell my favourite "Tom" story.

Back in 1980 during the Forbes Convention some of us were gathered at a late night party at June Palmer's house. I can remember being completely spellbound by Tom who was sitting in an armchair in a corner playing an alto saxophone. Eventually my two friends and I left the party in our hired minibus and returned to the hotel in Forbes. Even though he was staying at the same hotel Tom had declined our offer of a lift back. Being responsible for the bus we had parked it around the back under our upstairs window for safe-keeping and tried to keep an eye on it. Some considerable time later we were rudely awakened by noises below our window. On investigation we found someone on the roof of our bus attempting to get up the roof to our open window as they had been locked out. Yes, it was Tom.

Farewell to a great musician and friend to all who knew him. He was "Absolutely, Positively" the best.

*Gretel James*



Tom Baker & Pat Qua at home April 2000 – Photo Gretel James

### VISIT BY DIRECTOR OF CHICAGO JAZZ INSTITUTE ARCHIVE

Dr Terry Martin, Director of the Chicago Jazz Institute Archive, visited the VJA in July, 2001 (This article unfortunately was overlooked for the November issue of VJAZZ: Eds). Terry, who was brought to the Archive by Eric Brown, is Adelaide born and has been in the US for over 35 years, and is a keen collector of Australian jazz. He is also Professor of Molecular Genetics & Cell Biology at the University of Chicago, and is involved in the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians. Terry was responsible for the Dave Dallwitz Band being invited to the Chicago Jazz Festival.

The committee of the VJA wish to thank Terry for his input regarding the setup of the VJA.

## TOM PICKERING 1921 – 2001

On Friday the 26<sup>th</sup> of October an era in Australia Jazz closed with the death in Hobart of the great clarinetist and tenor player Tom Pickering. Tom died after a long period of illness. The members of the Archive send their deepest sympathy to Meg and his family.

On Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> November we held a memorial jazz occasion for the VJA and other friends to remember Tom as well as Tom Baker, sadly lost to us all the same month. We played some rare tapes and CDs of both great jazz men and also listened to live performances by many of Tom Pickering's former colleagues. Few, except perhaps for his close friends like Ian Pearce and Roger Bell, (as Andrew Bisset says in his 1979 seminal work "Black Roots White Flowers") are aware that "the Bell Band, though central to traditional jazz in Australia, were not alone at the fountainhead"; they shared that with the Barrel House Four from Hobart. The Four were of course Tom, Ian Pearce, Cedric Pearce and Rex Green.

Through the most enormous good fortune, Tom's father relocated his family to Hobart and settled in the same street as the Pearce brothers. They then met Rex Green at Hutchins School, Hobart. This small group with additions from time to time, beavered away in Hobart, found their way to improvised jazz-playing at dances and on the ABC (as early as 1939), but it was not until Tom walked into the Heidelberg Town Hall, taken there by Bill Miller to hear the Bell Band's great sound, that he had ever heard a band working on the lines of his own group. As is now part of legend, the great turning point was the 1946 Jazz Convention in Melbourne when all the groups from several states met and played together and lifelong friendships were formed. Ced Pearce couldn't make it to Melbourne but Rex, Ian and Tom were there. The Ampersand recordings by Bill Miller in the late forties show the great strength, conception and lyrical nature of Tom's tenor saxophone playing, as well as his melodic clarinet style and unique vocals. His work on tenor, like that of the late and also greatly missed Don (Pixie) Roberts is deserving of more critical attention.

What can we say about this great player, singer and composer except that he was not only a delight to hear but also to be with as a person. His well-known closeness to Roger Bell was not just a jazz friendship but a sharing of a love of literature, of lunatic word play and spontaneous wit. It is a feature that I personally remember from that time almost as well as the music.

Tom won literary awards for short story writing, painted (as of course did Graeme Bell) and in his professional life was the greatly respected Tasmanian Parliamentary Librarian. His recorded work ranges from the Barrel House Four to earliest Ampersands of the 40's, through the Good Time Music Band to great double LPs such as the Pearce-Pickering sides on Swaggie. The Archive is fortunate to have some rare recorded cassettes such as those from Tattersalls Hotel in 1979.

He was honoured with the Churchill Fellowship and on this rewarding visit to the States met and played with, among others, Jim Cullum.

In 1982 he was admitted as a Member of the Order of Australia. His was a creative and well-lived life, supported by his wife Meg. Goodbye to Tom, gentle man jazz man and friend to us all.

*Ray Marginson*

(with the help of Andrew Bisset and the late Norm Linehan)



THE MYER FOUNDATION

### MYER FOUNDATION SECOND GRANT

The Myer family have again responded generously to our submission for help in altering the toilet block on the site to provide a special purpose (disabled) toilet.

The Foundation has just advised of a grant of \$7,000 toward the cost of the work. The Archive appreciates this valuable support.

### OPEN DAY

SENIOR CITIZENS' WEEK

THE ARCHIVE WILL BE HOSTING SENIOR  
CITIZENS AGAIN THIS YEAR ON  
TUESDAY 19TH MARCH  
FROM 10.00 A.M. TO 4.00 P.M.  
FREE ADMISSION  
MORNING & AFTERNOON TEA PROVIDED  
LIVE MUSIC

### Cash Donations - since last issue

Frank Webster, Paul Burke, Peter Robb,  
Royston Coldicott, Brendan O'Neill,  
Fred Sommerville

### New Members since last issue

Frank and Cicley Webster, Ian Horbury,  
Margaret Cleaver, Ilona Booth,  
Brian & Margaret Adams

**DONATIONS OF \$2.00 AND OVER**  
MADE TO THE VICTORIAN JAZZ ARCHIVE  
Inc are **TAX DEDUCTIBLE**.  
Ref No. DGR900444123  
(EXCLUDES MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS)

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## **PLEASE NOTE    CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

**AS FROM 1ST APRIL, 2002 THE ADDRESS FOR ALL  
CORRESPONDENCE FOR THE ARCHIVE WILL BE:-  
P. O. BOX 6007, WANTIRNA MALL, VICTORIA. 3152**

### **FRANK TRAYNOR EXHIBITION**

THE VICTORIAN JAZZ ARCHIVE IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE "THE FRANK TRAYNOR EXHIBITION"  
WHICH WILL OPEN IN THE EXHIBITION SPACE AT THE ARCHIVE ON:

**SUNDAY 24TH MARCH, 2002**

**FROM 10.00 AM TO 3.00PM.**

THEN EACH TUESDAY & FRIDAY AT 10.00AM TO 3.00PM UNTIL FRIDAY 5TH JULY, 2002.

**ADMISSION FREE**

THE EXHIBITION WILL COMPRISE PHOTOS, POSTERS, MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS AND  
MEMORABILIA, LINKED WITH FRANK TRAYNOR AND HIS BANDS FROM THE EARLY BLACK BOTTOM  
STOMPERS THROUGH THE MANY YEARS OF THE JAZZ PREACHERS.  
THE ARCHIVE IS INDEBTED TO FRANK'S WIDOW, MARY, FOR THE DONATION AND LOAN OF THE  
MAJORITY OF THE MATERIAL DISPLAYED.

### **RECENT DONATIONS.**

Jacqui Easter, widow of collector husband Derek, of Hamlyn Heights, donated 198 10" and 12" LPs, 28  
78rpm, 5 books, one sketch and one photo. Lyn Rogers, widow of trombonist Dave, brought in a very inter-  
esting collection of 29 reel to reel tapes of sessions which include Dave Rogers Sextet, Krazy Kats, High Soci-  
ety Rhythm Kings, Golden City JB, Maple Leaf JB, Allan Lee, Nick Polites and Geoff Bland. We thank Lyn for  
the donation such and important contribution to Australian jazz. Lyn was impressed with the Archive and is  
now a regular volunteer worker.

Another significant donation of Australian jazz came from Bill Bunnett, of Brighton, who forwarded four acetates  
of the Frank Traynor's Black Bottom Stompers, recorded December, 1950, containing musicians such as Mar-  
tin Finn, Ross Fusedale, Graham Coyle, Bill Bunnett and Don Bentley. Bill also donated 124 12" LPs.  
Ian Horbury of Mildura, donated 10 sound tapes on video tape of the 1995 to 1998 Mildura Jazz Festival. Ian  
had already donated excerpt cassettes and compact discs of the Festival from 1979 to 2000, but these tapes  
cover everything recorded in those four years.

Dick House forwarded via Eric Brown a selection of jazz magazines from Australia, USA, and the UK.  
Diana Allen, a great supporter of the Archive donated 8 Magazines, musicians business cards, video of  
Graeme Bell interview, plus color photos of Australian musicians.  
Claude Garratt, of Adelaide gave two photos taken at the Adelaide Town Hall in 1951 of Willie McIntyre on pi-  
ano and another of Bud Baker and Lou Silbereisen. Don Hopgood, also of Adelaide, donated a copy of  
"Journal of the Historical Society of SA No 29, 2001" with an article "Hello Central Give Me X2350" by Don.

Finally I would like to mention the wonderful donation of photos, from the collection of Mary Traynor. These are  
quite considerable, many of which will feature in the Frank Traynor Exhibition in March. Also special thanks to  
Don Anderson for taking delivery to his home of the vast Allan Leake collection, which because of it's size would  
have swamped us by coming all at once. Don is delivering a couple of cartons each week, this way the collec-  
tion staff have been able to handle the cataloguing and storage requirements in an orderly fashion. When com-  
pleted a summary of the collections contents will be listed in future edition of VJAZZ.

*John Kennedy, Collection Manager*

**THE VICTORIAN JAZZ ARCHIVE IS OPEN EACH TUESDAY & FRIDAY FROM 10.00 AM TO 3.00PM.  
OR BY APPOINTMENT**

The Victorian Jazz Archive wishes to acknowledge the support of the following organizations.  
Arts Victoria and the Community Support Fund through the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Parks Victoria. The Ian Potter  
Foundation. The Myer Foundation. The Pratt Foundation. The Trust Company of Australia. The Helen McPherson Trust.  
The Archive gratefully acknowledges the financial support given to our Capital Fund by Dame Elisabeth Murdoch A.C., D.B.E. and  
the Estate of the late Ron Halstead, and the Estate of Don Boardman.