

I LOVE TO SING

by Ellen Vinson



Ellen Vinson of Jazz at Jackson's.

I LOVE to sing and I always have. I sing all the time at home, which is probably sometimes annoying, especially to my husband when I get a tune in my head and can't keep it inside. I know it's annoying because sometimes when I am belting or humming, I catch him raising the volume on his TV remote control. It's OK because he remains my biggest fan and supporter.

My grandmother was a classically trained singer. She studied music at The Boston Conservatory and she was my first voice teacher. She had many voice students in the parlor of her Hyde Park Tampa home, and several went on to the Metropolitan Opera. Whenever we came to visit, she would find time to work with me on vocal exercises and songs. One song I remember that she taught me was "Twitterpated" from Disney's Bambi. Needless to say, it was never a big hit, but a cute and fun song for an 8 year old.

If I had to name a singer who has had the greatest influence on me it would have to be Frank Sinatra. After I heard his recording of "You Go to my Head" and had just learned to drive, I had to literally pull off the road when I first heard that beautiful song on the radio. I began to listen to the way he interpreted his songs with perfect diction, expression and phrasing. I love the tunes from The Great American Songbook, especially the ballads, songs that tell a story and never go out of style. No one sang them better than Sinatra. I heard him in person only once. In 1989, my mother and I attended one of his concerts in New Orleans.

When I graduated from high school in 1963, I enrolled at Florida State and studied classical voice with Elena Nikolaidi, a brilliant mezzo soprano from Greece who had performed with opera companies all over the world. I didn't have the talent, discipline or even interest in classical

music or opera then and there was no such thing as a Jazz Studies program at Florida State so at the beginning of my junior year, I changed my major to Elementary Education.

I did a little singing during my years at Florida State performing at a few spots around town. I also recorded a number of advertising jingles at WTAL Radio. My husband tells me that my Fred Drake Chrysler Plymouth jingle, "Fred Drake is out to win you over this year". was played a lot in Pensacola years before I ever met him.

Fast forward to 1976 and I was living in Pensacola as a 31 year old single mother with a two children aged four and two. I was teaching second grade at Cordova Park Elementary and singing on weekends with the John Esty Tritones when I met Roger, my future husband. After we married in 1978, almost 35 years passed before I sang anywhere except church. It was at church that Collier Merrill heard me sing an Amy Grant solo and invited me to sing at his restaurant, Jackson's Steakhouse. Next September will be my 9th year to perform "Jazz at Jackson's" singing songs from Broadway musicals and The Great American Songbook, and now always accompanied by the magnificent Bobby van Deusen.

For the past 9 years I have performed for nonprofits and charitable organizations such as WRSE, the Arc Gateway, Big Brother, Big Sisters, Independence for the Blind, Jazz for Justice, and The Pensacola Symphony Guild. It's an honor to still be able to do these events. Maybe it's because I volunteer to sing for free that I still get these opportunities, but I hope it's because people enjoy my music.

Other than Frank Sinatra, our friend Bobby van Deusen has been a tremendous source of inspiration and teacher to me. He is a perfect accompanist, as well as a very talented and sought after solo performer. He has been such a help finding songs that he thinks are right for my voice and even encouraging me to step outside of my comfort zone from time to time. He can play anything from Rachmaninoff to Dr Dre, but Gershwin and Cole Porter are two of the composers that we especially enjoy interpreting, performing and recording together. It was my lucky day when we met and entertained at Vicki Baroco's surprise birthday a number of years ago. He has helped me to be more confident and improve each time we do a show. At nearly age 76, it's astounding that so many people come each September to hear us at Jackson's.....but I am so thankful that they do because as I said in my first sentence "I LOVE to sing!" Look at Tony Bennett, another of my favorites. He's 20 years older than I am and still drawing big crowds! 🎷

A TRIBUTE TO MARK PURSER

by Curt Bol

Mark Purser departed this earthly plane on Tuesday December 29, 2020. He had a massive heart attack and succumbed. Mark was a very unique person in so many ways, but music was where Mark really stood out from the crowd! I first saw him playing with The Garcias at the old Embers Club out on Barrancas in 1981. What a great sound they had! Mark joined Cafe Racer in 1984 and they played the area until 1987. Not only was he a great keyboardist, but he was a gifted sound engineer winning Addies many times during the 80's and 90's. His accomplishments are far too many to list in this letter. The main thing is he was a great father to his children, a true dedicated family man and a great friend! Never knew him to miss a gig or a downbeat in 38 years of playing with him! He will be hugely missed in the area's music scene, but even more by his family and friends!



NORMAN'S ENCOUNTER WITH SLIM GAILLARD

by F. Norman Vickers

When Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor occurred December 7, 1941, I was ten years old. I had an older brother who graduated from high school in 1943 at age 16. One could volunteer for military service at age 17 with signed parental consent. So, when brother Laddie turned 17 he entered the Navy. Ultimately, he was assigned as a torpedoman on aircraft USS Ticonderoga. He survived the war and some kamikaze bombings of his ship in the South Pacific theatre. The Ticonderoga arrived in Tokyo harbor one day after the signing of the Japanese surrender.

The military downsized rapidly after the war and Laddie arrived home with one suitcase with two 78rpm recordings. One was Slim Gaillard's "Cement Mixer." The other was a recording by Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson; I forgot the title.

The Biographical Encyclopedia of Jazz by Leonard Feather and Ira Gitler has an entry about Bulee "Slim" Gaillard having been born in Cuba, son of a sea captain. Later he was left on the Island of Crete and finally made his way to Detroit, etc. Years later, Slim repeated the same yarn on YouTube. That posting is still available—almost one hour—if one has time and interest.

My first personal encounter related to Gaillard was during my medical practice. A late-middle aged black lady was referred to me for a brief examination. She was polite and reserved. On our being introduced, I remarked that Gaillard was a famous name and went on in some effusive detail about the musician Slim Gaillard. She patiently tolerated my oration and when I wound down, she quietly and politely said, "Yes, he's my brother-in-law!" This was my first knowledge that there was a Pensacola connection to the musician.

I subsequently learned that the Music Makers a local group honoring jazz musicians both local and national had presented an award, in absentia, to Gaillard. I met nephew briefly at a ceremony held by that group. The Music Makers also honored Gigi Gryce and Junior Cook who were famous on the national scene as well as Joe Occhipinti and Roy Russell, our own musician members of the Jazz Society.

The third and last Pensacola Jazz Party was held in January 1991 at a hotel in downtown Pensacola. The Gaillard relatives that I had previously met brought Mr. Slim Gaillard to that event and left him in our care. He was well dressed in double-breasted suit and tie. However, his demeanor was subdued and it appeared that he had lost weight as the suit looked a bit large for him. We had a brief conversation and he told me that he was soon to travel to London to be with his son there. It was not a great surprise when we read of his death in London in late February, a little more than a month since his visit in Pensacola.

For those interested in more detail about Mr. Gaillard and his Pensacola years, see the research paper by Ian Hamilton, a then UWF Graduate Student in Public History, at University of West Florida, The Department of Public History. © UWF, Dept of Public History. This paper may be seen at the Jazz Room at downtown West Florida Public Library. There is one copy on reserve and one copy which may be checked out. A Gaillard photo is also on display at the Jazz Room.

See YouTube for musical performances and hearing Gaillard's own history, according to Slim. 

64 STUDENTS JOIN JAZZ PENSACOLA

by Carolyn Tokson



Jake Reosti, Student at Southern Alabama in Mobile, AL playing Bass. Photo by Dean Vanderhoof.

Thanks to the efforts of Fred Domulot, president and Dave Schmidt, vice-president, sixty-four student musicians joined our jazz society recently. Yes, that's right: sixty-four young musicians. I hope you are aware that one of the major goals of Jazz Pensacola since its inception has been to further jazz education and to encourage participation of student musicians in our Jazz Jams. As students become

"64 Students" Continued...

more proficient, they often participate in our Student Jazz Competition and are invited to perform in our Gumbos. We seek funds for the competition through the JETS (Jazz Education Team Supporters) each spring. As we prepare for the 2021 Student Competition, we encourage you to join us with a donation of \$100 which will go to offset the expenses of our annual competition. The Studer Foundation has recently donated \$500 to support our competition and we are most grateful. Yet, it costs about \$3500 to hold our competition and give the awards. Over the years, Jazz Pensacola had awarded more \$28,000 in prizes for students to use in continuing their jazz education. Please join us in this endeavor. JOIN JETS by sending a check for \$100 to Jazz Pensacola at 3 West Garden St. Suite 418, Pensacola, FL 32502-5633 or by with credit card by calling our administrator Alice Crann Good at 850-433-8382.

Many of the high school and college students who have first performed with our house band at a Jazz Jam have gone on to serious musical careers. We are certain that some of these student musicians who have just joined will indeed take the same path as past competition winners like those whose achievements we applaud. Austin Paul Jr., a winner from 2011, performed for the Disney Cruise ships before the coronavirus problems and has recently been involved in the production of a major celebrity's new album whose last album went platinum. He has also taken over the Tuesday Night Jazz at Seville Quarter. Andrew Tinch, a winner in 2018, is studying at the Frost School of Music with a full scholarship, and Sam Butler, a winner in 2017, is on a full scholarship at Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University. Elisha Miller, a winner in 2016 and 2017, is Program Coordinator of the International School of Music in Washington, D.C.

We are very happy to welcome these sixty-four student musicians to the jazz family and hope to see them at our Jazz Jams and in our competition in the future. 🎷

VICKERS ARTIST IN RESIDENCE FUND NOW PERMANENT

by Carolyn Tokson

The Vickers Artist in Residence Fund (VARF) was established on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of our jazz society and honors the founder, Dr. Norman Vickers, in a permanent, restricted fund which seeks to provide a visiting artist in residence program to support jazz education for all ages, especially young musicians. Recently VARF reached the \$20,000 goal which makes it permanent—in perpetuity. Guidelines state that only a per centage of the earnings can be used, so the fund will continue to grow.

Jazz Pensacola members will recall when Bob Byrnes made a donation a couple of years ago to bring in jazz guitarist Gene Bertoncini for an artist in residence program. Gene did a workshop for UWF and PSC guitar students, a public concert at PSC and a fundraising jazz concert at the Opera

Center. The latter event made a profit of \$1,500 which went into the VARF fund.

Recently, Bob Byrnes and his wife Margaret donated \$3,000 to Jazz Pensacola with the goal of sponsoring a jazz artist in residence. Plan is to have similar events as previously. Any funds generated by the fundraising event will be donated to VARF.

Gratitude also goes to Crystal Joy Albert, former president of the board and to the pro bono work of Dr. Larry Beall for their wisdom and foresight in establishing the fund in 2013. Thanks to all who have contributed through the years to make it possible for VARF to reach our goal of permanently establishing the fund.

The Syncopated Times (TST), a nationally syndicated jazz publication, has run a free ad for the VARF for the past few months after Lew Shaw one of their writer featured a full-page article about Dr Vickers and the fund in their August 2020 issue. Vickers has been an occasional reviewer for jazz books and recordings for TST. We are grateful for their continued support.

Donations for VARF are still solicited. Since only a portion of the earnings can be used for a visiting artist, adding to the principal will enhance the program. Make donations to Jazz Pensacola, 3 W. Garden St. #418, Pensacola, FL 32502. Indicate contribution to VARF. 🎷

WHAT'S JAZZING

by Carolyn Tokson



George Petropoulos' hands on keyboard. Photo by Dean Vanderhoof.

Jazz Pensacola started the month with a Jazz Jam at the 5 Barrel at 121 S. Palafox St., a pleasant evening with new band members and jammers. The house band consisted of Roger Villines on trumpet, Bryce Lyublanovits at the keyboard, Joe Murphy on bass, and Fred Domulot on drums. JazzFest 2021 Planning Team has already held a meeting and is excited to be working on the details to the upcoming JazzFest 2021 Saturday and Sunday, May 15 and 16, in historic Seville Square. We are eager to find new volunteers; contact Robert Windt at rswindt@aol.com if you can join us. If you haven't sent in a \$100 donation for the Jazz Education Team Supporters (JETS) to fund our Jazz Pensacola Student Competition, please do so now.

Despite the pandemic, jazz is alive and vibrant thanks to the enthusiasm and work of our enterprising musicians and businesses who try to deliver live jazz in a

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 3, 2021

Jazz Jam

The 5Barrel
121 S. Palafox St.
6:30pm-9:00pm

March 15, 2021

Student Jazz Competition

Seville Quarter
6:30pm-9:00pm

Masks are mandated indoors within the City of Pensacola

May 15 & 16, 2021 **Pensacola JazzFest**

Seville Square
Schedule TBD

“What’s Jazzing” Continued...

safe setting. Locally, Sunday brunch is the best opportunity for several choices in live jazz. Curt Bol and his band are at the Five Sisters Blues Cafe from 11-3. Al Alvarado is at McGuire’s from 11-2. Further afield, Jones and Company are at AJ’s Seafood and Oyster Bar in Destin starting at 4PM. You can also catch them at Bric a Brac on Fridays from 7-10PM. There’s live jazz at Alice’s on Bayview in St. Andrews both Saturday and Sunday at brunch from 10:00 to 2:00 featuring Two Saxy with Harry and Leslie Fager. There’s also live jazz at the Shrimp Boat in Panama City. The Guffman Trio is playing from 10:30 to 2:30 at Emeril’s at Miramar Beach. Over in Mobile there’s music at the elegant Dauphine’s with Roland Cobb.

During the week, Joe O and his Jazzabouts are at Alice’s Restaurant on Intendencia St. Wednesdays starting at 6PM and at the Drowsy Poet on Saturdays from 10-12. Wednesdays you can also hear saxophonist Jim Andrews at The District or Thursdays at The Cactus Flower. Friday and Saturday evenings, Jim is at Alice’s. Out of town, you can hear Rebecca Barry in Daphne at The Cigar Bar from 6-10PM Thursdays. The Listening Room in Mobile offers live music on Friday and Saturday nights from 8-10PM. Their next jazz show is March 12 and will feature the Hanna Mignano Trio from New Orleans.

Gino Rosaria is scheduled for a concert, live stream and video in West Columbia, S.C. on March 12 and 13 and at the Seabreeze Festival on April 22 in Panama City.

Congratulations are in order for Dustin Bonifay, Jazz Pensacola Board member, who has recently opened his own State Farm Insurance Agency at 6705 Pine Forest Rd. Suite 100 here in Pensacola. Prior to opening his own agency, Dustin worked at the John Schaffer State Farm Agency, one of our valued JazzFest sponsors. Best wishes to Dustin in his new endeavor. Kudos to Roger Villines whose photo at the Pensacola Symphony was in the last VIP Pensacola magazine. A photo of Norman Vickers at the recent Camillia Show was also in that issue.

Thanks to Pensacola magazine for their inclusion of material about Jazz Pensacola in an article on jazz and blues in Pensacola by Gina Castro which quotes Crystal Joy

Albert and also mentions our annual JazzFest. It focuses on the major part that local Black citizens played in the development of blues and jazz in this area.

Condolences to the family of Frank Cagle and to his companion, Marilyn Wolfe. Frank had been in a nursing home for the last few years, but as long as Marilyn was able to bring him, he was very happy to come and hear jazz events. Condolences to the family of Fred Levin whose loss the entire community mourns. Teri Levin is a sponsor of our 2021 JazzFest. Continued wishes of healing to Holly Shelton as she recovers from a back fusion. Our dear friend Vivian Lamont is still with her daughter and feeling much stronger than last month. We also send healing wishes to Andi Greenlee who used to staff the door at our Blues nights several years ago. She is recuperating in Gainesville after surgery there. Here’s hoping we all stay well and are able to see each other again soon. Until then, keep on jazzing. Visit our website at www.jazzpensacola.com for the latest blogs and articles as well as a calendar of live music in the area. 

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!

Matthew Agcaoil	Briana McGuire
Bella Arce	Tyler McGuire
Corran Armbruster	Erin Miller
Gunner Baker	Julianne Miller
McKenzie Baker	Taylor Miller
Zack Banter	Hunter Mixon
Izzy Bolling	Aden Mixson
Heaven Brandt	Liberty Moench
Anna Brennan	Reagan Moench
Keliana Brinson	Sarah Mulcahy
Owen Burt	Blake Panepinto
Emory Carroll	Ainsley Parnell
Grace Cavnar	Sawyer Poulsen
Joseph Cavnar	Lealyn Recasas-Joson
Zach Dake	Emily Reeves
Caden Dale	Jeffrey Rodriguez
Ty Dunlap	Abigail Roest
Jadyn Erickson	Elaina Rowell
Gavin Fisher	Ansley Rust
Gian Guadagnoli	Nicholas Salazar
Delaney Hammond	Hope Schulte
Bryce Hanson	Sam Shaner
Elijah Haveard	Summer Smith
William Heal	Devin Snodgrass
Jake Henley	Colton Stutsy
Caiden Holland	Chance Szot
Michial Holmes	Brayden Tompkins
Levy Johnson	Wyatt Vandenlangenberg
Emily Jumonville	Victoria Vaughn
Brielle Lebrun	Aidan Westerkom
Rivers Lewis	Phillip Michanowicz
Kynan Lilly	Joy Banfield
Hadyn Lopez	Max Levesque
Maegan Mallet	

