

Bring Your Axe And Swing It!!! – Remembering Johnny Gimble

By Woody Edwards

Bring your axe and swing it!!! Or so it went with legendary jazz violinist and country fiddler, Johnny Gimble's fiddle camp—rather swing camp, a camp for musicians.

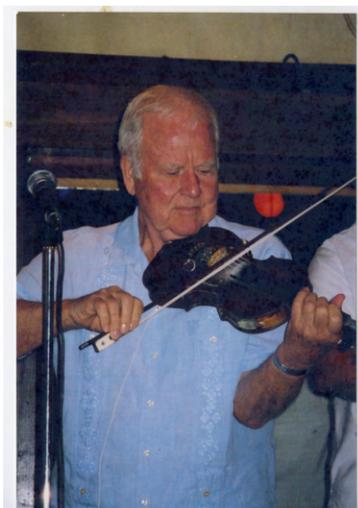
As one who aspires to the lofty heights of jazz violin, yet coming from a background of traditional bluegrass fiddlin' attending three of Johnny's swing camps provided opportunity for immersion.

Johnny connected with Pensacola by spending vacations camping at Ft. Pickens on Santa Rosa Island. One Sunday afternoon he showed up at a Jazz Society event and being immediately recognized by Norman Vickers was put to work. This followed with him being a featured artist at several JazzFests in the 1980's and more recently at Jazz Gumbo in 2005.

Growing up during the Golden Age of Country Music I was certainly familiar with Johnny Gimble yet only when he visited Pensacola for JazzFest did I "sidle up" to him, his style, his supreme jazz musicianship.

Where are country music and jazz linked? Johnny lassoed the two styles when he reminded us that while Benny Goodman was taking jazz up the East Coast, Bob Wills merely added fiddles and steel guitar and took jazz out West thus shifting into Western Swing.

As fiddle camps go, rather swing camp, his were unique. When Johnny and his camp instructors used the phrase "bring your axe," they meant it. While not actually having horns or reeds we did have accordion and autoharp, all equally welcome. Camp was not about getting toe-to-toe learning fiddle tunes, it was about jamming the Great American Songbook. Trust me, there was ample plenty of jammin'.



Johnny Gimble

Campers were assigned ensembles according to ability. From there we were on our way into a week of building repertoire, assigning solos, crafting harmonies, arranging tunes, riffing riffs. Our highly competitive instructors were not simply competing with each other, they wanted to look good in front of Johnny, The King of Swing Fiddle. Taking our solo in our final concert was a bit daunting for us junior players however, our instructors drilled us with, "I don't care if you tap dance for 12 bars, you gotta' play something!!!" By the end of the week the daunted had become the dauntless.

Johnny and his family and instructors ensured inclusion--No one sidelined, no one excluded, no cutting. Everyone all in.

The greater gift was getting to know Johnny--his supreme kindness and conviviality and how he combined these with his wonderfully offbeat sense of humor.

Johnny's sense of humor was no more evident than in those quirky twists of words and phrases which campers came to call: Gimble-isms. And these would be relentlessly compared during breaks. A couple of examples are in order ...

"Never play the same thing once." Or, "I was watching you like you was a hawk." Or, "you're only as good as your rhythm section." Or, after a jam session, "that was good, JAM good!!!" Then, "Play everything you know every time you play." Setting aside the jocose phraseology these stand as guiding principles for playing and listening

About Johnny's fiddlin' several core characteristics must be called out—tone, intonation, improvisation, rhythm.

Intonation – Johnny's intonation on the violin is legendary. Pitch as pitch perfect as could be noted.

Tone - At camp I asked him about Johnny Frigo, another jazz violin legend and who played JazzFest in 2001 with whom he had recently played in performance, what he thought about Frigo's sweet, sweet tone. Johnny responded, "I like it, but for him, not for me." He knew what he wanted. He called his tone "dirty." When he said

that I internalized the importance of having MY tone.

Improvisation –Johnny had the ability to hear and sing the riff in his head. His improvisation style was bracketed phrasing in a chordal, or vertical form, not melodic. Often he would over-voice or scat the solo along with the violin. This was part of the musical magic, every old standard became new.



Woody Edwards takes ensemble solo - Swing Week 2001.

Rhythm – Whether blues, ballad, bebop, or traditional jazz the rhythm always swung.

Swing camp was special. Johnny spoke to me with more than his fiddle bow. I came away with an appreciation of who he was, his humanity as a person,

his sense of humor, and his musical core values.

Each of these created a shift in my own thinking not just about music but more importantly how I should treat people. Lighten up! How can I use humor to bring people in. Asking, in a tight situation: WWJD—What would Johnny do, or say?

As for the fiddlin' the lesson has become: bring your axe and ... "Swing, man! Swing!"

For future reference I invite for your consideration of the following resources:

Phil Thomas Katt's Uncharted Zone interview with Norman Vickers about Johnny's career entitled "Our Love Is Here To Stay By Johnny Gimble," available on YouTube.

A summary of Johnny's life and career may be found on the Johnny Gimble Memorial Video on YouTube.

Available soon in the Jazz Room collection at the downtown Pensacola Public Library, is a DVD from Johnny's 1990 performance at The Greater Gulf Coast Arts Festival. This features as Johnny's backup Pensacola musical legends Lloyd Ellis(gtr), Frank Horne(b), Ted Johnson(dr), Ray Parker(cl, pn) and provides a concise example of Johnny's jazz verve.



"Jazz Washes away the dust of everyday life." - Art Blakey

Music is a Grand Tradition in the Butler Family

by Rosie and Ed Butler

We are so happy our family shares our deep love of music and each in their own way is carrying on the tradition.

Ed and I both started performing professionally as teenagers in Jackson, MS. I was on TV hosting my own musical show. Ed played trombone, vibes and piano with various bands throughout the region. It was only natural that we would soon combine our love for music with our love for each other.

In our 20's we formed the Ed Butler Orchestra, a 9 piece "big/little band" that only played for society functions: country clubs, convention dances, dance clubs, weddings, etc. With the connotation of being "Mississippi's Most Danceable Music", we traveled the entire state, from the Mississippi Delta to the Gulf Coast, over 100 dates a year. It was a great 20 year period in our lives.

As a result both of our children followed suit. Our son, Steve, won a scholarship to LSU as lead trumpet in the marching band and symphonic orchestra. When he's not overseeing music training of his two sons, he is an Assistant United States Attorney, managing the Northwest Florida region.

His son Sam won Jazz Pensacola's young musician award a few years ago, and is now a jazz trumpet major at Indiana University. His younger brother, Zach, is a high school senior, holding down the first-chair trombone duties, giving his older brother a "run for his money".

Our daughter Jill Butler has two musically talented children, Jackson and Anna, a classical pianist and a vocalist. An article regarding Jill's current career is to appear in Roux Magazine's winter



Rosie and Ed Butler

issue. Needless to say we are so proud of them all. Ed and I continue to perform...but the real magic happens when our whole family gets together for a musical adventure. Here's to all you music lovers!!

*Editors Note: You can find videos of Rosie and Ed Butler and Jill Butler on YouTube.

Jazz Society of Pensacola, A Brief History

By F. Norman Vickers, Volunteer Executive Director Emeritus

Stirrings of interest in starting a jazz society in Pensacola, FL was begun in the 1960s with jazz enthusiasts and some jazz musicians, but it was decided that it would require too much work. However, in 1982, the University of West Florida's new radio station had begun broadcasting and jazz was part of its stated mission. Pensacola Arts Council had just been organized. So, I invited Pat Crawford, WUWF-FM director and Arts Council director Diane Magie (pronounced Magee) to my home after a musical event at our local Pensacola Junior College. I suggested that Pensacola needed a Jazz Festival, Crawford was in favor. If Ms. Magie had been an experienced executive director, likely she would have responded, "Good idea. I'll present it to my board." Instead, she responded, "Great idea; let's do it!" So, that was the impetus necessary to begin organizing a jazz society. The idea was that Arts Council would be the lead organization with the University radio station and the newly formed jazz society in support positions.



two best pieces of advice were: 1. Rest assured that a small number in your organization will do most of the work. 2. Don't depend on the musicians to make your organization succeed; they have another agenda.

The Jazz Society organization moved along smoothly. A board of five were elected. It was planned that one member would retire and one new director would be elected each year. So, initially staggered terms for board members were initiated to make the process work. My election was for three years. The Jazz Society would operate from my medical office so our main office expenses were merely office supplies, stamps etc. The juke in the community was that when one called to speak with Dr. Vickers, the question was, "Is it musical or medical?"

The first Pensacola JazzFest was held in the spring of 1983 with Pensacola Arts Council as primary sponsor and WUWF-FM and Jazz Society of Pensacola as support. It was held in shaded downtown historic Seville Square.

About the same time as our local jazz society was getting started, there was a movement to have a national jazz organization. Jazz Times Magazine was having a convention in New York City.

JAZZ PENSACOLA

Local saxophonist and bandleader Joe Occhipinti had been doing a Friday Jazz at Noon event at a local restaurant, so approximately 100 known jazz enthusiasts were invited to attend the 2 p.m. meeting after the close of the jazz event. Approximately 40 persons attended and enthusiastically endorsed the idea. We planned to have annual membership dues and make a reasonable charge for our jazz events.

Details for organizing The Jazz Society of Pensacola, Inc. as a not-for-profit, were proceeding at the same time as plans for our first Pensacola JazzFest to be presented in the spring of 1983. Letters went out to approximately 40 known jazz organizations asking for advice about how best to proceed. The response was enthusiastic, and the

Some of the prime movers in that get-together were Warren Vache, Sr. of New Jersey Jazz Society, Harold Gray of Potomac River Jazz Club and Hal Davis, newly retired New York publicist who had just moved to Sarasota with view to starting a jazz society there. So, I attended the Jazz Times event and, as a bonus, I sat in the hotel room with the jazz elders at the beginning of American Federation of Jazz Societies (AFJS).

The following year, the first AFJS convention was held in Savannah, GA and I was elected to the board of directors. Because initially the AFJS board was heavily weighted toward the US East Coast, I dropped off the board and was re-elected a few years later when the AFJS convention was held in New Orleans.

The AFJS Board was dynamic, to say the least. Usually, board members had been effective with their local societies as president, newsletter editor or other responsible job(s). And usually, board members traveled at their own expense. One person deserves special mention is the late Mat Domber, founder of Arbors Records. Mat sponsored some excellent jazz parties in Clearwater, FL. AFJS sponsored Statesmen of Jazz, a group of musicians, each over 50 years old. The question of liability insurance came up and Domber volunteered that his company would be responsible for liability insurance for that group. Board meetings were usually held with other jazz events, for example, I had opportunity to visit Sacramento Jazz Jubilee and attend AFJS board meeting during same visit.

My year as president of AFJS was by default. In 1991, pianist Ed Metz, Sr. was due to be president. He had just retired from an industrial position. He also was bandleader in New Jersey. He had just successfully contracted with the Bob Crosby family to use the Bob Crosby name for his band. So, he made the announcement that he would be unable to accept the presidency. Hence, Vickers got the job!

I had been editor of our quarterly newsletter, so I continued that job during my presidency of

AFSJ since it was easier just to do it than to find someone to whom to hand it off. Special mention, too, should be to Bill Gottlieb. He was jazz photographer for Washington Post late 1930s to 1948 except for a couple of years off to be in military service during WWII. He was a board member, retired from the publishing industry who was enjoying touring the world with his jazz photography exhibits. We became good friends and would discuss jazz and jazz photography. Harold Gray of Potomac River Jazz Club was best AFJS president during my time. He was lobbyist for independent grocers, independent truckers etc. He'd assign one a job and then call about ten days later to inquire how it was going. Usually, I hadn't done anything (and he suspected as much.) But I'd promise to get on it and would do so in order to avoid embarrassment when he was due to call about 10 days later.

A highlight of my year as AFJS President came in spring of 1991. Our convention was in Kansas City and new marble slab gravestones had been installed on the graves of Charlie "Bird" Parker and his mother. These were to replace the small gravestones which had been stolen from the gravesite. Local plans were to have a 21-sax

salute on a Sunday morning when the gravestones were to be dedicated. The AFJS board was in attendance as were radio and TV representatives, but not a single saxophonist showed up.

Not to be outdone, I took out my 3-octave chromatic harmonica and played a 48-reed salute on a Charlie Parker tune. I never got to see the TV on the Sunday evening news as I was on my way back to Pensacola to be ready for Monday morning medical practice!

As most readers know, AFJS died a death of attrition in the early 2000s after a twenty-year run. Individual societies reduced their financial support shortsightedly, in my view, by withdrawing their financial support. Although our AFJS expenses were minimal, there were costs of producing a newsletter and paying certain office expenses. In the period, however, a series of manuals we're produced and consultative help was available to individual societies. Although Jazz Education Network is an effective organization, it does not speak to the unique needs of jazz societies. So, an unmet need still exists.

Back to Jazz Pensacola—our shorter name for Jazz Society of Pensacola, Inc—in 1996, in preparation for eventual retirement from medical practice, I sold my practice to our local Baptist Hospital. Nothing materially changed in my medical practice, but I could no longer justify using medical staff for part-time jazz work. Consequently, we found an affordable office and hired a part-time administrator. In approximately 2004 I stepped down at Volunteer Executive Director. Currently, the board has governed successfully with help of a part-time administrator, Alice Crann Good.

In 1999, Jazz Pensacola assumed direction of Pensacola JazzFest after administration by the Arts Council for seven and WUWF-FM radio for 10 years, respectively. Hence, Jazz Pensacola has history of running our JazzFest longer than the previous two. We have missed two years of producing a JazzFest. The first was 1997 when WUWF had moved the JazzFest to the fall instead of the usual spring event. So when they announced they were no longer going to sponsor JazzFest, there was not time for a spring 1998 festival. The other was spring 2020 when Covid-19 shut down many activities.

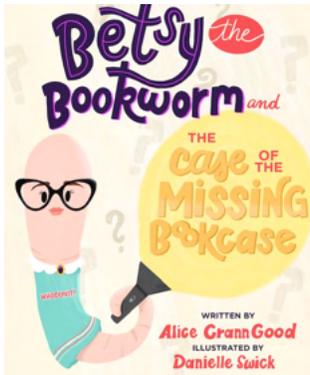
Happily, our 2021 free Pensacola JazzFest was mid-May with good music and good crowds. Because national artists were still unsettled about traveling of long-term commitments, artists were

drawn from local and regional groups, thereby saving some travel and hotel expenses.

So, outlook is good for Jazz Pensacola as we resume our monthly jazz programs and our separate monthly jazz jams. We continue our support of an annual jazz scholarship competition for high school and college jazz students., Also, we have an endowment fund for visiting jazz artists. We have previously had guitarist Gene Bertocini as a visiting jazz artist who gave a jazz class for guitar students from University of West Florida and Pensacola State College, a public jazz concert at PSC and a fundraising concert for Jazz Pensacola. We have funds reserved for a repeat visiting jazz artist program in the near future. So, our board and entire membership are enthusiastic about the future!



Jazz Pensacola's Administrator Alice Crann Good Has a New Book Out!



Alice Crann Good has written three Betsy the Bookworm children's books. All are research-based picture books that promote the importance of children reading books, going to libraries and bookstores. All books are published by KDP/ Amazon Publishing and IngramSpark, which supplies bookstores

worldwide. The books overflow with fun and action. They are garnering 5-star reviews from parents and teachers. Montessori School in Pensacola picked them for their library science classes, and the West Florida Regional Library System selected the books for the children's section(s). You can also find them at bookstores and online from many booksellers, including barnesandnoble.com. All sellers provide book/author descriptions.

Award-winning writer Alice Crann Good spent more than 20 years as a journalist for Gannett Co./Pensacola News Journal (Florida) and seven years as a communications specialist with a Florida State college. She spent the majority of her career as a prolific journalist, producing features on a local, regional, national and global levels. She

has won many awards, including the Sigma Delta Chi Award in Journalism, the Scripps Howard Foundation National Journalism Award and The Best of Gannett. The peak of her journalism career was reached while covering refugee camps in Albania during the Kosovo Crisis in the late '90s. She traveled with Catholic Relief Services around Albania, including to an orphanage. She hails from a large family and loves children. She lives in Pensacola, Florida with her husband, Thomas. An avid reader, she has done much research on the importance of children reading. She focuses on print books, bookstores and libraries. She has published three "Betsy the Bookworm" books that are available at Amazon.com and from booksellers worldwide.



Alice Crann Good,
Administrator of
Jazz Pensacola

Alice also has been Jazz Pensacola's administrator since 2015. Her myriad tasks include grant writing, public relations, marketing and communications, event planning, finances, membership, etc.

What's Jazzing

by Carolyn Tokson

Jingle Jazz is Jazz Pensacola's only December event scheduled for December 13 in Phineas Phogg's in Seville Quarter. **It's free, but it is also a fundraiser.** Please bring your friends and **make an end of the year donation** to support live jazz here in Pensacola. **North Pole Panic**, a lively crew of musicians with a quirky bent will entertain you with music to brighten the darker days of winter and get you in the holiday mood. We are accepting donations/sponsorships in memory of our dear Jim Crumlish for that event. Also remember to **bring non-perishable food for our food drive** which we will take to Rev. Teasdale at the Epps Christian Center for distribution to our neighbors with food insecurities.

Upcoming Events:

Jingle Jazz, Monday, December 13, 2021

**January Gumbo, Monday, January 21,
2022**

"What's Jazzing ... Continued"

January Gumbo will bring us **The Legacy of Howard Silver and Art Blakey**, a program that was cancelled due to the summer Delta virus spike. This band features Allen Beeson and Jonathan Martin on trumpets with Cynthia Domulot on keyboards, and vocals, Fred Domulot on drums, and Tom Latenser on bass. It's a grand chance to hear some of the hard bop popularized by Silver and Blakey in the Jazz Messengers of the '50s.

Jazz by the Book will feature **Joe Occhipinti, Tuesday, December 7** at the **West Florida Public Library**. He and his ensemble will be playing classic jazz favorites and bringing attention to the Jazz Room's collection of books and music. If you haven't visited, the **Jazz Room**, you've missed a treat. The hallway and Jazz Room as well as other smaller rooms are beautifully decorated with jazz memorabilia, photographs and paintings by local artist, Nina Fritz. That's just the beginning; there are books and CDs galore available free to anyone with a library card. Last month's newsletter highlighted the newest additions to the Jazz Room. You can find that on the Jazz Pensacola website www.jazzpensacola.com where you will also find the calendar of live jazz events in the area.



Joe Occhipinti playing his saxophone.

Thanks to **Carmen Brown's Jazz Notes** for the latest in jazz happenings along the Alabama-Florida line. If you're not getting her emails, you are missing out on the latest. Contact Carmen at smoothoperator983@gmail.com

Jazz for Justice drew a large crowd including quite a few Jazz Pensacola members who particularly enjoyed Tuba Skinny from New Orleans. **The Latino Festival** was also well attended and offered some exciting music. **Foo Foo Fest** is a very special time here in Pensacola. After both of those events, the **4Korners** performance at our November Super Gumbo brought an excited audience and new faces. We are lucky to live in a community which offers such a wide range of musical talents. November has been a grand month for jazz with large crowds at The District to hear Fred Domulot and the The District Jazz Committee with different guest artists such as Kathy Lyon, Jackson Miller, and even La'Roy Bodiford who performed at JazzFest. Peg Sheridan's birthday party was a blast at Alice's with



Ricky Duffy, drummer, enjoying 4 Korners.

Joe Occipinti's combo with George "Bebopoulos" Petropoulos, Leah Yelverton, John Fountain and Dr. Bob Andrews playing some of the all-time jazz favorites. A crowd was at the Wright Place at the First Methodist Church to hear Kathy Lyon and Greg Lyon. That's not even mentioning all the fantastic choices to hear live jazz on Sunday brunch here, in

Mobile, and the surrounding towns. Check out the website calendar for the latest events. If you're a musician and want an event posted, contact our office at 850-433-8382 or at info@jazzpensacola.com

The Pensacola Jazz Society would like to welcome new member Pam Carr.

As we move into December, plans are already set for upcoming events such as the first planning meeting for Jazz Pensacola JazzFest 2022 on January 19, 2022 and more. Applications for the 12th Annual Student Competition which will grant awards to aspiring young musicians in March are one the website. The call for artists to submit renderings for our Jazz Pensacola JazzFest 2022 poster is also out. Vendors can make applications to be part of JazzFest soon. Fred, our president, has a lineup of events right up until JazzFest. Look for our Jazz Alerts from the office as well as our newsletter to keep abreast of what's in the works.

Best wishes for a very happy holiday season full of festivities with friends and family. Hope to see you at Jingle Jazz with your bells on.



Ali Egan and Friends at the November 4 Korners Gumbo.