

JAZZ CLUBS

DOWNTOWN

THE BLUE NOTE

Located first at 56 W. Madison Street, near Dearborn Street, in downtown Chicago, the club was owned by Frank Holzfeind who opened the venue on November 25, 1947. The offerings included an eclectic mix of music from Dixieland, and big band swing to modern jazz. In 1953, Holzfeind moved the Blue Note to North Clark Street, but ended up closing in 1960 mainly because the fees charged by the big bands and star jazz performers just became too expensive. Among the jazz greats who could be heard at the Blue Note were Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, George Shearing, Lionel Hampton, and Jack Teagarden. The Blue Note also created recordings by Woody Herman, Stan Kenton, Benny Goodman, Dave Brubeck, the Oscar Peterson Trio, and Harry James.

TOM HOLZFEIND | SON OF OWNER OF THE BLUE NOTE

Before my father opened the Blue Note he was working at the Northwestern Railroad. Dad started a bowling league since bowling was really popular then. The owner of the bowling alley was a guy named Harold Wessel. Wessel also owned a club in downtown Chicago called Lipp's Lower Level. The strength of his organization was with the bowling league and the various leagues managed by my father. Mr. Wessel also made my father the manager of Lipp's Lower Level, a post-WWII club for folks to come and just listen to music, not necessarily jazz. I'm not sure of the amount of time that this took, but, eventually, my father managed to buy the option to own the place from Harold Wessel in 1946. Dad decided to operate it as a jazz club because he loved that type of music. It also happened that at that time there was a disc jockey who had a radio show and who occasionally played jazz. His name was Dave Garroway, the eventual host of the original *Today Show*. It turned out that my father consulted with Garroway about jazz and who were

the best musicians he should hire to perform at the club. Dave and my father became quite close, and it was Garroway who made a really important point to my father about operating the Blue Note. Garroway told Dad that if he was going to have a jazz club that it had to be an integrated club, and that was a huge milestone in the 1940s. Garroway said that the club should be integrated in terms of the audience as well as having black and white jazz players performing there.

One of my father's great accomplishments was to have that type of club. Over the years, Dad won awards from the Urban League and organizations like that. According to an Urban League statement from the award: "...for your courageous pioneering policy and practice in Chicago's entertaining world of admitting guests solely with respect to their good manners, and of employing musicians at the Blue Note solely with respect to their artistry—thus setting a pattern of decency and democracy." So, Garroway was the one who put that thought in my dad's mind and boy, "it was off to the races" after that for the Blue Note. In addition, the jazz performers at the Blue Note, even from the very beginning, were remarkable people from the club's heyday in the late 1940s until the club closed around 1960.

The great Duke Ellington played at the Blue Note more than any other person. In fact, he and my father became quite close and, over the years, they corresponded regularly and Duke would perform with his band at the club a couple times a year. What was unusual was that when he came he would stay for two weeks. So, for example, over the Christmas break, always, he came for two to four weeks which gave the musicians and their families the chance to stay in place for more than one or two nights. Other big names who performed at the club included Count Basie, Stan Kenton, Dave Brubeck, Oscar Peterson, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, and Billie Holiday. So the really major players of the time performed at the Blue Note. In fact, one of the great lines from Duke Ellington was when he called the Blue Note the "Metropolitan House of Jazz." Those were the kinds of players who performed there.

Ahmad Jamal, formerly Fritz Jones, also performed at the club in the early 1950s when he was only 19-20 years old, and there is a great story my father told about him when he first played at the club. At the end of his performances, my father gave him a \$1,000 bonus and, he was so touched that he left for Paris, France, where his career took off. Ahmad was always so grateful to my father for his generosity. I think that he came back and played at the club several times again. Those were the kinds of people who were at the Blue Note.

In 1947, Dad moved the Blue Note to another venue at 3 North Clark Street, right in the heart of downtown. In those days, that was the place to be and there were a couple of interesting things about that place. One was that it was a very large venue and it had a very big stage, which was one of the few places that could accommodate the big bands. You know, Ellington and Basie had 20+ piece bands, so you had to have room for them to perform. The other thing that was sort of interesting about it was that my father created this thing called the Teen Terrace. The idea was that he had a section of the club that was located at a higher level, stage right (if you were in the audience, it was on the left) which had a sort of picket fence and was four or five steps up, but still very close to the stage. But, that is where people who were under 21 years old could come, buy a Coke, and listen to the greatest jazz musicians of all time. Dad was very proud of the fact that he was able to introduce young people to jazz. When I was still living in Chicago, I would run into people and after I told them who I was, they would tell me that they experienced jazz at the club. The Blue Note closed in 1960, but when it was open it was a pretty big deal.

There are a few theories concerning why the club ended up closing. First, the costs of performers increased. One example was Nat King Cole who played at the Blue Note a couple of times. After he had the hit song, *Nature Boy*, his price charged just skyrocketed and my father said, "I just can't afford you." He was paying the Count Basie Band something like \$5,000 a week (today that is nothing,

but this is back in 1950), and, at one point, the cost just doubled and he could not afford to pay those prices. A side note to that was that when Duke Ellington played at the Blue Note, his rate never increased from the very beginning in the late 1940s up until the club closed in 1960. He was just a good buddy of my dad's and they had great rapport. I think that the price of talent just skyrocketed overnight and the business was moving a lot away from the Loop down to the Rush Street area northward. That was probably the other reason for the change and the club's closing. These guys started playing in convention halls and big amphitheaters, and small clubs couldn't afford the musicians' price increases. Then, there was the movement away from the inner Loop when Chicagoans started staying away from the Loop in the evenings. But, despite all of those factors, I don't think that Dad ever considered moving the club further north.

I was born in 1946, so I was a teenager when it closed, but all of my memories are from when I was still in grammar school. My mother took us down to the club for Sunday matinees, regularly, so we were exposed to that music during all my early life. We lived on the Northwest Side near Foster and Cicero in a neighborhood called Forest Glen which was just off Elston Avenue.

There is another important story about the club that relates to Evanston. One night my father wanted to take Duke Ellington out to dinner during the mid 1950s but he could not find a restaurant that would serve him and an African American for dinner, even someone with the stature of one of the greatest entertainers and intellectuals in the history of music. Finally, he decided to call the owner of Fanny's Restaurant in Evanston. Dad said to her, "Here's the deal. I've got this incredible man I want to take to dinner and his name is Duke Ellington." According to the story that I heard, Fanny said to him, "Well, I don't like it, but because it is you, I'll do it." So, this is one of those incredible stories about integration that, in that day and age, a man of Ellington's international stature couldn't be served in a white-owned restaurant.

Duke Ellington,
(Courtesy of Chicago
Historical Society,
ICHi-024875)



SONDRA FARGO | EDUCATOR

As for jazz places in the Loop, the Blue Note was the primary place, and probably the only place that we frequented. Sometimes they would have jazz concerts at the Civic Opera House, or, sometimes, at Orchestra Hall, but the Blue Note was the place that you would go to hear Count Basie or Duke Ellington or Woody Herman bands.

BOB DAUBER | AUTHOR

I remember the time we went to the Blue Note after my senior prom to hear Duke Ellington. On our way there, I said to my girlfriend, "It's going to be great to see the Duke again." She said, "Do you know him?" I said, "Sure!" So, we went to Blue Note, and who was standing at the maitre d' stand but Duke Ellington. He took a look at me and said, "Man, how are you doing, great to see you." My girlfriend looked like her jaw was going to hit the floor. I said, "It's good to see you." I couldn't have scripted it any better, especially when you consider the fact that he didn't even know me. It was just one of those very happy accidents.

JOE LEVINSON | MUSICIAN

For jazz, the Blue Note on Randolph was extremely popular. The biggest names worked there, including Duke Ellington, Dizzie Gillespie, Harry James, Charley Barnet, The Sauter-Finnigan Band, Dave Brubeck, and Les Brown. There was just an amazing array of artists who appeared there, and it became known as one of the world's greatest jazz rooms.

THE BLACK ORCHID

Founded by Al Greenfield in 1949, the upscale nightclub was located at Rush and Ontario Streets on the city's Near North Side. Frequented by celebrities that included Hugh Hefner and Tony Bennett, it was also the place that Johnny Mathis was claimed to have gotten his first big break. Greenfield sold the club in 1956 to Paul Raffles, Pat Fontecchio, and Bill Doherty. The group also were the owners of

the Cloister Inn at 900 N. Rush Street. The Black Orchid had such famous performers as Harry Belafonte, Diahann Carroll, Ray Charles, Billy Eckstine, Buddy Hackett, Mort Sahl, Mel Torme, Dinah Washington, and Jonathan Winters. The owners of the club declared bankruptcy in 1959 and never reopened.

BOB DAUBER | AUTHOR

I would go to the Black Orchid, and I remember when we went there and saw Johnny Mathis in 1957 or 1958 when he was already a big star. His warm-up act was a guy I never heard of by the name of Professor Irwin Korey who was billed as "The World's Foremost Authority." He came out wearing a beat-up tuxedo, was rather disheveled looking, and he would walk back and forth across the stage without saying a word for about three or four minutes. Then, he would pick up somebody's drink, take a sip, put it back down, and his opening line was always the same. He'd stop and look like he was about to say something, and then he would start walking back and forth again. Then, he'd stop and, finally, he'd say, "However..." That was always the opening line to his act.

THE BIRDHOUSE

A small jazz club that was created by jazz saxophonist Fred Anderson in the 1960s in a second-story loft at Dearborn and Division, it lasted until 1978. The club catered to an under-21 year-old clientele by not serving alcohol. However, major jazz performers like Oscar Peterson and Ramsey Lewis offered their music to the young listeners at The Birdhouse.

BILL BENJAMIN | ASHEVILLE, NC

I became a big fan of jazz in my teens. And, of course, Chicago offered up a great menu of jazz clubs and big-name performers. The problem was that being underage, there weren't too many places I could go to and listen to that wonderful music. There was a place, though, that opened up that had specifically tried to appeal to the younger crowd to try to expose them to real live jazz. It was called

The Birdhouse and it was located on Dearborn between Division and Goethe. The club was unique because it had a section for underage folks called The Peanut Gallery and there was also a separate section for imbibers. So, the place was literally split in half for those who could legally drink alcohol and those who could not. While the club was short-lived, we youngsters were able to come listen to the likes of Gene Ammons, Sonny Stitt, Bill Henderson, Quincy Jones, Slide Hampton, and Thelonius Monk, to name just a few.

One of the great things about growing up in Chicago was having access to some terrific radio jazz shows and I remember, specifically, three jazz DJ's – Sid McCoy, Daddy-O Daylie and of course, Dick Buckley. They did so much to promote the exposure to great jazz music. There were a couple of other jazz DJ's during the 50s, 60s and early 70s and it was a great time for jazz music on the radio. Of course, all of that has changed with the advent of the Internet and access to resources like Sirius, etc.

TED YOUNG | EDUCATOR THE NETHERLANDS

The Birdhouse was my favorite jazz place, not because of its alcohol policy that made my admission possible, but because of its intimacy and the excellence of its artists. Remembering things past: Oscar Brown, Jr. (*Mr. Kicks*), Lambert, Hendricks & Ross (*Cloudburst*), The Horace Silver Quintet (*Song for My Father*), and Art Blakey & His Jazz Messengers (*Caravan*)—a feast!

Eisenhower was in the White House, soon to be followed by that young guy from Massachusetts, and Hanoi and Selma were far, far away. We were teenagers in Chicago and the music was sweet. We were first generation rock-and-rollers but it is the jazz and folk that I remember most. Live and on radio, they were there for the asking.

"Hey babe and you, too, old bean, it's the real McCoy" was the sign-on of Sid McCoy on his late-night jazz program on AM radio. Here I was introduced to Frank, Ella, and Miles. On the FM side there was "Midnight Special" with Norm Pelligrini,

the most eclectic (and long-lasting!) folk program one could imagine. Eclectic meaning that in one broadcast you could hear Tom Lehrer, Josh White, and Mohammed el-Bakkar and his Oriental Ensemble.

As teenagers, live music was limited to the weekends. In symbiosis with the radio, it provided the sounds, the mannerisms, and the smells to truly flesh-out the broadcast experience. I saw Gibson and Camp at the old Gate of Horn and Theodore Bikel, Judy Collins, and Lenny Bruce at the new Gate of Horn. The performers were all extraordinary but the old venue trumped the new.

And then, in 1959 there was the first Playboy Jazz Festival. We were not quite 16 and the Chicago Stadium was anything but intimate, but my classmate Dave Beck and I were there. The jazz and the crowd were wonderful; the Bunnies were absent.

These memories are secure but those times were a bubble. For me, the bubble burst on August 29, 1968. And, like all things Chicago, it had a soundtrack, *Prologue* and *Someday* from Chicago Transit Authority. The whole world, you see, really was watching.

RAMSEY LEWIS | MUSICIAN

In 1950, I was 15 years old and still in high school at Wells High School. I had just joined the musicians' union and when I told them I was 16 they didn't ask for any proof. I started playing with a band called the Cleffs, led by Wallace Burton, who invited me to come over to his house and told me what jazz records to buy and listen to and showed me chord symbols rather than writing the chord out. Wallace was the one who whetted my appetite for jazz.

There were girls there, and I was in high school and my first year of college. In addition, you picked up \$5 or \$6 a weekend and, in those days, it wasn't loose change. I also pretended to play piano, but, I think that in my heart it was still going to be classical music for my career. I went to the University of Illinois for my academics, but I also studied music at the Chicago Musical College which, today, is part of Roosevelt University. I took music and piano classes with Dorothy Mendelsohn, who was

the piano teacher at both Chicago Musical College and DePaul University. I had met Red Holt and Eldee Young, the drum and bass players, respectively, with the Cleffs. They were part of that seven-piece group.

The Korean War broke up our seven-piece group, and Red went into Service for a year and a half. Eldee Young and I were the only two guys who didn't go. In those days, if you were in college, you were deferred from military service until needed. While Red was in the Army we used a drummer named Butch McCann, but when Red got out of the Army, the three of us got together between 1954 and 1956. Chess Records produced our first records and we were playing in a nightclub called the Lake Meadows Lounge on 35th and South Parkway, later King Drive. We were pretty much part of the wallpaper there because we played music but people weren't as attentive as we wanted them to be. A few people came in just to hear us, and one of them was Daddy-O Daylie, a big-time disc jockey/jazz jockey in Chicago and he was on WAIT-AM in those days. He would come in there to hear us, and we must have played there for a year or more.

One of the times he came in and said, "You know, you guys are pretty good. You guys should have a record deal." We had heard that before, but he came back in a couple of weeks and he said, "I've arranged for an audition for you with a record company. On Saturday, show up at 48th and Cottage Grove at a stationary store that is owned by the Chess brothers who are just starting a label. In fact, they have already started the label that focuses on the blues, but they are looking to expand into jazz." So, we showed up that Saturday afternoon and they had a piano back in the shipping department. We set up and played three or four songs, and Phil Chess was smoking his pipe and said, "Yeah, yeah, you guys are pretty good." So Phil called Sonny out of the shipping department, and he asked him, "What do you think of these guys?" We played a couple more times and Sonny said, "These guys are really good." Phil said, "You think they're all right?" Sonny said, "Yeah, they're very good."

So, Phil told us that he wanted to talk to his brother, Leonard, and he would get back to us. About a week later, Daddy-O called us and told us that they wanted to sign our trio. So, we got our first record deal and they recorded it under the Argo label. In those days, they recorded their blues under Chess and Checker and their jazz under Argo. They eventually had to give up that name because some other company was using the Argo name, so they changed their jazz label to Cadet. We continued to record with them until 1969 or 1970. Then we went with Columbia Records.

In the early days, with the Chess family they had already recorded the blues and they knew the best blues makers because they ended up with some of the best blues artists ever. They kind of left it up to us as to what to play because they didn't know quite what to do, although Phil Chess used to say, "Play more high notes, play more high notes!" But, I didn't know what that meant. He was honest and sincere about it, and he just liked the sound of the high end of the piano. But, we were pretty much left up to our own devices and we recorded the first album called *The Gentlemen of Swing* and there was a song on there called *Carmen* that got a fair amount of air play. The next album was called *Gentlemen of Jazz* and there was a song on there called *Delilah*, which even got more air play. The first album after they recorded us sat on the shelf for a while, and they were not certain if they wanted to put it out. Daddy-O Daylie said to them, "If you put it out, at least in Chicago, I guarantee that I will play it." So, they did put it out in Chicago, he played it, and then Marty Faye and others played it, so we became fairly well known because of their support. And, because of their help they released the album in Philadelphia and Washington, DC and both of the first two albums caught on there. We recorded 17 albums by the time we had our first big hit. In those days, you recorded two albums a year. Every six months you went into the studio and did another album, and every new album became more popular and we were pretty happy.



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BLUE NOTE

As we approached 1965, we were recording our seventeenth album and we put it out. A couple of months after it was out, we got a call from the record company saying that we had a big hit on our hands. We didn't quite understand quite what that meant because we didn't record albums in those days to be "big hits." We recorded them because that's the way we felt about music at that time. So, we were like, "What song are they playing? Why is it a hit?" And they told us, it was the song called *The In Crowd*. We found that to be very humorous because *The In Crowd* was the final song we put on the album and it was sort of the "dessert," and we thought that we had the "meat and potatoes" and we wanted something light and gay, so we put that on and that song caught on. That was also the name of the album, and that became our first big, national hit. After that, there were several other hits and Joe Glazer got involved and booked us all over the United States in the major concert halls and nightclubs.

It was still the three of us as a trio, but in January 1966 after we had become a huge hit (we had been together since 1954 or 1955), we decided to break up the group. The money was coming left and right, and there was great notoriety, and although we had great album sales and concerts, we just decided to break up the group.

THE JAZZ SHOWCASE

Founded in 1947 by Joe Segal, The Jazz Showcase has been at over 60 locations in Chicago over the years, including its current one on South Plymouth Court next to the Dearborn Station. The club has been a venue for many of the greats of jazz, including Ahmad Jamal, McCoy Tyner, Kenny Burrell, Eddie Harris, Bill Evans, Sonny Stitt, Gene Ammons, Joe Williams, Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, Ornette Coleman, and Marian McPartland.

JAZZ, LTD.

Jazz, Ltd. was a Dixieland jazz band managed by Bill Reinhardt from June 1947 to April 1978 that included the great Sidney Bechet. It was also a nightclub in existence from June, 1947 to February 1972 that was managed by Bill's wife, Ruth. First located at 11 E. Grand Avenue it was also situated at 164 E. Grand Avenue. Bill and Ruth co-owned the club. It was estimated that over 700 musicians played at the jazz club over the years including Bechet, Barrett Deems, Eddie Higgins, Art Hodes, Jimmy McPartland, Chet Roble, Jack Teagarden, and Franz Jackson. And, finally, Jazz, Ltd. was also a record label that produced over a dozen albums.

GOLD STAR SARDINE BAR

Located at 680 N. Lake Shore Drive at Erie and founded by Bill Allen, it probably got its name from the fact that it could only seat a maximum of 50–60 people. It was in operation from 1982 until 1997. The club never charged a minimum or a cover charge, took no reservations, offered free cigarettes, and was open for lunch as well as late evenings. Some of the big names in jazz who performed at the Gold Star were Tony Bennett, Bobby Short, Buddy Rich, Stan Getz, Julie Wilson, and Woody Herman.

BILL ZWECKER | ENTERTAINMENT REPORTER AND TELEVISION PERSONALITY

The Gold Star Sardine Bar is a great story. I remember going there one night and seeing Liza Minnelli who was in town. She was great friends with Bill Allen, who was a wonderful cabaret kind of guy and who co-owned the club. He loved that kind of music and was the one who launched the Sardine Bar. Liza had been performing at the Lyric Opera House and came over to the Gold Star Sardine Bar afterwards when we were all there. Of course, I saw Bobby Short there a couple of times when he came to town and he loved that place because it was so intimate

and obviously much, much smaller than the Carlyle where he performed regularly in New York. But, he just loved the intimacy of the Gold Star.

ANDY'S JAZZ CLUB

The club was first opened in 1951 as Andy's 11 E. Lounge just east of State Street near Mother Hubbard's, the preeminent River North sports bar. The club served as a hangout for newspaper workers from the nearby *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Sun-Times*. It grew into a renowned jazz club and restaurant and, in 1975, a group of investors bought the club and changed its name to Andy's. Among those jazz stars who have performed at Andy's were Chuck Hedges, Larry Coryell, Franz Jackson, Barrett Deems, Art Hoyle, and Von Freeman.

CAROL MARKER | GURNEE, IL

One of our favorite places was Andy's. We went there a lot, and it was where we would see a different band each week. Still, we loved taking the out-of-towners there to show off our Chicago clubs jazz scene. So Monday night was a key night to escape your reality and go out in Chicago and have a ball.

I would add that my husband was a dentist and he totally understood embouchure and the importance of it to musicians who played instrument using their mouths. So, not only were these people musicians, but they also were patients of his and ultimately became social friends of ours, as well. There was no bigger fan of these musicians and their music than my husband.

OLD TOWN

PLUGGED NICKEL

The club was located in Old Town on North Wells Street. Miles Davis recorded several famous albums at the club, and bands like the Horace Silver Quintet performed there.

PENNY LANE | BROADCAST PERSONALITY AND ENTERTAINMENT CONSULTANT

It was a blistering, cold Chicago winter night. My husband, Wayne, and I had gone to the Plugged Nickel on Wells to see Buddy Rich and his big band. After the show, we were beginning the drive home. We were on Clark St. around North Avenue and we stopped for the light. Standing on the corner, trying to keep his coat closed as the wind was blowing gale force along with the snow was Buddy Rich. I said, "Look, honey, that's Buddy Rich standing there. We should give him a ride." So we pulled over and I lowered the window and said, "Mr. Rich, do you need a lift?" He gratefully accepted. Now, we were driving a ratty old car, but at this point I don't think he cared. I hopped into the back seat, and Buddy sat up front with Wayne. He was staying at the Playboy Mansion and that's where we took him. He was so appreciative and just thanked us profusely. A nice ending to a terrific evening.

UPTOWN, EDGEWATER AND ROGERS PARK

GREEN MILL COCKTAIL LOUNGE

The jazz club is located at 4802 N. Broadway in Chicago in the Uptown neighborhood on the North Side. It originally opened in 1907 as Pop Morse's Roadhouse and was renamed Green Mill Gardens just a few years later. It was a favorite of Al Capone during the Prohibition Era. It appeared in several movies including *Prelude to a Kiss* and *High Fidelity*. Other North Side jazz clubs included Club Laurel, Key of C, 1111 Club, Club Silhouette, Club Detour, Marios, and Bar-O, some of which were either located in the Uptown and Edgewater neighborhoods or on Howard Street in the Rogers Park neighborhood.

LARRY BEERS | MUSICIAN | CHICAGO

I'm from downstate Illinois, and I studied at the U. of I. and had some wonderful teachers over the years who helped prepare me for the move to Chicago. Champaign could be considered as the springboard

**Bobby Short,
Gold Star Sardine Bar,
1988**



**Andrea Marcovici,
Gold Star Sardine Bar,
1988**



to jump to Chicago. I believe the first club I played at professionally was the now-defunct, Orphans. It was on Lincoln. I think this was around 1982. When I moved up to Chicago in the mid-80s, around '86 or so, a good friend of mine, a bass player named Angus Thomas was playing with Ghallib Ghallab and some other players at a place called Kiku's and I sat in one night. After doing it, they asked if I wanted the gig. I was waiting tables at the time, so I jumped at the opportunity and started playing with them.

We played all kinds of joints for about a year—places like The Backroom and The Cotton Club, which didn't do very well. It was on South Michigan. This was when the Bulls were still kind of not at the top of the NBA rankings, but I remember one night when Michael Jordan walked in with Horace Grant and Scottie Pippen and this was before they became big stars. One night, McCoy Tyner and Stanley Turrentine came in and they sat in with us. They played a couple of tunes with us and that was a major big deal; kind of a happening—a brush with greatness, if you will. McCoy Tyner and Stanley Turrentine are two iconic legends and I never dreamed that I would be playing with them.

Over the years, getting to know a lot of people, I would play at other places like The Bop Shop and the Green Mill, which is a legendary fixture in Chicago. I was also playing in rock clubs like The Avalon, formerly called Tuts on Belmont. There were other places, half of which I can't remember because they were there for only a short while. But, the Beat Kitchen, which is still there was one of the clubs. Alan Baer opened it before he sold it to the present owner.

I played with a real fun group—The Action Figures that included Kevon Smith, Angus Thomas, myself, and another player who Angus really taught how to play bass. His name is Darryl Jones and he's gone on to a little gig to play with a small rock band called The Rolling Stones. Darryl Jones also went on to play with a trumpet player you might have heard of—Miles Davis. The Action Figures was a funk/rock band that we'd put together. This was around 1988 and we had formed

a pretty solid rock quartet that held court and played different rock venues for over three years. We had a steady Monday night gig at a place called Esoteria and another called the Big Nasty. So many of the musicians were off on Monday nights, so they would come and sit in with us. Buddy Miles was a regular in Chicago in those days, so he would often come and sit in with us. Sometimes, he would take over my drums for a couple of tunes or he would just sing. One time, he surprised all of us and played guitar. Turned out he had learned guitar while he was working with Jimi Hendrix. After about a year at Esoteria and then a year at the Big Nasty, we moved over to a place called The Union, which was just south of the Vic. The Monday night culture resulted in all kinds of musicians showing up to play with us, like Dave Mick from the Big Twist and Larry Nolan, also from the Big Twist. Derek Frigo, Johnny's son and a guitarist from Enuff Z'Nuff.

In the late 80s and into the early 90s, I worked with a wonderful musician, Nick Tremulis and we did a series of benefits called The Waltz. Nick took the name from the film, *The Last Waltz*, which was a Martin Scorsese-directed documentary of The Band's final performance. There were five of them in total and these were done to benefit homeless teenagers. They were held at The Metro. Nick was able to really pull some strings in terms of attracting musicians to perform at these events. In fact, the first one of them that we did, Rick Danko from The Band came to perform. The list of people who came to do these shows were folks like Mavis Staples, Ronnie Spector, Ian Hunter from Mott The Hoople, and so many other big-name performers.

A lot of memorable moments for me, as a musician in Chicago.

BOB CUNNIFF

On Argyle, there was the Tail Spin, and further west on Argyle there was the place where Charlie Parker and Lester Young played at the Green Mill, and

on Bryn Mawr there was the 1111 Club that was right by the "L." We also went up to Howard Street after the War, and Art Tatum was performing at the Club Silhouette in an empty room. So, I got my own personal "audience" with Art Tatum.

DEMPSEY TRAVIS | AUTHOR

Club Laurel on north Broadway was a place that we went to a lot of times. Count Basie used to play there all the time. They had society singers there and it was a high-class place. The Green Mill on north Broadway was one of the original jazz places and opened in the early '30s. We used to go there after the Aragon Ballroom to have a beer and listen to some good jazz after listening to waltzes by Wayne King.

There was also the 1111 Club on the North Side that was famous because of a guy named George Brunies who was a great trombone player, and who played with all the top jazz people including the band leader Paul Whiteman. But, Brunies didn't like playing with a big band and preferred a small group where he could feature his jazz trombone. He actually would lay on his back and play the trombone with his feet.

JOE LEVINSON | MUSICIAN

Many of the jazz clubs located along the "L" on the North Side were just storefronts. One of them was the Key of C, which was located on Broadway around Wellington. They had jam sessions in there all the time, and that was where I met Fred Karlin, who later won the Oscar for *For All We Know* from the movie *Lovers and Other Strangers*. He was a trumpet player from Winnetka who had graduated from Amherst College at the age of 18 and he was brilliant. Fred had formed an octet that was rehearsing in his home, and the group played his own arrangements. He not only played the trumpet, but also the piano and he was a great arranger. A lot of the local musicians went up to Winnetka to play in his octet, and I was one of them. That was where I learned the art of "chamber music jazz," playing tightly arranged, highly difficult, and exciting

arrangements. A lot of them were original compositions, and some of them were tunes that were standards.

Clubs like the Key of C existed all over the city of Chicago, including the Club Laurel and the Green Mill, probably the longest running jazz club in the world at a single location. In fact, I played there in the '40s and early '50s with a bunch of local musicians like Sandy Moss and Eddie Avis. There was also a place on Milwaukee Avenue and Webster called Mario's. Mario was an Italian bar owner, and he had a band there on weekends and a little stage in this bar, and it was the dumpiest place. My friend, Eddie Avis, the trombone player, was part of that band. They didn't have a bass, but they had a vibraphone, trombone, tenor sax, and guitar. In those years, I was starting to do a lot of society work and playing dance bands, and, on the weekends, playing weddings in hotels downtown. I'd be done at midnight on a job on a Saturday night, and I would drive my Chevy with my bass over to Mario's. The sun was just coming up on Sunday morning, and I had played all night at Mario's with these jazz players and it was just wild. I played in a lot of the joints. In those days, sitting in was a lot easier and almost expected in a lot of the places, even in the more sophisticated rooms. If you were a good enough player, and they knew you, they'd say, "I'll take a rest, you play bass for a set." I got to play with an awful lot of people, including Ahmad Jamal on the South Side in a joint on 64th and Cottage Grove in the Pershing Hotel. When I knew Ahmad he was called Fritz Jones, and he played piano and his bass player, Israel Crosby, worked at the post office. One night Ahmad asked me to sit in with his group even though I was 16 at the time.

The 1111 Club was in Uptown right by the "L" on Granville, and they had a Dixieland band that played there with George Brunies and a drummer named "Hey Hey" Humphrey, who was a wonderful character. I also heard about all this music that was being played in Rogers Park in clubs on Howard Street. Traveling from Drexel Square on the South Side to Howard Street on the Far North Side was a





pretty big hike, especially in those days, since the expressways didn't exist. But, my dad was real good about it. He let me have the car, and I'd go to Howard Street and park it there. It was easy. But, one thing you got to know about Howard Street, both during and after the War, was that it was jammed with servicemen. They came from Great Lakes Naval Training Station, Glenview Naval Air Base, and Fort Sheridan located to the north of the city and Howard Street could be reached with the Chicago and Northwestern or North Shore trains.

The beautiful thing about Howard Street was that it was also located at the end of the line for the Chicago Howard Street "L" line. Howard Street was to the North Side what Rush Street was to downtown. It was a jumping street, at least on the south side of the street where liquor could be served while the Evanston side of the street was "dry." The two places that I knew about were the Club Silhouette and The Club Detour. I actually sat in the Club Detour when I was 17 years old. I wasn't old enough to be in there, but I probably conned my way in...certainly, the bartender didn't bother me. I only had a ginger ale since I wasn't a drinker in those days.

Both of those clubs were within a few blocks of one another just east of the Howard Street "L" station. When I'd go into the Silhouette... remember, again, that I wasn't old enough to be in there, I'd sneak in, and maybe they'd throw me out, and maybe they wouldn't. I remember listening to Herbie Fields and Charlie Ventura at the Silhouette. I remember seeing the Herbie Fields Octet or Septet there at the Silhouette, and that was a real powerhouse group that was sort of trying to be a Bop group. They were trying to get into that kind of thing. Swing music, the Benny Goodman and Tommy Dorsey kind of stuff was beginning to be passe among the hip musicians of the time. By the way, I was hep when it was hip to be hep. Anyhow, in those days I was hep, but I was not a hep cat because I didn't have the zoot suits and

the big shoulder stuff and the chain, and all that. And, a lot of the hep cats would wear a beret and let their goatee grow, and try to be like Dizzy Gillespie. And, there were a lot of guys who were smoking joints and doing all kinds of stuff with needles, but I never got into that, thank G-d.

I can't remember when the clubs closed, but I saw Art Tatum in the Club Detour one night when I went down there. I sat at the bar at the Detour and it was the kind of one of those bars with the piano and the little bandstand was behind the bartender. It was like a round bar surrounding the platform where the band was. And, here was Tatum all by himself up there, on a grand piano, in the middle of this bar playing and hardly anybody was in the club. Either nobody knew he was there, or they hadn't advertised very much, or I don't know what, but I sat there completely blown away. He was the greatest jazz piano player that I'd ever heard up 'til then, you know, and he was so advanced it was scary. There was his technique and his ideas and his harmonics and everything. It was like a graduate school course in how to be totally great on your instrument.

SONDRA FARGO | EDUCATOR

In the early to middle 1940s I remember going to the jazz clubs on Howard Street. In those days everybody danced. I was not drinking at that point, unlike some of the other kids I knew, but I loved to dance. And, so, except for the Aragon, the nearest place to where I went to school, at Evanston Township High School, was Howard Street. We went to such places as the Bar-O and the Club Silhouette, which was where I first saw Sarah Vaughn. They might have been postage-stamp sized places but they had some sort of dance floor. The fact is, I remember the Silhouette was really a nice nightclub located east of Paulina, close to Marshfield. We just hung out on Howard Street in those years after high school. I remember seeing Billy Eckstine there even though nobody had really heard of him yet.

SOUTH SIDE

CLUB DELISA

The Club DeLisa was located at 5521 S. State Street near Garfield Avenue on the city's South Side and was one of Chicago's most famous and important African American jazz clubs. It opened in 1934 and was owned by the four DeLisa brothers. The original building burned down in 1941 but was soon replaced by the New Club DeLisa. The club provided entertainment in the format of a variety show that featured singers, comedians, and dancers along with the DeLisa chorines. At the height of its popularity in the 1930s and 1940s, Club DeLisa was open 24 hours a day offering continuous entertainment. The Red Saunders Band was in residence at the club from 1937 to 1945 and 1947 to 1958, and other well known entertainers of the time included Fletcher Henderson, Count Basie, Joe Williams, Albert Ammons, and LaVern Baker. The club was closed in February 1958 following the death of two of the four DeLisa brothers.

JIM DELISA | SON AND NEPHEW OF OWNERS

The Club DeLisa opened right after Prohibition. When my dad, Jim, came from Italy he first stopped in New York to visit relatives and friends. My dad became a carpenter, my uncle Mike became a tailor, and my uncle Louis became a shoemaker. After they arrived in America on the boat in New York City, my dad decided to come to Chicago.

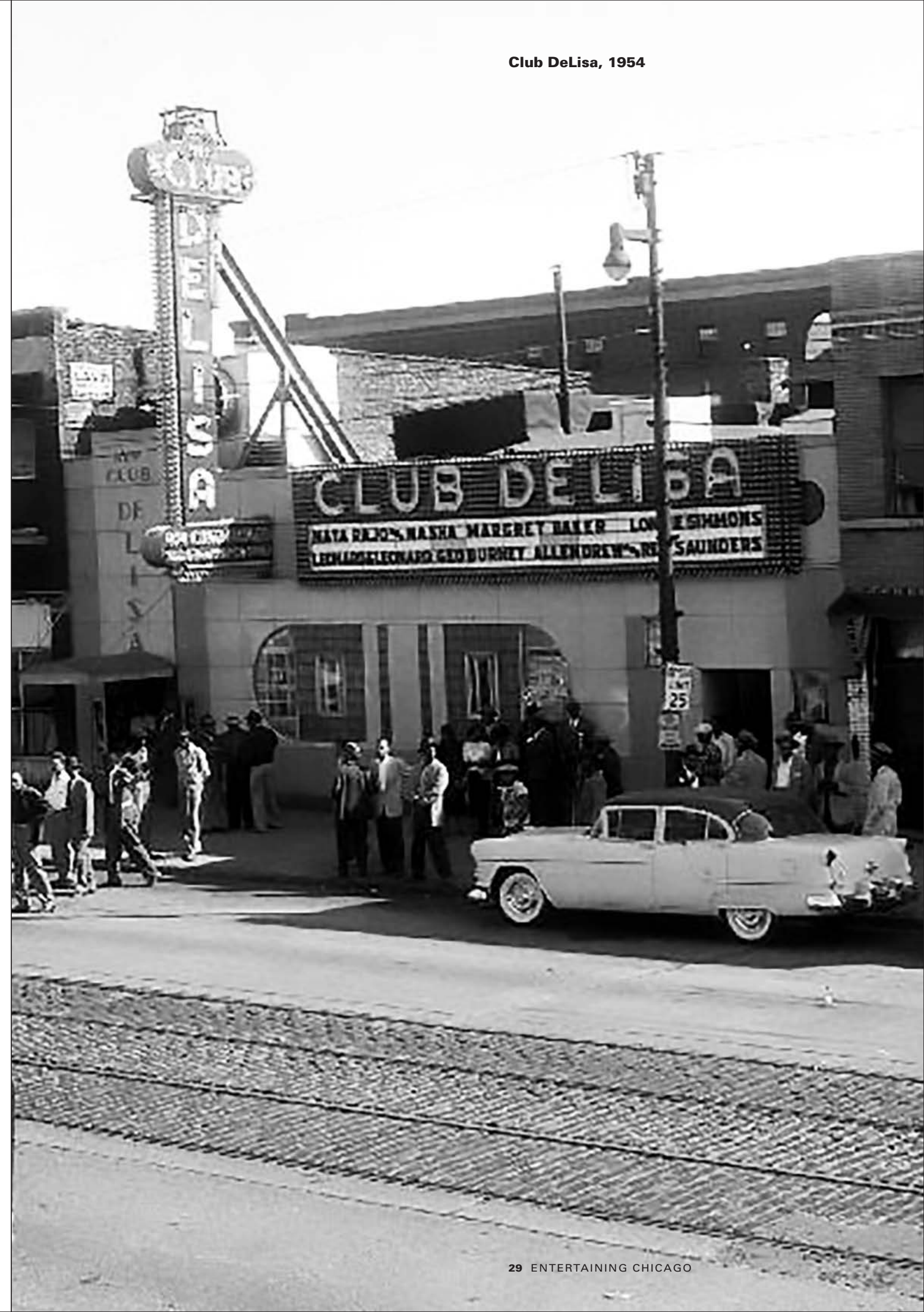
He called my uncle Mike and my uncle Louis and said, "you gotta come to Chicago because there are bushels of money being made here." This was in the 1920s, and it was moonshine that was providing the money. So, they came and opened up five moonshines and a beer tavern on the South Side. After Prohibition ended, they established Club DeLisa in 1933 and when they first started, it was pay for your beer. But they would also give free pretzels and popcorn to draw the crowds. The original club seated 350 people but, on weekends, over 500 were

squeezed into the Club DeLisa. The crowds kept getting bigger and bigger, but then the first club at 55th and State Street burned down because of an electrical fire on February 11, 1941. So, they decided to open up the New Club DeLisa at 5521 S. State Street. People were laughing because they said that they wouldn't be able to build another club that quick, but my dad said that he was going to make it happen. And he and his brothers did just that in about two and one-half months. The new club was bigger and better than the original club, had central air conditioning, employed 150 staff, and accommodated 1,000–1,500 people and it had a stage with settings under the floor and you could hear Red Saunders with the band beating on his drums. The stage would rise and there would be Red Saunders, Louis Armstrong, and whoever was performing there. The stage would be raised so that there wasn't a bad seat in the house. And they did nightly floorshows.

At the old club, the actor John Barrymore would come there from the Blackstone Hotel in his robe and he would be eating salami, drinking, and flirting with the women. Bob Hope would also come to the club, as well as John Wayne. The Kirbys, the Eckstines, Joe Williams, La Verne Baker, Moms Mabley: they all started there, and even Sammy Davis Jr, along with his dad, when they came through Chicago. My dad and his brothers fed them when they didn't have enough money to eat.

All of the top jazz people came to Club DeLisa, and on Monday they had a breakfast show at six in the morning. Everybody who was appearing in Chicago would come to the club, do their thing on the stage, and then watch the other performers. Radio personality Daddy-O Daylie used to broadcast a radio show from the Club DeLisa.

On Saturday, my dad would have kiddie shows at the club. But when you went downstairs, the chorus girls were dressing, and there was gambling. One day, when U.S. Congressman William Dawson came to the club with his wife, my mom was sitting at a table, and the Congressman asked if he could join my mother. And, Mom said, "Of course you can," but Mrs. Dawson said that there was no way. She wanted





Dancers, Rhumboogie Nightclub, Chicago, April 1941. Photo by Russell Lee, (Library of Congress)



the table for just her and the Congressman. She had no idea who my mom was. So, when Mrs. Dawson said to my mother, "You can leave now." My mom's answer was, "My name is Georgia DeLisa, and I would love for you to join me." So, they did and Dawson, who was the most powerful politician on Chicago's South Side, was a gentleman and sat with Mom.

TED SAUNDERS | SON OF DRUMMER RED SAUNDERS

My dad, Red Saunders, performed regularly at Club DeLisa. He started there in 1936, was the lead drummer, and Albert Ahmons was the first bandleader at the club. My father came up to Chicago from Memphis, Tennessee with my auntie on the Illinois Central Railroad. They arrived in Chicago around 1917 or 1918, and Lill Armstrong, Louis Armstrong's wife, had just come up from Memphis too. Many other musicians and entertainers came to Chicago from the south since Chicago was the key place for entertainment and for musicians from the 1920s on. The hottest recorders were the Red Hot Five and the Red Hot Seven who played in Chicago at the Grand Terrace. Lill Armstrong was the piano player with the group and also the one who wrote the records. It turned out that a nun taught Dad how to play drums. Lill was the one who used to sit down and teach each of the musicians their parts. They played at the Grand Terrace on 35th Street, and then it moved to 38th and Grand Boulevard (later King Drive).

We lived in back of a place called the Rhumboogie that was one of the city's top jazz clubs, but the Club DeLisa was the place in Chicago. The Club DeLisa was the first one that blacks and whites could go in and mix and sit down and watch the shows together. There were white acts and black acts in the show. They called them "black and tan" and it was the only place in town like that. In New York, the Cotton Club in Harlem was segregated. Blacks performed there but could not go in the club. If you were a musician and you were serious about playing music, you came to Chicago. So, all of the key musicians, including W.C. Handy, who was considered

the "father of the blues," came and lived in Chicago. Nat King Cole came to Chicago in the 1940s, but he was a struggling musician who used to play at the Grand Terrace. He learned to play from Earl "Fatha" Hines who was at the Grand Terrace at that time. Nat used to go in and stand at the back door and watch Earl Hines play the piano.

My dad's full name was Theodore Dudley "Red" Saunders. "Red" was the name they gave him because many of the people in Memphis, at that time, were called Red. He was a light-skinned black man and, therefore, they called him "Red." One of his first major gigs was with John Phillip Sousa, playing drums with the band because the military band was made up of civilians who traveled with Sousa. That was how he got started. From there, he played in a group called the Walkathons, who traveled around the country, had dance contests and offered prizes. On the Walkathon that Dad was on, Red Skelton was the comedian and emcee of the show, and they got to be very close friends.

My mother and father were on the road with a show called *Harlem's Scandals* and my dad was the drummer who was making \$75 a week which was considered a fortune in the early 1930s. My mother was a dancer in the show, and, actually, she came from a prominent family, because my grandfather was a lawyer and he was the man who was in charge of streets and driveways for the city of Chicago for 58 years. His name was Madison James Washington. My dad was playing at Club DeLisa during the War, and he was making records for Vee-Jay Records. Everybody came into the Club DeLisa including John Barrymore. Bob Hope lived in Chicago and worked here, and his manager used to book some of the acts at the club. His name was Charlie Hogan, and he was the main booker for the Regal Theater. One of the major things at the Club DeLisa was the security. Nobody bothered you when you went into the Club DeLisa, and one of the major reasons was the bouncers including Punjai. Those bouncers all seemed to be 6' 8" tall and weigh 300 pounds, and nobody messed with them. They looked out after everybody. When you came

in the club, and you had the money or you were a prominent person, you had a front seat. They would grab a table and put you up front, right in the center, no matter what your color was.

JESSE WHITE | ILLINOIS SECRETARY OF STATE

I remember Club De Lisa that was located near 55th and State, and it was the place to go for live entertainment for African Americans. The fellow who owned the place was the father of someone who works for me, Jim DeLisa. The club really mattered to the African American community in Chicago because it was the place to go and be seen. Whenever there was good entertainment for African Americans in town you had to get a ticket to get in there. Since I was old enough to go there I do recall seeing the great pianist Red Saunders who played there. I also remember going to the Chicago Theater to hear my good friend Nat King Cole. What was strange about that was we were sitting in the back of the theater and there was someone who was so enthusiastic about the music that she yelled out, "Sing it Mr. Cole, sing it!" Then, of course, there is the fantastic Ramsey Lewis, who we honored recently for his commitment to providing entertainment to people across the State of Illinois.

RHUMBOOGIE CAFE/ RHUMBOOGIE CLUB

The club was located at 343 East 55th Street, but it was only in business for a short time from April 1942 until May 1947. The Rhumboogie was owned by world champion boxer, Joe Louis, and Charlie Glenn. Although the club closed after a fire on December 31, 1945, it did reopen in June 1946, but because business never came back to earlier heights, it closed a year later. When it originally opened, the first orchestra was Tiny Bradshaw and His Orchestra, which was followed by Horace Henderson, T-Bone Walker, and Milt Larkin. Other acts over the five years of the club's

existence included Sarah Vaughan and Charlie Parker. In October 1944, a Rhumboogie Recording Company was created with a house band that included Red Saunders, famous for playing at Club DeLisa. The label went out of existence in 1946.

GRAND TERRACE/SUNSET CAFE

Originally called the Sunset Cafe at 35th and Calumet, it later became the Grand Terrace. When it was the Sunset Cafe it was considered to be one of the hottest jazz venues in Chicago in the 1920s where such stars as Bix Beiderbecke, Benny Goodman, Gene Krupa, and Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey performed. In April 1926, Louis Armstrong joined the Sunset Cafe's band, becoming the band leader in 1927. Armstrong's master of ceremonies was Cab Calloway, and the band included Earl "Fatha" Hines. The club was raided on November 5, 1927 for openly selling bootleg whiskey. The Grand Terrace, originally located at 39th and King Drive opened in place of the Sunset Cafe and Earl Hines became the bandleader. The band broadcast on WMAQ. The Grand Terrace would close in 1940.

GRAND BALLROOM

The Grand Ballroom was located near 63rd and Cottage Grove which was previously known as the Frank Loeffler Building. In November 1923, Loeffler had purchased the previous building on the lot from Mayor "Big Bill" Thompson and had that structure demolished. The new Frank Loeffler building was constructed on that site. Next to the Loeffler Building was the 3,200-seat Tivoli Theater movie palace and the seven-story Pershing Hotel. The Loeffler Building became known as the Grand Ballroom where they would have lavish pageants and dances. The Pershing Hotel would become black-owned in 1943 and host such important black artists as Earl "Fatha" Hines, Ahmad Jamal, and Charlie Parker.





DEMPSEY TRAVIS | AUTHOR

I started playing piano at five years of age, and I became interested in jazz when I was even younger because my father was a piano player.

In terms of the jazz clubs on State Street, the first ones that I can remember as a kid were on 35th Street and included the Grand Terrace at 35th and Calumet, on the southwest corner. I also went to the State Theater and to the Dreamland. Most interesting to me was seeing people going home at 9 or 10 in the morning dressed as if they were going out for the evening although they were just coming home after being out all night. You would see them leaving the various clubs, like Club DeLisa, Swinger, Rhumboogie, and Grand Terrace. I started going to the clubs when I was 15 and 16 because I was playing in them which I did until 1942 when I went into the Army.

In the '40s, Club DeLisa was probably the biggest club on the South Side, and in the city. The club burned down and they rebuilt it.

ROBERTS SHOW LOUNGE

The Show Lounge was open from 1954 to 1961 and operated by Herman Roberts at 6622 South Park Way although the sign in front said Roberts Show Club. During those years, Roberts booked such major stars as Count Basie, Nat King Cole, Lionel Hampton, Sam Cooke, Brook Benton, Jackie Wilson, and Sam Cooke. Roberts also opened the Roberts Motel Chain on the South Side and booked such stars as Ramsey Lewis, Bobby Bland, Billie Eckstine, and Esther Phillips.

SUTHERLAND LOUNGE

A very popular venue for music during the heyday of Chicago's jazz scene, it was located in the Sutherland Hotel that was completed in January 1919 at 4659 S. Drexel Boulevard on the city's South Side. It was originally designated a military hospital and then assigned to the US Public Health Service. In 1925, the six-story hotel was purchased by

a real estate consortium including its partner, William J. Sutherland, and the hotel was named for him. When jazz music began a revival in the 1950s, the Sutherland Lounge was advertised as "Where the Stars and Celebrities Meet." Such jazz stars as Thelonius Monk, John Coltrane, Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Billie Holiday, Bill Evans, Sarah Vaughan, Nancy Wilson, Nina Simone, and Miles Davis performed at the lounge. It closed for repairs in 1963 and briefly reopened in 1964 before finally closing that year.

BILL GOLDMAN | LINCOLNSHIRE, IL

Here's one story I really remember about the Sutherland Lounge. I was dating a young lady and wanted to take her to hear some jazz. This was in the early 60s and the Sutherland was kind a legendary place. I used to go there often, and it was situated in a primarily black neighborhood. It was definitely off the beaten path of the usual Rush Street clubs like the Cloister Bar at the Maryland Hotel, the Black Orchid, and others. As I recall, it cost about 3 bucks to get in. When we got there, we were treated to the music of Sonny Stitt, a magnificent tenor sax player. But, the offshoot of this story is that I married Joyce and remarkably, we're still together after 57 years. I guess she was really impressed that I would lay out that kind of money to take her to a great entertainment venue like the Sutherland.

PHIL HOLDMAN

I think that I was at the Club DeLisa about twice because it was a long distance from where we lived on the West Side. I went there with one of my friends who liked big bands. His father had a brand new DeSoto and he would get the car and say, "Phil, where do you want to go because I'm getting the car this Saturday night?" I said to him, "Let's go to the Club DeLisa." I told him that it was at 55th and State and, boy, that was a thrill because they had good food like fried chicken. It was a "black and tan" club, which meant it had African Americans and whites attending the club. Jimmy Noone

had a great dance band there, and he was a talented clarinet man. In fact, when Benny Goodman got done playing at the Sutherland Lounge he used to take the band and go to Club DeLisa to hear Jimmy Noone, who was one of his idols. We saw beautiful dancers and beautiful floorshows, heard great music, and the night wasn't expensive because you could get it all for about a dollar. A fried chicken dinner was \$.35 and it was a real plush club, although it was rather compact, so no matter where you sat you were close to the band and close to the show and there were chorus girls with scanty clothing. It was a lot of fun. I also saw Red Saunders there who was the house drummer, and he performed at Club DeLisa for many years.

There was a club on the South Side at 63rd and Western where the guys drove their fathers' cars to take a load of us West Side guys who were friends and liked good music. It was called Jump Town, and it featured the singer Anita O'Day. The club featured all the great jazz singers and jazz trios of the day, and it was a very hot spot.

I never went to the Sutherland Lounge but I knew about it. Benny Goodman played there, and it was in the Southmoor Hotel at 47th and Drexel. The Cloister Inn at the Maryland Hotel was another place that I went to a couple of times because I liked Lenny Bruce, the comedian. I was friendly with him and he was brilliant. But, he didn't perform there until the '50s.

RICH SAMUELS | TELEVISION PERSONALITY

During my high school years I lived in the suburbs, but I did get into Chicago a lot because I was with a group of kids who were jazz musicians, or so we fancied ourselves. So, quite often, we would go down to the Blue Note, which used to be at Clark and Madison, and, later on, when we had driver's licenses, we would go south to the Sutherland Lounge at 47th and Drexel in the Sutherland Hotel, where the jazz musicians would play, the Regal Theater at 47th and South Parkway (King Drive), and McKies Disc Jockey Lounge at 63rd and Cottage Grove. As for the Club DeLisa, it was more of a place

for floor shows. We went to places, particularly, where they had jazz acts, although there were some more exotic things that they could only play in Bronzeville, like Redd Foxx at the Sutherland back when he was doing "party records" before his television career. At the Regal, we saw Moms Mabley, who was not in the mainstream at that point.

KENT BEAUCHAMP | RECORD PROMOTER

I spent a lot of time on the South Side of the city because I loved jazz and blues music. I would also sit up and listen to Sid McCoy on his all-night radio show. I was fairly street smart, and I knew my way around and knew where to go and where not to go. I hung out at the different blues and jazz clubs, and I remember seeing Ramsey Lewis at the Croydon Inn off Rush Street and Ahmad Jamal at the Pershing Room. The Club DeLisa had just closed by the late '50s and early '60s, and the Crown Propeller may have still been in existence by then. The Blue Note had also closed by then.

I got to know the Chess family quite well. The real recording of blues music was going on at their studio on South Michigan Avenue where they did Chess, Checker and Argo recordings. I got to know a lot of record artists and radio people, and they included Eydie Gorme and Steve Lawrence, Ferrante and Teicher, and Martin and Lewis. I remember the time that Van Morrison came to Chicago, and he was a very talented kid and I had to take him around to the television and radio stations for interviews. Ironically, his interviews were good and he was talkative with the interviewers even though he was quiet when we were traveling around the city. Another guy who was like that was Neil Diamond, and he was one of the great show business personalities who you could ever imagine. But, although he was not real talkative, he was friendly to me.

During the early '60s, I was dealing with some of the best known black recording artists, like Aretha Franklin.

I also worked with Dick Gregory, Ramsey Lewis, and Ahmad Jamal. I was promoting rock and roll



records and we would visit the big radio stations, like WIND to meet with Howard Miller. WLS came later in the early '60s with Dick Biondi, Gene Taylor, and Clark Weber. In those days, WCFL and WJJD were the rival stations for WLS.

THE BEEHIVE LOUNGE

Located at 1503 E. 55th Street in the Hyde Park neighborhood on Chicago's South Side, The Beehive Lounge was one of the city's premier jazz clubs in the 1950s. The Beehive opened in 1948 and from the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s, it was a place to hear bebop and hard bop in Chicago by such great musicians as Coleman Hawkins, Al Hibbler, Milt Jackson, Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, Max Roach, Thelonius Monk, Gene Ammons, Cannonball Adderley, Dexter Gordon, and Sonny Rollins. It was known as a "black and tan" club because of its multiracial audience, and the house pianist from 1948 to 1951 was Jimmy Yancey, while Junior Mance performed at the Lounge from 1953 to 1954.

PALM TAVERN

In 1933, James Knight, the first "Mayor" of Bronzeville opened the Palm Tavern at 446 E. 47th Street on the city's South Side. When he retired in 1956, ownership of the tavern was transferred to Geraldine "Mama Gerri" Oliver who would operate the establishment as Gerri's Palm Tavern until July 3, 2001. The Palm Tavern had a major impact on the nurturing of black musical culture in Chicago. Over the decades, the Palm Tavern provided a venue for such diverse African American musicians as Duke Ellington, James Brown, Count Basie, Quincy Jones, Dizzy Gillespie, and Muddy Waters.

REGAL THEATER

Built in 1928, the very popular theater that seated over 3,000 people was part of the Balaban and Katz chain and was located at 47th and Grand Boulevard (later renamed

South Parkway, and, then, in 1968, Martin Luther King Drive). It was a key night club and music venue on the city's South Side, was lavishly decorated with plush carpeting and velvet drapes, and offered customers motion pictures and live stage shows. Those shows included such stars as Nat "King" Cole, Cab Calloway, Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Lena Horne, Sarah Vaughan, Miles Davis, Lionel Hampton, Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, Sammy Davis Jr., and, in the 1960s, Aretha Franklin. Other acts included Sam Cooke, Jackie Wilson, The Supremes, The Four Tops, Della Reese, Herbie Hancock, Dionne Warwick, James Brown, John Coltrane, and Martha and the Vandellas. In June 1962, "Little" Stevie Wonder recorded his hit single *Fingertips* at the Regal in a Motortown Revue that included Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, Marvin Gaye, Mary Wells and the Marvelettes, and BB King. In 1968, The Jackson 5 opened for Motown acts that included Gladys Knight and the Pips. The Regal closed in 1968 and was demolished in 1973.

WARNER SAUNDERS | TELEVISION PERSONALITY

My father was a Pullman porter and my mother was a maid, and we lived up over the grocery store and other stores near 47th and South Parkway. It was an exciting life because the Regal Theater was right around the corner and the Savoy Ballroom was there, and the alley with the back door to the Regal literally faced the front of our house. You talk about "people watching." There were 10 children who lived in the apartment building where we lived, and we were all about the same age. So, we used to stand outside and literally watch the stars go by, and they included every entertainer, athlete, and businessperson. It almost became common place to see all the famous people..."Oh, there's Joe Louis, there's Count Basie, there's Ella Fitzgerald, there's Billy Eckstine..." It was like State and Madison for the black community, and it was the

center of everything. There was a large department store across the street called the South Center Department Store, and it was very much like a mini-Marshall Field's. The Regal and the Savoy Ballroom drew a lot of people, and there were lines around the corner waiting for the stage shows. So, we used to go outside and hang out on 47th Street and just watch because we didn't have to go anywhere.

I had a strong interest in jazz when I was growing up, but I wasn't old enough to go to the Club DeLisa. It was a jazz place for my parent's generation. Into the 1950s, the downtown clubs were opening up, like the Blue Note, the Black Orchid, the London House. I was a young man at that time, and it was the hip thing to do to go there.

BOB KRYZAK | GRAPEVINE, TX

Some friends and I had gone to the Regal Theater to see James Brown. He was a fabulous entertainer, and he had this shtick he would do that involved a cape. He would be onstage, singing and dancing and sweating and really getting after it, when all of a sudden he would drop to a knee and come to a dead stop. He would act as if he just couldn't continue. Then, one of his fellow musicians would come out carrying a cape and proceed to drape it over Brown and try to coax him back into performing. Suddenly, he would stand up and start to move and groove, like he had amazingly been revived. It truly was a sight to see. He would do this several times during his act and of course, the audience would roar with approval each time he did it. I'll never forget it. He was a truly incredible performer.

BURNING SPEAR/HIGH CHAPPARAL

One of the South Side clubs owned and operated during the 1950s and 1960s by radio personality Pervis Spann. The club was located at 55th and State, and Spann booked major acts to perform at the club including the Jackson 5, Aretha Franklin, and B.B. King. After Spann's overnight slot at WOPA-AM radio ended, the station was bought by Phil and

Leonard Chess in 1963 and the call letters were changed to the popular WVON-AM, a 24-hour blues station.

MCKIE'S DISC JOCKEY SHOW LOUNGE

Created by popular disc jockey McKie Fitzhugh, McKie's Disc Jockey Show Lounge was opened in 1956 at 63rd and Cottage Grove on the city's South Side. Among the many performers at the lounge were Sonny Rollins, Bill King, Gene Ammons, John Coltrane, Fontella Bass, Brook Benton, and Sonny Stitt. After the club closed in the late 1960s, Fitzhugh died in 1970 and the hotel where the club was located went vacant soon after.

MARC DAVIS | AUTHOR FREELANCE WRITER

In 1969, Gene Ammons, the great tenor sax man, was released from Joliet prison after serving a seven-year stint for narcotics possession; his second imprisonment for a dope rap. To celebrate his liberation, he got together with another great tenor player, Sonny Stitt, with whom he used to perform regularly and they scheduled a night of music at McKie's, a South Side club.

I was there with my wife and some friends, along with a packed house three-deep and more at the bar, in a relatively small room. The air was dense with the aroma of weed and the mood was jubilant. The crowd was mixed—both black and white. Ammons and Stitt were at the peak of their virtuosity, blowing their warm, rich, resonant tones, with astoundingly complex improvisations and mind-boggling fingering.

They stood under a single spotlight, side by side on a small stage over the bar, taking turns at "cutting" each other with memorable solos, each successive "call and response" more beautiful and enchanting than the one before. They played long sets, late into the night and into the half light of the following early dawn.

Beyond the great jazz of that never-to-be forgotten night, was the joyous spirit of their playing, two

great friends and musical colleagues, reunited after many years apart, each inspiring the other to play at the very best of their capability.

JOHNNY FRIGO | MUSICIAN

On the South Side, I would sit in at the black jazz clubs after my gigs. I would park my car in an alley on a Saturday night at 2:00 a.m., take my violin, and walk right into some jazz club, like Club DeLisa. On Sunday mornings they had what was called a “Milkman’s Matinee.” that included eight dancing girls, and Albert Ammons, who was the son of the great tenor player, Gene Ammons, and his band. I would go in there. and they would let me sit in. One night, I was tired. But when you sat in you played one or two sets and then let somebody else play. I was so ignorant that I walked up there and although I decided I wasn’t going to stay there too long, I just kept playing. When I finished, the announcer said, “OK, Johnny, let Teddy Wilson play on piano.”

I played my music at a lot of clubs on 63rd Street. Mostly, I played bass at the Trianon Ballroom with Wayne King, and at the Aragon Ballroom with Dick Jergens. In 1942, I played with Chico Marx at the Blackhawk Restaurant. They would broadcast every night. I sang with Mel Torme, and we had the quartet. Mel had just gotten out of high school and he was from the Hyde Park area. I traveled with Chico Marx. It was during the time that I was with him that I signed up for World War II in 1942. I picked the Coast Guard. They heard that I played violin, so they sent me to Ellis Island. I had a physical, and little did I know that there was something wrong with my back, so I was on “light duty.” So, I played bass with the band, and I played tuba and trumpet with the military band. I was in the military from 1942 to 1945, but I mainly played with the band and did concerts at Walter Reed Hospital and radio programs. Then, from Ellis Island, life was good. As long as you passed muster, you were able to get out every night to go to Manhattan. People would give us tickets to everything, so I went to all the clubs, saw the Glenn Miller show, Broadway plays, and, at one point, next to Carnegie Hall, a new USO opened.

After I got out of the Service in 1945, I came right back to Chicago and began traveling with Chico Marx. I joined him at Tower Theater in Kansas City, and we did theaters all over the country. And, when he saw that I played violin, he asked me to bring my violin on stage one day, and we sort of fell into a comedy routine. He had an Italian accent, and we would do stupid stuff and improvise routines like “You noodle on the fiddle, and I’ll spaghetti on the piano.” The audiences liked it, and when Mel Torme couldn’t make it at times, I sang with Chico and I sang some Irish songs.

About 1951, I introduced myself to everyone in Chicago again since I had been away for so long. I happened to stop at the Streamliner Club near Union Station on Madison Street, west of the Loop. George Shearing was playing there. and he had me sit in and he played Detour Ahead. Later, I went to the Pump Room, where I had played with David LeWinter, the pianist for Paul Draper, the tap dancer, and LeWinter had a nice dance band. I remember picking my fiddle and playing Sleepy Lagoon on a Sunday afternoon to a dance tempo, and Jascha Heifitz was sitting in front of me.

JOE LEVINSON | MUSICIAN

Chicago was rife with clubs in the 1940s and 1950s. Some were very sophisticated and some were real dives, and I played in both types of clubs. Since I was born in 1929, during the ’40s I was too young to play in those places, but I went to hear music there. I hung out and I haunted all those clubs. I remember many of them, and even if I couldn’t get in I would stand in the doorway or I would go around to the back alley and listen through the window. I would catch neighborhood guys and local bands. Some of the places were expensive and classy, and I went there too. I grew up playing classical violin. As an 11-year-old, I had never really paid attention to jazz. But, my parents went to the clubs, not particularly because of the music, but because they liked the food and they took me with them. I would just sit there and I remember hearing Fats Waller and his Rhythm

Band. Then, I found out that my father loved Benny Goodman and he was the one who introduced me to big band music. There was a radio broadcast of jazz coming out of New York City that he loved to tune in on, and Dinah Shore used to sing on that program. In 9th grade we moved to the South Side from the North Side, and when I completed grammar school, my father thought that I should attend a good high school. Even though I was all set to go to Lake View High School, my father said, “No, I think that we are going to send you out to University High.” He was able to do that because he was a visiting professor at the University of Chicago in legal medicine.

We moved to Hyde Park and lived at 915 Hyde Park Boulevard, right at Drexel Square. We had some brilliant people in that school, including those who were jazz musicians and had great jazz record collections. That was when I started collecting jazz records.

When I finished 10th grade in 1945, I had two choices: I could either go to Hyde Park High or stay on in the four-year college at the University of Chicago. The U of C students were a number of years older than me and much more worldly, experienced, and serious students. So, I really wasn’t doing very well. But, what I was doing well was playing violin in a high school orchestra in the U-Hi dance band and listening to jazz records by Ellington, Jimmy Blanton playing bass in his band. I listened to that sound and said, “That’s it, that’s it, that’s the perfect sound and rhythm!” I went to a band rehearsal at U-Hi one day and they had a bass fiddle standing in a corner and nobody played it. It was a cheap bass, a plywood bass. I picked it up, and it looked like a violin with a thyroid condition. So, I realized that I could play, and I understood what was happening with it because it was like the violin I was already playing. I said to the bandmaster that I could play the bass, and he said that he would rather have me on bass than on violin because they didn’t have a bass player. It was a terrible band.

Then, I heard that a bunch of guys living in the Burton-Judson dormitory on the U of C Midway had formed a dance band, and a lot of them

were military veterans who had come in and even had some professional experience with bands. They were 7 to 10 years older than me, and I went over there to hear the band one day. They were rehearsing in the dining room, and I noticed that they didn’t have a bass player, so I boldly said, “Can I play in your band?” So, one day I borrowed the bass out of the high school band room, walked into this rehearsal with the school’s bass, and said to them, “I’ve come to play in the band!” They decided to let me try, and I blew them away because I knew what I was doing. So, I was immediately a member of a band in which I was the youngest person, and they were playing college proms, fraternity parties, and all kinds of things around the campus. I was actually even making money.

These guys introduced me to the jazz clubs around Chicago’s South Side. They snuck me in with them, including the Bee Hive on East 55th Street, and I saw Charlie Parker and Max Roach and others of that caliber. I was only 15 or 16 years old but it didn’t matter if you were white or black, and we would go to jazz clubs up and down 63rd Street. I even went downtown with them to places like the Cloister Inn at the Maryland Hotel. Bronzeville was the euphemism for the Black Belt, especially along South Parkway and 63rd down to 47th Streets. I even remember going to the Regal Theater at 47th and South Parkway and seeing Pearl Bailey. Down the street from the Regal Theater was a record shop called the Groove Record Shop. I used to ride my bike up there after school, and they had jazz records galore.

There were a lot of jazz piano, stride piano and blues piano players in Chicago. One of them, who recorded a lot was Jimmy Yancey. And, Mama Yancey, his wife, was a blues shout, and some of the guys in the band took me over to Jimmy’s apartment with my bass. They were having a rent party and, of course, he had a beat-up old, upright piano in his apartment on the second floor near Sox Park. And, I went in there with my friends from the college band, and Mama, who had one

eye, was the nicest person, knew I was just a kid. So, I played blues with Jimmy Yancey, and Mama sang some songs, and, in between, whenever we weren't playing she would come over and hand me a ginger ale.

Guys took me all kinds of places around the South Side and downtown to hear jazz, including the Sutherland Lounge. I never went into the Club DeLisa on 55th and State because that was big-time and you had to have a lot of money. But, I knew guys who told me about it, and they had the "Milkman's Special" where the last show started at one in the morning and they came out about 7 o'clock in the morning and the band was still playing. Visiting dignitaries in the music business would stop by there after they did their thing. Club DeLisa was renowned.

JUDY ROBERTS | MUSICIAN AND LEGENDARY JAZZ ICON

My beginnings actually started with my father, who was a great guitar player and who did big band arrangements for the likes of Fletcher Henderson. My dad was born white and Jewish (like me!) and Henderson's bass player, the famed Israel Crosby, said to my father, "Man, you write some good bass parts for a white boy!" I guess it was okay to say things like that at the time, and my dad was thrilled. My dad is really the one who turned me onto the greats like Andre Previn, Oscar Peterson, Ella, Jackie and Roy, the incredibly talented jazz duo. I was around 5 years old when I started picking up on the greatness of that music. I don't read music, but I was picking things out on the piano and that's how it all began. So, you could say I was truly blessed by having a really cool father. His name was Bob Loewy. By the way, later when I started doing featured gigs, I decided to change my name from Judy Loewy to Judy Roberts—using my dad's first name for my lastname was a sweet decision. In the 80s, we did a jazz quartet CD together called *My Heart Belongs To Daddy*, that featured both of us playing and singing. It was pretty cool. But, it all started because my dad was an arranger and he was generally home all day.

So, we listened to lots and lots of music together—all the greats—all the time. A wonderful foundation.

Now, how I started singing is really a funny story. When I was in high school, I became part of a very cool jazz quartet, but all I wanted to do was play piano. You know, I've never really considered myself a singer, but despite that, here's how it all began. We got booked into a club out in Addison (IL) that was owned by the Mob and one night, while we were playing, one of the mobsters came up to me and said, "Hey, I want to hear you sing *Fascination*." I told him, "I'm sorry, sir. I don't sing." He takes out a gun and puts it down on the bar and said, again, "Sing *Fascination*." So, I looked at the guys in the band and I began to sing, "It was fascination, I know..." And the next song I sang was, *Never Will I Marry* followed by *Save Your Love For Me*, you know, the Nancy Wilson songbook because I'd been listening to great singers for most of my life. So, that's how I began singing... at gunpoint!

My first real chance at success happened when I was still in my teens, and I got the house trio gig at The London House. That was something that really opened up some doors for me. I got to play opposite "the real people" five nights a week. That's how you get to not only listen, but also get to know them, get familiar with their style and find out what the real people were doing. During their sets we were able to sit in the audience, in the back, and can you just imagine? Getting to hear stars like Oscar Peterson five nights a week, three sets a night? Unbelievable! That's how I got to meet bassist Ray Brown. He came through with Oscar Peterson, and he liked me. I was young—like 19—and we went into a recording studio and did some fun things. I'm pretty sure it was Universal Recording on Walton and here was Ray Brown, the real deal and the nicest guy. He wasn't hitting on me or anything like that. He was solely interested in making music with me and that's what we did. Ray had an "in" at Mercury records, and he tried to get them to do something for us, but Mercury shut down right about the time we made the recording, so nothing ever happened with it. (I still have the acetate recording in my possession!) But that recording session paved the way.

Judy Roberts
(Courtesy of Judy Roberts)



The fans would line up outside when I had the London House gig. You know, we would start early there—around 6 o'clock and our trio would perform for the dinner crowd. Most of the time, the audiences were respectful of the musicians, but occasionally, there would be some yahoos who just didn't get it. There was this one time when some conventioners had a table right up close to the band and my bass player, Fred Atwood, was taking his solo and these guys were just yakking it up. Well, the audience tried to shush them up but they weren't having any of it. This one guy was really being obnoxious. Now, when I played, I always took my shoes off because it was more comfortable for me. But, now here was this guy, talking loudly and being excessively rude so I got up, ran across the stage in my stocking feet and jumped down into the audience and grabbed this guy by the collar telling him to shut up. The audience applauded, however, the manager didn't think as much of my actions, so I got suspended for a week, but it was worth it to me. There's also a well-known story of mine about George Shearing playing at the London House and experiencing some loudmouths. The cool audience members were audibly making shushing noises to these idiots. Finally, Shearing himself, upon hearing the "shushing" wittily said into the mic, "I'm playing as softly as I can." It's a time-honored great story.

INTERNATIONAL AMPHITHEATRE

The International Amphitheatre was an indoor arena that was open from 1934 to 1999 located on the west side of Halsted Street at 42nd Street on the city's South Side, adjacent to the Union Stock Yards. The Amphitheatre replaced a horse-racing track that was destroyed by fire in 1934. It was among the first arenas in the country to be air conditioned. Not only did the Beatles perform there on September 5, 1964 and August 12, 1966, but it was home to the NBA Chicago Packers and, later, the Chicago Bulls in their inaugural season of 1966-67. It was also home for Chicago wrestling and the Chicago Auto Show as well as several national political conventions

including the infamous Democratic National Convention in 1968.

NORTH SIDE

THE BACK ROOM

Located at 1007 N. Rush Street in Chicago, it lasted from the 1960s until 2014. It was one of the oldest jazz clubs in the city and offered excellent jazz by some of Chicago's best vocalists, trios, and quartets. It consisted of a small, carpeted room with exposed brick walls and a black drop ceiling and a tiny, wooden bar.

JUDY ROBERTS | MUSICIAN AND LEGENDARY JAZZ ICON

After my London House gig, I began playing at a very hip place on Rush Street called The Back Room. It was originally called Wil Sheldon's. This was also a big break for me because it was centrally located, right in the midst of all the Rush Street happenings. We were there five nights a week, too. A lot of the big-time musicians who happened to be in Chicago would come and sit in and it was a major thing that was going on there. So between Mr. Kelly's, the London House, and the Marienthals doing their thing, it turned out to be a big deal for me. That's also where I met my first electric bass player—Neal Seroka—and who shortly thereafter played guitar on my hit albums for Inner City and PAUSA. We still play together.

CAROL MARKER | GURNEE, IL

The Gaslight Club was a place you could go to in order to escape the everyday responsibility of taking care of toddlers and maintaining a home front. Every room in the club had a different motif, so depending on your mood, you were free to pick and choose your surroundings. Did you want a nice, quiet library with low-level blue lighting, very comfortable sofas and a piano player in the corner that you could barely hear? Then that was your room. Of course, being with someone special made for a very romantic setting with exceptional potential for that evening. Or did you want to go to a French bistro? You made a right



turn for one and a left turn for the other. But there you were with access to two different worlds just for the taking within that building. All of it wonderful. The bistro had, in the corner, a table with corned beef and marbled rye bread, so if you wanted a sandwich to go with your cocktails, you were in business. They had this every night. There was a big winding staircase that was housed in this mansion so if you felt like negotiating it, you'd find yourself upstairs, headed for the Speakeasy. When you got up to the entrance of this room, there was a phone booth and you'd go into it, pick up the phone and say, "Joe sent me." Once you got into the Speakeasy, there was always a jazz band playing and waitpersons rather scantily attired, taking care of the customers. My all-time favorite song the band would play was called, *I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate*. The tables in the room were all made of rugged wood and on the tables were wooden mallets that the customers could use to rap on the tables—keeping time with the music, which everyone did. It was total festivity, silliness, and joy! While I was not there for this particular period, I'd been told that the Gaslight Speakeasy was where you took your girlfriend—NOT your wife. Again, while I never saw it, I was told that the bar, instead of regular barstools, had saddles.

I also heard that in the corner, they had a fire pole so that if you needed to get down to the first floor without the wrong person seeing you, you slide down the fire pole. Now, this was before my time and I never saw these features, but I have no doubt they existed. It was this great Victorian mansion with all of these different rooms, and you could and spend the whole night being entertained by the magnificence of it all. The place was founded by Burton Browne, who must have been a highly creative and inventive person to come up with a concept like the Gaslight Club.

FACES

Faces, located at 940 N. Rush Street on the city's Near North Side, was the premier jet-setters' disco in the early 1970s. Individuals could become one of the approximately

16,000 lifetime members for \$50 to get a nod from the doorman. It closed in 1989 and was the brainchild of Jimmy Rittenberg and three friends. When it opened, people said that Rush Street was like being in Las Vegas.

JIMMY RITTENBERG | GENERAL MANAGER OF FACES

During the mid '60s, Rush Street and Old Town became the center of my activities. We would have a couple of beers at Mister Kelly's, stop at the old River Shannon, go either to Old Town or Butch McGuires, and then walk around the corner to Rush Street. The place where I used to work was originally The Gate of Horn, and that was where Lenny Bruce got removed from the stage by the police and the club was shut down. When it got closed, three young guys bought it and transformed it into The Store, a post-college bar. By that time, State and Division had become the location of several college bars, whereas Rush Street still remained the place for the "Boys," including entertainment, the Whiskey A-Go-Go, the Candy Store, the strip joints, and the "dress-up" joints. So, the city's Near North Side was like three different cultures: Old Town, Rush Street, and State and Division. I worked in Old Town and tended bar at Chances R, and I was very fortunate because I had the opportunity to hear Steve Goodman, Bonnie Koloc, Johnny Prine, and many others.

I went to the college bars on a regular basis in the '60s and later became a mainstay at Mr. Kelly's, so I became known to performers like Jackie Mason, Shelley Berman, Joel Grey, Chad Mitchell, Bill Cosby, and Tom Jones. London House didn't have the big acts in the late '60s, but Happy Medium, Mister Kelly's, and the Empire Room all had major entertainers in those years. The clubs began to lose their clientele because of television and the fact that you could see the comedy acts on television every night. Then, the bands started hitting big, and they couldn't fit into the little clubs.

CAROL MARKER | GURNEE, IL

Briefly, one great place to talk about down on Rush Street was Faces—a disco club. 70s and 80s. Think younger people and disco and Motown. One thing that really stands out in my mind was the entrance to the place. When you walked in, it was done up all in silver, including the ceiling and you just had to stop to absorb it. When John Travolta did his movie—*Saturday Night Fever*—one of the gals in the neighborhood had learned all the steps. We're housewives, and we would practice in the driveways so we'd have long enough routines and learn the steps, so that when we went into clubs like Faces, we really knew what we were doing. It was an amazing amount of fun! That's what I remember about Faces and there wasn't a song they would play that we didn't know, and we would sing right along with them and it was incredible! So, you go from the Gaslight Club, to a jazz club or a Motown disco. That's Chicago!

WISE FOOLS PUB

In the 1970s, this became one of the city's most popular blues club. It was located at 2270 N. Lincoln Avenue on the city's North Side. Performers at the club included Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, and Mighty Joe Young. After being sold twice, the club now is more likely to host local alt-rock and cover bands than blues performers.

JUDY ROBERTS | MUSICIAN AND LEGENDARY JAZZ ICON

There was a kind of heyday period for places on Lincoln Avenue in New Town. One of those spots was the Wise Fools Pub. People used to literally line up around the block to get into that venue. One of the things that some of the clubs would pride themselves in was getting people to remain quiet when there were performances taking place. I played Wise Fools five nights a week, and I was pretty popular there. I had this thing for when people would start yapping. I had a flashlight and if there were people making too much noise, I would shine the flashlight on them—you know—to

draw attention to them. The whole room would applaud and of course, the offenders would either slink down in their seats to try and avoid the embarrassment or they would get up and walk out. And that was okay, because there were 50 more people waiting to get in! The flashlight shaming was actually very effective for controlling noisy patrons who were spoiling things for the true fans.

CAROL MARKER | GURNEE, IL

My second favorite place to go was the Wise Fools Pub on Lincoln Avenue—particularly on Monday nights. That's because Monday nights have always been slow nights for musicians, so they'd show up at Wise Fools. All the money they would get for playing was whatever was collected at the door. The musicians were encouraged to bring in their own arrangements of jazz standards and perform them there. It was a long room, always jam-packed and each waitress had to cover about 30 tables and the amazing thing was—they never missed a lick. The band that was always there, although it would vary by which players came in on a Monday night, was run by Dave Remington and given license to do whatever. My high point about that experience, as well as everybody else's was the improvisation that was encouraged by Remington. And the musicians who came in were all A-List musicians. The tune that Remington had selected was the theme from *2001—A Space Odyssey*. Some of the musicians I remember coming in to play included Sun Seals, Cy Touff, Bobby Lewis, and Bob Cousins on percussion. Dave Remington was blatantly honest, so he would not permit anyone to be on that bandstand that didn't have the chops to pull it off. Again, this would be the kind of night that you could step away from kids in diapers or the lawn needing tending and so forth and just escape for two or three hours. Also, when we would have out-of-town company, including people from Europe, we would take them to clubs like Wise Fools and others and they were hearing only the best!