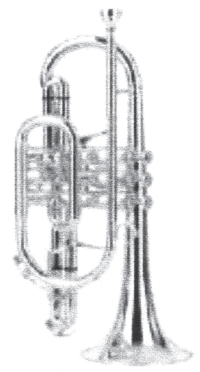


JAZZ SOUNDINGS

THE PUGET SOUND TRADITIONAL JAZZ SOCIETY



December 2019

Volume 44, Number 10

DAVID LOOMIS BRINGS HIS GOOD HERB JAZZ BAND TO OUR DECEMBER 15TH CONCERT!

by George Swinford



Above: David Loomis

For the third time since the Good Herb band was formed, we'll hear them play music from the renaissance of traditional jazz, some seventy years ago. Literally from that renaissance, since they will be reading the same arrangements that Lu Watters crafted for the Yerba Buena Jazz Band in the 1940s. Dave acquired those very arrangements a few years ago, just prior to forming the Good Herb band.

A word about the name: "Yerba Buena" translates from Spanish to

English as "good herb". It applies to any one of several varieties of mint-like plant, as well as being the name of an island in San Francisco Bay where one of those varieties flourished. Bay-Area cornetist Lu Watters chose that name for the rehearsal band he formed before WW2 to play classic jazz, as a musical relief from the big-band sounds he was playing on his regular jobs,

A few years later, when a number of the musicians returned from WW2, the Yerba Buena band was reconstituted. It found regular work and quite a popularity playing music originally recorded some twenty-five years earlier by such bands as King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band. Although Watters himself retired from music in 1950, some of his sidemen, such as Turk Murphy and Bob Scobey, carried that torch forward, as did the great South Frisco Jazz Band, Bert Barr's Uptown Lowdown and several others. The

Loomis family lived in the Bay Area for a time and Dave's parents played Yerba Buena records in the home, so young Dave was immersed in Frisco-style jazz almost from his beginning. By the time he joined the Uptown Lowdown band in 1980, he knew Turk Murphy's trombone solos well enough to play them note-for-note.

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WHERE:

Ballard Elks Lodge
6411 Seaview Ave. NW, Seattle

WHEN:

1 pm - 4:30 pm - December 15

ADMISSION: Pay only at door.

\$12 PSTJS members

\$15 non-members.

Free admission for those under 21 who accompany a person paying admission.

FURTHER INFO:

Carol Rippey 425-776-5072.

Or - website: www.pstjs.org. Plenty of free parking; great view & dance floor, snacks, coffee, and other beverages available.

Puget Sound Traditional Jazz Society

19031 Ocean Avenue
Edmonds, WA 98020-2344
425-776-5072 www.pstjs.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

Elks Lodge, Ballard, 6411 Seaview Ave N.W., Seattle

Dec. 15	Dave Loomis' Good Herb Jazz Band
Jan. 19, 2020	Ray Skjelbred's Yeti Chasers
Feb. 16	Jonathan Doyle Jazz Band
March 15	Grand Dominion Jazz Band
April 19	Ain't No Heaven Seven
May 17 & June 21	TBA

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JAZZ SOUNDINGS

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Ads must be submitted in a jpeg or PDF format

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Deadline is the 10th of the month for the next month's issue

Gigs for Local Bands

BARRELHOUSE GANG TRIO

Tuesdays 7:30-10:30 Oliver's Twist, 6822 Greenwood Ave. N.
Seattle, WA 98103

BELLINGHAM TRADITIONAL JAZZ SOCIETY

1st Saturday, 2-5pm VFW Hall 625 N. State St., Bellingham, WA

Dec. 7	Crescent City Shakers
Jan. 4	Maple Leaf Jazz Band
Feb. 1	Josh Roberts and Friends
March 7	Yeti Chasers
April 4	Bellingham Dixieland All Stars
May 9	Market Street Jazz Band
June 6	Evergreen Classic Jazz Band

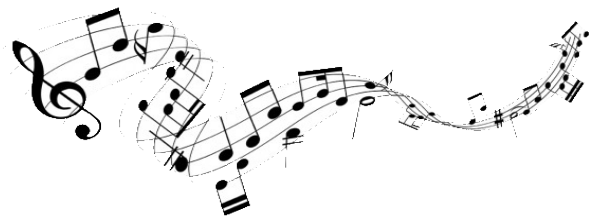
OLYMPIA JAZZ SOCIETY

2nd Sundays 1-4pm Elks Lodge 1818 Fourth Ave E. Olympia, WA
www.olyjazz.com

Dec. 8	Tom Jacobus & Friends
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PEARL DJANGO

Dec. 13 8pm North City Bistro Tickets and reservations made directly through the Bistro will be required to guarantee seating. Call (206) 365-4447 1520 NE 177th St Shoreline, WA



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JAZZ SOUNDINGS 

On Your Dial.....

Sunday
3-6 pm Ken Wiley's Art of Jazz on KNKX - 88.5FM

GRAND DOMINION'S JIM ARMSTRONG

JUST KEEPS ROLLIN' ALONG

by John Ochs

His Next Appearance Marks His 41st Consecutive Year Playing for the PSTJS. (We continue our series begun last month about the Grand Dominion Jazz Band with a profile of Belfast songbird and trombonist Jim Armstrong who appears with the band at our concert next March.)

Jim Armstrong likely holds the distinction of having played for more PSTJS concerts than any other musician. For 40 years, he has entertained us as a member of the Phoenix Jazzers, the Grand Dominion Jazz Band, the Crescent City Shakers, the Yeti Chasers, and CanUS. Even so, it is hard to believe that this seemingly ageless performer turned 80 this year. Lest we attach too much importance to this milestone, however, we should note that his energetic vocal and trombone work remains the envy of many a younger man, and he still plays rugby in a league with players who are “considerably younger.” And, whether it’s music or rugby, he plans to continue for “as long as I enjoy it and can play up to a certain standard without being a burden or dragging people down.”

Jim is fond of saying that at one time he was “the only trombone playing, Norwegian-speaking, color-blind art teacher in Ireland.” The back story to this statement is both true and revealing.

Armstrong was born and raised in the Stranmillis district of Belfast, Ireland July 30, 1939,

to Bob and Lily Armstrong. No one in the family played a musical instrument, and except for choir, the local public school did not offer music instruction. He did, however, belong to a youth organization which sponsored a brass band: “I was 15 and had no interest in music, but my pals did, so I played the E-flat alto horn, the most boring instrument in the band. The music program had a small budget, so the band director wrote out a lot of the



Above: Jim Armstrong playing rugby

arrangements himself. Once in a while, he’d leave out a notation, like calling for C rather than C-sharp. He was impressed I could spot the mistake and remember it. Even without any formal instruction, my ear was telling me what the right note should be. “

Jim became serious about music when he turned 17. By then, “British Trad” had become the most popular



Above: Jim Armstrong

music in Great Britain; he’d seen *The Benny Goodman Story* and *The Glenn Miller Story* at a movie theater; and he’d cast aside his alto horn in favor of the more interesting euphonium: “I thought, ‘I’d love to be able to play all that stuff.’ I knew I could learn either trumpet or trombone without much trouble because the euphonium’s valve system was similar to a trumpet and its mouthpiece the same size as a trombone. My favorite band was the Chris Barber Band, and he played trombone. A friend showed me the scale of C, and it didn’t take long to master a few more scales.”

Around this time, Armstrong read Rex Harris’ book *The Story of Jazz*. The final chapter, “So You Want to Be a Jazz Musician?,” featured a list of recordings and advised readers the best way to

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learn jazz was to play along with the records. Not long afterward, he attended a jam session in Belfast and was invited to sit in: "I didn't know what I was doing. I knew scales, but I didn't know what chords were. But afterward, one of the musicians told me, 'Stick with it, kid. You've got what it takes.'"

Trombonists were in short supply, so word got out. Clarinetist Stanley Koppel was leading a band for a dance in Belfast and needed a trombonist. His playlist included some Chris Barber tunes, and Jim agreed to give it a try: "The first tune he called was in G-minor. I had enough time to ask, 'What do you mean by "minor?"' 'It sounds sad,' he told me, just as he stomped it off. That was my introduction to music theory. A thousand years later, I studied music at the University of British Columbia. By then, I had already absorbed all the concepts – intervals, octaves, chords – and I sailed through."

After graduating from grammar school in 1957, he attended Stranmillis Teachers College. Since he excelled in drawing, he decided to specialize in art education. Asked why he chose art in spite of being color-blind, he explains, "There was a shortage of art teachers then. For my final exam in 1961, I was tasked with painting a mural for the school gymnasium. At first, all the tanned athletes I painted came out green, so I turned them into brown and told the examiners the scene was intended to picture students at a high school in Nairobi, Kenya."

Armstrong continued to play music in college. His first regular job was in 1959-'60 with the Apex Jazz Band led by trumpeter George Chambers: "The banjo player and

I were frustrated playing nothing but old tunes like Canal Street Blues. We broke away and formed our own band inspired by Chris Barber arrangements." Since most members studied at the college, they called themselves the Embankment Six after the bank along the River Lagan which borders the Stranmillis district. The band held down a Thursday night spot at Sammy Houston's popular jazz club until Jim emigrated to Canada six years later. In addition, the group played regularly for dancers at Queens University Student Union Hall.

Jim also participated in the 1960s Irish show-band scene as a member of the Dave Glover Show Band, generally recognized as one of the top bands in all of Ireland. The band played a mixture of pop, rock and Dixieland. In addition to playing trombone, he was one of several bandsmen who doubled as a lead and backup singer: "Brass players usually never have to play in the guitar keys, that is, the keys of G, E, and A, but in the show band I had to sing and play riffs behind rock singers who sang in those keys. It was great experience because I developed an innate sense of what fit in with any type of band."

Armstrong's ability to discern musical sounds goes hand-in-hand with a keen talent for linguistics, as demonstrated by his mastery of five languages. With regard to how he came to speak Norwegian, he explains, "I'm an amateur history buff, and in my late teens and early 20s I was so fascinated by the Vikings that I bought a book called 'Teach Yourself Norwegian.' I have an ear for both music and languages, and I found Norwegian pretty easy to learn. I still speak fairly good

French but my German, Italian, and Norwegian are getting rustier and rustier through lack of use."

Jim took a teaching job after graduation in 1961: "I was the only band member with a day job. They were all pros except me. I had to get up early and go to school. Weekends were grueling because the band would travel as far south as County Wexford in the Republic of Ireland since Northern Ireland was controlled by the Presbyterian Church, and music was not allowed on Sundays. With this schedule, I knew I would get sick during the winter so I tendered my resignation Friday November 22, 1963. I remember because it was the day President Kennedy was shot."

In 1966, Armstrong and his new wife emigrated to Valleyview, Alberta, Canada where he taught Social Studies with an emphasis on history. Two years later, they moved to Richmond, B. C., a Vancouver suburb, where a teaching colleague introduced him to Mike Cox, who played banjo in the Lions Gate Jazz Band. Their meeting later bore fruit when Cox left Lions Gate and decided to form his own band. Mike already had lined up a trombonist, but he asked if Jim could play trumpet. "Give me a month's practice and I'll be ready," he replied. Cox christened the band the "Phoenix Jazzers" after the bird of Greek mythology. Although its members knew each other, they had never played together as a band so, like the legendary phoenix, the new band had arisen out of the ashes of the predecessor groups.

Armstrong's British Trad and show-band experience enhanced the Jazzers' audience appeal and

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Armstrong - continued from page 4

added to its repertoire. The band really took off in 1975-'76, gaining cohesion and confidence by playing regularly in Vancouver at the Hot Jazz Club, which offered music five nights a week. In 1979, they recorded their first album, "Some Like It Hot." Later that year, they played at the Sacramento Jubilee, their first of many West Coast festival and concert appearances over the next few years.

The Phoenix Jazzers' reign as an out-of-town festival band proved short-lived, however. In 1982, Cox assembled an all-star jam group consisting of musicians from three different bands in the Vancouver and Seattle areas to play a weekend gig at the Hot Jazz Club. Soon, the Grand Dominion Jazz Band, as the new group was called, grew so popular that its festival requests overtook those of the Jazzers. Even so, the Jazzers continued to play for appreciative audiences in the Vancouver area until 2002.

When Jim moved to Victoria in the 1990s, he and pianist Toni Blodgett co-founded CanUS, a quartet specializing in the music of such vocal groups as the Boswell Sisters and the Mills Brothers. As with his prior bands, CanUS was an immediate success, holding down regular jobs in Victoria and enjoying popularity at festivals in Sun Valley, San Diego and Lacey, as well as at our PSTJS concerts in Seattle. In fitting recognition of his long service to jazz, he was honored as the Vancouver Dixieland Jazz Festival's "Friend of Jazz" in 1994 and the San Diego Jazz Festival's "Gentleman of Jazz" in 2001.

In 2010, he moved to White Rock, B. C. where he has worked regularly with a variety of bands in

and around Vancouver ever since. In recent years, his steadiest gig has been with Gerry Green's Crescent City Shakers. All the while, he has continued to be featured on vocals and trombone with the Grand Dominion Jazz Band, which still delivers that same strong, swinging New Orleans beat after 37 years.

Loomis - continued from page 1

The octet that Dave will bring to our December meeting consists, with one exception, of the same guys we've heard in the band's previous two appearances. The newcomer to the band (and to our audience) will be Rex Gregory, on clarinet. The rest of the band, which Dave will lead on trombone, will be as follows: Michael Van Bebber and Dave Holo will provide that inspiring two-cornet sound. Ray Skjelbred, heard on many Bay-Area band recordings, will play piano. Paul Hagglund, an outstanding grad of Camp Heebie Jeebies will play tuba. Kevin Johnston's banjo and Mike Daugherty's fine percussion work will round out the rhythm section.

As individuals these guys are all fine jazzmen. As a band they are thoroughly familiar with the classic Yerba Buena charts, and with each other's playing style. It will be great to hear them tear through the music which introduced at least some of us to traditional

jazz. Get new energy for your holiday preparations! Join us at the Ballard Elks on December 15th to hear an afternoon of classic jazz!

**PLEASE, PLEASE,
IF ANY OF YOU
ARE THINKING
ABOUT MOVING,
NOTIFY US
PROMPTLY OF
YOUR NEW
ADDRESS.**

EMAIL TO:

trianglejazz@comcast.net

OR PHONE:

425-776-5072.

THANK YOU.



We're looking for new

Members

YOU can help with little effort and that's by bringing just one of your friends or family members into our club. If WE ALL do that, our membership will double.

Puget Sound Traditional Jazz Society

PSTJS officers and board members - December 2019 ballot

*Incumbent

If you must miss the December meeting, here is your chance to vote for your PSTJS officers and board members. Remove from newsletter, vote your preference and mail by Dec. 9, 2019 to:
PSTJS 19031 Ocean Ave., Edmonds, WA 98020-2344

Place your name(s) and the word BALLOT on the top left of the envelope. Your name will be checked on election day and your vote added to the rest. On election day the ballots will be removed and the envelope discarded before the ballots are tallied.

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VICE PRESIDENT
Michael Shilley

SECRETARY
Cilla Trush*

TREASURER
Gloria Kristovich*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Vote for 4 candidates

Therese Berg Dave Loomis

Sharon Dooley* John Ochs*

Bill Julius Carol Rippey*

Write-in: _____ Office: _____

Note: Must have person's consent

Note: If you intend to vote at the concert in December you will be required to present your membership card to receive a ballot.

See Candidate's comments below:

Therese Berg - running for the Board of Directors: "Finding and encouraging new members and inspiring current ones to attend the monthly third Sunday of the month meetings.

Sharon Dooley - running for the Board of Directors: My goal is "increased membership".

Bill Julius - running for Board of Directors: I love trad jazz and fully support the Society's primary objectives: "preserving and promoting the live performance of traditional jazz." The board's greatest challenge, after net annual losses of \$1,982 in 2016 and \$2,726 in 2017, is to reduce the trends shown below.

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Avg. monthly attendance	98	85	81	72
Ticket revenue as a % of total event costs.	81.8%	77.4%	66.8%	59%

Dave Loomis - running for the Board of Directors: "Youth outreach" and "Integration with swing dance community".

Carol Rippey - running for the Board of Directors: My interest/goal: The PSTJS has been a very important part of my life for over 40 yrs. The society needs your attention and care. With your vote, I will continue to give my unwavering support (to quote a dear friend) "TO KEEP THE MUSIC PLAYING!"



Puget Sound Traditional Jazz Society
19031 Ocean Ave., Edmonds, WA 98020-2344

Please (enroll) (renew) (me) (us) as a member or members

Name _____

Address _____

City, State _____

Zip Code _____ E-Mail _____

Phone _____ Check when renewing if your address label is correct

Dues for 12 months: Single \$25 Couple \$40 Lifetime single \$200 Lifetime Couple \$350
 Patron \$500 (One or two lifetime membership)

Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope. _____

The Puget Sound Traditional Jazz Society is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization dedicated to the performance and preservation of traditional jazz. Your membership and contributions are tax-deductible. Thank you.



Red X on your Jazz Soundings mailing address label with **your name** on it - means it's time to renew your membership.

TWO red XX means **last chance to Renew Now!**

If you haven't found that perfect gift for your relative, friend, neighbor, or co-worker, here's an suggestion. Buy them a membership in the Puget Sound Traditional Jazz Society.

Here's how:

Fill out the application form in this newsletter (or print one off our website www.pstjs.org) with the recipient's name/names and mail with your check for the appropriate amount to:
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Please include a self-addressed stamped envelope to yourself.
 Membership card/cards in the donee's name/names and your receipt will be returned to you promptly.

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JIM ARMSTRONG GROUP armsjv@shaw.ca 604-560-9664

BARRELHOUSE GANG Leader: James Walls

206-280-1581 barrelhousegang@gmail.com

www.barrelhousegang.com

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