



# IN THE MOOD

The Olney Big Band  
NEWSLETTER

JULY 2013

Volume 8, Number 2

Dear Readers:

Summer is sunshine and blue sky, cold drinks and outdoor concerts. There will be plenty of all of those to go around. See the back page for details about where and when, so that we can see you this Summer.

Three of this year's venues will be new to us – see the story about what they are and how you can join us.

Something else that's great in the Summer is reading! Plunge back into the swing era with books about the vibrant history of America and her music, and life on the road with talented and fascinating characters.

- ITM Editor



[www.olneybigband.org](http://www.olneybigband.org)

## Quarter Notes Swinging into Summer

Dr. Rip Rice - Chairman of the Board, Olney Big Band

**O**n the back page of this issue is a quotation by Frank Sinatra about the importance to him of working in a (big) band when he was growing up. That statement by Old Blue Eyes caused me to muse about my own adolescence and how important playing in a dance band was for me.

Not that I was ever in the same musical category as was Mr. Sinatra. Not at all. But that's why I maintained music as a much-loved hobby, rather than trying to make a living as a musician -- leaving that chore to the truly professional musicians. I had never really thought much about the factors of my youth and adolescence that had the strongest impact on me, and what they had taught me. But now I am, and I'm grateful to Mr. Sinatra for the stimulation.

Rather than offering an autobiography, I wish instead to pass this provocation on to you: "How important was music to you while YOU were growing up, and what did your musical experiences teach you that was useful in your later life?"

In my case, I was impressed by big band dance and jazz music at an early age, and set about learning to play reed instruments. But just being able to play a horn for oneself, for "kicks," was not enough. I quickly found out that playing in a band required teamwork, and I enjoyed being a part of a team. Sure, it was nice to stand up and solo from time to time, but the bigger satisfaction to me by far was the teamwork aspect of a big band. Whenever I became distracted while playing in a band (i.e., when a really nice looking girl danced by), I lost my place and stopped playing for a moment -- at which point, the band was missing my part and the overall sound was not the same.

So one of the major truths that music taught me was concentration. If I was going to be a part of a team, I was expected to play every note so that the resulting chords would be full and as written by the arranger. Such concentration led to taking responsibility for my part in a band, which also led me to learn about commitment -- to the team; to ANY team -- and being part of teams from time to time is what life is all about.

Just those three basic, elemental, facts of societal life that I learned as a musician -- how to be part of a team, how to concentrate, and how to commit -- paved the way for my career as a scientist, and even to my basic character when I met and married the only woman for me 65 years ago.

But I never realized all this, until I read Frank Sinatra's comment about HIS growing-up years. Thank you, Frank. How many of you, our beloved readers, might have similar reactions? Please let us know!



# THREE NEW VENUES TO ENJOY!

**N**ot to brag, but nowadays, the hard-working manager of your Olney Big Band – that would be baritone sax player Dave Schumer – gets quite a few calls asking whether the OBB can come and play.

This Summer and Fall, we have played and will be playing for the first time in three great locations.

**Big Band Night** - On July 6, the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in beautiful St. Michaels, MD hosted Big Band Night. This has been a tradition for about 25 years, with a tent for dancing, plenty of green lawn to sit on with picnics, and fireworks over the bay. Despite the heat, everyone enjoyed the evening (after the fireworks, folks came back to the dance floor and asked for an encore!).

**“Pin-up Girls” Show** - The Flying Dog Brewery is branching out into art! The Dog is having an event called “The Artist Angle, which is a gallery opening to support local creativity. Artisan beer samples will be on tap, so swing on over for a great evening of art, music, and beer! As the Flying Dog says, “good people drink good beer.” A limited number of tickets will be on sale for \$25, check our website for a direct link to the event once Flying Dog puts them up for sale online.

- Saturday, August 31, 6:00-9:00pm
- 4607 Wedgewood Blvd., Frederick, MD 21703
- <http://flyingdogales.com>

**Swingin’ at Blob’s Park** – This is one of those storied dance halls that we’ve always wanted to play, and now we will! Please come and dance, drink, eat, or just listen to your favorite big band melodies. Have you attended events here before?

- Sunday, December 15, 4:00-7:30pm
- 8024 Max Blobs Park Road, Jessup, MD 20794.  
Admission \$10 for all ages
- [www.blobspark.net](http://www.blobspark.net)



Photo courtesy of Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum



Photo courtesy of Flying Dog Brewery



Photo courtesy of Blob's Park

# Artie Shaw and His Gramercy Five Combos

by DR. SUE VAZAKAS

**M**any of the Swing Era's big bands had a small "band-within-the-band," such as Tommy Dorsey's Clambake Seven, and the small groups in Benny Goodman's and Duke Ellington's orchestras. Artie Shaw's smaller bands were termed the Gramercy Five.

There were actually several groups called "Gramercy Five" (Gramercy 5 was a New York telephone exchange). The first "Five" was formed in the 1940s, and another in 1953, which was actually a sextet, with Artie Shaw on clarinet, Billy Butterfield on trumpet, Johnny Guarneri on harpsichord, Roy Eldridge on trumpet; Dodo Marmarosa on keyboards, and Jud DeNaut on bass.

Here is some of the marvelous write-up for the Complete Gramercy Five Sessions CD, on the web site "CD Universe":

"The Five did some of Artie's most famous tunes, including *Keepin' Myself for You*, *Cross Your Heart*, and of course, *Summit Ridge Drive*. This gave the bandleader and certain band members a little variety and chances to try different things away from the constraints of dance-oriented big bands.

...The Gramercy Five... had a slightly unusual instrumental lineup: the leader's clarinet, electric guitar, bass, drums, trumpet, and harpsichord (occasionally piano, too). The sound was elegant yet swinging, with a



Artie Shaw (photo by npr.org)

more freewheeling...feeling in the solos. The Five could indulge in Ellingtonian voicings ("Summit Ridge Drive"), Dixieland/New Orleans-style solos ("Special Delivery Stomp"), bluesy melodies, and traces of that strange new music that would be known as bebop.

...Shaw's Gramercy Five featured some musicians who went on to jazz legendhood: trumpeter Roy Eldridge, pianist Dodo Marmarosa (who went on to play with Charlie Parker and Gene Ammons), and the wonderfully versatile guitarist Barney Kessel (who went on to play with Sonny Rollins, Julie London, and the Beach Boys)."

The *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* reports that Shaw's first "Gramercy" group actually consisted of six musicians: "Shaw (clarinet), Billy Butterfield (trumpet), Al Hendrickson (guitar), Nick Fatool (drums), Jud DeNaut (double bass), and Johnny Guarneri (harpsichord). The combination of powerful solo work from Shaw and Butterfield

with the sound of the harpsichord proved very popular and led to the highly successful recording *Summit Ridge Drive* (1940), of which a million copies were sold. In 1945, following his military service, Shaw reorganized the band, including Roy Eldridge, Barney Kessel, and Dodo; this group recorded the tightly knit classics *The Sad Sack* and *Scuttlebutt* (1945). Although he continued to use the name Gramercy Five for small groups into the 1950s, none of Shaw's later ensembles had the impact of these earlier combinations."

A later Gramercy Five group was made up of musicians with strong bebop inclinations - Tal Farlow on guitar, Joe Roland on vibes, Hank Jones on piano, Tommy Potter on bass, and Irv Kluger on drums - and their musical personalities place a new complexion on the old Gramercy Five pieces.

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“...Mr. Shaw quit just a little too soon. A new kind of combo jazz was just coming into being then.”

In “Artie Shaw Rarities Come to Light,” a 1984 *New York Times* piece, the author states that “listening to these 1954 Gramercy Five sides suggests that Mr. Shaw quit just a little too soon. A new kind of combo jazz was just coming into being then. The Gerry Mulligan Quartet and the Modern Jazz Quartet were taking their first steps. Mr. Shaw was a bridge between the Swing Era and these 1950s groups, and he might have found many of his old friends who had not adjusted to his new moves primarily because it was he who made them, waiting for him in the jazz atmosphere that Mr. Mulligan and the Modern Jazz Quartet and others created in the mid- 50s.”

Let’s hear from Artie Shaw himself, as reported in Schuller’s book *Swing Era*: “I can only say I did what I had to do and what I felt like doing. I mean, I don’t think you can go and ask a composer who writes for symphonies why he wrote sonatas. Beethoven wrote 111 sonatas, and he wrote songs for string quartets, and he wrote

symphonies, operas, overtures. You get bored doing the same thing if you’re trying to grow as a human being, which some people insist on.”

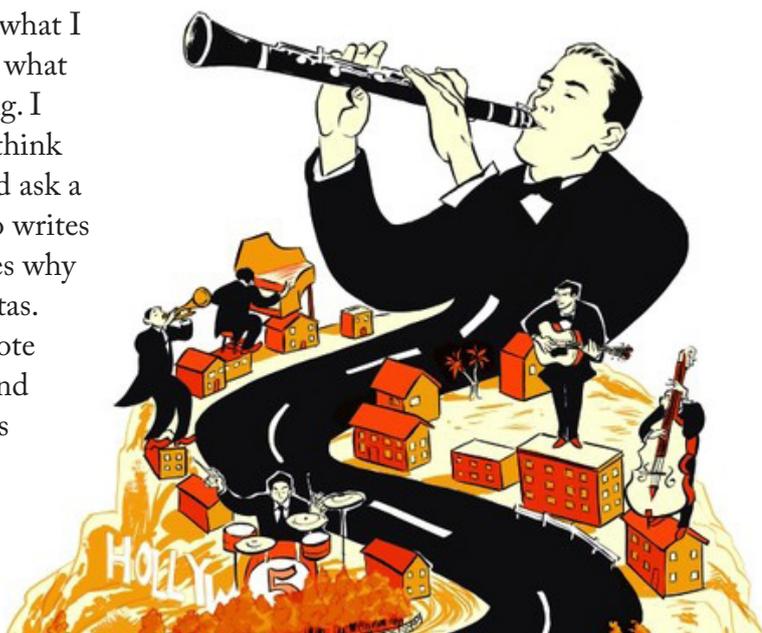
“Others don’t. Guy Lombardo bragged that he never changed his music in his entire life, and it worked for him. But that’s like Henry Ford saying ‘We’re still doing the Model T.’ It doesn’t make sense to me. So I never thought about why I did it. I only knew that I was bored and I had explored one thing as much as I needed to and then I decided to change into something else.

YouTube offers many original recordings of the various Gramercy Five quintets and sextets: <http://tinyurl.com/mg476mj>

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*New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2d ed., in Oxford Music Online, accessed 2/25/2013.

Schuller, G. *The Swing Era: the Development of Jazz, 1930-1945*, 1991.

Wilson, J. “Artie Shaw Rarities Come to Light,” *New York Times*, October 28, 1984, accessed, 6/7/2013.



Artie Shaw and the Grammercy 5 (Illustration by Ryan Inzana)

## How Sweet It Was!

One of our favorite concerts takes place at the Brooke Grove Retirement Village in Sandy Spring. Saturday, June 22 was a beautiful sunny day.

The audience and the band enjoyed the event very much, especially since Dr. Rip Rice, the band’s Chairman of the Board and a BGRV resident, helped out with percussion on one of our Latin numbers.



# Swing Into Summer Reading!

by DR. SUE VAZAKAS

**T**here are many fine books about our favorite musical era. I often refer to my copy of Simon's classic *The Big Bands* to read about the colorful band leaders, sidemen, arrangers, and others who shaped the Swing Era. Here are a few of the noteworthy writings that describe those heady times.

*The Swing Era: the Development of Jazz, 1930-1945* by Gunther Schuller (1991)

*The Swing Era* focuses on that extraordinary period in American musical history--1933 to 1945--when jazz was synonymous with America's popular music, its social dances and musical entertainment. It includes reviews of such often-neglected jazz figures as Henry "Red" Allen, Horace Henderson (younger brother of Fletcher Henderson), Pee Wee Russell, and Joe Mooney. There are also portraits of great soloists such as Art Tatum, Teddy Wilson, and Jack Teagarden, and singers including Billie Holiday and Helen Forest.

During the 1930s, swing bands combined jazz and popular music to create large-scale dreams for the Depression generation...

*Swingin' the Dream: Big Band Jazz and the Rebirth of American Culture* by Lewis Erenberg (1998)

During the 1930s, swing bands combined jazz and popular music to create large-scale dreams for the Depression generation, capturing the imagination of America's young people, music critics, and the music business. This book explores that world, looking at the music that shook the nation and has kept people dancing ever since.

*Swing Shift: "All-girl" Bands of the 1940s* by Sherrie Tucker (2000)

Here is the forgotten history of the "all-girl" big bands of the World War II era. American demand for swing skyrocketed with the onslaught of war. Although all-female jazz and dance bands had existed since the 1920s, now hundreds of such groups barnstormed ballrooms, theaters, dance halls, and makeshift USO stages on the home front and abroad. Tucker chronicles the careers of such bands as the International Sweethearts of Rhythm, The Darlings of Rhythm, and the Sharon Rogers All-Girl Band.

*Swing Changes: Big-Band Jazz in New Deal America* by David Stowe (1994)

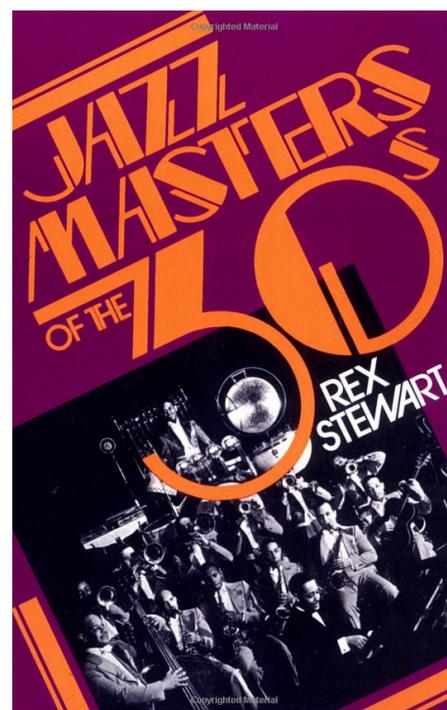
It was the big-band era, and swing was giving a new shape and sound to American culture. The author looks at New Deal America through its music and shows us how the contradictions and tensions within swing -- over race, politics, and the role of women - mirrored those played out in the larger society. Drawing on memoirs, oral histories, newspapers, magazines, recordings, photographs, and films, this book offers a vibrant picture of American society at a pivotal time.

*Jazz Masters of the Thirties* by Rex William Stewart (1972)

Chapters include "Father of swing trombone (Jimmy Harrison)," "Coleman Hawkins, "The father of tenor saxophone," "Red Norvo; a tale of a pioneer," "Ellingtonia: Days with Duke," "Tribute to Tricky Sam (Joe Nanton)," and "Genius in retrospect (Art Tatum)."

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## Key Personnel

Chairman of the Board: Dr. Rip G. Rice  
Music Director: Dr. Bob Tennyson  
Business Manager: David B. Schumer  
Sound Engineer: Paul Freirich  
Band Historian/Archivist: VACANT

## Board of Directors

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## In The Mood

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## Friends of the OBB

The Friends of the Olney Big Band support the efforts of the Band by encouraging volunteerism and by donating and soliciting and receiving gifts, bequests and endowments for the Band. If you are interested in becoming a *Friend of the Olney Big Band* go to the OBB website and click *Friends of the OBB* for details.

### Arrangers:

- Brooke Grove Retirement Village, Sandy Spring Friends School

### Side Men:

- American Legion Norman Price Post 68, Dr. Charles C. Chen, Globetrotter Travel Services of Olney, Graeves Auto and Appliance, Helen Kinney, Mamma Lucia Restaurant Olney, Montgomery General Hospital, Rose Redding Mersky, Alan Rich/Nova Label Co., Sandy Spring Lions Club, Halsey W. Smith, Studio of Ballet Arts

### Donors:

- Vera Bailey, Carpet and Vacuum Expo, El Andariego Restaurant, Christopher's Hardware, Barry and Ali Fell, Deb and Paul Fitzer, Fletcher's Service Center of Olney, Greater Olney Civic Association, L&L Music-Wind Shop, Crystal U. Lee, Moss Chiropractic, Music & Arts, Olney Theatre Center, Olney Toys, Sole D'Italia, Sandy Spring Bank, Turf Center Inc.

### Honorary Friends:

- Joe Karam & Robert Redding (in memoriam), Barry Schwartz

## OBB Events Schedule

**Friday, August 23, 2013** -  
Riderwood Village, 7:30 - 9:00pm.  
Closed to the public.

**Saturday, August 31, 2013** -  
Pin-up Girls Show at the Flying Dog  
Brewery, Frederick, MD 21703,  
6:00pm - 9:00pm. Open to the public.

**Saturday, September 28, 2013** -  
Asbury Methodist Village,  
3:00 - 9:00pm. Closed to the public.

**Thursday, October 3, 2013** -  
Evenings in Olde Towne Concert Series,  
City Hall Concert Pavilion, Gaithersburg,  
MD, 5:00-6:30pm. Open to the public.

**Sunday, October 13, 2013** -  
50th Anniversary Dinner Dance, The  
Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd,  
Closed to the public.

**Saturday, November 2, 2013** -  
Swing! Swing! Swing! V, Olney Theatre  
Center, Olney MD, 1:30-5:00pm.  
Open to the public.

**Friday, December 6, 2013** -  
Christmas Concert, Mormon Temple  
Kensington, MD, 7:00-9:00pm.  
Open to the public.

**Sunday, December 15, 2013** -  
Swingin' at Blob's Park, Jessup, MD,  
4:00 - 7:30pm. Open to the public.

### CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR FURTHER DETAILS

“Whether you were an instrumentalist or a vocalist, working in a band was an important part of growing up, musically and as a human being.”  
- Frank Sinatra

### For Band Information Contact

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### For Booking Information Check our Website or Contact

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