



IN THE MOOD

The Olney Big Band
NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2011

Volume 6, Number 2

Dear Readers:

As you'll see in this issue's "Musings of a Band Leader," we recently lost Bob Redding, one of the pillars of the Olney Big Band.

Bob joined the band in 2004, and two years later, initiated publication of this newsletter. In 2007, he was featured with our then-youngest player, Alexander Leishman, on the cover of our first CD, "Generations."

We look forward to having you join us for our upcoming memorial issue about this remarkable man.

- ITM Editor



www.olneybigband.org

Quarter Notes Musings Of A Band Leader

Dr. Rip G. Rice - Music Director, Olney Big Band

A MONTH OF JOY AND OF SADNESS

August 2011 was a month of great highs and great lows for the Olney Big Band.

After months of intensive rehearsal and a great deal of work on publicity and preparing the concert program, our third "Swing, Swing, Swing" concert took place on Saturday, August 13. This annual performance at the Olney Theatre was another sellout, and the band never sounded better. To these aging ears, the band and our two stellar vocalists were just plain magnificent! The guest swing dancers provided marvelous dancing to accompany some of our numbers, and Dr. Bob Tennyson and I each did our jobs wonderfully (as I was told) at, respectively, directing the band and providing narration about the songs we played. The band was even treated to some delicious homemade brownies by our long-time friend Dolores Karam, who magically appeared during intermission with containers of this much-needed sugar boost. And all of us were flying high, basking in the joy of a job well done, and a performance to tell our grandchildren about for years to come.

Until the following week, when we received the news that our trumpet-playing nonagenarian, Bob Redding, had passed away at age 92.

No matter how mentally prepared we all were for this eventuality, somehow there was the feeling that maybe this guy, this Bob Redding, was going to keep carrying on, in spite of Father Time. Those fans of the Olney Big Band that have seen us perform since 2004 may remember my occasional mentions of "that senior old coot back there (in the trumpet section) that took that trumpet solo -- well, he's Judge Bob Redding and he is 90, or 91, or 92 years old (as applicable to the year)!" And Bob would stand up and acknowledge the applause with a smile and a pump of his fist in the air.

This edition of In The Mood is published as we were planning, with mention of the passing of our friend and colleague only on this page. However, we will be dedicating the entire next (special) issue of our newsletter to Bob's memory, and to what he meant to us. Not only what he meant to the band as a musician, not just as the fellow who had the original idea that we should have a newsletter and call it In The Mood, and not just as the guy who provided many of the stories in each of our past issues. We will be telling our fans ALL about Bob Redding, including some aspects of his "day job" as an attorney and judge.

It is indeed with great regret that I must be the one to pass this sad news on to our Big Band-loving readers. The pain is real, but Bob will always be an inspiration to us and, I'm sure, to you. □



Bing and Elvis Part 2

Continued from preceding issue

by BEN EWING

Idolization

Though both Crosby and Presley were beloved as vocalists, their outsized successes cannot be explained primarily in terms of purely “musical” virtues. Both figures also created distinct public identities corresponding to their musical styles that allowed fans to project onto them values and ideals, which in turn became inseparable from reactions to the music itself. Moreover, both figures exploited media-constructed images of themselves: uniquely American manifestations of detached, unshakable charisma.

Bing Crosby

In his early years with the *Rhythm Boys*, Bing’s debt to African-American style helped create a sense of him as hip or cool. Artie Shaw alludes to this in a quote that appears on the back cover of Giddins’s *A*

Pocketful of Dreams: “The first thing you have to understand about Bing Crosby is that he was the first hip white person born in the United States.” When Crosby expanded his media presence to radio and movies, he honed the genial charm and mildly self-effacing manner that perfectly complemented the smooth tones and effortless swing of his vocal performances.

Crosby’s movie roles played a particularly significant role in solidifying his image. In *Going My Way: Bing Crosby and American Culture*, Linda A. Robinson writes: “Significantly, most of Crosby’s screen roles were all the same role: in the 1930s, he was the easy-going crooner, never taking life too seriously, and with *Going My Way*, this on-screen character was enriched with a warm tolerance that enhanced his...unflappable calm in the face

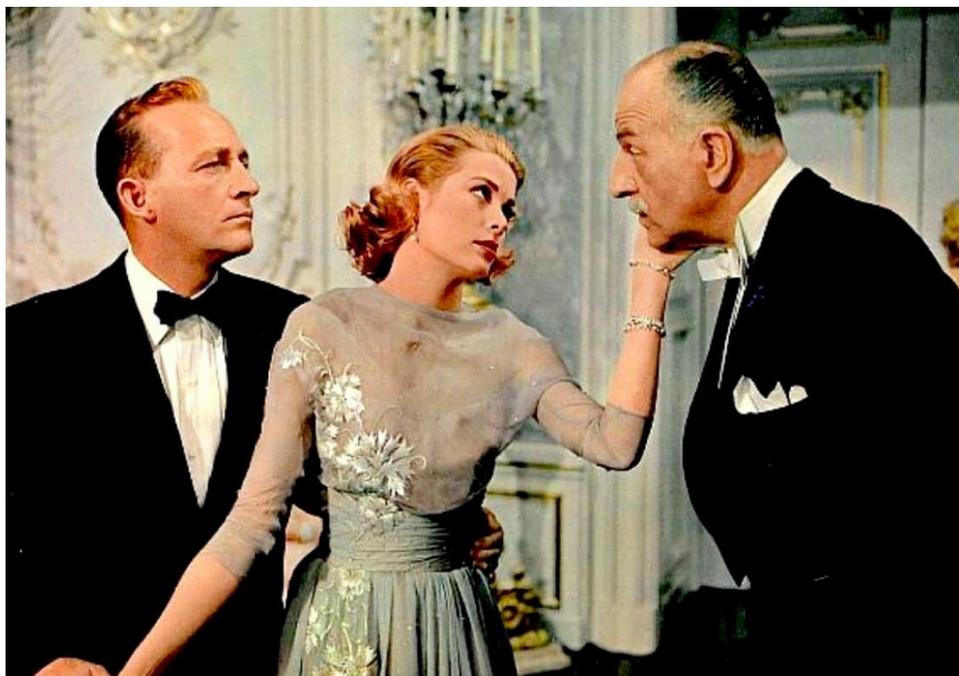
of life’s difficulties... Crosby was also perceived to *be* the character he played or, putting it the other way, his film characters were perceived to *be* ‘Bing Crosby,’ the individual. Indeed, few stars made as great an effort to collapse his film ‘image’ into the public perception of the man himself.”

Adult-themed, implicitly patriotic songs such as the Depression era lament “Brother Can You Spare a Dime?” enhanced listener identification, as did Crosby’s many V-Discs and performances for servicemen in World War II.

In a new introduction to *Call Me Lucky*, Bing’s “as told to” memoir, Giddins adds: “Beyond his mastery of the vocal art and of light comedy, Crosby personified something profoundly and unalterably American. Through fifteen years of Depression and war, he became our voice, manner, and disposition.” Adult-themed, implicitly patriotic songs such as the Depression era lament “Brother Can You Spare a Dime?” enhanced listener identification, as did Crosby’s many V-Discs and performances for servicemen in World War II.

Elvis Presley

From the start, Elvis was “hip” incarnate and the force of his personality matched the rough, instinctual musical aesthetic he molded from the raw materials of black blues. Elvis’s unbridled energy, rhythmic swagger and boyish good looks embodied youth just as teenagers were emerging as a newly liberated,



<http://bit.ly/opJSaK> (attribution is “High Society. By Nice Dawg”)

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The nearly universal appeal that Elvis eventually engendered, however, arose from a perception of him not just as a rebel but also as an all-American boy—one who served in the Army in the late '50s and sang a string of Crosby-esque ballads in the early '60s.

soon-to-be-dominant consumer group. (An adult personality, Bing starred in his Academy Award winning blockbuster *Going My Way* not long before he turned 42—the age at which Elvis, whose youth eventually seemed to fade all the more quickly for its prolonged vitality, died.)

The nearly universal appeal that Elvis eventually engendered, however, arose from a perception of him not just as a rebel but also as an all-American boy—one who served in the Army in the late '50s and sang a string of Crosby-esque ballads in the early '60s. As with Crosby, insouciance always remained a key aspect of Elvis's personality.

As Marcus writes in *Mystery Train*: “You can hear that distance, that refusal to really commit himself, in his best music and his worst; if the throwaway is the source of most of what is pointless about Elvis, it is also at the heart of much of what is exciting and charismatic.”

Commercialization

The successes of Crosby and Presley often seemed more about image than music. This might never have been lamentable,

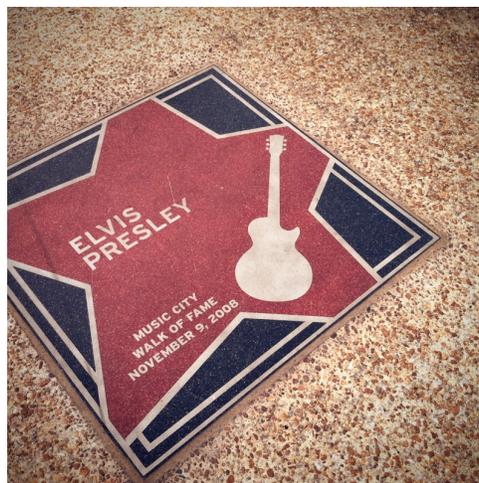
however, were it not for the fact that their music itself also often seemed more about image than music. Under the influence of notoriously savvy, bottom-line driven businessmen, Crosby and Presley both recorded unfathomable quantities of western, Hawaiian, patriotic, holiday, film, and religious records—many of which have been derided by critics as “novelties.” But in each case, the clear aim was to use diversification to broaden the artists' mainstream appeal—and thrust as many recordings on consumers as possible. ...Crosby and Presley were always commercial artists, and the profit motive may have been...as much an inspiration as a diversion. Yet it remains true that both seemed to compromise certain aesthetic values for the sake of commercial gain—and in a way that bore directly on their idolization.

A large part of the commercialization of Crosby's career, of course, was rooted in his acting career, and the transplanting of his unaltered, regular guy persona onto role after role. But similarly motivated by a drive to make Crosby the icon of “everyman” were the genre-hopping novelty cuts he recorded at the direction of Jack Kapp, head of Decca Records, beginning in 1934. As Giddins

writes, “Jack was denigrated by many insiders as Killer Kapp, for killing Bing's early greatness in a relentless exploitation to sell more and more records.” But there also seems to be some truth in Kapp's retort that “if he hadn't diversified his talent, he would remain just a popular singer of popular songs.”

As Kapp did to Crosby, Colonel Tom Parker did to Presley. Ruthlessly driven to brand and market Elvis, his manager is alternatively seen as the greedy capitalist who spoiled Elvis's greatness or a prescient mastermind more responsible for the Elvis phenomenon than the king of rock and roll himself. Parker had a much firmer hold on Presley than any business partner did on Crosby, and it was under the Colonel's management that Elvis appeared in several dozen fluff movies, which, like Crosby's, successfully cashed in on and spread his iconic image (though none earned critical acclaim as had Crosby's best). It was also during this time that Elvis began recording more ballads and delving into genre exercises for his western and Hawaiian films. Whether or not the Colonel Parker legend is largely justified, it has come to embody in the collective consciousness of Elvis appreciators the perceived decline—particularly the diversion from performance of pure rock and roll—that took hold of Presley in the 1960s and continued virtually unabated until his death.

The artistic merits of these decisions aside, they undoubtedly added a new dimension to Elvis's appeal and helped entrench his popular presence. They also seem to have appeared in conjunction



<http://bit.ly/pyOVyF> (attribution is “Music City Walk of Fame, Nashville. By vasta”)

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with a stretching of Elvis's musical and cultural persona that took him far beyond the limited appeal of a rebellious rocker.

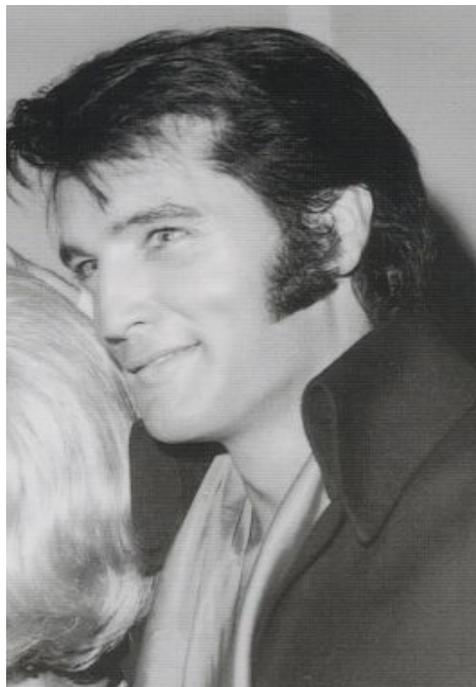
In *Mystery Train*, Greil Marcus traces this expansion of identity to its breaking point in the self-parody of Elvis's latter day performances: "The cultural range of his music has expanded to the point where it includes not only the hits of the day, but also patriotic recitals, pure country gospel, and really dirty blues; reviews of his concerts, by usually credible writers, sometimes resemble Biblical accounts of heavenly miracles... Elvis... transcends any real America by evading it. There is no John Brown in his "Battle Hymn," no romance in his "Dixie," no blood in his slave song. He sings with such a complete absence of musical personality that none of the old songs matter at all, because he has not committed himself to them; it could be anyone singing, or no one. It is in this sense, finally, that an audience is confirmed, that an America comes into being; lacking any real fear or joy, it is a throwaway America where nothing is at stake. The divisions America shares are simply smoothed away."

If taken out of context, Marcus's last few sentences could easily be mistaken for a rock and roll era critique of the unchallenging blandness of say, Bing Crosby.

Through the prism of these two careers, one can identify not only major shifts in style and audience in American popular song, but also the dominant, recurring themes of its conventional historiographies. These interconnected narrative

threads of influence, integration, idolization, and commercialization are touchstones upon which our collective understanding of pop music in the 20th century hinges—the categories by which we trace the musical and historical importance of pop artists. Whether these frameworks will or should persist or are ripe for reexamination is partly a matter of speculation and to a large extent outside the scope of the present study. Examining Bing Crosby and Elvis Presley by the light of such rubrics seems not only to affirm the supremacy of two figures in 20th century popular music, but also to validate the critical standards themselves. Yet one must be wary of circular logic. These two pioneering men helped birth the very historical paradigms that situate and substantiate them.

Adapted from Ben Ewing (<http://site.benewing.net/>), <http://www.popmatters.com/pm/feature/123984-bing-crosby-elvis-presley-and-the-narratives-of-american-popular-song/>, July 22, 2010 (accessed August 31, 2011). □



<http://farm3.static.flickr.com> (attribution is "Elvis in vegas. By Craig's007v")

Did You Know?

The OBB begins every concert with "S'Wonderful" by George Gershwin. Our theme song version was arranged by Frank Comstock, who was the arranger for Les Brown's Band of Renown from 1943 until Brown died in 2001, a whopping 58 years. Comstock did many projects, including arranging music for TV shows including *Happy Days* and *McHale's Navy*, and motion pictures including *Some Like It Hot*. (J.R. Tumpak, *When Swing Was the Thing*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2008.) (The Olney Big Band also has the Ray Conniff arrangement of 'S Wonderful, written when Ray was playing with Artie Shaw.)

Did you know that when band leader Artie Shaw left the music business in 1950, he ran a dairy farm in Pine Plains, NY? After finding out that he owed taxes to the IRS, to the IRS, however, in 1953 he re-formed his popular jazz quintet, the Gramercy Five, to try to make some money.

"My whole world had suddenly collapsed. ...I couldn't figure out where I was or what to do. The only thing that seemed to make any sense at all was to go on back to music again, try to save up some more money, and see what might turn up..." (Artie Shaw, after leaving academia, in his autobiography *The Trouble with Cinderella*. NY: Farrer, Straus, Young, 1952) □

Introducing Bill Klein

Bill Klein, who plays Alto Sax II with our band, first heard about us from Band Manager Dave Schumer. Bill met Dave in September 2010 when Bill joined the Rockville Concert Band. As Bill tells it, “Shortly thereafter, there was an opening in the group and Dave invited me to audition. I did that and apparently did okay, because I was invited back!” Bill and his family moved from Pittsburgh to the Washington, DC area so that he could serve as Director of the Behavioral Research Program at the NIH National Cancer Institute.

Bill Klein started loving the saxophone as a young child watching his harmonica-playing father’s combo rehearse in the living room. He studied alto sax in elementary school, and added the clarinet in high school, where he eventually won the Louis Armstrong Jazz Award.

I’ve always enjoyed playing clarinet, though my first love is the saxophone.

“I took up the clarinet after my saxophone teacher said it would help my embouchure and provide an interesting new challenge. I spent a lot of time practicing classical music on clarinet while continuing my jazz studies on saxophone. I’ve always enjoyed playing clarinet, though my first love is the saxophone.”

“Although I started out as an alto player, playing lead alto in my high school and graduate school jazz bands, over the past decade or so I started playing tenor -- there was more

of a need for jazz tenor players where I was living at the time.”

Since then, Bill has played alto and tenor sax in a wide variety of jazz ensembles, Big Bands, jazz combos, and concert bands. A highlight was playing lead alto sax in the Princeton University Jazz Ensemble during four years of graduate school. The band toured North America and played by invitation at the Montreal Jazz Festival, Villanova Jazz Festival, Notre Dame Jazz Festival, International Association of Jazz Educators annual meeting, and many other venues; performed with Clark Terry, Benny Carter, Stanley Jordan, and Terence Blanchard; and recorded two albums. (This is even more remarkable given that he did this while completing his Ph.D. in Social Psychology.)

After graduate school, Bill accepted a faculty position at Colby College in Maine, teaching courses on statistics and other topics, and played regularly with the Colby College Jazz Ensemble, Maine Jazz Educators Ensemble (performing live on Maine Public Radio), Al Corey Big Band, Fire and Nice Big Band, and Pandemusicum.

More recently, Bill played lead tenor for the group Big Band Memories and alto for the Washington Swing Orchestra – two leading swing bands in Pittsburgh – where he was on the faculty at the University of Pittsburgh teaching classes to undergraduates and graduate students (on fascinating topics such as risk perception). Bill has also performed in the pit orchestras for *My Fair Lady*, *City of Angels*, and *Cabaret*.

Why does Bill like playing with the Olney Big Band? “I’ve always

loved playing with bands that really work and rehearse, as we do. It makes the experience (and ultimately the performance) much more professional and satisfying.

“And I sit between two outstanding musicians who play lead alto (Murray Green) and lead tenor (John Gottdiener) who are also wonderful people. I’ve enjoyed having the chance to play lead and some solos on a few charts, as well as hearing the other talented soloists throughout the band.

“As I look around the band and see people at all stages of life (including Bob Redding, up until recently), I reflect on how fortunate I will be if I can play in a big band during my entire life. Nothing has brought me more satisfaction outside of my family life and work life, and I hope that it will continue forever.” □



Photos by Rip Rice

Key Personnel

Band Leader: Dr. Rip G. Rice
Music Director: Dr. Bob Tennyson
Associate Director: Brian A. Damron
Business Manager: David B. Schumer
Sound Engineer: Paul Freirich
Band Historian/Archivist: Vacant

Board of Directors

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Brad Bawek, Vice President of Design and Publishing
Barry Fell, Friends of OBB
Paul Freirich
Tom Harwick, Vice President (Founder)
Bruce Morris
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Richard Sonnenschein

In The Mood

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Friends of the OBB

The Friends of the Olney Big Band are people who love to listen and dance to big band music and are dedicated to keeping alive the spirit of American Big Band swing, dance, and jazz music. Friends support the efforts of the Band by encouraging volunteerism and by donating and soliciting and receiving gifts, bequests and endowments for the Band.

Benefactors:

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Sandy Spring Bank, Robert E. Traut, Dolores and Gary Wilkinson
Charles and Elsbeth Woodward

Honorary Friends:

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

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.

OBB Events Schedule

Saturday, October 15- Swing Dinner Dance, at The Lutheran Church of St Andrew. 15300 New Hampshire Avenue, Silver Spring, MD. Questions? Call 301-384-4394 or email my.standrew@verizon.net. All welcome - invite friends!
7:00 - 10:00PM

Thursday, December 1 - Creekside Condo Party, Crystal Ballroom, Clubhouse #1, Leisure World. Closed to the public.

Sunday, December 4 - The Potomac River Jazz Club Annual Holiday Big Band Bash. Knights of Columbus of Silver Spring, 9707 Rosensteel Avenue, Silver Spring, MD. Tickets on sale now at the Potomac River Jazz Club website: <http://www.prjc.org/prjcevents.html>. Admission is \$15 for PRJC members, \$20 for general admission and \$5 for youths and students under 22 with student ID. Cash Bar will be available and snacks can be purchased. 2:00-5:00PM

Friday, December 23 - Festival Of Lights Concert, Mormon Temple, 9900 Stonybrook Drive, Kensington, MD. Part of the Temple's 34th annual Festival of Lights performances on stage at the Washington, D.C. Temple Visitor's Center. The first concert will be at 7 PM and the second at 8 PM. FREE and open to the public.

OBB Rehearsals

Mondays 8-10 pm

All full band rehearsals

For Band Information Contact

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RGRice4ozone@aol.com

For Booking Information Check our Website or Contact

David B. Schumer - Manager:
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theolneybigband@gmail.com

www.olneybigband.org