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November, 2017

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The ATJS Jazz Messenger is circulated mostly by e-mail, and is published as we have an important message or gather enough material to assemble a new issue. We are into the 2017-18 season, as good an occasion as any to crank out a new issue.

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## President's Message



We have gotten the 2017-18 ATJS season off to a good start. Old reliable Silver Creek Jazz Band gave a successful curtain-raiser on September 10, bolstered by a good crowd of 156 jazz fans. Better still was the return after several years of the Jim Cullum Jazz Band on October 8. Old Cullum hand Allan Vaché journeyed to Austin to play clarinet. The band gave a sensational show and drew 244 fans, the Society's best showing at Cap City Comedy Club in ten years. We saw many new faces at the concert, and were able to demonstrate the best the Society has to offer.

This is very encouraging, because we want everyone with an interest in traditional jazz to come to Cap City Comedy Club, have a good time, and help keep the wonderful music that is traditional jazz alive and well in the Greater Austin Area. We are working through our twelfth season at Cap City Comedy Club.

Having Jim Cullum play in October is a little like NASCAR scheduling the Daytona 500, its biggest race, at the very start of its season. However, the remainder of the schedule promises to offer much good jazz. Thrift Set Orchestra has performed splendidly for the Society in the past. We welcome back La Grosse Tete, the New Orleans Jazz Band of Austin, Mission City Hot Rhythm Cats, and the sensation of last season, Ron Fink and the Rowdies.

Ron Fink and the Rowdies are from the Dallas area. They are spearheaded by three mainstays of recent All-Star concerts: Bob Krenkel on reeds, Brian Standridge on trumpet and Gene LeBeaux on trombone. The 2017 concert was a major head-turner, and I urge anyone who was unable to attend to catch this year's performance. The slate will be completed by the ATJS All-Stars on June 10.

I am sad to note the November 1 passing of one of our original Society members, John Huntsberger. John was a fine banjoist who played gigs in the Austin area for many years. I played some interesting events with him under the name of Shucks and the Oyster Po' Boys. John made some significant contributions to the Society, and was the founder and leading player in the Austin Banjo Club. A memorial celebration will be held at Quality Seafood, 5621 Airport Boulevard on Sunday, January 14. It should be a lively occasion with some good traditional jazz. I hope anyone wishing to honor John's memory will attend.

John was a great lover of the San Francisco style of jazz. He was my inspiration for my article on listening to San Francisco jazz which I published in these pages in 2015. By an odd coincidence an article written by the first ATJS President, Gene Wisdom recently surfaced, in which he describes meeting Lu Watters, the founder of the style. It seems fitting to offer both articles in this edition.

Dave Stoddard



**Guitarist J. D. Pendley and Banjoist John Huntsberger  
at the 2009 ATJS Jam Session**

### **Thanks to our Poster Hosts!**

Every month, the Society puts up posters for its concerts. Here are our current poster venues.

**Cedar Park Public Library**

**Music and Arts  
2541 South I-35  
Round Rock, TX**

**Strait Music Company North  
13945 Research Boulevard  
Austin, TX**

**Capital Music Center  
6101 North Burnet Road  
Austin, TX**

**Leander Public Library**

**Premier Music Academy  
1400 E. Old Settlers Blvd.  
Round Rock, TX**

**Strait Music Company South  
2428 W. Ben White Blvd.  
Austin, TX**

**Austin's Musical Exchange  
6015 Burnet Road  
Austin, TX**

**Round Rock Public Library**

**Half-Price Books  
various Austin-area locations**

**Sam Bass Music  
801 Brandi Lane  
Round Rock, TX**

**Westbank String Shop  
6301 Manchaca Road  
Austin, TX**

**Federation of Texas Women's Clubs, 24<sup>th</sup> and San Gabriel Streets, Austin, TX**

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### **Current ATJS Board of Directors**

**Dave Stoddard  
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## Enjoying San Francisco-Style Jazz

One of the interesting aspects of jazz is its fragmentation. There is a huge divide between traditional and modern jazz forms, but there are also large differences among various styles in the traditional jazz idiom. What's more, there are large differences between traditional jazz as played today and jazz as it was played in the Teens and Twenties. In many instances, the tunes are the same but the style in which they are presented is not.

One way of getting familiar with the traditional jazz songbook is to listen to performances of recordings in one of the two major styles prevalent today—Chicago and San Francisco. These names reflect where the styles started, and not necessarily where they are played today. In this issue we will talk mostly about the San Francisco Style.

In 1939 a San Francisco trumpeter named Lu Watters decided that jazz, particularly swing, was getting away from its roots. He put together a traditional jazz band which sought to go back to the early days of jazz. The result was the Yerba Buena Jazz Band. It played the old tunes, but in a style which was noticeably different from early jazz performances. For a start, the piano-banjo-rhythm section was far heavier and more driving than those of early jazz bands. The front line played in a collective improvisation format much more familiar to today's Dixieland fans than anything which was played in the Teens or Twenties.

The apparent model for Yerba Buena was King Oliver and his Creole Jazz Band. Yerba Buena and the Creole Jazz Band had the same two-cornet front line format, but the Creole used a string bass in the rhythm section. The Creole Jazz Band's recordings are very ensemble-centered and sound a bit lumpy by today's standards, but at least part of this can be attributed to the acoustical recording methods of the day.

The Yerba Buena Jazz Band came along at a time when the art of improvised soloing had come a long way from 1923, when the jazz world was just beginning to hear the solos improvised by notable innovators such as Louis Armstrong and Miff Mole. In this respect the Yerba Buena harkened back to 1923. Their recordings are heavy, driving and very ensemble-based.

The Yerba Buena was an artistic and commercial success. It lasted until about 1957, when Watters broke up the band and retired from playing in favor of a career in geology. In the early 1950s, successful San Francisco jazz bands were led by two Yerba Buena sidemen, cornetist Bob Scobey and trombonist Turk Murphy. Scobey formed the Frisco Jazz Band in 1949 and led it until the early 1960s. He took with him the popular banjoist/singer Clancy Hayes. The Frisco Jazz Band name passed on to trumpeter and Murphy alumnus Bob Schulz.

Murphy's playing style has been widely imitated, especially by fellow San Francisco-style trombonists. He blasted much if not all of the time, producing a trombone style that lacked subtlety but was loud and driving. Unlike many of Murphy's imitators, the blasting was built on solid trombone technique. What's more, Murphy was a fine jazz composer. He wrote Trombone Rag in part to separate himself from the imitators, most of whom could not play the trombone solo passages. Murphy had a long career, keeping his band together until his death in 1987.

One of the most successful of all San Francisco-style bands started as a college Dixieland band at Purdue University in 1947. The group played college functions as the Peerless Jazz Band and paying gigs as the Salty Dogs. After the original generation of musicians graduated from Purdue, they settled in Chicago and continued playing as the Salty Dogs. Their successors at Purdue also played under that name, causing confusion until the Chicago group took its current name, the Original Salty Dogs.

The Salty Dogs are best known for their recordings from the 1970s, when they featured a front line of Lew Green on cornet, Kim Cusack on clarinet and Murphy stylist Tom Bartlett on trombone. They have now been together in some form for quite a few years, and are well worth a listen.

An interesting San Francisco-style band has been together in Seattle for many years. This is the Uptown Lowdown Jazz Band, a hard-driving outfit. Like many traditional jazz bands in this day and age, Uptown Lowdown plays with various numbers of players in its lineup. The largest of these is the festival band. The band's trademark is having up to three performers who can play bass saxophone. At times all three bass saxes are going at the same time, backed back a strong tuba in the rhythm section. The results are quite interesting.

The festival circuit has also found room for the newest San Francisco-style band of note, John Gill's Yerba Buena Stompers. John Gill, a banjo player who lived in Austin for a few years, has assembled a band of heavy hitters including Tom Bartlett on trombone, Duke Heitger and Murphy alumnus Leon Oakley on cornet and trumpet, New Orleans notable Orange Kellin on clarinet and Clint Baker on tuba.

These bands give a good definition of the San Francisco style of jazz, but there are other San Francisco bands of note. Fans of the style would do well to develop a library of recordings. Many of the early LPs are available on CD, and offer the bands at their best in recording studios. The recordings on YouTube vary from older studio recordings to videos shot at jazz festivals. These will certainly do to get you started. Happy Listening!

The following recordings are all on YouTube. To call them up, go to YouTube, enter the artist and the name of the tune, and you should be on your way.

Lu Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band – Irish Black Bottom  
 Lu Watters Yerba Buena Jazz Band – At a Georgia Camp Meeting  
 Lu Watters and the Yerba Buena Jazz Band – Minstrels of Annie Street (written by Turk Murphy)

Turk Murphy – New Orleans Stomp  
 Turk Murphy – The Curse of an Aching Heart  
 Turk Murphy's Jazz Band – Trombone Rag (written by Turk Murphy)  
 Turk Murphy's Jazz Band – After You've Gone

Original Salty Dogs Jazz Band – New Orleans Shuffle  
 Original Salty Dogs Jazz Band – Grandpa's Spells  
 Original Salty Dogs Jazz Band – Georgia Swing  
 Original Salty Dogs Jazz Band – That's a Plenty

Uptown Lowdown Jazz Band – Canal Street Blues  
 Uptown Lowdown Jazz Band – Since My Best Gal Turned Me Down  
 Uptown Lowdown Jazz Band – 1919 March  
 Uptown Lowdown jazz Band – Original Dixieland One-Step

Bob Schulz and the Frisco Jazz Band – Dallas Blues  
 Bob Schulz and the Frisco Jazz Band – Oriental Strut  
 Bob Schulz and the Frisco Jazz Band – Kansas City Stomps

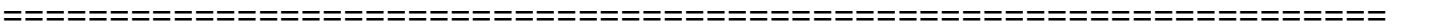
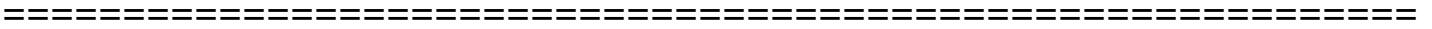
Yerba Buena Stompers – Over the Waves  
 Yerba Buena Stompers – Swing That Music  
 Yerba Buena Stompers – Yerba Buena Stomp



## Remaining 2017-18 Schedule

November 12	Thrift Set Orchestra
January 7	Annual ATJS Jam Session
February 11	La Grosse Tete
March 11	New Orleans Jazz Band of Austin
April 8	Mission City Hot Rhythm Cats
May 6	Ron Fink and the Rowdies
June 10	ATJS All Stars

All concerts will be from 2 to 5 p.m. at Cap City Comedy Club, 8120 Research Boulevard, Austin, TX (US 183 at Anderson Square). The Jam Session will run from 1:30 to 5.



## SOME OF THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA ADVENTURES OF ONE TRAVELING JAZZ FAN

by Gene Wisdom  
[March 27, 1979]

For almost twenty years I have made one or two business trips each year to Portland, Oregon. Portland is one of the nicest cities I know, and the combination of good friends and interesting work there has made the business portion of these trips a real pleasure. And then, in addition, there have been the opportunities to stop over, going or coming (or both) in San Francisco, and more recently, in Sacramento. Along with all the other well-publicized charms of Northern California, right now there is more high quality traditional Jazz being played there than anywhere else in the country.

The leading figure in Traditional Jazz on the West Coast, almost continuously for the last forty years, has been Turk Murphy. He was a featured member of Lu Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band, which in 1940 began the revival of New Orleans Jazz which is still continuing. Wherever the music is played, Turk is universally recognized and praised for his talents and hard work as researcher, composer, arranger, leader, trombonist, vocalist and night club proprietor. Earthquake McGoon's, his home base for sixteen years, was demolished last year to make way for high-rise "progress" but there is now a new McGoon's on The Embarcadero. In addition to filling all those roles, Turk is an affable, kindly man with thousands of well-deserved friends. He has been extremely generous in providing help and encouragement to hundreds of musicians, professional and amateur. Listen to any practitioners of the West Coast style and you are hearing the Turk Murphy influence.

Now what about Lu Watters? Because he hasn't remained active in music, many jazz fans can appreciate Big Bear Stomp or Emperor Norton's Hunch, introduced as "Lu Watters tunes" without having a clear idea just how important his contributions really were. Watters was the one with the original idea, the one who brought Murphy, Helm, Scobey, Rose, Hayes and the others together to form the Yerba Buena Jazz Band to preserve and extend the music of Oliver and Morton. Watters was the gifted composer who did indeed extend the music. It was his impeccable sense of time which counted off just the right tempos and it was his strong cornet solos which provided the ensemble lead and some of the best cornet solos recorded. Listen to those same current practitioners of the West Coast style and you are also hearing the Lu Watters influence.

Last January 20, about 24 hours after our last jazz night here, I had made my way to the Bull Valley Inn, a delightful antique bar and grill and weekend jazz joint in Port Costa, northeast of San Francisco. There I got acquainted with Mike and Agnes Gerba, who it turned out, heaped kindness after kindness on me throughout that and the following weekend. Mike is a retired telephone company official and is very active in the New Orleans Jazz Club of Northern California (most recent job, musical director). In discussing music and musicians the name of Lu Watters came up, as it frequently does in that part of the world, and Mike remarked that Lu Watters was a friend of his. When I asked about Watters' current interests, Mike had a quick answer: "Rocks." Since retiring from music in the 1950's Watters has pursued a study of geology and now operates a small business in polished stones (necklaces and the like) and importing such things as shells from the Philippines (more about that later).

The next afternoon at the NOJCNC monthly meeting in San Leandro, the first people I saw were the Gerbas. They not only invited me to join their party for the afternoon (program: the fine trad Magnolia Jazz Band plus super-pianist Ralph Sutton plus talented jammers) and introduced me to one and all as the official representative of ATJC but they also included me in a gathering of musicians and jazz fans at their home afterwards. I never did get to hear Agnes Gerba play the piano but I can highly recommend her cooking. In the course of that evening, when Lu Watters' name again came up and I expressed an interest in his rock business, I was shown samples of his work (Mike Gerba: "Scratch a musician and no telling what other talent you'll uncover"). Then Mike asked me the key question: "Would you like to go up and visit Lu?" That one didn't take any time at all to answer, and so we did.

The next Saturday (I did remember to work in Portland during the intervening week) Mike and I drove up to Sonoma County to visit Lu. I don't know exactly what activity we interrupted but, if he resented the interruption, he never gave the slightest sign. He invited us into his home, which he called his "warehouse" and which does show clearly its utility in serving him as "the smallest importer in the business." For the better part of the afternoon, he was the gracious host, pouring us Sonoma County wine and participating in, but not dominating, a relaxed conversation, about music, about rocks, about Australia, about lots of other things. It was the kind of visit to enjoy with an interesting, interested person, even if he had never played a note of music. Here is a man whose place in jazz music is secure. He did things that no one had ever done before which can't be duplicated exactly by anyone else. He did those things and then he moved on to other interests without turning his back on anyone or anything. He is still interested in music and he stays in touch with his old friends who are still in music. There's not a trace of bitterness, of regret about other musical accomplishments he might still be making (he's only 67 now) or of resentment or envy of any other musicians' accomplishments. I found him to be someone worth knowing and learning from.

I don't think Lu would ever want to have a big business but he might welcome some slight expansion. My knowledge of stones and shells is near zero but I do have a sample shell necklace from the Philippines which he gave me, and I intend to mention his business at some of the shops in this area and that might lead to something (other ideas, anyone?). I would regard it as a job well done if any ATJS member were to broaden the scope of the Lu Watters import business.

Well, these were just the highlights of the trip. There were other musicians and other music which alone would have made the trip interesting. But the incidents related here were special and they moved me to try to communicate some of my thoughts and feelings. I guess if you're a jazz nut you might as well go all out. When the opportunity presents itself go back to the sources and get acquainted with some of the remarkable people who have been the creators and preservers of this music, which is, itself, rather remarkable.

**HELP WANTED:** Your Austin Traditional Jazz Society is in need of volunteers. Help in staging concerts is always welcome (front desk folks), and we could use some people to help with marketing, particularly to put up posters.

# AUSTIN TRADITIONAL JAZZ SOCIETY

presents the

## 16<sup>th</sup> Annual ATJS Jam Session



**Come for a fun filled afternoon of listening to great local jazz musicians and perhaps some swing dancing to the beat of hot traditional jazz.**

**When and Where:** Sunday, January 7, 2018 from 1:30 to 5 p.m. Doors open 1:00 p.m. at Cap City Comedy Club, 8120 Research Blvd. (US 183) at Anderson Square in North Austin. **For more information about the Jam Session see [www.atjs.org](http://www.atjs.org).**

**Admission: FREE!!!** Bring some friends.

**If you would like to play:** Send an e-mail to [info@atjs.org](mailto:info@atjs.org), or register at the front desk on the day of the Jam Session.

**Features:** Good food (kitchen open 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.), full bar to 5:00 p.m., (suggested minimum: 2 items, food and/or drink). Two dance floors, plenty of free parking. **ATJS concerts are family-friendly.**