

## Seeing in New Year With the Four Freshmen

by Ann Smith, Texas Coordinator

The New Year's Eve concert by the Four Freshmen was held in Spring, Texas, (near Houston) in the beautiful auditorium known as "The Centrum." An enthusiastic audience of 400 attended the celebration. There was much spontaneous applause as fans recognized some of their favorite Freshmen hits. This was also true when one of them did something particularly cute or said something funny. They especially responded enthusiastically when Vince did his whistling - also when he did his scat routine while strumming the bass. One of my favorite remarks was when Brian introduced a song and said "It goes something like this. In fact, it goes almost exactly like this."

The program consisted of 28 Freshmen favorites (that's Four Freshmen, not 28 Freshmen). Their encore was one I'd never heard them do before - what else - "Auld Lang Syne."

After the concert the guys came out in their tuxes to autograph CD's for their fans. It looked like a rather formal occasion, with the fans dressed up for New Year's Eve and the Freshmen all decked out. Following the concert and autograph party we reconvened at a local pub for an afterglow and to see in the new year. There were about a dozen of us in all, including three of the Freshmen. Curtis had to drive back to San Antonio for festivities there and was unable to join us. It was such a pleasure getting to wine and dine the remaining three Freshmen - Bob, Brian and Vince. Never in my wildest dreams as a star struck kid did I ever imagine that I'd get to celebrate in the new year with the Four Freshmen. It was such a privilege and a joy. To top things off, the waiter opened the blinds by our table and we were able to look out at a fireworks display as we ate and celebrated the new year.



Autograph party in Texas after the New Year's Eve concert

## The Jazz Cruise

by Ann Smith, Texas Coord.

What else can I say? It was heavenly - especially hearing 8 hours of live Four Freshmen music in one week. The Freshmen did four 2-hour concerts in total. I've never been on any kind of cruise before. Believe me, if I should go again, I would make sure it was a jazz cruise and, of course, it would have to include the fabulous Freshmen.

Truthfully, I was only interested in hearing the Four Freshmen (not that I'm partial or anything). I wasn't interested in any of the other performers - until I heard them! They were wonderful. Some of the musicians included Freddie Cole, younger brother of Nat King Cole. He looks a lot like Nat, sounds like him, and plays the piano like Nat. Another extremely talented performer was 19-year-old Taylor Eigsti (sounds like ice tea) and his trio. Taylor is a phenomenal piano player who started playing when he was six and has been performing for 11 years, since he was 8 years old. The other two members of his trio are sons of the legendary Dave Brubeck: Chris (bass and trombone) and Dan Brubeck (drums). Another real treat was the Jeff Hamilton Trio. Jeff is a fabulous drummer and puts on a really entertaining show. His pianist is also a former child prodigy, Tamir Hendelman, who started piano when he was eight and began performing when he was 12 years old. He's been performing for 20 years and is only 32 now. The bass player of the group is Christof Luty - a real joy to watch and hear as he performs.

Three of my favorite jazz vocalists were: Barbara Morrison (with Duffy Jackson's big band), Marlena Shaw (great fun and tremendously entertaining), and Denise Thimes (a gorgeous rich voice). My apologies go to all the other wonderful performers that I never got to hear. I know they were great and that I would be so sorry I missed them if I'd had a chance to catch their act. The truth is, I enjoyed the ones outlined above so much that I made it a point to catch every performance they did. There just weren't enough hours in the day (and night) to hear all the other, sadly.

The cruise was also a joyous reunion for me with some of my favorite FFS members, in particular, Carmen Merritt and her daughter Dee Dee Linderer. We've been roommates at several of the conventions and have had so much fun together. They weren't able to come to this year's convention so, naturally, I was forced to go on the cruise so I could visit with them.

I eagerly await the upcoming FFS convention this year in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I look forward to seeing all of you there in July.



Mom & daughter team Carmen Merritt and Dee Dee Linderer having fun on the cruise - making up for lost time after being separated for over 40 years.