

Brian Eichenberger Lead Voice



## JOHN KENNETH ALBERS IN MEMORIAM

by Bill Comstock (FF Hall of Fame)

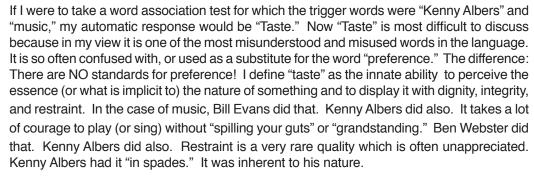


Curtis Calderon 2nd Voice

He was born JOHN KENNETH ALBERS, but to me he was always Kenny or "Old Jawn." We were close friends and associates for the better part of sixty years. I believe the story should begin with the way in which we met.

I had come down to Philadelphia with a group fronted by a fellow who had been playing trumpet with the Gene Krupa band. After several weeks of working in Philly, he decided to go back with Krupa, which left us looking for a trumpet player. One of the group remembered "this guy, who looks like Van Johnson, from some little town over in Jersey." How does he play? was the next question. "I only heard him once but, as I remember, he sounded real good."

So we called a rehearsal and into our lives ambled this big blond fellow who did, indeed, somewhat resemble Van Johnson. And could he ever play! Improvisationally, much better than the person he replaced. And could he ever sing! And he had the ability to "hear" harmonically, which is the rarest gift of all. He fit in perfecty. He attracted attention and accolades everywhere that we appeared. And he could write (arrangements) very well. At this point I asked him if he would like to go on the "road" for about four weeks. His reply was "Man! four years!" And so began a long personal and professional association which was to have a profound impact on my life.



The sounds that Kenny could make with his horns were truly something to behold. I've never heard anyone with quite the warmth and depth that he displayed. His solos were imbued with the kind of "quiet fire" which burns with great intensity but without much noise. They were always beautifully melodic while embracing every appropriate chord progression. But there was still another side to the Kenny Albers coin.

His mastery of the mellophone (which very few people were able to play "in tune") provided the kind of raucous excitement which was so very important to Ross Barbour's show-stopping pieces like "It's Only a Paper Moon" and "Them There Eyes." And when he and



Vince Johnson Baritone Voice



Bob Ferreira Bass Voice

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