

## DID YOU KNOW?

# ANOTHER FT. WAYNE, INDIANA CONNECTION

by Marlene Lobsiger and Jean Mendenhall

Neil Lantz was born and raised in Fort Wayne, Indiana. He graduated from North Side High School, class of 1956.

Neil played clarinet and sax in the high school dance bands and played his way thru Indiana University by forming his own band where he played string bass. Today, Neil is still playing his sax in several bands in the Indianapolis area.

Neil met Dave Blackwell, 2013 Co-Chairman of the Ft. Wayne convention in 2008 at the Indianapolis convention. They soon discovered that they both had graduated from North Side and Dave had also played clarinet and sax in dance bands at North Side. Dave and Neil both graduated from Indiana University. Dave from IU school of music where he was a member of the Marching 100. After Dave graduated, he went on to do his student teaching at Lane Middle School where Neil was assistant principal..... Surprise!

Neil has supported the North Side Alumni

Association over a span of 50 years and has maintained many friendships with classmates from graduating class including FFS 2013 convention committee members, Jean, Alice, Mary, Gretchen, Pat, Mike and Stan. the rest of the story.....Ed King, founder and artistic director of The New Millennium Jazz Orchestra who will perform at the convention on Friday night, has been teaching music at North

Side High School for 40 years and serves on the NSHS alumni board.

We promise this will not be a North Side Reunion. Just a lot of folks who have been friends for 50 years and are working hard to make this a great Four Freshmen Society Convention in Fort Wayne.



## Big Band on campus... and off (continued from page 2)

requires a band shout and a piano player who, well, makes a listener ignore the absence of Basie. The UWJO shouted in fine fashion and pianist Michael Wedoff covered the piano open very nicely.

It is a Basie trademark to open with 12 bars of Basie piano before the band comes roaring in. The Count had a unique ability to make each individual note exactly right for those 12 bars. Wedoff isn't Basie and it didn't matter. He got it right.

The UWJO did a very nice take on Thad Jones' *To You*. My ears always want a bit more "oomph" from the brass but that's not how Jones wrote the arrangement. The beautiful song comes from a wonderful, if somewhat ignored, album entitled *The Count Meets the Duke*. And yes, it is the combined Basie and Ellington bands from 1961.

The UWJO's trumpet section includes two freshmen and two sophomores, which Professor Wallmann pointed out after *To You*. It will be fun to listen to these guys develop their sound during the next couple of years.

Trombonist Chris Van Hof of Madison and UW-Platteville led a big band arrangement of Bill Evans' *Funkallero*. The song is from a 1971 Grammy-winning Evans-Eddie Gomez-Marty Morrell trio album and, like many Evans compositions, sounds different with full instrumentation. It's an interesting idea and Van Hoff's presence as arranger and soloist was welcome.

*One Finger Snap* is another song not often associated with a big band that the UWJO tackled. Herbie Hancock originally did it with a quartet and the UWJO used a Bob Mintzer arrangement. Herbie and Mintzer music is not for the faint-of-heart musician. Kudos to Professor Wallmann for doing it and to the band for pulling it off.

Maria Schneider's *Hang Gliding* closed the show. The UWJO kept stepping up to challenges and the complex *Hang Gliding* was no exception. The challenge was mostly met as the band concluded with a song and arrangement that very much celebrate the composer's joy. The instrumental imagery was very evident.

Professor Wallmann saluted senior Colleen Woyach, the only graduate in this year's band. A baritone sax player, it has been fun to watch the development of her jazz chops. Meanwhile, I'm looking forward to next year's edition of this really fine young band!

## Kenton Kronics

Three consecutive charts from the Kenton book provided a quick fix for Stan fans at the most recent Madison Jazz Orchestra gig at the Brink Lounge. Three different arrangers did *All the Things You Are*, *A Little Minor Booze* and *Stella by Starlight*. *All the Things You Are* is credited to Kenton, himself, MJO's Brian Whitty confirms. Kenton may have "borrowed" a Dennis Farnon chart originally written for Charlie Barnet's band in 1950. *A Little Minor Booze* is composed and arranged by Willie Maiden from 1969. That cooker was Maiden's first for the Kenton band.

I sometimes wonder how many versions of *Stella by Starlight* I own. Two of my favorites were done by Kenton arrangers, Bill Holman and Pete Rugolo. They are utterly different, of course. Holman's chart was for Charlie Mariano's alto sax lead in 1955. Rugolo did a great arrangement for ten trombones on the *Voices and Brass* album by the Four Freshmen in 1960. It was one of the last Don Barbour albums and one of the best by FF Group #3. Rugolo did the trombone choir charts for the album, as he had done for the best-selling *Four Freshmen & Five Trombones* in 1955.

Kenton and Basie devotees - and I am both - are really fortunate to have a top-notch local band that leans heavily on those books. Add the Madison Mellophonium Jazz Orchestra with their devotion to that early '60s aspect of Kenton history and we enjoy an overflowing musical cup.