

# JAZZ IN JACOBY WITH THE FRESHMEN at ROSEBURG, OREGON

by Gil Peterson

An audience of approximately five hundred Freshmen fans, old and young, gathered at Jacoby Auditorium on the campus of Umpqua Community College, here in Roseburg, on Thursday, February 13, 2003. The Freshmen were nothing less than sensational. The audience was totally overwhelmed by the magical harmonies of the Fabulous Four. Frankly, I have never heard the group sound more in sync with each other both instrumentally and vocally.

There were over twenty-five FFS members present. They came from Washington, Oregon, Arizona, Nevada and California. It was wonderful seeing a number of friends from last summer who returned here for this concert. John DuPriest, a super fan from California, brought a very special trumpet, once owned by Don Jacoby, with him to the concert for Curtis to play. Curtis played it magnificently the entire evening. (See the article by John DuPriest.)

I met the boys at the Eugene Airport on Wednesday the 12th and we arrived here in Roseburg just in time to get checked in at the Windmill Inn and then off to a welcoming reception at the home of Francis and Pat Engle. Their home is gorgeous and overlooks the entire Garden Valley area. Around twenty-five friends joined us there and we all enjoyed a number of adult beverages and delicious foods. Bob proved himself to be the champion of the pool table and won all the money. At the end of the reception the Freshmen sang "Their Hearts Were Full Of Spring." My friend, Gary Beck, a terrific jazz guitar player, told me later that having heard the boys sing that particular song that evening would be a memory that he would cherish the rest of his life. I think that pretty well sums it up for all of us who were there.

Approximately 250 middle school, high school and community college modern jazz vocal harmony singers and musicians attended the Jazz in Jacoby workshop on Thursday, the 13th. The Freshmen shared their knowledge and experience with the group for a couple of hours in the afternoon. They did a wonderful job and the kids loved them.

The sound system at Jacoby had only recently been installed and the sound check became a bit of a nightmare. The doors were to be opened for the evening concert at 6:15 PM and fortunately we were able to solve the problem just as the first few people were entering the auditorium.

The Umpqua Singers, under the direction of Dr. Jason Heald, opened the evening concert. It is an impressive group of young men and women who performed flawlessly. It is so encouraging to see young people involved in groups like this. The Freshmen took the stage and closed out the evening with a fabulous repertoire of old and new material delivered magnificently with that extraordinary warmth and freshness that is so individually unique in the magical musical world of The Four Freshmen.

After the concert, all of the FFS members and a few very special friends, gathered at Elmers, next to the Windmill, for a few drinks and conversation. The evening was concluded with the boys singing "The Star Spangled Banner." No one has ever heard our National Anthem sung like this. It is, without question, the most unique rendition I have ever heard. Our hearts were touched as we all stood with pride and awe as the Freshmen brilliantly honored our flag and country. It was truly a beautiful and fitting conclusion to another sensational evening with The Four Freshmen that we will remember always.

## Jacoby Plays Jacoby (With a little help from Curtis)

by John DuPriest, Penryn CA

There were two Jacobys on the Umpqua Community College campus in Roseburg for the Four Freshmen concert - Jacoby Auditorium (named for the first president of the college), and the trumpet of Don Jacoby, a child prodigy and one of the very best of the big band trumpet players in the 30's, 40's and 50's.

The trumpet was made for Don, "Jake" as he was known to his many friends and acquaintances, probably around 1938-39 by LeBlanc of Paris, France. I acquired the horn in 1997 from Jake's best friend, Casey Sliwa. Casey was playing trombones with the Great Lakes Naval Training Station band in the Chicago area in 1941 and Jake was playing the same area with Les Brown. Casey talked Jake into leaving Les Brown and joining the Navy. Jake became the leader of the Great Lakes band. Among the memorabilia that came with the LeBlanc is a photo of Jake in front of the band wailing away on the LeBlanc.

Jake and Casey split up in 1944, Jake joining the Artie Shaw band in London and Casey ending up in a band on a ship that took troops to the war zones and brought wounded back. One day they got in contact via radio telephone and in the middle of the call Jake said: "Hey I gotta run, there's an air raid and I have to get in the shelter." Years later Casey confirmed that Jake had the LeBlanc with him in the shelter that day. Jake had the horn reconditioned some time after the war and it is in virtually mint condition today. One unique feature is the signature "Don Jacoby" in silver wire on the side of the bell.

After the war, Jake played 1st trumpet on the Chicago Theater of the Air and for many years was a featured soloist with the studio band on the Don McNeil's Breakfast Club. In the early 60's he was hired as the trumpet clinician for the Conn Music company. Since Conn preferred Jake play a Conn, he gave the LeBlanc to Casey. Jake passed away in 1992.

When I first met Curtis at the FFS afterglow in Roseburg last year I told him about the LeBlanc and his eyes lit up. I sent him some info and photos and we have been scheming by e-mail ever since to get the LeBlanc and Curtis together. It was destiny that the two should meet. Dr. Keith Winking, a trumpet player and head of the music department at Southwest Texas State was one of Curtis' teachers. Dr. Winking's teacher was - you guessed it - Don Jacoby.

The technical perfection of Curtis Calderon was in full swing at Umpqua and to hear two hours of that sound out of the LeBlanc for the first time in over 40 years was pure joy. You've just got to believe Jake was hearing and grinning.

