

They Were New To Me Then

Loren Knutsen (WA)

I never thought anybody cared when I met the FF or even that I did meet them, but it seems maybe that isn't entirely true. If it is true for you, feel free to push the big RED X button and I'll never know.

This all happened back in 1954/55. I was still single and stationed in San Francisco (tough duty) as a member of the US Navy. I soon found out that you could enjoy that city more if you didn't wear the uniform, not because that was anything to be ashamed of but somehow you felt more comfortable when you looked like everyone else around you. The places I enjoyed were not the typical places where servicemen gathered and a suit and tie was just what most guys wore where I went, not like today.

One of those places was a small club on Market Street, named FACK'S. The billboard in front had some really good things to say about the entertainment inside, things like Bobby Troup, Charlie Barnett, The Hi-Los, Buddy DeFranco AND THE FOUR FRESHMEN.

My first visit there was on a Thursday night, the one night in the week they did not have music, my luck! The upside was, I got into a conversation with the bartender, Nick Andros, who turned out to be one of the owners. We talked about the entertainers they hired and the next night it was Buddy DeFranco with Eugene Wright on Bass and I'm not sure who on piano, not too bad for starters. Needless to say, I was there early!

Several weeks later the FF (Group 2) showed up to play for the whole month, and although I had never heard them I thought, based on the other groups that Fack's hired, they had to be OK. From that time on I was hooked. In fact I rarely missed a night that month except when I had duty back at the base. In a small club like Fack's it was easy to talk with the entertainers and the FF were no exception. In fact, we got to know each other quite well and that was really something for a guy from North of SEATTLE where there was practically no live entertainment except the school band.

Now you'll probably wonder how a sailor could afford to frequent a place like Fack's, the second top-rated club in the city - it's easy....I COULDN'T, but that alone wasn't going to keep me out, so I'd show up whenever I could get away and help with some of the chores, moving tables and chairs or whatever needed doing. As a result it seems as though some of my refreshments never showed up on my tab.

It was only on the last night I was there that Nick spilled the beans and told everyone that I was discharged from the Navy that day. The next day I headed back to Seattle and the FF went on to their next engagement. I only saw them Live twice after that when they had performances in Seattle. During the first show I was spotted by Bob Flanigan and spent the intermission in their dressing room catching up on old times. The second time was when Ken Albers had joined the group, which was Group 3.

Last year WE, my wife and I, saw Group 21 in a small town on the US/Canada border. That sure brought back a lot of memories for me and we both really enjoyed that show. Through the years I saved the pictures we took at Fack's and now they are on the FFS website for all to enjoy, thanks to Chaz. Their first album, a 10" Voices in Modern, was a gift complete with autographs...what a surprise when the postman brought that.

We'll be at the convention this year and hopefully we'll have a chance to visit a bit with Bob and Ross and Ken. We're also looking forward to making some new friends and hearing stories we've never heard before about all of the groups. See you there!

Things to Think About

by Curtis Calderon

It's good to see lots of posts on yahoo.com, even though there are disagreements from time to time.

None of the groups will truly sound the same and more so due to changes in the way records are being made today and of live performances. One of the things to think about is that groups 1-5, and perhaps more, recorded and sang live lots of times around one microphone. We record and play on four separate mics, and that has an effect on blend. Whether groups 1-5 sound better or not, it's just another thing to think about. I think it's easier to compare if you saw, say group 3 live and acoustic and then heard group 22 live and acoustic. I think then you would truly be able to hear if one group blended better or not.

Also, Brian will never sound like Flanigan and that's a wonderful thing in many ways. I will never sound like Bill Comstock on second part or sound like Kenny on trumpet, etc. It's a good and bad thing. It's good because each group takes on its own personality and it's bad if you wanna hear Flanigan sing and play trombone and Kenny play trumpet.

I, personally, think the three guys surrounding me are of the best singers out there. So, anyhow, I look forward to seeing some familiar faces at the convention and meeting new ones as well.

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