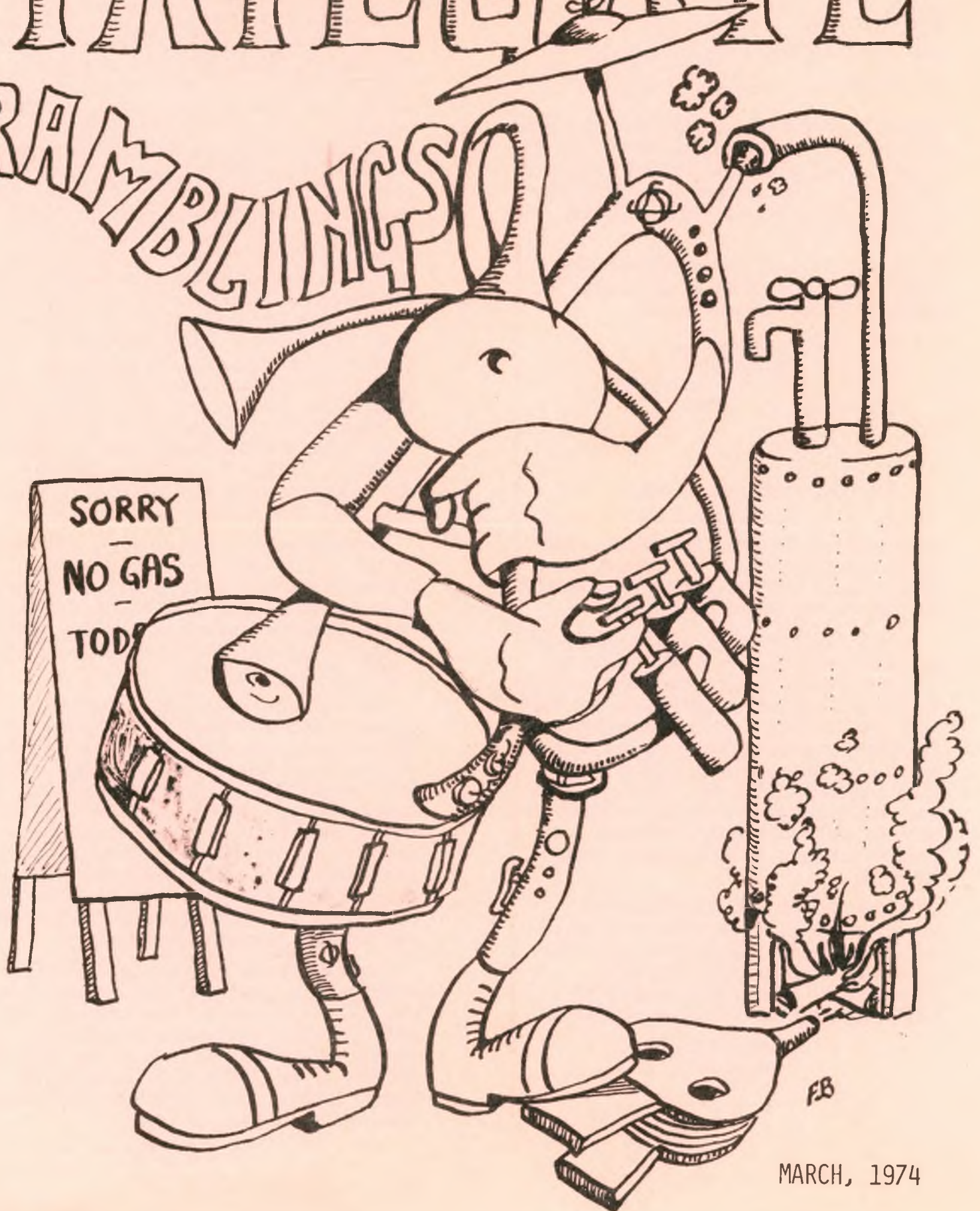


TAILGATE

RAMBLINGS



MARCH, 1974

TAILGATE RAMBLINGS

Vol. 4 No. 1

March 1974

EDITOR - DICK BAKER

Associate Editor - Polly Wagner

Art Director - Fraser J. Battey

TAILGATE RAMBLINGS is published for members of the Potomac River Jazz Club, an organization dedicated to the support of traditional jazz interest and activity in the Greater Washington, D.C. and Baltimore areas.

Articles, letters to the Editor and ad copy (for which there is no charge to members) should be mailed to:

Dick Baker, Editor
TAILGATE RAMBLINGS
2300 S. 25th St., Apt. 209
Arlington, Va. 22206

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TAILGATE RAMBLINGS - "WRITE ON!"

Due to the resignation of Al Webber as Editor of TAILGATE RAMBLINGS, hereafter there will be a new format which will combine the "Tailgate" and "What's the PRJC Doin' Now?" newsletter.

Since the inception of the PRJC, Al has published the TR, a job which has required many hours of research, colici-tation and writing of articles for this PRJC publication. After three years of dedicated service, the pressure of personal circumstances had forced Al to take a sabbatical leave. On behalf of the PRJC membership, I want to thank Al for his untiring efforts in what I am sure he thought at times was a thank-less job.

A new format will be published monthly. Until a new editorial board is formed, I have appointed Dick Baker as Editor of the "PRJC TAILGATE RAMBLINGS." I hope the membership will support Dick in his new endeavor.

Fred Wahler
President

Al Webber's "retirement" from the TR editorship is a real loss to the club, if for no other reason than the professional expertise he brought to the job -- editing is Al's 9-5 gig, too. The necessary change in editorship does, however, give us the opportunity to experiment with a format which many of us have talked about from time to time; that of a monthly magazine. The old TR was intended to be a quarterly publication; various pressures and problems often conspired to drag that period out to 4-5 months. This, of course, meant that a certain part of its material was badly out of date. For example, I inherited from Bro. Webber a good deal of material dealing with our September picnic, the Manassas Jazz Festival and a piece I wrote myself on the Toronto Ragtime Bash in October. I have decided to discard all this material as outdated. I apologize to those who submitted it and thank them for their effort; I urge all of them and any other potential journalists in our ranks to continue to submit material to TR and promise them they won't have to wait so long to see the fruits of their labor.

Everything you came to know and love in the old TR will be in the new one. I hereby solicit your letters to the editor, your new ideas and comments on old practices, essays, reports on jazz in other areas -- everything. Also, send in any "want ad" type material.

Stalwart TR contributors Scotty Lawrence and Ed Fishel will continue to grace these pages regularly, and now that Al Webber is free of editor's duties he will be contributing articles as well as continuing his "Wax in My Ears." Fraser Battey says he'll continue turning our art work for us and ex-PRJC Art Director Tom Niemann resurfaced recently, also promising to resume contributing the kind of delightful cartoons which still adorn our membership certificates.

Finally, Polly Wagner, who has been doing such a great job getting the flyer out to us each month, will continue to edit the TR page devoted to upcoming events and regular jazz gigs, as well as serving as my colleague in getting TR typed, laid out and ready for the printer each month. Wish us luck.

Dick Baker

HAPPY JAZZ BAND PLAYS FOR PRJC

By Ed Fishel
Arlington, Va

The Happy Jazz Band, from San Antonio, which played for the PRJC at the Twin Bridges on the evening of Tuesday, Feb. 5, is not the band that its name implies, not the band most of us were expecting. It carries banjo and tuba, and it still has in its book a fair number of extremely "traditional" New Orleans tunes, but most of its music falls under the heading of Chicago jazz, or even New York jazz, or what one is tempted to call Everybody's Jazz. In fact the Happy Jazz Band's bag is a lot like the World's Greatest Jazz Band's bag.

Are we to deplore the HJB's venture outside the boundaries of "happy jazz"? Answer: No. I took copious notes that night, but not to do a review--I was out to steal the HJB's stuff. Every time they opened up with a new number, the first thought it compelled was, "If we were sharp enough, that's the kind of jazz we'd be playing around here."

Item: First, last and foremost, they are smooth, polished, professional, and it is not because very much of their music is simple or routine. The opening notes of their first number announced: "We're an outfit that clicks like mad. Gangway!"

Item: They had well-worked-out beginnings and endings, almost never resorting to drum tags or cadenzas in order to get a number over with.

Item: They distributed solos in a most undemocratic manner. The pianist rated about 64 bars of solo for his night's work, the banjoist maybe 16 bars, the tuba man one or two short passages, and the drummer just a lick or two here and there. Their excellent pianist had his innings in accompanying vocals and instrumental solos, and in leading off a few numbers. The other rhythm players had breaks and other key spots in the arrangements; everybody earned his pay.

Item: Speaking of arrangements, there were enough arranged passages to make a note-taker wish he had brought along a half-inch pad of manuscript paper. In theory, very much of this kind of thing spoils the spontaneity of jazz. It

ain't necessarily so; there were enough improvised passages, and they had as much kick as anybody else's.

Item: There was plenty of variety. Mark Hess, the HJB trombonist, did a 20-minute solo stint at the piano, playing seldom-heard rags including one of his own composition. Leader Jim Cullum, Jr. (Jim Sr. died last year) played What's New? with piano accompaniment only and extended it to something like five minutes, all of them worthwhile. There were vocals aplenty, the most entertaining one (to me) coming when Cullum and clarinetist Bobby Gordon traded four-bar phrases for two choruses of Sunny Side.

Item: The band has a bag of originals; the ones we heard were Westmoreland Weave (by one of its founders, now deceased) and Gordon's Playin' Hookey. Both numbers established to my satisfaction that a well-schooled Dixieland front line can deliver a pretty good facsimile of Glenn Miller or the Dorsey brothers, an accomplishment that I for one am willing to admit admiring.

Item: The HJB does not shy away from being likened to the World's Greatest Jazz Band. They played Bud Freeman's The Eel, and also Charles Chaplin's Smile, a tune that the WGJB resurrected two or three years ago.

If the program was less traditional than some of us expected, it was at least partly because a large expanse of dance floor invited the playing of ballads, which generally succeeded in filling the floor; the band would probably have been more inspired if the tables of listeners had come right up to the bandstand.*

The HJB had plenty of other action while with us. On the day preceding the PRJC party they did a recording session with Max Kaminsky for Fat Cat's Jazz; Max's exacting standards ran the session out to a good ten hours. And following our bash the HJB front line and banjoist sat in with the World's Third Greatest Jazz Band, which was opening a weekly (Tue nite) gig at the Place Where Louie Dwells in Southwest D.C.

*This is a point which has arisen time and time again: is our music for listening or dancing? Are the two always or ever compatible? Readers' comments are invited. - DB

ONE SWEET LETTER FROM YOU

The last TR included some rather controversial articles, particularly one quite critical of the Preservation Hall Jazz Band. Replies to this article have come from far and wide; two are reprinted below. While this editor doesn't intend to pull any punches in the future, I do hope that after the dust settles on this episode our reader-editor and reader-writer dialogues can be less rancorous.

Editor

It is uncomfortable to see Tailgate Ramblings come to this. What started out as a journal of items of interest about music and musicians has been adopted as a personal forum for the expression of controversial opinions intended to maintain the requisite pounds-per-sq.-in. of ego.

In one section we find the malicious criticism of all that remains of the originators of "our" music; later we lament that none of the descendants of those originators choose to clasp our cause or our club to their dark bosoms--because of semantics, no less!

The self-appointed critics could assemble their own band. There would be a trumpet, a trombone, a clarinet, some drums, and a piano. (How would this assemblage sound compared with the group they attacked?) The clarinet and the only confessed non-musician in the crowd were the only favorable critics. The rest of the "band" contributed remarks which were, at best, unkind, uncalled for and unrepresentative of the type of benevolent enthusiasm one expects from the PRJC. The clarinet output read like an excerpt from Jonathan Livingston Seagull, and could have been written in absentia. Only President Fred's remarks seemed genuine, unassuming, and uncontrived.

If all this was done to smoke out new blood, then congratulations, Al, it worked. I don't like controversy, and here I am. But if you really were serious, then remember, this paper is sent outside of our group, and it can be expected that others will assume that these writers scribe from some basis of authority, some foundation of expertise. But where, they might ask, do those guys find the colossal malice on which to base what was said about a bunch of nice old men?

Since the PRJC enjoys national prominence, it is probable that these ill-conceived critiques will be seen by some of the targeted old gentlemen. Maybe we should invite them to our next picnic so they could take reciprocal pot-shots at the new "band" we've formed. But then, they are probably too civilized for that.

I am ashamed.

Al Stevens
Woodbridge, Va.

Editor:

I would like to comment on the views set forth in the article, "The Preservation Hall Jazz Band: Pristine Purity or Poppycock?"

First, let me state my credentials, or lack thereof, to comment on the article: I am a past resident of New Orleans and I am acquainted with each member of the band; I did not attend the performance in July at Wolf Trap; and I am not a musician.

Second, I agree that: "Old musicians never die, they just play in Preservation Hall" (Icon O'Clast); "Percy Humphrey, for my money, is far short of the caliber of trumpet player we should expect to come out of New Orleans" (Mr. Lawrence); "They also have a knack of elating the audience with a variety

of old standards, hymns, and seldom heard tunes of New Orleans jazz." (Mr. Wahler); "Jim Robinson is in his 80's and the rest of the band is in its 70's (except for Allan Jaffee, tuba). What the heck do we expect?" (Mr. Stimson).

Third, possibly you could provide me with an answer to the following question: "Which events is PRJC sponsoring during the next year, or have they sponsored during the past three years, which provide Washingtonians with a more exemplary representation of true New Orleans style jazz than that provided by the Preservation Hall Jazz Band?"

Jim Tozzi
Vienna, Va

The Max Collie Rhythm Aces played for us in December, Jim, and will be back in May. I think you'll find they fill the bill nicely. DB

* * * * *

BEIDERBECKE MEMORIAL JB TO PLAY MARCH 9

The Bix Beiderbecke Memorial Jazz Band, which came down from New Jersey last year to play for the PRJC in celebration of Beiderbecke's birthday (March 10), will perform for us again on Saturday, March 9, from 9 pm to 1 pm.

The nine-piece BBMJJB, led by wash-board player Bill Donohoe, is the group of hard-core Bix-o-philes which traveled to Davenport, Iowa, a few years ago at their own expense to play at the graveside of the legendary cornetist. This event sparked what has become one of the major yearly traditional jazz festivals.

The BBMJJB will play in one of the larger rooms at the Marriott Twin Bridges; call the club phone number this week to find out which room. Admission will be \$2.50 for club members, \$3.50 for non-members.

PIANO: Geo. Steek 6' Grand completely rebuilt & refin. \$1695 or make offer. Wagner 703/534-0566 evenings.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

By Icon O'Clast

(Musings, sometimes irreverent, on the state of the performing arts by a professional trumpet player and member of the PRJC presently resident in New Orleans)

Last week I read a book called "Bird Lives." And I've seen red and white bumper stickers proclaim the fact that "Bix Lives." Why not "Izzy Friedman Lives" or "Mezz Lives"?

Now I know there's no question that these men made a lasting contribution to jazz, each in his own way and in his own time. And no one can put down their followers' desire to pay them homage. But I wonder if they really do the whole field of jazz any good. Sure, each year in at least two locations semi-pro bands, along with a few old-timers, get a chance to play and to have an excuse for a fraternal-type picnic. But apparently the music isn't true Bixiana. Maybe that is as it should be. limited recorded examples of Bix would begin to sound redundant in a short time if played note for note by 10 or 15 assorted bands. Then, too, who really wants to try to copy the Wolverines by rote? Can you imagine anyone really wanting to sound like Al Gande or George Johnson?

Of course, sooner or later some ambitious group will decide to recreate the Whiteman and Goldkette bands. It will be a job but that seems to be a trend nowadays. Imagine all that work recruiting, copying and rehearsing a book of numbers that really only merit duplication because of a relatively few bars of Bix.

Jazz is a spontaneous, creative thing. And, while it would be extraordinary to find a musician today who couldn't be compared in some way to some past hero, jazz should still be as personal as the individual can

make it, regardless of subconscious influences. To deliberately set out to copy a style, even to the point of memorizing and playing whole choruses, seems to me to contradict the whole idea of jazz. I'm not referring to the young kid who is learning his instrument. He has to start somewhere and for a cornetist Bix is a pretty darn good man to begin with. But if he stays right where he starts, he'll stagnate quickly.

Jimmy McPartland and Bobby Hackett and Dick Cathcart come to mind at this point. I don't believe I've read that these men have involved themselves with a "Let's Play Bix" movement,* although they're probably better qualified than most to lead the parade. McPartland certainly, and probably the others, have vociferously denied the umbilical relationship to Bix as years have passed. Even though some might question it, their intentions are apparently to play like McPartland, Hackett, etc.

The modernists constantly tell us that jazz must be dynamic and viable or it no longer is jazz. Remember when you were called a Moldy Fig? Playing in the idiom of New Orleans/Chicago/Dixieland Jazz need not be static certainly, but if the players insist on direct copying, then the chordless, beatless wonders of modern jazz are going to have their point made for them. Foreign musicians are the worst offenders in this, of course. All of us have heard European or Japanese kids repeat the Bunk Johnson and George Lewis solos, including the fluffs. To paraphrase Rudi Blesh -- "This Is Jazz??"

I am not picking on the Bix enthusiasts per se. If there were a "Big T Lives" movement, the same thoughts would apply. I applaud their efforts to erect museums to preserve the memory of a great contributor to our music

(Aside: I wonder how the Bix curators are going to arrange and classify all the battered cornets that were "really Bix's"). Nevertheless, fans and musicians should not let their musical judgment and personal creativity atrophy. To live, jazz must be Today - by Today's living jazzmen.

**Both Hackett and McPartland have recorded "tributes to Bix" and so-called "Bix tunes," probably at the behest of record company A&R men rather than by choice. Hackett has long expressed his preference for Armstrong above all other trumpet players.*
ACW

April Fools to Play March 31

Al Brogdon, trombonist and leader of Southern Comfort, has cooked up a special treat for the Sunday before April Fools' Day. He has put together a group of musicians you'll all recognize: himself, John Thomas, Al Stevens, Stan Booth, Charlie Robb, John Skillman and Country Thomas. The kicker is that none of them will be playing their primary instrument. Each of them is a virtuoso (virtue so-so?) on another instrument. They invite sit-ins, but with the proviso that the sitters-in also play an instrument other than the one for which they're known. Looks like a lot of fun at the Windjammer on March 31.

ARR Plays a Freebie

Del Beyer's Anacostia River Ramblers furthered the jazz cause and won friends for the PRJC by playing an open-air blue-finger special in Alexandria's Market Square on Feb. 18. They played before and after Alexandria's annual George Washington Parade. Thanks, gang!

The Potomac River Jazz Club



** WINDJAMMER **

March 3	GOOD TIME SIX
10	WORLD'S THIRD GREATEST JAZZ BAND
17	BAY CITY SEVEN
24	JOYMAKERS
31	APRIL FOOLS

For recorded info -
DIAL (301) 630-PRJC

April 7	BULL RUN BLUES BLOWERS
14	NEW SUNSHINE JAZZ BAND

REGULAR GIGS

PLEASE NOTE: All Gigs are Tentative -- Always check 630-PRJC

Sunday	PRJC weekly session in the Windjammer Room, Marriott Twin Bridges Hotel, south end of 14th Street Bridge, Arlington, Va. 7:30 - 11:30 p.m. Open to public; \$1.00 cover. ANACOSTIA RIVER RAMBLERS, Lighthouse, Falls Church, Va. 7 - 11 p.m.
Monday	RANDOLPH STREET GANG, Bratwursthaus, 708 North Randolph St., Arlington. 8:30 - midnight.
Mon. - Sat.	BLUES ALLEY (rear) 1073 Wisconsin Ave., N. W. Washington. Check local newspaper.
Tuesday	WORLD'S THIRD GREATEST JAZZ BAND, The Place Where Louie Dwells, 1000 4th St. S. W., Washington; 9:00 - 1:00 a.m.
Friday	BAY CITY SEVEN, Steak & Ale Restaurant, Timonium Road (north of Baltimore, Md.) TEX WYNDHAM RED LION JAZZ BAND, Surrey Restaurant, Wilmington, Del. <u>First Friday</u> of month only. 8:30 - 12:30. Reservations suggested.
Fri. - Sat.	BOB ENGLISH BAND, Buzzy's Pizza Warehouse, Annapolis, Md. 9:00 - midnight.
Sat.	DOC'S OF DIXIELAND - Naval Officers' Club, Bethesda, Md., Two Saturdays each month, 9:00 - 12 Call 652-6318

SATURDAY, MARCH 9

MARRIOTT TWIN BRIDGES

BIX BEIDERBECKE MEMORIAL JAZZ BAND

Members \$2.50

9:00 p.m. - 1:00 a.m.

Nonmembers \$3.50

PRJC MEMBERSHIP - Initiation fee \$2.00; Annual Dues \$5.00. Contact Dolores Wilkinson, 2122 Massachusetts Ave., N. W., Washington, D.C. or call 630-PRJC and leave name and address.

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HORRAY FOR DIXIELAND JAZZ

