

An Internet Conversation about Chuck Traeger
from the *Dixieland Jazz Mailing List*
Compiled by Henry Strobel

Don't miss the **great photos of Chuck and his friends** at the bottom of this article!

[Dixielandjazz] Bunk Johnson - Maria Elena etc. + Chuck Traeger.
From Steve Barbone, 2006

"Just got off the phone with my best musical buddy, Chuck Traeger. In the 1940's and 50's Chuck was one of the premier OKOM bassists on the New York Jazz scene. In addition to playing WITH EVERYBODY at Condon's, Nick's, Hickory House (backing Marion McPartland) etc., he played and recorded with Bunk Johnson circa 1947 at the Central Plaza.

"He remembers playing Maria Elena with Bunk several times on dates, but is not sure if it is on the record they made with Bob Wilber's band back then. I believe George Buck might have re-issued it a while back. He, like Don Ingle and I, also remembers the original tune as a Waltz.

"He cracked up when I asked him about it saying; "Who the hell is left in the world that is interested in this stuff?" So I explained the DJML to him and not having a computer, he sends all list mates his regards.

"If you were around NYC jazz joints 45 to 60 years ago, you probably remember this wonderful bassist who later became a highly respected bass repairman with clients from the NY Philharmonic to the legendary jazzman, Ron Carter. He just celebrated his 80th birthday and now lives in the woods in New York State, near Bear Mountain with June, his wife of over 50 years.

"Quite a change from those wild and crazy happenings with Condon and the OKOM jazzers of that period when he and June lived in a tiny apartment in Greenwich Village, right around the corner from Nick's. (he walked to work)

Cheers,
Steve"

From Bill Haesler

"Dear Steve,

There is a photograph of Chuck Traeger playing at the Caravan Ballroom with Bunk Johnson in New York in 1947 on page 231 of the 2000 Jazzology Press book 'Song of The Wanderer' by Mike Hazeldine & Barry Martyn.

Also in the pic are Bob Mickle, Jerry Blumberg, Albert Nicholas, Irv Kratka, and James P Johnson. One track of the music from this 17 Oct 1947 date is on American Music AMCD-45 put out by George Buck. I have this.

There are also 3 other tunes from another night with Bunk and Mr Traeger on the CD. . .

Kind regards,

Bill.”

“Thanks Bill

I knew you'd have some more information on that. What a list mate. I'll pass the information on to Traeger. I'll also pick up the book and give it to him as I doubt very much that he has it.

“He also recorded with Sidney Bechet around the same time, with Bob Wilber's band. Also, perhaps re-issued by Buck. Buck tracked him down and paid him \$100 as a performance fee before re-issuing AMCD-45, endearing himself to working musicians everywhere.

“It was Traeger who turned me on to Clifford Brown when Brownie took the jazz world by storm in the 1950's. Chuck is a complete musician from classical to avant garde with a strong record of OKOM in NYC from 1945 to 1965. He also did quite a bit of work with Lester Lanin and Meyer Davis "society" groups.

“You would adore Chuck Traeger who was, in those days, called "Charlie" and one of the hippest jazz men on the planet. I worked a steady gig with him, one summer back then which included Gene Schroeder on piano. All the regular guys used to fall by and sit in, from Erwin to Haggart to Lawson to Lee Gifford et al. Oh my, how I would love to do that again.

Cheers,
Steve”

Photographs from the Golden Age of Jazz, Library of Congress, William P. Gottlieb Collection



Photo above: Bob Wilber, Johnny Glazel, Dick Wellstood, Charlie Traeger, and Ed Physe, Jimmy Ryan's (Club), New York, N.Y., ca. Dec. 1946



Sidney De Paris, Freddie Moore, Eddie (Emmanuel) Barefield, Sammy Price, and Charlie Traeger, Jimmy Ryan's (Club), New York, N.Y., ca. July 1947

(continued on the next page)



Wilbur De Paris, Sammy Price, Sidney De Paris, Eddie (Emmanuel) Barefield, and Charlie Traeger, Jimmy Ryan's (Club), New York, N.Y., ca. July 1947