

THE OKLAHOMA SQUEEZINS

"Our squeezin'...is pleasin'"

The Oklahoma Accordion Club Newsletter

Art Van Damme

Art Van Damme (born April 9, 1920 in Norway, Michigan – February 15, 2010) was a jazz accordionist. He adapted Benny Goodman's music to the accordion. Van Damme was a pioneer of jazz accordion, starting from 1941, when bandleader Ben Bernie hired him. Returning to studio work in Chicago, Van Damme formed a quintet with several colleagues and recorded his first album for the Musicraft label in 1944.

For the next 15 years he was a studio musician for NBC Radio in Chicago, meanwhile recording a number of albums for the Capitol and Columbia labels aimed at a cocktail-piano audience and named accordingly (*Cocktail Capers*, *Martini Time*, *Manhattan Time*, and so on).

In 1947, Van Damme made the cover of *DownBeat* magazine, and was voted Top Accordionist in the magazine's annual poll of jazz musicians for ten years in a row. Later, he was similarly honored for five years in a row by *Contemporary Keyboard* magazine. Van Damme later moved into more adventurous territory with albums such as *Accordion a la Mode* and *A Perfect*



Match, the latter with guitarist Johnny Smith.

In the course of his long career, Van Damme visited Europe nearly 40 times, and played everywhere from the Desert Inn in Las Vegas to the Blue Note in New York City and Disney World in Florida. He also appeared on many television programs, including *The Tonight Show* with Johnny Carson and *The Dinah Shore Show*.

After leaving NBC in 1960, Van Damme opened a music store and accordion studio in Chicago while he continued to tour regularly.

When his contract with Columbia records expired in 1965, he was signed by the German label MPS and recorded sixteen albums for them.

Van Damme retired to Florida in 1980, but continued to perform occasionally, appearing at clubs throughout the U.S. until as late as 2008. Along with Mat Mathews and a handful of others, Van Damme set the standard for jazz accordion and kept the bar high for more than half a century.

• Courtesy of Jack Bowers
www.allaboutjazz.com

http://www.nme.com/video/id/TpYDmfXF_M8/

May Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on Sunday, May 9 (yes, Mothers' Day) at the Messiah Lutheran Church, which is located at the intersection of NW Expressway and Portland Ave., just west of I-44 and Baptist Hospital, and across the street from Deaconess Hospital on Portland Ave. Festivities begin at 2:30, when the orchestra rehearsal starts.

At 3:30 our meeting begins, followed by individual and group performances, and then a "jam session" follows until 5:00 or 5:30 pm. Everyone is encouraged to come, and everyone is encouraged to perform. If you are shy about playing alone, some of us will play with you.



The Prez Sez

Bill Henson

In this article, I would like to mention two people who work hard behind the scenes. One is Frank Gesinski, who produces our newsletters tirelessly. He has to remind me to write these articles, but he always has patience and makes sure the articles get placed into our newsletter, and he does a great job.

The second person I want to mention is Diana Richards. She has done a wonderful job on our website, and it looks great.

From both my wife's and my own experience with newsletters and websites, I can assure you that these are very hard working positions. Many hours are spent preparing and inputting data on both, and a lot of times we don't show our appreciation enough.

I for one wanted to make sure you know who the two people are who work very hard to advertise the Oklahoma Accordion Club.

May is coming up, and spring is in the air. So, bring some wonderful music to play for the club members present.

If you have suggestions for our club, do not hesitate to contact me to let me know what you like and don't like. We officers are here to serve you the club members, but please remember that we are members also. My email address is MustangBilly@cox.net and I can be reached via my cell phone: 405/822-3770.



Italian Festival

Dan Orza

The Oklahoma Accordion Club Orchestra will once again perform for the Elks Lodge Annual Italian Festival. This is the fourth year that we have been invited to perform at this festival. They love us and enjoy our music. All members of our orchestra are invited to perform on Saturday, June 5th, 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. And, of course, everyone performing will be rewarded with lots of wonderful Italian food. The location is at the Elks Lodge at 4711 N. Tulsa in OKC, just south of NW Expressway. OAC members can come as paying guests of the orchestra. Questions? Contact Dan Orza.



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The Treasurer Sez

Dick Albreski

The Kolache Festival was held in Prague, Oklahoma on Saturday, May 1st. A parade was held in the morning, traditional food was sold all day, and there were three polka bands playing. From 11:00 am to 4:00 pm, the *Bohemian Knights* performed. From 1:00 pm until 5:00 pm, *Czech and Then Some*, a Texas polka band performed. For the evening polka dance, the *Masapust Polka Band* played. This is a fun event you don't want to miss next year.

Recently, I read about a serious problem that, hopefully, will never happen to one of us. A Texas accordion player elected to take his brand new Excelsior midi accordion with him on a trip to Hawaii. He had no problem taking his accordion as carry-on going to Hawaii. Coming home was a tragedy. They refused to let him carry on the accordion, and they demanded he put it into the cargo hold. Needless to say, the accordion was ruined. Attempts to get compensated are almost fruitless because the airlines experts are not accordion players.

There are no easy ways to travel with your accordion on an airplane. It can be done. First, if

your instrument is electronic, it cannot be dismantled easily. Sooo...you need a "special reinforced case" that will take cargo hold travel. Your current case will not! My suggestion is that you contact an accordion technician for guidance in traveling with your accordion. Don't think you can travel with what you currently have at home.

A word from your accordion technician: reeds are very sensitive. If you elect to see what your reeds look like on your own, then heed the following cautions: Never touch your reeds with your bare hands, you have oils and moisture on your fingers that will cause your reeds to rust before their time. Also, never, never blow into a reed block. Reed blocks are not harmonicas. If you want to ruin your accordion early, take it apart and blow into the reed blocks. A word to the wise is sufficient.

We currently have 50 members in our club. If you have not renewed your membership for 2010, please do so ASAP. Our expenses for the month were \$48.34, and income was \$138.00, leaving \$1,623.63 in available funds. See you all on May 9th at the next OAC meeting.



Tribune Media Service

April Minutes

Beth Henson

Minutes

Oklahoma Accordion Club

April 11, 2010

- Vice President Jimmie Woolly called the meeting to order since President Bill Henson is working in Amarillo, Texas. There were 20 members and four guests in attendance.
- Dan Orza thanked everyone for jamming before the meeting began.
- There was no recommendation from the committee for the June birthday party. Two suggestions were made from the floor:
 1. Have a barbeque dinner catered for the membership, or
 2. Have an Italian dinner catered (Dan is to get more information about a caterer he knows).It was suggested that the meal be served at the church during the regular meeting time if the church would give permission, or at the Stars & Stripes Park. The board will follow up with Oliver Delaney to see if he has made other plans. Every member would be permitted to bring one guest at no charge. A firm decision will be made by the May meeting.
- Although the May meeting falls on Mother's Day this year, the meeting will be held as usual.
- The youth accordionists accompanied club members as they sang "Happy Birthday" to Eleanor Martinez.

- Job Elliott, Hannah Braden, and Dick Albreski performed the pieces that the youth played at the National Accordion Association convention in Dallas. Job and Hannah learned every part so that they would be able to fill in where needed during the concert, and did an outstanding job. Pieces played today were "Melody of Love," "Tinker Polka," "Lawrence Welk Tribute," and "The Accordion March." Solos were performed by Hannah: "Sparkling," and by Job: "Honky Tonk Polka." They are both very talented young people. Maddie, Brea, and Becca Smith also performed at the NAA, but couldn't attend today's meeting because of a conflict with soccer matches.

- We had the pleasure of having members of the Tulsa Accordion Band attend our meeting -- Janet Haskin, Annie Johnston, and Barbara Mahar. They, along with Dan Orza, performed "Blue Skirt Waltz" by Vai Blaha/Mitchell Parish, "Easter Parade" by Irving Berlin, and "Faust Waltz" by G. Gounod.

- Dan Orza performed "Jolly Caballero."

- Dick Albreski performed "Laura" and "Lover."

- New member Phil Scibelli played "The Teddy Bear March" and "Elaine."

- Jimmie Woolly played "Amazing Grace" and "How Great Thou Art."

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Henson



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Phone (____) _____ Birthday (mm/dd) ____/____/____ (optional)

Newsletter

I prefer to receive the monthly newsletter, the Oklahoma Squeezins, by:

- ☐ E-mail at address (above) or at _____
- ☐ Conventional post (snail mail)

Membership Dues

The OAC membership year runs from January through December. Membership cost is prorated quarterly for new members.

- ☐ Primary Membership is \$16.00 per year per individual.
- ☐ Family Membership is \$8.00 per year for each additional family member when accompanied by a Primary Membership.
- ☐ Lifetime Membership is a one-time fee of \$180.
- ☐ Youth Membership is complimentary for accordion-playing youth through age 18.

Your Status (please check all that apply):

- ☐ Professional ☐ Semi-Professional ☐ Amateur ☐ Student
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- ☐ Other (specify) _____

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