
MANDOLIN IN THE U.S.

JIM FEROE AND THE SEATTLE MANDOLIN ORCHESTRA

- Jim Feroe
edited by Irene Liddle

Jim Feroe started playing the mandolin at fifteen years of age (1952), when he fell in love with it while listening to his grandmother's old 78 speed records. He taught himself to read music from a mandolin easy method book. Though bluegrass was popular during that time, he was most influenced by the "Pinetoppers", a duo from Pennsylvania. They mostly played polkas and waltzes on the electric mandolin.

Jim's first attempt at performing was as Jim of "**Jim and Vern**". Vern played on his mother's all metal, National guitar set up Spanish style, playing rhythm with all five fingers of the right hand and then rolling them in what his mother called "old German style". This style fit beautifully with Jim's. They soon became popular, playing for school assemblies and other local functions, ultimately winning a series of talent contests with Jack Rivers, a local cowboy star. This led to radio and USO engagements.

Jim's expanding interest in the mandolin was further nurtured by Italian and Spanish music recorded by such greats Perry Como, Dean Martin and the Gaylords. Mandolin was often played in their recordings. His interest in classical music developed later.

During the '60's when he became a collector he found himself enthralled with **Dave Appollon** and began looking for a mandolin orchestra in Seattle. His search was in vain, because the only mandolin organization, a mandolin club, had been disbanded.

A broken leg, the result of an industrial accident found Jim incapacitated for one year. But he put the time to good use by bringing together a small group — two mandolinists, a guitarist and an accordionist. They performed for the Seattle "Christmas Around the World" festival.

The group expanded with the addition of **Georgene Hagelund**, a mandolin teacher who had played with **Carlo de Vilipis'** mandolin orchestra. She brought her students with her and together the group started the Seattle Mandolin Orchestra. The repertoire included simple Italian and Spanish songs.

In addition to expanding his interest in music, Jim tried

new instruments — a Regal mandola, a Gibson mandocello, and a Gibson mandobass (bought for \$100), passing each of them on as he learned a new one. He finally went back to playing the lead mandolin as the group grew in number to twenty-two. He purchased music parts from FIGA to build a music library. But 1972 brought an end to this venture when Boeing's big lay-off hit Seattle. Most of the key players moved away to seek employment and the group dissolved.

Jim met **Albert Jacobson**, a former concert-master with the New York Mandolin Orchestra and mandocellist in **Sol Goichberg's** "Mando-Art Quartet". It was through this meeting that Jim was introduced to classical music. They formed the Seattle Mandolin Quartet, which, unfortunately was disbanded when Albert passed away in 1976. But this was not before the two had performed Vivaldi's Two Mandolins Concerto with the Bellevue Philharmonic, a concert so successful that the two were asked for autographs. Jim later played a five day subscription concert with the Seattle Symphony Orchestra, under conductor Milton Katim. Jim's accomplishments also include a recording of Sephardic Jewish music "Ladino Romanzes" with Linda Aazonline Capuleto. He also played the mandolin with the Cascade Symphony, performing Respighi's Roman Festival.

It was not until 1984 that Jim once again found himself involved with the mandolin through a contact with Tom Moran who had started a teaching group. Eventually Tom dropped out and Jim brought in "official" mandolin orchestra music. The group took hold and grew. Allan became an arranger for the group.

The Seattle Mandolin Orchestra has recently been involved with Ken Culver's Portland Mandophonic Orchestra. This year the two groups joined forces when Ken brought the Mandophonic convention orchestra to Jim's Seattle Folklife Festival, where they had a "hilariously" good time. Among the attendees was **Kathy Foote** from Norway who presented both Ken and Jim with a plaque from the Norsk Mandolinorkestr Forbund.

*Note: The information in this article came from Joyce Adams who had received it from Jim. Thank you both.

Irene

MANDOLIN NEWS FROM NORTHERN VIRGINIA

- Rose Nemerow

The Music Makers continue to draw people into restaurants in the Washington, Virginia and Maryland area. They perform regularly at Topkapi in Fairfax, Virginia, Woodside Deli in Wheaton, Maryland, and during Octoberfest they presented traditional and popular German folk songs on weekends at the historical Old Europe Restaurant in Georgetown section of Washington, D.C.

Coming events for Rose Nemerow and the Music Makers

include a concert at Kennedy Center during the Judaic/Hanukah Festival of Lights. During December, they will perform a Czech and Slavic program of folk songs and dances at the Smithsonian Institute.

The Takoma Mandolin Orchestra is scheduled to present a program of classical and Christmas music at the Smithsonian as well. Members of the orchestra attended the Classical Mandolin Society of America convention in Nashville, Tennessee in November.