

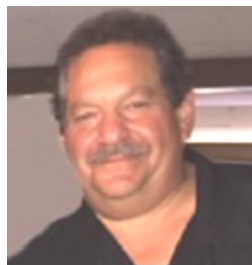
BLUES NEWS

NEW OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTED

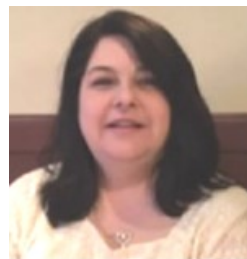
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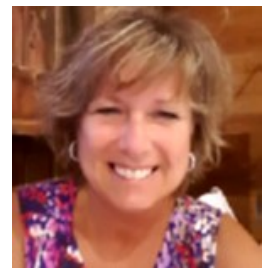
Bill Koteles
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Anthony Lovano
Vice President



Elaine DeStephano
Treasurer



Kris Diehl
Secretary



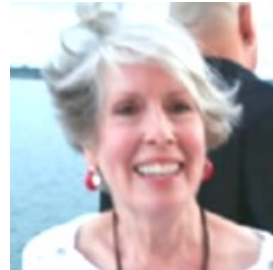
Dave Rolland
Board Member



Mike Kormos
Board Member



Robert Dickow
Board Member



Penny Holycross
Board Member



Susanne Mayer
Board Member

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Do you have an idea for an
article?—email Elaine
elainecbs145@gmail.com



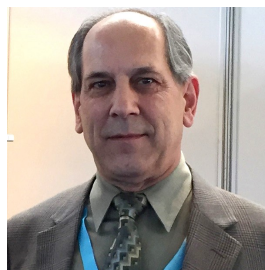
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Bill Koteles



Letter from the President

Bill Koteles

I'd like to thank all who attended the CBS election Jam in November and those who voted via proxy. Especially all those who ran for a position on the new board. We are fortunate to have a number of returning board members who are familiar with current projects and upcoming goals. Our first time board members have shown interest and concern for the future of CBS.

The new board held their first board meeting right after the election and appointed Kris Diehl as the Secretary for the open position.

Our first major project is to finalize the process for the CBS Scholarship and Educational Fund. The fund was a goal of John Adams when CBS started the Blues Cruise to raise major funding. The cruise and other fundraising activities will continually add growth to the fund.

We also have a new website. The new format will allow us to have more materials available to all and gives us additional promotional and marketing options.

We are streamlining our committees and clarifying their functions so to combine and simplify our tasks. We still need some members to volunteer in areas we will present soon.

Again, thank you to all have been supporters of CBS and our future supporters.

Bill Koteles
President
Cleveland Blues Society

NOVEMBER JAM AND ELECTION

BLUE COLLAR BAND AT THE SAND TRAP



Blue Collar Band :

Anthony Graceffo, Drummer

Tommy Tucker, Bass

Steve Martinovich, Guitar



Thank you to everyone who came out to the jam!

The CBS Board would also like to offer a special thanks to the election committee, Jim Bell, Lloyd Braun and Donald Grcic, for such an outstanding job this year.





Upcoming Jams

12/11/2017	Paradise On Babbitt	Ms. Butterscotch & The Bonafide Blues Band
1/06/2018	Beachland Tavern	Blues Chronicles
2/12/18	Smedley's	Nightwalkers

CBS CABIN FEVER MEMBERS INDOOR PICNIC

SUNDAY, February 18, 2018

Time: 2pm to 6pm, Parma Elks – 2250 Snow Road, Parma
(Behind McDonalds in Midtown Shopping Center)

BAND: Anthony Lovano's Supernatural Band, Band will play from 3pm to 6pm

WEBSITE - WWW.CLEVELANDBLUES.ORG Click on Calendar

Free to Members/\$10 for non-members
Food, pop and water are provided. Cash bar available for beer & wine.
(In this location, you cannot BYOB)
We welcome side dishes and desserts

BECOME A VOLUNTEER

If you would like to volunteer for any of the CBS committees or contribute articles to the CBS Newsletter, contact your CBS Board members. The following committees are in need of members and new ideas: Membership, Sponsorship, Newsletter.

blues@clevelandblues.org



Blues You Should Know

by
Bob Frank

Big Maceo Merriweather

There are guitar players in blues who tell you who they are in just a few notes. The index finger trills of BB King, the long, string bend pulls of Albert King, or the icy slide-ups of Albert Collins mark these guitarists by both technique and tone. Add to that the trebly standard tuned slide of Muddy Waters or the “Dust” riff of Elmore James and you know almost instantly who you’re listening to. Fans of more modern blues can quickly pick out Stevie Ray, or even Mike Bloomfield within just a few bars. Sometimes it’s the tone, sometimes the instrument, sometimes the technique; these are the factors that give guitarists their personality and uniqueness.

But what about piano players? What makes a piano player so distinctive that you can identify him in just a few notes? After all, everyone pretty much plays the same instrument, at least when we’re talking about the acoustic piano. True, jazz buffs can pick out a Thelonious Monk, McCoy Tyner or Bill Evans by style alone. Some classical music authorities can listen to a few bars of a sonata and proclaim “Rudolph Serkin” or “Vladimir Ashkenazy” and be right. Whatever the genre there is no question that two piano players can play the same notes and sound completely different. While curious, this is one of the things that make music so interesting.

Big Maceo Merriweather is one of those piano players you can spot a mile down the pike. Whether on recordings done under his own name, or his backup work with Tampa Red, Big Bill, Sonny Boy Williamson or others, there is absolutely no mistaking Big Maceo for anyone else. With his powerful left hand, usually described by biographers as “thunderous”, and his deliberate, almost march-like timing, Maceo’s playing proclaims itself the moment you hear it. Like many great pianists, Vladimir Horowitz included, Maceo was left handed, and while he was certainly no slouch with his right hand, his left-handedness undoubtedly helped to give him the power to play the left-handed boogie patterns with such authority. He was also a big man, somewhere between six foot and six foot four and in a later interview his brother guessed him to be about 260 pounds.



Major Merriweather was born in 1905, one of eleven children, on a small farm about 40 miles outside of Atlanta, GA. Out in the country, there would have been few opportunities for a poor, black child to learn to play piano. Pianos were a luxury item out of reach for most rural families black or white. A few churches might have a pump organ, but they certainly wouldn’t allow a fledgling player to try out his

blues licks on it. His brother noted that while he was a member of the church, he never played in church. In 1920 the family moved to College Park, a mostly African-American suburb located just South of Atlanta, where Maceo’s father, Kit, took a job at a bank. The streets of College Park were named for Ivy League colleges and Harvard Avenue was the main drag. There were

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Blues You Should Know

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Big Maceo Merriweather



plenty of bars and restaurants on Harvard Avenue, along with after-hours joints, “cheat spots” and brothels on the adjoining side streets, and it’s likely that most of them had pianos. It was there that, somehow, with little or no formal training, the teen-aged Major managed learned to play piano, most likely by watching the piano players then trying out what he had just seen when they got up for a break. Many blues pianists learned this way.

In 1924 Major moved to Detroit, where several of his older siblings were already settled, and soon began making a name for himself playing house parties and rent parties throughout the black community. At one of these house parties he met the proprietor, an enterprising young woman named Hattie Spruel, whom he eventually married, and with whom he fathered his only child, a girl they named, interestingly, Majorette.

For the next fifteen years or so, Major, who by now had picked up the nickname “Maceo”, worked steadily around Detroit with the help and support of Hattie, who acted as his manager and booking agent. For a while, he supplemented his income working for the WPA and later, for Ford Motor. In 1941, Hattie decided that he was ready for bigger things and arranged for him to go to Chicago. Hattie

undoubtedly had music business contacts through her promotions of blues events, and was able to hook him up first with Tampa Red, then, through Tampa, with Lester Melrose, the producer/promoter who pretty much controlled the Chicago blues scene at that time.

Both Tampa and Lester were immediately taken with Maceo and June 24, 1941, the two, along with bassist Ransom Knowling, recorded fourteen tracks for Bluebird Records, one of Melrose’s clients. The first six they recorded would be under Maceo’s name, the remainder, would be under Tampa’s. Included in that session was the song for which Maceo would be best known, *Worried Life Blues*. *Worried Life*, which in some ways was a reworking of Sleepy John Estes’ *Someday Baby*, has gone on to be one of the most often recorded blues songs of all time. It was also among the first batch of songs inducted into the Blues Foundation Hall of Fame in 1983, and was placed in the Grammy Hall of Fame in 2006. More recently, it was included on Eric Clapton’s multi-platinum *Unplugged* album.

Tampa Red had been one of the biggest selling, most popular blues performers since 1928, when he recorded the hugely popular song *It’s Tight Like That* with his then piano partner Georgia Tom Dorsey. *It’s Tight Like That* sold 7 million copies, making it the biggest selling blues record to date. Shortly after, following an automobile accident and the death of his wife, Dorsey had a religious conversion and left the blues completely. He went on to become the founder of modern gospel music and was the composer of *Precious Lord, Take My Hand, Peace in the Valley*, and dozens of other songs that make up the foundation of modern gospel music.

Tampa, who’s real name was either Hudson Woodbridge or Hudson Whittaker, continued with the blues, using a succession of excellent piano players including Joshua Altheimer, Black Bob Hudson and Blind John Davis. In the late 1930’s he abandoned the blues for a while, focusing on recording the pop and swing-type songs that he wrote.

Big Maceo was the perfect piano partner to bring Tampa back to the blues. The rapport between them was evident immediately. Perhaps it was the fact that Tampa, despite his name, was actually from Georgia himself, giving the two something in common amongst the mostly Mississippi born musicians who made up the Chicago blues scene at the time. For a few years, Tampa and Maceo, along with a

bassist and drummer, were among the most popular acts in and around Chicago, personifying what was to be known as the “Bluebird Beat”, the jaunty swing-influenced sound made popular by recordings on the Bluebird label.

There was still another factor contributed to the success of the Tampa/Maceo combination. On Tampa Red’s earlier recordings, he played an acoustic guitar, specifically a National Tri-cone resonator guitar with a gold colored finish. Early advertising promotes Tampa as “The Man With The Golden Guitar”. Tampa was a good, but not particularly full-sounding player. He played melodies and back-up with a short, glass bottleneck, mostly on the highest two strings. Consequently, pianists had to hold back in order for Tampa’s guitar to be heard, the piano being a much louder instrument than the guitar. By the time he hooked up with Maceo, though, Tampa had switched to the electric guitar, an archtop fitted with a DeArmond pickup. This meant that Maceo could play full-out, using all his power and strength, his left-hand bass rolls propelling and driving the music along.

In 1942, however, wartime rationing, and a strike by the American Federation of Musicians known as the Petrillo Ban, ended recording for three years. As a result, bookings for the group became scarce, and Maceo was forced to take a job as a railroad porter, working the trip from Chicago to San Francisco. Letters home to Hattie in Detroit show him asking her for ten or twenty dollars to buy a coat or for medicine, as his hard living and hard drinking were starting to take a toll on his health.

1945 brought an end to the war as well as an end to the Petrillo ban, and Maceo was once again in demand. For a while he teamed up with Big Bill Broonzy, recording and touring extensively. He also backed Sonny Boy Williamson, Jazz Gillum, and made more records with Tampa Red. Once again, Maceo was “the guy” on piano in Chicago.

Then, in the summer of 1946, the hard touring and hard drinking caught up with him. Maceo suffered a severe stroke that paralyzed his right side. He would never play the same again. A heartbreaking letter home to Hattie has him describing his attempts at rehabilitating himself, “so that I can be Big Maceo again.”

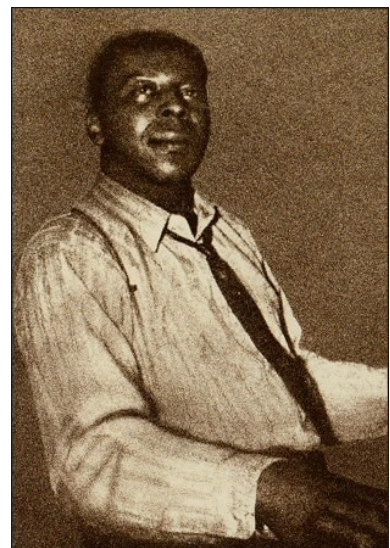
Curiously, his stroke did not end his recording career. Apparently the success of his records owed as much to his wistful, smoky, yet expressive voice as for his piano play-

ing. He made more records with Tampa Red, playing only the left hand part. On some records he would play the left hand part while Eddie Boyd would play the right. In 1949 he had his protégé, Little Johnny Jones, play piano while he just sang. Jones actually did a pretty good impression, though it wasn’t quite the same.

Eventually, with his records doing more poorly, and along with his health declining, Melrose dropped him and, with the exception of a few tracks cut in 1950 with the John Brim trio, Maceo playing left handed only, Big Maceo’s career came to an end. When Maceo died in Chicago of a heart attack in February of 1953, Hattie brought his body back to Detroit to be buried.

Maceo’s recording career lasted only five years with half of that leaving him idle due to the recording bans. Yet, what we have of his legacy has been long lasting. The next generation of Chicago blues pianists, Otis Spann, Sunnyland Slim, Henry Gray, Little Johnny Jones and others owed him a great debt and most were quick to acknowledge it.

Much of what we know of Maceo’s early life comes from interviews with Maceo’s older brother Roy Merriweather, who was a prominent pastor and community leader in Dayton, OH for over fifty years. Perhaps fittingly, Roy Merriweather’s son, Roy Merriweather, Jr. is a notable and successful jazz pianist who has recorded for Columbia, Capital and other labels. Merriweather, Jr, now in his seventies, looks nothing like his famous uncle, he’s slight of build and shorter, but in researching him for this article, one common factor appears in most writing about him; nearly every writer comments on the power of his left hand.



Seven Life Lessons From The World's Greatest Baseball Fan, John J. Adams



A legend is defined as a person who has become famous as the result of a unique characteristic or skill. [John J. Adams](#) of Cleveland, Ohio, has become a legend in the realm of major league baseball and is arguably the most dedicated fan ever.

Starting in 1973, at the age of 21, John began consistently attending home games for the major league Cleveland Indians baseball team. He comes with his large bass drum and beats it to get fans clapping and cheering at key points during a game. The tradition originated in the old Cleveland lakefront stadium and now continues in its modern-day replacement, Progressive Field.

In 44 years, John has only missed 44 games. Day in and day out, in the snow, sleet, rain and

sunshine, Cleveland baseball fans can count on John to lead them in cheering on their favorite team. In that time, John has become the only fan to have a bobblehead created in his honor. And the locally-owned Great Lakes Brewery has even [created a beer](#) named after John, called Rally Drum Red Ale®.

I heard about John's legendary status and came to know him personally as he lives across the street from me in Brecksville, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland. During the Indians' impressive recent 22-game [winning streak](#), John and I exited a game, and I noticed dozens of fans coming up to get their picture taken with him.

I sat down with John recently to learn more: How does one become a legend, and what life

lessons would he want to share with others? Below are a few lessons he outlined from our chat:

1. March to the beat of your own drum — discover your dreams, and have many of them.

John used to play a drum with the cheerleaders in high school to get a crowd going, and he knew he loved to play that role, so he continued on a grander scale with a major league team.

Beyond this, John also lived out his passions in his career (a day job that paid the bills) and through pursuing many roles in the volunteer sector. He believes passions can be found in all areas: work, hobbies, volunteering and relationships with friends and family members.

All passions should be lived out for fulfillment. You might say that John's advice can be summed up in the phrase "march to the beat of your own drum."

2. Don't listen to those who try to discourage you.

John states, "I guarantee someone will tell you it can't be done, or you're a fool. They're wrong. If everyone were afraid of being laughed at, we wouldn't have inventions like electricity. That's what life is; nothing existed until somebody did something."

3. Go out there and do it: Just get started.

Once dreams are identified, it's time to go out and start making them happen, one step at a time.

4. Don't give up — persist.

Some dreams take longer to fulfill; stick with it.

5. Becoming a legend is not intentional; it's a by-product of doing what you love.

John added, "I never set out to become famous or to become a legend. It just happened as I just set out to do what I loved."

6. Be flexible; things don't always go as planned. And be prepared for opportunities.

"You can plan all you want in life, but life tells you what is going to happen," John asserted. "Education gives you the tools to do multiple things and do what you want to do. My dad told me, 'everyone says they're waiting for their ship to come in, but if you don't have a dock ready, it never will.'"

7. Have fun and keep your priorities straight.

John stated that the reason he's kept going and has rarely missed a game in 44 years is not so much dedication as it is the "love of the game" and "having fun." He states, "If I ever stop having fun, I will stop going to the games."

It's important to have the right priorities. John says he has never missed work because of a game, but he has missed a game due to work or volunteer teaching. Life and work must be balanced.

As we ended our interview, John shared some stories about baseball games and people he has met over the past four decades. "I've met people from every continent except Antarctica -- because no penguins have come to our baseball games," he joked.

He recalled [Len Barker's perfect game](#) on May 15, 1981, and previous trips by the [Indians to the World Series](#) in 1997 and 2016. A difficult night was game seven of the [World Series in 2016](#), in which the Indians narrowly lost to the Chicago Cubs.

The Indians made it to the 2017 playoffs, but were eliminated in the final game of the Division Series by the New York Yankees. They [last won in 1948](#), making them the team with the [longest championship drought in major league baseball](#). Win or lose, you'll find John living out one of his many passions, banging his bass drum and leading fans to cheer on his favorite team.

GO TRIBE!!!!!!!!!!!!

THANK YOU CBS SPONSORS



Happy Holidays!