

One More Time

Prankster Trumpeter's Dream Comes True

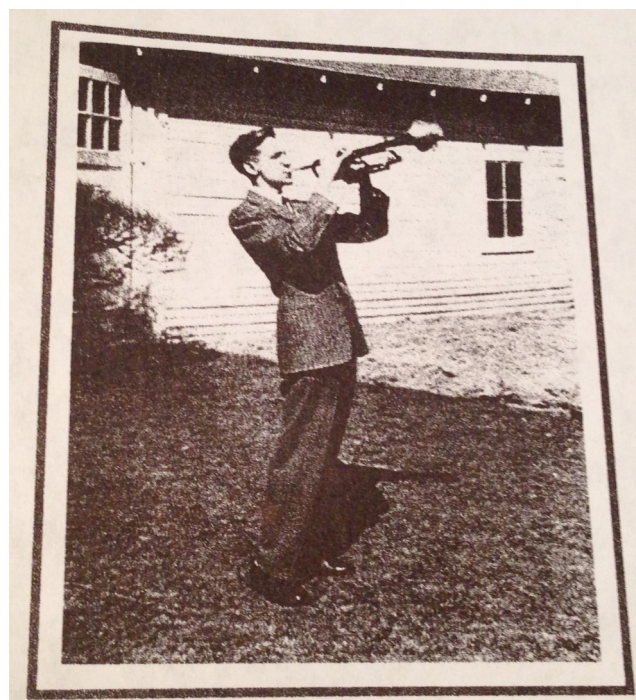
By Terry Sweek,
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As told to Linda Sweek

Swing has had a powerful hold on my life. Today, as most days, I've listened to Benny Goodman and Glen Miller. In a little while I'll put Tommy Dorsey on the CD player. Tonight, I'll bring out my trumpet and play a couple favorites— *Stardust* and *Tenderly*.

Back in 1947 I dreamed of playing like Harry James. Everything he did I wanted to do, especially playing gigs in Las Vegas and being married to the beautiful Betty Grable. James played sweeter than anyone else.

Harry James I wasn't. I was just an eager kid and a bit of a prankster. Somehow during a high school band practice I would persuade the trumpet and drum section to play an entirely different song than the one our band director, Mr. Whittey, would tell us to play. In addition, I could generally persuade at least the trumpet section to march out of formation on the practice field. The prank that really got to Mr. Whittey was the time when the boys in the band were instructed to wear a long black tie with their uniform for a concert performance. Instead, I got the trumpet and drum sections to wear black bow ties. Even though I frustrated Mr. Whittey, he took a liking to me. After practice, he would stop me and tell me I had real potential and should knock off the pranks.

Besides the high school band, I played in a five-piece band. We played at high school dances and weddings. The crowds loved us. Back then everybody knew about every member of every band. Playing the five-piece made me feel like one of the greats.



Terry Sweek in the 1940's

After high school, I joined the Coast Guard, and my trumpet playing took a back seat. Later, I became a husband, father then a fireman and just too busy to play.

Forty-five years went by before I brought my trumpet out of its case. Not a sound came out. I took the trumpet to the music shop where they fixed and cleaned it. My gleaming trumpet sounded sweet once again.

I played on my own for a while. Then I heard about an orchestra for those 55 years and older. I joined the orchestra and loved it. Not once did I get the trumpet section to play the wrong tune. Mr. Whittey would have been pleased.

Eventually an offshoot of the orchestra formed a big band, *One More Time*. It's a pretty good 16-piece band. Several of the members have played professionally with groups like Tommy Dorsey.

With the revival of swing, we are asked to play a lot of gigs.

Crowds seem to love us and we are often asked to come back. Recently, we were the main act at a Mardi Gras celebration where people paid \$25 a piece to see us. We've even been asked to play at a University of Iowa football halftime show.

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Last spring, *One More Time* played at the Rivera Ballroom in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin where Louis Armstrong once played. What a thrill it was for me to play where one of the greatest trumpet players of the big band era played! That dream to be like Harry James—well, some days it feels like a dream come true.



Terry Sweek with gleaming trumpet



One More Time big band