

Norrie Cox

by Rich Regent

Early jazz had been an important part of Norrie Cox's life since he first heard it in 1948. Norrie was known for his real British accent, distinguished a white goatee, clarinet playing and his commitment to the preservation of early New Orleans Jazz as a performing art. He was one of the very few teachers of authentic New Orleans jazz.

Norrie played an old Albert system hybrid of a clarinet, having unusual fingerings and strange keys, which he stored in a long black music case when not playing. This type of clarinet is named for Eugene Albert (a pupil of Adolphe Sax), who made changes and improvements to the keywork designed by Iwan Muller in 1809. In the United States the name "Albert" became synonymous with these instruments, where in England they were generally referred to as "simple" system. When Norrie's clarinet would cooperate, he could please and amaze the purist of Jazz and Dixieland listeners.

Norrie Cox Traditional New Orleans Jazzmen had gigs at the Bavarian Inn, the Uptowner, and at Linneman's Riverwest where he recently formed a trio to include Jack Grassel and Tom Girr. Norrie led the **Riverboat Ramblers**, his **Goodtime Jazz**, and when available was clarinetist with **Roy Rubinstein's Chicago Hot Six**. A complete biography of Norrie Cox is on his web site, which is still up and running, at <http://norriecox.com>. Norrie Cox was a recording artist for both Delmark Records and the GHB Label with his New Orleans Stompers and has made many CDs.

Norrie was a retired Engineer from Harley Davidson and Waukesha Engine and was married 53 years to Gwen. He is further survived by three children Robin, Martin, and Sally.

Norrie Cox loved helping young musicians. At Fairview Elementary School, Norrie spent a few days encouraging an autistic 4th grader, who had extreme withdrawal from human contact, to play the maracas in the classroom. Norrie, in his calm manor, would say, "We're going to try that again." Teachers were amazed at the positive results Norrie could achieve with patience and by playing his clarinet. Norrie's teenage band, **The Crescent City Stompers** performed in the historic Preservation Hall, for which he received many awards and citations for his volunteer work with young people. His musical encouragement made a difference in many lives. Norrie taught his students, "When you're playing a song, the most important parts are the beginning and the end. No one remembers the middle, but everyone remembers the beginning and the end." But for Norrie, we will remember the middle, too.