
In a Mist:
The Story of Bix Beiderbecke
by
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Leon "Bix" Beiderbecke died on August 6, 1931. The New York death certificate stated that he was 28 years old, had been a musician, had died from lobar pneumonia, and that he had been born March 10, 1903 in Davenport, Iowa.

He had not rated an obituary in the *New York Times*, but the *Davenport Democrat and Leader*, on August 7, 1931, gave his death front-page coverage. No one predicted than that a legend was in the making. He was to become an archetypal figure of the Jazz Age, destined to live as long as jazz itself.

Though Bix Beiderbecke certainly had a musical heritage, none of it was jazz. His great grandfather — the first Beiderbecke to come to Davenport — had been a professional organist and the leader of the Deutsche-Amerkanische Choral Society during the 1890s. Bix's mother, an accomplished pianist, gave lessons, and his uncle Al Petersen was a cornetist who led the town band. At the age of 12, Alice, Bix's older sister, was a semi-professional pianist.

A musical prodigy when he was only a toddler, Bix could pick out a tune on the piano note for note after a single hearing. He would even reproduce any "wrong notes" in the original. The local newspaper wrote him up as a celebrity. But his phenomenal ear kept him from learning how to read music. It was so easy for him to play by ear he simply did not take the time and trouble to master the printed note. His lack of formal musical training was to plague him for the rest of his life.

During his early years Bix spent much of his time at the piano. His mother and others tried to give him lessons, but they all gave up in despair. He persisted in playing only by ear. Such a stubborn streak might account for much that is original in his music because he constantly experimented with unorthodox ideas of harmony and melody, but it showed Bix's parents he lacked the discipline for the formal study of music. They soon gave up their hopes of his someday becoming a concert pianist. Nor did the classroom much interest Bix. His only loves besides music were baseball and tennis. He just would not concentrate long enough to meet the requirements of routine schoolwork.

Although he grew into a healthy, good-looking, and well-liked young man, Bix was quiet and somewhat withdrawn. Perhaps he suffered from a lack of self-esteem because most people judged him a good-for-nothing. Because of his inability to learn piano from his mother's formal lessons, he considered himself a failure as a musician. By age 14 he was still in the fifth grade.

At the time Bix was experiencing the difficulties of growing up, another young man, Alfonso Capone, was getting to be quite well known in New York City, especially with the police department. He was later to move to Chicago. In a New Orleans home for street waifs, Louis Armstrong had just been given a trumpet to play in the home's band. Both Capone and Armstrong would put their particular stamp on the times, and Bix was to be directly influenced by both. Capone provided the places, and created the atmosphere, in which men like Armstrong and Bix Beiderbecke would play their tunes — and do their drinking. The music would make Bix famous, the booze would cut short his life.

One day in 1917, probably as a joke, Bix's father brought home a new record. It was a number by the Original Dixieland Jazz

Band, featuring the cornet of one Nick La Rocca. Bix listened to it hour after hour, transfixed by La Rocca's playing. Bix's parents were aghast. It made them anything but happy to see their son so taken by jazz. Even his cornet-playing Uncle Al cautioned Bix: jazz musicmaking was no career for a man.

It is not difficult to understand why jazz was held in such low esteem in the early part of the century. Its roots run deep in two soils, growing out of the rhythms of Africa and the complex harmonies of Europe. Yet jazz is an American art form; America provided the common ground upon which these two roots could join in a single growth. The impetus for that growth came from the black man, who used jazz much as he had used his hymns and work-songs in the previous century. Dispossessed in the white man's world, jazz was almost the only thing he could call his own. And as the average white man in those days would probably never think of inviting a black into his home, so jazz musicians — black or white — were unwelcome. To a small town, middle-class family, a son's decision to embark upon a career in the world of jazz was shocking, practically scandalous. He might just as well have decided to be a pickpocket.

From about 1887 to 1917 New Orleans was Mecca for the jazz musician. Storyville, the city's notorious red-light district, employed more musicians than any other area in the country. Here the musicians found a warm welcome — in brothels and saloons. After America entered World War I in 1917 the military authorities succeeded in putting the Storyville prostitutes out of business. There was a naval base close by, and the military felt that the serviceman should not be exposed to such sordid influences.

In a more far-reaching fit of moral righteousness, federal lawmakers about this time decided to try the "noble experiment." Prohibition, the Volstead Act of 1918, became the answer to a racketeer's prayer. Bootleg-liquor traffic soon brought millions into the coffers of organized crime; Al Capone obtained the liquor concession in Chicago where he gained personal control of most brothels and speakeasies; and gangsters became the jazz musician's most appreciative audience. Many a player would find a $50 bill stuffed in his horn.

A young cornet player, Louis Armstrong by name, was only one of the many musicians who left Storyville to come North. Blacks were leaving every part of the South to work in the war-related industries of Northern cities like Chicago, and soon the windy city was to have the largest black population in the United States — some 800,000, many of them jazz musicians or enthusiasts. There were no "mixed" bands in Chicago yet, but black and white musicians did get together on their own time to play their own brand of jazz for themselves or anybody who cared to listen. As far as the middle-class white population was concerned, jazz players stood on the lowest rung of the social ladder, working for gangsters and socializing with "colored people," but it was just these influences that gave the art of jazz its peculiarly American flavor.

Given the social stigma of the jazz-player, Bix's parents refused again and again to buy him the cornet he wanted in order to play the music they disdained. Finally, he took eight dollars he had managed to save from his allowance to buy a beat up cornet from a local hock shop. He practiced by the hour while listening to the music of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band,

Young Bix and his mother (from the Bix Beiderbecke Room courtesy Davenport Public Library).

trying to sound like Nick La Rocca, and working much harder than he had ever worked at the piano. Soon he could pick out such hits of the day as "Margie" and imitate La Rocca's solos on pieces like "Tiger Rag" and "Skeleton Jangle."

His fingering and playing of the cornet would have seemed highly unorthodox to a trained musician, but his style gave the music an extraordinary impact. He made every note beautiful not only in its relation to the musical line, but also in and of itself. He produced one of the loveliest sounds ever to come out of any kind of brass instrument, a sound all his own, a sound many other musicians would one day copy.

By June of 1921, Bix was playing to excursion parties aboard the river steamers *Majestic* and *Capitol*, and taking jobs throughout the Tri-City area. He neglected his education more and more, and when he failed to graduate from high school, his parents enrolled him at Lake Forest Academy in Illinois for the term beginning September, 1921. Lake Forest was a military academy meant to "straighten out" young men unfit for regular schooling who were not bad enough for reform schools. His parents hoped Lake Forest would help Bix to complete a respectable education and forget the crazy notion of making jazz his life's work.

The academy was good enough, but it was too close to Chicago, and instead of forgetting jazz, Bix thrust himself further into the night world of big-city music. Before long he was breaking curfew at Lake Forest, sneaking out after bed-check to go into Chicago and hang around places like the Black Cat Room in the Edgewater Beach Hotel. There he met Jimmy Caldwell, who soon asked Bix to join his five-piece ensemble. Bix also met such jazz musicians as trumpeter Paul Mares, clarinetist Eddie Edwards, saxophonist Don Murray, and many others. He came to know them and, eventually, to sit in with them.

Because he played and drank until the early hours of the morning, he had little time left for sleep. Dead-tired, often hung-over in class, he found it harder than ever to "learn" anything. The Beiderbeckes might have had better luck had they picked a school somewhere else. Although his "scholastic" life was not a total loss — he did play in the school band and was active at football and tennis — his progress in the classroom was non-existent, and his miserable grades contributed to his expulsion when school authorities inevitably caught him sneaking out after curfew.

For the next 18 months or so he jobbed with local orchestras in Chicago and towns throughout Iowa and Illinois. He played with Jimmy Caldwell in "Caldwell's Jazz Jesters" and with the "Orpheum Times Revue" at the Orpheum Theatre in Chicago. He was beginning to become well-known as a very talented musician and to gain respect in music circles, but although he was getting experience, he still played only by ear — music theory remained a mystery to him.

He became a member of the Wolverine Orchestra in January, 1924. The Wolverines were a group of highly-talented musicians who made a good living playing for university dances. The orchestra made a deal with Gennett Record Company of Richmond, Indiana to cut a few records. The first two, made on February 18, 1924, were "Fidgety Feet" and "Jazz Me Blues." Hearing these today, it is clear that Bix was a standout player — he carried the group.

Bix left the Wolverines in October, 1924 to join the Jean Goldkette Victor Recording Orchestra in Detroit. Here was an orchestra with a national reputation, but Bix soon descovered he could not play the way he wanted under Eddie King, the orchestra's pear-shaped, roly-poly recording director who actually disliked jazz. He refused to let Bix do much improvisation. By December 8, Goldkette let Bix go because of his inability to read music. He could only do the highly improvisatory jazz parts, and jazz was only a small part of the orchestra's repertoire. Jean Goldkette's parting advice to Bix was that he learn the technical side of music and, more importantly, learn to read it. In the end, the stint with Goldkette was not the happiest of experiences.

Bix, now 22 and discouraged, returned to Davenport to tell his parents he was ready to finish his education. He enrolled at the University of Iowa as an "unclassified" student. Immediately he joined an Iowa City band called "Bromo" Sulser and His Collegians. He was paid seven dollars a night. And he began to experiment with the piano, sketching a composition that would be called "In a Mist."

Seven of his 14 credit hours at Iowa were related to music. He wanted to add more music and drop the courses he was not interested in. Of course, he got a resounding "No" from the administration, as well as demands that he take military training, physical education, and freshman lectures. He simply refused. When he and a group of his more riotous friends, including football player Bill Flechenstein, got into a brawl after a night of heavy drinking at Reicharts Cafe, the university officials found their excuse — Beiderbecke and Flechenstein were expelled. Bix's college career had lasted less than three weeks.

Bix hung around Iowa City for a while, then he headed east for New York, where he would play with a very well-known group called "The Ramblers." While he was in New York, he played with top-notch musicians, but his excessive partying and drinking did little good for his health. Soon he felt the urge to return to Chicago where he could again be part of that jazz scene. There, in Charlie Straight's band, he played with the great black musicians who were pouring into the city, and unlike his stint with Goldkette, the time spent with Charlie Straight was very satisfying.

September, 1925 found Bix with Frankie "Tram" Trumbauer in an orchestra led by Adrian Rollini that played at the Arcadia Ballroom in St. Louis. In looks as well as life-styles, Bix and Tram were polar opposites, but their musical collaboration

The Wolverine Orchestra of Chicago with Bix Beiderbecke seated fourth from right (from the Bix Beiderbecke Room courtesy Davenport Public Library).

greatly benefited both men. Tram played a C-melody saxophone with a whimsical tone suited both to Bix and to the times. Bix's cornet and Tram's sax worked together in a way that made Bix always sound deadly serious, a foil for Tram's light touch.

Tram was a fantastic musician who appreciated and helped Bix whenever he could. He taught him some music theory and helped, eventually, to steer him into two of the best-paying and most famous bands of the day — once more with Jean Goldkette and, finally, with Paul Whiteman. But Tram's good-natured efforts to teach him the technical side of music may have only hastened Bix's downfall. Because he had never learned to sight read music with any degree of facility, it was killing work for Bix as Tram coached him through the new score Whiteman gave his men each week. Unable to conform to and feel comfortable with printed music, his physical and emotional health deteriorated as his musical and psychological frustration became more intense. He felt himself doomed never to realize the elusive goal of playing his music in his own way. But at least the jobs Tram got Bix allowed him to buy a decent grade of the bootleg liquor that was steadily killing him.

Despite his difficulties with printed music, Bix had gotten on well with Charlie Straight. When real jazz playing and improvisation were called for, Bix could

Bix, fourth from left, on tour with the Jean Goldkette Orchestra (from the Bix Beiderbecke Room courtesy Davenport Public Library).

handle it. Despite, too, his lack of formal musical training and his total immersion in the shady subculture of jazz, Bix developed his abiding fondness for classical music while he lived in St. Louis. He began to use his acute musical ear to delve into piano improvisation based on conventional classical harmony. He was especially fascinated by Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, Gustav Holst, and Igor Stravinsky. More and more such non-jazz composers were to influence his improvisational thinking.

The St. Louis band broke up in the spring of 1926, but Bix — with Tram — was invited to return to the Jean Goldkette Orchestra. This time around, things would go better for Bix. Goldkette's group was, after all, probably the finest white orchestra of its time, with first-class musicians who could play both hot and sweet. Their jazz arrangements packed a wallop comparable to the most widely-known black orchestras.

But Bix continued his heavy drinking, and he ate very poorly. Musicians are not known for helping each other with drinking problems. In fact, drinking seemed to be as much a part of their lives as their music. George Avakian, a noted jazz historian, relates how Bix lived during an engagement at Hudson Lake, where he shared a broken-down cottage with Pee Wee Russell. The colorful clarinetest from St. Louis

was spiritually closer to Bix than the more business-like Trumbauer. That is, neither Bix nor Pee Wee cared much about anything except playing their music and keeping a 24-hour supply of liquor on hand at all times. They got their booze for two bucks a gallon from a pair of bare-footed hags who kept the Prohibition agents away with a dozen vicious dogs and a couple of iron shovels. The shovels were also used to dig up the crocks they buried behind the henhouse in which they lived. Bix and Pee Wee amassed a collection of empty liquor jugs and — the remnants of their staple diet — empty baked bean and sardine cans. Their back porch sagged under the weight of 30 or 40 quart bottles of milk, souring by degrees. They always meant to leave a note for the milkman, but never found pencil and paper together at the same time.

The Buick they bought did not run. They pushed it to the shack and used its hood to prop up a mirror for their morning's shave. As they explained to friends: if you live in the country, you've got to have a car.

"I couldn't tell you if there were any rugs under the dirt," Mezz Mezzrow recalled of the shack, "but the room did have an upright piano with a bad list to the keyboard." It was this piano that enabled Bix to explore the intricacies of harmony. He was beginning to split his musical personality: European form and discipline had started to encroach upon the freedom of the New Orleans music that had been his first great influence. Soon Bix was to record his completed solo "In a Mist," in which the influence of the American romantic composer Edward MacDowell wins out over jazz, though certainly jazz does not disappear altogether.

Avakian suggests that "In a Mist" is crucial to an understanding of Bix. As one probes into both man and musician, the title of this composition seems more and more appropriate. Bix never got out of a musical mist in his restless striving for something that always eluded him (though what wonderful things his search produced!). Embittered by the demands of a commerical musical world, a world on which he was never wholly to turn his back, Bix found himself deeper and deeper in a mist, depending increasingly on alcohol to lift him through each disappointment.

The only other relief was the playing itself. His early days with the Wolverines at Princeton dances had earned him many lasting fans who brought him back to play again and again. Yet he seldom talked about music with his friends. Instead, the conversation turned to subjects like the novels of P.G. Wodehouse, which were great favorites of his. He would quote long passages from any of the 48 books, correctly identifying page numbers and characters.

Bix had little to do with women. The bond among jazz musicians tended to be fraternal and exclusive. But, because he was handsome and a natural gentleman, women found Bix quite attractive despite his reticence. Their mutual love of the piano brought Bix together with a Princeton cheerleader, and one girl from St. Louis claimed that Bix had come close to marrying her. But it had just not worked out: he had as little interest in "serious" long-term relationships as he had had in the formal study of music.

By and by, the hard realities of finance overtook the Goldkette band. Reluctantly, in the fall of 1927, most of its members were let go. Bix and Tram, with some of the others, joined the Paul Whiteman organization.

For some years Whiteman had been known as "The King of Jazz," a title that did

not sit well with the true lover of jazz. Although, in a real sense, it can be said that the slickly orthodox Whiteman never made a jazz record, he always had great jazz musicians in his orchestra. They included the likes of the Dorsey brothers, guitarist Eddie Lang, clarinetist Bill Challis, trombonist Jack Teagarden, trumpeter Bunny Berigen, vibes player Red Norvo, and the cymbal pounder who doubled as singer, Bing Crosby. Whiteman's was the largest, best-known, and best-paying orchestra of its time. His payroll often ran to $10,000 a week, and payroll records show that Bix was paid $200 a week in those days, a handsome renumeration indeed. (Bing Crosby was paid only $150.)

Today the only Whiteman records sought by collectors are those from 1927 to 1929, which include Bix and Bing.

During this period, the grinding tempo of learning score after score took its toll on Bix, whose drinking — amazingly enough — had increased. In addition to his heavy schedule with Whiteman, Bix made a number of records under his own leadership in October, 1927. "Bix and His Gang" included Bill Rank (trombone), Don Murray (clarinet), Adrian Rollini (bass sax), Frank Signorelli (piano), Howdy Quicksell (banjo), and Chauncey Morehouse (drums) — all top flight musicians but not particularly steeped in jazz. Yet these were probably the freest and least inhibited records Bix was ever to make. Their style has the loose and improvisitional quality that the public calls Dixieland. Although there are good solos and solid ensemble work by other musicians, one realizes today that Bix alone carried the stamp of greatness. In all the recordings, Bix does the work of three or four men. He often plays the responsive phrases to his own melodic lines, also blowing explosions of pure rhythm in his eagerness to kick the band along. With real jazz men, Bix would not have needed to work so hard. The holes he plugs up himself would not have been there. Nevertheless, it is a special thrill to hear how he compensates for the shortcomings of his players.

Beiderbecke home, now on the National Register, at 1934 Grand Avenue in Davenport (photo by Alan Axelrod).

On February 4, 1927 Bix recorded "Singing the Blues," which, along with King Oliver's cornet choruses on "Dippermouth Blues" and Johnny Dodd's clarinet solo on "High Society," is one of the three most celebrated solos in jazz history. Avakian describes it as a "solo of intense, brooding beauty, carefully built up to a typical tumbling break in the middle, with a surprise break explosion after it." There is hardly a jazz musician who has not learned it by heart.

Unfortunately one hears relatively little of Bix on Whiteman's commercial recordings because the 78 r.p.m. discs last only about three minutes and he had to share

the solo spots with many other talented musicians. People who have heard Bix live insist that his records do not do him justice. Early recording techniques could not capture the full essence of his sound, so that it is very difficult to judge him on the basis of what he left. The recordings made by Louis Armstrong during this period have, on the other hand, fared better with critics because he surrounded himself with less talented musicians. Certainly both Armstrong and Bix were great musicians, but Armstrong did not have to share the spotlight. It is all too easy to denigrate Bix's work with Whiteman: too little space for Bix to stretch out, overblown arrangements, unsuitable material to play, inadequate recording techniques. This criticism is unjust, at least during the orchestra's Victor recording period. Critics tend to judge Paul Whiteman in terms of his commercial success rather than on the actual merits of music. Whiteman, after all, did not set out to create a jazz ensemble. His was a popular dance orchestra,composed of the finest musicians of their day outside the classical symphony orchestra. Jazzmen became of necessity an integral part of Whiteman's kaleidascope, and as a musical formula Whiteman's worked very well. The orchestra played with a polish, an euphony, and an engaging rhythmic lift that made people listen to popular music. Many of these Victor records have a sound and balance to be deeply admired, as they were by most musicians of Whiteman's day.

Bix's life with Whiteman was very good for a while. More and more he turned to the piano and the possibilities of modern harmony. He was able also to master some very difficult passages on cornet solos, as evidenced by his solo in the second movement of George Gershwin's *Concerto in F*. But when Whiteman's band left Victor and started recording for Columbia records, Bix's sound suffered. Columbia's recording equipment could not capture the sound as well as Victor's had, and Bix's cornet lost its crispness and fidelity.

It is hard to say when Bix's drinking ceased to be only "heavy" and became an addiction. The Whiteman band left on its 1928 grand tour, and Bix was again drinking more than he should. A gentle man, always ready to praise good musicians, unwilling to knock the bad ones, Bix's one failing was alcohol. By 1929 he seemed at the edge of the precipice. Whiteman's radio show was packed with new tunes every week. Bix had to work harder than ever learning Whiteman's arrangements, the kind of technical and commercial work he disliked most. His drinking got so bad that Paul Whiteman sent him home to Davenport for a rest cure. He kept him on full salary for a couple of months, then on half pay for another four months. Finally, Whiteman realized Bix would never return and, reluctantly, took him off the payroll completely.

Back in Davenport, Bix was in bad shape. His family was solicitous, but also ashamed. Callers were discouraged and, as Bix seldom ventured out, he became more and more isolated. The family considered alcoholism, like jazz, a social taboo, and it felt Bix's condition was a blight on its social respectability. The family doctor suggested Bix be hospitalized and treated under strict supervision: Bix's brother drove him to Dwight, Illinois for treatment at the Keely Institute, known for its great success in treating alcoholism. He entered as a voluntary patient and was free to leave any time. But Bix did remain at the Institute for five weeks — a week longer than the normal stay. When he left, on November 18, 1929,

the doctors had to admit that his progress had been slow and his condition was still serious.

That December Bix appeared with a number of orchestras playing in various Iowa and Illinois towns, including Chicago. His chief engagement was with the Jimmy Hardin Orchestra playing at the Danceland Ballroom in Davenport. As if it were his epitaph, Hardin usually billed Bix as "the former cornetist with Paul Whiteman."

Indeed, Whiteman, ever-understanding, invited Bix to rejoin his orchestra when the two met again in April, 1930. His chair, Whiteman said, would always be waiting, any time Bix wanted it. But Bix realized that he no longer had the endurance or the stability to do the kind of commercial work Whiteman wanted. He had to decline the generous offer.

Still, he refused to give up music entirely. He joined the Dorsey Brothers band, playing for Princeton dances and smokers, for fraternity dances at Williams College in Massachusetts, and even in some recording sessions.

Then Bix got a particularly good break for a comeback. He was invited to be part of "The Camel Pleasure Hour" broadcast weekly over NBC radio. But, despite the Keely Institute, he had resumed drinking, and with a vengeance. During the broadcast of October 8, when Bix rose to play one of his famous solos, nothing came out of his horn. He was unable to recall what had happened. Everything went blank, he said.

A very few days later he was on his way back to Davenport, lonely and scared.

Yet even this crisis he somehow managed to weather, and by December, Bix was feeling well enough to visit friends. To his mother's dismay, he accepted a job playing in Trave O'Hearn's band. By mid-January, 1931 Bix seemed well on the road

DEAD IN NEW YORK

Picture of the 18-year-old Beiderbecke used in the obituary of the August 7, 1931 Davenport Democrat and Leader *(photo by Alan Axelrod).*

to recovery. When Paul Whiteman played on January 17 at Danceland in Davenport, he paid Bix a lengthy tribute and, after much coaxing, talked him into a solo. The musicians listened, rapt in Beiderbecke's music, and afterward Whiteman once more offered Bix a chair. Once more Bix said he was not up to it.

Note on Sources

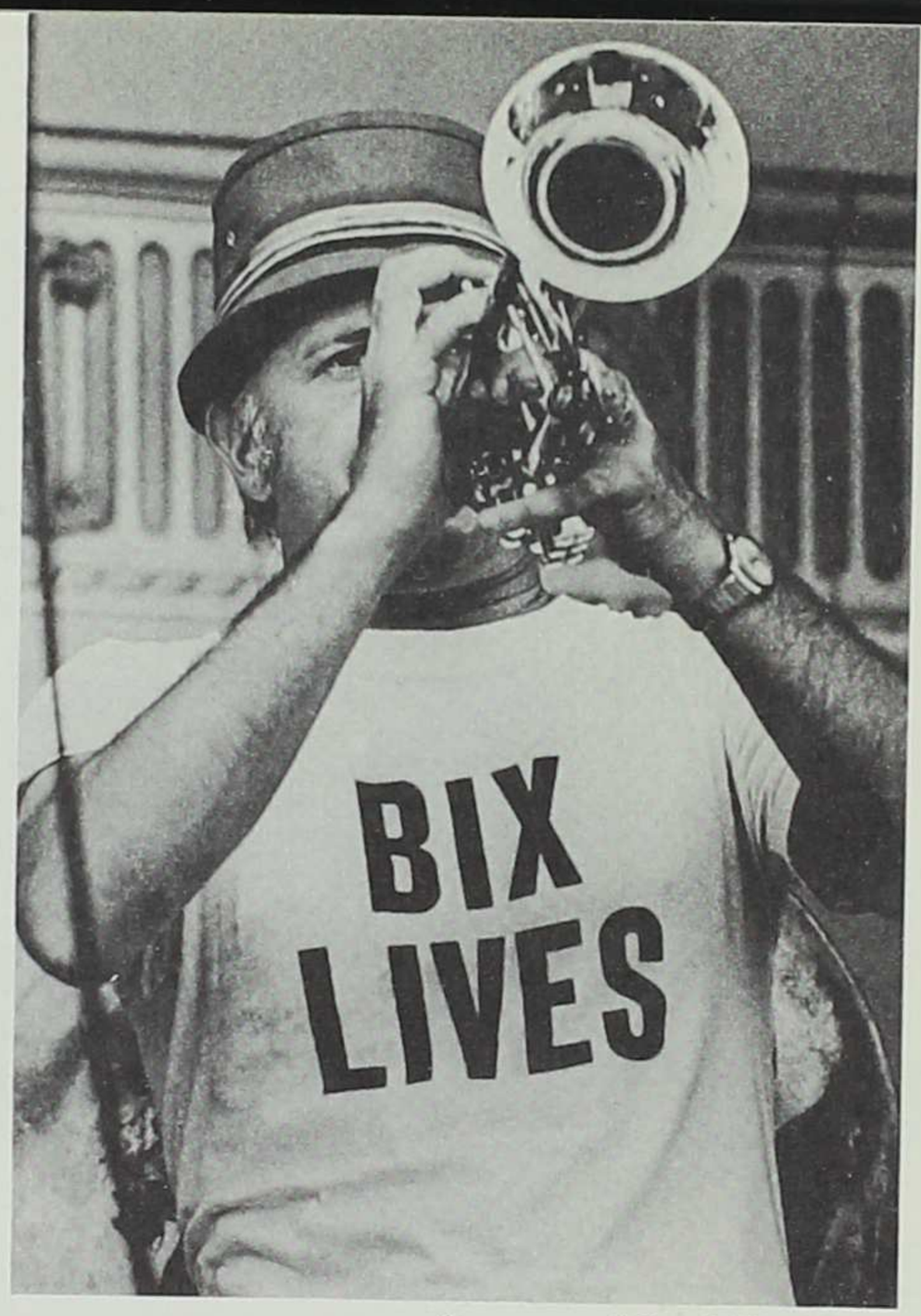
The principal sources for this article are Ralph Berton's *Remembering Bix* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974) and *Bix, Man and Legend* by Richard M. Sudhalter and Philip R. Evans (New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1974). Also helpful were "The Bix Beiderbecke Story," written by George Avakian as liner notes to volumes one through three of Columbia Records' retrospective collection of Bix's music (LP Cl 844-6), and Max Harrison's essay on Bix Beiderbecke for Milestone Records' (LP M-47019).

But by March Bix decided he was ready for another crack at New York. He joined the Dorsey Brothers for more college dances, and on April 18 he copyrighted two piano pieces, "Flashes" and "In the Dark." Bill Challis tried to get Bix to join the Casa Loma band, a very slick, precisioned, polished outfit of the kind that had never suited Bix. Although he had many nagging doubts about his ability to read the complicated arrangements, he gave the band a look.

That the members of the Casa Loma Orchestra were mostly ex-Goldkette players did not boost Bix's self-confidence. Many of the orchestra's arrangements were based on ones Bix had played quite often, but he just did not have the confidence to cut through them. After four nights of constant practice, Bix gave up. And quit. And drank.

And for the first time in his life, he was broke. The money he had sent home to his sister to invest in bank stock had been lost in the market crash. Playing dates were few. Still he managed to keep his room at the 44th Street Hotel. He turned more and more to classical music and to playing the piano. He spent much time with Bill Challis, working on the score of "In a Mist" and other piano pieces Bix had sketched through the years. The going was slow; they had a jug which had to be hidden in the bathtub from Challis's sister, who shared the apartment.

His friends do not find it pleasant to recall Bix's last year — one fast, downhill slide: a few commercial dates; an ill-fated attempt to take an all-star band to Europe; a move to Queens; pneumonia. It developed from a cold he had been trying to cure for years. On August 6, 1931 Charles Beiderbecke, Bix's brother in Davenport, took a long-distance call from Frankie Trumbauer in New York. Tram told him to come to



(courtesy of Quad-City Times)

New York at once. Bix was in trouble. But by the time Charles and his mother reached New York, it was too late. Dr. John James Hoberski had pronounced Bix dead.

He listed the cause of death as lobar pneumonia with edema of the brain, but privately he ventured the opinion that death was hastened by the effects of alcohol. Bix's mother and brother took his body back to Davenport with them, and he was buried in Oakdale Cemetery after one of the largest funerals anyone could remember.

A great but undisciplined musical talent, his music born of his life's disorder, Bix Beiderbecke is an archetype of the jazz era. "Bix lives" is becoming a well-known phrase in Iowa — especially around Davenport where yearly jazz festivals are held in his honor. Of course he "lives" only through the more than 200 recordings and the wealth of memories he left. All things considered, maybe that is not such a bad "monument." □