

Happy Thanksgiving!



Newsletter of the

SAN FRANCISCO



Happy Thanksgiving!



ACCORDION CLUB

November 2005

The Accordion: San Francisco's Official Instrument



President's Message

Columbus Day Parade: Val Kieser and Dick Schiller put together another successful parade adventure. Our float was awarded fourth place honors, just missing the money by one level...maybe next year? Everyone who participated enjoyed the afternoon, and the accordion music brought smiles to the thousands of spectators who lined the sun-drenched streets of old North Beach, what a great day!

Our monthly meeting on October 16 is in the books, and goes down as one of the best ever. We had authentic Russian folk music with Grigoriy Krumik, great American standards with Ron Harris, tasty accordion jazz with John Marquette, and some special arrangements of our favorites with Frank Montoro on his lightweight Giulietti Stroller which Vince Cirelli recently amplified. All of the music was expertly

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NOVEMBER 20 MEETING

A Great Program!

BART BENINCO from Petaluma
HARRY GAY AND DON GARIBALDI
from Stockton

BOB SMITH demonstrating
a 1919 Galleazzi accordion that he restored
(see photo and article on page 3)

RON BORELLI AND HIS SIS,
CAROLE (vocalist)

Warm-up players

JIM FIRPO AND LEE WOODALL

We are fortunate to have tremendous talent within our club!

About our November Players . . .

BART BENINCO of Petaluma studied with Rudy Molinaro (a good friend of John Molinari, Sr.) in Bridgeport, Connecticut. From an article by Kris Nelson in *The Classical Free Reed*: "Having been part of the Molinaro Accordion Orchestra in his youth, Bart performed at Town Hall and Carnegie Hall in New York; Orchestra Hall in Chicago; and the International Accordion Festival at Hunter College." He also performed in the orchestra for a performance of Luciano Pavarotti before 12,000 people in Sacramento's ARCO Arena. Bart is one of our perennially favorite players and a great guy to boot!



RON BORELLI is a popular performer using accordion, piano and synthesizer as his chosen musical instruments. Also, as a band leader, his orchestra continues to perform throughout the SF Bay Area. Ron has performed

with the SF Symphony, the SF Opera, the Berkeley Symphony, Theatre Works, and with the Three Tenors. CAROLE BORELLI, vocalist and Ron's sister, started performing with her father's band, the Al Borelli Orchestra. She sings with a big band, an octet, and a jazz combo, and continues to perform with her brother. Her performances include concerts, television and private parties. She has recorded with many SF Bay Area artists, including an original song for the 1998 Olympics.

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NEXT MEETING: Sunday, November 20, 2005, 2:00 p.m. at the South San Francisco Senior Center, 33 Arroyo Drive, South SF

Our Own Treasure, Joe Smiell, Turns a Youthful Eighty

A GREAT ONE AMONG US

I wonder how many of us have had the life-changing experience of having a personal involvement with a great personage—famous or not—who, through his or her wisdom, talent and humanitarianism, changed our thinking, gave new life to our being and ultimately defined the route of our life's journey. In our accordion world, we wonder how it would be to have known the great ones such as Frosini, Magnante, Galla-Rini (who is still with us and many of us do know), the Brothers Deiro, and others who, through their very being, could inspire and motivate us to achieve a level higher than ourselves alone.

Well, in our San Francisco Accordion Club, we are blessed to have a man who has opened—and continues to open—our hearts and minds to the art of learning and performing *music* in ways of which few teachers or musicians are even aware, much less teach.

Joe Smiell, a musician's musician, has had his own musical idol—Maria Lert (yes Maria was a man, not a woman), who was Toscanini's opera director—from whom Joe derived a large amount of his knowledge of music. Joe promised Lert that he would make a lifelong mission of imparting his musical knowledge to anyone who was interested, without fee. And that is what Joe has done and continues to do, to our enormous benefit.



The most inspiring lessons Joe teaches are about subtleties that that normally only very seasoned symphony players know, such as very precise phrasing (how many of us have heard the “ti-a, ti-a” phrasing lessons?), dynamics, and how to begin and end notes—things that are almost never taught, and especially to accordion students, but that make notes on the paper come alive as beautiful music. A handwritten letter to the ACE Ensemble from a retired member of the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra drove the point home. This man had never met Joe but paid the highest compliment for Joe's conducting of the ACE Ensemble, specifically how *musical* it sounded, in ways normally reserved for experienced symphony players. He wrote, “I watched him (Joe); he actually puts the breathing into the music when he conducts. Just who is this man Joe Smiell? What a treasure. Do you realize what you have here? Where has he been?”

In his personal performances—from symphonic orchestras, to movies, to Broadway shows and countless other venues, on the various instruments he has mastered—Joe has shown how the proper performance of music can touch the spirit of audience and performer alike.

Joe is the most prolific writer of music one can imagine. He is constantly under commission to write for symphonies, dance troupes, musical events all over the world. He is the consummate expert on ethnic music, with German and Eastern European music being among his favorites. It was Joe Smiell who brought the Oktoberfest to the US, following WWII, originally to help raise money for German orphanages and also help mend relations between the US and Germany. The Oktoberfest subsequently spread to other parts of the world as well, including Japan, where Joe's Bavarian band was commissioned to play for several years in a row.

Many times, Joe has told us it's a shame that Mozart and other classical composers never knew the accordion: they would have gone crazy over its dynamic capabilities. The bellows afford accordionists the means to make the music sigh, cry, laugh in ways that no other instrument can, and Joe devotes his life to teaching us all how to do it.

Joe hand-writes all the parts to all the music for his bands and for the ACE ensemble. (ACE alone now has over 500 such pieces, most in 10 parts.) At first, people are unsure about reading Joe's manuscript, but before long they are exclaiming about the warmth and personality the handwritten manuscript affords over the printed music.

One of Joe's pet endeavors is the teaching of Austrian/Slovenian button box (“*Steirische Harmonika*”), which he taught himself to play many years ago. Since 1993 he has conducted two button box camps per year, up in the high Sierras. While most button box players read an artificial rendering of the music that omits all phrasing and dynamics, Joe insists that his students read real music, which he handwrites for each button box camp.

One could go on and on about Joe Smiell, a real genius and gentleman in our midst. He fought in two major wars and came home alive, and we are the ones who are richer for it.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY JOE !!!

To experience the magic of Joe's teaching and the joy of ensemble performance under his direction, be sure to attend Galla-Rini Camp 2005, which takes place July 23-28 in San Rafael, CA

Music Director: Joe Smiell

See camp information elsewhere in this newsletter.

October Meeting Notes

I was surely sorry to miss this meeting! I hear it was one of the best ever! I thank **Rosemary Armanino** and **Peter Di Bono** for providing me with the following information about the meeting.

The warmup accordionist was our One and Only **Dennis Stoscher**. President **Peter Di Bono** was MC for the day.

On the program were **Grigoriy Krumik** on Russian bayan, with his friend **Clark Welsh** on balalaika and domra. They played a lyrical dance, *Karapet, Karabeniki, and Prodolinshke*.

Ron Harris played *I'm in the Mood for Love, It's Been a Long, Long time, and Once in a While*. **John Marquette** from the South Bay played *Georgia, Satin Doll, Blue World, Violets for Your Furs, Ecstasy* and, for an encore demanded by the audience, *These Foolish Things Remind Me of You*. John played a Sem Reedless Accordion and received a warm response from the audience, who also loved his choice of music.



John Marquette

Frank Montoro, a retired teacher and school principal, told about **Vince Cirelli** installing a microphone pickup in his *Giulietti* stroller accordion. Frank played a bolero medley, *La*

Rosita, Here's That Rainy Day, and Biondina Mia Mazurka.

For the funny coincidences of the drawing, see the President's message on the front page!

Following the break, featuring another winning spread of food prepared by the Benedettos, the meeting resumed.

The second half of the program featured **Frank Lima**, a.k.a. **The Great Morgani**, in full costume (see photo), playing *Dancing Cheek to Cheek*; some music from *Carmen*, and some Piazzola numbers. Frank has been playing for 54 years, including 9 years as a street performer in Santa Cruz. He has 110 costumes and 38 accordions!

The Finale featured our own Pres. **Peter Di Bono** with **Harriet Newhart** on violin and **Steve Hanson** on bass. They played *Je Te*

Jamming with Jim and Ed

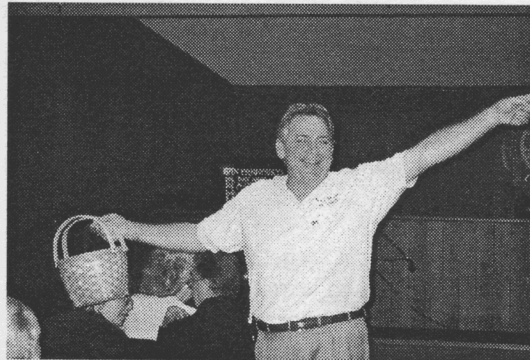


Olga and Bat Cava

Veux, Ti Voglio Tanto Bene, Czardas, Forgotten Dreams, Salut d'Amour, Begin the Beguine and a medley from *Showboat*. I hear their performance was very moving and they got a standing ovation. I'm so sorry I had to miss this entire show! Val



Frank Montoro



Peter & the Drawing

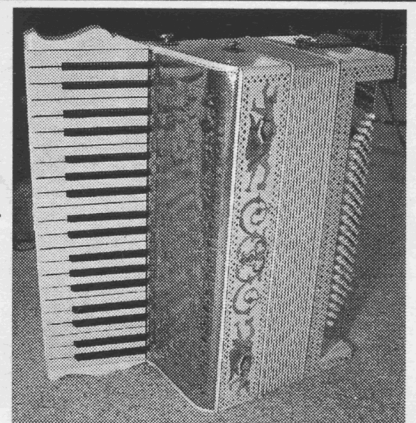


Gene and Judy Dale



Johan Gullmes & Friend

A Very Interesting Accordion Restoration. . .
 . . . was done recently by **Bob Smith**. The accordion is a **Galleazzi & Sons** manufactured in 1919 in San Francisco, belonging to **Frank Schlotter**. The accordion has beautiful abalone shell angel pictures on the front. The grille says "Galleazzi & Sons, S.F." According to *The Golden Age of the Accordion*, the address was 478 Jackson, San Francisco. Bob spent many, many hours restoring the accordion to playable condition. Bob will demonstrate the accordion at the November meeting. Frank intends to donate the accordion to **Helmi Harrington's World of Accordions Museum in Wisconsin**. Bob has taken quite a few photos of the internal works of the accordion, for anyone who might be interested.



A Few Comments and Greetings for Joe Smiell

From a button box student in Wisconsin:

"Dear Joe, I heard you're reaching another milestone in your life, and I just wanted to wish you all the best on your birthday. It's not often I have a chance to talk to you, so I appreciate this opportunity. I think of you often, especially when I'm having trouble with my music practice on the button box. There have been many times when I can still hear your words of instruction, from one of the camps I've attended. I really do appreciate all you've done for me, you've been a great inspiration, and I just wanted you to know that! Happy Birthday Joe!"

From an ACE Ensemble member:

"My point of view is appreciating Joe, and how he carefully fine tunes different parts to fit different levels of competence. I am a musician of very moderate ability. Yet because of Joe's sensibility, I too have learned enormously from him. He gives me a part which is challenging yet possible to learn if I work hard at it. I think that is one of the strengths of our ACE. Joe knows our capabilities and orchestrates his music to teach, encourage and challenge each one of us. I am so grateful for his mentoring."

From another button box student:

"Joe Smiell and his button box camp are a big part of my life. By teaching me to play the button box musically, Joe helps me to understand and appreciate music. By providing a personal and first-hand connection to himself and his compositions, Joe give me a rare opportunity. Joe's influence has spread to the musical education of my grandchildren as well. Thank you, Joe, for the joy you bring to our lives! May you continue doing what you love so much for many years to come!"

From a button box student in Wyoming, now a button box teacher:

"Joe Smiell is simply the most remarkable person that I have ever had the pleasure of knowing. While his genius for music is awe-inspiring, his willingness to share that genius across a wide variety of musical genres and with musicians of all talent levels is no less astounding. Meeting Joe and attending my first button box camp was a milestone in my life. As a result I have met people and traveled to places that would never have been possible for me. Through my association with Joe I haven't just learned a lot about music, I have also learned a lot about life. I am so much richer for both. Happy Birthday Joe."

From another button box student:

"At the age of 17 and fresh out of high school what did I know? But one thing I did know was that I was inspired by Joe's music. And as the years followed with Oktoberfests and Button Box camps, I realized what a genius was in our midst and how lucky I was to be able to experience it all. Truly the man is a genius!! Besides kind, giving and with a special humor."

From another button box student:

"Dear Joe, When I first met you in 1998, I was impressed by both your musicianship and your kindly nature. You inspired me to begin to learn to play the button box! You possess great talent, something which you share so generously

with us! Happy Birthday!"

From a Galla-Rini Camp participant in Indiana, an advanced accordion player:

"Joe is not just a GREAT musician, arranger, and accordionist. He certainly is all those things. But, most importantly, Joe is a kind and sensitive person. His desire to see people grow, improve and do their best with their instrument is always cradled gently by his desire to see them grow in self confidence and self worth. His teaching and directing methods include not only technical skill, but also encouragement, praise, positive reinforcement and the ability to communicate to his students and groups that he believes "they can do it." I have learned much by listening and watching Joe, and have greatly appreciated working with him at the Galla-Rini Camps."

From an SFAC member and Galla-Rini camper in Marin County:

"Joe is a very special person who makes us all feel so good about our music. Thank you Joe."

From an ACE Ensemble member:

"When Joe is talking about music, playing music or writing music, I am inspired to learn because I regard him as a teacher's teacher."

(Continued on next page)



Joe and Lucy Smiell



From another ACE Ensemble member:

"The love of music was always part of my life and make up. Since becoming part of the ensemble with Joe as our leader, I have learned so much about refining my playing. We have always been thrilled to play Joe's arrangements of the very orchestral pieces normally heard on the classical stations. We have been exposed to folk, popular, classical music, and more recently, show tunes. All these have been painstakingly arranged in multiple parts with each of our abilities in mind. Joe has untingly shared his passion and instilled the same passion in us... An inspiration to all with his energy and focus, Joe has made a tremendous impact on us because he makes us feel special as a necessary part of the ensemble: (Joe is) the consummate educator, and mentor."

From another Galla-Rini camper, in San Diego:

Joe Smiell has always been an incredible man with an amazing talent. I have always been impressed with his ability to write music in so many parts without hearing them played first... must be quite a computer/tape recorder in his head... Joe is such an unassuming man, very humble, a real gentleman. It has been a pleasure to be in his workshops at camp and under his direction with sight reading sessions. His classical accordion group is awesome and gets better every year. Mr. Joe Smiell is one of a kind!! Thank goodness, we have been able to know him and play his arrangements. Happy Birthday Joe!!!!"

From another button box camper, also a teacher and arranger:

It is most fortunate for us, Joe's students, that he never forgot the music impressions of his early life despite his Conservatory training on wind/reed instruments and classical music. And in the last quadrant of his life he returned to his first instrument, the piano accordion. Then in his 60's, he learned and mastered from "scratch," in rather short order, the diatonic button accordion. His Button Box Camp is legendary in the button box "underground: for music education, fellowship, good times, humor, and structured learning. Attending the camp for most people is one of those indelible experiences one never forgets. Thanks, Joe!

From another ACE Ensemble member:

"Joe has taught me that playing an accordion is much more than just pressing the right keys. I have had a richer life for having known him as I do. I will be eternally grateful to him for all he has done for me."

From a Galla-Rini camper in Maryland:

"Dear Joe: What a talent! - What a teacher! - What a sweet-heart! I can not count the number of times you have helped me with my accordion playing. Your encouraging words are always an inspiration to me and, I am sure, to others. You are one in a million. Happy Birthday! - With many more to come."

From another ACE Ensemble member and button box camper:

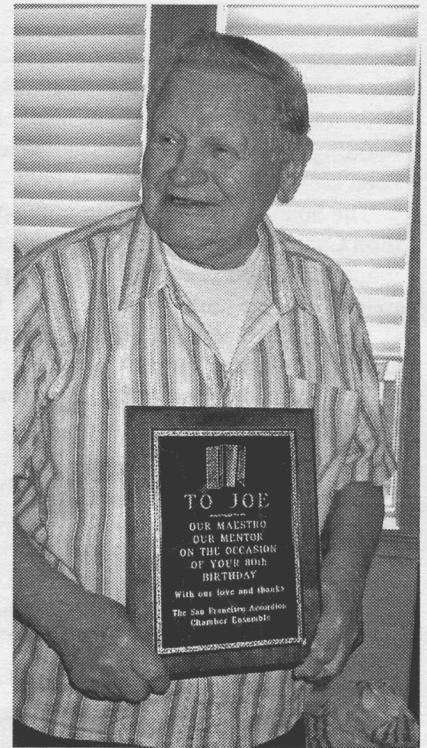
"Joe, in the 11 years I have known you personally, you have literally changed my entire life focus. Music was always in my soul but I did not have the training or time to develop it. For years I had admired the precision and musical sound of your Bavarian band and dreamed of ever meeting you and shaking your hand, and now you are a close friend and mentor, both musically and in life. You are the most generous person I have ever known. You give of yourself and your immense talent and never ask for a nickel in return. I cannot believe my good fortune, and the good fortune of all of us in the Bay Area, to have you in our midst. Thank you for everything, and may you continue doing what you're doing for many years. Happy Birthday Joe!"

From an SFAC member:

My first—and very enlightening—experience with Joe was when, as a new member of the SFAC ensemble, I played a

part in one of Joe's arrangements that ended on a half note. He said, "Who played that half note, it is not correct?!" I defended my playing saying that it was a two-count note and that is what I played. Well, that was my (embarrassing) introduction into the world of playing notes, not necessarily as they are written, but as they are *meant* to be played with feeling and emotion. This concept has opened up my life to a wonderful aspect of the world of music, making songs come alive and become more meaningful both for the performer and the audience. I would never have learned this mostly untaught but basic lesson, had I not been blessed to have Joe Smiell as my teacher! Thank you, Joe, and a heartfelt wish on your 80th for many, many more birthdays to come.

Countless other people would have loved to contribute to this column but we just couldn't reach them all! I'm sure Joe received cards from hundreds of them. Pres. Peter Di Bono's comments are in the President's Message in this issue. vtk



Our November Performers (continued from page 1)



Don Garibaldi comes to us from Stockton, where he was born and raised. He has played accordion since his freshman year in high school. His accordion teacher was John Pisacco. During his senior year at St. Mary's, Don formed a four-piece group and began his performing career playing for parties and dances. He performed for the Officers' Club at the naval base in San Diego and continues to perform with several local musicians, including Dr. Harry Gay and

Bob Secor. He has recorded two albums, *Bella Italian* and *America the Beautiful*. Don always played an Excelsior until a year ago when he began playing a Petosa 1100 with MIDI. The cabinet of his accordion was built by Chuck Berger in Portland. **Dr. Harry Gay**, also from Stockton and who also studied with John Pisacco, a member of SFAC, is



no stranger to us! A great player and gentleman who is always more than willing to share his great talent, he has entertained at our picnics every year for the last several years, and at some of our meetings as well. Harry has an impressive bio, with an early music career and a later one, 22 years later, that is still going on. His early playing years included having a trio, a quartet and a 6-piece ethnic Italian band. Harry has an accordion music library that he is happy to share with anyone interested.

Bob Smith surely needs no introduction! Bob always has interesting tidbits of information to share, along with his musical talent.

Lee Woodall and **Jim Firpo**, our warm-up players, are two of the world's greatest ambassadors for and lovers of the accordion, as well as very loyal members and supporters of our club.

Your Executive Board met . . .

. . . on Tuesday, October 4. The rental of the Municipal Services building in South San Francisco, where we hold our meetings, has been increased to \$385.

The board agreed to let our club sponsor the Galla-Rini Accordion Camp beginning in 2006. The camp will not cost the club any money, and will bring prestige and, probably eventually, some money into the club. Joe Smiell will be the leader of the camp.

Bob Hansen and Val Kieser will investigate what it would take to start up a Website for the club again.

Val is working on our participation of our club in the Columbus Day (Italian Heritage) parade.

There was a long discussion of the club's finances and the money that is specified for the ACE Ensemble from private donations. With dues now coming in, the financial figures are in flux at the moment.

By the time you read this, we will have had another board meeting, scheduled for Tuesday, November 15.

President's Message (Continued from page 1)

performed, and it was impossible not to find some music that struck a responsive chord with everyone. **Dominic and Frances Benedetto** did their midway magic, and put out another great buffet during the break while **Jim Firpo and Ed Massolo** provided the background music. "**The Great Morgani**," **Frank Lima**, came by and delighted us with his wonderful playing, and eye-catching costume...CAUTION, ACCORDION PLAYER!!!

Two drawing coincidences: 1- **Frank Montoro** was the lucky winner of the first door prize, a nice bottle of wine. Guess whose ticket Frank drew for the second door prize? You got it: Frank pulled his own ticket. You should have heard the moaning and groaning from the gathering; 2- well, not wanting to have any suspicions, and to assure everyone that the money drawing was above board and honest, I asked retired Atherton police officer, **Ron Harris**, a paragon of virtue himself, to select the raffle ticket for the cash drawing. You can imagine how embarrassed I was when Ron picked my ticket. -- I wasn't, however, too embarrassed to keep the money. Hey, we "brothers in blue" have to take care of each other. I'll buy you an adult beverage at the next policemen's ball, Ron.

Harriet Newhart, violin, and **Steve Hanson**, bass, joined with me in the second half of the program in presenting some memorable music from around the world. The selections included classical and popular American standards, and all were well received. Our last selection, **Cole Porter's Begin the Beguine**, brought everyone to their feet, clamoring for another tune. An encore of selections from *Showboat*, the great musical by **Jerome Kern**, ending with *Ole Man River*, moved the audience such that many were holding back tears - it was quite a musical experience. I hope you were there; if not, you should have been!

The November meeting features accordion great, **Ron Borelli**, who will be joined by his sister, **Carole**, on vocals. I heard them at **ACR** last month, and you don't want to miss them on November 20th.

I recently purchased the video of **Art Van Damme's** April tour to Brazil. It runs over ninety minutes, and is some of Art's best work. The silky smooth Van Damme style is so unique and recognizable; this collection of timeless jazz belongs in everyone's library. Featured with Art are quintet regulars, including

Jon Erickson on vibes. Check out Jon at **Nick's Rockaway Beach** for weekend dinner dancing. Sadly, Art is not quite as adept with a golf club as he is with an accordion. In a recent outing at The Rocklin Golf and Country Club, Art, seemingly attempting to excavate a large portion of earth with his golf club, sustained a serious wrist injury. Happily, he has recovered and is getting ready for a December two-week Russian tour. Leave the golf clubs at home Art; they have permafrost in Russia. Get Art's video: **\$34.95, DOTART MUSIC, PO Box 966, Roseville, CA 95678, specify DVD or video cassette**

Joe Smiell recently reached a significant birthday, and the event was celebrated at lunch with Joe's wife **Lucy Smiell**, the **ACE Ensemble**, and a few other friends and admirers. What an honor to know this wonderful man. It is difficult to aptly describe Joe: he is an enormously talented individual; he has devoted his life to music; he freely gives away his expertise to anyone who wants it, and he **never** speaks of his many accomplishments. I won't speak of them either because that might make him uneasy, but I will tell you that among the heroes one looks up to in life, **Joe Smiell** is at the top of my list - **Joe Smiell and John Wayne (in that order!)**. Make it a point not to miss Joe's workshop the next time he gives one.

Play your accordion every day, and remember:

REAL MUSIC IS LIVE! *Peter Di Bono*

A Tidbit From History . . .

SFAC member **Tom Bruno** from Pennsylvania is not only a master accordion restorer, he has extensive knowledge about the history of our accordion and artists—especially Excelsior and Charles Magnante—which he gladly shares. The Excelsior Accordion Company was founded in 1924 in New York City by **Egisto Pancotti** together with his brothers **Roberto** and **Archimedes**. **Mario Bugari** (see photo below) and his brother were cousins of Pancotti and worked for Excelsior as reed makers.

This issue's bit of history relates a true and amusing story of a verbal exchange between **Egisto Pancotti** and **Anthony Procida**, a local teacher and artist. As the story goes, Mr. Procida visited the Excelsior showroom to try out the different models. Upon playing one of the models in an energetic fashion, Mr. Procida said, "Egisto, some of the notes on your accordion are choking," to which Egisto replied, "If you take this accordion and tie a jackass to one end, and tie a jackass to the other end, and have them pull, what's going to happen? It's going to choke, right? Now, you don't want to play like a jackass, do you?" *True story!* Look for more anecdotes from the pen of **Tom Bruno** in upcoming issues of the SFAC newsletter!

(See article about Tom Bruno on page 8)

OWNERS OF EXCELSIOR ARE MASTER ACCORDION BUILDERS

E. Pancotti

Robert Pancotti

Mario Bugari





Young Accordionist and Vic



Our "Star" David Lee in front of Judge's Stand



Showing Off the SF Accordion Band



Barbara & Vic Corsiglia, Gwyn Lister
Scott Williamson and Mel Schwing



SFAC in Columbus Day Parade in SF

As you can see from the photos above and to the left, we had a blast! The cheering crowds kept our spirits high—and they even slipped us a drink or two along the way! Our Tootsie Rolls with club logo were received with enthusiasm everywhere they were tossed. Caleb Lee from Folsom brought along several young Chinese accordion students of his, including our "star," Caleb's son David (above, left), who performed standing up when we passed in front of the judges. This young man of 14 is extremely talented and took us all by surprise—he already knew all the songs, except "Tarantella," which he sight-read almost flawlessly. I'm told we won Fourth Place in our Division—not a cash prize, but at least Honorable Mention!

The kids helping us out, all from the Sacramento area, are: Twins Jason and Jeffrey Liu, age 9; Caleb Biggers, 8; Micah Biggers, 6; Olivia Lee, 7; David Lee, 14; and teacher Caleb Lee. We are looking forward to having Caleb and some of his stu-

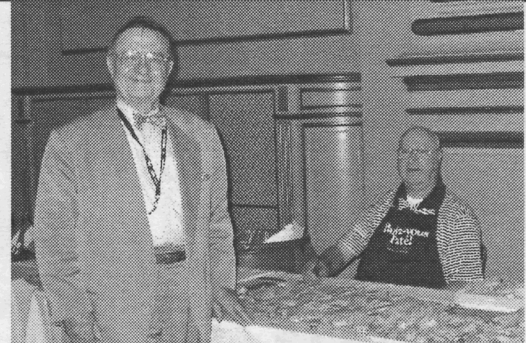
dents come and play for our club. We heard their little ensemble at the Golden State Accordion Club picnic, and they were terrific!

This parade was a perfect example of a team effort! Everyone helped out in some way, be it decorating, helping with the trailer, bringing food and drink, and dozens of other tasks. Special thanks to: **Scott Williamson** for getting the Tootsie Rolls and printing and applying the labels; **Vic and Barbara Corsiglia** for getting us the sound system and generator (they even paid the rental) and coming to San Leandro the day before to help with the trailer (and get a horse demo from Val!); **Dennis Stoscher** for arranging for the trailer, which was loaned to us by **Jeff Gilmour** of Ace Truck Repair in San Leandro; and last but certainly not least, **Simon Hui** from KQED for an expert job of driving the tow vehicle (my Explorer), with his teenage son **Spencer** as co-pilot. We also thank **Gwyn Lister**, **Telmo Echeverria**, **Mel and Cherie Schwing**, **Dick Schiller** and **Bob Smith** for their participation and help on many, many fronts. **OUR THANKS TO ALL!**

Val



The ACE Ensemble . . .



Bernard Métais and Henri Lapuyade of Marcel et Henri Charcuterie Française

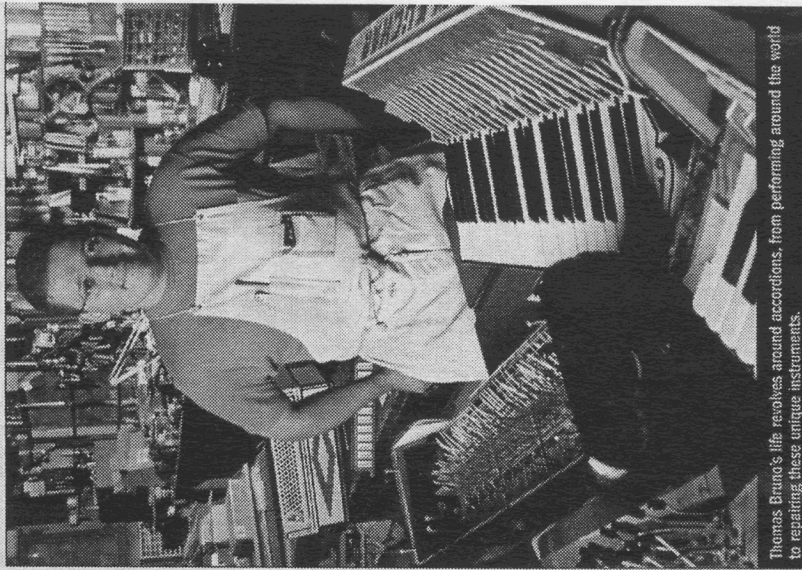
. . . gave a terrific concert on October 29 in the Green Room of the War Memorial building in SF, for the *Soirée Française* of the *Fédération des Alliances Françaises*, the nationwide French organization with chapters in dozens of cities. There were between 150 and 200 people in attendance, from all over the country and from France, including the French Consul General Frédéric Desagneaux and his wife. It was a gala affair and our concert was extremely well received. Some people there did not realize that we were all accordionists and thought we were part of the symphony! (One person asked Anne Métais which instrument she played in the symphony and she replied "Bassoon." ACE will be playing at the SFAC December meeting, as will the Fun Band as well. (More ACE photos on next page)

backtalk

Recent Article from Pittsburgh Magazine
featuring SFAC member Tom Bruno

with chris rodell

photo by Chandler Coxwell



Thomas Bruno's life revolves around accordions, from performing around the world to repairing these unique instruments.

Pushing His Buttons

From his little shop in New Kensington, Thomas Bruno endears himself to the worldwide accordion-playing community

It's taken more than a year for one world-renowned Pittsburgh business to recover from the devastating regional flooding of Sept. 17, 2004. For this business, those waters rippled across North America. Because when flood waters hit The Bruno Accordion Co. in a small, two-car garage in an alley off Seventh Street in New Kensington, many fanatical devotees of the accordion shuddered. And the life of Thomas Bruno, one of America's busiest accordion repairmen, suddenly got a lot more hectic.

But if anyone thought Bruno, 33, was finished, he or she doesn't know the first thing about this industrious accordion player/repairman/teacher. You see, for an accordion player, the reflex response to any occasion is to press on. And on and on and on. The typical accordion, as a matter of fact, has 41 treble keys and 120 bass buttons. "It's an easy instrument to sound bad on and a hard instrument to sound good on," says Bruno.

A son of healers Dr. Anthony (urologist) and Dr. Jacomina (ophthalmologist) Bruno, Thomas grew up destined to mend. Both of his older sisters are in medical disciplines.

Jacomina says, "His first accordion teacher told us, 'I have taught the deaf and the blind, but none of them were as bad as Tommy.' But we took him to Mario Mosti in Jeannette, and he flourished."

He enjoyed such a warm rapport with Mosti that, upon his mentor's retirement and Bruno's 1997 graduation from Penn State with a mechanical-engineering degree, Bruno took over Mosti's accordion-repair shop. Today his small, cluttered workshop looks like the kind of place in which Geppetto would spend hours to lovingly turn small blocks of wood into the flesh-and-blood boy he called Pinocchio. Bruno practices a similar kind of magic with instruments, inspiring a kinship all over the world.

"The accordion was invented by the Chinese in 3000 B.C., but it was perfected by the Italians," says Bruno. "So, many cultures think of it as one of their national instruments." Indeed, the accordion is fluent in any language. It plays the *pasa doble*, a Spanish bullfight. The Parisians enjoy it while sipping chardonnay

on the banks of the Seine. The Germans raise glasses of stout to the raucous carnival of sounds it creates each Oktoberfest. And many seasoned Pittsburghers are convinced the instrument exists solely to blast out the first electrifying notes of the "Steelers Fight Song." On a more formal note, Bruno joined the Pittsburgh Symphony for a gig this summer.

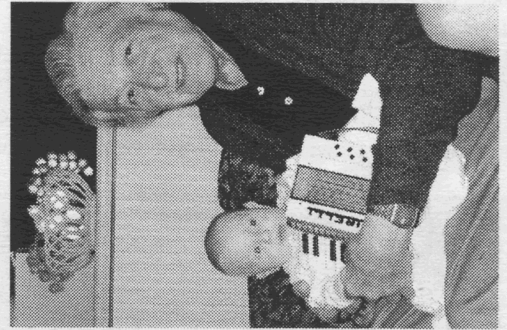
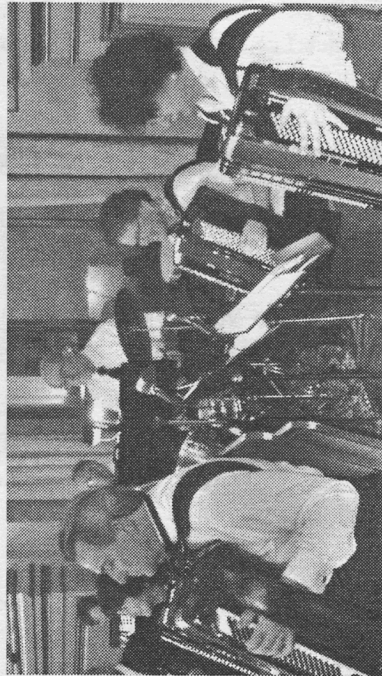
"It means so many things to so many people around the world," says Bruno, who traveled this summer to the Coati Accordion Festival, where he was an honored guest of the San Francisco Bay Accordion Club.

"After a really busy day spent repairing them, I still like to sit back and play and discover new things about the accordion. I can forget about everyday things and just lose myself in its music."

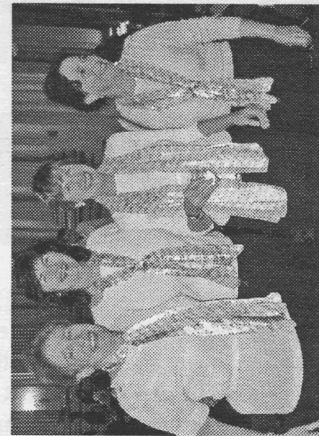
It's wonderfully comforting to know that in a world of so much jarring disharmony, there is a universal instrument that can bring us all together. And it's just a happy coincidence that its first name happens to be accord. ☺



Top: Some ACE members and Joe Smiell with Consul General from France Frédéric Desagneux and Mme Desagneux; Jane Robert, President of the Fédération des Alliances Françaises; Tom Horn, President of the Alliance Française of San Francisco.
Below: the ACE Ensemble at the Soirée Française.



Vince Cirelli with the family's youngest accordionist



Val, Lynn, Mary-Alice and Nora from the ACE Ensemble at the Soirée Française

**NOTE ABOUT
TEACHER LISTINGS:**

For names and phone numbers of accordion teachers in the Bay Area (San Francisco/ North peninsula, North Bay, East Bay, Peninsula and South Bay) please contact Val at (510) 531-4836 or vtkacc@value.net.

Come and join in ...

San Francisco Accordion Club

***Our New Home and New Meeting Schedule!!
Since February 2005 the SFAC meets on the
Third Sunday of the month
2:00 p.m. South San Francisco Senior Center in
The South San Francisco Municipal Building
33 Arroyo Drive, South San Francisco
For Info call any board member.***

East Bay Accordion Circle

Meets the THIRD TUESDAY of the month 7:30 p.m.
1540 Scenic Ave., Berkeley. Bring your accordion!
For information call (510) 548-2822

Accordion Club of the Redwoods

Meets 7:30 p.m. the third Monday of the month
Hermann Sons Hall, 860 Western, Petaluma
For information call Harry (707) 838-2859

Golden State Accordion Club

Vacaville Chapter

Meets 7 PM

the second Tuesday of the month

Moose Hall, 6585 Gibson Canyon Road

Sacramento Chapter

meets 7 PM

the fourth Wednesday

at Dante Club, 2330 Fair Oaks Blvd. Sacramento

For information call (707) 864-2359

Northern California Accordion Society

Meets 7 PM the third Thursday of the month

Venita Rhea's Restaurant, 4415 Granite Dr., #1500, Rocklin, CA

Info: Call Vince Cukar (916) 791-3041

Good Time Accordion Club

Meets 7 p.m. the second Wednesday

of the month

Community Center

1055 Escalon Avenue, Escalon

For information call (209) 545-3603

Medford Accordion Club

Contact: Joe Zajac, 424 Girard Dr., Medford, OR 97504;

(541) 779-3420 or zajac@aol.com

South Bay Accordion Jam

Third Sunday of the month 2:00 p.m.

Location of meeting varies; for info call

Victor Corsiglia (408) 554-6275 or

Bill Tapogna (408) 984-5290.

Silicon Valley Accordion Society

Meets on the first Sunday of the Month

2:00 p.m. at Harry's Hofbrau Restaurant

390 Saratoga Ave., San Jose

(between 280 and Stevens Creek Blvd.)

For Info Phone (408) 270-5003

SFAC Evening Ensemble Practice currently on hiatus!

*New Location beginning when we start up again: at the home
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Hope Lutheran Church, 55 San Fernando Way, In Daly City

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"Musette"

Extracted from the March 2002 issue of The BAAC Page

Contributed by SFAC Member Bernard Métais

When one hears the word "musette," Paris comes to mind. The "musette" is a unique expression of a place and an era: Paris and the early 1900's; even if the word is a misnomer.

Originally, a "musette" was a kind of bagpipe, played by the rural population of the Auvergne, a province in the center of France. At the end of the 19th century, many "Auvergnats" emigrated from their native province to Paris. Some of them combined the sale of the coal imported from the Auvergne with the sale of drinks and simple meals. On Sundays the proprietors (the "Bougnats") organized dances for their friends where they played their native instrument: the musette. Such community dances were called "bals à la musette."

Other immigrants also came to Paris, which, at the turn of the Century, was a haven for immigrants. Among them, after 1870, the Italians, who, like the Auvergnats, brought with them their musical instrument: the accordion, which has been produced in Italy in the Castelfidardo workshops since 1860. They also settled in the same marginal parts of Paris as the Auvergnats and therefore competed against them in the Sunday community balls with their accordions. In the end the Italians won and the "bals musette" took place with the sound of the accordion—no longer with the sound of the musette.

After a decline in the 70's and 80's the accordion is experiencing a renaissance in Paris. If you are in Paris, please visit the Balajo, near the Place de la Bastille. You will hear the musical heartbeat of true Paris.

Our Sincere Thanks

***To those who have generously donated to the Club
this year. Recent donations that your Editor has heard about:***

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Word Has It . . .
 . . . that SFAC member **Corky Bennett's** new accordion show, "From Jazz to Broadway" (and everything in between) will hit the road for a world tour soon. Peter Soave is assisting in the bookings in Europe. Corky, who lives in Reno, would like to come and play for our club. He writes that his show "is a good high-energy show, complete with music and comedy." He travels with his conductor/keyboardist, occasionally augmented with horns. For more info, go to www.corkybennett.com.
 . . . that **Gus Greyhosky**, recently in the hospital, is recovering nicely and will soon be back among us.
 . . . that recently ailing SFAC member **Harry Cannata** is home, on the mend, and feeling much better already.
 . . . That **Isabelle Massolo** took a fall and is hurting but recovering.



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Vince Cirelli (415) 467-2208
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