



Wilbur de Paris wows them at one of New York's night spots.

I WAS A TROOPER AT THE AGE OF SIX

The State Department named this Crawfordsville jazz artist and his combo for a sponsored tour

By JOHN D. STEVENS

TWO BROTHERS from Crawfordsville, Wilbur and Sidney de Paris, are making jazz history.

Wilbur, a forceful trombonist, heads a seven-man Dixieland combo which has been playing at New York's famed Jimmy Ryan's night spot for more than nine years. That's an almost unheard of run in New York. His brother plays lead trumpet.

The combo—in addition to its nightly chores at the 52d Street bistro—has made eight record albums, done movie backgrounds, and appeared in television, radio and concerts.

They consider their greatest accomplishment, however, their triumphal three-month tour of Africa in 1958 as official representatives of the Department of State.

CRAWFORDSVILLE, INDIANA 47933
S.W. WASHINGTON STREET
CRAWFORDSVILLE, INDIANA 47933

"Jazz is a wonderful ambassador," says Wilbur, who talks and acts more like a college professor than a man who has spent 53 of his 59 years in jazz. "When we were in Africa, I had a long talk one afternoon with a man who had spent most of his life there. He said our diplomatic mistake had been in making friends with the rulers of a country and ignoring the

people. When the ruler changed, we had to start all over. Jazz gets to the people, and therefore it really does us some good."

NEITHER Wilbur nor Sidney had much formal musical training, although both played in the Crawfordsville High School band. Their father, however, was a mainstay of a touring minstrel company. He played trombone, banjo and guitar. Wilbur went with his father on a tour at the age of 6. He hasn't put down his horn since.

The De Paris brothers do not try to copy the early masters of jazz in style or technique.

"The oldtimers didn't have any technical knowledge of music," Wilbur explains. "We at least knew about breathing, phrasing and such elementary things. We have learned more as we went along. Naturally our style is different from the originators back in New Orleans."

Wilbur even calls his band a "New New Orleans" group. Their repertoire includes many recent numbers in addition to the old Dixieland standards like *Muskrat Ramble* and *Tin Roof Blues*.

TWO NUMBERS heard frequently at Ryan's are *On the Banks of the Wabash* and *Indiana, My Indiana*. And that's not a coincidence. Since Wilbur is an active member of the Sons of Indiana of New York, Ryan's is a sort of rendezvous for displaced Hoosiers.

Although they have only one relative in Indiana now they both consider Indiana as "home."

How do they like playing one spot after so many years of touring? Just fine. Not only that, but they feel it is the best way for jazzmen to assure continued popularity.

"Over-exposure has killed many good jazz musicians," Wilbur says. "When you stay in one place, and the people come to you, then you don't have this problem."

PERHAPS the secret of their continued success is that any jazz musician plays what he is and what he has learned. The De Paris brothers have been plenty and have learned plenty in half a century apiece in the jazz world.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

MARCH 5, 1961

Public Library
Crawfordsville, Ind

61-0837

zine

RL
(file)
921
De Paris,
W.