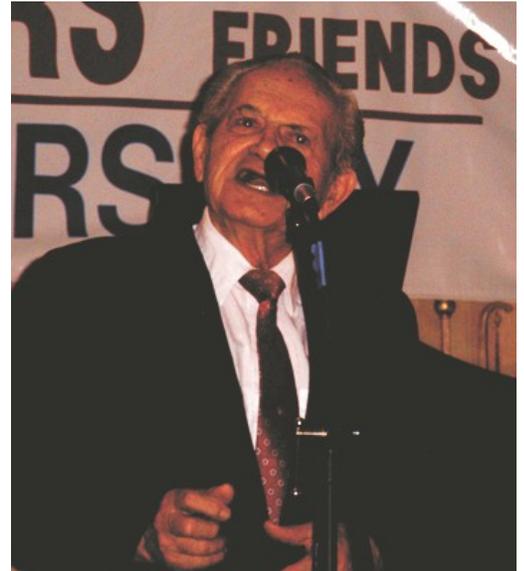


Farewell to Stan Harper

Another one of the stars from the “golden age” of the harmonica has left us. Some of our members know Stan from the SPAH conventions. But for those who don't, here is some information about him. He was a consummate professional musician who chose to play classical music on the chromatic harmonica. Stan was 94 when he died. His love of the harmonica began when he was 10 and he found a diatonic harmonica in the street. He bought a 5-minute instruction booklet for 10 cents and learned the proper method of single tone production. He was finally able to get a Koch Chromatic — a 10 hole, regular tuning. He learned about music from a friend who was studying the piano and from a book on how to read music and he learned time values and keys. At this point he had never heard another harmonica player, so he learned to play the tunes his friends played - mostly classical music.



He won many contests and met professional harmonica players. He was in a harmonica band in Brooklyn. They played numbers like “Scheherazade,” “Sorcerer’s Apprentice,” and Beethoven’s 5th.

During WWII, he enlisted and was assigned to a special unit put together to entertain the troops. He gained valuable experience writing arrangements for the outfit’s topflight orchestra and performing classical selections accompanied by a number of excellent pianists of the troops.

Stan played with the likes of Charlie Leighton, Dave Doucette and Alan Pogson. Stan’s classical study and training enabled him to present several programs of baroque music at Carnegie Hall recitals in recent years. His career has included performing frequently on the cruise ship circuit.

Asked if he regretted choosing the harmonica for a career, Stan said, “I can honestly say that I have been extremely lucky with the way I’ve earned my livelihood for all these years. Let me tell you that there are a million things I may be sorry about, but I’m never sorry about the harmonica. I might have liked a lucrative sideline—like being a thief.”

I got to know Stan when I was editor of SPAH’s magazine, Harmonica Happenings. He attended the SPAH Convention for several years, and I had the privilege attending his seminars and enjoying his entertaining performances on stage. Along with being a brilliant musician, Stan was a crusty, outspoken old curmudgeon, and everybody I know loved him. He will certainly be missed.

Roger