

AROUND THE WORLD in 40 YEARS **with** **NATURAL GAS JAZZ BAND**

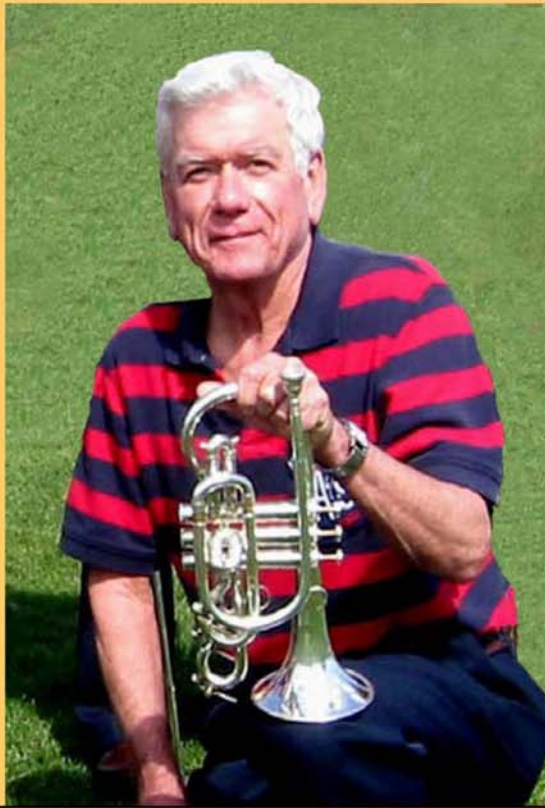


A HISTORICAL AND PICTORIAL SCRAPBOOK

**OVER
200
PHOTOS
MOST IN COLOR**

**Beginning with the very first band (1970), through four decades
of international and domestic jazz travel, up to 2010**

By Phil Crumley and Warren Perry



Phil Crumley has played cornet in the band ever since it was first formed in 1970. He practiced dentistry for 32 years in San Rafael, CA before his retirement. His patients would sometimes jokingly state that Dr. Crumley did just enough dentistry to support his jazz habit. Phil lives with his wife, Virginia, in San Anselmo, CA.



Warren Perry joined Natural Gas Jazz Band in 1973 as the band's first and only drummer and is a 37 year veteran of the group. He practiced law in Marin County, CA for 45 years and is a former mayor of San Anselmo. Warren lives with his wife, Connie, in San Anselmo, CA.

AROUND THE WORLD IN 40 YEARS
WITH THE



This scrapbook presents a number of interesting and amusing
photos and anecdotes accumulated during four decades of
traditional jazz performances and related travel
experiences

Over 200 photos,
most of them in full color

By Phil Crumley and Warren Perry

PREFACE

It is likely that the person who has this book in hand knows something about the Natural Gas Jazz Band and the musical world of traditional jazz.

An avocational jazz band is not a money making entity. Like the jazz musician who inherited a million dollars from his uncle Louie said, when asked what he would do with the money, "Oh, I guess I'll just go on playing music 'til the money is gone."

In reality, a successful jazz band is an extended family. The makeup of such a family is as follows:

First, the musicians themselves must like each other. There must be a degree of personal respect and mutual admiration of musical talents. And, perhaps most of all, an ability to look beyond each other's weaknesses and find merit in what may be contributed for the end product, that is, good music.

Second, believe it or not, each band member has a real life too. In most cases this means sharing his existence with a spouse. The band wife is a unique species. She must tolerate the absence of her husband on special occasions, countless repetitions of the same stories, complaints and music, and a disrupted life in general (not to mention some of the motel rooms and fast food meals when on tour).

Third, the band sometimes requires substitutes. The substitute who adjusts his own life or schedule to accommodate the group is certainly part of the extended family. Individuals who as substitutes have come to the rescue include Jim

Maihack, Jim Brennan, Ken Keeler, Jackson Stock, Ross Perry, Carl Lunsford, Rod Biensen, Pat O'Neil, George Knoblauch, Gene Berthelsen, and Jim Buckman, all of whom stepped up to the plate on road trips.

Fourth, then there are the fans themselves. This faithful group that comes to gigs and sometimes travels with the band or contributes in some other way makes the whole thing possible. This, of course, includes that staunch band of GasHoppers.

Fifth, a group of nine people stand out as special friends of the NGJB:

Bill Borchert, a founder of the Sacramento Jazz Jubilee, was responsible for the NGJB receiving its initial invitation to the Jubilee and a significant number of festivals on the West Coast. The Jubilee itself has been a key contact with numerous foreign friends and musicians, such as Leningrad Dixieland Jazz Band, which has borne fruit in the form of invitations to international festivals and performance tours.

Detlef and Kersten Ott of Leipzig, Germany have become friends of the band and the NGJB's unofficial representatives on the European continent. Detlef also created and manages the NGJB's very fine web page.

Anna Zabriskie created the GasHoppers. Anna decided the band should have a fan club so she made one happen. It was just that simple. She also attended every band performance that was physically possible for her, and was always seated right there in the front row. She joined that big fan club in the sky in 2008 but the GasHoppers continue to march on. This lady deserves the band's deepest gratitude for her dedicated support over all those years.



Bill Lutt of World Projects opened the door for the NGJB's very successful group tour program. World Projects' tours have seen the band go to Australia, New Zealand, China, France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Hungary, Ireland, England, Scotland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the Czech Republic.

Ed and Dottie Lawless were among the NGJB's earliest supporters. They introduced the band to the New Orleans Jazz Club of Northern California, the New Orleans Rascals of Osaka, and the King Cresol Jazz Band of Tatsuno, Japan. Also, they were instrumental in bringing the band together with Turk Murphy and Lu Watters. Many of Ed's photos grace this publication.

Dave and Florence Strange must be the NGJB's most faithful and generous friends. They seem to be ever present in various forms, as listeners, sponsors, tourists, hosts, advisors, GasHoppers bookkeepers, and even music critics. As to the latter, see Dave's liner notes on the NGJB 1977 Volume II L.P. on the band's website.



Dave Lewis, an original member of band, provided all the low, brassy notes, many very popular vocals, and scores of humorous moments during his 38 years as a band member. Although musically retired, he still serves as band treasurer. Dave and his wife, Edy, who passed away on January 30, 2009, were a hugely important part of the musical, travel, and social aspects of the band. Their departure has left a large void.



With all of the above in mind, this book is dedicated to the Natural Gas Jazz Band extended family and special friends.

Phil Crumley and Warren Perry

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PART TWO

Domestic Festivals, Special Events, Folks, Friends, and Fans

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PART I

The Beginning, the Early Years and the International Tours

In the second year Burgess died and dentist John Hartman took over on trombone. About the same time Weden quit and was replaced by Pete Deetken, a strong banjo player. Crumley assumed leadership and Finke was replaced by Jim Whiteside on piano.

It was 1973 when drummer Warren Perry joined the band. Perry mentioned the band to trumpeter Ev Farey and told of the musical repertoire being, for the most part, Dixieland standards and other such old chestnuts. Farey generously gave Natural Gas the musical charts from the famed Bay City Jazz Band. Thus, Natural Gas commenced its evolution into a true traditional jazz band of the West Coast style.

The lineup of Crumley, Murphy, Hartman, Whiteside, Lewis, Deetken and Perry was unchanged until 1978.



1973 - Personnel changes included Perry (drums), a lawyer, Hartman (trombone), a dentist, and Deetken (banjo), an engineer.

1978 - 1989 The Alvarado Inn, Ignacio, CA was home base for 11 years. Pictured here with Don Keeler (pno) and guest Roger Crumley (trumpet).



CHAPTER FOUR

1983, 2003 Scotland, England, Netherlands

1978 - Edinburgh Fest - Newcastle, England - Eindhoven, Netherlands
2003 - Edinburgh - Newcastle - York - Bath - Stonehenge - Bournemouth
- London - Sidcup

At the Drybroughs Edinburgh International Jazz Festival of 1983 the NGJB found itself in fast company. In addition to the NGJB, the American bands were South Frisco, High Sierra, Rosie O'Grady, and Buck Creek as well as Climax from Canada, Bob Barnard from Australia, Hot Antics from France, Merseysippi from England, and a host of other European and international headliners.

The Glencairn Hotel and the Granary Bar at the Dragonar Hotel were hot spots but the auditorium had the greatest capacity. There the NGJB followed the Hot Antics who were terrific. Inspired musically by the Hot Antics, the NGJB was also emboldened (an unknown word at the time) to cash in some of their food and drink tickets for some haggis, the same being an acquired taste item. However, most of the tickets went for that good Drybroughs beer or cider.



NGJB family at their hotel, with local driver and guide, Edinburgh, in 1983

SAMPLE PAGE- CHAPTER FIVE



**Gassers at New Suntory Club, Kobe
home of the New Orleans Rascals**



**N. O. Rascals at New Suntory - this band was
formed even before Natural Gas JB.**



**The two bands - good buddies in jazz - note
special Japanese band shirts worn by NGJB.**



←
**This jazz business
is really hard
work, huh Bob?**

→
**Junichi-san with his
famous YELLOW MILK**



Harborlands International Jazz Festival, Kobe Japan - 1992

- **Hot Antics Jazz Band - France**
- **Australian All Star Jazz Band - Australia**
- **Ben-Persson Sweden All Stars - Sweden**
 - **Natural Gas Jazz Band - USA**
- **Host - Suehiro-san, known as The King of Kobe**



CHAPTER SEVEN

1989 - U.S.S.R

Leningrad, Yaroslavl, Moscow, Barnaul in Siberia

- The Cold War had caused a state of tension, conflict, and competition between the Soviet and American governments for more than 40 years.
- Bob Murphy worked for nearly two years, with help from Leningrad Dixieland Jazz Band, to get the necessary clearance, paper work, and co-operation of Goskoncert (Soviet Peoples Concert), a branch of the Soviet government.
- The two substitute musicians on this tour were Jim Maihack, trombone, and Carl Lunsford, banjo. Phil Elwood, reporter for the San Francisco Examiner, was also part of the tour group.
- In Siberia, a Barnaul newspaper reported that “Natural Gas Jazz Band was the first American jazz band to play in Siberia.”
- The band was under contract to the Soviet government and was paid in full, in rubles, at the start of the tour. For the entire two week tour, all hotel, food, drink, and other expenses, except travel, were paid in rubles. At the end of the tour, some rubles were left over and the band was not permitted to exchange them or take them out of the country – so we gave them away!

Soviet Tour

Glasnost was a policy of more openness and wider dissemination of information by the government than had previously been present in the Soviet Union. This was a part of Mikhail Gorbachev's program for political and economic restructuring of the Soviet Union initiated in about 1986.



Jazz Festival poster, the first concert of the tour - Leningrad, 1989



TOUR ROUTE BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN
Helsinki -Leningrad - Moscow - Yaroslavl -
Moscow - Barnaul, Siberia -Moscow - Helsinki



Jazz in Siberia (Barnaul)

**Note flags of the band, United States, United Soviet Socialist Republic.
L. to R., top - Lunsford, Perry, Murphy, Maihack, Lewis, - bottom - Clute, Crumley**



**Tour Route -
Sydney to Canberra to Brisbane
to Cairns to Sydney**



U. S. Embassy, Fourth of July party in Australia's capitol city of Canberra. It seems that the American Ambassador was a jazz fan and enjoyed having NGJB featured at his patriotic event.



←
**Linderhof, the royal
palace of Ludwig II**



→
**Piano built for Handel
at Linderhof**



**The Bavarians love their beer, oom-pah
music and the Oktoberfest**



**Gene dueting with Fritz Stewens of Mu-
nich's famous Allotria Jazz Band**

→
**No wonder the Oktoberfest
is so popular**





The Gassers onstage at the Oktoberfest

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
1999 CHINA
Shanghai, Beijing, , Hangzhou

Preceding the band's 1999 China Tour we had a chance to meet Shadow, who was to be our guide and tour director. There was more to Shadow than met the eye, which is saying something as she was an exotic Oriental beauty.

It seems Shadow was somewhat privileged as she was an only child, she was a talented singer who had all the moves and grace of a Las Vegas showgirl, and above all, was our communist supervisor.

Shadow always pointed out the highlights of the Red society. Interestingly she once pointed out to us that eighty percent of Chinese households had computers. This was most informative as she also boasted that over forty percent of the homes now have electricity.

Communications with Shadow were sometimes difficult. For example, we repeatedly requested that we not be subjected to marathon sightseeing and bus rides as we needed a break before dinner and evening gigs. Those pleas fell on deaf ears. We later learned that the rules of the authoritarian regime controlled the hours of the bus, not the tour group that was paying for it.

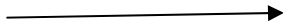
We learned much about dining in China. Plenty of tea and beer was available, although the latter was rather weak. We learned that when the watermelon appeared it was the end of the meal.



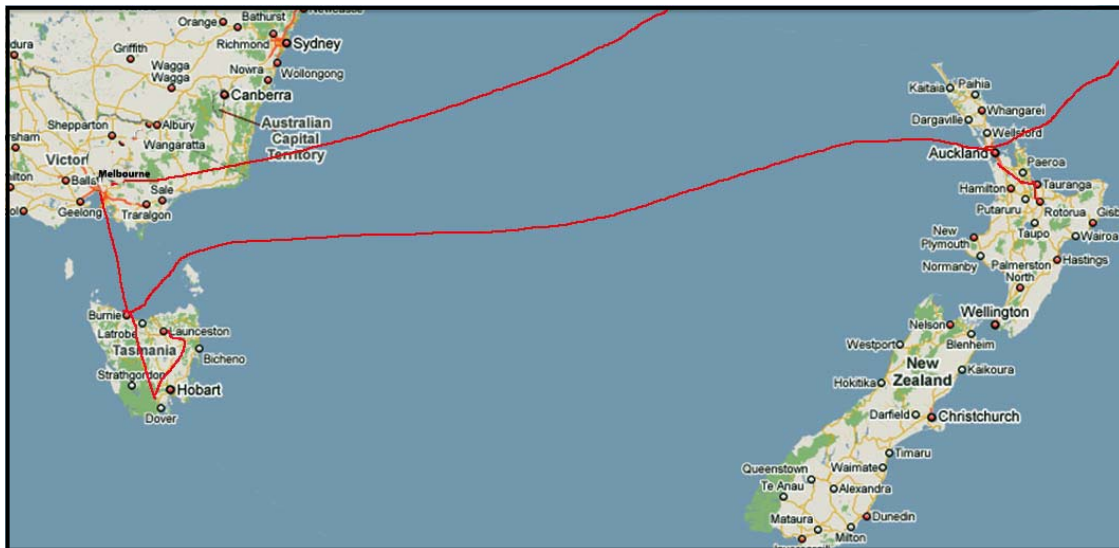
Album cover of a recording made by Shadow, our tour guide in China



The Beast - a Tasmanian Devil



**The Beauty - our tour guide,
Cara, with old whatzisname**



San Francisco to Auckland - 6,543 miles
Auckland to Tasmania - 1,508 miles
Tasmania to Melbourne - 363 miles
Melbourne to San Francisco - 7,416 miles.
TOTAL = 15,830 MILES



Czechoslovakian farm land seen from the tour bus



Dee is presented flowers by a local jazz vocalist in Prague



In Vienna, Austria, another highlight of the tour was the performance in Axel Mehlhardt's JAZZLAND. This is the oldest private jazz club still existing in Europe and run by an avid jazz enthusiast. All 150 seats of this club, located at the banks of the Danube River in an old cellar of a church, were filled that night.

That is Axel in the white shirt and Detlef Ott in the shirt with the skinny red & blue stripes.



**Ascona/Locarno, Switzerland - site of the famous
JAZZASCONA New Orleans & Classic Festival**



**Best Dressed Folks in Ascona -
Rog & Mae Gould with daughter,
Debbie Owens**



Gassers at the Ascona Festival



Para-sailing from the mountain over Locarno



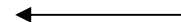
**Dave & Edy & tuba waiting for
the bus to take them to a gig**



Sunset gig by the lake in the village of San Nazzaro, near Ascona



Bob & San Nazzaro lad who wandered onstage. Who is teaching whom here?



Jan Burrows smashing our tour bus window --well, she didn't REALLY do it.



Lago Maggiore and mountains as seen from the balcony of our hotel room in Locarno



An outstanding concert in Copenhagen's city square directly in front of the City Hall. Hundreds of onlookers and dancers enjoyed the beautiful weather and great jazz. Musicians L. t R. - Carson, Crumley, Murphy, Brennan (partially obscured with tuba), and Ross Perry on drums.



- - and the dancers of all ages joined in the fun



Our luxury ferry which took us on the over-night trip from Copenhagen to Oslo



Our Oslo city guide - she insisted that this sightseeing is very serious business and YOU WILL pay close attention.



Party time on board the ferry - the more, the merrier



Sculpture in Vigeland Park, Oslo



Memorial to Jewish Norwegians killed by the Nazis during World War II

PART II

U.S Festivals

Special Events, Places and People

Just for Fun

Recordings

In addition to the hotel, Neil had an antique shop in the basement of the hotel. On one occasion when he was on the verge of selling a chest-of-drawers to an interested lady, Dave Lewis approached the pair with the comment, "Neil, I see you only have one or two of those chest-of-drawers left. Do you want me to make another six or eight of them for you as I did last time?"

Needless to say, that squashed the sale right then and there.

One year, NGJB was the opening band for a small bar, The Pioneer Rex, in downtown Jackson, CA for the 1993 Motherlode Dixieland Jazz Festival. This venue was so small that the bandstand consisted of plywood on top of the pool table. As the band was setting up, it was noted that no piano was present, whereupon the bar owner wheeled out an old, dusty upright from the next room. Noting the filthy condition of the keys, pianist Pete Clute found an old piece of cloth and began cleaning the keyboard.

This action caused a nearby jazz fan to ask, "Is that why they call it a rag-time piano?"

By all of the preceding, it should be obvious to the reader that the many National Hotel weekends were a large part of the band's experience and many friends were made as a result of those weekends. The band is grateful to Neil and all the Jackson gang for the many good times, as crazy as they were on occasion.



Joining the band is Jan Scobey, widow of the great jazz trumpeter, Bob Scobey. Bob was part of Lu Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band



↑ 1998



← 2007

The Gassers with their good Russian friends, the Leningrad Dixieland Jazz Band. These two bands first met in 1987 at the Jubilee, met again in the U.S.S.R. in 1989, and then got together again at the Jubilee, on these two dates.

2007 - All-star and Past Jubilee Emperor George Probert sits in for some musical excitement with the Gassers.





DANCELAND, in downtown Davenport. The Paul Whiteman orchestra appeared at Danceland on Jan 17, 1931. Paul asked Bix to sit with the band and Bix did. This was the last appearance of Bix at Danceland; he died 7 months later in NYC.



WOOF WOOF

It was July, 1990 at the Bix Fest that NGJB first heard Uncle Yoke's Black Dog Jazz Band. The Gassers, waiting backstage to go on next, were impressed with the music and amazed to learn that the audience responded to the Dog's act by yelling "WOOF, WOOF" instead of applauding. A stage hand suggested to Phil that it would fun and interesting to get the audience to respond to NGJB in some wild and unique way also.

Phil responded, "Those guys are called the Black Dogs and the crowd goes Woof, Woof. We are called the Natural Gas Jazz Band. C'mon now, what sound would you expect?"

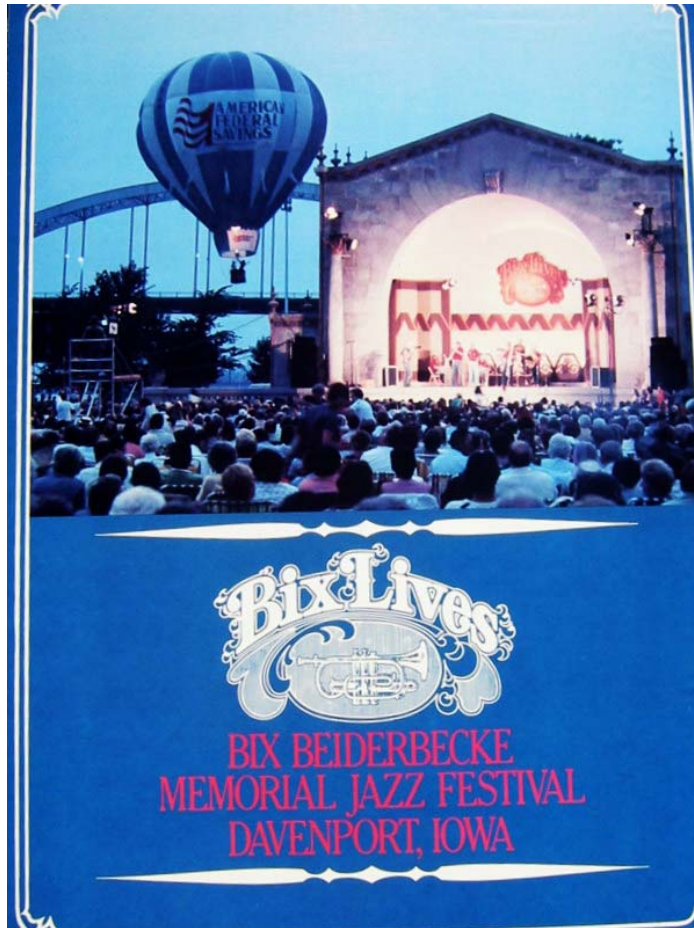
At this point, tubaist Dave Lewis pleaded, "Please, just have them keep barking!"



One of the largest audiences in the band's history. The Bix Beiderbecke Memorial Festival in Davenport, IA , probably in 1988. The press estimated the crowd to be 16,000 plus or minus a few.

The opening paragraph of the novel, **"1929", written by Frederick Turner** in 2003.

"On the anvil of the cornbelt's summer sun the crowd sizzles at the river-front park in Davenport. The gaunt-framed old man stands slightly separate from them, his back turned on the bandshell where the Natural Gas Jass Band races through Muskrat Ramble."



Bix Fest Poster - yes, those are the Gassers on stage.



1988 The band and the Bix Beiderbecke memorial bust and plaque.



1993 THE FLOOD

The entire main venue, Le Claire Park, was under water. The water level reached the nose on Bix's bust (see photo above) and nearly covered the main stage floor.

"20,000 fans from all over the world attended the 1980 (Bix Beiderbecke Memorial) festival. Bands this year included the Natural Gas Jazz Band, the crowd's favorite."

Liz Beiderbecke, great-niece of Bix Beiderbecke



→
Lu Watters, 1911 - 1989
Lu and his good friend, Gussie.
Lu loved the ocean and the beach.



←
Wally Rose, 1913 - 1997
Photo at his last performance
with NGJB, June 1996. Nice
shirt, Wally.



Pat Yankee was Turk's very popular vocalist for many years in Earthquake McGoon's. Still performing beautifully, she belted out a few tunes with NGJB at the 2008 Sacramento Jubilee.



Carl was with the Turk Murphy Jazz band for nearly 10 years; currently with the Gassers.



←
Bob Helm, 1914 - 2003
He was a valuable mainstay
in both Lu's and Turk's
bands for many years.

SOME SPECIAL FOLKS



Bob Barnard , a living legend of Australian Jazz and among the finest mainstream-jazz cornetists in the world, is one of the most highly regarded jazz musicians ever to come from Australia. He is also a very nice guy.



Judie Carr Bruno - a great fan, ardent supporter, and wonderful friend since the early 1970s. Seen here with her mother, Dee Dee.



Fritzie Hartman
1911 - 2001
Fritzie was the mother of NGJB trombonist, John, and sat in with the Gassers on numerous occasions at many venues including Sun Valley and the Bix Fest. Her husband, John, Sr., also joined the band occasionally. A child prodigy proficient on many instruments, she became a member of the musician's union in 1927 and toured professionally while still a teenager. She had a huge, beautiful smile and a wonderful personality to go with it. (see pp. 86)



Phil Elwood - Well known jazz columnist and critic, being presented a plaque for his many years of support of traditional jazz. Elwood traveled as a reporter with NGJB on the historic jazz tour of the U.S.S.R. in 1989.



Spiegel Wilcox - appeared as a guest star with NGJB many times. A wonderful, funny chap and a fine musician. (see pp 92)

THE GASSERS: VARIOUS VIEWS

See page ix and check year to determine personnel.



1971 -L. to R., Hartman, Crumley, Murphy,
Lewis, Weden, Fink



1989 - unfinished sketch
by Judie Carr Bruno,



2004 - by Audrey Hulburd



2005 - by Jim Johnson



Current Cast of Characters

Appendix

And the beat goes on. After some 2,000 gig dates, the future continues to beckon. Who knows? We may come out with Volume Two of this book on some future anniversary.