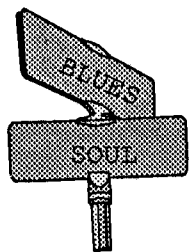


AT THE CORNER OF...



Well Blues Notes readers, in keeping with the promise that the publishing committee made to increase the size of the Blues Notes, here is a our new segment. This new column will feature stories from blues artists, and those people behind the scenes that make up this crazy music business called the blues.

In the future look for some stories from Johnnie Bassett, Jeff "Zippy" Crowe, and many more. This month to kick off "At the corner of..." Bill Heid has graciously accepted our invitation to tell our readers about some of his experiences in the blues. I hope you enjoy the new column. As the Sr. Cho himself would say "it's cute, I think you will like it".

Publishing/editor... Paul Freel

R.J Spangler and Mr. Cho (Hollywood) were kind enough to ask me to recount a few interesting stories about blues artists I've met in my 32-plus years of this nutty music business. So in Ernie Harwell "baseball story" fashion, I've picked three that will perhaps amuse your readers. The first sort of concurs with this year's 50 year observation of Jackie Robinson's breaking the color line in major league baseball in 1947. I broke the Alligator color line in 1974 playing keyboards on Fenton Robinson's "Somebody Loan Me A Dime" record. Drummer Martin Gross, now of the Howling Diablos and I put a little group together to back Fenton's appearance at the Blind Pig in Ann Arbor and Fenton afterward hired me to play on his first record for Alligator. But Bruce Iglauer, the president of the label, indicated he wanted only blacks on his label, then in it's infancy. Fenton, hearing of this, told me to keep it on the down-low, but if he couldn't pick his own people to play on his record, he'd just as soon not do it. I don't know what transpired later between him and Iglauer, but I did play on that album and three years later, his second LP ("I Hear Some Blues Downstairs") plus, thanks to Bruce, recorded two albums on Alligator for KoKo Taylor in 1975 and '76.

A very fine guitarist/vocalist named John Nicholas, now in Austin, Texas, introduced me to Muddy Waters in 1974. Muddy was playing at a Harpo's-type club called the Rock and Roll Farm in Wayne where we were introduced, and thanks to Nicholas, I was invited on stage to play a tune. Trying to be gracious and leave the bandstand after one song, Muddy said, "No, no. Let's play some more!" and I ended up having the honor of playing an hour set with Muddy doing all the Muddy classics from his mid-50's CHESSE recordings I enjoyed so much in my misguided youth.

I'm saving what I think is the best for last. I was milling in Los Angeles in 1978 and heard Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson playing at a little dive on Santa Barbara called the Rubiat Room and when I saw him using a trio with a Hammond B-3, I got up the nerve to ask him if I could play. He invited me up to the bandstand and like many old timers, gave me the old "play something at breakneck speed to humiliate the midget trick." Sonny Rollins' "Oleo" was the test weapon and after I passed, he went on to sing several great blues, including "Hold It Right There." After the set, I thanked him, he grunted and said nothing, and I left, wondering if he thought I was in fact, a "kobito," or "tsuru" (midget). The next morning, Johnny Otis called me and said "I just got a call from Cleanhead and he said some guy from Pittsburgh was at his gig last night at the Rubiat Room and he played his ass off!" I replied that I was there and said, "well, we played a few but he didn't say anything afterwards." "That's typical," Otis said, "it's hard to get a compliment from that old bastard." Years later, I called him while in L.A. and found out he had died, but talked to his widow. "You know, he mentioned some guy coming to his gig at the Rubiat and how surprised he was that he played so good. I guess you were that guy," she said. And now we'll have more blues stories, but first let's tune in on these words.

- BILL HEID, CONTRIBUTING WRITER



THE DETROIT BLUES SOCIETY CELEBRATING SUMMER Sunday, August 10, 1997 at The PineCreek Golf Club

3 p.m. - 4 p.m. the Sidewinder's
4:30-5:30 p.m. Hasting's St. Blues Band
6:00-6:45 p.m. Doug Deming's Blues Suit
Blues Band
6:45-7:15 p.m. Nikki James with Blue Suit
Call Jim Shedd for more information: 313-483-
5010 There will be plenty of barbecue and
blues. Don't miss the fun!!!

There will be no general meeting for
the month of August. Don't worry we
still have the Pine Creek Blues Fest.,
which will benefit the Detroit Blues
Society Education Fund. "Blues in the
School's"
See schedule at left.

DBS Board Meeting:
Wed., August, 6
Holbrook Cafe, 7:00 p.m.