

Jack, the Singing Cab Driver

Because of his bi-polar disorder, Jack didn't really have a career in the traditional sense. He had flown commercial transport planes after he returned from the war, but he didn't like the cold weather locations he had to fly to. His brother, Mack, convinced Jack to join him in going to college at Ohio Wesleyan on the GI bill, but that didn't last long, and as Mack later said, "Jack was only interested in girls and cars." From 1963 to 1985, he sang as a member of the chorus in the Outdoor Drama, *Horn in the West* in Boone, NC. This ended up being the closest thing to a career he ever had, though it paid very little and, of course, didn't involve benefits.

So over the years, there were several non-career-oriented jobs: short-order cook, service station attendant, sight-seeing train driver, and for a short time, private pilot promoting land deals in the Bahamas. But the job that he became best known for was that of driving a taxi for Yellow Cab of Ft. Lauderdale. This was because he would sing songs to his customers as they rode with him. His repertoire ranged from popular songs of the 1950's to gospel and Christian songs of all types, including "How Great Thou Art," "Because He Lives," "The King is Coming," and many more. As I have described elsewhere, Jack would evangelize to every passenger, and would sometimes announce how many souls he had saved that day after returning home. He was clearly on a mission, literally.



This mission, though, could be challenging for the rest of his family. His wife, Carol, was mortified to read a full-page article about "The Singing Cab Driver" in the Ft. Lauderdale News in 1977, and her reaction ultimately caused Jack to spend some time in the hospital for depression. It was during my first semester away at college, and when I returned home for Thanksgiving break, he was still there. I remember going to the hospital with my trumpet to

play for him and all the other patients in the ward, and of course, he wanted to introduce me to everyone there after the mini-concert.

When I was in high school at Pine Crest Preparatory School, which had a large percentage of Jewish students, I was often informed by classmates that they had ridden in the taxi with my Dad and that he had told them I was his son before trying to lead them to Jesus. It made them wonder how I could possibly afford to attend such an expensive school. Before I was able to drive, Dad helped transport me to and from all the musical activities I was involved in, usually by picking me up in the cab. On these occasions, I would have to lie down in the back seat as he drove so that he wouldn't get caught transporting someone without the meter running.

Shortly his short hospitalization in 1977, Jack "retired" from driving the cab after he was robbed at gun point by someone posing as a passenger. The career of the Singing Cab Driver was over, but not his legacy. Flash forward to 2018 during one of my trips to China when I needed to take a taxi in Beijing, and traffic was bad, so the ride lasted about an hour. To pass the time, the driver started singing, and I had a momentary vision that my father was paying me a short visit. When the ride was over, I used my inadequate Chinese to tell him that my father had been a singing cab driver too, and I left him a larger-than-normal tip. But then, I tip all taxi drivers well whether they sing or not.