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By Maggie Paine
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DURHAM, N.H. -- Jazz musician Clark Terry, 81, of Haworth, N.J., is the recipient of the 2001 Charles Holmes Pettee Medal, the University of New Hampshire Alumni Association's highest honor, Karen Johnson, president of the Alumni Association, announced today. The annual award is given in recognition of outstanding accomplishment and distinguished service to the state, nation or world. The award will be presented on March 25, 2002, at the Memorial Union Building.

Terry, whose career as a jazz musician began on a $12.50 trumpet purchased at a pawnshop, was, by age 20, playing with well-known bands. After a stint in the Navy during World War II, Terry joined the Count Basie Orchestra, and then Duke Ellington's as a featured soloist -- the only musician to perform at length with both band leaders. Courted by the Tonight Show, he joined the NBC orchestra, breaking the color barrier and becoming both a featured performer and TV personality. When the Tonight Show moved to Los Angeles, Terry stayed in New York City, recording and headlining national and international jazz festivals.

"Clark Terry is arguably the most respected jazz trumpeter in the world today," Johnson says, "and that would be enough reason to honor him. But he's also the world's foremost jazz educator. Clark realized in the '60s that the language of jazz was in danger of being lost as a living entity, and dedicated himself to passing on that language to a new generation." Terry has been associated with the UNH music department since 1974. Thanks to Terry, the UNH Jazz Band became the first
college organization to perform as part of an evening program at the Montreux Festival when students played there with him in 1976.

In the 27 years since, Terry has worked with hundreds of students at UNH and at other universities around the country, as well as with high school and junior high school students through his association with the UNH Summer Youth Music School. Over the years, he has performed and recorded with numerous UNH students and faculty members.

Terry received an honorary doctorate in 1978; he was named adjunct professor of music at UNH in 1988.

In 2000, an anonymous donor established an endowment for the "Perpetuation of the Jazz Language" to bring musicians and scholars of exceptional reputation to UNH. The fund was named for both Terry and David Seiler, UNH professor of music. "Terry's a musician's musician," Seiler says, noting that at age 81, Terry still "plays as well as he ever has."

The Charles Holmes Pettee Medal was established in 1940 by the University of New Hampshire Alumni Association and the University Board of Trustees. "Clark Terry epitomizes the kind of extraordinary achievement and distinguished service represented by the late Charles H. Pettee, for whom the medal is named, and we are proud to award it to him," Johnson says. Pettee served UNH for 62 years as professor and dean until his death in 1938.

Previous recipients of the annual award include television producer and UNH alumna Marcy Carsey, astronaut Alan Shepard, former New Hampshire Governor John H. Sununu and former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop.

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