"It's a way of life the School teaches." — Bob Gibson

"Second Half typically progressed into the Third Half at the Saddle Club on North Avenue," says Margaret Rely. "I remember attending very discreetly, so I was considerably underage. The music was great! Here, Margaret (back row) sings with teachers Ray Tate, Louise Dinnick, Mike Dunbar, and (behind Ray) Bill Hansen at Second Half in 1975. Johnny Long, below, plays gut bucket.

noodle cutter. But that about tells you how we trusted that 'good ole boy,' who, from time to time, caused the utmost damnable consternation.

"It was Ray who kept the Old Town School of Folk Music on the folk music circuit long after there was no folk music circuit. Ray never missed an 'open mike' session at the Azteca, the Saddle Club, or the Bulls. He taught us to love the music, to sing out, to write a tune now and then, to play with chords and harmonies, to take it all very seriously. And he taught something else to those of us who were watching: how to teach." — Marcia Johnson

"Ray was very good at drawing people out. Maybe because he was such a phenomenal music man himself, he never felt threatened by anybody musically. He could get people out of themselves, get them to have a good time, and realize the potential they never knew they had, in a nonthreatening way. For example, I was in the Old Town Singers and was dying to learn the string bass, but I would have never, never said anything about it. Somehow Ray just knew. One night he said, 'I think we need someone on bass. How about it, Judy? I was thrilled. He constantly tapped people's abilities — and recruited a lot of teachers that way.' — Judy Reed

Like his predecessors, Ray brought performers playing at the many clubs around the city into the School for impromptu concerts and jam sessions. "If special visiting artists came into town, Ray'd latch onto them to give a workshop at the school," says Ticia Perenchio, who did public relations work for the School during Ray's tenure. "So someone could take a workshop with Sam Hinton or Bryan Bowers." And for me, OTT head honcho Mike Dunbar adds. "Clubs like the Earl of Old Town or the Quiet Knight would send their headline acts to the School to be guests at the second half, or to play at the Saddle Club, a nearby tavern where the School hosted a weekly open stage.

"I ran into Ray Tate at the old Quiet Knight in the early '70s. He told me about the School and mentioned that something called 'Paxton picking' was taught there. I was thunderstruck because, to put it mildly, I have never entertained an inflated sense of myself as a guitarist. Careful attention to my recordings has reinforced this view. I expressed disbelief; Ray insisted. "I must tell you that on every occasion in which I have visited the School, I've searched the walls in vain for a chart explaining 'Paxton picking?' I see Dyer-Bennett arpeggios, Leadbelly licks, etc., but of my inimitable style, no sign. Perhaps it's kept under lock and key in some inner sanctum, accessible only to the more advanced students? A nagging voice whispers 'Nah.' I began to fear that Ray Tate was having a little joke with me. "I'm still wondering what 'Paxton picking' is — and if I could learn to do it. — Tom Paxton

One day Leo Kortke visited an Old Town School fingertips picking class. "Leo pulled out his guitar and played a few tunes with us," Margaret Reilly then a student. "He was always around. At the time I was just a star-struck kid, bashfully impressed to be hanging out with a famous folksinger like Ed Holstein. "Amis the dog was always in the store with me. Up on the counter, playing with customers, or with Emmy Reves's boxers, Ariel. Ariel would howl whenever she heard harmonica—ugly dog that she was. Emmy would get the biggest kick out of playing duets with Ariel every time she tested a harmonica. Another good friend of Amis was Zeuss the wonder dog, the Old Town School's mascot German Shepherd who belonged to the custodian, Cory Camalleri. Zeuss's head was as big as Amis's entire body, but the two would roll around the floor constantly, to the amusement of everyone. That was just one of the many great friendships started at the Old Town School."