

Library buys Red Kelly collection

By Jamie Chase
Tacoma Weekly Staff Writer

Jazz fans attending Red Kelly's final performance at Kelly's Restaurant and Lounge this Saturday night will notice something missing from the performance. Tacoma Public Library came to an agreement this week with Red Kelly, owner of Kelly's, to purchase his collection of historic jazz and political memorabilia hanging on the venue's walls. Kelly's sold earlier this month and closes Saturday, September 20 after 76-year-old Kelly hosts his final show.

The library plans to remove the collection from the facility before Saturday, fearing looters and fans may remove pieces during the last performance. David Domkoski, Community Relations Manager of Tacoma Public Library, is responsible for the purchase. Concerned the collection would be dismantled or sold to a national collector, he moved quickly to purchase without an appraisal.

"The importance of the collection is that it is in its totality," he said. Domkoski described his disbelief that Kelly planned to give historic memorabilia, including photographs of Harry James, Tony Bennett and Duke Ellington, away to fans and friends during his last performance.

Last year a representative from Smithsonian Institute visited Kelly's with Domkoski and expressed interest in purchasing the collection. "It is a national treasure that will stay in Tacoma," said Domkoski. "I reviewed the collection with collection librarians and they were blown away."

As for the price paid for the memorabilia,

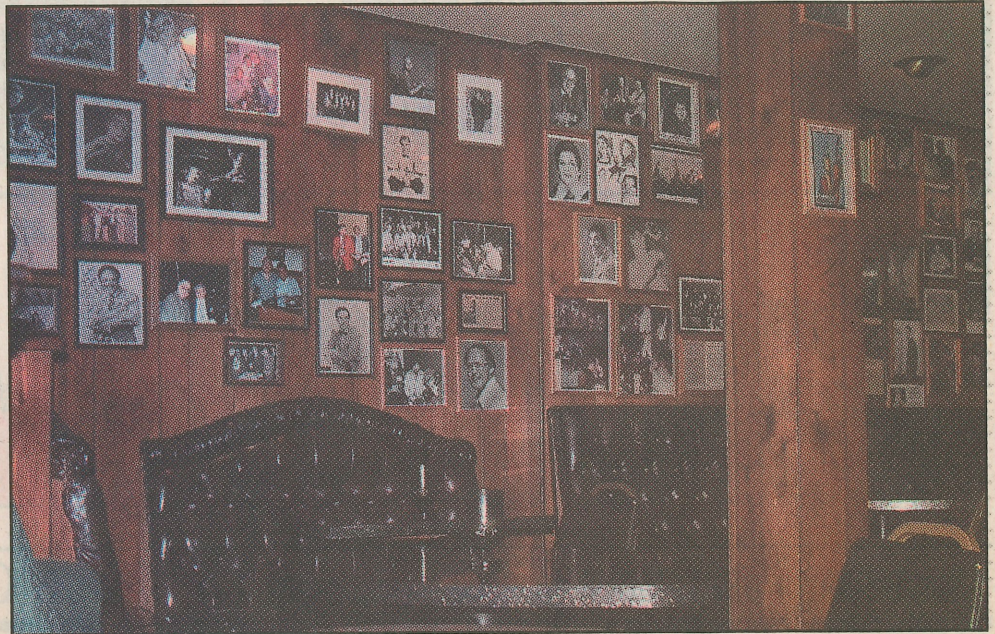


PHOTO BY JAMIE CHASE

Red Kelly's memorabilia collection was recently purchased by Tacoma Public Library.

"we are not talking about a large sum of money," stated Domkoski. "It is priceless because it is Tacoma history." Funds for the purchase came from the collections budget; however the library plans to initiate a fundraiser immediately to raise preservation monies.

Will taxpayers be surprised by the library's purchase? "Collection is part of what we do," Domkoski replied. "The library provides access to information whether photographs, music or memorabilia."

Collection preservation efforts will center on increasing public access to the history of the memorabilia. The library plans to docu-

ment the collection piece by piece with Kelly and a videographer, digitize copies of the photographs, and make the collection available on a website. Preservation fundraising is now Domkoski's mission. "I hope when people find out about this we receive checks in the mail."

To support preservation of Tacoma Public Library's Red Kelly collection, hand deliver your check to David Domkoski Saturday night during Red Kelly's final performance at Kelly's, 1101 Tacoma Avenue South or send checks to: Tacoma Public Library Foundation, Attn: Red Kelly Fund, 1102 Tacoma Ave. S., Tacoma, WA 98402.