

*Meet our*  
**Master Artist, Rusty Mason**

**Russell Leroy Mason** was born in Winchester, Virginia in 1922. He began playing brass instruments in his grade school band, and was introduced to jazz trumpet via the recordings of Louis Armstrong. "Jazz was big in the 'thirties," Rusty remembers, even in the rural Shenandoah Valley where he was growing up.



By the age of thirteen, Rusty was already working professionally with several local dance bands, affording the young musician valuable touring experience. Rusty recalls being the first black musician in his area to break the color barrier, playing with a local white jazz band at a time when racial segregation was the general rule. Serving in New Guinea during World War II, Rusty led the dance band he played with in his army unit.

After discharge from the Army, Rusty enrolled at the Modern School of Music in Washington, D.C., studying clarinet technique and classical music for two years. After consolidating the skills needed to make a living playing music, Rusty spent the late 1940's and early 1950's as a busy jazz musician. His talents were quite in demand, and he worked with such well-known bandleaders as Tiny Bradshaw, Lucky Millinder, and Buddy Johnson, among others.

Rusty, now 87, can be heard at a variety of clubs and other venues in the Washington, D.C. area where he makes his home. A talented multi-instrumentalist, Rusty plays not only the saxophone (alto, tenor, and baritone), but is also accomplished on the trumpet (his first love), clarinet, flugelhorn, and piano. Rusty has taught at Swing Week at Augusta since 1989.

Like many swing musicians of his generation, Rusty was influenced by the post-war bebop revolution, and incorporated some of those more modern elements into his style. However, Rusty's heart and soul is in swing, where he continues to find new ways to bridge the generations with music, and to play jazz with energetic creativity.

***At Augusta, Rusty delights in spending time with students.*** Whether conversing in the dining hall or playing a tune under the shade of an oak tree, or in classrooms, students are encouraged to spend time with this extraordinarily gifted and generous musician - a treasure to our musical community.