

Only a couple of rooms are open to tourists.



renovated Union Station, on the Red Line, is a Metro stop, train station and shopping mall.

## ro to tour D.C.



Mary Chapin Carpenter performs Wednesday at Wolf Trap.

### Inside: More things to see and do while visiting the nation's capital

- The ethnic, urban draw of Adams Morgan, Page G6.
- A look at African-American heritage in D.C., Page G6.
- Touring the Department of the Treasury, Page G8.
- Kennedy Center and Wolf Trap schedules, Page G9.

to more than three hours.

## MUSIC



Musician Greg "Fingers" Taylor handpicked his mostly female blues band, the Lady Fingers Revue.

## 'Fingers' Taylor hits the road again

By Jim Morrison

Special to The Daily Break

**G**REG "FINGERS" TAYLOR was playing with Jimmy Buffett before there were Parrotheads snapping up hundreds of thousands of tickets each summer. Before there was a Coral Reefer Band. Before, even, Buffett had a record deal.

So when he joins the mellow Margarita Man for a show tonight at the College of William & Mary's Cary Field, he brings a long, wise and balanced perspective. He's lived through the lean times, the drunken times and the good times, emerging a survivor who not only plays in Buffett's band, but also has his own Lady Fingers Revue, an almost-all-female blues band that opens the shows.

It's a busy life with one of the top live draws in the country. A life that started two decades ago when one struggling musician asked to sit in with another.

"The time I met (Buffett) was about 1970, and he was just a traveling folk singer by himself, half broke," Taylor recalled recently while on the road with Buffett.

It was in Hattiesburg, Miss., where Taylor was a student at the University of Southern Mississippi, a place he describes as "where all the hippies went to college back in the '60s." Well, at least some of the ones in the Deep South. Including Buffett, who had graduated a few years earlier with a journalism degree.

Fingers was the local harp player who sat in with everybody who blew through town. And Buffett was appearing at what passed for the student union, a joint with a couple of mailboxes, drink machines and a few tables.

"I walked in and there was this guy with this huge

Please see **FINGERS**, Page G4



# FINGERS

continued from Page G1

cowboy hat on, long, stringy blond hair and a giant mustache," Taylor said. "And he was singing 'Why Don't We Get Drunk (And Screw)' to about three little old ladies on break from their night class. I said, 'This is one of the most bizarre things I've ever seen.' It was great."

He asked if he could sit in, and Buffett assented. But only on the last song of the set.

"I waited around and played with him, and we hit it right off."

But Taylor had a year to go in college and didn't want to give up his draft deferment. So he played sporadically with Buffett, opening for John Sebastian one weekend, The Association another.

Finally, Buffett got a recording contract with ABC Records. Taylor ended up in Memphis playing with an R&B band called The Highsteppers. But Buffett didn't forget his harp buddy.

"To his credit, and my luck, when he got a recording deal he would fly me in Nashville to record those first three albums," Taylor said. "Jimmy kept me in mind all the time."

By early 1975, Buffett had done the singer-songwriter bit and was looking to put together a band. He called Taylor, and the first incarnation of the Coral Reefer Band was spawned.

The band's traveling act has changed since those days, Taylor said.

"Initially, it was just a bunch of guys who would drink a half bottle of whiskey go on stage and stumble through it," he said. "When it was over we'd drink another half bottle of whiskey and stumble on to the next gig. That was great. At that time, it worked. We could pull it off. We were young and that was the times. Real crazy times, the '70s."

In the '70s, Buffett toured often with Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson as part of the outlaw country group. But his music didn't fit there. In fact, it didn't fit anywhere.

But by the early 1980s, a change had occurred. Buffett no longer was associated with the outlaw country artists. And he was headlining on his own.

While Buffett's career was building, Taylor's personal life was shattering.

In the '70s, he said, "If I woke up

## IN CONCERT

**Who:** Jimmy Buffett

**When:** 5 tonight

**Where:** Cary Field, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg.

**Tickets:** \$25. 1-221-3340. Call (800) 543-3041.

on the floor of the bus or on the floor of the motel or someplace I didn't know — somebody's house — there were usually two or three band members who had done the same thing the same night. I thought everybody lived like that. It was my reality, you know. 'Oh, don't you get drunk and go into blackouts every week?' I didn't know. Alcoholics are funny."

By 1983, demon alcohol had grown into an uncontrollable force.

"I was 31, and I was forced to look at myself and confront myself honestly and say, 'You're a drunk.'"

"I was flaming out on whiskey, and I just had to get off the road. There was this respite there. When I came back in '84, they were calling the audience Parrotheads, and they began to be like a cult, like the Deadheads. And since then it's just gotten bigger."

The crowds had changed. They packed concert halls everywhere, even though Buffett's only major commercial hit was "Margaritaville" off his 1977 "Changes in Latitudes, Changes in Attitudes" album. But then, Buffett isn't the kind of artist to be measured by radio airplay.

And with the change in crowds came changes for the band. Big-rig Canadian buses with VCRs, CD players and comfortable bunks replaced the old bus with no air conditioning.

The lifestyle matured, too. The boys learned to live a little more and party a little less.

"The people who are still around from that era are people who went through the '60s and went through the '70s. Either you get your act together or you flame out."

### A mostly female lineup

Taylor has an established career. In 1989, he released "Chest Pains," a solid collection of sinewy R&B, rock and blues that featured Texas blues guitarist Anson Funderburgh, famed Memphis guitarist Steve Cropper and the Memphis Horns.

The disc has some catchy tunes,

especially "Some White People (Can Dance)," "Barbed Wire Kiss" and "Jackson Police."

Although he assembled an all-star lineup for the recording, it will be a different band that backs him opening for Buffett. During a brief winter tour, Taylor chose an all-female band. Buffett liked it so much he asked him to reprise the idea for the summer tour.

But that band could not be reassembled. So Taylor went on a nationwide hunt to find the best female blues players and singers. Along the way he discovered a rich vein of untapped talent.

On the West Coast, he found Debbie Davies, a guitarist who has worked with Albert Collins; sax player Nancy Wright; and drummer Linda Geiger. Buffett recommended a bassist named Joyce Grimes he had seen in New Orleans. From his old stomping grounds in Hattiesburg, Taylor plucked keyboard player Beth McKee. Finding a singer took some time, but he finally settled on Janiva Magness, who shares vocal chores with him onstage. Rounding out the band is Larry Raspberry, Taylor's old buddy from his Memphis days with The Highsteppers.

They do about 30 minutes, offering cuts from Taylor's solo album, along with some old R&B and even a funky gospel version of The Eagles' "Take It to the Limit." Taylor is hoping to head into a studio after the summer tour is over and cut an album with the band, though nothing has been inked yet.

Onstage, when the Lady Fingers Revue is finished, it's really just the beginning for Taylor, who does double duty and turns around to play with Buffett.

"I'm having a good time this summer because I really like Jimmy's show," Taylor explains. "I'm getting to play some nice acoustic numbers with him like we did when we first started out 20 years ago, when we first met."

Of course, now 20,000 or so folks each show hang on every word, a kinder, gentler sort of cult. Not a few ladies on break from their night class.

"The last four years we've sold out everywhere in the United States," Taylor said. "We're probably the biggest ticket this summer and that includes the people who are on MTV and all that stuff."

# MUSICALS

he selected a spoof of 1920s musicals, "The Boy Friend"; a star vehicle about comedian Fanny Brice,

ees and sets out to produce professional-quality work," Meredith said. He explained that local actors don't

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