



The NOTE



Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania • Spring / Summer 2015



MICHAEL STEPHANS • JERRY DODGION • BILL CROW • GENE QUILL

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The NOTE contains some content that may be considered offensive. Authors' past recollections reflect attitudes of the times and remain uncensored.

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From the Collection . . .



Cover Photo (front): Warren Vaché performing at the 2014 Zoot Fest.
Photo by Bob Weidner.



Center Spread: Matt directing the Al Cohn and the Natural Seven Ensemble.
Photo by Bob Weidner.



Cover Photo (back): Lew Tabackin performing at the 2014 Zoot Fest.
Photo by Bob Weidner.

The NOTE



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The mission of the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection is to stimulate, enrich, and support research, teaching, learning, and appreciation of all forms of jazz.

The ACMJC is a distinctive archive built upon a unique and symbiotic relationship between the Pocono Mountains jazz community and East Stroudsburg University.

With the support of a world-wide network of jazz advocates, the ACMJC seeks to promote the local and global history of jazz by making its resources available and useful to students, researchers, educators, musicians, historians, journalists and jazz enthusiasts of all kinds, and to preserve its holdings for future generations.

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A Note from the Collection Coordinator



Fran Kaufman

By Dr. Matt Vashlishan

Greetings once again from the office of the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection! As many of you may have heard by the time I am writing, the Poconos jazz community (and beyond) lost two very special people in the past month, both victims of different types of cancer. Trombonist Rick Chamberlain was one of the primary voices of Poconos jazz. He

founded the COTA Festival with Phil woods 38 years ago, established COTA Camp Jazz, and was very active with Bob Bush in recent years in regards to the ACMJC, helping to organize Scholastic Swing and Library Alive concerts. In my short time here as coordinator, Rick was always involved with the Collection and in particular all of the Al Cohn big band music. His inspirational personality and excitement for music and helping others will always be remembered as we all continue the programs that he set up so many years ago. Pianist Eric Doney was also a prominent figure in the area, teaching and mentoring many young musicians during their high school years. Eric was active in our COTA Camp Jazz for several years and always performed at the COTA Festival and the Deerhead Inn to a packed house. One of my first memories of Eric and his music was a CD of his titled "The Piano" that I purchased at a COTA Festival many years ago when I was performing in high school as a COTA Cat.

Both Eric and Rick were truly special people as well as musical voices and their work and memory are a part of what makes and will continue to make the Poconos so special. In the last issue of The Note, Rick was kind enough to recount his memories of the most recent COTA Festival. He provided a great photo of one of the first festivals where the band was set up on the street performing on a tiny stage. None of us were sure of the pianist performing with Phil and the band, but fortunate for us he has made himself known! Wolfgang Knittel wrote this about the photo and that day:

"Wolfgang Knittel on piano: Wolf's electric piano with the mixer on top, the amp on the floor below. That equipment burned up in the garage fire set by somebody that hated fancy sports cars (belonging to Julia [Wolfgang's wife]). My equipment was in my car which I was to drive to the Lehigh Valley for repairs the next morning. This equipment was used at the Bottom of the Fox gig with Rick Chamberlain and others."



Garth Woods

Eric Doney (left) with Rick Chamberlain (right) during COTA Camp Jazz

Once again I prove I am not perfect. Part of my column is to correct any inaccuracies that might have occurred in previous issues, and the latest is the personnel list for the centerfold photo of Woody Herman's 2nd Herd. The general consensus is that Marky Markowitz and Stan Fishelson should be switched, and Shorty Roger is Shorty Rogers. I appreciate everyone who took the time to write and let me know.

There will be other changes happening in regards to the content of The Note, but I will leave those as a surprise to you as you read. Times are definitely changing, but this is a good thing. There's more content laying around here than you would believe!



Phil In the Gap



David Coulter

By Phil Woods

Rick Chamberlain died today. I met him when he attended my jazz school in Bucks County, Solebury, Pa., in the mid-60s.

The owner's first intent was to hire Maynard Ferguson who came the first year and never showed again. The next year they needed a "jazzier" and that is when I took over the program. It was 1964 and it was Kismet wrapped in Fate! My house was a quarter mile away from the generous campus. There was no money but I got free tuition for the family and Chan taught jazz singing because Annie Ross gave her copies of Lambert Hendricks & Ross. Ramblerny was happening. Rick was 14 when he came to the school.

Here is an excerpt from the local New Hope Gazette in 1965:

"A good jazz musician plays half by ear and half by technical knowledge."

That's what 14 year old Richard Chamberlain says and he adds it's beginning to work for him. Already he has developed ability both ways on the trombone through the concentrated two month camp.

The school features teachers who are tops in the fields of jazz music instruction, drama and ballet. Jazz alto saxophonist Phil Woods who toured Russia with Benny Goodman in 1962 is Richard's teacher.

"What you do is keep the basic rhythm of a song and improvise on the melody," Richard explained. "I decide on the spur of the moment what I'm going to play. I've learned more in two and a half weeks of intense jazz study than I learned in two years of study at home. When some of the guys are sitting around the dorm they talk about jazz techniques; I sit there and soak it in."

Some of the students were Richie Cole, Mike Brecker and Roger Rosenberg, all consummate pros as I write this.

Already Richard has composed some arrangements of songs. He wrote his own version of "Soliloquy" from "Carousel." The band group, comprised of 17 members, meets for practice throughout the day in the "Bird's Nest," a one-time sheep shed which once housed some birds in their nests.

The sign that once adorned the restaurant that Chan had in New Hope. (Is shown in photo, right.)

Richard first became actively interested in jazz at Pennsbury Jr. High School, where his teacher, John Mack saw potential in him.

Pennsbury under John Mack's tutelage became one of the best high school jazz bands on the East coast and won First Place every year.

Write of Spring

"Mr. Mack gave me my first lessons in improvising," he said. "The chords are written down, yet you play what you feel. The piano player or whoever plays rhythm must stick with the basic chords, while the individual musicians each come in for a couple of choruses in their own style."

The jazz students rehearse all day, working on harmony, arranging and theory as well as private instruction on their instruments.

When Rick started the COTA Camp jazz he utilized many of



Phil Woods and Rick Chamberlain at the Ramblerny Camp.

Courtesy of Phil Woods.



Courtesy of Phil Woods.

Phil Woods directing Camp Ramblerny Big Band.

the techniques that we used at Ramblerny. Sadly it closed in 1967 and became a remedial reading school. If it had remained open I don't think I would have moved to France in 1968.

Rick and I stayed in touch through the years and when we moved to the Poconos in the 70s we resumed our friendship. He and Ed Joubert and I were known as the unholy trio. Why, I will never know. We were the model of decorum, most of the time. One night we were in the Deer Head Inn as were about 20 other musicians all waiting to sit in. I idly remarked that we should move this whole scene out doors and start a Festival. Celebration of the Arts was the end result of our musings. Joubert built the stage and Rick became all-purpose director and remained in this post for all 38 years.

I remained the saxophone player who made up new work for others to do. The trio became a duo when Joubert was murdered. Now I am the last one and I miss my glorious partners. I loved them both very much and keeping focus on future Festivals will be dif-

ficult. But Rick always stayed on point. He started the COTA Camp program and modeled it on the Ramblerny model. He was also the Jazz Ensemble Director at Lafayette College and kept his teaching schedule while undergoing chemotherapy. I don't know what else to say. It won't be the same without Rick. Pete Peterson put it best:

"I have no words. Damn you Rick Chamberlain for leaving the world with one less angel and doing it at such a young age. I am sure the Lord will forgive you."

In 1968 the family with our matching luggage, 24 cardboard cartons, left New Hope, Pa. and moved to Europe. We were headed for Amsterdam, even bought a car for delivery there. First stop however was Ronnie Scott's club in London. They picked us up in a Mini Cooper and took us to a hotel called the Eros featuring hot and cold running hookers.

Things eventually worked out when Simone and Jean Louis Gini-bre came to London and brought us to Paris where we stayed for five years. Jean Louis was the editor for the French Jazz Magazine who did a story on our expat status

and turned me on to the best French musicians, Daniel Humair on drums, Henri Texier on bass and George Gruntz on piano. We called the band The European Rhythm Machine. We sometimes called it The European Washing Machine – cleanest band in the west!

Stay in Paris long enough and one takes up writing and painting. My painting was terrible but Chan and I had a great idea. We would write a book together and call it Life In E Flat. We used pink and blue paper and wrote every morning.

Chan eventually got her part of the book, the pink part published and titled it "Ma Vie

En Mi Bemol" the French translation of my title "Life In E Flat" that Chan appropriated. My blue part is still in the drawer.

After our divorce and my return to the states in the 70s I wrote some columns for Saxophone Journal. I enjoyed the process and it was a welcome break from composing.

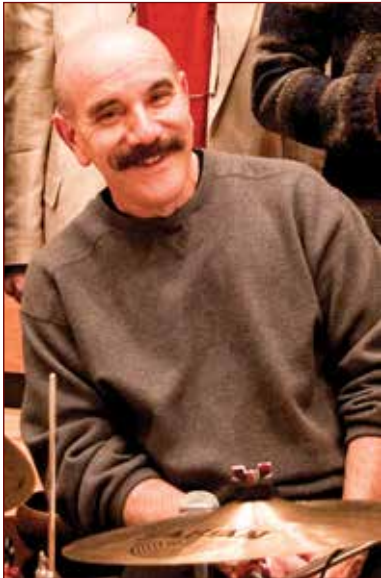
When Jill and I settled in the Poconos Al Cohn's wife, Flo, with the urging of trumpet man Ralph Hughes started a magazine called The Note. I called her Maxine after Thomas Wolf's editor Max Perkins. It was soon picked up by East Stroudsburg University as an adjunct to the Al Cohn Memorial Collection.

This will be my 62nd Phil In The Gap and someone else will have to pick up the pencil – I am tapped out.

And my disease is getting mean. I am not as fleet of finger nor foot – so I just keep looking for the good notes and only breathing out is the ticket. My plan is try to be nice and be even nicer to Jill. Besides, spring is here my dear. In, out, in, out and again and again.

And don't forget COTA Camp Jazz - July 27- August 2. ☺

Michael Stephans



Chaz de Bourbon/BGA Studios.com

Improvising: The Heart of the Jazz Experience

Suppose you've just emerged from the subway on 42nd Street in New York City. Suppose also that you have no particular destination in mind; so you decide to head east on 42nd and see where it takes you. You cross Broadway, then 6th Avenue, enjoying the sights and sounds as you walk. The only guidelines you have are to have some lunch and head back to your hotel by dinnertime.

As you come to Madison Avenue, you make a split-second decision to turn right and head south. You have never been on this street before, and everything you see and hear is new to you. At this point you decide to find a restaurant for lunch. Your only guideline is your budget; so as a result, you discover a tiny Indian restaurant on 38th Street. The prices are reasonable, so you make the decision to have a meal there.

And so goes your afternoon. Street after street, you move spontaneously and without an agenda. The only thing you come to expect is the unexpected itself.

Now, move the scenario from the streets of New York City into your kitchen. You're tired of the same old recipes, and you haven't made your

Ears, Mind, Heart: Two Views of the Jazz Experience for Listeners

weekly trek to the grocery store. So you decide to just throw something together. But what? You decide to make up a recipe on the spot, using whatever available ingredients you have at hand. So into the skillet go the sliced onion, the ground beef, a little chili powder, some sliced tomatoes, and a few black olives. You have no idea what you are preparing, but you do know that you will serve these prepared ingredients over a bed of white rice. If this experiment tastes good, you might try to prepare it again sometime. If not – well – you'll try to invent something else another time.

These two scenarios represent an important part of life and they are certainly at the very core of jazz music for both the performer and the listener. When the jazz musician is through playing the melody of a song, s/he then embarks upon an improvisational journey, not unlike an afternoon in New York City or an adventure in your kitchen. There are some guidelines, however; just as you know how to put one foot in front of the other when you walk down the street, the jazz musician knows how to play a musical instrument and understands the structure of a song, before s/he moves into unfamiliar territory, choosing this note or that, this musical phrase or that, just as you might instantaneously choose one city street over another in your travels, or one spice rather than another in your instant recipe.

This sense of spontaneity that provides the basis of improvisation is what is often known as being in the moment. As Buddhism and other spiritual philosophies often sug-

gest, there is no past and no future; there is only the present moment in which we find ourselves – either as musicians or listeners. Buddhists call this state of attentiveness, samadhi. When we musicians improvise, we are often seated squarely in the present moment of spontaneous creation. That is not to say that we don't use the lessons of the past to create our improvisations. We bring certain fundamental tools to a performance; things like the knowledge of theory, harmony, and rhythm – as well as the full range of human emotions we feel at that time – in order to craft our improvisations in some way that brings deep personal meaning to us, and hopefully brings the listener into our world, if only for a little while. As my friend and colleague, New York pianist Jim Ridl, points out, "Jazz is a complex medium of expression. It calls for both musical intelligence and passion. The musician draws on multiple sources: music of all kinds, personal life experience, current events, history, and culture, and something intangible within the self, whether it be called soul, inspiration, the Muse, or the Spirit" (Interview, 2011). Creating jazz, to paraphrase the legendary trombonist and composer Bob Brookmeyer, is the act of telling your story and mirroring the world at large – with all of its emotional ups and downs. In this sense, the jazz improviser says things through his or her instrument that all human beings are capable of feeling as a part of life. That is where the connection between musician and listener has the potential for creating a moving and memorable experience.

Focusing: Tumbling into Selflessness

When we go to the movies or the theater, we watch the production and listen to it simultaneously. This is a given; however, when a film or play has depth and is totally engrossing and engaging (think of your favorite movie, for example), something happens to us. We often move beyond the mere act of observation and into the realm of participation; that is, we empathize with one or more of the characters and laugh at his or her bumbling mishaps (in a comedy) or cry when he or she encounters tragedy (in a drama). We also revel when justice is served and evildoers get their comeuppance. In other words, we are able to experience a film or play, rather than passively watch and listen to the production.

The above analogy holds true for jazz as well, although the act of experiencing jazz can often be more subtle than experiencing comedy or tragedy. In other words, the whole range of human emotions is not as readily visible as it would be in a film or a play. As you experience a jazz performance, you must be open to whatever feelings you might be having at the very moment you are hearing the music. Since art often mirrors life, you may well experience a wide range of emotions, from pleasure and excitement, to sadness and contemplation, and all that falls in between.

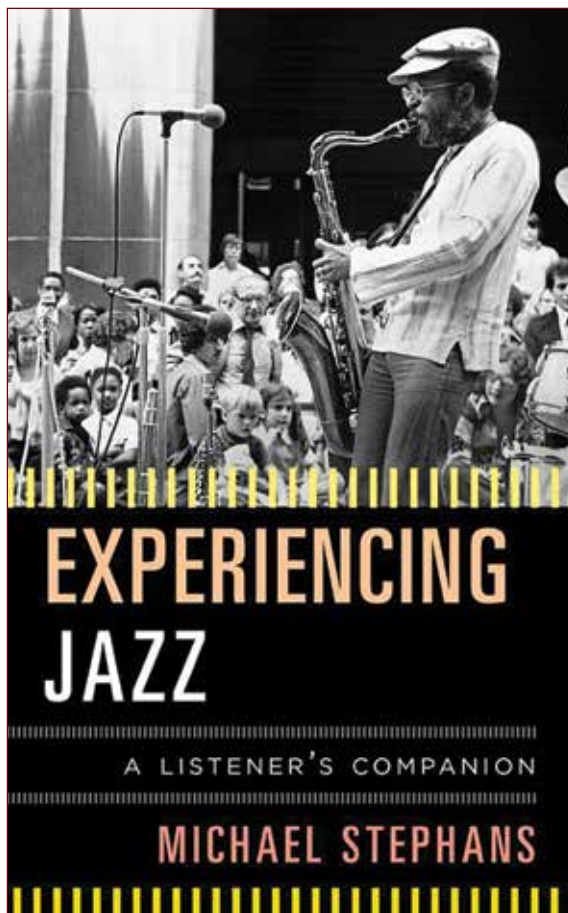
Even as jazz musicians strive for a state of samadhi – that is, total immersion in the creative act – so too can listeners move into a state of absolute concentration. As a listener, you have only to be completely open to the music unfolding on the bandstand or on your iPod or CD player. As multimedia composer and violinist Stephen Nachmanovitch suggests in his book, *Free Play*, “For art to appear, we have to disappear.” In other words, we essentially have to abandon conscious thought while listening to (or playing) music. We have to train ourselves to be present; to allow



Laurie Samet

ourselves to focus upon what is going on at that very moment – much as a child focuses upon something as simple as the act of building a sandcastle. That means, in a sense, to become what we’re doing. So when we hear jazz, we have to give ourselves over to the experience, without preconception, judgment, or distraction. In this sense, we are truly experiencing jazz, not merely listening to it.

Sounds easy, right? If my own students are any indication, experiencing jazz can be a real challenge. With our attention spans becoming shorter and shorter, due to the dynamic advancements in computer technology as entertainment, the idea



of sitting through a jazz concert or listening to an entire John Coltrane recording in a college music library or at home may seem too much like work.

So how do we create a sense of focus if we want to be able to give our total concentration to a jazz performance? My jazz appreciation students, who over the years have been mostly non-music majors, have discovered that such listening is a challenge, especially when they are exposed to music that is often under three-minutes in duration; and when they are overexposed to a hit song by a well known popular musician. For example, you might hear a new song by a good singer, and as a result, you download that artist’s song or purchase her CD. After several months of listening to her hit song on your iPod and on the radio, and hearing it as background music in boutiques, grocery stores, and elevators, you become understandably bored with it.

Jazz, on the other hand, is not a commodity that can be canned and packaged into a three-minute recording. It is not an entertainment and has little “commercial potential.” Musicians don’t become jazz musicians because the music provides a lucrative means of making a living. As such, the first thing a new listener can do is to cast aside all previous notions of what jazz is, and accept it on its own terms. Before you decide whether you like a particular jazz performance, you must give your attention fully to it. This means openly embracing whatever you hear and avoiding comparisons with any other musical genre. It also means taking the time to learn about and from the men and women who create the music – for they and the music they play are inseparable. This is one of the keys to the samadhi of listening. A fellow musician once said to me that we [jazz musicians] are vessels through which the music of the universe passes; and this is what flows through us and into you, the listener, if you are open to what we have to say; our stories, our lives.

Excerpted / adapted from *Experiencing Jazz: A Listener's Companion* (Scarecrow Press, 2014) ©2014 Rowman & Littlefield Publishers ☺

From The ACMJC Oral History Project



Jonno Rattman

By Jay Rattman

[Jerry Dodgion] [JD] I like to be sure to show my gratitude. I really I have been very lucky, really lucky. And I am not kidding because I have been lucky with timing of all kinds of stuff that has happened. Some people used to think that I must be a great hustler. I never learned to hustle a gig because the phone rang just before suicide, but I mean it rang, I never called anybody and begged for a gig ever. And not that I worked that much but I've been really lucky, you will see.

[Jay Rattman] [JR] I read another interview of yours where I think you said Dinah Shore wanted a copy of a song you wrote so that she could get someone to write lyrics for it...

[JD] Oh yeah, Johnny Mercer, a friend of hers. Yeah.

[JR] Johnny Mercer. And you never sent it.

[JD] No, I never got around to that. (Laughing) He really was a good friend of hers, you know a little bit of research that I ran into along the way, Dinah Shore was the first one in history to sell a million records.

[JR] Right.

[JD] Before Bing Crosby or anybody else. It was Harold Arlen/Johnny Mercer song, Blues In The Night,

Jerry Dodgion Interview Part One

sold a million records. So when she said he was a good friend of hers...

[JR] I'm sure he was. (Laughing)

[JD] (Laughing) Yeah...oh man funny huh?

[JR] Alright well, let's get properly started. I'm here with Jerry Dodgion on June 23rd, here in New York City, 2014.

[JD] Yeah!

[JR] And we are here to talk about your career.

[JD] Oh boy...

[JR] And your whole life. So I guess let's get started at the very beginning, where and when were you born?

[JD] August 29th, which is Charlie Parker's birthday as well, in Richmond, California. [1932]

[JR] Okay.

[JD] And I grew up there and in the summers I used to go to my grandparents', who were custodians on a prune ranch in Healdsburg, which is 60 miles north. Healdsburg at that time, and Sonoma county was really known for prunes. So I started going there



Jerry Dodgion

and spending half of the summer, I split the summer with a cousin of mine who was a year younger than me and my grandparents couldn't take us both at the same time so we each split a half a summer and it was a great education.

I went barefooted all summer and the river was not far from there and I learned about all kinds of things. Prune picking season started around near the end of August, I always wanted to pick prunes but I was never old enough, so on my twelfth birthday, or right before that I think, I said look I am old enough now so they made arrangements so that I could pick prunes for a couple of weeks maybe.

But you see the reason I mention that is that when I was in grammar school they said, "Does anybody want to play a musical instrument? Raise your hand." So, I raised my hand and another kid in the class raised his hand and we went to the room so-and-so and I saw a saxophone on the table. The teacher comes into the room and says "Do you have any preference of the musical instrument you would like to try?" And I said, "Yeah, I am interested in the saxophone." He said "Well the [school system] doesn't provide saxophones," so you had to have your own. So he gave me a trombone and my arm wasn't long enough for even sixth position I don't think, so I put it on hold.

I said, well I would like to get a saxophone, so when I was turning twelve and just going to go into junior high school I picked prunes and I made sixty dollars which in 1944 was pretty good. I told my mother I would like to look for a saxophone, and she said okay, so we went to look for a saxophone and the altos were one hundred and a quarter, so my mom says "okay, we'll split it with ya." So I got to buy half

a saxophone and it was great. I go into the junior high school and beginning band, you know with the band teacher, and that was my beginning. And I didn't know anything about anything, I had no musical family...no anything, but there was a guy who lived a few blocks away who played the saxophone. I used to go over and hang out with him now and then and hear him play the sax and he played a C melody [saxophone], and he could play pretty good, I mean I didn't know and he played melodies... so it was nice. Anyway, that's how I got started.

[JR] What about the saxophone was so appealing to you? When you saw that saxophone on the table, why?

[JD] Well, I had already asked questions when I heard the radio, and I asked "What's that sound there?" and my mother says that I think that's saxophones. It could have been Guy Lombardo, it could have been anything, but I liked the sound of it you know. That's all, my only attraction.

So then I acquired a clarinet because I was in an old band where we would try to play stocks and stuff and I wasn't doing very well at all. It got to a point where I had to have my instruments repaired so I went to a music store repairman and I said that I needed to have my instruments repaired so he fixed them up and when I came back to pick them up he said, "Okay play something," and I played something and he said, "Jesus, you need lessons," you know? I said, "Ah, I guess so, who would you recommend?" and he said "Me." He was a very good teacher, he was a good guy and he had been on the road with some commercial bands, you know?

[JR] What was his name?

[JD] Jim Ginn. And he played the tenor and the alto and clarinet and flute. He started me on the clarinet, he said "We'll start on the clarinet" and we did the Klosé (Method). I made a little progress on it, you know I actually practiced, he gave me stuff to practice so I practiced and then we got to the saxophone.

I'm glad that I was very fortunate that I finally got with a teacher. When I see people now that don't have a teacher I say, "You should get a teacher, I am telling you from personal experience that you really get in bad habits that you have to break and it is a waste of time. To make your time count better get a good teacher." So that's what I recommend.

[JR] He worked on the clarinet with you and then the saxophone presumably?

[JD] Yeah, yeah.

[JR] And when did you pick up the flute?

[JD] Well that was later, but he played the flute also. But I didn't get to the flute with him. Later I started playing with little bands when I was in high

Frederic Sater

school. I played with a Latin band. I was studying Spanish in school in the Bay Area of California, and there was a little Latin band that was like a family band that the father was a trumpet player, and the daughter played piano, and his wife played maracas, and two or three other saxophone players and trombones, and he had stock arrangements that we would play, stocks from Mexico that looked like there was a paper shortage because they were very small and there was CODA one, CODA two, CODA three, DS 4, 5, 6. It was like wow this long piece of music comes from this little tiny piece of paper. But it was all great learning experience and then also the Spanish, well you know, it was really great. I could actually speak a little Spanish.

My first tour to South America with Benny Goodman I was one of the band interpreters practically. But I told them everybody speaks so fast, I mean in Chile they speak so fast. Everyplace, and now in New York in this neighborhood Dominicans speak really fast and Puerto Ricans speak so fast that they leave off all the s's so they can speak faster.

[JR] Do you still speak Spanish?

[JD] Not very much because there is nobody that I can speak too. In California Spanish there is Mexican “Buenos Dias! Como Esta? Hey! You know?” It is relaxed. Relaxed and slow. But here it is like double time, you know? I just never could keep it up. *(Laughs)*

But it has been interesting, well you know Spanish is an easy language because of the pronunciation. The vowels are always pronounced exactly the same way. When I started learning a little French I said, “Gee, this is tough.” If you don’t know how that word sounds, you don’t know how to say it...but in Spanish you do. You can pronounce words you don’t have to know anything about the meaning of it or anything but you can pronounce it correctly because the vowels are pronounced the same all the time.

[JR] So you were playing with this Latin band in high school?

[JD] Yeah!

[JR] And what other sort of groups were you playing with then?

[JD] That was the best one. That was more professional. Then I joined the National Guard because there was some professional musicians in the band that were in the band to stay out of the draft. An officer owned a music store in Oakland and he came around to the high schools and was trying to drum up business and get some kids in the band. Then I met some people in the band that took me into another world because some of the guys were professionals and they said that they had been on the road with bands, this opened a door to all kinds of stuff.

So I lied about my age about joining, you had to

be 17 and I was 16, so I think I said I was 17. We go to camp, the band rehearsed every Monday night and I remember I was playing clarinet for the band to start with and I was starting to play the flute a little bit on some of the Latin gigs that I was doing, but without a teacher. I finally got with a teacher and I thought, “Oh man,” and one thing led to another...and gee I am back there now. I said, I can’t do anything.

I met a lot of really good people —meeting other musicians, some of the great musicians were really good people. There were some guys that were really different, some guys were very aggressive, but that was just their personalities. But anyway, I met a lot of good people who shared the information and helped each other and I started getting encouragement.

[JR] At this point would you say you were playing jazz or was is not really jazz exactly?

[JD] Well no, I wasn’t into jazz but I was starting to play stock arrangements in little bands and some of the guys I played with were really talented. I remember there was one band I played in, in junior high school into high school, and there were two brothers...one guy played the saxophone, the other guy played the piano and it turned out the other guy played saxophone as well, and these two guys whenever there is a school assembly they would play the piano. They would play Boogie Woogie on the piano, two guys...one guy playing the bass and the other guy the treble. They would rock it!

They would have the auditorium rocking, and I said “My god, this is amazing!” So we played in the band and the tenor player, whenever we were playing some stock arrangements when it comes to the tenor solo he would play the solo from the record and I would look at this part and it’s not there. I said, “wow look at all of this stuff happening.” Anyway that is how detached I was when I started. Luckily, I met more people that helped me and I got into it. It opened more doors and I was really attracted to it. It was amazing.

[JR] How would you say you first got into listening to jazz or playing jazz?

[JD] Well, there was a really good friend of mine, one of my best friends I guess, that happened to live around the corner and his name was Clive Hawthorne. He played the trumpet and he stuttered so badly that he could barely say hello and I got really close with him and he was tuned in. He was tuned into who’s good and what to listen for, and man, he said, “listen to Basie,” he said, “listen to Gillespie.” I used to listen — we went to the record store together and I bought my first record, and man, was I lucky! 75 cent record, the first one I ever bought...

Well let’s see my mother and father were divorcing when I was about 13 and my mother met a guy who was newly out of the Navy. He was coming over to visit and he brought over a phonograph! I thought “Wow!” and he brought some records, some Benny Goodman

records, some Peggy Lee and stuff like that. Then I started getting into it.

My first record, I'll never forget, was the Teddy Wilson Quintet with Ben Webster and Buck Clayton. Man, I must have listened to that a thousand times. I said, "This music is great! Everytime I listen to it, I hear something new in it!" I said, "Wow, how is that possible?" Then I see that people listen to the pop music and they listen to that twice and it never changes. There is no depth to it. And Clive, around the corner, was always getting all the new stuff all the time. I mean I learned a lot with him because he would just keep turning the pages of stuff happening, just always.

And he was into poetry and art, painting and sculpture, and you mentioned it. He opened the door to me for a whole bunch of stuff because with my family situation I was not going to see anything like that. My future was a big question mark, but music was bringing me to life. Man, I just couldn't believe it. I was lucky, really lucky then, with that because I didn't know how to seek out anything or go any place or anything. It was amazing and it hasn't stopped yet.

[JR] So did you make a conscious decision to sort of learn how to play jazz or was it a gradual evolution in that direction?

[JD] Well, I noticed that the guys that were really talented, they could just do it. I asked them lots of questions and I said, well I know I am not talented in that I can't get it that way, I can't just play by ear and do that, I didn't play well enough that I was pointed in that way. I was with guys my age and we would get together and try stuff, you know?

It just came gradually, very gradually. Then I started getting lucky with one of the guys in the National Guard band who was one of my first mentors, I guess. He was a trumpet player a little older than me, John Coppola. He played with Charlie Barnett and Stan Kenton and some other road bands, but he kept coming back to the band to avoid the draft.

Whenever he was around and we started to rehearse something he was right on the case to get us to play together and get an ensemble sound, to play together in an ensemble and be conscious of the time and the dynamics, especially the time. Get the time right and it will take care of the other stuff, the time has got to be right. It's just that some real good priorities were taking shape, and it has been a great learning

experience trip ever since. It is still just as rewarding, it is amazing.

[JR] So what happened next or where did you go from there?

[JD] Well from there I went to camp with the National Guard band. It was funny, my first gig away from home was playing tenor in a San Francisco tenor band, which is the lowest form of commercial band. It was three tenors and a trumpet playing stocks. My teacher prepared me for this - he said you gotta transpose alto parts, so he taught me how to transpose and play a fourth higher on the tenor from the alto parts. I got good at that so I got a gig with this tenor band in Lake Tahoe. But it was starting the week that I was at camp, so somehow or other I talked them and said, "Look I can't get there until the second week." So I auditioned for it, I showed up with a bunch of other saxophone players that sat in and played one tune sight reading. The leader had his favorite lead tenor player there to listen to everybody and the guy picked me for one of the tenors.

When I was at camp, it was 1950, and the Korean War started and there was a notice up on the bulletin board that says "We are on alert because there is war starting in Korea and we may be activated." I am thinking "Oh shit, I am gonna get in trouble because I lied about my age." Then eventually they took a division from California, but they took the one from L.A. And that was a disaster, they went right into the combat and there were 90% casualties in the band. The band didn't know anything about what to do and neither did we. We had a great officer, he kept us out of all that stuff so we could play better. I thought, "Jesus, that's lucky right there."

Anyway, when I got out and went up to Lake Tahoe there were a lot of gigs, like three hours a night in a ballroom and most of the band stayed in a little cabin. The band leader was kind of a militaristic guy. On the inside part of the front door there was a big poster of a picture of our band leader and somebody brought some darts, so his picture was on the back of the door with his face full of darts. He came to visit one day and he was talking to us for a while and he says, "Well, I'll see you tonight," and goes to open the door and he looks and sees his face with all these darts in it. It just sorta stopped him for a while. He didn't say anything and went out, I thought "Phew!"

I mean this is stuff you learn. I just thought of



Jerry performing at Zoot Fest 2013

Garth Woods



Frederic Sater

Speaking at the Frank Wess Memorial service.

that, I haven't thought of that in 100 years. Anyway, the good thing about that was it was only a three hour gig and we were only a half hour from the state line into Nevada and in the casino right there they had live shows and stuff and I could get in. I saw Nat King Cole Trio, and I saw Lena Horne with George Duvivier and the drummer that played with Gerry Mulligan — no-piano band... [Chico Hamilton] I played with his group later and he just died recently. He was teaching at The New School...

[JR] Yeah, I know exactly who you are talking about...

[JD] Oh, why can't I think of his name? That's a senior moment, I guess. Anyway, to see actual live music and think, "Wow, that's an actual level." When I heard Duvivier and Lena play I said, "Holy shit, I've never heard anything like that," you know it was more and more inquisitive stuff. It was just accumulating information and inspiration along the way! It was really a great trip!

The guy who played first tenor in that was an old timer and he really played that hotel dance band style. He was from New York and he had played Broadway shows in New York. When we played *Tea for Two* he told me — he says, "I played in the original show in New York of that," and I thought, "Wow!" And he was! It was really wild. When I look that far back it is amazing how much I remember. You know, I don't do that very often. When I get through some of those things I am just glad that they are behind me. Musically it was not very good, but it there was lots of

stuff to learn. Man, wow.

[JR] So when did you get out of that band?

[JD] The National Guard?

[JR] Yeah.

[JD] Well I kept staying in it because if you miss six meetings they are supposed to turn your name into the draft board and there was still a draft going on. So, knowing that I didn't look for any traveling work. There were opportunities to do stuff because I started getting opportunities young. Then Gerald Wilson moved to San Francisco and stayed there for a couple of years. And he started a band and I got a call to come to his rehearsal one time and I said, "Oh man, now this is really something! Wow!"

I sat between Jerome Richardson who I had known and I had heard him play but I had never met him before, so I sat between him and Teddy Edwards, the great tenor player. And I noticed right away that when we were warming up we sounded just like high school band, and then Gerald steps in front of the band and if he wanted to say something he just sort of raised his hand a little bit like this and it got quiet, really quiet, and I said, "wow!" I had been doing rehearsal bands around the Bay Area for a little while and I thought, "Man, I have never been in a band that showed the leader this much respect."

Then I found out more about him: he had played with Jimmie Lunceford. He joined Jimmie Lunceford when he was 18, and took Sy Oliver's place playing trumpet, writing arrangements, and singing in the trio. And after that, he played with Count Basie for a while and arranged for Count Basie. After than he played for Duke Ellington for a while and actually wrote some for Duke Ellington. That is where his respect was from, see I didn't know about him but now it's like there is so much to learn here.

We started playing Sunday afternoons at a place in Oakland and we'd have guests sometimes. Some people would come and sit in, like Sarah Vaughan was playing in San Francisco and she'd come to our Sunday afternoon thing because she knew Gerald. Everyone knew Gerald and respected him. And she would come sit in and I said, "Wow, unbelievable!" Then we got a really good gig: we played on a concert in San Francisco, it was a George Shearing concert and we opened the concert. George Shearing I guess was the main thing but there were three tenor players — Norman Granz's brother, I think, named Gene Norman, it was one of his productions — and there were three tenor players, soloists, and they came up and played with our rhythm section, and it was Wardell Grey, Zoot Sims, and Stan Getz. And man, wow! Here we go again, you know. I said, "Amazing!" Let's see that was in '53... 30 or 40 years later Jay Branford sends me a CD and says "Are you on this?" and it was that concert!

[JR] *No way!*

[JD] It was that concert with those three tenor players! The big number that the band played was “Hollywood Freeway,” which was one of Gerald’s arrangements of a blues in C, and Jerome starts off playing, and I play, and we play 12’s and stuff. That just wiped me out I said, “Oh God,” because we had no idea that it existed. Those things happen sometimes.

[JR] *Was that commercially released or was that a bootleg?*

[JD] Well, it was sort of commercially released but the information on it was all wrong. They say Clark Terry is on it and Paul Gonzalez is on it, but they get their information mixed up a lot. It’s actually Jerome and me playing together in 1953 on there. Anyway then Jerome gets a call to go with Earl Hines so he leaves town with Earl Hines and eventually moves to New York and Gerald said “Well you move over and play lead alto.” That’s so funny, that was one of the times that I took Jerome’s place.

I had no idea that it was going to be an over fifty year friendship with him. So I learned a lot doing that, of course, and I was playing the flute a little bit better... not much better. Jerome was a good flute player then and Jerome could sing. Gerald had an arrangement of “The Song Is You” and it had band vocal. The whole band sang the melody except when it comes to the bridge, he says “Jerome!” he points to Jerome, and Jerome sings it like a ballad singer! I said “Holy shit!” Anyway, one thing led to another and we got another gig at the Downbeat club and we were playing Sundays there, that was in San Francisco on Market Street. Then the club started calling me to come in occasionally to play with someone for a week or so.

[JR] *Leading your own band?*

[JD] No, no, no, no, just to come in and play — they always had a group... a bass player named Vernon Alley and he always plays at Blackhawk as a rule, and they accompanied — everybody who came through town played with this group — and Richard Wyands was the piano player. They started calling me to play with the group at the Downbeat club, and it was Richard Wyands, and Vernon Alley and different drummers. So one time they call me in ‘55 — well they had been calling me a little bit in ‘54 I guess. I guess they were calling me because that had heard me play with Gerald Wilson’s band in there.

One night they called me in an emergency and said can you come in tonight because Chico Hamilton’s group is here and Paul Horne has to take off one night and has to go to L.A. because his wife just had a baby and she is having the after baby blues or something so can you come in tonight? I said okay and so I came in. Paul Horne was playing clarinet and alto and flute, and they had little charts and stuff, and it was cello, woodwind player, and guitar, bass and drums. I got through

it, you know I didn’t do it greatly, but Chico was very nice and told me, “You should try to get your clarinet together,” which was very good professional advice. He was good, he didn’t jump on me and tell me that I didn’t play it well enough. Then he featured me on a ballad. I played, “I Can’t Get Started,” and I got a lot of applause.

I think there was one guy that I knew there. He was a New York saxophone player that came to San Francisco a long time ago, and he started the applause and pretty soon everyone was applauding. That was the very time I ever got recognition for playing something. I was a little embarrassed and a little, you know, “What do I do now,” you know? And then the club started calling me more.

One time they called me for a two week gig, so I show up — this was in January of ‘55; this was a big year for me I didn’t know what was coming — and I show up and see that the marquee says Billie Holiday. I said “Oh, uh oh...I am probably playing in the other group,” I think, so we go up with the trio, only Richard Lyons wasn’t there. Richard was in New York visiting his girlfriend who he eventually married and lived in New York. He still lives in New York and we still play together! Isn’t that amazing? That is really great. So we played a couple of tunes with quartet, and the piano player was someone that I didn’t know. Her name was Memry Midgett, and she was a light skinned black girl who was about 6 feet tall. I thought, “Memry Midgett, what an outstanding name!” and she played very well and we played a couple of tunes.

Then the announcement comes, “Now ladies and gentlemen, Miss Billie Holiday.” There is an up staircase and a down staircase, so as she’s coming up I’m walking down. And so I listened to the trio playing for them and they sounded good, they obviously rehearsed and had their stuff together. Then when the second set comes and we go up and play a couple of tunes and they announce her again and I’m going down the stairs and she is coming up and she says “Hey baby, come play behind me.” And I don’t know what I said..but I said “Oh no, you sound great with the trio...you sound really good I don’t want to mess up... you sound great.” So I walked down.

Now the next night before our couple of tunes I hear, “Hey you! Hey you, alto player,” and I said “Uh oh,” so I go and say, “Yes, can I help you?” and she says, “Yes,” she says, “Tell me something... Do you think you are better than Lester Young?” and I don’t know what I said to her but, “that is ridiculous why would you say that... that’s... come on!” She said, “Well I said it because if you don’t want to play behind me you must think you are better. You see, he likes to play behind me, so if you don’t want to play behind me, you think that you are better than he is.” So I said, “Well I’ll try it, but I don’t want to get in the way, I don’t know the tunes. I don’t want to embarrass me and you.” So I played behind her and I played very little and I didn’t play anything while she was singing I played in between.

I hear lots of records where some guys are playing behind singers and they are playing a solo and it doesn't make any sense. But when Pres played behind her, it was like she would sing something and he would make a little comment just in the vein of what it is. So I tried to do that and just play very little and she was delighted. I am walking around looking for a place to try reeds and she says, "Baby, what are you doing?" and I said, "Trying reeds," and she says, "Well come in my room... Pres used to do that all the time. Come on, man."

So I would go in there and try a reed and she would start telling me stories. And the stories were great, I mean just great, about when she and Pres were living with her mother. She said, "He called me Lady and I called him The President, and he called my mother The Dutchess." Oh it was just great stuff. It was unbelievable, just great, and she was enjoying telling me stories and I was enjoying hearing and every intermission I would go back in and here we go. She wasn't really crowded with fans coming back and asking for autographs and stuff at all and the house was packed but there was nobody bugging her which was nice. She liked me coming in there because she could tell stories of a happier time maybe and they were great stories, just great stuff. Her logic, the way she got me to play behind her, that is an example of her logic. One day the door is open and I am sitting there talking with her and the piano player walks by and she says, "Oh Memry come in here, would you please," so she comes in, and she says, "Are you okay tonight, how are you feeling?" and she says, "I'm okay..." "Well I heard the way you are playing, is something bugging you?" and she said "Well, Vernon is bugging me." "The bass player?" "Yeah" "What's he doing?" "I don't know he is just bugging me." "Well what is he doing to bug you?" "I don't know." So she leaves and pretty soon Vernon walks by and she says, "Vernon, come in. Tell me are you bugging Memry," and he says, "No, I am just trying to play my bass what do you mean?" "Well," she says, "well, if she has the idea that you're bugging her and you're not doing anything, then either she loves you or she hates you."

Her logic again, just tying it up so that she can handle it. That was two weeks of just wonderful stuff for me which is amazing. And she talked about Pres. The drummer walked by and she says, "Rocky, come in here." She says, "you know when we do 'I Cried For You' and we do the first chorus as a ballad and with your brushes you just double the tempo and we go into the chorus... How come you always f**k that up?"

I mean you people have studied music and I never see how you could get something wrong like that," and she said, "You know, Count Basie and I, we don't read music and we are doing okay." [Laughs] Her logic, you know? You sound alright doing this stuff and then you do this simple thing... You know she wasn't a complainer, it was just about time to mention it because it hadn't been happening right. But it was okay. Then she would do "Strange Fruit" or "Don't Explain" and I had enough, nobody had to tell me not to play on those



Frederic Sater

Jerry performing in Harlem, NY.

songs because there is no place for a saxophone butting in because the lyric is so intense, and so sad.

I learned a lot just playing behind a singer. After that I got more calls to play behind singers and stuff and I played very little, and then when then I heard other people doing it they were playing too much even on records. I would here Billie Holiday records with Benny Carter, and another trumpet player I knew too, but they are playing too much. They are playing like they can't hear her. Maybe they can't, maybe that was the situation, who knows?

Now it is so strange, everything is so manicured now. I mean the guy playing behind you might live in Taiwan and he is doing it on his lunch break. Who knows? Anyway, I was getting more calls to do stuff and then Gerald Wilson left town and had to go back to L.A. Then he called me to come to LA to play a week at the Oasis in L.A., on Vermont [Avenue], and about maybe six or eight of us from San Francisco went down and we played a week, and we didn't stay in hotels: we stayed in private houses and nobody got paid. But it was a great week! It was really a great week, and Gerald was just great. He was my first real real — real — band leader, because there was no better or anybody on a level like that. Anyway then the week turned out okay.

During '55... '55 was a big year. I call it a big year because in January after the two weeks with Billie Holiday, I had my very first record date with a quartet of mine. It was a three hour date, we did a few tunes, and then the next day I had a recording with Vince Guaraldi Quartet. I used to play with him a lot around town.

[JR] Who was on your own record date?

[JD] Sonny Clark, Eugene Wright and Larence Marable. They were really good, they sounded great. I sound like a little kid because I was.



Oliver Nelson Band with Phil Woods, Zoot Sims, Jerry Dodgion, Danny Bank.

[JR] *You would have been 23 then? Is that about right?*

[JD] I had turned 22 the August before that. And then one afternoon the phone rings and it is Gerald. I said, "Hey Gerald, how are you doing?" and he says, "Oh, I am fine, how are you?" and he talks slow and says, "Benny Carter is taking a band into a brand new interracial hotel in Las Vegas for the whole summer... I was wondering if you would be interested to play lead alto?"

[JR] *Wow!*

[JD] I said, "Geez, of course I would." Then I thought, "Oh shit, I can't do it." He said, "Why?" I said, "Because I am in the National Guard and if I miss six meetings I am in the draft." He said, "Oh well, that is too bad. I am sorry." I said, "I am sorry Gerald," and hung up. I thought, "Oh my god, I have never felt like this about anything before." There was never anything so important and I had to say, "Oh f**k."

So I said, "Let me call Charlie Kruter." That's my warrant officer who leads the band, the National Guard band. I said "Charlie, I just got a call from Gerald Wilson and he said he wants to hire me for this gig with Benny Carter in Las Vegas for the whole summer

starting in June," and Charlie says, "Oh that's a great opportunity." I told him that I couldn't do it because of the National Guard and he says, "Call him back and tell him if you can take off two weeks in July to come to the National Guard camp that you can do it. I'll take care of you on the rest of the stuff." Now, that's lucky. I didn't ask him for that, I am not aggressive anyway, but it was his idea. I said, "oh man, okay!"

So I called Gerald back, I can't get to the phone fast enough, and then he answers *[slow drawl]* "Hello," and I said *[quickly]* "Gerald, did you get anybody yet?" you know? *[laughing]* And he says, "Oh, I haven't talked to anybody yet." I said, "Well I will tell you what happened, I asked the band leader in charge and he told me that if I can take off two weeks in July to go to National Guard camp then I can do the whole gig!" He said "Oh well, I'll call Benny now and ask him for what he says about that," so I am on pins and needles waiting for the phone to ring and the phone finally rings and it is Gerald. "What's happening?" and he says, "Well, I talked to Benny and he said by that time he will play your part, he will know it by then anyway so don't worry about it." I said "Okay!" So I drove to LA and stayed at my wife's grandparents, who were Sicilian, and had a garden and everything around their house and the food there was great. ☺

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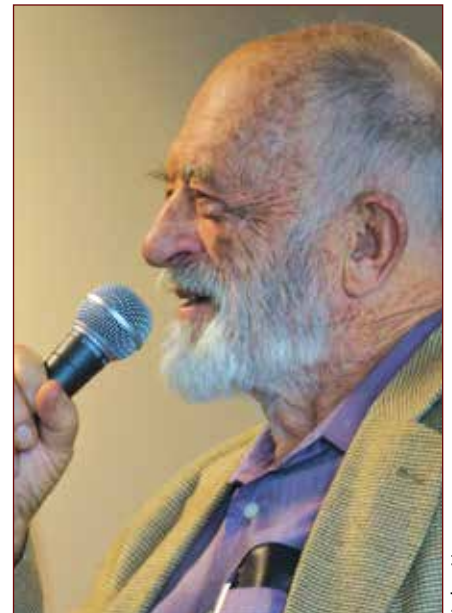
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John Mosca enjoying his first Zoot Fest

Matt directing the Al Cohn and
Photo Bob Weidner



and the Natural Seven Ensemble.



Gene Quill Remembered

Editors Note: This article was first published in Jazz Journal International in July 2013 and is reprinted with permission.

By Gordon Jack

Gene Quill was just 15 in 1943 when he joined the AFM Local 661 in his home town of Atlantic City. Precociously talented on alto he had already won a “Stars in the Making” contest three years earlier which led to an appearance with the Jimmy Dorsey orchestra. While in high-school he had his own band playing army bases and USO dances and on leaving school he joined Alex Bartha who had the house band at the famous Steel Pier in New Jersey.

He first met Phil Woods in 1948 at one of the regular sessions held at Teddy Charles’s loft on the corner of 55th. Street and Broadway in New York where Brew Moore, Tony Fruscella, Don Joseph, Jimmy Raney and Frank Isola were in regular attendance. Phil was studying at Juilliard at the time and he told me in a JJ interview (September 1998), “I sat in with Gene for a super-fast Donna Lee. He kicked it off and when we hit the head it sounded like a unison. Afterwards we went to the bar to hang out and Gene could really hang out!”

Another popular venue where 24 hour sessions frequently took place was at Joe Maini and Jimmy Knepner’s apartment on the southwest corner of 136th Street and Broadway. Gene was often to be found there and a list of those attending at various times reads like a who’s-who of the new music because Dizzy Gillespie, Max Roach, Joe Albany, Miles Davis, Herb Geller, John Williams, Charlie Parker, Gerry Mulligan, Zoot Sims and Warne Marsh all played there at various times. Lenny Bruce frequently came to listen and socialise with the musicians. On one occasion in 1950

Don Lanphere taped Charlie Parker there accompanied by John Williams, Buddy Jones and Frank Isola and the results were eventually released as The Apartment Sessions (Philology W842-2CD). Many of the younger musicians though were finding it difficult at the time to become established. Joe Maini was occasionally reduced to busking in subways and a year after the Parker recording Mulligan sold all his horns and hitch-hiked with his girl friend to Los Angeles in search of work.

In March 1951 Gene joined the newly formed but short-lived Buddy DeFranco big band performing arrangements by Mulligan, Jimmy Giuffre and the leader. In an enthusiastic DownBeat review of the band’s performance at the Rustic Cabin in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Leonard Feather said, “Buddy really has something on the ball musically and could be built into an idol of American youth.” It didn’t happen despite extensive financial backing from a number of quarters including a very well connected call-girl named Charlotte. She invested around \$50,000.00 in the band which was an enormous amount for the time. Eight months

later and hugely out of pocket Buddy had to call it a day as a band leader.

The same year DeFranco disbanded, Gene worked briefly with Jerry Wald’s band at the Arcadia Ballroom which had a strict Local 802 policy for tax purposes. Gene didn’t have a union card at the time so Herb Geller took his place and in a JJ interview (September/October 1994) he told me, “There was some resentment because Gene was very popular with the guys and he was an excellent player but quite soon I was accepted and everything was fine.” A couple of years later he had another unfortunate experience with Quill who was late for a Nat Pierce recording session. Pierce telephoned Herb who immediately took a cab and arrived at the studio just as Gene came running in. Nat said, “Herb is going to do the date because whenever I use you Gene, you’re either late or you don’t turn up at all.” Quill was angry and upset and accused Herb of always taking his jobs although he obviously didn’t bear a grudge because in 1956 when Leonard Feather asked him who his favourite alto players were he named Charlie Parker, Phil Woods, Charlie Mariano and Herb Geller.



Gene Quill & Pat Sheridan, 339 West 48th Street, NYC 1963



Courtesy of Phil Woods



Donated by Bill Crow

Phil Woods - Gene Quill Quintet

Gene Quill in the Thornhill Reed Section.

Soon after leaving Jerry Wald he successfully auditioned for Claude Thornhill who was organising a new orchestra at the Local 802 union hall in New York City. It was quite a band. Quill had the jazz alto chair and Med Flory led the sax section which included Brew Moore for a time. Bob Brookmeyer was on trombone and relief piano and Teddy Kotick and Winston Welch were also there with the delightful Chris Connor taking care of the vocals. Quill remained with Thornhill off and on until 1956 eventually taking over from Med Flory on lead alto which included a great deal of clarinet work.

Teddy Kotick left in 1953 to join Stan Getz and was replaced by Bill Crow who remembered Gene in his book - *From Birdland to Broadway* - "As a scrappy little

Irishman always ready to challenge the world." Along with Brew Moore and Brookmeyer he was a heavy drinker and although he had been a Golden Gloves boxer his diminutive status left him at a disadvantage in certain situations.

According to Crow, "He wound up the loser in many after-hours brawls." The Thornhill organization did not have a band bus. They travelled in a convoy of four cars between bookings and one of the vehicles - The Rat Patrol - carried rejects from the other three with Gene of course usually at the wheel.

According to Crow's book, his brilliance on both alto and clarinet did not extend to the essential maintenance regimes all instruments require. One night in Texas part of his alto's right side-key assembly broke off requiring pressure from his hand to keep it in place. On another occasion in El Paso his horn almost collapsed. Pausing in mid solo he refitted the keys and rods while instructing tenor-man Ray Norman to - "Hold your finger right there." During the band's residency at the Roosevelt Hotel in New Orleans he married his girl-friend Bobbie who had been travelling with him. Winston Welch and Bill Crow were two of the witnesses.

The Thornhill orchestra recorded

14 titles in April 1953 for the Trend label. Quill is heard on *Jeru, Family Affair, Rose Of The Rio Grande* and *Five Brothers* which are his first recorded solos (Hep CD 80) - he had soloed on *Tiny's Blues* in 1951 with DeFranco but that title has never been released. A brilliant sight-reader and one of the finest lead alto and clarinet players of his generation, he had become an established member of the exclusive New York studio scene by the mid-fifties. It was a busy time and he was frequently called for recording dates with among others Quincy Jones, Ernie Wilkins, Joe Newman, Manny Albam, Michel Legrand, Tito Puente, Johnny Richards and Oscar Pettiford.

In 1955 he had a short-lived small group with Dick Sherman an outstanding but now almost forgotten trumpeter. They had been colleagues in the DeFranco and Thornhill bands and Jordi Pujol has released a fine example of their work on FSR-CD 667. It includes a memorable concert from the Pythian Temple, New York introduced by Al 'Jazzbo' Collins

with excellent performance on Flying Down To Rio and Sherman's own Sid Meets Haig. The latter has an AABA 32 bar form reminiscent of Monk's Rhythm-A-Ning in the A sections. The trumpeter was a former Juilliard student who had disappeared as a recording artist by 1958 but luckily his Bobby Hackett by way of Fats Navarro approach can be heard at length with Al Cohn and Zoot Sims on From A To Z (RCA 74321).

It was at this time Quill became very friendly with John Williams who told me, "Gene was special. We shared a lot of jam sessions and booths full of friends and laughter in Charlie's Tavern." Frank Isola was one of their close, mutual friends. He had worked a few months with Quill in Atlantic City in 1951 and they can be heard together on one of Dick Garcia's few albums as a leader - Message from Garcia (Dawn DCD 108).

Another close friend of Gene's was of course Phil Woods. He was best man at Phil's marriage to Charlie Parker's widow and early in 1957 Woods sat in when Gene was working with John Williams at the Pad in Greenwich Village. Things worked out so well musically that they decided to form a group together which worked fairly regularly for the next year or so around the New York area. They were booked as Phil and Quill. This confused an M.C. at the White Canon club in Queens who enthusiastically introduced, "Phil Anquill - here he comes now" to a bemused audience. Well worth tracking down is their Fresh Sound release (FSR-CD-473) which includes some titles with Sol Schlinger one of the busiest baritone players in New York at the time.

Early in 1960 Gene joined Gerry Mulligan's Concert Jazz Band taking Eddie Wasserman's place on lead alto and clarinet. Don Ferrara told me that Gene was a very popular member of the band because he was a stellar player with a good sense of humour. Brookmeyer who was the straw-boss was also impressed, "I thought that Gene had the fire and the madness sometimes of Charlie Parker. He was a little maniacal but controllable." Unfortunately he did not get many

solo features with the CJB at least on record but the 'fire' Brookmeyer mentions is readily apparent on 18 Carrots For Rabbit (FSR-CD 710) and All About Rosie - both on alto. He also made an outstanding clarinet contribution to Bridgehampton Strut which is available on Mosaic MD 4-221 together with Rosie. One night he had an accident at Birdland when he had his alto balanced on his knee with the mouthpiece close to his face. Somebody called him and in turning quickly, the reed cut his eyeball. Phil Woods was in the club and took Gene's place with the CJB for the remainder of the engagement.

After Mulligan disbanded in December 1964, Gene free-lanced around New York at clubs like Kenny's Pub and Embers West where he had his own quartet. He was one of several fine alto players who worked with Buddy Rich's exciting new big band in the late sixties. Ernie Watts, Art Pepper and Richie Cole all followed him after he left in 1967. Jazz-work becoming scarce he did what a lot of musicians at that time were doing and moved to Las Vegas where he worked with Dan Terry, Ray Anthony and Billy Daniels.

In 1974 he moved back home to Atlantic City where he played in the Steel Pier Show Band. Sadly in what was believed to be a robbery he was mugged on Memorial Day weekend in 1977 which left him paralysed on his right side and blind in one eye. One of his former Thornhill colleagues told me that it was not so much a



Gene Quill

From the ACMJC archive.

mugging as an assault. Phil Woods and Bill Potts went to visit him in hospital where he was lying in a semi-comatose state in an oxygen tent with tubes connected to every orifice. Phil gently asked if there was anything he could do and Gene whispered, "Yeah, take my place!"

He no longer had a horn so at a 1979 benefit Phil Woods presented him with a new alto. Revising his fingering to compensate for his lame right hand he played his favourite ballad It Might As Well Be Spring with Woods on the piano. Years later Phil told me, "There wasn't a dry eye in the house...the sound and fire where still there".

Daniel Eugene Quill died on the 8th of December 1988 in Pomona, Atlantic City. ☹

Memories of 1950 to 1953

By Bill Crow

When I left Seattle to live in New York City in January of 1950, I got off the bus with 50 dollars in my pocket, carrying a suitcase and a valve trombone. My friend Buzzy Bridgeford, a drummer, had convinced me that if I wanted to be a musician I had to be where the music was. In his estimation, New York was the only place to be.

I didn't see any reason not to believe him. When we arrived, Charlie Parker was playing with his quintet at Birdland, with Red Rodney, Bud Powell, Tommy Potter and Roy Haynes, and opposite him was a house band made up of Max Roach, Al Haig, Miles Davis, J.J. Johnson, Curley Russell and Sonny Stitt. The admission price was 95 cents, and you could listen to great music all night long without spending another dime.

After our first tough winter scuffling in New York, Buzzy wound up with a summer gig in the Adirondacks, at the Altamont Hotel in Tupper Lake, N.Y. It was originally Gene Roland's gig, but on opening



Bill Crow playing bass.



Bill Crow walking in Times Square.

night Gene had a fight with the boss's wife and walked off in a huff. Buzzy salvaged the job, and a week or two later he got me hired as a trombone player.

The boss wouldn't hire a bass player... he felt that piano and drums were enough rhythm. So Buzzy found a local kid who owned a Kay bass and paid him 20 bucks to rent it for the summer. Then he told me, "When you're not playing the trombone, you've got to try to play the bass. I can't stand playing without a bass player."

The other musicians sort of gaslighted me into staying with the bass... they didn't give me any positive feedback about my trombone playing, and constantly encouraged my bass playing. "Wow, on that last tune, you sounded just like Ray Brown!"

By the time I got back to the city, I had taught myself to play the bass well enough to accept gigs. I would rent a bass when I got work. It took a while to find one of my own.

As soon as I met a few New York musicians, I began to discover all the places where jam sessions might take place. Nola Studios, on Broadway in the 50s, was a main location. (Not to be confused with Nola

Penthouse, the recording studio on 57th Street.) Nola's had a number of small rehearsal rooms, each with a piano, and one large room that could hold a big band. That was the room where jam sessions were often held, with a collection being taken up to pay the rental.

I found out about Nola's during a visit to New York City while I was still in the Army, stationed at Fort Meade, Md. I looked up a friend of a friend, who took me to a session there.

About 20 people were in the big room, but only five or six were playing. A good rhythm section, a trumpet player, and Brew Moore on tenor. Brew had finished most of a gallon jug of Gallo wine, and was lying on his side on the floor, playing, with a lit cigarette tucked into his octave key. I was impressed with his ability to still swing when so far into the bag.

There were several private lofts and back rooms of bars where we could play, and on one nice afternoon when no one had any money for studio rental, Gerry Mulligan rehearsed some of his big band arrangements on the shore of the 72nd Street lake in Central Park. Until I got my own bass, I would hang out at sessions and rehearsals until the bass player got tired, and then would get a chance to play his bass. I played a lot on Teddy Kotick's bass, and on one



Jerry Mulligan Band rehearsing in Central Park, NYC.

Donated by Bill Crow



Jimmy Raney, Phil Woods, Bill Crow.

Donated by Bill Crow

Whenever Bird played, Jimmy Knepper would turn on his tape recorder, and then, during the next day, he would listen to the tapes and write out Bird's solos. Those transcriptions became Jimmy's practice material.

A club date bass player in the Bronx let it be known that he had a bass for sale, and I heard about it at Charlie's Tavern. I went up to look at it, an old Kay that was in good shape, and he said he wanted \$75 for it. I only had five dollars to give him, but he agreed to hold the bass for me until I

owned by a Spanish bassist, Louis Barreiro.

Another great location was a room at 136th Street near Broadway. It was a basement that extended out under the street, so you could make noise all night without bothering anyone. A baritone player named Gershon Yowell found the place, and when he moved out, it was taken over by Joe Maini and Jimmy Knepper. We played there a lot. Sometimes Charlie Parker would drop by just to hang out, and he would occasionally play. I was too shy to play while he was around, but I enjoyed getting to know him. A very sweet, funny, intelligent and generous man, no matter what Miles Davis said about him in his book.

got the rest of the money together.

I wasn't making much profit at the time... a club date might pay \$15 or \$20, and I had to pay five bucks to rent a bass for the weekend, and maybe another five to rent a tux. But I was also finding other work. Dave Lambert, who was also scuffling at the time, would come up with jobs we could do together, like moving somebody from one apartment to another, or painting someone's apartment, or baby-sitting, or doing minor carpentry jobs. I took a traveling job for a few months with Mike Riley's trio playing drums and singing, and even with the low pay I was getting, I managed to save a few bucks and send them to the bassist in the Bronx.

When I finally paid off the \$75

and took possession of my bass, I quit my job with Riley and started working with Teddy Cohen's trio, with Don Roberts on guitar. After I'd been with Teddy for a couple of months, he told me one day that he was changing his name to Charles. "Charles Cohen," I said. "That sounds pretty good." He laughed, and said it was the Cohen he wanted to get rid of. He felt that the Jewish name was holding back his career. He



Kenny Clarke

did all right with the new name, so maybe he was right. Other friends had already done the same thing: Donald Helfman became Don Elliott, Julius Gubenko was now Terry Gibbs, Herbert Solomon became Herbie Mann, and Anthony Sciacca became Tony Scott.

We rehearsed every day, and worked occasionally. Teddy taught me the right changes to all the bebop standards of the day, and playing with no drummer helped me develop a strong sense of time. I'd invented my own fingering system for the bass, which was a little awkward, but I didn't know any better. I improved it several years later when I began studying with Fred Zimmerman, of the New York Philharmonic.

Don Roberts got a better job and left us, and Jimmy Raney replaced him. Jimmy had been working with Stan Getz, but Stan had gone alone for some work on the west coast, and so Jimmy was available for a job we had on West 46th Street in the Iroquois Hotel, playing jazz and accompanying Amanda Sullivan, who was billed as "The Blonde Calypso."

At the end of that summer, Jimmy got a call from Getz. "I've got a week at the Hi-Hat in Boston. Roy Haynes is living up there, and says he'll do it. And I got Jerry Kaminsky on piano. So find a bass player and come on up." Jimmy asked me if I wanted to do it, and of course I did.



Charlie's Tavern, a favorite New York watering hole on Seventh Avenue in the former Roseland building.



Stan Getz and Frank Isola.

We got together at his apartment one afternoon and he taught me Stan's tunes, and then we took the train up to Boston.

I met Stan at the hotel where we were staying, and he said, "Do you mind if I check into your room with you? I'll split the bill with you, but I won't be staying there... I've got a chick in a room upstairs. This is just for the record." I agreed, and became Stan's roommate, on paper.



Duke Jordan

On opening night, we started the first tune and my D string broke during the first chorus. I tried to play around it, but was having a terrible time. There was another bass under the piano, which belonged to the house group that was playing opposite us. I decided to quickly switch basses, hoping the other guy wouldn't mind.

But when I began to play it, I discovered that it was set up for a left-handed player, with the strings in the opposite direction from mine. I fumbled through the tune, making many mistakes, and at the end Stan gave me a minute to put a new D string on my bass, and the worst was over.

By the second night I was pretty comfortable with the quintet, and the music went smoothly. But I was amazed at Stan's love life. In addition to the girl in the room upstairs, he was spending time during the day with another girl he had met at the club. And on the weekend, his wife came up for a surprise visit, and checked into the hotel. At the club that night all three women were sitting at a table in front of the bandstand, and each one was sure she was the one with Stan, and the other two were just friends.

When we got back to New York the next week, Stan called and said he had a week at Birdland. Jerry Kaminsky and Roy Haynes had stayed in Boston, so he hired Duke Jordan and Frank Isola. During that week we also played a concert at Carnegie Hall opposite Charlie Parker's quintet. Then Stan found us a week each in Baltimore and Washington, and we came back to New York for a week off.

That Tuesday, Stan called to say Birdland had a last minute opening for a week, so I went there and found Kenny Clarke setting up. I assumed Frank had already booked something and wasn't available. We began to play, and I got along with Kenny very well. We played the radio broadcast that was always done on the first set of opening night at Birdland each week.

When I got up for the second set that night, I looked over in



Claude Thornhill.

the Peanut Gallery, the seating area beside the bandstand, and saw Frank Isola there. "What's up, Frank?" I asked. "I don't know," he grinned. "I turned on the radio and discovered I was fired!" Stan pretended not to notice him.

We did a recording session for Norman Granz and another for Teddy Reig, and then Jimmy Raney left us to take a steady gig at the Blue Angel with Jimmy Lyons. So we worked a couple of weeks as a quartet. Then Duke and Klook left to do something else, and Stan said, "Well, I guess I have to form a new quintet." So he hired Bob Brookmeyer, John Williams and Alan Levitt, and I stayed on bass.

That was an interesting group, but the rhythm section never really jelled. John wanted the time feeling to be up on top, and Alan wanted it more relaxed. I was too inexperienced to have a strong point of view, and Stan and Bob weren't comfortable with us. So Stan decided to go back to his original bass player, Teddy Kotick, and that was the end of my six month tour with Stan. Teddy had been doing one-nighters with Claude Thornhill's band, and I wound up taking that job for the next summer, and my musical education continued. I learned a lot from playing with Stan and with Claude, and had a lot of fun doing it. ☺

David Liebman



Matt Vashlishan

Smithsonian Institute NEA Masters of Jazz Project: Bill Kirchner with David Liebman

The following is the Smithsonian Institute interview between Bill Kirchner and David Liebman following his acceptance of the NEA Masters of Jazz Award, and took place in January of 2011. This interview is incredibly extensive and will be presented in its entirety via several installments. This first “episode” is a bit larger to get you started. Enjoy!

Kirchner: Today is January 4th, 2011. I’m Bill Kirchner. We’re here in my home in South Orange, New Jersey, and we’re going to be talking with NEA Jazz Master Dave Liebman. Let’s start out with the most obvious thing. What’s your full name, Dave?

Liebman: No middle name. In fact, when I was about 13 or something, I said, “How come I don’t have a middle name?” to my mother, and she said, “Choose one.” In those days I was enamored by all the tough guys in the neighborhood, who were Vinny, Vito, Tony, Tito. I said, “Can I do Tito or Vinny?” She said, “No, I don’t think so.” So that was the end of any middle name. Nobody in our family has middle names. This is a rarity, I guess.

Kirchner: And just so we get the formal stuff out of the way, you were born what day?

Liebman: September 4th, 1946, Brooklyn, New York.

Kirchner: In a hospital? At home?

Liebman: Brooklyn Jewish Hospital.

Kirchner: What were your parents’ names?

Liebman: Francis. Her maiden name was Gatina – Hungarian, Alsace, a little German, and my father was a Liebman. They were from Belarus, White Russian Minsk, around that area. I never met my grandfather. I think he died when I was very young – he was a butcher, upper East – East Harlem. My mother lived in Brooklyn. I think that’s where they were always, like Crown Heights, that area. They met through school, teaching, because they were both teachers.

Kirchner: So you’re a first generation American.

Liebman: I would be second, right? No, I’m second generation, because I’m talking about the grandparents coming from the Old World. My parents were born here.

Kirchner: What did your father do for a living?

Liebman: Teacher. That was the Board of Ed., New York school system, both my parents. Eventually my father, his last 10 years, 15 years, was an assistant principal in Brooklyn, Ditmas Junior High, and he was out in Rockaway. My mother was in Rockaway. My father was in Borough Park and then at Ditmas Junior High. My mother was in Bedford-Stuy, because when I was a kid, I used to go – we had to go to the hospital. I would go spend the day with her. Then she ended up in Far Rockaway. The Board of Ed., until they retired.

Kirchner: Are they still alive?

Liebman: My mother died in 2006 or '7. My father died in '86.

Kirchner: Do you have any siblings?

Liebman: I have an older brother, five years older. I'm not sure where he is now. I think he's in Las Vegas. We're not in contact.

Kirchner: Is he musical at all?

Liebman: He played accordion, which I got to say, that's what I first saw. But nothing more than that.

Kirchner: Were your parents musicians?

Liebman: My mother had classical piano lessons when she was young, from what I understand, and would occasionally sit down and play. In fact, on my first record, Look How Far – my first official record as a leader, I did Pablo's Story for Pablo Picasso, and at the end I – what's the word? – I put in, inserted, The Breeze and I (Andalusia), because I always remember her playing that at the piano [Liebman hums a phrase of the melody]. That one.

Kirchner: I was going to ask you why you did that.

Liebman: That's why. It was dedicated. That's good that you know that.

My father loved classical music. I remember – and I still have them, LPs – Tchaikovsky. I know Brahms's Fourth was there. I remember Beethoven. He loved Caruso. I would hear that in the background in the house. He wasn't a fanatic, but that was the music he loved, opera and classical.

Kirchner: What do you remember of your earliest musical experiences, things you heard on the radio, or live, or whatever?

Liebman: Rock-and-roll. I loved – I don't know if I heard Rock Around the Clock when it came out, but I was there certainly pretty close to the beginning. And Elvis was my big hero, Elvis Presley. Even I used to sing, when I was on crutches – because I had the polio thing, which I'm sure we'll get to eventually – I would take the crutch, like a guitar, stand in front of the mirror, and think I was Elvis. I sang Hound Dog, Don't Be Cruel, Heartbreak Hotel. I loved Elvis Presley. So I was – the first musical experience, it's got to be 8, 9 years old, listening to rock-and-roll and Martin Block's Make Believe Ballroom, AM radio, Saturday mornings, the Top 25, and I had my own Top 25 for years. I still have it. But I liked the best of the week, and collected 45s. I still have – probably have a pretty valuable collection of original 45s, things from Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis, Chuck Berry, etc. That was my first music that I loved. I liked to dance. I learned how to dance. As I said, I won a talent show – I guess it was not a talent show, but it was an assembly in fourth grade, PS 99, I got up. I know I

sang All Shook Up. I remember that. Yeah, it was rock-and-roll.

Kirchner: When Bill Haley and Elvis came on the scene, you would have been about 9 or 10. So that makes sense.

Liebman: That's about right, yeah. And I loved – to get to it, I liked the sound of the saxophone. And of course since early rock-and-roll, as you know, had – the saxophone was the main soloing instrument, eight bars here and there. I liked the tenor. I didn't even – certainly didn't know what it was. Nobody in my immediate family – I never saw a tenor. But I liked the sound of it, and I wanted to play that instrument from rock-and-roll, right from the beginning.

Kirchner: Did you hear some of the R & B tenor players like Big Jay McNeely and Sam "the Man" Taylor?

Liebman: Not at that time, no. These are solos from, like, Rock Around the Clock, that guy Rudy whatever his name was, a long Italian name. Duane Eddy had a great saxophone player, Rebel Rouser. Then there were the little crossover things, as I know now, like Walkin' with Mr. Lee, Lee Allen, Honky Tonk, Bill Doggett. They were R & B guys who snuck into the pop charts, and I heard – that's where I heard tenor. Even In the Still of the Night has a great – no, Come Go with Me, my favorite song – the Del Vikings – my favorite song from that era has a great tenor saxophone solo with a giant squeak in the middle of it. I'm either thinking of Come Go with Me or In the Still of the Night, which is a very famous tenor squeak. The cat's reed, and that's the way – but I liked the sound of the tenor from rock. I really did.

Kirchner: How about Sam Butera with Louis Prima?

Liebman: Not at that time, nope, no. There was no jazz – jazz, swing, Benny. None of that was in the house, that I remember, and I didn't have any relatives. Often you hear, "I went to my uncle's, and I heard Benny" [Goodman] – not that I recall.

Kirchner: You mentioned getting polio, which happened pretty early in your life, right?

Liebman: '49, yeah. Summer of '49.

Kirchner: Why don't we talk about that now?

Liebman: I of course don't remember the actual incident, but from what my mother told me, and described, I got up. I couldn't walk. I just fell over. I had had a fever. Went to the doctor. He said, "We don't know what it is." She raced home. She tells me she had a police escort across the George Washington Bridge. This happened in Monticello, where we – we spent summers in the Catskills, as most teachers did. They had July and August off. We were at a place called White Lake. I guess it still exists. I just got sick and was in the hospital for the next 13 months from that

day, from what I understand. Of course then, at 3 years old, you don't know anything, and you don't realize it. Somebody asked me – in fact I was just talking to somebody about this earlier, we were just talking this week, earliest childhood memories. It's always good to say, "What do you remember from – the earliest thing you remember?" I remember the balloon losing air at the end of my bed in the hospital. Again, I'm not sure if this is when I was 7 or 8, when I had a couple of the operations. But I remember watching the balloon go down. It was right – somebody gave me a balloon. In the middle of the night it was starting to wither, and how upset I was.

Also I remember with my brother wasn't allowed in. He was then 12, 13, whatever. My mother, they wheeled me out to the balcony whatever it was – overlooking the parking lot. My brother was downstairs. He was waving to me. But that's about all I remember, except a couple other hospital scenes. But that was – my whole childhood, outside of normal, whatever normal was, is tied up with the next doctor, the next thing, and when you're going to have this magic operation that'll enable you to walk without a brace. That happened eventually, I'm 13 years old, after several operations, several broken legs, etc., etc.

Kirchner: You mean you broke your legs trying to walk?

Liebman: I broke my leg in the hospital, that 3-years-old thing. Fell down. That was an extra four months. I broke my leg on ice. I've done that several times through that whole era. And I had a couple operations. They did – I don't know what they tried. The main thing was, we went to Bellevue. It was a world famous guy, Dr. [Diever]. The reason we were going there – this is when I went to my mother's school. That's why I know she was in Bed-Stuy, because I would be off from school. I'd be with her until 2, 2:30, 3, and then we'd go to 34th Street. I remember this very distinctly. It's probably where I learned geography so well. It's because there was a giant map outside the elevator, and pins of people who came to this rehabilitation center. I remember sitting for hours, waiting for the doctor, going, "Look at the Philippines," like that.

Anyway, the big deal was that I was – I could have this operation called arthrodesis, which was something to do with stabilizing the bones, so that the foot wouldn't go out. You had to wait until your bones were mature, which is somewhere around 12, 13 years old. So it was always like, "When are we going to do it? When are we going to do it?" "He's not ready yet. David's not ready yet," cha cha cha. Finally, about 13, 14, I had that operation. Then, shortly after, I got rid of the brace until the last 20 years.

Kirchner: So they considered the operation "successful?"

Liebman: Yeah, from what they said which means, like right now, I can lift it only in one direction. It's stabilized. That's – my problem was that the foot

just went out, from whatever the polio did. Of course everything was atrophied, weak. The knee was weak. But I then went without a brace until 1987, '88. We'll eventually get to it. So that's a long period that I didn't have a brace.

Kirchner: Gene Lees, whom we both knew, also had childhood polio. I don't know if you knew that or not.

Liebman: Yes I did. In fact he wrote some great articles about post-polio syndrome, years ago.

Kirchner: I wanted to ask you about this, because he said in later years, it was expected that things would come about.

Liebman: Some people have gotten it. I know some people who have. I have not, thankfully. I feel weakening happening. I definitely see myself walking worse. But I'm also 64 years old. Not to tell you about that. That's going to happen no matter – in a normal situation, let alone in a situation like our situation, where you are stressing on this one side of your body, etc., etc. It's eventual – it's wear and tear. I feel it. There's no question about it.

*Kirchner: So knock on wood.
You started playing piano fairly early, right?*

Liebman: Yes, because I wanted the saxophone. I was vehement about it. She said, "You must take two years" – my mother. My father, of course – it's just that my mother was the vocal one. So I always say, my mother. "You got to take two years of piano, because that's how you'll know music." Aw, come on. So I did. I took three years, classical. It was a neighborhood teacher. Für Elise, Spinning Song, and a little Bach, blah blah blah. Eventually, like 12 years old, I said, "Okay. Is it time? Can I get it?" Then there was the, "You have to play clarinet first." So I didn't get to tenor until right before my Bar Mitzvah, because I know I played at my Bar Mitzvah, I'm in the Mood for Love, with the band, and I'd been playing nine months. So that's when I'm 13. That's September of '59. So by the time I was . . .

Kirchner: You played that on clarinet?

Liebman: No, on tenor, finally, because I took clarinet, like around 11 and a half, 12 years old. I did it for a year or whatever. Hated the clarinet, probably because I didn't – I was pushed into it. Because those days, the belief – you know – the belief – not the belief. De rigueur. You've got to play clarinet first, because it's harder.

Kirchner: That's what I – I started on clarinet when I was 7.

Liebman: Yeah, because it's much more difficult, which it is. But my question still remains: whoever said you wanted to play clarinet, anyway?

Kirchner: Did you ever hear Frank Wess's remark about the

clarinet?

Liebman: No.

Kirchner: The clarinet was invented by two guys who hated each other.

Liebman: With all due respect to the great clarinet players in the world, it's just never been an instrument that turned me on. I love it in classical, and of course, obviously – I think the reason that it never turned me on, because I always associated it with that sound of swing and that kind of syrupy, corny extension of Jewish klezmer-type playing that I probably never heard. If I had heard Jimmy Giuffre first, I probably would have loved the clarinet, because he was so hip and so cool on it, or if I had heard someone like Eddie Daniels play, but I guess Benny just didn't get to me when I was a kid. "Aw, that's the old stuff." And it's not fair to clarinet, because, as I'm saying, there's some amazing players on it. Tony Scott, man, the way that guy played the instrument, it was a joke, it was ridiculous, it was beyond the instrument. So I take everything back I've ever insulted the clarinet for. Hold the guards, please.

Kirchner: Although you and I being people who specialize in the soprano, we've heard all the dissing about soprano players. We have to put up with that garbage.

Liebman: That's right. Thank you very much. I feel better.

Kirchner: So you started – when you started saxophone, was it on tenor?

Liebman: Yeah, finally tenor. Yes. Yeah, right away. Never did the alto. It just never came up.

Kirchner: The first saxophone players you heard, then, were rock-and-roll tenor players.

Liebman: That had already by then been ensconced in my brain. Not that I played like that. I didn't try to play like that. I began playing – I have to back up. Where I studied music, after the classical, where I did clarinet, where I did saxophone, was in a little neighborhood school called Bromley – B-r-o-m-l-e-y – Studios. It was a family, Fay Bromley, Buster Bromley, and Eric Bromley, the son, who was going to Juilliard. I spent Saturday mornings there. This is from around 12 years old. My mother found it in the phone book, I guess, neighborhood school, 15 minutes from the house in Brooklyn. I went for piano lessons. I went back, took piano with the father, learning chords and all that. I took saxophone with Nat Shapiro. He was the teacher at that time. And I took combo. You sat and you play Combo Orks [orchestrations]. You remember Combo Orks, with all three . . .

Kirchner: Charlie [Cohen] books.

Liebman: The three-part harmony written out.

This family – this mother, Fay, who just died – amazing. I was in touch with her all the way through – she booked you in the Catskills as soon as you could play. I was there. I'm 13 years old. My first summer – because I'm September. So right July, August of my 13th year, becoming 14, I played at the Cedar Hill Hotel in South Fallsburg. I basically was playing – what I'm getting at is, I didn't play blues and rock-and-roll that I heard. I played club dates, because my teacher was a club-date musician. He taught me the vibrato with the wa-wa with the jaw, wa-wa-wa-wa. I had that sound. I learned tunes. I wore a tuxedo at 14, 15 years old. I felt like quite a mensch. You know what I mean? I was going. I had a tuxedo. I had three tuxedos at one point. So, style-wise, that's what I was playing before I started to hear jazz.

Kirchner: It's like Gerry Niewood once told me, that he thought club dates were the best preparation for jazz playing.

Liebman: Little I knew, that we're playing the bebop tunes, that when you're playing How High the Moon [Liebman sings the opening melody], that you would end up hearing Bird [Charlie Parker] playing it. Because then, Top 40 didn't exist. Club date was the standards and cha-chas and mambos and the freilachs and Hava Nagila and tarantella and all that stuff. That's where the clarinet – clarinet and the flute, because now I was playing finally. By about 14, 15, I got the flute. So you're playing the Latin tunes on flute, blah, blah, blah. But it was a great training, first of all, in styles – maybe it led to my eclecticism. I don't know – in the fact that you had to switch from a Latin tune to the Peabody [a dance] in two seconds, because Grandma asked for it, or something like that. That was a great – it was a great training ground, and I did it religiously. I was in the Catskills every summer until I was 18 or 19. I was there at Passover weekends and Sukkot and all that stuff – from April to October, every weekend, more or less, that we could, we were in the Catskills. I had a group called the Impromptu Quartet, and we were a club-date band. That was really my training.

Kirchner: Student musicians don't get that now, and they don't know what they're missing.

Liebman: No, they don't get it. They'll never get it. It's over, all over. But of course Top 40 ruined that too. By the time that came in, a guy doing "a club date," even before the deejay stuff, '80s, '70s, they were already playing Top 40, because they're old tunes. They lost their value to the new generations.

Kirchner: When did you first hear jazz?

Liebman: I always tell the famous first story of Birdland. If that's the first, I don't know. But how I really heard it was at Bromley Studios, because between the combos at 11 o'clock, and then they switch over at 12 o'clock to another bunch of kids, Eric, who played alto, and his assistant, Nick something, played – I don't

know if he was a drummer or not. He played drums like I do, amateur have-fun drums – they would just play while you were putting your horn away. Kids are coming in and out. I'm like, what the heck? I always tell this story. It sounds so naive, but it's the truth. "How do you move your fingers that fast with your eyes closed and no music in front of you?" That completely floored me. I just couldn't believe it, because here I am, playing, looking, and everything like that. And moving fast, and seeming to have a good time. I didn't under- – I had no idea what the music was like. But that's probably the first time I heard jazz.

Then it was more so when I went to the Catskills, because of course the guys all wanted to play after the gig was over. The Catskills had certain places where you could hang. It had sessions every Thursday night at a place called the Hom[?], which is still I think in existence near Ellenville, in that part of the Catskills. 1 o'clock in the morning until 5, they left the nightclub open. Arnie Lawrence was the leader of the band, and you could sit in. I didn't sit in until I was 16. I had no chance to get on stage. I could hardly play. But this is Eddie Daniels, Steve Schafer, Marty Morrell, this guy named Donny Kretmar who just disappeared. He had been playing electric bass. I don't know what ever happened to him. I thought he was brilliant. Lonnie Rutstein. I remember these guys' names better than a lot of other people from the past. I heard it every summer. So it was like, "Where are the guys playing? Where are they playing?" So that's where I informally heard it.

Then finally, the most formal way was at 15 years old. I'm in a dance band, playing tenor, high school – Lafayette High School – and my friend said, "Do you want to go to Birdland?" Christmas week, vacation. "What is Birdland" What is it? Blah blah blah. Anyway, I cleared it with my parents, went to Birdland. I was just talking about this. I'll tell you how this is a funny story. I was in somebody's house a couple days ago, and he put on Count Basie at Birdland, 1961.

Kirchner: Great record.

Liebman: I never knew this record. It had – because it said it's his only engagement in New York during those years. It said something in the liner notes. This is just a few days ago, for a Christmas party. I said to the guy, that has to have been the week I was there, because I saw Basie opposite Gerry Mulligan's – whatever it was called – the jazz concert band.

Kirchner: Concert Jazz Band.

Liebman: I was – that's Christmas week of my – I'm 15 in September. So that's Christmas week of that year. It's '61. The reason I remember it – I don't remember the music – I remember that a Coca-Cola was a dollar. We sat in the peanut gallery.

Kirchner: I was going to ask you that.

Liebman: Which I didn't know and became inti-

mate with eventually. We sat in the back, high school kids. I was the youngest. They were 17, maybe 16 years old, the other guys. Took the subway. "What you want to order?" They came over. I said, "Coca Cola." She said, "That'll be a dollar." I went, "What?" I flipped, because it was five cents in Brooklyn. So that's 20 times. Okay.

Plus, I had never seen so many black people in one place. I had never seen women dressed the way they were dressed, the waitresses and the girls that had the cigarettes and the box around the – we have a camera, so you know the – the box with cigarettes, and then the camera girl with the big flash. I said, what is this about?

So then started the whole folklore thing. Philosophically, I had no idea I'd do music. You're a kid. You're into music because of the music. But you also get into music because it represents something to you. Something's going on that isn't just because it sounds great. I think what happened there is, I went, "There's another world out here." This is not Brooklyn. I don't think so. This is not Mom and Dad and Aunt so-and-so.

Kirchner: You're not in Kansas anymore, Toto.

Liebman: Thank you. This is exactly it. I think that is – in a way, it was a gigantic culture shock which I'm still absorbing in a certain way, because I wasn't headed in that direction.

And then – to finish this – a few months later I went – I'm sure we'll talk about this, but I went, and I saw [John] Coltrane live. That was – epiphany was – if there was a night, it was that February gig, because now I see, because of Fuji's [Yasuhiro Fujioka] book with all the dates, I see the billing, Bill Evans and Coltrane, and now I've pinned it down to the week that I was there, February of '62. That was the beginning of realizing that something more than meets the eye

Kirchner: The first time I ever heard Coltrane was live at the Pittsburgh Jazz Festival, nine days before he recorded Ascension, June 1965.

Liebman: What a way to come in.

Kirchner: So, I'm curious, because we both were exposed to Coltrane live for the first time, before we knew who he was or had heard him. What was your initial reaction to Coltrane?

Liebman: There's a few things that happened that night. The first one was, it was the group with Eric Dolphy. I'm with my first girlfriend, a flute player in the orchestra. I'm first clarinet. A love affair. We went to Mama Leone's for dinner, and we went to Birdland. I walk – I didn't have any idea, except that I had been there a few months earlier, but I didn't know who was playing. There's a placard. It has a picture of Bill Evans – maybe a picture of him, Bill Evans Trio – I didn't have

any idea who he is – and this picture of a guy playing soprano. It's Coltrane. I'm just starting to read *Down Beat*. I said, "This is the guy who plays soprano saxophone," which was a big thing then, because I never saw one. So we go in. They're playing. I say to Julie, I say, "This guy sounds like he's practicing." He's missing notes. This is that period when he's going for the altissimo. He's squeezing out the G's and the A's and all that. And the other guy, with the ball in his head – that thing that Eric had – I could recognize in the little fledgling ear that I had at that time, that this was jazz, because Eric played at least rhythmically. He played in that style. Trane was just like – I don't know what he was doing.

So that was the first thing. The second thing was, they go into this tune. She leans over. She says, "That's from *The Sound of Music*." I said, "Wait a minute." So now I think – this like, we're walking into the hippest place in the world, and I say, there's no way that those guys are going to play something from Julie Andrews. This is the height of absurdness. No way. Sure enough, of course, it was *My Favorite Things*, as I found out. Those are the big things that night, was, "Who is this guy? He sounds like he's practicing," and this ditty from *The Sound of Music* is being played in Birdland. It impressed me.

Kirchner: It's funny. My reactions were very much the same. I was two months short of 12 years old.

Liebman: But you heard the free stuff then.

Kirchner: No, he was – this was . . .

Liebman: '66?

*Kirchner: No, '65. This is the so-called transition period, with the quartet. He played *My Favorite Things*, but it was like – you know the '65 records, like *Transition* and . . .*

Liebman: And *Vanguard Again* – but that's '66.

Kirchner: It was really intense.

Liebman: Oh God. I can't believe walking in on that.

Kirchner: Half the audience walked. But the bill that night, just to be quick about it – I don't want to hog your time – but the bill that night was Earl Hines, Carmen McRae, Stan Getz's quartet with Gary Burton, Steve Swallow, and probably Roy Haynes, Coltrane's quartet, and the [Duke] Ellington band.

Liebman: It definitely stood out like a sore thumb.

Kirchner: Everybody but Ellington and Coltrane were on before intermission. Then Coltrane's quartet came on after intermission. So as a result, even though a lot of people walked, a lot of people like my parents and me gritted our teeth and stayed, because we wanted to hear Duke.

Liebman: Isn't it – when you think about it though,

especially then, where he played, from '65 until the end, he must have been aware of the – not antipathy, but of the reaction. I remember Newport, seeing him in '66, the people – and the Titans of the Tenor Saxophone story. I always tell that story. Half the audience left Lincoln Center. He must have known that. He didn't have his eyes closed. This is a big difference in the response from – you hear the Europe concerts in '63. They're playing Mr. PC then. They're playing Impressions. The people are enthusiastic. Then you hear this. Is this because it was America, where you just don't know anything? Or it's just because he was really taking it far out? He must have felt that vibe. How could he not? I think about that.

Kirchner: I get the impression from reading stuff that he said in interviews and whatever that he just felt that it was what he had to do, regardless of the consequences. He just felt that that was the course he had to take.

Liebman: But imagine the guys getting off the bandstand. You know how you are, when you're on with your guys, and you get off the bandstand. "Man, it was weird out there." Somebody's thinking something. There's four guys up there. Maybe nobody's talking about it, but you got to think, God, they just got up in the middle and left. What a drag.

Kirchner: For example, at the end of '65 McCoy Tyner and Elvin Jones left, because they couldn't deal with the way the music was going. Did you ever talk to Elvin about this? Did he ever say anything?

Liebman: No. It's just what I read, what you read, that it was too loud, two drummers, and I think ego-wise, he didn't want to be competing with anybody else. You know the way he was. And Rashied [Ali], he was the kid on the block. Who knows? McCoy couldn't hear himself, he says.

Kirchner: But Elvin never said anything to you about this?

Liebman: No. I would think that would be taboo.

Kirchner: Yeah. I would imagine.

All right. So that's your first experience with Coltrane. Obviously that was a life-shifting experience for you.

Liebman: Eventually. Certainly not that night, although I tell it like it was. Epiphanies don't happen immediately. They take time to enlarge and magnify and get exaggerated with time, because we exaggerate. But it certainly made me – the main thing is, it made me see, this is not a hobby. What can I say? I'm still 15 years old. This is not just playing saxophone in school band. That's the same instrument I have at home in Brooklyn under my bed. This can't be possible, that's the same instrument. It's a tenor saxophone. It's the same instrument, made by the same people. How could he play it like that? That was the thing. And then of course Elvin and McCoy in the band, the intensity and energy, the way that they played when you saw them

live. It was just such an experience. You're shifting in your seat, 45 minutes. They're still playing a duet, and your back hurts. You know what I mean? People like this – guys are serving drinks, and they're still playing the same tune. Everything about it made me go, this is way beyond any reality – again, I'm 15. I'm not – I can't cognate these thoughts. But it appeared that this was what was going on. This is way past anything I ever knew. This is beyond Birdland's lifestyle. This is like – how can four guys make music like that? What is this about, this kind of intensity, that I can't take my eyes off it? I have certainly no understanding of the music. I didn't understand a thing. Nobody knew what was going on in my – whatever my peers were at that time. I was trying to play like that. I'm sure we'll talk about it. But we know at that period, there was no jazz education, there was no transcription books, blah blah blah. I was just mystified, but I knew there was something here that's got to be dealt with. You can't turn away from this.

Kirchner: When you were in high school, did you have a band director who was especially hip to these things?

Liebman: No, not that – we never talked jazz. It was a decent band director, Mr. [?] and Mr. [?] Polikov]. I remember them. We were in the dance band. We kind of ran ourselves. But no, I didn't have any older guy who said, "Listen to this." I didn't. I had my friends, Mike Garson, my first friend, piano player. We hunted it together, maybe. And my friend Steve Lipman. He would come and see Trane with me. You had friends, and they'd say, did you hear this record?, did you hear that record? But I would say, more or less, I was on my own. And the teaching, again, remember, there's no teaching either, because I'm studying with Mr. Shapiro, and that's certainly not jazz. Not that it was taboo, but it wasn't – nobody taught jazz then. There was no – eventually I got to [Lennie] Tristano, because he was the only game in town. But nobody taught jazz, really.

Kirchner: When did you get to Tristano?

Liebman: It looks like I'm 17. So, '63, '64, and it's because of my friend Mike Garson, who plays piano. His father was a liquor salesman, and on one of the rounds, they stopped at the Half Note. He supplied liquor to the Half Note. Mike walked in, and he saw Tristano with Warne [Marsh] and Lee [Konitz]. He – Mike was a year older than me in high school. He was part of my Impromptu Quartet, my first close friend, musical friend. Somehow he knew the – "Do you give lessons?" Anyway, he started studying with Lennie, and he said, you ought to go to Lennie. I was desperate to have anybody teach me anything about jazz, because there was nobody. There was nothing. No books. There was nothing to learn from.

So I went to Lennie at 17. The short of the story is, it was a year, and I went Sundays. You might know he lived out Hillside Avenue, 190th Street, in Jamaica.

Kirchner: In Queens.

Liebman: You had to take – from Brooklyn, you had to go to Manhattan. Then you went to blah blah – Jamaica line. You got off. You took a bus up Hillside Avenue, and then you walked a block or two. He was at the end of a street, Victorian house. I can see it right now. Dark trees. It looked like Vincent Price. It looked like the House of Usher. It was forbidding, let alone going in there. You lined up. You got in. You got a lesson.

My favorite story is, at the first lesson, I'm walking – first of all, the room is empty, except for the piano, living room, whatever it is. White, if I remember right. Somebody answered the door, a little weird. I don't know. It was strange. And I'm intimidated and nervous, although I don't know who Lennie really is, musically. I don't really know. I just know he's a famous musician who teaches jazz, from Mike, but I'm not at all aware of the genius that he was. He says, "What do you play?" He's blind, right? Because he'll take any instrument. "Tenor." He says, "Play a B-flat major scale from the bottom all the way up to the top." Now you know, because you're a saxophone player, how difficult it is on a good day to get a B-flat out with having an explosion, and on a nervous day, at 17 years old, etc., etc. So I went bleh bleh bleh. Finally it came out, and I got up to C or D or E-flat. I think I got halfway up, and he said, "Go home, and learn how to play your low notes." Or he said, "Go home and learn how to play that scale, and don't come back until you do." Something like that. That was the end of the lesson.

Of course he was right. Eventually I studied with him. I did the Lester Young. I did the blah blah blah, playing a melody without the chords, just with an [?] note. I did the thing. I was loyal, because I wanted to. I didn't get it, not that you really get it at that age. But I didn't get it, and he was so strange that I – look, I'm a kid. You're a kid, and so everything's personal. You don't like the guy. So suddenly he's of no use to you. You know what I mean? I didn't say I don't like the guy. I didn't have any feeling about him. But until one night – one Sunday I came in, having just seen Trane the night before, blown out of my brains, saying oh, I – I'm just talking, like a kid. I say, "I saw John Coltrane last night, and it was fantastic." He says, "He ain't playing nothing, and Elvin hasn't played good since he came to New York." Some categorical diss. Dissed completely categorical, nothing – don't even go there. I'm like – the guy couldn't see me, but I must have fallen off my feet. I was like, how could you say that about my man? Anyway, that was my last lesson. I couldn't face him after that.

Kirchner: Reportedly he had those kind of views, but then he would turn around. Like, I heard that he loved Wayne Shorter's solo on E.S.P. on the Miles [Davis] record.

Liebman: It's quite possible. He was very selective. He was a genius. But basically, it all stopped with Bird, as far as he was concerned. In the end – look, I could dig it. From that standpoint – it's like a Barry Harris situation, too. I can understand these guys. I respect

them. I appreciate them. I don't know if that's the way to live, but that's their business. Because to me, you're cutting off half the ship, but that's your – if you want to be like that, you must have a reason.

But he was – the thing about Lennie – the main thing that I got, though, when all is said and done – I don't think there's any one thing I got, except understanding more about Lee Konitz and Warne Marsh, which is timely, because I just recorded with Lee. So I know more now than I ever did, and it came back to Lennie. But it was that there's a system that you can learn this music. Because of the conditions in those days, and the "we can't teach jazz" thing that was around, you just didn't know what to do. I saw – even though it wasn't right for me, and I wasn't – it wasn't Lennie. It was me. I wasn't mature enough – that you could learn this music. You can do something. It isn't just hit and miss and put your finger in the air and wait for the wind to hit. That was the thing that – I didn't know it then when I left him, but I see that that's what it is. He said, "This is serious business," because he was very serious. Outside of peculiarities, and eight-minute lesson, and when you missed a lesson, you had to pay – I never heard of that before, but he was right, etc., etc. – the point was that this was a discipline that was real, and there was a way to approach it, which came to roost 20 years later when I became this jazz education thing. But that was a thing that had to be noticed. There was a guy who really knew what he was doing.

Kirchner: Our lives ran parallel in a number of ways. One of them is, I studied with Lee when I was about the same age as you were, when I was – from 18 to 20.

Liebman: He's much more communicative.

Kirchner: Yeah. Lee is a more sympathetic person than Lennie was.

Liebman: As a human being.

Kirchner: That was for me a life-changing experience. But I got the same revelation that you did.

Liebman: Especially at that age, and especially in our time, because of the lack of its being organized. We didn't know Jerry Coker. I didn't know [David] Baker. That's going to come later, when I finally met them and became friendly with them, familiar with them. But we from New York had nobody. We had [John] Mehegan, Hall Overton's little class on [Thelonious] Monk or whatever he did at The New School, and Lennie Tristano. That was it in New York City, from what I understood.

Eventually I took lessons with Charles Lloyd. I went up to Charles. This is a couple of years later. This is just because Bob Moses, who became my first real playing friend, and who was way ahead of me. He was into jazz when he was eight years old. Parents lived in the same building with Max Roach and Elvin Jones,

Central Park West. Abbey Lincoln was his godmother. Blah blah blah. He was my conduit to knowledge. I said, "Who's the one that sounds the most like Trane? Who can I go to." He said, "Charles Lloyd. He's playing with Cannonball Adderley." So I went to the Half Note. Sure enough, they're doing Fiddler on the Roof and all that. I went up to Charles, dressed beautifully, perfect. I went, "Mr. Lloyd, do you teach?" That's all. I just said, "Do you teach?" He said, "No." Then he looked at me. He said, "But you could come over tomorrow. I live on West 4th Street, across from the firehouse," which is right near the – right across from the Blue Note. I said okay.

I went that next day, Sunday. It was the next day. And for the next year I spent every Sunday with him. I even drove Keith [Jarrett] and Cecil [McBee] – they don't remember – Cecil, Keith, and Jack [DeJohnette], I drove them to Newport for them, because they were playing. And this is when I saw Trane at Newport, '66. Okay, I'm 20 years old.

I spent the year with Charles. I became his gofer, his aide-de-camp. I drove him around. I got him when he was at Slugs with [Pete] LaRoca. That's when I first met Pete, Tony Williams, etc., etc. I was a kid. He didn't teach me. I just hung out with him. We just hung out. I helped him. One night he said, "Let's go. We're driving to New Jersey." He looked in the New York Times. He went and he bought a Maserati, that day in New Jersey. Went to this beautiful, elegant house overlooking the Palisades, or something like that. Went up there. "I'm Mr. Lloyd." Blah blah blah. "I'm interested in buying your car." He said, "Okay, I'll buy it with cash." I don't remember. But I was his guy at that time. I spent a year, a solid year, being with him. I can't tell you that I learned anything in particular, but there are things that I gleaned from being around him, because he was a very intelligent teacher-type guy. He was a teacher, and there were things that I got out of him.

But again, once again, there was nobody to really tell you what to do. So, at 20 years old, I was still in the same boat, which is like, there's not going to be anybody to tell me. Now I could see that this is all going to be hit and miss, trial and error. Finally. No teacher is going to show you what's going on. You're not going to get instruction from A to Z in order. Berkeley School of Music, that's not – you don't do that. So, what? – you're on your own. I realized then that the only way I'm going to get good, is playing, playing, man hours spent on the horn, just man hours. That was the resolve that led me to the next years of my life, which is finally, after college – whenever we discuss that – the whole idea, how to live in a loft, that I had to play every day. I had to have drums and a piano, and a bass if possible, and that that door had to be open all day, and that was the only way I was ever going to get good, because of this situation.

☺ To be continued next issue.

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Lew Tabackin playing at Zoot Fest 2014

Photo by Bob Weidner