



The NOTE



Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania • Spring / Summer 2016



REMEMBERING PHIL WOODS • NOVEMBER 2, 1931 ~ SEPTEMBER 29, 2015

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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): A young Phil Woods.
Photo by Burt Goldblatt



Center Spread: Phil Woods and friends; Benny Carter, Phil Woods, Zoot Sims.

Photo courtesy Jim Eigo



Cover Photo (back): From the ACMJC photo archive: Phil performing at the honorary doctorate ceremony at ESU in 1994.

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Vol. 26 - No. 2 - Issue 66
Spring / Summer 2016

The NOTE is published twice a year by the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection, East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania, as part of its educational outreach program.

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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

By Dr. Matt Vashlishan

It is with pleasure and sadness to present you all with the Phil Woods Issue of *The NOTE*. This is a very special issue for the Pocono area musicians. When putting this issue together, one of the hardest tasks was to keep it at the appropriate length. I'm sure you can imagine how many people knew Phil, and how many more were influenced by his music and personality. I tried to keep the contributors to a minimum – mostly people that worked closest with Phil or lived around him, and I'm sorry I could not have had more people talk about him. It seems every person has a unique and funny story to tell, which proves what an amazing person he was, with or without the saxophone!

Along with Phil's passing, we lost another great saxophonist: George Robert. George battled Leukemia for years, sometimes getting better and sometimes getting worse. I actually spoke to him about contributing to this issue during one of the better times, but he passed away before he could follow up with me. Luckily Pat Dorian got to him as well, and there is much more about George and from George in Pat and Mary Dorian's column later in this issue. Thank you to them for putting that article together!

Phil had so much to do with *The NOTE*, the ACMJC, and jazz in the Poconos; his influence and legacy will live on in this area forever (along with many other areas of the world). He wrote more than 60 columns of "Phil In The Gap" for *The NOTE*, as well as contributing to many other articles. He co-founded COTA (the Celebration of the Arts annual jazz festival as well as COTA Camp Jazz), and led the COTA Festival Orchestra. He was a great friend, musician, composer, arranger, bandleader, critic, comedian, pianist, and the list goes on. I would like to take advantage of my "Coordinator's Column" and tell a few stories about why Phil was so special to me.



Photo by Jenna Brown

Phil, Matt, and Tony Marino performing at the Deer Head Inn

I knew about Phil all through high school at Pocono Mountain. Luckily for me the music program was great and we were exposed to good music. I picked up every Phil record I could find at the local music store. At that point he was a complete mystery... I knew he lived in the area but nobody ever saw him! I just heard stories and listened to the records that made him seem like he was super-human.

When I attended the COTA festival I began to see him live, and I'm sure I heard him at the Deerhead Inn as well. When he wasn't performing during the COTA Festival, he would usually sit perched at the top of the steps next to the stage. This was a perfect vantage point where he could check out the hillside, see the music, and position himself to talk to all the musicians. Occasionally he would move to the other side for a better look at the drums! When I joined the COTA Cats (back then directed by Pat Dorian) I started to meet musicians in the COTA Festival Orchestra, JARO, and most of all I got to see Phil up close working with our band. I took his every word like it came straight from the Bible, even though most of the time he just scared the hell out of us!

I learned about George Robert when he came to the COTA Festival

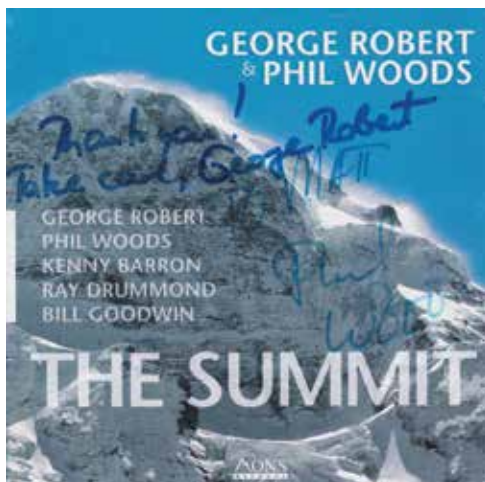
to play with Phil. They put out a record that I bought immediately (yes, you actually bought music back then!) called "The Summit," featuring Phil and George along with Kenny Barron, Ray Drummond, and Bill Goodwin. The tunes were written by both Phil and George (plus Perdido where they play the Clark Terry line on clarinet!), and I immediately gravitated toward George's sound and writing style. It was obvious to me even at that age how much respect and awe George had for Phil, yet he was able to maintain his own voice on the instrument. If it were possible to wear out a CD like you could an LP, I would have done it with this album. Fortunately for me lasers are way less abrasive than needles.

So upon hearing Phil and George live, I began to struggle with my own alto playing. I never realized what an effect living in the Delaware Water Gap would have on me as a saxophone player. Most kids growing up in other parts of the country or the world only heard these musicians on recordings. I heard them right in front of me! That sound they had on alto was amazing. So clear, powerful, crisp and sparkling, and it was something I wanted! I started trying every mouthpiece in the Woodwind & Brasswind catalogue. I drove my band directors nuts with my pitch and

tin can brightness, trying to achieve what I heard in Phil, Nelson Hill, Pat Turner, George Young, etc. So one September at the COTA Festival I approached Phil, who was sitting in his chair perched at the top of the steps, and I asked him THE question: "Excuse me, Phil, I was wondering... I really want *that sound*... what kind of mouthpiece do you use?" And my first lesson began with his response: "It's a Meyer 5 medium. But man, you just have to PRACTICE!" And he walked away. No need for follow-up questions! And you know what? He was right.

My second lesson came a year or two later when I was auditioning for the Pennsylvania All-State Jazz Ensemble. Part of our audition was to play Charlie Parker's solo on "Ko-Ko" from the Omnibook. It's fast as hell and I wanted to listen to the original recording for some inspiration. I couldn't find it anywhere, not even on my ten-disc box set. When I asked Pat Dorian if he could help, he said, "If anybody knows that recording, it would be Phil Woods. Why don't you call him up and ask him?" So I did. As the phone was ringing I had never been so scared in all my life! What was I going to say? What was HE going to say? Well the answering machine picked up and I was off the hook. Somehow we eventually set up a time and he had me come over to his house. In addition to giving me the recording, taking the time to work though it a little, telling stories about Bird, explaining various parts of the solo, we also talked about improvising. It was a real lesson. I remember what he said vividly: "If you only take one thing away from today, remember this: the 3rds go to 7ths, and the 7ths go to 3rds!" Of course he is explaining the most basic element to playing over a ii-V-I chord progression. He was right about that too.

Over the next 10 years or more, I occasionally saw Phil at the festivals. One year I was featured with my own group, and I had not seen Phil for quite some time. I



My signed CD booklet from George and Phil

played with bassist Evan Gregor and drummer Ian Froman. We were doing some sessions at that time and put a group together. Phil heard it and flipped out! In a good way! He came up to me after our set and said, "what happened to you?!" I guess the practicing finally paid off. From that point on our relationship grew, although sporadic, and he always made me feel like he was an actual *fan* of my playing and my music. This led to me playing second alto in the COTA Festival Orchestra, and eventually me taking over the direction of the group. Whenever I played at the Deerhead Inn and he was available, he would come down to listen to the first set. He raved about my trio recording with Evan Gregor and Bill Goodwin, and always made me feel like he was interested and truly appreciated what I was doing. That is probably the most

valuable thing he could have done for me.

To explain his generosity my final story has to do with my ongoing issue with saxophone neurosis. After selling my main horn that I used for 12 years, I had been testing various horns and hadn't been happy with any of them. I was talking about it with him one day. He told me to come over; he had a bunch of different horns. When I arrived he was upstairs with at least six alto cases on the floor. Three horns were Selmers, and three were Yamahas, which he had been playing for quite some time. We sat there and he listened to me play these horns over and over for what seemed like hours. He would comment on this horn, then the next, then the one I had been playing. We had a great time. At the end of the session, he concluded I sounded the best on one of his Mark VI altos, the one he had been playing for years before he switched to Yamaha. So he said to me, "That one sounds great. There you go. Now you have a horn." Now, he obviously didn't give me the horn, but I took it and played it for a good while during my search.

Phil was just great to me; he was always trying to help. We had a great time talking about saxophone things, about other things, and he always encouraged me whether it was about my playing or about my writing. All of the lessons I learned from him are things I will keep with me forever. He made me feel like I was part of the club so to speak, and for that I will always be grateful. ☺



The COTA Festival Orchestra saxophone section with Phil

Photo by Garth Woods

From the Bridge



Photo by James Richard

Phil's Legacy

By Su Terry

The first time I met Phil Woods, he didn't give me a second glance. I didn't look at him either. That's because I first met Phil through his music: in my vinyl collection were *Musique du Bois*, *Greek Cooking*, and a Lena Horne album with Phil as soloist. Played 'em over and over again.

When musicians study one another's music, we're not concerned with outward personalities. We wish to know that musician in a much deeper way. Through someone's music, we learn about his or her innermost spirit, or essential self. This aspect of a person is often well-hidden!

As I grew up, the Phil influence kept creeping into my life as a budding professional saxophonist. Take for instance, the classic and unique sax part on Billy Joel's "Just the Way You Are," a song I was destined to perform hundreds of times. Among other Phil solos, I also transcribed the jaw-dropping, ruthless, a cappella solo at the end of Paul Simon's "Have a Good Time" from the *Graceland* album, executed with an "I eat this stuff for breakfast" precision.

Lena Horne's "The New Album" featured Phil at his most lyrical. I bought several copies of the album so I could give them as gifts. (It wasn't like I had lots of bread to blow on albums. I was a junior in high school when that side came out in 1976. My budget was a \$10 per week allowance plus any gigs that happened to come down the pike—mainly the occasional pit orchestra job for community theater or summer stock. But "Off Broadway" is a long way from Wall Street.)

Through these recordings I learned who Phil was—who he really was, deep down. That's why, when I finally did meet him in person and he yelled at me, I wasn't too fazed. What happened was, after a concert in New York City, I went up to him and asked what kind of reeds and mouthpiece he used. He went on a diatribe. "It's not important what kind of reed and mouthpiece you use," he scolded. "Your sound comes from YOU, not the equipment."

Some years later, I was playing a gig with Mark Hamza in the Poconos. Phil came by and I loaned him my horn so he could sit in. When he handed the horn back

to me, he said, "Your setup's too small." In saxophone parlance, he was referring to the tip opening and chamber of my mouthpiece. He was right, of course. Sound-wise, Phil was Man O' War, while I was one of those donkeys you rent at the Grand Canyon.

Yet another lesson from the Master: it is certainly true that one's sound comes from oneself. But after you get your sound, you should find the correct equipment to maximize it.

Phil considered the element of humor to be essential, not only in music, but also in daily life. The humor of jazz is dry. This is not the pratfall of Vaudeville or the slapstick of a circus clown. Rather, it is the wit of an intellectual, an aesthete. It is the expression of the Master Artist.

One example of humor in music is the use of musical quotes. In jazz, it's the injecting of a melody to a different tune during a solo. You never knew what Monsieur Du Bois was going to quote, as he was familiar with most of the extensive repertoire of the *Great American Songbook*.

What creates humor? Tension and release. Contrast. The unexpected, from the sublime to the ridiculous. But the humor in jazz music, as in other sophisticated settings, is also dependent on the knowledge of the listener. Humor is seeing the Big Picture. We have to look beyond, to the world at large. Only then will we have the perspective to bring contrasting elements together to make people smile.

Of course, laughter can be a form of appreciation rather than just the reaction of a tickled funny bone.

We laugh to say *touche*.

We laugh to say *olé*.

We laugh to say *oy vay*.

Because jazz musicians appreciate humor, we enjoy backing up a great comic. (By the way, having had the pleasure of being on stage with David Brenner, Joan Rivers, Rodney Dangerfield and Don Rickles, among many others, I can assure you the act is always raunchier in person.)

My favorite bit ever was by a wonderful comic whose name, sadly, I don't recall. I was in Florida touring with Leslie Uggams (pianist Bob Albanese was the Musical Di-



Portrait of Phil by Jonathan Glass — fountaingallerynyc.com

rector) and this comic opened for us. He had a joke that went..."Buffalo wings. Every restaurant down here has a sign outside for buffalo wings. Geez. You know, when I was a kid, the sky was black with buffalos. Those poor animals have to walk now!"

The band thought this was hilarious. Our backstage

guffaws were even more prominent juxtaposed with the silence of the audience. Out went the Buffalo Wing bit.

Phil's last directive to me, issued from his hospital bed, was "keep 'em laughing." At the end of the day, one's sense of humor—or sense of perspective if you will, since it's virtually the same thing—saves the day. A bit of humor is an ironic sort of *Memento Mori* (sobering words a Roman warrior's slave would whisper in his master's ear as a reminder that all the glory was temporary and he would someday die). Hence the phrase "eat, drink, and be merry!"

I've always shared Phil's credo of humor as an essential nutrient that bolsters one against the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. The right joke, at the right time, can nourish a soul for years to come. At this very moment, I'm recalling a certain high school concert band rehearsal where the director passed out the Liberty Bell March by John Philip Sousa. As we launched into the music, my brother and I, from our respective seats in the clarinet and sax sections, realized that the piece was none other than the theme song of the Monty Python Show. Nothing could contain our glee.

We just about died laughing. We were both

ejected from that day's rehearsal (hey—I've been thrown out of better places) but it was worth it.

Phil, until we meet again. Maybe at a country dance being held in a garden. One flat. You bring the polka dots, I'll bring the moonbeams. Dig it. ☺

Phil Woods in Concert Manchester Craftsmen's Guild

On September 4, 2015, Manchester Craftsmen's Guild presented a concert in their hall. It featured the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and NEA Jazz Master Phil Woods playing the Charlie Parker with Strings repertoire. It turned out to be a historical night not only because it is rare that the Pittsburgh Symphony performed in such an intimate setting – their home is Heinz Hall – and that the arrangements of this repertoire had only been played in the United States one other time, but because Phil Woods announced his retirement from performing after a seventy-year career live, onstage, before the last tune.

Following is a selected transcript of what Phil Woods said on stage during this historic performance

Good evening. Welcome. Thank you. I toured Europe for three years doing all of the major cities for this “Charlie Parker With Strings,” and we called it “Bird and More.” We’d do the last three pieces of course, you know, “April in Paris” and “Everything Happens to Me,” and (Laughing) what, what’s the first one? [Someone in the band says “Just Friends.”] “Just Friends,” thank you. “Just Fiends.” We’ve only done two in America: Rochester was the first one and this is the second one, and I’m very pleased to be in a city I dearly, dearly love. I’ve always had a great time here.

Let’s see, what can I tell you? I first heard Charlie Parker when I was a wee sprat. I mean I had a music teacher who was a great... let me just give you a little background:

It was 1931. The War was raging. I’m sure you heard about it; it was in all the newspapers. (Laughter) And I, my major thrust of life was to melt lead and make toy soldiers. So that’s what I did during the War. And I was poking around in my Grandma’s wicker sofa and I saw this box. And I opened it up and it was a saxophone. I said, “Oh, I can melt that sucker down.” (Laughter) Somebody mistook my illegal attempt at stealing it and melting it down and gave it to me to play. So I, you know, I took it and I put it in the closet, where I thought it belonged and went back to my major force, which was melting lead and making soldiers. My mom, finally, she said, “Philip,” and when she said “Philip” like



Phil Woods with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra

Photo by Wade Massie



Photo by Wade Massie

Phil Woods laughing at his own life stories

***I called Mr. Harvey LaRose for saxophone lessons.
I just fell in love with music because of him.***

that... she said, “You know, your uncle went to a great deal of trouble to leave you that saxophone.” And even at age 12, I realized that dying can be construed as a great deal of trouble. (Laughter) That’s why I’m saving it for last, actually. So, I got the Yellow Pages and I called Mr. Harvey LaRose for saxophone lessons. And that’s when my life changed. Harvey would give me all of the “Hit Parade” songs and play piano. He played violin, alto, clarinet, arranged. A super guy, a super guy. I just fell in love with music because of him. I forgot about melting lead, I got in serious into the saxophone. And, one week, he gave me the first jazz I ever played, he gave me transcribed solos by Benny Carter. So that’s where I first learned it, I first improvised on studying Benny Carter. Then he gave me a song “Mood to be Woood,” by Duke Ellington. And, wouldn’t you know it, it was a feature for Johnny Hodges and we all, all us kids in Springfield, we went to see the Duke Ellington Band. We went to see all the bands, but to see Duke’s band and then the lights all went blue and Johnny Hodges stepped forward and

he played my lesson piece! And I said, “Oh, my God.” (Laughter) There was nothing like hearing the music you’re working on being played by a master.

That just reinforced my intent to be an alto player, a saxophone player. And then I heard Charlie Parker and that’s all she wrote, pun intended. (Laughter) Anyway, that’s my story and I’m sticking with it. [Band plays “Repetition.”]

As I mentioned before, the idea was to do Charlie Parker with Strings and More. And here’s one of the “and more” parts: I honestly took the original Bird with Strings and fleshed them out and you might have noticed, I added three woodwinds. I like the sparkle it gave the strings to have woodwinds, being a Julliard clarinet player. So this is by Lou Brown and Ray Henderson and the verse is absolutely marvelous and then it goes into this very funky thing. It’s a great contrast in musical materials. “The Thrill is Gone,” arranged by Eric Doney and myself. Eric Doney was a great piano player from the Delaware Water Gap. [Band plays]

Thank you very much. Thank you. How about a nice hand for this rhythm section? Tom Wendt on drums; Paul Thompson on bass; Alton Merrell on piano; and the Maestro, Larry Loh, of this wonderful orchestra.

This is as good a time as any. I want to talk a little bit. Do you mind if I talk a little bit? This is my last concert. I’ve had a 70-year career, but my emphysema is increasing and it’s just not fun anymore for me. I mean I’m having fun tonight, but... I always told students, when they’d come for their first lesson, “Don’t smoke. And learn your keyboard work.” (Laughter)

I mean, I’ve played with everybody. And I don’t want to blow my own horn, excuse the pun, but I would like to just give you some idea of where I’ve come from. You know about Johnny Hodges and Bird, and all that. Well there was a group of us guys in Springfield, Mass., and when we left, years later, they called us “The Springfield Rifles.” We never called us that. Joe Morello was on drums, with Brubeck. Chuck Andrus was on bass. He went with Woody Herman. Sal Salvador was on guitar. He played with Stan Kenton. And a friend, a neighbor of mine, Hal Serra, he was a great piano player who lived up the street from me.

Hal started to take lessons with Lennie Tristano. And I was heavy into jazz and I said, I wonder, could I take a lesson with him? And he said, “Sure.” So we got on the bus in Springfield, a four-hour drive to Manhattan, subway, then go to Lennie’s house and have the lesson. And our normal path of hanging out would be to go to 52nd Street after our lesson, after getting a pizza and buying the latest discs.

Mr. Tristano said, “Are you kids going down to 52nd Street tonight?” And we said, “Yeah.” We’d get a Coca-Cola for a dollar. (Laughs) And we’d sit and we’d listen to six hours of music. I mean, you have no idea what, what a ... what a world it was then. And he said, “Well, if you’re going down, I’m opening for Charlie Parker. Would you like to meet him?” To myself, I said, “I’ve always wanted to meet God.” You know? (Laughter) And, sure enough, we held back on the pizza; we held back on the records so we’d have two dollars for two Cokes! It was going to be a big night, you know? And after, somebody came and took

Mr. Tristano said . . . “I’m opening for Charlie Parker.

Would you like to meet him?”

To myself, I said, “I’ve always wanted to meet God.”

us backstage. And there was the great Charlie Parker and he was sitting on the floor. He had a big cherry pie. And he said, “Hi, kids. Want a piece of cherry pie?” (Laughter) I said, “Oh, Mr. Parker, cherry is my favorite flavor!” And it was! (Laughs) He said, “Well, you sit down here,” and he cut me a big slab and talked to us for a half hour. I mean, the generosity of genius in those days was truly amazing. I mean the accessibility of these ... I mean they changed the planet and he’s giving me a piece of cherry pie, wow! (Laughs)

I went on to Julliard as a clarinet major. I looked constipated all day. (Laughter) And then at night, I would do my species counterpoint exercises and listen to Charlie Parker broadcasts and I had the best of both worlds.

My first band was with Charlie Barnet. And when we were working the Apollo Theatre, I had scheduled my final exam at Julliard. I was a Vincent Albano student, and I was going to play the Brahms and the Mozart. I was going to be the first guy to play the three clarinet pieces by Stravinsky. Unfortunately, at the Apollo, my clarinet was stolen on the day of my exam!

(Laughter)

So I never quite completed my paperwork and all that. But I sure got a lot out of it. Birdland was a very good gig. They used to hire young people on Monday nights. So I used to work the Birdland All-Stars and I was hired for the Birdland All-Stars in 1956. And we were a little group called “The,” I forget what they called us. I guess “Birdland All-Stars,” with Conte Candoli and Kenny Dorham, and Al Cohn, and myself. And we played with Sarah Vaughan’s rhythm section, Roy Haynes and I forget everybody else. That was my first really extensive bus trip. I did some traveling with Neal Hefti and I played with Vaughn Monroe, and a few bands like that. Oh, by the way, when we would order pasta in New York, we didn’t say “al dente.” We thought “al dente” was a tenor player with Harry James, actually! (Laughter)

So, the Birdland All-Stars. I show up and there’s all my heroes, there’s Basie’s band, there’s Bud Powell, there’s Lester Young. I mean it’s the Birdland guys. You know? And I didn’t know where to sit. And I hear a voice from the back, it’s Al Cohn, and he says, “Back here, Phil.” So I went back to almost the last row. I sat right behind Lester Young and Bud Powell for the whole trip. Now I mean those guys didn’t say one word to each other (Laughing) in six weeks on the road. It was amazing. And it was the middle of March. And it was freezing. And

I, you know, I had to... nature was calling. And I said to Al, “I hope this guy stops soon because, you know, my bladder is busting.” It’s snowing and raining and it’s a miserable night. So Al said, “Well go up and just ask him if he’s going to make a pee-stop.” I wouldn’t say I’m going to the bathroom, that’s too New England. You know,

a pee-stop, we call it. I said, “Okay.” And I get up there and I said to the driver, “Will you be making a pee-stop?” And he said, “You have to go to the bathroom?” I said, “Yes, I do.” And he opened the door, didn’t slow down, he just (Laughter), I mean, I mean it was a mess, man! (Laughter) I mean, you can imagine. But I got pretty good at it. (Laughter) Still do. You don’t learn that at Berklee! You don’t learn how to piss on a bus going 80 miles an hour in the middle of the night! (Laughing) That’s “Road Rat City,” baby. Let me know when you’ve had enough. (Laughs)

When I was at Julliard I attended all of the workshops. I heard the first “Concord Sonata” of Ives. Life was good. And then I got a gig at the Nut Club in the Village. I used to play this every night. [plays Harlem Nocture] (Laughter) I didn’t see a girl from the front until I was 33 years old... yeah, okay. (Laughs)

Dizzy was in Europe and Quincy Jones was putting together a band for him. And I did the first Quincy Jones record. So, I was hired to play with Dizzy. It was going to be a State Department tour. We went to Abadan, Iran; Baghdad, Syria; Beirut, where all the oil was, that’s where we went. We picked up Dizzy in Rome and... I never met Dizzy before. And there I am, 24 years old, playing “Groovin’ High,” and talk about the generosity of genius. Now there was a trombone player in the band named Frank Rehak. And, you know, Aberdeen had a lot of opium dens. Frank thought he’d do a little shopping. (Laughter)

He came back with a shopping bag full of, I don’t



The ensemble pauses to listen to Phil speak.

Photo by Wade Massie



Phil sounding better than ever

know what it was, but, my God, he had a big bag of it! So, on the first break, (there was no backstage in Abadan and Iran), it was pretty primitive. So we got under the stage to smoke Frank's hash. We were going to check it out! (Laughter) Anyway, the pipe is being passed around and, all of a sudden, everybody disappears and here comes Dizzy! And he says, "What are you doing?" I said, "It's not my pipe." Yeah, that's going to work. (Laughter) He said, "This is a State Department tour, young man. You could be jeopardizing every man, Jack. It could be the end of detente in our time. I mean, you are really messing up... Is it any good?" (Laughter) I said, "Diz, I'm no expert, but this is the best shit I ever smoked." (Laughter) And so he said, "Give me some before I fire your white ass." (Laughter) That started a relationship which went on forever. Oh, Dizzy.

I was so lucky. Not so lucky with Benny Goodman in Russia. I had a terrible time with Benny in Russia in '62. We opened up in Moscow, a great band. And there was, once again, a big party. We used to party a little bit in those days. And we had a couple of days off in Sochi. I remember I got very drunk, a little... I over did it, considerably. And I, you know, and we're getting bugged with Benny 'cause he's not playing any of the new music; he's playing all the old stuff. It was getting to be a problem. So I was so ripped, I just looked at the sky and the ocean, and I just yelled out, "F-You King." You know?

And, he was on the balcony below me. He recognized my voice. At 9 o'clock. We all get a call, rehearsal. Oh, my God. He said, "Blue Skies," just the reeds. And everybody goes, "Oops, oops, oops, oops." And he stuck his clarinet in my ear and said, "Play it like this. Play it like that." He was really on my case, man. He hated me. And I hated him! (Laughter)

I mean he was a great clarinet player, but not a nice man. (Laughter) So, you don't quit in Russia. You know, you end up in the gulag. (Laughter) It was ironic that 15 years later, I won a Grammy and Benny Goodman presented me with it and he said, "I wondered what happened to you." And I said, "Yeah, sure you did."

(Laughter)

Anyway, I won four Grammys. I started the COTA Festival in Delaware Water Gap, which we'll have the weekend after Labor Day.

We've been doing that... this is about our 38th year. And I'm with Jill Goodwin, my wife. We've been together 40 years. And I love her. We've all agreed that it's time to take a break. I've been doing this for 70 years so I just can't do it anymore. So I'm going to miss it. Let's see. When I pack up the horn tonight, it's going to be kind of weird. But I want to do a

Photo by Nate Guidry

lot of writing.

Now, you know, I did a lot of classic pop work. What I really loved doing was Aretha Franklin. I did an album that I'm really proud of with Lena Horne and Robert Farnon, and Dr. Wu and Steely Dan. And I played with Billy Joel. I made him a star, "Just the Way You Are." (Laughter) One of the great humbling experiences of my life was that I was working a gig somewhere and this cat, a young tenor player, comes in and he said, "Can I talk to you?" I said, "Sure." He said, "You're the guy on that Billy Joel record, aren't you?" And I said, "Yes, I am." He said, "Have you done anything on your own?" (Laughter) Keep you humble, baby. Anyway, that's my story and I wanted to just share... We'll see each other again, I'm sure.

(Applause)

Thank you so much. Thank you, Marty Ashby and thank you, group, everybody at the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild for inviting me. I had a great time. This is called "Rocker," composed by Gerry Mulligan. Thank you.

(Band plays)

Thank you very much. That's all we know!
(Applause, Standing Ovation) ☺

Jon Gordon

Editor's Note: When I began working at the ACMJC, I was greeted with a computer full of old photos, emails, documents, etc. One of the files on the computer was the following article from Jon Gordon to Phil Woods, where he explained that it was the portion of his book when he discussed meeting and studying with him. The book is called "For Sue," and is available on Amazon.com.

I followed Phil around at jazz clubs for months once I started going to them with Margaret, desperate for a chance to study with him. He was in his early 50's at the time, with greying hair parted on the side, almost always under his trademark leather cap. There was such command to his playing, both of the alto saxophone and the language he used as an improviser. And there was a toughness to him and his playing that really spoke to me. Phil was very kind and supportive whenever I spoke to him, but told me he wasn't teaching at the time.

But I kept showing up and asking in different ways. "Are you sure I couldn't just take one lesson some time?"... "Can I send you a tape?" ... "Are you teaching again yet?"...

Phil, annoyed, exasperated, and somewhat concerned for my mental health finally said after a year, "Well can ya play!?"...

I froze, trying to figure out what the right thing might be to say, when he finally threw his business card down on a table in the upstairs musicians' room at the Blue Note and said, "Well call my wife. Ya gotta pay me whether you can play or not!"

Hooray!... I annoyed the shit out of him but he's going to give me a lesson anyway! Yea for me!...

Those lessons were incredible! They could easily be the focus of a whole other book. One minute he's demanding that I follow the score to Petrouchka, the next he's telling me I've got five minutes to write a rondo... (as I desperately tried to remember the form!). Then he's telling me to sit at the piano and play the opening of the Rite of Spring, and then to play Bird's solo break on the alto on "A Night in Tunisia" (only remembered the beginning and faked the rest, but he started laughing happily early on in it so it covered the part I faked).

Then he'd say, "Let's sight read these Bartok violin duets."

In early 1984, I started studying with Phil Woods. My friend Jay Rodriguez had played me a couple of Phil's records a year before in early '83. The minute I heard Phil I had that life changing moment that many of us have at some point. I remember thinking, "Oh! So that's why I'm playing this instrument!"

"Uh, sure Phil. Is it transposed to our key of E flat?"

"Of course not! What kinda shit is that? You gotta know how to transpose! You're a concert man!" (In other words, be able to play in C concert as written for the violin instead of the E flat key of the alto).

"Well, um, I don't really know how to do that, sir..."

"OK, Jon, here we go, 1,2,3,1,2,3,..."

And off we went as I stumbled and missed most of the notes. But the lesson was clear. It wasn't about just being a great instrumentalist; it was about being a great musician. And it was the beginning of trying to understand what it was to be a great artist. Phil was and is all of the above and has been incredible to me over the years.

He'd say to me, "Why are you doing this? I've seen too many heroes of mine that lived and died for this music. If you're not trying to change the world man, I'm not interested!"

When he said things like that to me it meant a great deal to me. And I've always felt the same way about music.

I got to study with my hero - how lucky is that? I was thrilled every time I went to his place in the Poconos for lessons over those couple of years, and he's been a great friend and supporter ever since. ☺



Young Jon Gordon with Phil

Photo courtesy Jon Gordon

The Evolution of the Phil Woods Quintet

At the end of the summer in 1973 I received a call from my sister Jill who was living in Los Angeles. She said she was coming east and would be traveling with her new boyfriend, Phil. They were going to stop in Denver because Phil had a gig, then meander their way across the country and eventually end up at my place. I was living with my first wife, Rita, at the time and we had a farm in Mt. Bethel, Pa. When I was talking to Jill it was always “Phil this...” and “Phil that...” and eventually I said, “so who is this guy Phil?!” So when she said, “Phil Woods,” I was very surprised, “Phil WOODS is your BOYFRIEND? Wow, that’s interesting!” They needed a place to stay when they finally arrived so they stayed with us.

Of course I knew who Phil Woods was, and I had seen him play and had been following him since I was a teenager. He was one of my favorite players. In my crowd we considered him a major deal. He was a little older than us, but he was one of the guys we all really followed, like all of the young lions: Phil, Coltrane, guys like that. So here’s Phil Woods and he comes to my house. I had a piano in those days and we could play any time we wanted. A good friend of Steve Gilmore’s was pianist Vince Maggio and he was visiting Steve, so I invited him to come over and play. Phil was out running errands or something and we were playing trio. It was really sounding good and Phil came back and heard us playing. He immediately got his horn out and joined us playing a couple choruses and then we all hung out. That was really the first time Steve Gilmore and I played with Phil.

Meanwhile during all of this, Phil started to get some gigs and attracted the interest of some producers. One of which was Norman Schwartz, who was producing Michel Legrand among other people. He lined up Phil to play with Michel at a club in New York called Jimmy’s. The band was Ron Carter, Grady Tate, Gene Bertoncini, Randy Brecker, and Phil with Michel. They played that gig and recorded it live. Michel, who had been aware of Phil, completely flipped out and had to have him on another project he was writing for saxophone and orchestra, which was later released called “Images.”

The quartet as everybody knows it was not playing much at this point, but Steve and I would play with Johnny Coates or Al Cohn at the Deer Head Inn and Phil would occasionally come down and play. We would hang at Al’s and Zoot would come and play, and Phil would join us there too. There was a lot of stuff like that going on.

Around February of 1974 Phil was called by another producer named Don Schlitten to record for the Muse label. It was one of those dates where you use the label’s rhythm section and a guest comes in to front the band. This one was Jaki Byard, Richard Davis, and Alan Dawson. They made records with Booker Ervin and a lot of

other guys. This record later came out as “Musique Du Bois” and it was very well received. I happened to be in New York recording that week and was hanging around the Half Note club which was around 54th Street. I was just hanging at the bar and Phil came in after his record date. So I asked Phil how the date went and he said it was OK but there were some issues he wasn’t happy with. We were just chatting about the various things that went well and that went wrong and he mentioned that he really wished he could have had me and Steve on the date. So at that point he mentioned that we could start something and he asked if I knew any piano players. I thought of one immediately that would be good named Mike Melillo. I recently discovered that he could play really good bebop, and previously I thought he only played free. So it was a big surprise and I suggested him to Phil and we got together.

We had a session at Mike Melillo’s house, and at that time Phil was into using all kinds of effects on the saxophone from being in LA. So Phil says he’s going to bring his whole rig to the rehearsal! So we get there and he sets up his amp and his ring modulator and all these effects, and we start to play. Well, after about a chorus everybody stopped playing and started laughing! We were saying, “Oh man, that’s the funniest sounding shit we’ve ever heard, Phil! What are you doing? You have one of the greatest saxophone sounds of all time, why do you want to mess with that?” So we convinced him to unplug and just play. Especially Mike, he was the real point man in that group for years. Phil had the name, Mike had the ideas, and Steve and I were really good at driving the car! So when Phil unplugged we all loved it and started playing frequently. Mike, Steve and I were the house rhythm section for a jam session I was hosting every Monday night, and we always had guests come and play, and we ended up using Phil more than once and used that to get the group going.

In 1975 Phil’s producer got him a record deal with RCA and wanted to use us as the group for that. His producer didn’t really like us that much, he wanted to use the stars – the well-known guys at the time. But Phil prevailed and he trusted me enough to choose the additional personnel for the record. We needed a percussionist and a guitarist, brass, things like that. So we went in the studio for a couple days and did the record, which is called “The New Phil Woods Album.” This helped us start to get some real gigs happening. By the end of 1975 we were going to Europe and really got things going.

We ended up having an incredible affinity for music with that group. We hardly ever had to rehearse unless we had an important record date coming up or if somebody wrote something new. Mike was writing a lot and Phil was writing some. I think the thing that helped the

most is that Phil knew he could rely on us. We weren't trying to bullshit him or pull something over on him; we just wanted to play good music. He could get up on the bandstand with a set list, and then all of a sudden change it completely and just call tunes, and we would be OK with it. In fact that's what happened on our first big gig in Europe. He heard that Cannonball Adderley died and we had a set worked out – it was going to be on the radio and everything, and he completely threw the set out the window and opened with Parker's Mood and after that just kept calling tunes.

I was pretty depressed after that gig, I thought we had just blown it. So I went across the street to the café where all the musicians were hanging out and started talking to Jimmy Cobb about it. I told him the whole story about how I was bummed out. He had this boombox with him that he took out, and he pressed play, and he had apparently recorded our set! When he pressed play and I heard what we were doing, it sounded really good! So he asks me, "what's the problem, man? It sounded great!" I'll always be thankful for Jimmy.

After a couple years we really got a reputation. We named it the Phil Woods Quartet and formed a little

co-op and Jill ran the business part. We all voted on how the band functioned and what we did with it. Eventually I started producing the group. We didn't have a label and we needed somebody to provide the recordings and I had been recording the band on my own and had a bunch of tapes. The first of these was the Phil Woods Quartet Live, Vol. 1. Those live tapes did really well. I went on to produce all of the records for the Quartet and Quintet, as well as produced other people's recordings as well.

The band just kept getting more and more successful and the records were doing well, and we had a really great period between 1976-2000. After that it started to go down hill a bit workwise, but we had been touring and recording for 25 years! I think we were doing it so long that everybody heard it after a point. But we kept changing the music but it's a funny business. We had a great run – I'm not complaining! Right up to the end we were one of the best bands. I have no illusions about that. We were accepted amongst the other bands and other musicians. They used to call us "the Celtics ... white guys who can play!" We had the best gigs, the best booking agents ... it was just a great experience. ☺



Photo by Garth Woods

Phil's solo with the COTA Cats

Phil Woods Talks to Steve Voce in 1996

I heard the Phil Woods Big Band play at the Wigan Festival last month. Despite the fact that the band was exhausted by a savage tour schedule it played wonderfully, with Phil, Brian Lynch and the magnificent piano player Bill Charlap outstanding.

Phil and I had the conversation that follows in Florida at one of Matt Domber's jazz weekends, this one dedicated to Flip Phillips. Phil began:

I went to New York in 1947 and studied at the Manhattan School of Music for the summer and in the fall enrolled at Juilliard. I did four years at Juilliard. I was living on 93rd Street near the Hudson River, sharing the rent with Sal Salvador and Hal Serra. Our pad was in the same building where Jimmy Raney and Tal Farlow lived. I remember John Collins, Johnny Smith, Chuck Wayne, Tal, Sal and Jimmy all jamming together late at night. I heard some incredible music. I wanted to join in so badly, but was told I wasn't ready. And I wasn't. Tal, Sal, Hal and I got on a kick of building model airplanes. We would stay up all night listening to the weekend live jazz shows on the radio, the main source of entertainment in Angelica.

We would take our flimsy ships to Central Park at first light and fly them. Sal's, which were always the most sloppily built, flew the best. It was a time when the technological beast had not yet taken over our lives. We had 78 RPM records, big bands, 52nd Street and Birdland. Giants like Bean, Prez, Pops, Bird, Bud, Fats [Navarro] and Diz walked the earth.

While I was at Juilliard I also played fourth tenor in Charlie Barnet's band for a while. The day of my final exam I was playing at the Apollo Theatre doing seven shows a day. I had to arrange to play my Mozart and my Brahms between shows. My clarinet was stolen that day, too! The reason I seemed to come up on the scene so suddenly in the 50s was because there were more bands and consequently more places to be heard. I got a lot of exposure playing at Birdland on Monday nights, which led to the Birdland All Stars tour and that drew Neat Hefti's attention to me and I joined his band.

That's where Quincy Jones heard me and recognised that I could play a little bit and he recommended me for the Dizzy Gillespie band. It all came of being at the right place at the right time. It was very much a golden age for big bands then, too. One of my first big gigs was when I took Jackie McLean's place in the George Wallington band. That was an important gig for me as far as name value was concerned.

Of course, Charlie Parker was around New York at



Photo by Bill Potts

the time and I played with him at some jam sessions. I was playing at the Nut Club in Greenwich Village, playing for strippers and wondering about my saxophone and my mouthpiece - the usual doubts a young man would have. Somebody said 'Bird's across the street jamming,' and I went to Arthur's which is still there, and Bird was playing on a baritone sax belonging to Harry Rivers, the painter. I said "Mr. Parker, perhaps you'd like to try my alto?" He said he would, so I ran back across the road and got my saxophone. When he played I realized that my horn sounded real good. There was nothing wrong with it! He said "Now you play it!" So I did my feeble imitation of him and he said 'It sounds real good, son,' So I went back across the street to work and played the heck out of Harlem Nocturne.

I first heard Gene Quill with Art Mooney's band in the late 40s and then I met him at a jam session with Teddy Charles' band. We hit it off right away. Gene asked me if I wanted to sit in and asked me what I wanted to play. Whatever suits you, I told him. 'Donna Lee fast!' he said.

We hit the line and the unison was pretty good. We

played all day and all night and then we went to the bar and from then on we were like brothers. We became the preferred sax section for a lot of the arrangers who worked in New York then, people like Quincy and Oliver Nelson, Gary McFarland, Bob Brookmeyer and Ralph Burns. The rest of the preferred section was Al Cohn, Zoot Sims and Sol Schlinger (who's here at Flip's party) or Danny Bank on baritone. We had a band that we called Phil and Quill. We never travelled. We worked the Vanguard and the Half Note and odd gigs.

The Birdland All Stars tour was 1956 and then in '57 I toured with Dizzy's big band. For the Middle East part we had Joe Gordon as first trumpet soloist. We played in Abadan, Iran; Beirut, Lebanon; and Damascus, Syria; - all of the trouble spots. I've often said they should have sent Dizzy a few more times. It might have been a much better world. When we did a tour of South America Joe Gordon left and Lee Morgan joined the band.

The Quincy Jones band was formed specifically for Europe in 1959, it never appeared in New York. It was put together to play the show "Free And Easy," Harold Aden's remake of his "St. Louis Woman" show. It was a great band with Clark Terry, Benny Bailey, Ake Persson, Budd Johnson, Porter Kilbert, Jerome Richardson, the list is long. We were a year in Europe. We opened in Amsterdam. The band was in costume on stage with the music having been memorised. It was quite an accomplishment.

The show folded in Paris after about two months. We managed to keep the big band intact with five saxes for 10 months until we went back to the States. The economic reality of the States was such that we cut down to four reeds. I think we lasted about a month. It's amazing that we managed 10 months in Europe, but we couldn't make it for more than a couple of weeks in New York City.

Quincy lost a lot of money on that trip. He did all the booking and everything. People told him he was crazy and that he couldn't keep a big band in Europe and that episode more or less forced him into the production end of the business.

One of my first big projects was "The Rights of Swing" for Candid Records in 1961. Nat Hentoff was the producer for Candid and he was given what for those days was a whole lot of money. He had a real budget to commission writing and stuff and he said 'Do me an album,' and that was the first commission I ever got. I bet the money up front to write the piece (a five part suite that ran for 40 minutes, Candid 9016). Quincy conducted and I had a good band. We used some of the guys from Quincy's tour: Benny Bailey, Julius Watkins, Sahib Shihab and Buddy Catlett along with Curtis Fuller, Willie Dennis and the drummers Osie Johnson and Granville Roker. I used the whole of my musical experience when I was writing the piece. For example there's a direct quote from the first piece I wrote, Back and Blow, which was for the first date



Photo by Bill Potts

Phil Woods featured soloist with the Bill Potts Big Band.

I ever made for a Jimmy Raney album. I used ideas from Stravinsky's 'Rites of Spring' in the final part. I'd studied that work over the years, taken it apart, analysed it and enjoyed it. So when I thought of the title for my album it was really a tip of the hat to Mr. Stravinsky. I love both sides of the coin, jazz and symphony music.

I loved it when I had the chance to play Manny Albam's "Concerto for Jazz Alto Sax" with the full orchestra. I was trained as a classical clarinetist, so I'm fairly comfortable with an orchestra and I can read pretty good, you know. Gary McFarland and Oliver Nelson used to specifically write clarinet parts into their pieces for me, because I was about the only guy in the section who didn't play flute.

In 1962 I joined Benny Goodman for his tour of Russia. He wasn't the greatest human being that I've ever met, but what a great artist! That's all we really care about, the great art. But he was tough on his musicians and nobody really understands why. He had his set ways. He wanted us to sound like his 1938 band. It was unusual for a man who did so much to revolutionize the music to be caught up in the past like that. If any of us caught the audience too much for him he'd reduce our solo space. It was very perverse; I don't think he had always been like that though, I think it was something that caught him in later years. That was the only time I ever worked for him. We'd had quite enough of each other.

When Benny died John Frosk called Jerry Dodgion and he said, "I've got some good news and some bad news. The good news is that Benny died last night. The bad news is that he died in his sleep!"

I spent a lot of time teaching between 1964 and 1967 and then in March 1968 I moved with my family to Paris. The jazz opportunities in Europe were good at that time. I formed the European Rhythm Machine almost as soon as I arrived, with George Gruntz on piano, bassist Henri Texier and drummer Daniel Humair. Later Gordon Beck took over on piano. We stayed together for four years. It was an experimental group and an innovative part of my life.

As you say, there were some periods of my life when I felt more creative than others. The ebb and flow of any evolutionary part of living is like that. You can't always be full out with the creative thing.

You have to have time sometimes to ponder just where you're at. I hadn't recorded or played any jazz for years and suddenly I was in Europe and had a band and I was playing major festivals. I was even invited to play Newport.

I had the first Varitone electric attachment and [Gordon] Beck was using electric piano and we were early into fusion. I make no bones about liking what Miles Davis did at that time. Whatever Miles did I copied. I liked his musical direction. As he would change, I would

change, too. He was the pathfinder for those things and I found him intriguing so that I experimented in my own way using his techniques.

The Varitone negates your own tone, so I tried a woodwind amp. I also got a wah wah pedal. Well, that really takes your tone away. I also used an Oberheim ring modulator. You throw a wah wah and a ring modulator on the horn, boy, and you've got some nasty stuff! I remember Leonard Feather came to hear the electronic band I put together in California in 1972. That was a more experimental band than the European Rhythm Machine had been. But I was leaning towards that in the Paris days, and when that ran out and I moved to California I was still pursuing it and exploring more of the electric gadgets. In fact we had arranged an audition with Elektra Asylum. They were trying to find a group to cover for Weather Report, which was hot. The week of our audition David Geffen took over [running] the company and all appointments were cancelled. There was a complete change of policy, so we never got the chance to be heard. I often wonder what would have happened if a big company had gotten behind that band.

Lately I've been doing a lot of writing. I like to play melody. I'm a melody man. I like to play a song and I like form and responsibility. I don't think I'll be doing too much experimentation. I'm not going to be getting into 12 tone and I don't think I'll be changing the course of Western music. I sure have fun playing the theme and variation form which I love.

I don't overvalue the polls. I've been fortunate enough to win many of them for many years now, and it has enabled me to keep a quintet going. The publicity that goes with it makes it an important adjunct. That is, until I lose! Mosaic has just come out with a 20-year retrospective covering the quartets and quintets... all the way back to the band with Harry Leahy and the first quartet with Mike Melillo, Bill Goodwin and Steve Gilmore. There's some stuff from Japan with Zoot as our guest, right up to the present with Brian Lynch and Jim McNeely. ☺



Phil speaking with Jimmy Heath.

Photo by Bob Napoli



Photo by Bob Napoli

Phil Woods and friends: Benny Carter
Photo courtesy Jim Eigo



, Phil Woods, Zoot Sims



Au Revoir, George Robert & Phil Woods

By Mary and Pat Dorian

Our last time together with George Robert was perfect. He was staying with us for a few days in August 2014, recently victorious from his first battle with leukemia. George forged his way through chemo and a bone marrow transplant with bravery and determination. He did everything 110 percent.

Grateful that George received medical clearance to travel, every minute of his short stay was a celebration. His warmth filled our house for several days in August 2014. He spent hours at our kitchen island in his PJs while Mary cooked and Pat reminisced with him about the 23-day European performance tour with the Phil Woods Big Band. It was easy to be friends with George—his charm, intelligence, sense of humor, and kindness were overwhelmingly great. He especially enjoyed imitating Peter Sellers as Inspector Clouseau with a terrible French accent from the Pink Panther movies of the 1960s and '70s.

George always credited Phil Woods as being “his man,” but make no mistake, George was one of the world’s best alto saxophonists and clarinetists. He had working quintets in which he shared the front line with iconic trumpeters Clark Terry and Tom Harrell and other notables worldwide. Phil and George called each other the nicknames of Kin Tama I (for Phil) and Kin Tama II (for George). There’s some ebullient backstory there!

George and Pat bonded as friends and colleagues in the previously mentioned unforgettable 1998 jaunt. Pat marveled at George’s lead alto and improvisation virtuosity. His playing exuded extreme *joie de vivre*. Monsieur Pascal Savelon lives near Paris and archived all eight selections from the first performance of the tour in Vienne, France. You can witness the virtuosity of Phil and George on YouTube by Googling:

YouTube 1998 - Phil Woods Big Band - Vienne (1/8)

In addition, two selections from Festival d’Antibes Juan-les-Pins with guest Johnny Griffin are viewable at: <http://bigbandsonly.blogspot.com/2013/11/phil-woods-big-band-1998.html>

Pat spent two magical sabbaticals with George in Switzerland, the first in the winter of 2002 in Berne, right after 9/11 and just after he and his physician wife, Joan had adopted a beautiful infant daughter, Shu Mei. George was in charge of the Swiss Jazz School and Pat interacted at the school and the surrounding Germanic-influenced part of Suisse. Joan and George were tour guides par excellence and remarkably caring hosts and chefs. The second was in the winter of 2009 after George became director of the Swiss Jazz School in Lausanne, located lakeside in George’s beloved French-influenced part of Suisse, a mere 90 minutes east of his native environs of Geneva. He and Joan had added a son, Matthew, a few years earlier. George was integral in sharing hundreds of

pages of Al Cohn’s music that had ended up in Europe so that Pat could transport copies back to the archives in the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection.

In December 2012, George was diagnosed with leukemia and was hospitalized for months while he recuperated from a bone marrow transplant. Pat and George Skyped regularly. George had many victories. He was able to perform at a special concert in September 2013 to acknowledge all of the people who helped him. He continued his remission into August 2014 when he visited Joan’s family in Canada and then traveled to the Poconos for a few days before attending to Lausanne Jazz School business in Manhattan with the folks at Juilliard.

On the morning of August 18, 2014, George knew very little about what we were planning that night. Mary served a frittata, his favorite pumpkin bread, and tea while he wrote emails. George’s emails were effortlessly funny, and thankfully we saved almost all of them.

In the evening there were surprise guests: Bev Getz, Rich Szabo, Tom Hamilton, Doris Cresko, Bill Goodwin, Pete Hyde, Phil Markowitz, Davia Sacks, Jim and Nancy Daniels. This night had been planned for months, especially the music part. George had stated many times over the years that his favorite big band work was Bill Holman’s arrangement of “The Dolphin” for Woody Herman and His Orchestra featuring Stan Getz, recorded live at the Concord Jazz Festival on August 15, 1981. George probably first heard the recording in his early 20s. He recorded a quartet version of it on his first LP “First Encounter” in March 1985.

Pat had asked Stan Getz’s daughter, Bev, if it would be all right to request the score from Bill Holman to have parts engraved so that George would have the arrangement to perform. She was all for it. Permission was received from Bill to acquire a scan of the score from Bill’s archive in the Smithsonian Institute. Pete Hyde then volunteered his formidable engraving and editing skills to input the score so that the score and parts could be printed as a surprise gift for George.

Pat made an emotional toast that night and presented George with his favorite arrangement. Pat and Pete were then able to share the arrangement with Bill’s archive at the Eastman School of Music followed by it being published for worldwide distribution by great friend of the ACMJC, Bob Curnow, via his Sierra Music Company. Because of George’s passion for great music, this publication is now available.

There were countless great things about our last gathering, but the simple parts are what George mentioned for months afterward. The perfect weather, the tomatoes we served from the garden, the jazz musician stories that made us all laugh—sweet George appreciated everything, especially his wonderful family, friends, and music colleagues.

That night will always be one grand memory.



Courtesy of Pat Dorian

George Robert in remission in 2014

George wrote to us on August 20, 2014:

The party was so special! You cannot imagine what it means to me, and some of your friends came from far away, and what Pat and Pete Hyde did for me with “The Dolphin” is just out of this world. And Mary’s cooking was tremendous! I really loved the chili and could have eaten the whole pot, it was SO GOOD!!!

And again on August 22:

I am now back home, and when Joan came home, I immediately showed her your package and played her the great version of “The Dolphin.” I had tears in my eyes, reminiscing of the beautiful party you organized and this precious gift of yours, which touches me so much because it is so unique. But you guys are so unique and such special people so dear to me. You made me feel right at home and I feel really blessed to have such special friends. I will start working on 2015 in the next days and try and get stuff organized. We have to hang again soon, absolutely!

You are such kind people and I really miss you guys. This trip has taught me so much about the importance of the essence of life and the value of true and very special friends like you.

Know that your Swiss bro loves you so much
—George

On June 29, 2015, George was informed that the leukemia was back, yet he continued to plan another visit to the Poconos for 2016 with performances at the Deer Head Inn and beyond. When Phil Woods died (September 29, 2015) just six months before George’s passing (March 12, 2016, at age 55), George was devastated, putting aside his own serious diagnosis. He wrote his memories of Phil to us in several emails, planning to do a more in-depth tribute for The NOTE. He never got to complete his writing, but this short tribute derived from his emails to us says it all:

October 1, 2015

Dear Mary and Pat,

What you wrote about your interaction with Phil during his final hours at the hospital brings tears to my eyes. Thank you for sharing that with me.

It’s so hard to say goodbye to a friend who has meant so much to me, and not be able to say goodbye to him is even more painful. I waited probably too long to try and call him and perhaps he would not have been able to talk on the phone.

I know I was lucky to see him last year during my brief visit with you two. He was already so diminished then.



Courtesy of Pat Dorian

George Robert and Phil Woods

Feeling I may not be able to talk to him, I sent Jill a note to read to him. Phil and I had such a close musical and personal relationship. It's very rare to find your mentor early on in your life (I was 14 and thousands of miles away from Phil back then!), and to get to know him, play with him, tour with him, record with him. This is very rare, especially if you are not born in the US. I was very lucky.

We had a very special bond, and I know that if I felt so close to his music, it was because there was a special spiritual connection there, which I cannot explain. I didn't even transcribe a single solo of Phil's, but I listened to him for hours and hours because his sound touched me so much, which is what it's all about after all. He had that SOUND, that personality. One note and you knew it was Phil. And he was especially incredible during his time in Europe (1968-1972) and throughout the '70s and '80s back in the US. I don't know if you guys have that live album by Michel Legrand called "Live At Jimmy's," with



Photo by Joan Yap-Robert

George Robert and Phil Woods

Ron Carter and Grady Tate. Phil does a version of "You Must Believe in Spring" that will just tear you apart. It's so emotional, so beautiful and so musically challenging and rich. The sign of a major, major artist.

As soon as I moved to Boston, I connected with Phil (fall 1980) and we have done so much since then. It's not just his music, his incredible sound and concept. It's his passion, his fight for the music from day one. You could hear it in every note he played. He was not an easy person, but he had a big heart, and at the end of the day, that's all that counts. I'm not that easy either (ask Joan!). But I feel very fortunate to have gotten to know Phil so well and do so many things with him. And the distance makes it even harder to say goodbye, you feel so powerless and so lonely at the same time. He is a huge figure in jazz history, he accomplished something very difficult to achieve, especially coming on the scene at the same time as Cannonball and after Bird, on the same instrument! That really took courage! And organizing an 18-festival European tour in 1998 also took a lot of courage and he did it, and Pat and I were very fortunate to be a part of this fabulous experience!

It makes me so sad that I will probably not be able to travel so soon. The side effects from the white cell infusion I got a week ago are quite strong and I am not sure I could travel feeling like this. But do keep me posted on the day and time of any celebrations, and let me know if there will be music and so on.

I will find my own way to honor his memory, trust me. I am not letting Phil leave just like this. I know he was tired and he had a great life, as you wrote. He was almost 84, incredible, considering his life was not so easy during the '50s and later. We lost a dear, dear friend, a mentor, a crusader, or as I like to say, one of the last of the Mohicans. He once told me: "I use my Québécois blood to mellow down my Irish side." That is so Phil Woods! Mellow? Yeah, right! . . .

I hope Jill is coping OK, I know she is very strong, but I am sure it's very hard for her too, when you spend so much of your life with such a man, it must leave a big void. I am happy her family is with her and nearby and all her close friends like yourselves. In these moments you really need that support.

I am sure I will have a chance to come and visit again, and perhaps then Bill (Goodwin) and I will be able to do a tribute to our main man Philippe Dubois at the DHI. That would be really something.

Even though I love to write and always did, I still feel speechless in front of this loss. What can I say? Nothing. He was so close and he did so much for the music. God bless him and may he rest in peace, after such a long fight for his health as well as for the music!

I love you both so much and I thank you so much for being my family and such special people. I can't wait for our next get together in your beautiful and peaceful home!

Stay in touch.
I love you

—George



Photo by Joan Yap-Robert

George with Phil Woods' Big Band

October 5, 2015

To Pat, my brother,
Yeah, Phil had a great run, I tell you.

You know that for me some of Phil's greatest playing was done when he left New York and arrived in Paris and put together his European Rhythm Machine with Gruntz, Daniel Humair and Henri Texier. The beginnings of that group were great, then they went into jazz/rock and I didn't dig it as much, but if you go on YouTube and check out the very first album they did, soon after Phil landed in Paris, it will blow you away! The album is called "Alive & Well in Paris."

Anyway, my brothers bought that album and it changed my life. I must have been 9 or 10. I played the LP over and over and I still admire Phil's playing so much on that album. The fire, the risk taking, the f... SOUND he had, everything.... Phil told me that Daniel Humair took him to all the good restaurant spots in Paris and showed him what good food was about.

Well, Daniel is getting old, but he is still around, and today the club owner of the Chorus Jazz Club here in Lausanne asked me if I wanted to do a special tribute to Phil with Daniel in 2016. I said: "You bet I will!"

Phil is my mentor, it just happened. But what was amazing was to meet him in Boston in November 1980, going backstage during the break with my 40 Phil Woods LP covers. He signed each and every one of them. I told him I wanted to drive to the Gap and have a lesson. He said: "Sure."

And that started everything.

Years later, I am playing the Montreux Jazz Festival on the main stage in July 1984. Earlier that spring I had bought "Down Beat" and there was an ad that the Bud Shank Jazz Workshop in Port Townsend, Wash., will feature the Phil Woods Quintet as artists in residence. I immediately booked a flight from Geneva to Seattle (I recall having a very long layover at JFK, I was 23 then). During the week Phil invited me to play with the 5tet, him on clarinet and me on alto. Bud heard me and asked me if I'd like to come back the next year to be a teaching assistant. I said "YEAH!!!"

I came back in July '85 and was assigned a morn-

ing combo, which happened to be made up of Canadian cats (Vancouver being so close to Port Townsend). One of the band members was a really good trumpet player, Dave Esler, who is actually a medical doctor but plays pretty good jazz trumpet. We became good friends and Dave invited me to stay at his place the next time I'd come up to Vancouver. So I did, two years later, to do gigs with Hugh Fraser and local cats. Dave called his friends from medical school to come and hear my gig in downtown Vancouver, and Joan was in the group, as she did med school with Dave in Edmonton. And this is how I met my future wife, Joan.

So I always told Phil that he was in many ways responsible for Joan and me meeting each other. I would have never flown to Seattle the day after playing at Montreux (I would have hung there with my trio and just having a ball on the Lake Geneva Riviera), but I just had to go and have a chance to

hang with Phil all week. I did and it again changed my life. So this is why I feel so close to my main man and why his leaving us is so hard to take, but we all knew it was coming. I had my rough times with Phil too, but it's so meaningless compared to all the great moments we shared.

Imagine that one year, some seven or eight years ago, he had to record two tracks for Michel LeGrand in Paris. He wrote to me to invite me to join him and Jill during that week in Paris, all expenses paid! I had the time of my life! We ate our asses off and Phil knew all the great spots in Paris. He could be like that too. I could really relate to him, some telepathic thing that I can't explain. Also why would his sound and musical concept make such a deep impression in me? I never transcribed a solo of Phil's, I just listened and listened. I am still in total awe of what he has done and of his playing. The next altoist in line is so far behind in my opinion. You will never hear someone of Phil's caliber on alto again. He left a huge mark in the music, I hope people realize that.

So my brother, if I make it to the Gap at some point, Bill and I need to do some tribute at the Deer Head with a killing trio.

I hope Mary and you are doing fine and all is going well in your beautiful home! Stay in touch and hope we can hang again soon, it was so special last summer!

Much love to you both,
—George

George's words speak for both of us and thousands of others around the world as we're left with incredible personal and musical memories of Phil and George. We think of them and their beautiful families all of the time.

In conclusion:

Au Revoir Monsieur DuBois! (and thank you for bringing George into our lives)
Au Revoir Monsieur Robert!

... both of you are forever in our hearts.

—Mary & Patrick Dorian
April 11, 2016 ☺

Interview with Steve Gilmore

By Dr. Matt Vashlishan

Matt Vashlishan: Good afternoon Steve, and thank you very much for taking the time to talk with me. Let's start off with how you met Phil. Can you tell me a bit about how that situation came about and how you were eventually asked to join the band?

Steve Gilmore: OK, as usual it was a little serendipitous in nature, I was playing show gigs in the Catskills and the Poconos - this is in the early 1960s. Phil was living in New Hope, Pa., and was doing a school called Ramblerny and he would come up weekends and do the show gigs. The band would augment and have a larger group for the certain acts that came in, and there was Phil playing lead alto. I knew him a little bit in a business sense. I didn't really hang with him that much but that's when I first met him. Of course, Phil was marvelous as the lead alto in the horn section - a superlative musician and reader. It was great.

I didn't really see Phil after that. I moved to Miami for four years and came back in 1971. Then a year or two later, I forget the time frame exactly, but Phil had left Europe. He had moved to Europe and spent six years there or something and came back and moved to Los Angeles. At that point he somehow met Bill Goodwin's sister Jill. They hooked up and Phil decided he wanted to come back to the New York area. So during the move they needed a place to stay, and Jill called her brother Bill who was living with Rita Goodwin at the time in Mount Bethel, Pa., and she asked him if they had a place to stay for a few weeks while they got things together, you know, and found some work and Bill said, "sure." So Bill kept wondering who this guy Phil was, you know, Jill kept talking about "Phil," and when they finally came, Bill realized it was Phil Woods!

So anyway they ended up staying at Bill's for a while, and finally they got a place of their own, and Phil was gradually starting to work in the city, and he attended a lot of jam sessions in the Pocono area. Bill, myself, and Mike Mellilo were the designated rhythm section in the area and we played all of the jam sessions and gigs in the area, and Phil would come sit in with us. He liked us, and he started to book some little gigs, and we became a band... it was pretty simple.

MV: It wasn't even a matter of him experimenting with different people? It wasn't even like he heard you or Bill and was then looking for a pianist, it's that it was the band he was playing with all the time so it was a logical solution?

SG: Yeah, it just kind of happened. Which, is usually the way it happens in most cases I find, you know. People just kind of fall in together and it works, and why fix it if it's not broken?

MV: Sure, and then if something happens you look for



Photo by Bill Potts

Steve Gilmore, Bill Goodwin, Phil Woods, Tom Harrell at the 1984 COTA Festival

somebody else.

SG: Absolutely.

MV: Which happened a bunch of times with that group.

SG: There were personnel changes but Bill and I remained the constant. But, you know, piano players decided to leave for various reasons and then Phil wanted to augment to a quintet because he wanted more of an orchestral sound so we got Tom Harrell, and that was a wonderful period. Then Tom left and started his own band, and Hal Crook took over for a couple of years, and then Brian Lynch came in.

MV: And everybody wrote for the group as well, right?

SG: Yes, as a matter of fact the whole tonality of the band actually changed with the personnel. When Tom came in the band, he used to write a large portion of the music. It was a good showcase for the writers too because they got their music played and all kinds of things tried out. So we had a lot of Tom's music, and a lot of Hal Crook's music as well as his treatments of songs which was very cutting edge and very modern. And then Jim McNeely came in the band and that changed the whole composition again. McNeely's music was very difficult to play. It was great music; very interesting and I felt like every time Jim brought in a new tune I had to go back to music school! Very difficult to play, but very wonderful music.

MV: Do you think that contributed to the longevity of the group? The fact that the music changed periodically like that in such a drastic way?

SG: You know I never actually thought about it in

those terms but you're probably right. It certainly made it more interesting, and Phil always tried to keep the stuff fresh. We'd play material for a while, and then Phil would research the American Songbook and find a lot of great songs and we would be constantly changing the music for a long period of time. As a matter of fact Phil had no qualms about finding a new piece of music (especially when we were just a quartet) and giving us copies and going to a big concert and just throwing the music in front of us and counting it off and start to play.

MV: Sure, sure.

SG: And we would just have to come up with an intro, and an ending on our own, and kind of just let the music play and develop.

MV: Right. Do you have any thoughts about what it was like traveling with those guys? Traveling with Phil for such a long time, you've been in the band the entire time so...

SG: Well one of the big issues was that Phil had a drinking problem, and it was pretty well known, so Phil could be difficult traveling with and it was something we just had to deal with. But Phil had remarkable longevity and strength and energy and he would be on a two- or three-day binge and we would make the gig but it was difficult to deal with. And then he would stop drinking and we would all be really tired and beat and we'd fly into a country and then another country the next day, and Phil would go in his room and take a nap for a couple hours and come out and literally blow us off the stage. He was that strong.

MV: He never stops.

SG: When you got it, you got it. And Phil had it, you know?

MV: Sure.

SG: But everybody on the band basically became a road rat in their own way. Bill and I and Galper pretty much became road rats. Tom Harrell was pretty difficult to travel with because he had his emotional difficulties and he would tend to disappear and sometimes disappear in the middle of the gig! Then somebody had to go find Tommy... But that aside, once he got up on the bandstand and started to play, Tom changed back into just a consummate musician. And everybody else just found their own way on the road. We all knew how to handle it and save our strength and pace ourselves – that kind of stuff.

MV: Did you learn anything musically or otherwise from Phil over the years?

SG: Well that's really hard to say... I mean of course I did. You always learn from playing with anybody who is better than yourself. It's really part of the apprentice system, working like that. Listening to Phil play every night and listening to his strength and listening to his economy sometimes – the way he



Photo by Bob Napoli

Steve with Phil on clarinet at ESU

develops his solo and the way it all makes sense, that had to rub off of me. I think I learned from everybody in the band. When you're playing, what I try to do is when someone plays a solo and they finish a phrase, whether it be Phil or Galper or whoever, I immediately try to complete their phrase. I try to pick it up and play something entirely new, and maybe it will help me to play something new and develop a song in a different way than I had done before, instead of playing the "old Steve Gilmore shit!"

MV: Now you were obviously playing with a lot of other people during this time, obviously you weren't just playing with Phil Woods for 40 years, I mean you were a sideman with a lot of people.

SG: In our hot days with Phil we probably worked 50 percent of the time. When I first started working with Phil I was also working with Thad Jones and Mel Lewis at the same time. I did that for probably close to a year and miraculously the gigs didn't interfere with one another. But I worked with tons of people. I seem to be the guy the singers would call... tons of singers. People like Tony Bennett, Mel Torme, Michel Legrand, Jimmy Witherspoon, Eddie Jefferson, all kinds of people like that. We all jumped around and did whatever we could. Some people I've only played with one night, or a week, or a weekend but the list at this point is pretty extensive. I actually had someone call me once and they said, "we wanted to call you before, but we thought you only worked with Phil Woods!" I laughed at them and said "you've got to be kidding me!"

MV: I was just going to ask if you thought working with Phil helped your career in any way but in this case it sounds like it hurt it!

SG: It's really great to be out there and I think the credit of working with Phil was more of a positive nature than the other thing I just mentioned, that people think you're always busy or that you don't want to work with anybody else... that does happen sometimes, it's really weird.

MV: Do you have a particular time period or configuration of the band musically maybe that you preferred? I don't know if that's a weird thing to ask, but...

SG: I wouldn't be presumptuous to say something like that, you know... the only thing I can say is that they were all good in their own way. I think that when Galper joined the band in the early 80s the band was really hot for a while. It was just a quartet, and Galper brought a really interesting way of playing and comping to the band than what we had before. It was more of an orchestral way of comping.

MV: This had more to do with the individuals playing with each other not necessarily the music you were playing. It was more the vibe of the group.

SG: And when Tom Harrell came in the band his music was very special and that was wonderful. I never counted them but we probably had 20-25 tunes of Tommy's that we played on a regular basis. We all got to know the music so well, including Phil and Tommy, that we got rid of the music after a while. It's hard to believe but Tommy and Phil played all those complex arrangements a lot of the time without music – they just memorized it. Sometimes Phil wouldn't even count off the tune. He would just say “blabla – tune” and then give us a downbeat! We'd come in at the exactly right tempo with the exact arrangement. That band was really, really tight back then.

I remember early on in the band's life we had a guitarist named Harry Leahey for about a year. The band was tight then too. We did a couple of direct to disk albums, where you go to the studio and you do an entire side without stopping. You can't stop because then they would have to pick up the needle and start again. So we did a couple of those and we were perfect. We knew the music so well and we were so rehearsed from playing all those gigs that we went straight through both records both sides and never even stopped. It was perfect.

MV: Wow that's pretty amazing.

SG: And you know, when McNeely came on the band his music was so complex and nobody ever really memorized that stuff. So we became music people, we had all this music to take on the road with us. My book was really heavy carrying it around, and I actually keep all the music that Phil ever played, at least the lead sheets. I've got a huge pile of it at home and every once in a while I'll bring it out and go through it. There's stuff I don't even remember every time, just hundreds of tunes on the American song form. Phil was always very dedicated to that, he never compromised, except for maybe a couple of times he did that thing with Billy Joel and the other thing with Steely Dan. But other than that, Phil stuck to his guns and did not compromise.

MV: I think that's important to mention. It's such a large part of what defined him as a person and musician. You find so many people doing whatever here and there just because but he felt so strongly about the tradition and how he wanted it to be

presented.

SG: Well he didn't want to do any of that other stuff. He had no desire to and he was principled in that way. He was a very principled person. Not always accurate but very principled.

MV: Yeah.

SG: The last three or four years he actually refused to work in the New York clubs anymore. The reason was because the clubs refused to pay into the musician's pension fund. The gigs paid a lot of money and they were good gigs, but Phil said he would not do it anymore until they reached an agreement with the union. And Phil was the only one who actually refused to play. Everybody else complained about it but they still played!

MV: Of course...

SG: Even some of the people actually picketed outside of the Blue Note, but they still played the clubs. Phil said, “The hell with them, I'm going to stand firm.” You know.

MV: Right.

SG: You know there are a couple of things that need to be mentioned as far as the Phil Woods Organization. The importance of Phil's wife, Jill, cannot be overstated. Phil was basically a musician. He didn't handle business very well, to be honest. But Jill was always there and she handled all the business, she handled all the organization and paperwork, and for a long time she traveled with the band and took care of everything. So all Phil had to do was get there and play. Even when Jill stopped traveling with the band she still organized everything. She just handed Phil the tickets and the schedule and Phil had to do nothing but go play. So really this band would not have existed without Jill, she was just so unbelievably important to us.

MV: And even if Phil could have handled it, it probably would have affected the music on some level I would imagine, having to do all that as well.

SG: Oh, yeah. Absolutely, and also it's interesting that all the record production stuff Bill Goodwin took care of. All the records we made were all Bill Goodwin projects. Phil didn't do that stuff either.

MV: Did he have any input on mixing or anything like that or was it all just Bill doing the production?

SG: I think pretty much Bill and the engineer at hand did all of that stuff.

MV: So once again Phil just went in and played and that was it.

SG: Yes, Phil is a great artist and a great saxophone player but didn't know all that much about studio stuff.



Photo by Peter Kiefer

Phil, Steve, and Tom Harrell at the 1985 COTA Festival

He knew “Phil stuff,” how to be Phil!

And last of all, and maybe least of all, my contribution to the band... we did a lot of traveling and spent a lot of time on the road and put on a lot of miles, and I was always the driver, because that’s the thing that I did good! So we would get in the car and do a whole tour to Kansas City and I would be driving. That’s my contribution!

MV: Man, you and Tony Marino are the drivers! He drives everywhere for the Liebman band. It must be a bass playing thing!

SG: It must be! Well you know maybe Tony has the same thing going that I do because we’re both great drivers and we don’t trust anybody else handling our lives other than ourselves! I don’t know... [laughs]

MV: You know there’s one thing I wanted to ask you about. I’m not sure what you can say about this, but you being a bass player/rhythm section player and all, but I was always curious... When I listen to Phil, in addition to the sound of course, the one thing that always stands out to me is his sense of rhythm and time feel.

SG: Yeah.

MV: I was curious if you had any thoughts or observations about this. Phil could pretty much pull a band along by himself, no matter who the band was. But, what about hooking up with him rhythmically? Was that a treat or unique for you?

SG: Well it was great. I’m going to go back to a phrase that Red Mitchell coined many years ago. He said, “Phil is a drummer.” Which means his time is so compelling and wonderful and it pulls you along... he’s so strong that you have to play that time. And it’s great

time.

MV: And this is not a “right or wrong” thing, it’s the essence... the whole vibe of it is what is so captivating. It’s very unique and it’s not something you always hear.

SG: Phil’s playing is, you know, I’m not saying he doesn’t listen to the band because he does. But he’s one of those guys that takes the bit and runs like a crazy horse full steam with it. And you go along with Phil because that’s just the way it is. And that’s a good way!

MV: And I would guess that that influenced your playing in other situations too...

SG: Oh sure. I think that any kind of a real strong soloist is able to draw everybody else in the band right along with them.

MV: I really appreciate all of your stories and information, is there anything else you would like to add about Phil or the band?

SG: Well, let’s face it, for 40 years Phil and all the guys in the band were part of my life... were my life in a lot of ways apart from my family. It was just a joy, and there was a period in my life where I took it for granted and thought it would go on forever. I never really had a sense that the music business was changing, and I didn’t do some of the things that I probably should have done to complete my jazz education or my education as a person. I just stuck with Phil and thought it would always be there. And things change, you know? The European economy changed, where we used to do most of our lucrative work, and the scene in America changed too. The gigs have kind of disappeared, or half of them did anyway.

MV: Well, when you’re playing so often it’s hard to look ahead and much easier to go a day at a time. One gig, then the next gig comes up, and the next one, and why would you necessarily look ahead?

SG: We were always winning the best jazz group awards and Phil was winning the alto sax awards and we didn’t think about it because the gigs just kept coming. Our business sense didn’t go with the times, let’s put it that way. I don’t think I could have or would have compromised musically but I’m grateful that I was a part of it. ☺

Brian Lynch

It's with sadness, but also joy and happiness as I reflect, that I write these few words about my now departed boss, mentor, and friend Phil Woods.

Phil is still very much present for me. I don't think a single day goes by without my thinking about something he said or did. His musicality, and how he shared it with us of the Quintet on the bandstand and in the recording studio, is a constant source of inspiration as I move through my days as a performer, music writer, and teacher. Phil was so damn good at music! Even being able to (sort of) keep up with him on the front line of the Quintet was, and is, a considerable source of pride. He was a central point of reference for me for almost a quarter century, and remains a lodestar for what I aspire to in music. He gave me such firm, loyal support over the time of my knowing and working with him, always backing my play and being a nurturing presence while understanding the vicissitudes of the sideman's path.

I miss him very, very much. I miss his humor and his humanity.

It was fun to travel with him; to sit in a tour bus or a van on the way to a gig in Iowa or Italy; he was a great road buddy. Erudite and well informed about the world around him, he was also interested in your point of view, what you were reading and listening to. I loved hanging out with him in his house, listening to sides or hearing him play piano downstairs, and checking out a new score on the computer upstairs in his work room, where the placard "Loners Unite" presided and spoke volumes of the solitude necessary for him, and us, to practice, compose, and prepare to be among the multitudes.

It's hard to know that I will never hear that jaunty, gritty, full of spirit voice on the phone line or face to face, hitting me with the salutation "Front Line," his favorite term of address for his faithful lieutenant, yours truly. I'm glad that I was able let him know how much I loved him before he moved on and up. Thank you, Phil, for all you gave to me, and to all of us lucky enough to be touched by your genius, achievement, and deep feeling.

Phil's Scale Exercise

The last time I played together with Phil Woods was in March 2015 when he came out to my home town of Milwaukee to be the guest artist along with myself at the first educational jazz festival of the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music (WCM), where we played with an



Phil and Brian during his November 2005 recording session for the record "Simpatico"

Photo by Nick Ruechel

excellent faculty jazz sextet (WCM is a community music school with a great high school program where I'm the Artist in Residence; it's also the place where I went to school back in the 1970s, when as a college conservatory they boasted a pioneering degree program in jazz performance). Phil's appearance and performance at the concert was a moving experience for my friends of the faculty group, the audience, and myself, though I little knew that this would be the last time on the bandstand with him.

A clinic for the students attending the festival was also part of the activities of the weekend. Now, as anyone who's ever attended a Phil Woods clinic can tell you, this was an unpredictable, uproarious, and inspirational "against the grain" experience for both students and audience alike. The picked student group ready to strut their stuff for the maestro never made it past the musical entrance exam that Phil required they pass before being deemed ready to display their wares; their running aground on the shoals of Phil's "old school" rigor occasioned a Woods jeremiad about the state of so-called jazz education that was simultaneously thought-provoking and entertaining.

Phil challenged the young musicians to reproduce a certain scale exercise on their instruments that I had never quite heard before. I found it a quite useful one for my own students to use as well as finding it enjoyable to practice myself, which I do in some form almost every day. I'd like to share with you this gift from Mr. Woods, a memento of our last time together and one of the myriad ways he remains fully present in my life and music. ☺

PHIL WOODS'S DIATONIC MODE EXERCISE

also in melodic and harmonic minor, modes of melodic minor, and any other 7 note scale

REST IN POWER



v.s.

etc. all keys

Personal Tributes to Phil

Editor's Note: The following are several tributes to Phil, either written specifically for this issue or compiled from writings published prior to this issue. While I thank everyone for their support of contributing to this issue as well as their deep respect for Phil, I also must apologize to everyone that I could not ask to contribute for the sake of space. Special thanks to Pat Dorian for his enthusiasm, knowledge, and rolodex that helped put this together!

Mark Kirk

Walking back to the car, from a late night gig in Manhattan, we spotted a movie star speaking with some folks on the street. Phil, in his unique dulcet tone, announced to all: "Hey, there's 'So-and-So.' Wonder if he knows who I am?" Oh Phil, if you only were aware how many knew and still miss you. You gave us all so much: unmatched musicality, dedication to the arts and learning, and your continued refusal to give nothing but your best and to instill those same qualities in all of us – your friends and students! Some 'critics' say your music was too perfect. Maybe they were correct, if perfection equals giving nothing but your best at all times, in all genres, and to the entire world. Phil, you raised and set the standard for all of us!

We logged a lot of miles together and burned a lot of late-night candles playing, writing, and pontificating. Our conclusions were always the same – we need more candles! As you wrote to me Phil, I now write to you: "Phil, a tried + true dear friend!"

Luv ya too my unforgettable forever friend.

George Young

As far as my relationship with Phil goes, it was a very respectful, creative and at times, professional one. He always had those quick and quirky one-liners when we would be together, either on a gig or socially. He was always very strict but extremely encouraging to the younger Cats and Kittens about the MUSIC, be it Jazz or any of the other genres. I can say, and I'm sure hundreds of thousands will agree with me, that Phil was definitely a "TRUE SENSEI of MUSIC."

I remember one time when we were together on a gig for Teo Macero at CBS. Teo had hired Phil, Al Cohn, Zoot, Stan Getz, Gerry Mulligan, Don Palmer and myself on saxophones. Teo had written a series of compositions that featured all of us with a rhythm section consisting of Bernie Leighton, Joe Beck, Russell George and Grady Tate. At one point, in the latter part of one of Teo's compositions, the time became very confusing as the music got over the

top with Teo's excitement as he was conducting. It was Phil however, who was the one to save the day by bringing us all together and back in again out of the confusion, as we prepared for the last ensemble to take place with the out chorus to the piece. Whew! Experiences such as these, one never forgets! Needless to say, Phil was a giant and his legacy will always live on!

Bob Dorough

Phil was a great friend & neighbor (we lived seven miles apart). We'd occasionally lunch together and get together for music and laughs.

The best times were after he declared that I ought to have a songbook, and he proceeded to digitize 16 of my songs and lay them out, printer-ready. The work/edit sessions were magical — me, over his shoulder. When I look at or think of that little folio, my heart goes out in pure thankfulness for his generosity.

Dave Seiler

About Phil, Clark Terry, and George Robert

Phil Woods and Clark Terry performed at the Clark Terry/University of New Hampshire Jazz Festival in the 1990s.

On the day of the only rehearsal, I met Phil in the lobby of the motel and he had a bunch of his own arrangements under his arm and he asked, "Can the UNH band read?" At the rehearsal Clark had not seen Phil's challenging arrangements. While working through one of them, Phil turned to Clark and said, "Do you want a piece of this?" meaning, "Do you want to take a solo on it at tomorrow's concert?" Clark answered in the affirmative, "Uh huh." Even Clark Terry knew when to go back to his hotel room, put a mute in, and practice chord changes.

Needless to say, the concert was unforgettably superb.

Phil spent a lot of time speaking openly to the students. In addition to some really shocking statements, one of the most profound was, "When Europeans visit America, they see the Statue of Liberty and then they want to know where the statue of Charlie Parker is."

Being a saxophonist myself, he was one of my heroes. Becoming a part of the New England jazz scene starting in 1972, I felt a connection when I found out that Phil grew up in Massachusetts and we both grew up playing polkas on the clarinet.

George Robert was one of the most wonderful and genuine people I ever met. Because I am a Swiss descendant, he referred to me as his Swiss brother. He had so many of the attributes of the Swiss people who, of course, have never fought a war. When George and Clark played here at Clark's festival, it was a very special concert.

It has been rough losing Phil, Clark, and George within 13 months of each other.

Johnny Mandel

If it were not for the fact that there were 3,000 miles between us, Phil Woods and I seemed to always be in sync. I felt that we were like brothers. The times that we actually worked together were far too few and I wish that we'd been able to hang. Every time I read his "Phil in the Gap" writings in *The NOTE*, I felt like we were hanging out, at least for a little while . . . and I didn't even mind my fictitious luggage being late.

Dan Morgenstern

On Phil and George Robert

I was saddened to learn of the death on March 14 of the Swiss alto saxophonist and educator George Robert. He had been suffering from leukemia for some time. Perhaps best known in the U.S. for his friendship and association with Phil Woods, whose art inspired him to take up the alto at 18, having started on piano at 9, then to clarinet. He graduated magna cum laude from Berklee in 1984 and got his master's degree from Manhattan School of Music three years later. He played with, among others, Toshiko Akiyoshi and Lionel Hampton, led his own quartet, and co-led a quintet with Tom Harrell for several years. A new group, with pianist Dado Moroni, toured with Clark Terry for his 70th birthday year in Europe and the U.S. In 1995, he was appointed head of Jazzschule Bern, Europe's oldest jazz school, and nine years later founded a jazz school in Lausanne. Leukemia struck four years ago, but Robert fought valiantly, recording a duet album with Kenny Barron, and a quartet CD hopefully titled "New Life." He was 55, born in Geneva Sept. 15, 1960.

On a personal note, I met George when he asked if I'd do notes for his debut album, *First Encounter*, and after listening was happy to oblige. We became friends and I wound up doing a few more. He was as special as his music.

On Phil

I first met Phil ages ago at the legendary Charlie's Tavern. Over the years, I never heard him give less than his all on his horn or say a word he didn't mean. It was an honor to be named an NEA Jazz Master in the same year as Phil and a special delight to observe the growing musical and personal bond between him and Benny Carter. There'll never be another ...

Jordi Suñol

On George Robert

I met George many years ago, when he and Tom Harrell co-led a quintet. He was one of the most sincere, dedicated and honest persons I've met in my career. He shared my devotion for both Phil Woods and Kenny Barron, two of the greatest musicians I've had the honor to represent. I'll miss him.

Phil Woods • In Memoriam

So many . . .

So many years of true friendship, respect and trust ...

So many "Happy Birthday muttafukka" (his on November 2, mine on November 10) ...

So many projects together: The Sax Machine (with Gary Bartz, Charles McPherson and Jesse Davis), the "Celebration! Big Band," "Bird with Strings ... and More," "Our Man Benny" (Carter) with the Barcelona Jazz Orchestra, and endless quartet and quintet gigs ...

So many great meals together ... (no wine, please) ...

So many common friends and partners who are no longer with us: Benny Carter (who introduced us!), Ray Brown, Hank Jones, NHØP, Cedar Walton, Johnny Griffin, Dizzy Gillespie, Clark Terry ...

So many great conversations (politics, poetry, and music, music, music ...)

So many great moments to remember and so many reasons NOT to forget.

Goodbye, my man Phil.

Johnny Coates

Phil Woods is one of the finest jazz musicians I've ever worked with. It was with him that I got to play with Frank Wess, Bill Goodwin, and many others. Phil and I recorded two CDs:

"Giants at Play" (Pacific Street Records – PSR 0022) recorded in the living room of Phil Woods on May 24, 2001;

"Giants at Work" (Pacific Street Records – PSR 0032) recorded at the Deer Head Inn on December 30, 2005.

Bill Mays

Here are three great stories about Phil that I included in my book: "Stories of the Road, the Studios, Sidemen & Singers: 55 years in the music biz."

The Phil Woods quintet was booked for a Japan tour in March 2011. It was a big tour, both for the quintet and for the Japanese audience, who hadn't seen Phil perform live in Japan for several years. We were to play the Blue Note, the Cotton Club, and Motion Blue. Then the earthquake, tsunami, and Fukushima nuclear plant disaster happened. After watching all the news and studying the radiation reports, we made an educated guess that we would be safe and decided to go. We were treated as national heroes. The audiences were so grateful – sometimes even in tears – that we had come to play for them.

We returned to Japan the following year. Phil was suffering with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and had his oxygen tank with him. He had played his ass off this particular night but backstage in the green room he was hurting. The band gathered round, told him how great he had been sounding and asked, "How're you doing, Phil?" In a wheel chair, all hunched over, oxygen tubes up his nose, white as a sheet, he looked up and growled, "Goddamn it, I can't smoke shit anymore, I can't do blow, I can't drink . . . (long pause) . . . at least I've still got my health!"

The band hit the deck!

The Phil Woods quintet was booked at a festival in Uruguay. It was held in, of all places, the middle of a cow pasture! The promoter, a jazz-loving rancher, held an an-

nual event on his acreage, out in the middle of nowhere.

The stage and audience seats were in the midst of a big grazing field, and the musicians' green room was an old converted bunkhouse. During Phil's performance, seated at a gorgeous Steinway grand, I looked up during a tune and there was a huge heifer, simultaneously chewing her cud and taking a leak, looking right at me and seeming to dig every note of "All Bird's Children." Apparently we were swinging 'til the cows came home!

In the years before I became a full-time member of the Phil Woods quintet I submitted some of my tunes for his consideration. I was very pleased when I learned he had recorded my song, "My Azure," and that he had played clarinet on it. Phil was a clarinet major at Juilliard, and I always admired his unique sound on that instrument. A few years after that recording I gave him another chart, this time on Billy Strayhorn's "Satin Doll." Most musicians will agree that while it's not a bad tune, it's been done to death and has negative club date connotations associated with it. So I decided to do something really different with it. While keeping true to the melody, I radically altered it harmonically and gave it an exotic feel in 5/4 time. When I asked Phil how it had gone at the recording session he disappointedly said that the producer just couldn't "wrap his head around it" and had passed on the arrangement.

"Yeah," said Phil, "He had absolutely perfect ears: no holes in them!"

Jamey Aebersold

Phil Woods was an inspiration to me from the first time I heard him on records with the Birdland All-Stars. He stayed at my house one night after he played for the Louisville Jazz Society. To his dying breath he swore I put him up in a barn. It really was my basement!

One of Phil's licks on that early record made me want to begin transcribing solos in order to find out what all these jazzers were playing.

Long live Phil's marvelous music and humorous stories.

Dave Liebman

Phil passed like he lived. Completely on his own terms. In the hospital on the verge of pulling the plug so to say, we spoke about Cleanhead Vinson, Johnny Hodges, etc., with his usual special brand of jazz humor right 'til the end, lucid and clear as a bell. He explained in short his decision to pass on and all I could say to him was "I love you bro. You did your job!"

I can tell you a few things about Phil:

- When you played next to him you couldn't hear yourself ... his sound was so big. That's what comes with years of playing and insisting on an acoustic setting when possible.
- His solo on Billy Joel's hit tune is probably the most famous "jazz" tinged solo in pop-music history, proving that bebop can prevail anywhere, anytime.
- When you say, "lead alto" in a big band setting, there is only one; he set the mold with his sound and

phrasing.

• He, along with Cannonball and a few others, took Bird to a logical extension, paving the way for Trane to go further. He even married Bird's old lady!

• His sense of humor and prose writing abilities were special, always with great insight and a healthy dose of sarcasm pertaining to the state of the world and life in general, peppered with keen insights into the people he dealt with. Basically, Phil couldn't and wouldn't abide by any bullshit ... calling it like it was.

• Along with a few other local heroes, Phil made our community a jazz stop, started an ongoing jazz festival, a summer camp, and involvement with local high schools.

• Phil was the epitome of a jazz warrior; ON THE ROAD all over the planet bringing beauty and truth everywhere he could.

• The masetro could play clarinet, good piano, and write for any combination.

• His summer workshop (Ramblerny) in the early '60s near New Hope, Pa., was a forerunner of what I, for one, do every summer.

Here's a great quote from Phil that lays it right out there when I interviewed him for a magazine about jazz education: "It's better for a kid to have a saxophone in his hands than a gun!"

PHIL DID HIS JOB ... he brought light, sanity and wisdom to us all. R.I.P.!

Erica Golaszewski

I was very lucky not only to grow up in the community of jazz musicians in Delaware Water Gap but to get to directly work with both Rick Chamberlain and Phil Woods for many years. I can remember going to the Deer Head as a young student and marveling over Phil's playing as he performed with his quintet, to me he was the definition of bebop and the highest level of jazz there was. He was the most unique sounding player I had ever heard, and though I didn't start working for him until many years later I would learn that his personality both on and off stage was just as unique. Over the years I got to take part in many of the projects Phil started, which mostly involved taping endless pieces of music, answering dozens of emails a day and being "Girl Friday" for whatever was needed. Today I am so happy and proud to continue running, with Matt Vashlishan at the helm, the big band that Phil started. It is an honor to work with all the musicians who loved and respected Phil so much and continually strive to keep Phil's vision of jazz in the Delaware Water Gap alive.

One of the very last interactions between Phil and me when he was in the hospital has come back and resonated with me for many months now. When I went into his room he had a CD player on and coming through the speakers was one of the albums he made with his quintet many years ago. I asked him, "Phil, why did you choose to listen to this album right now?" and his response: "There is only one Phil Woods, baby."

Well, he was right there will never be another Phil Woods and I am so lucky to have known the only one. ☺

ESSA Bank and Trust & The Deer Head Inn Present
A Gala Concert to Benefit COTA

A Tribute to Phil Woods

Music performed by The Phil Woods™ Quintet,
The Phil Woods™ Big Band, Bill Charlap, Grace Kelly
and other Special Guests!

*"It is an understatement to say Phil Woods was
one of the greatest jazz alto-saxophone players
to ever set foot on this planet..." -Quincy Jones*

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Readers, please take **NOTE**



• New Edition •

formerly
"Greatest Hits of the Blog
That Ate Brooklyn: Inside
the Mind of a Musician"

PBS Presentations

Northeastern Pennsylvania regional affiliate **WVIA-TV** (44) in Avoca, Pa., recently broadcasted two video segments skillfully produced by Kristin Doran. They are part of the "Stay Tuned" series about interesting regional stories:

- **"COTA and the Cats"** (10 min.), a succinct history of the Celebration of the Arts (COTA) Jazz & Arts Festival, the COTA Cats student jazz ensemble founded by Phil Woods in 1981, and the Deer Head Inn.

Ms. Doran's respectful interviews of Bill Goodwin, Denny Carrig, Sue "Su" Terry, and me are presented.

A snippet of Bob Dorough singing "Three Is a Magic Number" is included, along with other worthy performances.

View at: wvia.org/blogs/stay-tuned/cota-and-the-cats/

- **"Salute to Phil Woods"** (9 min.), reverently presented by long-time WVIA television and radio personality George Graham. Produced in the months immediately following Phil's death, it cogently presents both his global and local accomplishments, career highlights, recordings, and collaborations. It may be viewed here:

wvia.org/blogs/stay-tuned/salute-to-phil-woods/

Big Band Night at the Deer Head Inn!

Join the COTA Festival Orchestra under the direction of Matt Vashlishan the last Monday of every month at the Deer Head Inn for a great evening of big band jazz. Each month the ensemble performs original and arranged music from throughout jazz history as well as modern compositions. 7:30-10:30 p.m. - \$10

For more information please visit www.deerheadinn.com

Zoot Fest 2016

November 13, 2016 from 4-8 p.m. Zoot Fest is a major annual fundraising event to benefit the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection and its important outreach initiatives. This year Zoot Fest will be held at the Deer Head Inn and the Cecilia Cohen Recital Hall at East Stroudsburg University. Visit www.esu.edu/jazzatesu for more information.

ACMJC Jazz Lounge in Kemp Library

I am pleased to announce the opening of the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection Jazz Lounge on the first floor of Kemp Library. Scheduled for opening in Fall 2016, the Jazz Lounge will be home to artwork and artifacts from the collection, combined with a comfortable atmosphere for students to work. The Lounge will be a location for frequent seminars, lectures, listening sessions, and more! Additional information and schedules will be available on www.esu.edu/jazzatesu

Contributors & Acknowledgements

For additional information about contributors to this issue of **The NOTE**, you can visit their websites:

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Manchester Craftsmen's Guild: www.mcgjazz.org

Special thanks to:

Marcia Welsh, Ph.D., and **Brenda Friday, Ph.D.**, for showing their support for the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection and giving me the opportunity to continue to bring you this publication; **COTA**, **Jill Goodwin**, and **Garth Woods** for their help with photographs; **Charles de Bourbon** for the graphic design; all of the contributors offering their wonderful stories during such an emotional time; the **ESU Kemp Library** staff and **ESU Foundation** for their continued support in making this publication possible.



LEGENDS LIVE ON

But not without your support

Representing all forms of jazz from all eras, the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection was founded and named in honor of the award-winning Al Cohn — legendary saxophonist, arranger, composer and conductor.

Housed in Kemp Library on the campus of East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania, the collection consists of jazz recordings, oral histories, sheet music, photographs, books, videos, original art and memorabilia. The collection also includes outreach projects.

YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT of the collection is crucial in helping to promote music education and preserving the iconic jazz history of the Pocono region.

Please make your gift by mail using the enclosed envelope or online at www.esufoundation.org/supportalcohn. Be sure to designate your gift to the ACMJC. For personal assistance, call (570) 422-3333.

From the ACMJC photo archive:
Phil performing at the honorary doctorate
ceremony at ESU in 1994.

