

IN SEARCH OF MUSICAL AESTHETICS

A pianist's life in jazz

by

Walter Norris

Sunburst Recordings, Inc.

Sunhazed Publishing

All rights are reserved by the author.

Any copy or reproduction of the contents, without written permission by the author, will be in violation of the author's rights.

**Walter Norris Berlin, Germany copyright © January 1, 2005
www.walter-norris.de**

PREFACE

This book portrays the life of a pianist and his twin brother sketched in the world of jazz and although separated soon after birth each developed musically as well as philosophically as they began their adventure with piano improvisation in nineteen hundred and forty.

I'll refer to music categorically, when necessary, but my intention always is to sustain the abstraction that jazz evolved, melodically and harmonically from church hymns, late baroque and the classical periods plus African and Latin American folk music. I believe music is the original language of mankind and it probably sounded similar to the recorded singing of whales and dolphins.

People expressed their desires and needs in lowered or raised tonal pitch and communicated, visually, by drawing pictures in sand or earth to express their needs.

Music in Pagan times was emotional with slight inflections in timbre and bending of pitch; today this emotional expression is still found in all Mediterranean music. A cerebral perspective in music, ensuing from fugue and contrapuntal writing in an epoch corresponding with the Renaissance three-dimensional painting, reached a highly intellectualized peak with J.S. Bach and well-tempered tuning. Twentieth century jazz is a combination of emotional and intellectual music in addition to the rhythmical flexibility of African 12/8 triplet-feeling within 4/4 meter.

Historically, music has a long evolutionary development especially when considering that fragments of the Pentatonic Scale are found in African, Irish and twentieth century American songs. Although ancient, this scale is the backbone of Asian music even today.

Music is an aesthetic combination of vibrations, contemplation in pure physics and it is truly phenomenal. Only the extremely talented contribute and reshape music; others play because it's pleasurable. You can give young brilliant minds the finest musical instruction but they may never learn or have the nerves for working enough to develop and survive as artists.

Beginning with the first generation that brought my twin brother and me into existence, our mother Mary Metcalf was the third of eight children from Ella Craig and Walter Metcalf, banker of Evening Shade, located in the Ozark mountain range of north central Arkansas. My father Lucian Norris, was youngest of fifteen children of Thomas Norris, farmer in Poughkeepsie only ten miles easterly on Evening Shade Road.

Mother, while attending Arkansas College received only two years of piano instruction but she practiced incessantly. Each morning around six o' clock she waited at the school entrance for the custodian to unlock the doors. This allowed two hours practice before classes began and at the end of each day she stayed to practice in the evening. A large, vital woman who lived to work and accomplish whatever objectives she felt were necessary. She continued playing for an hour or so every morning until she died instantly of coronary thrombosis (her fourth attack) at age sixty-nine.

By the early twenties father had moved to Evening Shade for employment as a schoolteacher. After he and mother married they soon established residence in Little Rock where he became an accountant for Federal Reserve Bank; he remained there for thirty-five years. On retirement he continued his daily game of golf, religiously, until the year before his death at age eighty-four.

Their thinking was pre-Freudian and they assumed responsibility for all of their actions. They were compassionate as well as conservative and of course, I remember them with admiration. Mother played piano with total abandonment; she was born with excellent intonation and reflexes; inhibition never entered her mind. These assets plus hard work is why she advanced so rapidly but after marriage there was little time for developing repertoire. Nonetheless, she enjoyed playing the same pieces throughout her lifetime. Father was well tempered, tranquil, at peace with himself and all mankind.

CHAPTER ONE

My first conscious memory, at two and a half, remains clear even today as I enter the twilight chapter of life. I remember sitting on the floor in a hypnotic trance, looking up at mother and the piano as she accompanied father's singing. My mind, in a state of uninterrupted innocence, glowed brightly as musical sound lulled this first awareness of being alive.

There were other indelible memories beginning at this time, such as inserting a metal fingernail file into the wall's electrical socket; producing sparks and a mild electrical shock.

Then, another afternoon my curiosity was aroused when a scorpion, running across the floor, turned and attacked undeviatingly into my bare foot. Such learning experiences awaken the mind...and these profound impressions are deeply imbedded in the subconscious.

One day after a light rain shower, with brightest sunlight illuminating mother's flower garden, I ran into the back-yard and began twirling the metal clothes line like a jump rope, neatly clipping and flinging flowers high into the air. Drops of rain flew from shattered blooms creating a most colorful display of Mother Nature's radiant perfection. Observing this spectacle from the kitchen window, mother's wrath was aroused to the point of near insanity and I promptly became paralyzed with shocked surprise as the hedge limb, stripped of leaves, which she referred to as a switch, covered tender legs with red stripes. Inside my mind, ecstasy was suddenly shifted to a state of horror. Oh, how well I remember her switch but fortunately, I've never forgotten that beauty of wet flowers flying through rays of sunshine.

Another moment of spectacular beauty was on a drive when father halted the Ford so I could look, in awe, at an autumn sunset.

Such impressions on an only child, living in a neighborhood with no other children even near my age, helped create preciousness and a feeling that this world exists only for and around me.

Years later I would learn of a twin brother, raised by my aunt, in nearby Hot Springs, some sixty miles west of Little Rock. I've often wondered if my parents thought that twins raised together would eventually develop a strong bond and perhaps become more difficult to manage. I have no idea since it was never discussed; but do allow me to continue with these impressions that shaped my perspective and somehow, due to my surroundings, induced me to search for sensual pleasure...but only for the sake of making music.

During recess on my first day in kindergarten, all of the children ran outdoors onto the playground and around the side of the building like flock of geese; one charming little girl, a born exhibitionist, raised her dress and lowered her lovely protective covering. Everyone laughed except me; I looked with astonishment, "Oh, how beautiful she is." Little did I know that coitus would soon follow a few months later.

Those were innocent times, in the mid thirties, and are so contrasted in comparison with this first decade of our new millennium. I was allowed to walk alone eight blocks over to Main Street and take the streetcar for a distance of nearly five miles each day; returning home from that educational garden for the pre schooled. Taking the streetcar, looking out the window with curiosity and observing the scenery as it continuously changed helped me develop my taste for adventure as I traveled over tracks of rail to the sound of a trolley's clanging bell. Oh, how this little man in short pants proudly returned, all on his own, to mom and a warm lunch waiting on the kitchen table. These stories of early childhood connect with many events that thread throughout my adult life.

Late one evening, in a rebellious mood and jumping high on my bed when I should have already fallen asleep, mother decided to arrange a dramatic event that would be an everlasting lesson for me. She engaged the teenager next door and a couple of his friends to dress in Halloween costumes for this theatrical learning experience. They quietly approached the screened window of my room as I jumped from bed high into the air, rebelling mother's order to go to sleep. The sinister voice of our masked red devil neighbor, "I'm going to get you." I could not manage a scream; my voice failed completely; I was so shocked I couldn't utter a sound. Fear

was stamped forever in my subconscious. I leaped off my bed and ran into the adjoining room where mother sat calmly brushing her hair in front of dressing table. After a moment of silence I somehow regained my voice, struggling as if in a dream to do so, and screamed for her to come quickly, "The devil is outside my window." But she remained seated, unperturbed, as I scampered back to double-check and sure enough the devil in red was still there. Running back again to mother, I screamed for her to save me; and with reluctance she took my hand, walked me to the window but by this time Satan had left; right on cue. I never jumped on a bed after that evening. Fear was so deeply ingrained, works wonders and permanently.

Months later as the weather warmed, my bed was moved onto a large screened porch at the rear of the house. I was completely alone and although the night air was invigorating, I had difficulties falling asleep. But just before sunrise I would suddenly awaken because I could easily hear lions roaring at the city zoo located only three or so miles away. In pre dawn darkness, I associated the sound of my heartbeat with the padded footsteps of an escaped lion approaching. Fear could be triggered into imagined reality; a pounding heart, a predator stalking prey.

An extra stamp on imbedded fear; I was thrown high into the air repeatedly, by my Uncle Jim, and fortunately he always caught me. Even though this has happened to most everyone throughout the ages...on the way down the feeling of exhilaration becomes frightening to a small child; for me it was agonizing.

Spring of '36 arrived and one evening around six o'clock I heard father drive up the driveway, returning from work. I ran out to the garage just as he was removing a bicycle from the back seat. I ran up to him and asked, "Dad, who is that for?" and he replied, "It's for you." I then asked, "How do you ride it?" He said that I should sit on the seat, hold the handlebars with both hands and place my feet on the pedals and turn them clockwise. I did and rode down the driveway, out into the street, down to the corner, made a U-turn and pedaled back up to our house. I had no idea that one could suffer pain when falling from a bicycle. Weeks later, mother visited friends and took me along. As we approached their house, I noticed a few kids learning to ride and after weaving a short distance they fell off their

bicycles. I then realized that I too could fall and promptly proceeded like the others but this phase lasted only a few moments since I possessed unusually good reflex/coordination and balance. Throughout the years, I've found this parable interesting in that it demonstrates how a child can accomplish something new and unusual with their first try, especially when they haven't any idea that they can fail.

Another permanent impression was when Uncle Neil, the first born, visited from Tulsa and as he skipped up the steps he embraced me, "Sonny, I've just made a deal in Ohio to weld cast-iron forms for making tires; I'm going to make some good money on this one." And continued, "Cast-iron breaks from intense heat and I figured a method of welding cast-iron." His Evening Shade, early twentieth century, enthusiasm excited me. He was alive, it made a tremendous impact on me and he made his bundle in Akron, Ohio.

Another inspiring relative, Aunt Margaret, fresh out of high school and employed by County Roads Administration in Evening Shade, possessed *stellar* qualities. Everyone agreed that she had a "magical glow" and they all made comment about it. Beautiful, vibrant and quite intelligent with a grasp for understanding any situation intuitively. Her insight into a probability was uncannily accurate and after a couple of years she was transferred to Public Roads Administration in Little Rock. Then, about eight years later she relocated at the federal level in Washington D.C. She reappears in chapters that follow but her impression on me, at three and a half, never varied through all my life.

I was taken to a movie theater for a Nelson Eddy and Jeanette McDonald film and when they sang in duet, I began crying uncontrollably. Mother took me out in the mezzanine and explained that I was disturbing other people. I told her, "I can't help it, the music is so beautiful." After returning inside another duet was sung and again tears flowed. We went back to the mezzanine and then inside again...back and forth, even one could say forth and back. I wasn't trying to get attention; I was responding emotionally to music and felt deeply moved.

Mother entered me in a singing contest; a live broadcast presentation by KARK. I sang, over the largest mike imaginable, could barely see around it; "Little

Man, You've Had A Busy Day" and "The Beautiful Lady In Blue." Won second prize.

Our next door neighbor, early forties and very attractive, would occasionally take care of me while mother was shopping. I remember running to her and burying my face into her delightfully perfumed dress. She was very amused but could hardly keep me at arm's length. When mother returned the neighbor explained my behavior; both laughed with amazement.

In summer of '36, we moved to another section of town. Luckily, it was on the dividing line of the more affluent district so I attended Little Rock's best public school, Pulaski Heights. Nevertheless, our next door neighbor was Afro-American with an albino son; in the next block everyone was of dark pigmentation. Father and mother had obtained the house at an exceptionally low price and in addition there was a vacant lot on each side of the property. It was like buying one lot, with house, and getting two lots extra with the deal. Father explained that although many people are racially prejudice, he and my mother were not and felt that ethnic intolerance was wrong. He continued explaining that people, regardless of race, love their children and feel horrible if they can not take adequate care of them...and if people are injured, they suffer pain and lose red blood the same as anyone else. But, when people are treated unfairly they rebel; then added, "And when people are treated unfairly, I don't blame them for rebelling." Fortunately I understood, and was not shocked thirty years later when insurrectionists rioted in the ghettos of American cities across the nation.

Our address was 3716 West 5th Street, between Maple and Oak. Maple was Afro-American one half block north and two blocks to the south and extended a full block east. It was all Anglo west of Oak Street...so in my formative years I grew up, from four until eighteen, in a racially mixed neighborhood. Thanks to the teaching by my parents, all hues of all races were accepted as related human beings; today we know, from science, that humans are related to all creatures. This interracial experience, at an early age, was such a great help for me then and throughout all my life. It unmistakably helped in the world of jazz improvisation because I never felt the racial difference so many Anglo musicians feel when playing jazz; sure the

music is Afro-American but when I listen, I don't feel Anglo and absolutely never when I play; for me it's a bit like being color blind. Be that as it may, one can be removed from a neighborhood but the neighborhood will always remain in the mind.

One day a teenager living across the street picked me up by the head and swung me around in a circle; a sensation like being hung by the neck. Mother noticed from the kitchen window and screamed, "Put that kid down." The incident damaged my neck vertebrae which remained unnoticed until some forty years later when x-ray photos revealed two vertebrae in the upper and two of the lower part had solidified. Just miserable luck but then, everyone receives a bit of it somewhere along fate's chosen path.

CHAPTER TWO

Since mother played every morning, I too became interested in piano and it was decided that I should have a teacher. Like most families in the depression, there was always dreaded concern about the lack of money. My father was a member of the choir at First Methodist Church where the organist, John H. Summers was director. An arrangement was that if father agreed to sing all choir services and rehearsals, I would receive piano lessons and father continued as a member of the choir until his last years because singing, for him, was therapeutic. With this stroke of opportunity, mother made an appointment for my first piano lesson.

On a September morning we entered the room, I was introduced, and then John played a short piece on the piano. Immediately, I became more serious because his sound was enormous, even much greater than mother's and she managed a large sound from the instrument. Now, a beginning student must learn music notation and I had an instinctive and very strong aversion in acquiring this ability. Allow me to explain one serious fault in teaching music notation. The teacher expects the student to memorize intervals (tones) located on lines and spaces of treble and bass clefs. Students born with sensitive hearing and good intonation

should be taught that *E* on the first line of the treble clef must be sung and also heard in the inner ear. Also, the frequency of pitch must correspond with the same *E* above middle *C*, on the keyboard, which as mentioned before, is the first line of treble clef. Students should be able to sing tones that are notated; thus aural and visual connections are made when reading music. In music, sight-reading never should be separated from hearing intervalic notation.

Mother, being from the small village did whatever she thought should be done regardless of how she felt and if her kid didn't understand something, well a strong knock on the head will do wonders. So, mother supervised my practice by first leading me outside, along our driveway, to choose three or four hedge limbs, which she cut, and then forced me to remove all of the leaves. After returning inside, I removed my shirt and we worked at the piano. With each and every mistake made, I was struck across the back with a hedge limb. Amazingly, I understood and forgave her because she wanted my playing to improve. So did I, but such a way of teaching is to be avoided at all costs. But then in a way, this turned me toward improvisation. Throughout my life it has always been impossible for me to play without making a mistake...though according to a rule in music, if any mistake is resolved correctly it is no longer a mistake, and when I'm lucky, I can disguise mistakes that no musician or critic would ever notice. Intuitive pedaling certainly helps.

My first amorous affair; I was only four but she was experienced and two years older. She initiated me to everything pertaining to the act, including oral. All of this during daylight in the backyard. Being truly innocent of sin, I mentioned this beautiful moment of revelation to mom the next day. She hysterically read aloud from Holy Bible intimidating me that the devil would reach up from below and pull me down by the leg into eternal fire. I instantly cringed at her mentioning the sinister icon with moustache and van dyke; such mentality is only comparable to the twelfth century. The next day I explained and promised to the adorable seductress that although my mother forbids our associating...as soon as I grow up I would marry her; my first proposal.

One Sunday, father and mother took me for an afternoon in the woods, just outside the city, and while mother picked berries father sat on a large stone reading the newspaper. This was beside a construction site where a high bridge was being built. While throwing small stones I noticed a round puddle of water with a diameter of perhaps twelve inches. I shouted to dad, "Watch me jump into this water" but his concentration was buried in the newspaper. So, I called again, because I wanted him to see, and after about the third try I got his attention. He screamed, "Don't jump." I could sense by the sound of his voice that something was wrong so my feet remained immovable, as if frozen. Grabbing an abandoned bucket, filled it with a couple of big rocks as he approached, he placed it over the puddle of water released the handle and it sank. We remained silent while listening to the scraping of galvanized metal against sides of the hole for what seemed to be a minimum of two minutes. He estimated the hole to be a depth of at least seventy-five feet. He carefully explained that if I had jumped into the water there would not have been space enough for me to return to the surface and he would have been helpless to save me. This realization of dying was stamped in my memory vault and I've often reflected over this probability with absolute horror.

Our doctor, after examining, decided that I must have a tonsillectomy. An early bright autumn morning, father behind the wheel, I in the backseat, ready for the hospital, and as mother entered on the passenger side, she remarked, "When I spoke with Mabel last night, she said that hopefully Sonny won't lose his singing voice because of the operation." My brain, like a dry sponge immersed in water soaked up those words and to this very day, my voice timbre is strange if I speak and even worse when I sing. Throughout my life I could easily sing with good intonation but after this surgical amputation...never with the voice quality of one born to sing. Destiny had other plans.

On the first day of school in January of '37, mother led me into the classroom several minutes late and introduced me as Walter Norris to my teacher, Miss Harrison. I looked around and even quietly asked mother, "Who is Walter?" I had never heard the name before as everyone called me Sonny. Of course, all of the children seated in the classroom broke into laughter because I was obviously

puzzled. Some children on their first day in school learn to fly like butterflies or hop like frogs but I can say that I learned my real name. Naturally, mother revealed that I played piano and Ms. Harrison assured everyone that I would play, following the lunch break, as the class sang and marched around the room; a few rough boys by now were quite irritated. Later that afternoon, as I played, the toughs punched me as they passed but of course, Ms. Harrison was invariably looking elsewhere. When school was over that first day, the tough boys took me into a wooded area, just off school grounds, and gave me not only a beating but explained that it would continue at the end of each and every school day. One of them made sure I understood that if I told anyone, my father would be placed in jail. His was the commander of the State Police. My Father had never instructed me in the art of self-defense and being a secretive child, I never mentioned my beatings.

On a lighter *note of blue* and unknown to me at the time, Count Basie's band, with Lester Young, was stranded in Little Rock in '37 at the height of the Depression. Basie's famous title, "One O'clock Jump" was premiered over KARK radio...and the band's five month stay in Little Rock enhanced the development of a jazz scene that I would later benefit from. Al Hibbler, singer with Duke Ellington and native of Little Rock, spoke about those times in '38 to me when I was on a working visit in New York City the summer of '85.

I came home for lunch at noon and sang the new song I learned in school that morning. Mother was shocked because I had sung a couple of wrong tones and with bad intonation. She proceeded to sing it accurately...and naturally, I corrected myself but added, "But the teacher taught it that way." Thirty minutes later, she drove me back to school because she intended to discuss this musical imperfection with Ms. Harrison. Mother sat and listened to the class sing but said nothing and went home. That evening I asked why she had not spoken about the wrong tones in class. She answered that after hearing the teacher sing she knew it was hopeless and explained that Ms. Harrison had a very bad ear for music. The point I'm making here is that a child with good intonation can duplicate an example of bad intonation

or even a wrong tone, innocently, without noticing that it's incorrect. A child's mind absorbs everything.

Each summer, I spent a month or two at grandmother's house in Evening Shade. There was absolutely no industry and everyone agreed it was another Eden. I had the run of this mountain paradise as the local school vacation began a one month or so later and my cousins weren't ready for play until after their classes. But I wandered alone over hill and dale swimming one stream and walking on to the next. Everyone treated me as their favorite; Uncle Ted was the local banker and my grandfather had been its founder. Our vegetables came from the garden, irrigated with pure water from the town spring; warm milk each morning fresh from the cow; bread baked in a wood-burning oven, and the smell of hams hanging in the smokehouse. These holidays nourished my soul and helped me forget the daily punches of city life.

Listening to the radio one sunny morning in '40, just before leaving for school, I heard boogie-woogie...but the player was very good and it excited me. For the remainder of the school day, I couldn't get that sound out of my head. I stared at pages in the textbook but only heard this new music. I daydreamed instead of listening to the teacher; I had a radio station inside my head. Returning home that afternoon, I went to the piano and began playing boogie-woogie...which came easily as it only consists of the three primary (I, IV, V) chords.

Saturday's movie night at the Boy's Club...and while they changed a canister of reel to reel film for the movie's second half, I went out and stood on the steps leading to the playground for fresh air. A voice called, "Hey Sonny, come over here"...and as I took a few steps trying to see in night's complete darkness, sand was thrown in my face. Temporarily blind, I was taken inside and my eyes were splashed with water while the manager phoned father. At home that night and the following day, after repeated washings with a medicated solution...I could finally open both eyes.

I felt like an outcast. Others easily sensed that I was different but at that age, this I was unable to realize. Since I no longer wanted to return to the Boy's Club father suggested the YMCA as an alternative. Well, the Spanish architecture was

beautiful but my situation immediately became even worse. A powerful bully, born to fight, with the squinted eyes of a killer and two years my senior, welcomed me with a series of punches. Years later, he became a middleweight prizefighter with enough vigor and boldness to fight in the heavyweight division. Movies were shown each week...and during intermission when the film cartridge was changed, naturally, it was announced that I would play boogie-woogie. At the conclusion of every movie the bully took me outside for a few punches; in fact his fist flew into me whenever our paths crossed. I'll return with more about him later.

I had no idea how to fight and was invariably beaten. But, by observing others punching me I copied and duplicated their stylized mannerisms of boxing. I repeatedly hit their defensive arm position until I finally broke through to reach my target. I could surely have become a brutal bully but music and beautiful girls helped me remain well tempered.

One day while playing softball, during school lunch break, one of the toughs hit a high fly directly to me in center field. He yelled that if I caught it he would punch hell out of me. Knowing I couldn't miss, he came running at top speed for me and just as I caught it...I held the ball for a moment and dropped it just as I smashed him. His legs slid between mine, he was now flat on his back, I sank both knees, pinning both arms and shoulders, and then strangled him while screaming, "So these are the hands of a sissy piano player?" His throat had dark blue marks for the rest of that week. The leader of the pack rushed over to reinforce his threat, "Don't ever try that with me." That same day I received my after school punches. Although I had tasted blood, fighting never appealed to me...it wasn't my nature.

Another afternoon as dusk approached, a very short skinny kid, extremely tough and well trained by his older brother, took my rope. He refused to give it back so I gave an upper cut just like in the movies; his feet lifted off the ground, he landed flat on his back, then he jumped up and beat hell out of me. What a humiliation...and my father had observed all.

Around this same time I began my first participation in the biannual piano recitals performed by students of John Summers. Those who were to perform waited together in an adjoining room...but one of the students, with edgy nerves, hit

me. Evelyn, John's wife, had to pull me off of him but luckily I landed a few good punches before she pushed me out of the room towards the piano for my first experience as performer before captive audience. Funny, I remember the fight, then playing and being surrounded with people...but the titles I performed escape me. Nevertheless, recitals continued until I took flight from Little Rock in June '50.

Mother was concerned that I might become conceited and egotistical due to favorable remarks made after performing. So, she instructed me to reply, whenever such compliments were made, that my playing was not so good and also there were many mistakes. Mom's approach worked in a most hopeless negative way, I confessed all of my blunders whenever people paid compliments. Since scars are non-erasable, they should at least be worn with pride and although mom's remained for a long time, I later overcame them.

Every Saturday I attended double-featured Wild West movies. One theater had a serial, made in the thirties and entitled, The Lone Range. Of course, European composers residing in Hollywood, wrote the music/scores but their source of material came from the classical period and I'll add that many of the orchestrations were excellent. The theater opened at ten o'clock and I always viewed the films twice, even a third if time permitted. Now thinking back, this experience was evolutionary for I listened, uninterrupted for hours, to good music while staring passively at a flickering screen of animated characters. My thinking process was being shaped and formed to hear background music, automatically, with whatever I visually observed...and it continues to this day. The conscious mind is absorbed with visual and sound while each is stored in the subconscious. If comparing the movie screen with staged opera, experts agree that there is definitely a different learning process involved. We are affected and helplessly changed by technology.

But, how did I get money for admission to these movie houses? My source was the Federal Reserve Bank of Little Rock where father was employed as an accountant. I would walk into the bank at Third and Louisiana with its walls and floors of marble, ask father for a dime, thank him, run over to Main Street and see a thriller. A couple of years later it was necessary to ask for a quarter. Whenever I

had played a recital, Mr. Bailey the bank's director, would have dad bring me over at his desk to be congratulated, "I've heard that you had a good recital last week." I'd answer, "Yes Sir." And he would open his desk drawer, take a freshly minted dime and give it to me. "Oh, thank you Mr. Bailey" and out I went to buy a ticket and sit alone in that celluloid dream world of famous Hollywood stars.

As I walked back to school, after lunch at home, I could hear the theme song of a daily radio broadcast of jazz; Roy Eldridge's "After You've Gone." This broadcast, including all of Roy's solo and the sound came from a few different houses as I walked down the street. For my ears it was truly exhilarating. By this stage of my musical development, I was hooked on the energy of jazz but continued with classical...with equal love for both.

A close friend of the family, Louise Pruitt from Evening Shade, invited me on many occasions, to her house to listen to her record collection. No one had to tell me to sit directly in front of the speaker nor did anyone have to tell me keep my mouth closed and listen...because music had always been a serious experience. She had recordings of many big bands and naturally, boogie-woogie as it was so popular.

Walking on Main Street one evening with my parents, the shop window of a store specializing in Boy Scout uniforms caught my eye. I thought the dark blue Cub Scout uniform was fantastic and I wanted to join and be a member. They told me that if I played well on the recital, only a couple of weeks away, perhaps they would buy one for me. A few weeks later, I was taken in and transformed into a Cub Scout. My first Scout meeting was scheduled the following month in the auditorium at school. Dressed in blue, I sat and listened to speeches about rules of behavior, honorable duty and how to tie rope with many different knots. But the speaker was such a fixed conservative that I found the evening boring beyond belief; I didn't return for the second meeting but I wore that uniform around the house for years. Since then, I made a determined effort to remain free and avoid all organizations.

Without knowing, of the word or its meaning, mental depression struck and my awareness of melancholy was realized consciously. It happened on a dull grey winter day. With a feeling of solitude I had never experienced before, I retreated

indoors and never spoke of this to anyone. The cure for my depressed state was music and while sitting at the piano, something musically would come to my fingers; this became my liberation. Basically, it's my nature to be happy but this depressed condition visited me periodically...all through life. It's rather an agonizing curse and when it chooses to attack, it possesses me; then, I'm in need of an instrument. I've often said, "Home is, wherever I can find a piano."

Another summer vacation in Evening Shade...I played on grandmother's upright...it hadn't been tuned since it left the factory. Grandfather, whom I'd never known, had formed a village band in his time, and many instruments were stored in the closet. I fooled around with them but quickly lost interest...nevertheless, the upright's sound had a tarnished metallic charm.

In those days people still continued with horse and wagon for transportation and every Saturday the area used for parking between grandmother's house and Main Street was packed. I found it stimulating hearing hooves clopping on graveled surface as horses, rattling their harnesses, pulled wagons on steel rimmed wheels; sounds from the nineteenth century. The essence of this natural resonance entered my playing, as I'm sure city noise with blaring horns and roaring motors made their contribution. There's such a discord in transportation's sound when comparing the twentieth with previous centuries. I'm fortunate to have absorbed this natural sound and flow of rhythm created by animals pulling wagons...as opposed, to only experiencing the modern city's rhythmically mechanical sound of automobiles and trolleys.

Uncle Ted ran the Bank of Evening Shade. He had inherited the job in '28 when my grandfather, Walter Metcalf, died. Then the depression of the thirties followed and by February 1933 many banks began crashing like dominos, overnight, and not only in Arkansas. My uncle discussed Evening Shade's bankruptcy with the hand full of leaders who mattered. All but one agreed that their financial deposits should stay in the bank. This kept the village community together...which I'll interpret as a form of Socialism. Most daily monetary transactions by the local folk were simply a form of bartering. "I need the roof on my barn repaired but I can only offer you the two hams hanging in the

smokehouse." That's how people kept rain out of their barn. Nickels and dimes were saved and used for buying such essentials as coffee and tea. This population of three hundred somehow survived. One should remember that in President Roosevelt's radio address to the nation in '33, he told the American unemployed workforce not to waste their *coins* on public transportation or their *energy* searching for work because there wasn't any. Ted, like many bankers, suffered with ulcers.

One summer morning as I helped mother at the washing machine, the third finger of my left hand became caught as I fed wet clothes into the wringer; the second, fourth and fifth finger were raised. Realizing I could not pull my finger from the grip of the two rubber rollers, I yelled for mom...and she immediately hit the metal clamp above the rollers...thus freeing my hand. Fortunately, she was nearby and her swift reaction was soon enough...but we were in shock while discussing what would have happened had my three raised fingers been completely broken. For me, no more boogie-woogie; all piano playing would have ended. But I was thankful and very impressed with her spontaneity. Another lesson was learned...when in danger react...there's no time for thinking.

I attended an organ concert in our church and sat in the side balcony where I could observe the acknowledged master Virgil Fox, from Riverside Church in New York. His performance was truly electrifying and his last piece was played only with feet (foot manual) until the final chord when both hands were needed. But also in '41, I sat in the same balcony and listened to an organ concert by my cousin, Glenn Metcalf. Glenn had begun piano at the tender age of three and switched to organ in his early teens. He practiced around the clock throughout his lifetime; there was no time for marriage. As a virtuoso, he had performed concerts in Europe during the late twenties. Of all the organists, Virgil Fox was the most astonishing but I was absolutely in awe with Glenn's performance...and yet, my teacher John Summers played with more warmth. This idea of warmth may seem ridiculous to pianists who consider the organ a dead instrument, since a developed touch is unnecessary, but if an organist has enough warmth of soul, his warmth can be reflected in the performance especially with the choice of organ stops. Anyway, it

reinforces your self-esteem when a relative is musically phenomenal; few organists equaled Glenn.

While on winter holidays in Evening Shade, father and I drove about ten miles to visit his older brother, Charles Norris who had a small farm near Poughkeepsie. I was astonished by their likeness, both had the same eye expression and Uncle Charles spoke in a mild mannered way like father. After we visited another relative nearby for lunch, dad took my two cousins and me for a ride through a wooded area on a blind horse. There was only the horse's blanket to sit on...and gradually, as it began to slip off the horse, the three of us slid over the side, onto the ground. Since I held the reigns tightly, the cousin just behind me locked her arms around my chest but the other cousin, more experienced with horses, wisely jumped off. When the both of us hit the ground, I still held the reigns as she released me and rolled away. Lying flat on my back I pulled tightly on the reigns. The horse had stopped, taken one step backwards and its hoof now descended directly over my stomach. Instinctively with both hands, I grabbed the lower part of its leg and pushed myself back so that the horse stepped just between my legs. All of this happened within seconds, my father had turned just in time to see me in action; he was nearly sick and told me later that if the hoof had landed on my stomach it would have been my last moment forever. Another lesson never to be forgotten; you react instantly and do whatever is necessary. By this time my adrenaline pattern was established...and it continues to this day.

CHAPTER THREE

Louise Pruitt and her beautiful daughter of eighteen years vintage, dropped by our house with her date, an army captain around twenty-four originating from New York City. His boogie-woogie was rather sophisticated and different. We played for each other but most of the evening was spent together on the keyboard with four hands.

Many tricks were learned; left hand (boogie) patterns...and I was especially impressed with his walking-octave bass line; this night I advanced gigantic leaps

instantly; he changed me as well as my playing. A few hours later while lying in bed waiting for sleep, I promised myself I would be a pianist on a big band when I became old enough. This was my night for becoming mature; I had chosen my profession and I knew I would never change that decision.

Louise also escorted me often to the USO Club where we listened to dance bands. Some of the soldiers from many parts of the States would play or sit-in; some of them had worked professionally in Chicago and New York City as I learned when being introduced during their intermissions. It was such an impressionable experience and the sound system within my mind twirled all of that music without any end.

One early autumn afternoon with the front door opened, I was playing piano and Howard Williams passed by. Hearing me, he came up the steps and asked if I would join his band. I was overjoyed and the following afternoon my parents returned home to find his ten-piece band rehearsing in the living room. I soon realized that a number of musicians lived nearby. They were better than I and a few years older so I was musically motivated. All of this at the tender age of ten. Indeed, it was a delightful neighborhood with pretty girls and plenty of musicians.

I was always in church each Sunday either singing in the choir or turning pages for John Summers as he played organ; both experiences I enjoyed but the intensity of sitting on the organ bench and turning pages was emotionally stressful. I would listen to the music and forget when to turn to the next page.

Before the evening church service, I often walked two blocks over to Main Street for an ice cream cone. Nearby on Ninth was an Afro-American section and they too enjoyed meeting at the ice cream parlor. They were dressed in zoot suits (*à la* Cab Calloway) and the girls were brightly clad. Can you imagine strutting in a suit of a lemon colored fabric with terracotta pin stripes, dyed shoes of glistening mustard-yellow and laced with green shoestrings? Their mode of dress created such a lively and exciting atmosphere. After my cone of ice, I returned to church ready to turn pages for John.

Ms. Weatherly, a piano teacher who lived across the street, played popular tunes and I would listen. In those days you could walk down a street and

occasionally hear popular titles like “*Ain't Misbehaving*” or “*I Can't Get Started With You*” from a piano inside the home; it was quite a different world back in the early forties.

School report cards barely allowed my continuing to the next grade level and with the humiliation of losing daily fights I slipped into depression and became a non-student. I couldn't listen for more than a few minutes to teachers before my eyes drifted towards windows and the sky above; I heard only music, music from recordings, Howard's rehearsal band and from my classical pieces. I can say that music unquestionably helped me keep my sanity and it has continued to do so throughout my life. Today, even if I'm having a normal conversation, my mind separates verbal from the musical expression. I hear both words and music simultaneously; the concentration on each is separate.

Occasionally, I met dad in town and he would take me for lunch in an Italian, Spanish or Greek restaurant, talk with me about the behavioral differences in people and their tastes in food; explaining that one must appreciate and look for this difference. The impression was everlasting I accepted it and I've never changed.

All of my life and even to this day, when visiting another country I never wish for what I've been accustomed to in my native land. I willingly accept their way with food and drink. Father's attitude and example widened my perception and enabled me to appreciate the differences of others. Let me elaborate on this point. When listening to pianists, I look for their differences pertaining to style, interpretation and I marvel at their technical abilities; but never will I consider one pianist as better than another. *Vive la difference!* But, I'm amazed at how many people critically judge and choose pianists solely on their capabilities of producing power, technical feats and the execution of fast notes. Such people are attracted by excitement rather than the length of a crescendo or decrescendo...or the time-placement of tones within a rubato section...or the soul and intuition of the interpreter.

For example, while at Manhattan School of Music during the sixties, I attended a four-hour class held in the auditorium for all graduating pianists, once each month. Each pianist performed twenty minutes only, the teacher interrupted

them, and the next pianist went immediately to the Steinway [D] to play the next twenty minutes. I sat in the last row and listened to each not only produce a different sound but their interpretation and approach to the instrument was distinctly different; they came from all corners of the world. For my ears, the experience was unforgettable.

A few in this alphabetical listing of pianists may seem unfamiliar to many readers but I can recommend and assure you that all of them possess an individual, unique quality; Aldo Ciccolini from Naples, the Hungarian Gypsy, Georges Cziffra, Frank Fernandez of Cuba, Samson Francois of France, the Japanese, Mitsuko Uchida, Ramzi Yassa from Cairo, Lang Lang from China and especially the contemporary pianist/composer Noel Lee; an American residing in Paris. And the Russians of course; Vladimir Ashkanazy, Sviatoslav Richter, Evgeni Kissin and Grigoriy Sokolov. Although quite divergent, these pianists have a distinct approach to the instrument and their interpretive skills are unique. Individuals from different lands are to be appreciated and if overlooked or taken for granted, then the listener is deprived...and their musical scope limited.

Jumping back to '44, Billy Scarlet, a tenor saxophonist about twelve years young moved to Little Rock from Wichita Falls, Kansas. Howard and I rode over to Billy's house and listened as he played, Charlie Ventura's solo, on the Gene Krupa recording, of "Dark Eyes." Quite a technical achievement and I remained shocked; Billy had an edge on all of us. He worked a club, frequented by hard drinking soldiers, six nights a week and rarely attended school. Years later, he entered college, made perfect grades and became head of the woodwind department at University of Tennessee in Knoxville; a good man doesn't remain on the lower rung of a ladder for long.

A young Afro-American, twenty or so years of age, living just around the corner, could ride a bicycle backwards. He sat on the handlebars, facing the rear wheel, and pedaled his bike forward with the greatest of ease; to accomplish this feat means you must reverse your reflex coordination. I was so fascinated and decided that I had to learn. I tried for eight or so hours, minus a lunch break, and managed during the last hour to finally get a feeling for it. An explanation is

necessary; to stop with the break pedal, you must push your foot forward instead of backwards. To execute a right turn; although your right hand pulls slightly and the left pushes a bit forward, it definitely feels wrong. I'm sure riding a bicycle backwards is good for nerve reflex coordination and especially exercising mind over matter but one should remember to wear helmet and heavily padded clothing. My body was bruised from falling and covered with scratches from mother's rose bushes lining the driveway...but being so wound up, I couldn't stop trying until I'd mastered bicycling backwards.

I worked my first gig in mid January '44, a school dance just three weeks after my twelfth birthday with Howard's nineteen piece band at Robinson Auditorium and was paid ten dollars. I put the money in my pocket but continued holding it; I couldn't let go. Unfortunately, there was no opportunity for me to dance since I had to remain on the bandstand, but I desperately wanted to; I was falling in love with every girl in sight.

May of '44 (four months later) I attended my first Junior High School dance and escorted a most beautiful classmate, Hollis Conway, whom I was crazy about, but near the end of the evening someone told the bandleader that I played and a group of friends escorted me to the piano. After my boogie-woogie act, the leader asked if I knew "Besame Mucho"...I didn't...but answered, "Yes," and managed to fake the title and a solo. This was not difficult...but afterwards confidence was definitely gained and this attitude of being unable to say, "No," continued the rest of my life. If I don't know a title, I'll ask if they can sing the melody and if they can, I'll approximate it with a harmonic foundation.

A girl around three years older than I lived on the corner whom I had played boogie-woogie for the year before but I had recently become interested in jazz and no longer used boogie patterns in the left hand. With irritation she interrupted me, "Stop, what has happened? Before, you played boogie-woogie and now it's all that crazy jazz and I don't know what you're doing." I departed, disappointed and slightly depressed; I no longer had an interest in her.

Visited dad just as he was going downstairs in the vault of Federal Reserve and he asked me to join him. A guard with shotgun accompanied us as we

descended steps and entered the brightly lit vault. It was exciting...especially after the small vault in Evening Shade's bank where the double door always remained opened, closing only at night. But the contrast between the coziness of a village bank and the neat sterilized massiveness of the Federal Bank vault was remarkable indeed. It was breathtaking to see so many bags of money being carried into the armored truck...which was then driven up the ramp as the heavy metal gate was raised and again quickly lowered after the truck entered the street. Dad donated a quarter and I hurried to the movie house.

Talked my parents into teaching me to drive and to my disbelief, they agreed. I nearly crashed a parked car during the first lesson but continued and afterwards, practiced at home in the driveway to develop my skill, forth and back...or if you prefer, back and forth...but one goes forward before going backwards. I think in the abstract but I never disassociate myself from the concrete. The law, in Arkansas, permitted a child to drive if its parent was in the passenger seat; within four years I had reached the age to be issued a license. That lifestyle in the forties was as relaxed and pure as paganism.

Played in a rhythm section plus three horns but mother insisted that father drive me there and back home at the end of the evening. Naturally after the first intermission, he retreated to the car for sleep...but inside the club, a few loose women were looking me over as if I were a fresh sugar cookie.

Before the end of my twelfth year, childhood had become history as if by metamorphosis. I was soon to be a teenager with a chosen profession and overly excited about the future.

CHAPTER FOUR

My discovery of Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Art Tatum, Nat Cole, Lester Young and Errol Garner instantly became pure enlightenment. Parker and Gillespie recorded together the spring of '45 and each month, Howard Williams ordered, by mail, a shipment of records from the catalogue listings in Downbeat and Metronome magazines. Parker and Gillespie's debut arrived in Little Rock by

June. This was definitely the dawning age of a new music; jazz had never known such an intellectual level of improvisation. And who introduced this new music to us? Trombonist, Dale Hampton and bassist, Taylor (Jug) La Fargue from De Whitt, Arkansas. There was only one road leading into this town and it was necessary to use the same road when leaving. This part of the State was for hunting ducks and farming rice.

These musicians had listened to recordings of all of the great players. But there was also a pianist, Carl Owens, a member of the board of directors for a local company. He enjoyed banking hours, leaving the office early each afternoon and returning home where he sat at the piano and played Art Tatum "note for note by ear" long into the evening. De Whitt was small but its players were very aware of the new music. Dale and Taylor were also friends with a pianist from Memphis, Tony D' Amore (translates into "Tony the Lover") of whom I'll soon write more about.

Let me clarify that most pre bebop horn players knew chords and scales rather vaguely. Many intuitively hunted for a few golden tones, within a chord, and express them rhythmically. Now, improvisers of bebop needed knowledge of scales and harmony as well as sequences of chord progressions in order to weave their aural fantasies...so that a discriminating audience could enjoy the musical journeys of their solos. Discerning listeners followed and understood the thinking (reading the mind) of the gifted bebop musicians.

Daily, I repeated one title (track) for two and more hours in ecstasy, allowing my brain to absorb the sound. Never would I practice or write a transcription of their solo; which is much like trying to wear their shoes. I purchased a few records even though I didn't have a sound system and invited myself next door to play on our neighbor's machine. One of my greatest misconceptions was in thinking that anyone hearing intellectual music emotionally expressed would find it just as interesting I did. In reality, people with bad taste love dreadful music and people with good taste accept only music that is aesthetic. I tried to teach the unenlightened to appreciate bebop; I could have been stoned to death.

For me, bebop was an international music. A few articles, printed in *Metronome* and *Downbeat* magazines, were written by European critics raving about this new jazz. Bebop abstractly linked and combined baroque (early 18th century) music with the rhythmical 12/8 triplet feeling from Africa...jazz also had its melting pot. Bebop blossomed...its time had come...a new epoch was in the air, replacing a world war's lost flair.

I had just entered Pulaski Height's Junior High and older students had the choice of initiating any freshman. From the top of the steep embankment at the north east corner of the sports field, I was shoved a bit too hard. I tried to break the rapid descent with both feet but my head was much too forward and at the bottom...I smashed the level ground and remained in prone position for some moments. The older boys realized they had probably gone too far and tried to console me fearing that I would report all to my teacher. Managing to stand, and much to their relief, I brazenly laughed it off as the expression goes. One said, "Wow, you sure can take it." I was puzzled by his remark because I had experienced worse...but this remark I would hear again a few years on down the road.

My school grades soon became unacceptable so my parents engaged a tutor. She and her husband were from Chicago; they had spent their career on the Board of Education in Little Rock. She was a stunningly attractive intellectual, seventy-five years young, and made an everlasting impression on me. She spoke the English language with an admirable ear and always with poetic taste. After the lesson we would sit on her front steps and speak about life as a pursuit of attaining eminent ideals. She taught me more about the language and life in two months than all of my previous teachers but more importantly, she directed me on the correct path.

For three months I had a summer weekend gig in a dancehall with tenor saxophonist, Billy Scarlett and his quintet. Just imagine the "folk" trying to dance to bebop. Most of them impatiently requested for something danceable like music by Glenn Miller or Tommy Dorsey. Bebop was revolutionary as well as evolutionary.

I performed Grieg's piano concerto, for a spring recital in '47, with Jerry Hutton, an excellent organist playing the orchestra part. He was also a student with John. Mother was nervous, since the church was rather large and the acoustics might overwhelm me so before the performance she gave me a glass of water and a Phenobarbital tablet that magically evaporated all my inhibitions within minutes. I was totally absorbed in the music, played with the courage of a warrior and this event was remembered as a most enlightening experience. Mother had also taken a tablet for her nerves but her mind could never have anticipated my excitement; an imaginative youth still in puberty, with unclogged arteries and a strong heart for pumping adrenaline.

I spent a two and a half month working vacation studying organ with John Summers and I practiced whenever the organ was free, from early morning and until nine or ten o'clock in the evening. It was agonizing and by the end of August I explained to John that the sound of the instrument was intolerable and pressing keys that responded with sound electrically was shattering my nervous system. He had a great understanding and we continued with piano.

Kenneth Thompson, another pianist studying with John, had been unimpressive in '42, but by the following year Kenneth had advanced miraculously. He was one of eleven siblings and began his daily practice at four or five in the morning; if others slept through the music, they could consider themselves lucky. After Kenneth's recital, father said to me, "Son, he played much better than you and it's because he practiced more"...and I agreed without envy because it was true. Looking back, it was a great example as it inspired me to work more seriously. At the church in summer of '52 Kenneth played for me organ compositions by contemporary French composers for over an hour; I'll never forget that evening. Kenneth was a dedicated musician who had become a master in his early twenties. The next time I saw him he was working as a church organist in Brooklyn ('69) and then I met him again in Little Rock in '03. He had become a piano technician. He and his music were too far advanced for the organized church world.

Pat Murphy, a classmate, played trombone in the style of Bill Harris but after listening to J.J. Johnson, Pat became possessed with bebop. I sat near him in

school band rehearsals daily and he couldn't stop improvising especially when the band played loudly. The director could sense a strange sound somewhere within the many instruments; he would stop conducting the band and scream, "Who is that?" Then, he lectured about the decadence of jazz. Let me hasten to add that most every student/member of that band shared the director's opinion. Pat was dismissed nearly every rehearsal but was allowed to remain as a band member because he played better than all others...director included. Pat learned bebop within two weeks and by the end of the third, all musicians kept their eyes on him. I've never seen anyone become as violent as he when mastering a technical problem. If he missed a note, he cursed loudly and if his second attempt failed, he would kick a chair and if a third attempt proved unsuccessful, he began throwing everything, books, music stands or whatever was near at hand. Since he was so talented, third endeavors were usually unnecessary. The exceptionally gifted often experience little difficulty with technical problems and since a solution comes easily to them, they do not feel the need to practice as others with less talent do. Pat practiced at all hours. He had an anger that could never permit failure... not only in music...but also in fights. He was over six feet tall and around one hundred ninety pounds; on one occasion he took a big school tough and bashed his head into a metal locker repeatedly while I hollered for him to stop...and he nearly went too far.

Pat's emotions poured into his playing and painting equally as well. His art teacher suggested that he study at an Art Institution in Philadelphia. Hardcover textbooks became painted canvases...even the library books. Unfortunately, alcohol and every drug imaginable was taken and often in a dangerous concoction. An excellent trombone teacher Herb Haskell from Chicago said, that Pat played triplets in a detached manner (each tone accented) which he, the teacher, could not master in a lifetime. Pat whistled Parker's composition, "Shaw 'Nuff," at a fast tempo with an attack on each tone and invariably, his intonation was perfect. I've rarely found such an innate ability in any jazz musician. He often appeared at school after an absence of three or four days, still loaded, and I would try to sober him with hot coffee...which probably only stimulated his narcosis. Finally, I confronted him about his problem, "What is more important to you, music or drugs?" Without

hesitation he answered, "Drugs." I shrugged my shoulders and raised my arms not knowing what should be said. I remember him playing Cherokee and being so loaded that he couldn't remain in his chair. When he began sliding down to the floor, another musician reached under both arms and pulled him back into the chair. And all of this continued for at least fifteen choruses and he was successful with every phrase/idea attempted.

Pat took a bus to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and jammed with Carl Fontana for a couple of days. I would guess it was an even match but I did mention Pat to Carl in the late fifties while in Las Vegas. Carl wasn't interested or excited about hearing the name Pat Murphy.

I drove two hundred miles through a horrible rainstorm in '51 to visit Pat at Fort Smith's boot camp just before he departed for Korea. We met at the completion of his day's training; he in poncho, dripping with rain, and so violently depressed. He was ready to kill anything. The two of us went inside a near empty NCO club and drank a quart of whiskey.

That night I drove back to Little Rock and the following morning I boarded a military flight to Langley Field, Virginia. I didn't see Pat again until '57 in Chicago. That, I'll save for a later chapter.

My last fight...a new kid, southern Italian, and at least two years older, was transferred into my class. Physically he looked like a prizefighter born with a broken nose. His personality revealed the Mediterranean tyrant he aspired to be. No one dared challenge this guy. Other toughs just looked the other way whenever he appeared. In class when he came near me I was hit so hard that I crashed against the wall. Of course, the teacher would be facing the blackboard. This routine followed for months, day after day, until one afternoon I lost control of my mental facilities and hit him square in the face. As he went about four steps backwards, he smashed against the opened oak door of the classroom. This had a springing effect because the hinges didn't allow the door to go completely against the wall, and he literally flew back towards me. I couldn't believe what I had done but he flew past me so quickly that neither of us had time to hit. The next moment, with the expression of a killer approaching prey, he came towards me and just as I

started to hit him, Mr. Gardner (a math teacher) slipped up behind me and grabbed my arm. The Mediterranean noticed the teacher at the last second and tried to retract his punch but it still knocked hell out of me. If he had hit with full force I would have swallowed some teeth.

Mr. Gardner led us down to the principle's office. I was dismissed with a warning to behave...but this tough guy was transferred to a school of detention. Fortunately, this was the last I ever saw of him.

Around this time I met Jerry Barnes, trombonist, medical student and philosopher, who began working with Howard's band. A perfectionist whose sound on trombone reminded me of a French horn; his playing was soulful and always flawless. Jerry was five years my senior and had listened in '43 to Parker and Gillespie on 52nd Street in New York City. He had worked with the bands of Randy Brooks, Buddy Rich and others before returning to Arkansas for enrollment in the university.

Summer evenings, four or five of us would pile into a car to go for some serious drinking. But when we stopped to pick up Barnes he would always have a stack of library books to return. We waited outside while Jerry deposited the books and after a few minutes he returned with a new stack under his arm. Next, we drove to purchase a bottle and then parked at a drive-in, ordered our mixes and seriously observe the carhops (waitresses) then Jerry spoke about philosophy and music. Jerry insisted that we drink sensibly. Not more than one ounce was consumed within a twenty minute period so that osmosis could be observed. Otherwise, one could become foolishly drunk...but I soon lost all interest in checking my watch. These evenings listening to Jerry speak about ethics and philosophy molded my formative years. I decided that I would listen to my heart, do as I felt and always maintain a healthy obsession for music. More recurs about Jerry in a later chapter.

Howard needed a baritone sax for his band and talked me into playing it in the school marching band. Then I could bring the horn home for rehearsals and gigs. Mother soon became annoyed with the sound and bought me a used alto, Conn vintage '40. I loved it nearly more than the piano because you blew air into it. I

noticed that playing saxophone was similar to using the voice for singing. One problem for pianists is to create the illusion that they are breathing air into the *tones* as they play the instrument. This impression I did not master until many years later...but this problem is solved naturally when playing a horn and I did so every hour I could steal for myself. My influence was Charles Parker and of course, I had nothing but admiration for Sonny Stitt.

Howard would book his band for a dance, write some new arrangements, phone me to drop by, copy parts and rehearse. It was a pure bebop atmosphere. We took breaks and listened to radio broadcasts of live big band performances or new 78 rpm releases but never would anyone ever speak a word; this was a rule strictly observed. We didn't listen for fun, we listened to learn. And I'm grateful for the experience of copying parts from a score as it helped me understand the function of a big band and the purpose and sound of its different sections.

My parents caught me with cigarettes and as a punishment, allowed money only for my transportation, I was sixteen. So, I joined the Air National Guard, met two hours each week and collected \$30.00 every month. For two weeks each summer, we trained together with a few Squadrons from Texas and Oklahoma and my first encampment was in San Marcos, Texas. The trip was by train from Little Rock and there was no air-conditioning in the passenger cars; if fresh air was needed, you opened a window. The squadron from Houston had a band so I met a few others my age that played bebop quite well.

I spoke with my sergeant and got his permission to spend my two weeks jamming over in the theater with the guys from Houston, as sort of a cultural exchange. Much to my surprise he agreed and signed the necessary papers to make it official.

But one evening in the service club a crowd of about two hundred drank beer as if tomorrow would never arrive...but a few who knew me insisted that I play alto unaccompanied. Noise? A small bomb could have exploded unnoticed and I had to play through all of that uproar in the background. I approximated Parker's solo on "Lady Be Good To Me," unfortunately she was nowhere near. Well, I drank myself into a near stupor (only warm beer, all ice had melted) and afterwards I somehow

managed to find my barracks and undressed for bed. As soon as I covered myself with a blanket I had to go to the latrine. While going down the two steps at the barracks' entrance I lost my balance and with my body leaning forward I had to run to keep from falling on my face. I continued running until I crashed into the outside wall of the latrine, then I staggered inside. The next was a day of nursing a most horrible hangover in the August heat of southwest Texas. Nevertheless, I learned from tenor saxophonists Kendall Ramey and Bo Boyd. They came from Houston where tenor players grow like giants...as I would experience again, about four years up the road.

When Tony D' Amore was available to play piano with Howard's big band, I played alto, tenor or baritone sax, which was frequently after '48. Tony tried to get Howard's band booked by Roy Eldridge's manager in New York. It was a hot idea that unfortunately didn't burst into flame but Tony was definitely impressed with the band.

I would guess that Tony's parents were from Naples...he was dark, resembled Lucky Luciano and strikingly handsome in appearance. Women looked intently but only the courageous were lured to him. He possessed strength and virility...even when he entered restaurants, owners became noticeably nervous. But Tony's behavior was always that of a dignified Italian gentleman/gangster. He had studied piano in a Catholic school and demonstrated as much authority as anyone at the keyboard. Never a mistake or an indecisive phrase and he extracted a tremendously powerful sound that swung with a meticulous timing. I can say this about Tony because I have stood next to Count Basie as he played with his band and I have also observed the same with Nat Cole's big band as well. Tony's solo lines, played in the style of blocked chords, were linear and melodically in the manner of Lester Young. In '36 when he was nineteen, he recorded "Body and Soul" in Roy Eldridge's quartet and Roy had the pick of New York's pianists.

Tony never touched alcohol but his addicted to morphine often led him inside penitentiaries. During the late thirties and early forties he would journey to Chicago or New York with a trunk full of everything "*forbidden*" so that he could support himself and his habit. He listened to the local musicians while making his

contacts each night at jam sessions and after a number of weeks he would sit-in; his playing terrified everyone.

I had great admiration for D'Amore's playing but I could not accept his world of addiction. I've always had a respect for my talent and too much self-esteem to abuse the health. I observed him once before he had taken his medication; such a troublesome lethargic world was not for me.

His protege was tenor saxophonist Brew Moore whom I worked with in San Francisco in '57 and we had stories to trade throughout the intermissions.

Tony had played on Gene Krupa's band in '37-38 and also with Teddy Hill's in '41. I remember Tony describing the reaction in Manhattan after Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie recorded *Shaw 'Nuff* and *Salt Peanuts* in '45. People asked one another, "Have you heard Parker's and Dizzy's new release?" Overnight, musicians from Coast to Coast were speaking only about this new music. Many musicians from California, Oregon and Seattle telephoned friends in New York asking, "What is it like?" "What are they doing?" "Where are they playing?" Only the Beatles in the early sixties made a greater impact...but they appealed to the masses; their music was melodically and harmonically less interesting. I'll fit Tony in again with a later chapter.

Another pianist and trumpeter living in Little Rock was Robert Tally. Robert was equally as talented but played so differently from Tony...and yet both reminded me of Nat Cole. Tally toured in '38 with a small band in and out of Kansas City and one night a new alto player joined by the name of Charlie Parker. Robert wasn't introduced and after the second title he told Parker, "Hey man, tune up again you're flat." On the break one of the musicians remarked that the new saxophonist was Charlie Parker. Tally, being a true gentleman was ashamed; he immediately left the band and returned to the *'Rock.'*

When Dizzy Gillespie brought his big band to perform at Robinson Auditorium in '47, he phoned Tally and they played their trumpets for each other all that afternoon in the V.F.W. Hall on Gains at 9th Street. While Robert Tally was in the Army he taught himself piano. There was an opening in the band for piano but not trumpet...so he practiced around the clock and instead of going abroad with

an infantry unit, he served in the band; he learned fast on a difficult instrument. He played often with Howard's band and I sat next to him on a number of occasions, wide eyed, as he played piano. Tally and others, of darker complexion, played for the senior prom of '49 with Howard's big band in the auditorium of Little Rock's Central High School. We heard no comments about the band being integrated; more will follow.

Howard was dating a ravishing Irish brunette and one Sunday afternoon he took me along to her apartment. There I was introduced to her brother Mickey, a professional gambler. Mickey had consumed strong *spirits* from the pint in his back pocket and was demonstrating his ability with throwing dice. He had prepared a solid rectangular wooden board (36 X 24 inches) that was covered with green felt and placed on a table beside the wall. A thick string was tightly stretched over two small pegs, connected to the edge of the board, thus raising the string a half inch above the felt, horizontally. Another rectangular board of felt, with the same dimensions, was placed vertically flat against the wall. The handicap was to throw the dice against the wallboard...next they had to fall on the horizontal board and tumbled (bounce) over the raised string. I stood slightly behind him and observed his fingers carefully turning the dice, feeling the indentation of each dot, and he announced the intended number before tossing. He began with *snake eyes*, then *three*, and all possibilities of *four* (two dots each and then three dots plus one were thrown) and continuing with all numerical possibilities to *twelve* or as some say, *boxcars*.

Here was a skilled virtuoso who could definitely take all of your money with *his* game of chance. Next, five card *stud poker* and he named each hand that he dealt...from a freshly opened (unmarked) deck of cards. Mickey, in his eighth year, had been taken out of school and trained by his uncle for eight hours each and every day. After Mickey matured, he and uncle traveled to different cities...and in an alley just outside some factory on payday, they would pitch dice and collect the wages of many workers. I felt so relieved as we departed from that apartment and told Howard, "Never take me there again." Of course, Mickey out of necessity always carried a gun and was always slightly drunk.

I'll say to disbelieving readers that on Dick Cavett's televised ABC show during the early seventies, Cavett interviewed two gamblers from Texas who were not allowed to enter any Las Vegas gambling casino because they *always* won. Each demonstrated his skill by shuffling a new deck of cards and after dealing five hands of *poker*, the dealer named every card that he had dealt. Mandy, my first wife, never believed my story about Mickey until she viewed Cavett's program; then I repeated those four beautiful words, "I told you so." Thanks to Mickey, I never developed a thrill for gambling except once in Las Vegas...but I'll save that story for later.

Robert Foreman was a drummer about eight years my senior with vision only in one eye. This resulted from a childhood accident but he, nonetheless, acquired his pilot's license and invited me for a flight in a double wing two-seater that had been used for carrying mail back in the late twenties. You probably wonder how a state institution could possibly issue an aviator's license to a one eyed applicant. Well, that was Arkansas in the forties. He took me to the airfield, adjacent the main airport, and instructed me to climb into the front cockpit. With our goggles adjusted and seat belts fastened we ascended. The view was breathtaking as we climbed and glided over the Arkansas River...and twenty minutes later he landed in a field with grass at least two feet in height. We taxied to the end, turned around and took off again. "Was he practicing?" Then he hollers for me to check my seatbelt, I nodded O.K. with my thumb raised and he proceeded to perform a slow roll. I saw mother earth above me, became horrified and closed my eyes but I could do *no thing* at all. There wasn't any choice but to endure his aerobatic exhibitionism. Finally the hour of plane rental was over and we landed smoothly. Later, entering a bus to go home I became dizzy and nearly fainted. Fear was reinforced once again and still over half a century of flights awaited me.

I joined Bitsy Mullins' band for six weekends in Hotel Lafayette's *Skyroom* in October '49; Tony D'Amore on piano; Jerry Barnes, trombone; Buddy Hawkins, lead alto; Billy Scarlett and Fred Younts, tenors; Taylor (Jug) La Fargue, bass; Mert Davis, drums with Wayman Ballard, vocals/trombone and I played baritone sax.

This tentet was rehearsed to perfection because Bitsy projected an egotistical force to be dealt with and I'm sure this quality was magnified by Tony's presence; beyond doubt this was musically an exceptional band. I remember staying alone in the *Skyroom* after a rehearsal, above the city's skyline and playing while looking intently at scattered clouds against the sunset. The Lafayette, built in '26, has recently been renovated and declared a landmark by the Ministry of Interior in Washington. Its architecture signifies the opulent style of the twenties.

In the early fifties, Bitsy Mullins joined Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey's big band, featuring Buddy Rich, for a coast to coast live television presentation five night's weekly. Bitsy worked the following two decades in Las Vegas at Sands Hotel with the house show band and others along the strip.

Now back to '49. During intermission at the Lafayette, a waiter informed me that a gentleman and his wife requested that I join them at their table. They introduced themselves, said they were from Hot Springs and that they had attended three of our weekends in the *Skyroom*. The conversation soon led to their purpose of speaking with me and I was asked if the name Lenny Norris rang a bell. I replied, "No," and they explained that there was a local pianist/saxophonist who looked and sounded exactly like me. I was puzzled, "Surely you jest." But then I became visibly shocked when they handed me Lenny's photo. They said I could keep it and after a rather sleepless night I confronted my parents the next day; they confessed and explained everything. My twin and I had been separated soon after our first birthday. My parents had agreed that my aunt, being unable to reproduce, should raise my twin brother and also mother's nerves were simply too frayed for raising two. For whatever reasons my parents and aunt thought it would be better, or easier, for twins to be raised separately.

Father, mother and I drove to Hot Springs for a reunion with my other half. We entered my aunt's house and there he was...or I could say my eyes were fixed on the other side of the minted *coin* of our identity.

Since we were from the same egg there was hardly any visible difference. But right away I felt that he intuitively knew my feelings because there was a similarity of our thoughts expressed instantaneously; and I sensed the same about him.

Both of us had studied classical piano for approximately the same length of time. It was a bit strange to me that he also began playing alto saxophone at age sixteen as I had, and that both of us improvised jazz. His playing was indistinguishable from mine.

Our aunt, being eleven years younger than mother, had encouraged Lenny to play jazz as well as classical while my parents resented jazz. When improvising four hands on the keyboard, we were astounded by our spontaneity; but do keep in mind that the music we made was usually blues and only a few standard titles.

We drove back with Lenny to Little Rock for a few days. Of course, there were so many years to catch up with. While many twins enjoy being seen together, we felt uncomfortable because people openly compared and asked questions. But when alone, we spoke in a thoughtful way as though we were on life's same path. We tossed the idea around and finally agreed to continue living separately so that the fact of being twins would remain secret. Of course, conversations by phone increased the monthly bill but our parents managed reluctantly. We exchanged colorful musician stories. I remember his telling about a pianist, Jitter Bouroughs, who was one of the first to play the style of locked hands around Hot Springs and further north at the state university in Fayetteville even before Milt Buckner, Tony D'Amore, George Shearing or Oscar Peterson.

Another tale mentioned was "Dog" McGhee, a tenor player who traveled from city to city using local rhythm sections. He wore rimless glasses, dressed like a banker and his appearance was very serious but with all burners burning brightly, he was the regional tenor virtuoso of the early forties. There are no recordings of McGhee or Bouroughs and they are only remembered by a small hand full of musicians today. Since Lenny and I lived in different cities, still attending public schools, we didn't see much of each other but did manage many of our hours together by telephone.

Let me interject some information about Hot Springs. It was a resort spa where many from all corners of the U.S. would come for cures including Al Capone and Lucky Luciano. So an element of nightlife developed because of gambling, horse racing, vaudeville and even theater from Chicago and New York.

It was April '50 and I was scheduled to audition at University of Arkansas for a scholarship. The Dean asked, as we walked on the Fayetteville campus, "What will you do if you don't get a scholarship?" I told him that I didn't have the financial resources to attend university and if rejected it would be necessary to seek a scholarship elsewhere; I was eighteen and naive. An hour later as we attended a reception, one of the graduate students performed a Mozart Sonata. I was quite unimpressed with his interpretation but kept feelings masked and my opinion on ice. The next morning I played a Bach three part Invention VI, Chopin Polonaise, opus 40 #1 and a Beethoven Sonata, opus 27 #1, with four professors judging. The piano had a most difficult action. The key-weight was at least sixty-five grams and I had played only a few large Steinways in my lifetime, usually the pianos I met were uprights. Musically it was a dull morning and to keep this on the short side, I was not accepted.

Summers could not believe it. I was his only student, in twenty years, who had not been accepted. Jerry Barnes at this time was teaching at the university and he personally inquired to the Dean, who answered that I had told him if I was not accepted, it would be necessary to audition at another university; then added, "We give scholarships to applicants who want to attend this school and if not chosen they must be prepared to work as a waiter or dishwasher to supplement their income."

I want to make a point; education it is not always the answer but it is our only hope. People are born with a certain destiny and also they are stamped with a distinct character. They will learn only if their personality accepts the information offered. I wanted to attend the university but after Barnes explained what the Dean had said, I was satisfied; I didn't want to be in such an atmosphere and felt it was all for the best.

June '50 soon arrived and four days after graduation from Central High, I was riding with Taylor (Jug) La Fargue in his new Packard sedan to Panama City, Florida; we had two weeks with Mose Allison. While Mose sang and played piano, I was on alto. For the next set, I was at the piano and Mose played trumpet...much in the direction of Fats Navarro. The club owner's wife fired me during the second week because I looked too young. She said I should be home with my mother.

All of us lived in a couple of motel bungalows just outside of town and we listened to 78 rpm recordings after each night's work. When the others fell asleep I took a chair outside and observed a beautiful sunrise with a head swimming full of music inside. It was impossible to find a piano for practice because the club opened before noon but there was plenty of time for lying on beautiful white sandy beaches at the Gulf of Mexico...and since I'm one-eighth Cherokee my skin became a dark purplish tan.

While riding a streetcar, after returning to Little Rock, the motorman abruptly halted the trolley, came walking down the aisle, pointed his finger at me and asked, "Boy, if you're colored you'll have to ride in the rear of this car." I reacted chuckling, "What? Well, I don't think I am but I would rather ride back there anyway" and broke up with laughter as I took a seat in that section. But the Afro-Americans were busy looking out of the window. For them, I was probably some kind of trouble.

A week later Jug phoned and once again we were heading due south in his grey Packard to Louisiana for another week with Mose. When that gig ended we continued gliding on down the two-lane highway and whenever we noticed a promising (road house) nightclub we stopped, auditioned for the owner and got another week's work immediately.

CHAPTER FIVE

By August, the Korean War was out of hand and all National Guard Units were activated. My parents wrote that I had received notice to report for active duty at Langley Field, Virginia in October. This meant that I had to leave the quartet and play soldier. I discussed it among the musicians; I didn't want to go into the military but I knew my parents would be embarrassed and ashamed so I left the quartet and returned home to trade my life as a wandering musician for a uniformed one with the Air Force.

In mid September Mother, Aunt Margaret and I drove east from Little Rock, crossing the Mississippi at Memphis. Then we angled a few degrees northeast into the high Appalachian Mountains. The beauty of the land with trees turning red and gold delighted us at every turn. Within two days we had begun our descent on serpentine curves into the lower elevation of Virginia. From our scenic trip I had my photographic imprint but as I waved farewell to mom and auntie, I was aware that a new life awaited me; I turned, entered my barracks into the disciplined world of the armed forces.

Lenny was studying composition at New England Conservatory in Boston to avoid being drafted for four years in the military. He had a scholarship but paid his expenses by working regularly with dance bands. Lenny found Boston stimulating because nearly everyone walked the streets carrying an instrument.

It was October and I was stationed at Langley Field in a Supply Section within the 136th Fighter Bomber Wing. My job was to unload freight cars filled with wooden crates containing ever item imaginable. I had no gloves and only a hatchet instead of a hammer for opening the crates throughout each long day. After counting and listing hundreds of spoons, forks, etc, I had to pack up the items again in the same wooden crates and always nailing them with the butt end of a hatchet. After a few weeks, each of my fingers were blue and some even black under each complete nail...I can never exaggerate the condition of my damaged hands. So, I applied for a position in the band of another squadron since one didn't exist in ours. The director of the band told me that I would be accepted as pianist or saxophonist; both positions were open.

However, my commanding officer refused to allow any member transferring out of his squadron. I requested a hearing by a board of judging officers. They listened as I explained my background; classical piano (private lessons) for thirteen years, working professionally six of those years and I wanted to be transferred to the band. They all smiled, agreed with a slight nod but another month passed with no sign of any relocation; my hands were pathetic. So I created a one-man sit down strike and explained all details to my sergeant. Each day I presented myself for work but just sat and read a good book; I only lifted my finger to turn the next

page. At the end of that month I was told to report to my commanding officer. The major asked me to explain why I wasn't doing my job. I said I was needed in the band and would work sixteen hours a day at music but I refused to ruin my hands nailing crates with a hatchet. He ordered me to report to the munitions depot; better known as the bomb dump.

It was located in a wooded area some four miles distance from the airfield and barracks quarter. Only bicycles were used within this area that contained perhaps twenty bunkers camouflaged with sod and grass; in fact each mound contained fifty or sixty containers of dynamite stacked from floor to ceiling. One problem with storing dynamite is that it must be turned over periodically because nitroglycerine becomes concentrated by the pull of gravity and if jarred or moved suddenly, it is highly explosive.

The master sergeant of the bomb dump weighed over three hundred pounds; he sat at his desk and rarely moved. Others brought coffee, food or lit his cigars; he was served like a Mafia boss. As I entered, he held a fixed stare on me and gave a cunning smile while instructing his assistant to escort me to the bunkers. We bicycled a short distance and he unlocked the door of the first bunker. He instructed me, quite seriously, to be ever so careful when turning each wooden crate because the date stamped was six-months overdue on all of them. Then, I was told to wait until he had pedaled down the road and around the turn before picking up the first crate. Intuitively, I was developing my sense of touch and sensitivity. These crates were bulky, weighing around forty pounds, and I spent at least three real minutes turning each one. While holding, I moved a fraction of an inch and then waited before moving the next fraction. I followed this same procedure with each case. I'll term these thirty days as my period of detention. Keep in mind, my workday at the bomb dump consisted of twelve hours per day with Sundays off. Some twenty years later in New Jersey, I told this story to a neighbor who was a career army major and he informed me I could have charged my commanding officer with martial court.

The quickest way of transferring out of a section was to apply for guard duty in the Air Police or as a cook in the kitchen. Since my only accomplishment in

any kitchen was burning toast, I chose to be a guard and my transfer was completed within the month. I enjoyed guarding airplanes and being alone at night contemplating stars with my head full of music.

But before my transfer was completed I experienced trouble in the barracks. There was a big Texan around two hundred and forty pounds and large boned who didn't approve of my record collection or the fact that he saw me going into the Afro-American service club around the corner. I explained, "There's a good piano, a record player, I like being there and enjoy spending time at the keyboard with an Afro-American arranger from Boston who has studied composition, the Schillenger System, at New England Conservatory; from him I can learn." Big flushed faced Texan was unimpressed. Buckets of cold water were occasionally tossed in while I took my shower. But one morning in a mischievous mood, Tex removed a blanket from each bed and placed all of them, one at a time, on top of me. When I kicked them off he began piling them on again. I had been out drinking until early morning and suffered the effects of intoxication. I was no match, even sober, for this brute. One guy, Stanley Goldberg from Little Rock, made the Texan stop; it was a moment packed with tension but Texan backed off. I got my transfer and while packing my belongings for the move to the other side of Langley Field he approached, "Well...Norris, (long pause) I must say you can really take it." We didn't shake hands but with that remark I thought back to the initiation in Junior High when they pushed me a bit too hard from the peak of that steep slope.

Instead of going home for Xmas holidays, I took a bus to Manhattan for my nineteenth birthday and the beginning of the New Year.

It was so crowded the last evening of the old year that it was difficult to walk on Broadway from Times Square to Columbus Circle; sidewalks swarmed with masses. I spent all four nights in Birdland and was impressed especially with Billy Taylor's group. I walked the streets completely intoxicated with *Big Apple City*. But I became traumatized hearing country & western played through loudspeakers at the entrance of Colony Records on Broadway & 52nd Street; directly across from Birdland. Well, there's something about the musical taste of many that leaves much

to be desired. I guess it's impossible for a city with eight million people not to have a large population of equilaterals.

The 136th Fighter Bomber Wing was flown by Northwest Airlines to Japan in May '51. I thought it was strange that an air force wing couldn't fly its own troops. Certainly it was more comfortable flying on a commercial airliner than being cramped in a bomber; probably money had found its way inside the pockets of a few but that's often the procedure of defense spending. We stopped overnight at Travis Airbase; I walked around captivated with the environment of northern California. Our next refueling stop was Hawaii. This was a decade before their construction boom and Honolulu's commercial airport was very small with an outdoor terrace restaurant. I sat and enjoyed the best cup of coffee I've ever known in my life. The view was magnificent; my eyes had never seen such green vibrancy in foliage. The journey continued but about forty minutes later, over the Pacific, one of the engines failed and we had to return to Hawaii for major repairs. Looking out at the propeller as it turned slowly, I wondered if we were flying in one of Northwest's antiquated airliners. The following day, our plane was cleared for takeoff and the longest stretch of the Pacific began. With zero visibility early the next morning, we circled an hour before attempting to land in Fukuoka, Japan. Because of the nearby mountains we began a very steep descent through the thickest fog. I occupied a window seat, looked and searched for a small break in the cloud covering, then I saw land about five hundred feet below but the pilot maintained his angle of descent. My gut tightened and suddenly the plane leveled; at that instant the landing gear banged the runway, bounced and again made contact with Mother Earth. I waited, entered the aisle to exit just as the pilot and copilot approached and overheard their conversation; I was aghast. They were panicked, "The altimeter read that we were at an altitude of three hundred feet." "Yes, but when I noticed an opening and saw ground I shouted for you to pull up." Thank you, Lady Luck...that was close enough.

The following month was spent in Pusan, Korea but not before I tasted three weeks of nightlife in Fukuoka. The large dance hall had a sixteen piece Japanese band and I played every night while the pianist, father of five with two jobs, gladly

tried to sleep backstage. The trumpet/arranger and jazz soloist improvised with astonishing musical taste. He played with a Fats Navarro and Dizzy Gillespie influence. Completely self-taught, he had transcribed Gillespie's big band recordings. Even though our only language was music, we had an intuitive understanding and would break up with each others playing; pure musical joy. Fukuoka was a kind of oriental dream, riding in rickshaws or walking a long block on a warm summer evening with Geishas sitting on the veranda of each building.

However, I was transferred to Pusan for guard duty and to contemplate life, in solitude. Two months passed before I was flown back to Fukuoka and immediately went to sit in with the Japanese dance band. A few months drifted by and I was again sent about sixteen miles north of Seoul at Kimpo Air Base for the coldest winter. By this time I had taught myself to type well enough to be transferred into Photo Recognizance working night shifts but at least inside a warm building. As I finished work one morning at daybreak, the Air Police were swarming within twenty yards of my barracks. They had just shot five North Koreans who were on a suicide mission with the intention of entering the barracks as soldiers slept and knife as many as possible.

I discovered an upright piano in the servicemen's club on the other side of the air strip and this was my only consolation. Also, there were a couple of gigs that are still strong in the memory. One evening I played in Seoul for some officers after they had enjoyed dinner and booze; it was located on a small mountaintop and had been a palace before. A remarkably beautiful structure that was neglected but it had not been damaged the previous year during five alternating (North & South) battleground positions. On intermission I stood outside for a cigarette and admired the architecture; it was such a unique place. Twenty-five years later while leafing through pages of National Geographic, I noticed the newly restored palace and recognized it immediately.

We toured (three concerts) near the front lines in February of '52. One night we traveled about two hours in the back of an opened 6X6 truck, without headlights or canvas top; no one was allowed to smoke because the opposing force would take aim and fire from the nearby hills. It was that feeling of anxiety when your only

thought is just to survive the nightmare. We played but the audience was nervous; they tried to listen but their minds were occupied with getting through the following day without catching a shell.

Through friends I got word that there was an opening in an air force band near Tokyo. I applied but was rejected because I had less than six months to serve in the Far East before returning stateside for my discharge from the military.

That spring I was transferred again to Fukuoka with a job typing at headquarters and once again I was in town every night playing with the Japanese band. The dance hall employed many girls for dancing but there was one who caught everyone's attention. She was the most beautiful creature to be found gracing any ballroom floor. This princess from Shanghai was half Chinese and Japanese, born in Shanghai and was blessed with the contoured body of a Greek goddess. But her graceful movements and incomparable beauty remained in all of my thoughts. She conquered mind, soul and enslaved my body effortlessly. In restaurants everyone stared; on sidewalks people stopped and turned around in disbelief. Her apartment in suburban Madashi was traditional Japanese architecture with a balcony overlooking the garden. We listened to the finest jazz imaginable; Radio broadcasts of concerts performed in Tokyo by Nat Cole and others were unobtainable stateside. Coffee bars in the center of Fukuoka played recordings by Gillespie, Parker, Fats Navarro and Nat Cole. People heard jazz continuously as they walked the streets.

However, in suburban Madashi it was very quiet. But once I saw another American, he looked at me, turned and hurried away. I did the same but stopped and looked around in time to watch him as he disappeared at the corner. I was overjoyed living in a traditional Japanese quarter. Highlighted with music and love, my fantasy was enriched; I felt effervescent. I acquired an awareness of Oriental impressionism that has permeated my musical being ever since. It is said that the imprint of ones first mature love remains dominant in the mind forever. True and yet, although I've fallen completely in love with each of my wives the memory of the princess remains to this day. Unbelievably rare was the fact that we never had one argument, all moments were perfection. I'll never forget one night in the late hours

when she suggested a Chinese restaurant that was a rendezvous only for local Chinese immigrants and the place was as busy as a beehive. The food was admirable and prepared a bit differently but to observe this lively gathering as an outsider was an experience thoroughly unique. For her, it had a touch of Shanghai. For me, it was widely divergent from all that I had seen in Japan.

The completion of my tour of service approached and it was time to return stateside. We had discussed my wanting to come back and remain with her permanently in Japan after being discharge; she shared my desire. She also had connections for me to work as a pianist. I received orders to travel by train to a military processing center near Yokohama and she chose to accompany me. We stayed in the dining car most of the time viewing the early June countryside but thoughts of being separated dominated every moment; my body, internally, accelerated in anticipation of an anxiety attack. We stayed overnight in a hotel, our last together, and took a small suburban train for a short distance to the military base. She explained just before the last train stop that I must not to look back at her as I departed. I understood and agreed but as I stepped off the train onto the platform I was instantly seized with shock, felt horribly sick in my stomach; for me, it was nearly a physical and mental breakdown. I sank to a bench absolutely stunned and after sitting a few minutes I managed to collect my wits. I departed from the platform and presented myself at the security gate. After being assigned to a barracks I fell on my bed totally in despair.

I signed military papers, was examined and answered questions throughout the day. That night I found a spinet piano inside the chapel and in my seclusion, played. The second night a young Japanese girl was practicing; she occupied the piano. I waited perhaps five hours as I had nowhere to go but she would not stop and she had such a small talent. It's torture listening to a student who tries with perseverance and yet fails consistently. The ensuing night was repeated as I waited in vain but when she finished, I politely asked, "How many hours do you practice daily?" She explained that she began every morning at five-thirty, stopped at seven-thirty for her office job until noon and after a small snack she practiced forty-five minutes before returning at one o' clock to the office. She finished work at five

and after another meal at her desk continued practicing until eleven in the evening. The time periods of her office work were the same as my hours with processing but I managed to get to the instrument a few times during my six day confinement. This lady continued to work regardless of her talent or musical results. Even though learning a skill is clearly a matter of work, some find the effort a greater labor than others but for her the only thing that mattered was that she practiced.

Soon I embarked on a troop ship from Yokohama to San Francisco. The gloomy weather and my leaden frame of mind were similar that day. But after a few hours at sea I noticed a bassist and tenor saxophonist playing on deck; next to them was an unoccupied spinet piano. They were Navy seamen just jamming the blues away; I asked if I could participate and was accepted. You must keep in mind that with so many troops a commander must keep them occupied with an assigned work agenda. Daily our squadron scraped rust while sailors painted decks. The bassist fixed it with the Captain of the ship for me to play in their group and I was issued a naval uniform plus officer's mess pass; I ate my way through an enchanting ten day voyage across the tranquil Pacific. In shade we played as others labored beneath an overpowering sun. This was the closest to being transferred into a military band during my twenty-four months of active duty.

On a clear sunny morning as our ship slipped under the Golden Gate, I arched my back to look up at the suspended wonder and a moment later I turned to see the jewel of all California; San Francisco. We docked at Treasure Island, bathed in sunlight, while processing continued. Each night throughout the week I had a table at the "*Blackhawk Club*" listening to Dave Brubeck and Paul Desmond. But throughout this same week Charlie Parker played the "*Say When Club*" which unfortunately was off limits to all military personnel and four MPs stood at the entrance. The next afternoon I bought two suits, a few dress shirts and two pairs of shoes. I looked sharper than any *Dapper Dan* but the Air Police wouldn't let me depart from the *Treasured Island* unless I dressed in military uniform; so it was Brubeck and Desmond or no music (nightlife) at all. San Francisco was always considered the most beautiful city in the U.S. and that was no exaggeration in the summer in '52. I walked late afternoons and nights in amazement of the downtown

district. But now with the benefit of hindsight, I can say that I was impressed but not in the least influenced by the music of Brubeck and Desmond. My taste was for more *blue tones* in a triplet feeling.

Next week I traveled by train to *The Rock*, my point of origin but in order to get my Certificate of Discharge from active duty, I had to go to Shreveport, Louisiana and stay overnight. Why? People may tell me there is a right and a wrong way to do anything but I can add that the military's way is beyond all reason. The next morning brought beautiful weather and I was filled with excitement. All I had to do was to pick up my U.S. Air Force Documentation and hop a military flight back to Little Rock. I dressed in fatigues, stepped into my new blue suede loafers and refrained from any type of head-covering. I noticed a Colonel approaching and walked passed him without saluting; he turned with a flushed face and shouted, "Soldier are you in the Air Force?" I calmly responded, "No." I turned and continued walking for an instant and then, by half twisting my head I saw him standing with hands on hips, speechless. The following day in Little Rock, with documentation under my arm I signed more forms and severed all ties with the Air National Guard; finally I was a liberated man.

That night I borrowed the family Ford and drove aimlessly around town like a strayed animal. Each night, I dreamed of my princess from Shanghai but all were dreams of desperation; I would hurry after her along sidewalks as she turned the next corner and disappeared. My dreams occurred less frequently with the passing months. Looking back, I was entirely too young and immature to handle such an intoxicative love affair; I would have been lost if it were not for the piano. One of her unforgettable idiosyncrasies was to arrange, after cleaning the bureau, all scattered coins, wallet and keys exactly in the same position as I had placed them when I undressed the night before. Everything within our oriental capsule was perfectly harmonized, visually and psychologically; we were like twins, which can be ideal but it's most unusual with young lovers. Now, even an ocean away she occupied all thoughts and my dream state as well. Of course, my mind never ceased its endless improvisation; this was when I began shaping *Streets of Madashi*. The title has since been changed to, *Never Should It Ever End*.

CHAPTER SIX

I told my parents that I wanted to attend University of Houston and within three days I was on a bus heading southwest into the flat lands of Texas. I had no intention of enrolling for higher education because I was determined to work my way west to California and sail for Fukuoka.

By September I convinced my parents that I had registered for school but actually within the first week of my arrival I had work with Jimmy Ford's quartet.

Our first week together was in a small club. James needed to borrow a tenor sax but the cork on the gooseneck was so old and worn that it was impossible for him get in tune with the very flat upright piano. Without hesitation he pushed the mouthpiece farther onto the gooseneck and told me to play in the original keys while he transposed a minor-second. At a very fast tempo he fried *Cherokee* in *A major* while I played in *Bb*; transposition continued for all titles and he never struggled with any phrase.

After a week Jimmy accepted another gig where we worked from one o'clock in the morning 'til sunrise six nights every week; that continued for the following four months. This club was a former gambling house located twenty-five miles south of Houston off of Galveston highway. The clientele consisted of attractive prostitutes and flamboyant pimps who all enjoyed listening to our red-hot bebop.

When finishing each set we left the bandstand and opened a nearby door just behind the curtain. Then after entering a small room we pushed an obscured button and the paneled wall ascended like any electric garage door; once inside the adjoining room we activated another concealed knob lowering the wall to its original position. Here we enjoyed stuffed chair luxury with walls of stained walnut and carpeted flooring...all in complete privacy.

This building had been constructed for the Mafia boss of Houston in the early forties. It looked like any other affluent rancher's two story home but inside, secret passage ways had been assembled between floors for the convenience of patrons if the police should ever raid this stunning den of iniquity.

Our gambling/pimp club owner sold anything over the bar. Unfortunately a few years later, he breathed his last in a head-on auto crash with a trunk full of everything illegal; front-page photos showing many prohibited packages littering the highway.

Around the grounds of the club was a fenced pasture for cows to graze. No one looking from the two-lane country road just a hundred yards away would ever imagine that it was a nightclub. It looked like the home of a wealthy rancher who would eagerly shoot anyone stupid enough to approach within firing range.

Jimmy was the star of Houston. He and Red Rodney had recorded, the previous year in New York, and their recently released quintet LP was impressive but since then Jimmy had improved and was musically far greater; as a virtuoso, there was always a degree of inflammability in his playing.

And here was another aspect that made Jimmy's improvisations so melodious. He was an excellent ballad and scat singer. Whenever he taught me a new title, he sang melody and bass together in tempo and also the melody with an accompanying (tenor) voice-line...however, all chords were identifiable by his choice of intervals and perfect intonation. In retrospect, Bobby McFerrin is the only vocalist I've heard capable of singing as well as Jimmy Ford in this unaccompanied style.

We usually played our off nights in another after-hours spot in Galveston. This was the wild Gulf Coast with sizzling bebop and a Texan stylized nightlife around the clock; it seemed that everything was all happening at once.

Unfortunately most pianos were small spinets but it was possible to project a piercing sound. During this period of my quartet training there were only two others I knew of better than Jimmy Ford; Parker and Sonny Stitt.

Jimmy told me that after completing high school he journeyed by train from Houston to New York's Grand Central Station hailed a cab and went straight to 52nd Street. He entered the dimly lit *Three Deuces*, walked over beside the bandstand, opened his tenor case, inconspicuously fastened the neck strap and waited until Fats Navarro finished soloing. Then before Bud Powell could begin his improvisation Jimmy jumped up and honked his brains out. The musicians were

angered by his audacity but when he had finished the audience broke into heavy applause.

The musicians took Jimmy under their wing and put a needle in his vein. As he explained to me; in his earlier days he was just a one-note tenor player and by finding a good sounding tone (note) he repeated it rhythmically and then by ear, added a few tones until the chord (harmony) changed. Immediately afterwards he had to find other tones to repeat over the next chord. This is all without taking any saxophone lessons.

Within his sixth month in New York, Jimmy knew every title in every key. He made many great players on the scene (Getz, Sims, Eager) a bit insecure and occasionally uncomfortable; whenever I mentioned the name of Jimmy Ford to Parker, Getz or Zoot Sims, they invariably expressed their admiration.

In my opinion Jimmy sounded a mixture of Stitt and Parker but James had his own *skillet* and played inevitably as if he and *skillet* were aflame.

Local musicians said, whenever Count Basie's band played Houston, a jam session followed the gig. But Basie's musicians weren't too happy seeing Jimmy with horn in hand; he played rings around most everyone and never showed mercy. Houstonians referred to Jimmy as the *Great White Bird*...and definitely he could back it up. He was incapable of giving a bad night's performance. While in New York, he had replaced Stitt a number of times in Dizzy's Quintet.

But let me go back to Jimmy's formative years. Mother, a heavy alcoholic, would take her fourteen year old Jimmy into nightclubs where he sat in with the band and soloed. The bartender poured too many drinks for mom as well as for her underage son. By the time he was twenty-two, with a hopelessly incurable lifestyle, he was promptly ostracised from any inheritance; Jimmy was from a family of oil wealth.

One afternoon the two of us played in the family villa and although Jimmy introduced me to his mother, we didn't really meet because she was hallucinating. But his grandmother was slim and attractive at seventy-six and possessed a most elegant charm. She sat in the living room and listened intently to our wild energetic bebop. After playing a title Jimmy would ask, "How did you like that Mumsy?"

And she answered politely, "That's fine Jimmy, I enjoyed it very much." Then as jive as can be imagined, "We're going to play *My Buddy* just for you Mumsy." And she, "Thank you Jimmy." After we had burned *My Buddy* he asked again for her reaction, "That's fine, I enjoyed it and as you know it's one of my favourites." Ever so appreciative, Mumsy remained seated for at least an hour and then excused herself. Jimmy and I continued playing but during one of my solos he, standing behind me, quickly placed the palm of his hand on my forehead and jerked my head back; well, naturally the mouth opened and with his other hand he deposited a tablet in my mouth; then handed me a beer, "Here, you can drink while playing with your left hand." Fortunately, it was no more dangerous than a full pot of coffee. That was one of many afternoons with Jimmy; and then at the last minute we rushed off to work until dawn.

Let me elaborate a moment on Houston's folklore. There was a Mafia boss, still in his fifties and of very good health. Answering his doorbell one day, he was confronted with two massive uniformed policemen. With an authoritative voice one announced, "The district attorney wants to see you and our orders are to take you down to his office." The boss responded, "What?" and flattened the uniformed bull with one punch; then he shouted to the other cop, "Now, drag your partner's ass into that squad car and you can tell your D.A. when he wants to talk with me he'll send two detectives in an unmarked car." Later, two detectives arrived at the house in a plain Ford and took the boss downtown; after the district attorney had finished speaking with him the same two detectives escorted him home. That was the mafia's style in Houston.

Once after playing a gig for a gangster club owner, the thug not only took Jimmy's alto but refused to pay and continued intimidating and harassing James for most of an hour. Finally Jimmy was paid, collected his horn and left the club raging with anger. Just before dawn he returned and at the rear of the building stacked a huge pile of wooden crates, soaked them, zipped his zippo lighter and torched that nightclub to ashes.

Another saga in the life of James; it's near the last hour of a six night booking and the gangster/owner speaks with Jimmy about his \$500.00 bar tab plus

quite a few cash advances, and that his wages were not enough to cover the total amount. James counterattacks, "I'm going back on that bandstand and if all the people stand and applaud after I finish blowing the first tune, I don't pay my tab but if they don't stand and applaud, you won't have to pay the week's wages for my quartet." The owner agreed, James returned to the stand and said to his musicians, "Make this a good one fellows" and began blowing hell out of "*Flying Home*." Of course the audience went crazy with applause, even the floor was bombarded by stomping boots; his tab was written off and miraculously the musicians collected all of their money.

I preferred Jimmy's alto but he was truly a Houston styled *Texas be-bopping tenor player*.

Just to give an idea of the cost of living back in '52. I paid \$65.00 for a tailored suit; a long sleeved shirt of finest wool (full zipper front) for \$10.00; tailored sharkskin trousers for \$11.00; even for musicians the living was somewhat easy, but those *times* were soon to change.

Another tale about Jimmy; he goes into a café, sits at the counter and the waitress asks, "What will you have?" Jimmy glances at the menu and replies, "Give me a chicken *shit* salad sandwich." Unmoved, the waitress asks, "And what would you like to drink with that?" With a straight face, "Oh, give me a bottle of Bud."

It amazes me that no one in Houston even mentioned Peck Kelly to me. This pianist not only remained there but refused to leave regardless of promising offers from New York and Chicago. Twenty years had past before I even heard the name of this unrivalled player. But on the other hand, it was best for me to leave. The long arm of law enforcement was applying heat, especially to Jimmy and in those times most jazz musicians were destined for detainment unless they kept moving; one never lingered too long in any city...especially around election time.

CHAPTER SEVEN

For me Houston had been a fantastic experience and I learned much about intuitive playing while working with Jimmy but returning to Japan with the money I had saved was my main concern. So I left Houston the last week of January '53 for Los Angeles with two good tenor players, Kendall Ramey and Bo Boyd. The highway took us northwest through Texas and as we joined Route 66 in Albuquerque my sleepy eyes opened. This moment at daybreak was nothing less than a revelation; I felt so relieved leaving those southern deep-fried states far behind. Near the last of our westward journey we took a different route and dropped down to Oceanside, California; I had reached the Pacific. We checked into a motel, went to a club, ordered food and jammed the rest of the night with an interesting tenor player, Woody Isabell. After another night's sleep we continued driving north to Hermosa Beach where we listened all Sunday afternoon to Howard Rumsey's *Lighthouse All Stars*. I was very impressed with the pianist Hampton Hawes but none of the horn players measured up to Jimmy Ford.

We quickly found an apartment in a professional building, 2525 West Seventh across from the south-west corner of Los Angeles' West Lake Park, where we could play until ten o'clock at night. I rented an upright piano the following day and we played jam sessions whenever and wherever we could. I also worked days for the telephone company to supplement my income because during the first six months of establishing residence, the Musician's Union didn't allow itinerant members to work; this ruling applied to all cities of the U.S. Musicians were expected to remain in their city of origin. Anyhow, my sleepless euphoric nights were for music and with a shortage of pianists I rarely slept.

Los Angeles was exciting but the magnetic pull of Japan continued even stronger; I couldn't get her out of my mind. I applied at the U.S. Embassy for permanent residence in Japan. On hindsight of course, I was naïve and completely foolish. Nonetheless, the Embassy official explained, "I'm sure if you were an atomic scientist they would welcome you but never as a musician."

Undeterred, I returned to the Embassy the following week requesting residence in Mexico. They clarified that I would not be allowed to work in Mexico unless a Mexican citizen submitted a request with a written contract to the U.S. Embassy for my being engaged to perform there. Although a number of jazz musicians worked in Mexico mine was a *Catch 22* situation and the bottom line was that I really wasn't musically mature or professional enough. I simply didn't have a name that could attract enough people to make such an undertaking profitable. I began to realize that leaving the country was out of the question but I couldn't let the idea of Japan go completely.

The weekends began on Friday afternoon, continuing with an all night jam session, then playing throughout all hours of Saturday and Sunday. The marathon usually ended around noon Monday, at which time I would fall asleep for a few seconds while playing, wake up with the first thought, "What title am I playing? Which tonality (key) am I in?" Where else could one get such training; making music from the subconscious, instinctively, automatically and intuitively?

A few others from Houston soon migrated to join our musical community on the West Coast...Max McElroy, tenor and baritone sax; Bobby Bryant, bass; Harry Johnson, drums and a lovely singer Donna Lee, better known as the Dragon Lady.

The first local musician I met was a drummer by the name of Al Hicks. He had a car, a set of drums in the trunk, an outrageously beautiful lady each evening and he drove to clubs where we could jam. Nightlife in Los Angeles was as exciting as it should be for a youth of twenty-one. Yet, how strange the destiny; I could never have imagined that Al would become my manager about forty years later.

Needing *coins*, I accepted all work and some of it was very interesting. I played with a Latin big band in San Pedro but none of the musicians spoke English; all of them were from Mexico, excellent players and the gig continued for three weeks.

One night I worked with tenor saxophonist, Buddy Colette; Eugene Wright was the bassist and Harry Johnson played drums. When Buddy announced the intermission, I stood up to leave the bandstand but Eugene said, "Stay, sit back down and we'll play some blues." Harry and I were delighted. When Buddy

announced the second intermission, Eugene made the same suggestion again and Harry and I were getting a good lesson in timing. I saw Eugene a number of times during the late fifties when he joined Dave Brubeck; then the group swung. Eugene always set the perfect example of a musician and gentleman who indisputably inspired; me in particular.

The Houston clan found a house to rent with three bedrooms on Gramercy Place near Beverly Boulevard. It had been built in the early twenties as a residence for a Russian Ambassador. I rented an upright piano for one of the bedrooms; it was music at all hours. Two elderly women, in their late sixties, owned the place and wanted to vacation in France for six months and they thought it was all so charming that three young jazz musicians, with two beautiful women, would agree to lease their dwelling and reverberate the walls with jazzed *tones* of gold. Carson Smith moved in and we were a burning duo for hours on end. He still worked the Haig Club with Gerry and Chet but I must say that Carson was truly the best bassist I had ever played with and I learned so much from him, especially chord progressions and standards. One evening when we took a break with a beer in the kitchen, Carson told me about his thirteen year old brother, who in his opinion would become a bassist. Let me skip ahead to '58 when much to my surprise, Putter Smith knocks and stands at my door with his arm around the neck of a bass. He enquired, "Would you like to play?" Giving only his first name, I didn't make the connection that he was Carson's brother. Four hours later while wrapping his bass he asked, "Do you want to play again tomorrow?" Well, we practiced daily and after a month I happened to mention to another musician, "You know, of all the bassists I've played with Putter's approach to the instrument reminds me more of Carson Smith than anyone." The musician smiled and replied, "He's Carson's brother." Putter and I have continued playing at every opportunity for almost fifty years. I became very close to his father Smitty, played for him often and we had interesting discussions about music. I admired his special humour and philosophical approach to life; we shared a similar wavelength. But with my narrative of Carson and Putter, I must spring back to '53 when I was still getting my *tapping feet* wet.

Met Jack Sheldon and we played many jam sessions all over Los Angeles. Although Chet could cast a heavy shadow over most trumpeters, Jack nevertheless maintained his prominence musically and when I compare the two today, Jack sounds as interesting to me as Chet.

Steve White played all woodwinds and tenor sax. He was a manic-depressive with the wittiest remarks (some ingenious) and this creative ability extended into his improvisations. One Sunday afternoon, Steve played his tenor while sitting on top of an automobile as he was driven to the next jam session and like a procession, cars followed honking their horns; being a native Los Angelian he had a handle on show biz. But when Steve was behind the wheel, he drove wilder than a Hollywood stunt driver; on the wrong side of streets, through red lights, far beyond the speed limit and rarely did the police notice; it was as though he collected protective angels. Steve spoke with great authority; one intermission he walked behind the bar and asked the humourless owner/bartender, "Mind if I make a *White Special*?" The owner, with antenna alerted gave a reluctant nod and mumbled O.K. as Steve took a large metal can from the mixer and poured an approximated ounce from each bottle of alcohol. He gestured a toast to the owner, drank the contents, returned to the bandstand and played as though sober. The owner wanted to kill him but his club was packed, people were even standing and this was a Monday night. There was one unique difference in Los Angeles, the jazz community was integrated. Los Angeles a few years earlier had closed down Central Avenue which had been the Mecca for both jazz and integration...but *Central's melody* still lingered in '53.

Whenever I finished a gig or a session, I dropped by the Haig Club and listened to Gerry Mulligan and Chet Baker; my apartment was within walking distance. They played pure musical magic six nights a week for two and a half years and their performances were far superior to any of their LPs. I heard Oscar Pettiford sit in for the entire evening on cello and his playing this night was much greater than the cello recording; Gerry just stood shaking his head in disbelief.

Another night Buddy Rich sat in; the first title he sounded like himself but with the second piece his brush work had transformed into a homogeneous style with Chet and Gerry's quartet. These many evenings in the *Haig* were not only

educational but awe inspiring; I've heard Chet play with a divine magic that he never duplicated on recordings.

The *Circus Club* on Sunset Boulevard just east of Western Avenue had a jam session policy and also a direct telephone link to the vice squad. The friendly owner who tried to disguise his cop like appearance by wearing colourful Hawaiian shirts, would say to the young musicians, "Don't be like those antisocial beboppers who just stay at home and play to the four walls; you should have an attentive audience and here at the *Circus* jazz is appreciated."

When the bandstand became filled with *sleepy-eyed* horn players, the owner from behind the bar phoned his *colleagues at headquarters* and then if the musicians stepped out of the club to leave or just get some fresh air, bright headlights glared as the *felt top* few with guns searched thoroughly. Later, so many wished they had remained playing to those four walls in their apartment.

The LP release of Toronto's Massey Hall concert with Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Max Roach, Bud Powell and Charles Mingus reached Los Angeles by June. One afternoon Al Hicks brought the recording along and we listened to this live performance in a mild state of shock. Within the week I had a copy on *real to real* tape and listened repeatedly at every opportunity. Even today in Berlin I have it on CD and it is still played. As mentioned in the liner notes, Bud had just been released from Bellevue where he had received shock treatments; he was taken to Grand Central for the train trip with Parker and group to Toronto for the concert. He immediately drank a quart of Scotch and began opening the next plus whatever *else* was available. The point is that regardless of toxic consumption Powell was able to solo impressively and also accompany as no other pianist in music history; I'll admit that he tried to confuse (unsuccessfully) Gillespie and Parker but his accompanying was completely unique. Also included on the CD is a trio set that I find disappointing; I *hear* his insanity and *feel* the suffering. Shock therapy was in fashion at that time and *it* destroyed a divine talent. Let me slip back to the early forties when Bud, at that time with Cootie Williams's band in Brooklyn, stopped the dancers and John Collins told me the story. It was a large dance hall packed and during Bud's solo on "How High The Moon" the dancers stopped and gathered in a

huge swarm around the bandstand listening to many choruses; even Cootie didn't want to break this magical moment by bringing the title to its conclusion; Bud Powell was sixteen.

I played five hours nightly for six weeks in quartet at Fifth and San Pedro for all of June, July and August '53. This is one of the most dangerous corners anywhere. It was a ruthless world and the police did not interfere with anyone; they just showed their presence. Standing outside the club during intermission one evening, I heard a woman being stabbed and screaming her lungs out. At this same moment a policeman in uniform casually walked along the sidewalk oblivious to everything. I remarked to a bystander, "Why doesn't he go over and show his badge or something?" A man standing nearby said in no uncertain terms, "If a policeman went over to help he would draw his last breath. Man, the law is different in this section of the jungle." I never drank much while playing but this gig was the exception. Max McElroy (tenor) had returned to Houston and his replacement was vibraphonist, Joe Dillard. The upright piano was so flat and out of tune with his vibes; so when he played in *B flat* I transposed to *B natural*, a half step above, and this was still a quarter off. I guzzled beer but between the intonation and intoxication, my nerves were more than unraveled. During one set, I could no longer hold my kidneys and told the drummer to take a long solo while I went to relieve myself. Now a description of the men's room is necessary. You entered a small rectangular room, three and a half feet wide, ten feet in length with a barred window at the far end just above the toilet and for the urinal, a Spanish styled trough extending the length of one wall.

When I entered, there was a Mexican standing at the urinal. I took my place standing to his right and began relieving myself. Then a second later another Mexican entered to my right and now I was between them. The Mexican to my left pulled a wicked looking knife and screamed threats as the one on my right instantly pulled his knife...but I couldn't stop urinating. Of course for a split second they were frozen in time, ignoring me as though I were nonexistent. Then the attacker to my right rushed towards his enemy to my left; I immediately jumped backwards and pressed my rear side against the wall (opposite the urinal) as he charged past

me. I turned with a quick look over my shoulder and hurried back to the bandstand. The explosive drum solo ended just as I reached the piano but I continued glancing over my shoulder while we played. Then I noticed the survivor leaving quickly...but he still had such an adrenaline rush that his aura radiated the paranormal glow of a combatant just after a fresh kill; his appearance was completely different from all others. A couple of minutes later the corpse was discovered and with both feet dragging, he was pulled through the club and dumped into the street. Inside, the bartender prepared a bucket of water, grabbed a mop and proceeded to the men's room; it was all in a day's work. People at the bar looked around but pretended not to notice anything. No police came, no one was visibly disturbed. It was simply the jungle's law on Fifth Street between Main and San Pedro. I found this section of Los Angeles far more dangerous than New York City's Bowery, where I played one afternoon in nineteen sixty.

But there's a point I'll remember about this period of McCarthyism, that narco detectives constantly harassed jazz musicians. Anyone carrying a musical instrument was stopped and searched. These detectives even checked with club owners the names of all hired jazz performers and if any were considered users, they wanted them replaced with others. When the owner refused, two detectives sat all night near the entrance. So, as customers entered they instantly realized they were recognized; it ruined business; some groups were canceled after their opening night. If someone became a suspect, detectives broke through your door and *planted* something unlawful if necessary. The joke most frequently heard was, "Being a jazz musician in the U.S. is like being Jewish in Nazi Germany." Many good players, some innocent, were placed in prison where their musical spirit was eventually destroyed; a few even changed their profession.

Finally our gig at Fifth & San Pedro ended the last of August and within a week I received a call to work in West Las Vegas at the El Morocco, located on the corner of Jackson & "E" Streets.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Driving across southern California's mountainous desert the beginning of September can be unbelievably hot at midday. Bobby Bryant, my bassist, drove me in his unairconditioned Mercury and we arrived just in time to check in a motel, shower, wolf down some food and start the first set at ten o'clock that evening.

The building, originally an Indian stable for horses had been converted into a gambling nightclub on the other side of the railroad tracks; with streets unpaved, it was reminiscent of a dusty western scene in a cowboy movie.

Club El Morocco represented the last of the Kansas City jazz days. A small place, very clean, with two dice tables, four for poker, two blackjack stands with stools and in back of the bar you could try your luck with Kino. Local people skilled in gambling were able to win enough to pay their rent, other necessities and often with an excessive amount of *coins* to spend. Oscar Crozier, boss of the El Morocco, was a gentleman of brown pigmentation with an attractive blond wife by the name of Barbara who was also the club's accountant. His mixologist was also a lovely singer from Chicago by the name of Conny Strong and I remain in contact with her to this very day. I enjoyed an ethical business relationship with Oscar and for the following nine months I played six hours per night with one day off each week.

When I finished the first evening at four o'clock in the morning, Connie took me across the street to a café and shouted to the cook, "Hey man, this is the new piano player, give him the biggest and best steak in the house." He shook my hand, it all was so natural, I had my appetite and the tender T-Bone was fantastic. That first night she told Oscar to keep me and this camaraderie gave such a feeling of blood sister relationship.

I found this sunny community so relaxed and the people somehow handled integration as though they were colorblind. I felt better on this side of town than out on the Vegas strip in a luxurious casino. But naturally I was advised to have an apartment on the *blanc* side of town; no one wished to trouble the police.

I wrote my Shanghai princess in Fukuoka that there would be a slight delay but she, replying furiously, said I had gone east instead of west and of all places to Las Vegas. I mailed again expressing my intentions but she has had enough and wrote that all mail would be returned unopened; my next letter was still sealed when it came back.

I was crushed and heartbroken...but I was playing better than ever. I had my own trio in Las Vegas and no matter where I looked, beautiful women were everywhere. Even though music was top priority, my biological demands were unyielding.

The very next week a voluptuous blond entered the club and played the dice table. I approached her after my last set, exhaled warmth on the back of her neck and we left together. Three days later I was shocked when she told me she had recently become seventeenth. When we met she said her age was twenty-four and I believed. I now pictured myself in Federal prison. But when a girl looks so mature one doesn't bother to check her birth certificate? We lived together, fought like animals and after five months separated, much to my relief.

Nat Cole made three one month appearances at the Sands Hotel during my stay at the El Morocco and would come over after the show and have a drink at the bar while his bassist, Charlie Harris sat in with me every night.

When Lena Horn sang at the Sands, her bassist, George Duvivier and percussionist, Chico Hamilton, played a few sets with my trio every night for the entire period of their month's engagement.

Tommy Potter and Hank Jones joined us every night when Artie Shaw's band appeared on the Vegas Strip; also bassist Max Bennett and trumpeter Nick Traves, when Peggy Lee's Show appeared at the Flamingo Hotel. It was the best training I could experience anywhere...even better than if I had been in Los Angeles, Chicago or New York.

The El Morocco was so free of problems concerning integration. I exchanged greetings with Dorothy Danridge at the bar night after night and there was nothing more than that. Like the old west, everyone treated each other with respect...but unlike the old west, a gun on the hip wasn't needed. Las Vegas was the *thousand in*

one night dream...however, the next decade brought mass tourism to the tables and the quality of night life changed.

Once for just over a twenty-four hour period, a husband and wife *team* from back east visited the El Morocco; played poker and nearly acquired the club with all furnishings. When I returned to work the following evening they were still playing. Hours later they left empty handed and the employees, especially we musicians, were all relieved. Here you became aware that life win or lose was only for the moment.

Now allow me to backtrack for a moment; just after I became employed at the El Morocco, Charlie Parker arrived in Los Angeles without a rhythm section. Carson Smith was Parker's chosen bassist and suggested that I should be the pianist but unknown to Carson I was in Las Vegas. So the Musicians Union Local #47 of Los Angeles chose a piano player who played boogie woogie only in the key of "C". Fortunately, Loraine Geller (after her job) sat in with Parker; Carson said that her playing saved each evening. When the gig was over Carson heard that I was working in Las Vegas. He drove up, told me about Parker's engagement and then we played all night; I feel compelled to say that his energy and timing gave me greater support than all of the other bassists. But looking back, I think it was better that I worked in Las Vegas because Parker's strong personality and damaging life-style influenced so many young musicians.

About three o' clock one morning, two young Mexican toughs entered the club, ordered drinks, then stood near the bandstand and gawked at us while we played. One requested a Mexican folk song and when I told him I didn't know the melody, both of them slowly placed a hand in the pocket of their jacket and stepped onto the bandstand. The request was repeated and they demanded that I play it; the smoke filled room was tense indeed.

At this moment Charlie Horse, bartender for the early morning shift, who weighed at least two hundred fifty pounds with a head the size of a pumpkin, neck just as thick, walked around from the end of the bar with a quart of Vodka in each hand. He approached the desperados and said, "Both of you! Take your hand out of your pocket." Naturally, knives were held. "You can drop them on the floor and

leave.” Whew, after that front door closed behind them I bought a round of drinks and we musicians all toasted Charlie Horse.

Another early morning, a trumpet player walked in and insisted on playing with us; he was dreadfully untalented. We quickly took intermission and I told him he could pack that horn in its case. I was then alerted by one of the patrons that they recognized him as an informer for the police department. This was the kind of life jazz musicians normally dealt with; for survival, one needed a guardian angel on each shoulder.

Like a nerve hub, the El Morocco was stimulating; and with such famous musicians as George Duvivier coming directly from New York with the latest news about Parker, I was getting inside information. It was sad to hear that Parker’s health was plummeting. I couldn’t believe my ears as George elaborated about Stitt playing better than his master but Duvivier assured me it was true. Of course this was roughly a year before Parker’s death.

There were some interesting local players. Pretty Slim, a drummer who could swing as beautifully as anyone, anywhere; he merely wanted to create a swing feeling and he invariably refused to solo. From nearby Nellis airbase; Larry Aubry, trumpet; Percy Burrell, alto; and an excellent tenor saxophonist who only went by the name of Jiggs. On the next block Jiggs led a rock and roll quartet for dancing but after work he frequently came to sit in with us; he sounded like a warm-hearted Sonny Stitt. Jake Garheim played trumpet in the mode of Fats Navarro; Joe Pass often came with his guitar and all of these musicians were exceptionally talented; jazz was alive on the west side of the rails.

Las Vegas has an interesting mountain ridge to the east that reminds one of an Indian lying on his back and facing the sky; many commented on this similarity. Each morning around six I would look towards the profile in a meditative way as the sun ascended the peak; this became a ritual for me just as sitting in that Florida pine grove after a long night’s work three years before. I prefer being awake as our revolving stage turns to the sun.

Stan Kenton's band, featuring Charlie Parker, played Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles that April. I took two nights off, travelled with blond mate by train

and as we walked through Los Angeles' Union Station, where so many movies had been filmed, I noticed Parker going out the side door and into the small park; we approached and I asked, "Excuse me, are you Charlie Parker?" With a prideful smile he replied, "I'm guilty," and invited us to sit with him on the bench. I briefly told him that I had listened to all of his recordings since '45; he asked if I were a musician, I answered in the affirmative. As the dialogue progressed, I mentioned that I had worked with Jimmy Ford and now Parker was impressed, voiced his concern about Jimmy and spoke highly of Ford's playing. Soon I mentioned that we should hurry, go to the hotel and change for his performance; he seemed disappointed that we had to leave and his sincerity made it difficult for me to do so. To this day, no one has ever made a greater impression on me than Parker; the strength and glow of his persona was awesome.

That evening when Kenton's band screamed the loud introduction in full tutti, Parker entered stage right. As he still was assembling the goose neck on his alto the first tone was a shrill squeak; with his right hand he instantaneously twisted (adjusted) the mouth-piece, this squeak was consequently followed by three tones (without any break in the phrase) fingered with the left and then he continued playing with both hands. Speaking in the abstract, I would say that compositionally his squeak, being successfully resolved, was the beginning tone of his solo. Playing while he walked to the microphone five meters away at centerstage, you heard the sound of his alto projecting over the volume, decimal level, of the nineteen-piece band. The audience went crazy; they stood, waving their hands as they screamed; his stage entrance was no less than metaphysical; I've never witnessed anything as impressive.

The following evening Parker played in quartet at the Tiffany Club with a local rhythm section (chosen by the owner, Jack Tucker) but when the drummer, Larance Marabel was invited by Parker to sit in, the rhythmic feeling soared. Nonetheless, on intermission Parker walked over to the exit, turned and blew his breath towards a triangular shaped advertising place card on an empty table. And while it flew off floating to the floor, all eyes were on the card but he had already turned and disappeared through the doorway. He didn't re-enter the club that

night. It's pathetic that Parker had to play with such a mediocre bassist and piano player but on the other hand, a club owner couldn't trust Parker to hire musicians who were non-users.

By May of '54 my engagement at the El Morocco came to an end. Each night law enforcers were observing from the bar and staying throughout the evening; Oscar had to let us go. Bobby and his wife returned to Houston, Harry went to Los Angeles and I stayed for two more days in a motel on the strip because I was trying to land a new booking in a club. Unluckily for me, the second afternoon I decided to visit an interesting conversationalist, a young lady slightly older than myself whose apartment was two blocks away.

When I knocked, her door swiftly opened and a detective in an Ivy League suit pointed a thirty-eight caliber *Smith & Wesson* directly at my chest. I was invited inside with hands raised; I took two steps towards him and asked, "What have you done with her?" My acting, worthy of an Oscar made an impression and the detective stepped back. A sheriff, weighing about three hundred pounds and occupying most of a large couch barked, "Get your god damn ass over here and sit down. Aren't you that piano player over at the Morocco?" I answered truthfully. With eyes permanently squinted from years in bright sunlight he continued, "What do you think you are doing by playing over there?" I explained that I had studied classical piano since four and a half, was serious about improvised music and the only place in Las Vegas I could play without making a musical compromise was the El Morocco. He signaled with a fat finger to his deputy, I was immediately handcuffed and taken to city jail; the Ivy Leaguer from New England had been upstaged.

The Boston detective had been sent to Las Vegas for the purpose of organizing a mass raid with the assistance and cooperation of local police. Translation; city dude telling a *Wild West Sheriffs Department* about surveillance and how to coordinate multiple arrests. The next morning a jailer opens the cell and takes me upstairs to the temporary office of the alien northeasterner. He was quite courteous, offered me a chair and explained that he personally understood my desire to be a jazz pianist and about playing over on the other side the tracks; I

thought he was undoubtedly open-minded for an enforcer of the nation's system of rules. Then he began demonstrating his new tape recorder and the latest technology for small hidden microphones. Afterwards, he said that there was no reason to detain me (translation; I had the clean arms of a non-user) and signed for my release. Hardly believing my ears, I thanked him and checked out of the Grey Bar Hotel; as it is jokingly referred to by jazz musicians.

I returned to the motel, phoned Harry in Los Angeles and five hours later he and my new bassist Wayne Harris stuffed me with my possessions into a '46 Dodge coupe (there was no back seat) and we sped west to Los Angeles, the *City of Angels*; I felt more like a fugitive in search of an archangel.

Las Vegas had truly been a life of drinking 'til dawn and waking up at sunset but it had definitely fortified me with resilience for burning *ivories*, chorus after chorus.

CHAPTER NINE

Looking out the side window, silently improvising and feeling brazen as we rolled along Hollywood's Freeway, I decided that my return would be a *take two*. But best of all I didn't have to waste time hunting for a place to stay. A group of musicians (bassist Wayne Harris; pianist Mark Travecino and vibraphonist Joe Dillar) had rented two adjacent duplex apartments on Melrose Avenue at Santa Monica Boulevard directly across from the east entrance of Paramount Studios. There was jamming all of the twenty-four hours; when a musician felt sleepy he could go into the other apartment and crash on one of three mattresses on the floor. I did nothing but play. I had no contact to the real world, attended no movies, never read newspapers; there was nothing else in my existence but music.

Los Angeles had jam sessions beginning at six o'clock Sunday mornings and members of the rhythm section were paid five dollars. The next session would start at one o'clock in the afternoon and another at eight that evening. I'd worked straight through collecting *coins* from each. In those days one could buy Florsheim

loafers for \$22.00 or a good sport coat for \$30.00 so a musician could dress for little money, but *all* is relative. In the fifties the *U.S. Dollar* had much more value than today and if you drifted even further back to around the first decade of the twentieth century, one could obtain men's shoes for \$1.75 or a three-piece wool suit for \$7.50; such advertisements were to be found in San Francisco's newspapers...at that time *legal tender* was redeemable in gold or silver.

I remember one late night after a session being driven up to Joe Castro's *Falkan's Lair*, a mansion formally owned by Rudolph Valentino in the hills of Hollywood. Joe, a good pianist from Havana was sponsored by Doris Duke of tobacco fame. She dropped in and stayed with him perhaps only a few days twice each year. Sessions were frequently held in the *Lair* as he had two Steinways and the finest recording equipment available. When I left the sky was lit by a new dawn. I walked down the long tree lined driveway to the parking area and at this moment I realized I was truly in Hollywood; there was even a bright crescent moon high above. Joe had certainly passed around some fine Cuban cigars that morning.

August of '54, Jack Sheldon hired me to record with his quartet in Western Recorders Studio on Sunset Boulevard for Herb Kimmel's newly formed Jazz West label. It was the first *date* for all of us except Ralph Pena, the bassist. Herb wanted the musicians to be relaxed so he brought a quart of scotch and a case (24 bottles) of beer; just what he thought was needed to make the players feel cool, so I proceeded to quench a hot summer's thirst. William Claxton photographed the session and caught me at the height of intoxication as I sang how one of my titles should be interpreted. I had a superb Steinway [B] but was soon drinking coffee to sober up.

For years I was unable to listen to my playing on this recording and then a friend mailed the (re-issued) CD. However, I can now recognize from where I came, just a heavy handed "*stomper*" from Arkansas. Nevertheless, the individual stamp is there and of course it takes time before one becomes familiar with their musical identity.

Worked in Art Pepper's quartet each Wednesday and Thursday through September '54. But travelling from Los Angeles to the club in Pasadena reminded me of sneaking through enemy territory. Art hid very low in the car's back seat,

paranoid that narco agents cruising by might recognise him. He insisted that the driver avoid all freeways and take only back streets for this twenty mile journey. The trip should have taken twenty minutes instead of an hour. I was horrified just being in the car with him; hardly anyone spoke. His manic behaviour was that of an escapee. On the bandstand we all feared that cops would come and take us away because even if Art was clean, *they* would put something illegal in his and our pockets. The anxiety surely was evident in our music. Art played beautifully but he was no joy to work with. He wanted chords voiced exactly as they are written in harmony books. For a dominant seven chord, he wanted the root, third, fifth and seventh intervals played and stacked vertically in that order. I told him that such voicings sounded so mundane and utterly boring but he insisted that was how he wanted to hear the chord played. He was of the pre bop generation where less is better and simplicity is absolutely divine. We worked a few years later and although our conversation was pleasant, my energetic playing was that of an aborigine from the jungle compared to his; still, he played on occasion like a nightingale. Pepper's autobiography is tragic and certainly should be read; such a style of life can't seriously be called living. In '95, I heard a story about Art; he had been released from prison, was on foot and entered a place for dancing in the farming region around the vicinity of Gilroy. Art went up to the bandstand and asked the saxophonist if he could play his horn. After a couple of titles he thanked the musicians and continued hitchhiking towards Los Angeles. They said he appeared to be in dreadful health; this event took place only a few years before his *dossier* was finally closed.

A talented, certainly adventurous and wild young drummer with my trio took advantage of a lovely working girl for the sum of one thousand five hundred dollars and departed for a destination unknown. Her *manager broker* hired three young Sicilians from Temple Street of downtown Los Angeles and their sole purpose was to learn from me just where this drummer could be found; I've mentioned nationality and street location only to emphasise the seriousness of their professional intent.

I answered their knock on my door which unfortunately lacked a peephole. But on hearing a female voice convincingly faked, I began unlocking and suddenly with the strength of a tidal wave they crashed through ripping off security chain and wooden door facing.

A long knife was held at my throat and with the calmest nerves possible, I invited all three inside. *Pirate* (descriptive names are used) guarded the door with flashing blade; *Pockface* shoved me into a stuffed chair and began interrogating; but *Shorty* remained perhaps six feet to my left with his right hand inserted into a leather glove. Since the floor was carpeted he could take a couple of silent steps and with gained momentum hit my cheekbone with such tremendous force. It knocks no one unconscious but you must believe when I say that at the moment of impact so many sparkling stars are seen in universal darkness. *Shorty* continued his repetitive workout with gloved hand and always on my left cheekbone; I had become his favoured punching bag. Unfortunately, I had absolutely no idea where the drummer might be. I offered a couple of possibilities but *Pockface* found them all unacceptable. The telephone rang and *Shorty*, lifting the receiver answered in a gangster's dialect, "He can't talk now baby, he's busy with a couple of broads," then slammed phone into the cradle. But being so near I recognised the caller's voice, a singer whom I'll refer to as *Nightingale*. Questions accompanied by frequent jabs continued. However *Nightingale* dialled again and hysterically demanded to speak with me but hung up after *Shorty* yelled, "He's with the broads."

Next, I was escorted into bedroom and told to lie down with my legs spread. *Pirate*, obeying a gesture from *Pockface* approached me brandishing his knife and wearing a most sinister smile. My eyes glanced at the window and I seriously contemplated jumping, but *Pirate* was much too near and could easily foil any impulsive action on my part. Also, ground level was nine floors below. I'm not suicidal but the act is preferable to torture.

At that very moment the loudest knocking imaginable came from the front door. I was instructed to be calm and answer, but my voice quivered "Who's there?" The reply in deepest baritone timbre, "O' Grady and O' Connor."

Actually, these two were the most notorious narco cops of Hollywood fame and throughout the career their reputation and number of arrests was unequalled. In '48, O' Grady took Robert Mitchum into custody for smoking illegal herbs; front-page headlines nationwide.

Before I unlocked the door, *Pockface* now panicked with fear whispered that if truths were revealed I would later suffer consequences. After reassuring him, I opened and graciously welcomed O' Grady and O' Connor inside, then introduced the *trio* as my invited guests. The gangsters were familiar to O' Grady who began shouting, after a brief search, that he had recently arrested *Pockface's* brother and sent him north to San Quentin penitentiary. The air was electrified. Yet since I'm covering for and not pressing charges against them, the thugs were dismissed with a few smacks to the head and bodily shoves against the wall. After their exit I was alone with the law-enforcing *duo*. They began grilling me about my associates, "How did you get that eye?" I confessed that my eye resulted from a bar fight the previous evening. The *duo* finally left. They knew every detail of the evening because *Nightingale* earlier explained my situation over the phone and had pleaded desperately for them to go save me.

Now completely alone, absolutely in shock as silence was broken by the ringing telephone; jangled nerves made me jump on my feet. It was *Nightingale* and she became horrified on hearing my account of the perilous evening. She instructed me to wait inside and that Arnie, a mutual friend would soon knock on the door to transport me safely from my apartment to hers. On arrival at her place we immediately jumped into bed, which is natural for anyone who has narrowly escaped torture and death. And sure enough within minutes the working girl phoned. I made clear as it rang that I'd disappear in a flash if she mentioned my being there. She did. I fled with jacket in hand apprehensive that the *trio* might possibly be parked nearby observing my frenzied exit.

I was now walking the streets of West Hollywood at dawn possessing only one nickel that the *unholy three* had overlooked while rummaging through my wallet. I would have gladly traded my left foot for breakfast and coffee. Still I'm blessed with charmed luck, for on this day I had an afternoon rehearsal with Frank

Rosolino's quintet; yet with no alternative, I continued walking seven hours on an empty stomach; I hadn't eaten in over twelve hours. I was panic stricken and constantly in fear of being recognised by the *head hunters*. Spotting a mirror in a shop window, I noticed a bluish ebony bruise from the left cheekbone that continued through the bridge of my nose. I met Charlie Mariano at noon, our appointed time and he drove me to Frank's rehearsal in Hermosa Beach. I told everyone that I had been mugged as I came out of a movie. They listened and looked but I'm sure they thought of other possible scenarios. After rehearsing with Rosolino's quintet, I gratefully accepted an advanced payment and within a few days we opened at the *Haig Club* for a period of three months; my California debut with blackened eye. We continued through the fourth month only in quartet with Mariano, trio the fifth and my sixth month was solo piano. It was a great gig for me especially; Frank Rosolino, trombone; Charlie Mariano, alto; Max Bennett, bass; Mel Lewis, drums and all charts were arranged by Bill Holman. That spring we recorded an LP for Capitol Records, "*Frankly Speaking*."

Soon after opening, O' Grady stopped by the *Haig* routinely checking if junky musicians were employed and in a dimly lit corner next to the bandstand stood the Steinway. O' Grady asked, "Who's playing piano?" The owner John Bennett remarked, "Walter Norris." O' Grady commented, "He's alright, just runs around with a bad crowd." The Temple Street gang never bothered me again, perhaps they thought of me as being too *hot*. But I was constantly seized with paranoia and each time a stranger approached I glanced quickly over both shoulders; recovery was many months ahead.

Anyhow, by the end of the *Haig* engagement I had chosen matrimony with Mandy Manderscheid and our best man and witness was Frank Rosolino and his wife Jean. Now I was determined to live a more settled life style. And I found Mandy twice as nice as father's advice.

CHAPTER TEN

My beautiful wife, with whom I produced and raised two adorable daughters had an apartment with a lovely Apollo grand on Figueroa Terrace overlooking downtown Los Angeles; on the few days when visibility was clear one could see as far as Catalina Island. Nonetheless, this location was not without complications because after completing each night's performance I had to ride a bus downtown, get off and walk ten blocks to our domicile high on the hill. Furthermore, this ill starred route crossed two blocks from Temple street where my predators camped. This made each evening's journey home dreadfully agonising. I'm grateful to O' Grady but fortunately I never encountered him again; his arrests ruined many musicians but he at least saved me from torture. Even so, the lesson learned is that when beaten so thoroughly, once is enough; especially taking into account those incessant anxiety ridden dreams continuing even into our new millennium.

As I'm touching on the subject of tough cops there was a third member of that *illustrious group* by the name of Rudy Dias from East Los Angeles. While attending high school he *smoked* and sold to his fellow students, then after graduating he joined the narco squad and began arresting the former classmates. Since this happened in East Los Angeles, a rather harsh district of the city, a few of those after their detainment ensnared Rudy, bodily shoved him into the back seat of an automobile and burned rubber. One put a pistol to the side of Rudy's head, pulled the trigger but the weapon malfunctioned and in anger he hit Dias with the butt end and told the driver to slow down. Then the door opened and Rudy was kicked out of the moving vehicle. Luckily for him he wasn't permanently injured. I was told by a witness in that car ride who was fond of jazz. This big strong Mexican continued visiting jazz clubs and he always held the deadliest expression with his eyes; a tough hombre on the lookout for trouble.

Charlie Parker's death, at age thirty-five shocked all lovers of jazz but even more so the musicians; we were like a tribe with a lost idol. It is always written that Parker became addicted at the age of fifteen but I've heard that a close relative influenced the hand of Charlie's fate when he was just thirteen. After driving to a

news stand I read his obituary utterly stunned as I sat in the car. It stated that Parker was fifty-three. This irritated me because I thought it was a misprint but actually it was the estimated age determined by the pathologist. Another facet about Parker; the pathologist in New York who performed the autopsy found nothing unusual except that the inner Carotid Artery, supplying blood to the brain was much larger than that of other humans. The pathologist had later explained this to tenor saxophonist Lynn Halliday. This doesn't make one become a genius but Parker's brain definitely received more blood.

Although Lynn Halliday was raised in Little Rock I didn't meet him until he came to Los Angeles at the age of eighteen. He was unusually talented, learned quickly and I was very impressed with his musicality; I met him again in New York in '60; without doubt Lynn was a tenor virtuoso.

While working with Frank Rosolino at the *Haig*, Art Tatum's trio with Leroy Vinnegar and Bill Douglas had an extended engagement in *Zardis* at Hollywood and Vine. On intermissions I taxied there to hear a couple of titles and then raced back (many expensive trips) for my next set at the *Haig*. I had heard Tatum alone in all his glory one Monday night in '54 at the *Royal Box* on Hollywood Boulevard but in trio with Vinnegar, the rhythmic pulse immediately became modern swing. Leroy's hands were made for the bass; his index finger was so thick that if he played a white key on the piano, both neighboring keys on either side would be depressed also. Leroy was six feet five inches tall and amply proportioned at around two hundred and fifty pounds. His timing was unmovable, when he played the tempo stayed, his pitch and intuitive ability was awesome. Now keep in mind that Tatum's pitch was absolutely perfect, his timing and intuition was as great as anyone to be found in jazz or classical music. Since Leroy and I played afternoons frequently, he would talk about working with Art. Early in their engagement Tatum said to Leroy, "You're a good bassist but don't try to make me swing modern. I don't want to be changed so you play with my timing conception." Leroy answered, "I'm not trying to change you it's just that the energy starts building and *something* makes it happen. I witnessed Tatum play only quarter-notes (root, seventh and tenth) with the left hand and Leroy, simultaneously walking a quarter-note bass-line in medium

tempo. Leroy's bass-line and Art's fifth finger (left hand) played the same tones but the feeling of swing became modernized as you might associate with the trio of a younger generation. Art was so gifted that he could rhythmically crossover to Leroy's modern timing conception. Unfortunately, this trio was never recorded. Norman Granz should have taken them into the studio because this was a different Tatum and his modern rhythmic style swung with far more energy than any other pianist's. Yet, many *greats* said he didn't swing and a few thought he wasn't a jazz player; on that point, I'm still laughing into my sleeve.

About this time in the spring of '55 I recorded again for Jack Sheldon with Zoot Sims, Larance Marabel and bassist, Bob Whitlock. This recording has since been combined with the first Sheldon quartet date and released as a CD on Pacific Jazz. When I cashed my recording check I went shopping for transportation and bought my first automobile, a 1940 black four door Pontiac, a family car suitable for any self-styled gangster.

Began working as house pianist at Jack Tucker's *Tiffany Club* on Eighth Avenue west of Vermont and a number of times Nat Cole would drop in. He was a very positive pressure and personally, Nat was always a perfect example of the gentleman/musician.

Unfortunately, Mandy and I had to move from Figueroa Terrace because the four flights of stairs and being pregnant was difficult for her, so we rented a house on 30th street two blocks from what is known today as the Harbor Freeway. Each morning after breakfast I telephoned a few musicians I knew and invited them over to play but some of them didn't always show up so I began playing alone; but by the end of the month I walked past the phone each day and went straight to the piano. My pattern had been set for years and it was beautiful; after warming up for ninety or so minutes I improvised until leaving for the night's gig.

I'll never forget one evening as I raced my Pontiac to work with the radio on...and suddenly a recording of Elvis Presley was played. You can not believe the internal wrath I felt; even I had heard of the name but after a few measures of his singing I turned off the radio. I thought aloud, how could it be? How is it possible for such music to become so successful? First, you need to have an enormous public

response and then your management organizes easily. Months later I received a call to play in a quartet for a movie soundtrack and who should visit the studio lot? Presley, the new mania with his entourage. The studio crew filming the set I was involved with had to take a break because all eyes were on Elvis; he was a show stopper. One of Elvis' assistants standing near the entrance was asked by a film technician, "What time is it?" The Dixie fried assistant slowly looked up towards the sky and answered, "Oh, the sun's still up." This circulated as "joke of the day" throughout the studio but for the few musicians in our group it was sobering indeed; we felt that a *change* was in the air. Elvis replaced syncopated push beats with too many downbeats in his conception of Rock & Roll, nevertheless, his name became a household word instantly.

Dinah was born on the shortest day of the year. She was healthy but arrived two months early and had to be placed in an incubator; she weighed only three and a half pounds at birth. It was a shock for us but she gained weight, set a new record in Queen of Angles Hospital and by the third week of January I drove home with daughter in mother's arms. It was a beautiful time in my life, helping and taking care of this newborn in addition to my hours at the piano. She frequently accompanied me to rehearsals while asleep in the bassinet.

I still worked clubs nightly plus days with the telephone company for nearly a year to pay off hospital costs. Yet, I sandwiched in an hour of practice before racing off for each night's performance.

Vido Musso from the old school of tenor players hired, fired and then rehired me over and again for six months straight. We never agreed on anything musically and I deliberately drove him crazy with my accompanying at every opportunity. On the last night and for the first time Vido mellowed; he brought a bottle of twenty year old scotch that we shared in the parking lot. He said, "Man, this is what the Queen of England drinks." It was a far cry from what I was used to.

I received a call from Sonny Criss to work with his quintet featuring Teddy Edwards. From these two I learned much about music as well as a philosophical approach to life. Their way was to work on music and avoid all easy approaches and solutions; the thought was not new to me but with this group it was certainly

reinforced. We spoke every intermission about playing and how to make the music better. The gig was for six months with Buddy Woodson playing bass and Gene Gammage on drums. A few months later Gene joined Oscar Peterson's trio with Ray Brown; his replacement was the eighteen year old Billy Higgins.

About this time it was essential for Mandy and I to visit Budget Finance for a loan and sure enough we were approved, again and again. She was an excellent manager with money and even though I worked every night, the loans were still necessary.

I joined the Shorty Rodgers and Eric Dolphy quintet at Guido Caccianti's *Blackhawk Club* in San Francisco for a week. Eric and I had many interesting conversations about music and the different ways of practicing improvisation. Brubeck and Desmond were the opposite group and it amazed me to realize that five years earlier I had listened to them in this same club; now I was on the bandstand alternating with them instead of sitting at a table. How one progresses even while riding ever so loosely in the saddle of fate.

Months later Shorty's quintet was used as the opening group for Nat Coles's (nineteen piece) big band tour; two concerts in Los Angeles another at Long Beach and San Diego for the last. I learned so much from Nat (I stood on stage just behind the curtain every performance) and he definitely played his best. In Los Angeles and Long Beach he sang only a few titles, most were on piano because many in the audience thought of him as jazz pianist first; singing was secondary. But in San Diego he played less, sang every title and as a show performer he was one of the best. What I learned from him was how to play above a big band. It's mostly by playing through the empty spaces within the arrangement and weave a piano line or chordal accompaniment through it all; it's difficult expressing with words as words usually replace a part of the magic; Nat's piano sound was never overpowered by the band.

Shorty Rodgers had a six week tour beginning the second month of '57 with Bill Holman on tenor, Gary Frommer, drums and bassist Morris Edwards. We all gathered on the sidewalk of Alameda Street and Cesar Chavez Avenue went inside Union Station (where I had first met Charlie Parker) boarded the train and headed

directly to Chicago's *Blue Note* for a three week engagement. As soon as we were outside the urban area we all went to the dome (glass roof) lounge as our *Super Chief* pulled through tunnels and was soon streaking across tranquil desert sand. My fantasy was stimulated and it soared; I looked through the window while others chatted.

Arriving the following afternoon, we checked into a hotel, unpacked, showered, ate and by nine thirty that evening Gary and I were on Chicago's Southside sitting in with Gene Ammons. The upright piano was so horrible with many broken hammers but it was enlightening to watch Gene as he stomped his foot to hold the tempo steady and blew like the giant he truly was. I've never heard such an enormous sound. I heard when Gene was a teenager his piano playing father Albert used to say, "That's no sound. Why can't you get a bigger sound?" Years later Gene acquired the largest sound of any tenor saxophonist. Getz told me when he played on stage next to Ammons, he felt like someone had stuffed a pillow in the bell of his horn.

While at the *Blue Note* with Shorty, I took a cab to the club late one afternoon to practice. It was bumper to bumper early evening traffic and as I looked at the many people walking the sidewalk, I spotted my schoolmate Pat Murphy. I paid the driver, jumped out of the cab and hollered at the top of my voice, "Pat!" He could not believe, nor could I, as we talked and walked the few additional blocks to the club; I played for him. The next afternoon he came to the hotel, met Mandy and was taken aback to see Dinah who was just over a year old. Working as a draftsman, Pat always went to the *Southside* at the end of the day and partied all night; he added that he never played anymore. By '72 his life had ended. I'll say this for Chicago; the feeling there is very special and musically it's easy to get *something* going immediately.

We next journeyed to Cincinnati for a week's work, then Cleveland, Detroit and Toronto. Since I practiced afternoons in each club, I spoke with the owner about business and each said that it had been very good until the previous few weeks, then it had suddenly dropped and remained unusually slow. This was the beginning of a major economic recession from Coast to Coast but it wouldn't reach

California for another six months. Today, in the age of digital electronics a recession can spread around the globe instantly.

I took a train from Toronto to Chicago at the end of our tour and picked up a new '57 Dodge station wagon to transport to Los Angeles for an automobile dealer. I drove straight to Sioux Falls to collect Mandy and Dinah. The next day we took off for Interstate 80 at Omaha and enjoyed a most memorable drive on the northern route; through Cheyenne to Salt Lake City. Then south on Interstate 15 through a snowy mountain range that ended with the longest descent into green vegetation as we leveled and approached sunny Las Vegas. After spending the day and night we continued across Mojave Desert to Barstow, downhill into San Bernardino and onto the Los Angeles Freeway towards Hollywood.

But I'll never forget the dinner near Rock Creek, Wyoming, a couple of days before. It was twilight; the setting was out of a western movie scene as we entered a large café. The menu featured a T-Bone for one dollar twenty-five cents. Our waitress brought out two platters covered with mouthwatering steak, the largest my eyes have known. We returned to the highway at dusk and although we occasionally met another vehicle, I noticed that it was about ninety minutes before we passed a ranch house with a light and nearly another hour and a half before we remarked the next one that was illuminated; this was the least populated state in the U.S. Pulled into the first motel we sighted, stayed overnight and after breakfast I was back behind the wheel. Throughout the trip Dinah was overjoyed; now at sixteen months she was old enough to be stimulated when our excited voices described the scores of vistas in the *Rockies*.

Now I must mention a night, the month before in Cleveland. Phineas Newborn sat in and my ears listened ever so carefully. He had no problem with the bass player's lead weighted timing because Phineas' was like a hot knife cutting through warm butter. Phineas was one of the most impressive of all jazz pianists I have been privileged to hear. Afterwards we all went to up my hotel room, Phineas, Shorty Rodgers, Zoot Sims, Bill Holman, Gary Frommer and drank as we talked. Phineas and I retreated to one corner as others were clustered at the other end of the small room. For the rest of the night he and I spoke about the piano and

different ways of practicing. I remember having a rubber ball that I squeezed to build arm muscles (this exercise, being detrimental to tendons, should never be done) and Phineas took that ball and literally crushed it; small parts of rubber protruded between index finger and thumb plus it jutted out beyond the fifth finger; then with the fist still contracted he lowered and raised his wrist with reptilian speed. It was unbelievable to see such a display of strength from a pianist so wiry in stature. The following year I heard Phineas' trio in Los Angeles, his approach to the instrument was that of a virtuoso and to my surprise, critics and a number of musicians criticized him disgracefully.

Let me voice my opinion that Phineas was a unique artist, an incredible pianist and musically superior to every keyboardist on the jazz scene.

The bassist George Joiner, originally from Memphis explained to me why Phineas had problems of mental depression. The father supervised Phineas' practice and career; Phineas never went out shopping or outside to play or anything; he lived at the piano. When he became nineteen he met a beautiful girl who was *street wise* and after they married, she ruled him as wickedly as she wished. His intentions concerning life were pure but being with her he crumbled from bouts of depression. Periods in mental institutions followed and he died far too early. His recordings never measured up to his performances. Count Basie was correct in saying that Phineas was the next Art Tatum.

Changing to another pianist, I want to insert a story about Bud Powell as told by Doris Parker, his first wife whom I met in Chicago. The month before Bud recorded "Un Poco Loco," Alfred Lyons of Blue Note Records paid daily visits around five o' clock to Bud's apartment in New York City just to check on him as his marred reputation was beyond classification. As Alfred climbed the stairs he always heard the same phrase repeated over and again. It was the cadence at the seventh and eighth measures of the composition. After a minute or two with his ear against the door, he knocked and soon Bud opened. Alfred looked in disbelief, each visit, at the empty white capsules covering the floor; there was only a path from the door to Bud's piano and another path to the bathroom. Each day Alfred discreetly reminded Bud that the recording date would soon take place. Bud would mumble

inaudibly and laughed; then he would go to the piano and played the same cadence phrase repeatedly; never did he play any other tones. Finally Powell was taken into the studio and successfully played his entire composition *Un Poco Loco*. Alfred was greatly relieved and the LP instantly became a successful jazz classic. But Alfred had felt more than enough anxiety.

Half a century later in Berlin I watch an interesting televised documentary of Alfred Lyons, that city's native son. In the film he talks about all of the jazz musicians in New York advising him to sign Bud but instead Lyons chose Thelonious Monk. For me the reason was clear and absolutely no surprise why Alfred wasn't about to sign a recording contract with Powell. Lyons had learned his lesson with the *Un Poco Loco* session.

Each weekend for three months that summer I had my trio in a bar just off Vermont Avenue on Picco Boulevard. Ornette Colman sat in one evening; it was my first time to play with him and I didn't know exactly what to think but his playing was intuitive. One night Frank Butler, a native of Kansas City sat in to play and sing for his beautiful wife; she was in heaven and we all were knocked out. His performing was most inventive, especially soloing with fingers (sticks aside) and his singing and phrasing was as sensitive as Nat Cole's. Unfortunately, Frank like many other musicians spent most of his time inside prison. There he played with better jazz musicians than those found on the outside as so many talents were in confinement; this was an expression often heard in '57. Sitting at the bar one intermission, I recognized a beautiful girl shaded like coffee with too much cream whom I had seen four years earlier when working at Fifth and San Pedro. Now she looked stoned and depressed; such an exotic seductress dependent on alcohol and chemical substances trying to discard the tormenting memories of her past. Although jazz in Los Angeles was winding down it still had a strong influence from the *Central Avenue* days; very few musicians are still around who remember this *jewel of the Harlem Renaissance*.

Having an evening recording date, Shorty Rodgers sent the newly arrived Clifford Brown to the *Haig* as a substitute. Max Roach was chosen to replace Shelly Mann and I was the swap for pianist Marty Paich. Of course, when Marty phoned

he neglected mentioning Clifford and Max so I was surprised to find them on the bandstand and completely astounded by their musical energy.

This evening was a highlight never again to be equaled.

The tragic event of 1957 was the activation of Arkansas' National Guard to preserve order as Little Rock's Central High School became integrated. I felt mortified and deeply depressed since I had graduated from that school. That night I went to work and the musicians of the integrated group, Sonny Criss and Teddy Edwards, acted as usual to me and I was relieved to be so well accepted.

It has always amazed me how Americans of African decent can manage to remain understanding with a liberal attitude after having to endure untold difficulties, outright cruelties and humiliation. I feel that the well tempered dignity found in those people is a sign of superior quality. Nevertheless, that incident at Central High remained a heavy leaden cloud on my shoulders. You can't imagine how many Afro-Americans have asked, "You are from where?" "You went to that school?"

Jazz gigs became less frequent and with a family to feed I gladly accepted work in burlesque houses; so many *coins* had to be earned for our existence. Herb and Loraine Geller formed the house band at *Duffy's Gaiety* where Lenny Bruce was master of ceremonies; Lenny improvised satire and introduced dancing lovelies as they proceeded to disrobe with live music. Loraine found better work and I replaced her with the understanding that I could send a substitute whenever it was possible to earn more elsewhere. Herb's unparalleled repertoire was superb, the music was first class, even Philly Joe Jones worked there briefly. Lenny had *carte blanche*; the owner Rocco worshiped him because a year earlier Lenny had borrowed money from him and fled to Honolulu. But shortly afterwards he wired the full amount back to Rocco. Rocco had a working class mentality but by the same token he was from a wealthy family that owned a chain of drug stores in Chicago; he was so impressed when Lenny paid the loan. Now one could get the impression that Rocco (Italian) and Lenny (Jewish) were bonded by blood oath. At the club one night Lenny, under bright spotlights, walked on stage dressed only with necktie and shoes, no socks. Lenny had a brilliant wit and could do no wrong. I

remember more than once remarking to Herb on the bandstand, "It's a miracle that the police wagon doesn't pull up and take all of us to jail."

Rocco, a hardy Italian in his mid fifties had a knockout punch and loved to join in all bar fights. One night two large young Mexicans entered with knives drawn and Rocco, personally outraged attacked them bare handed; afterwards both were bodily dragged outside and left on the sidewalk. On another night two young Hollywood vice squad detectives remarked that Rocco had better play ball with them or else. This was said as they sat at a table wolfing down a complimentary steak dinner. Anger got the better of Rocco and with only one punch from a sitting position, he knocked the detective unconscious; the other cop had to pull his partner out to the police car and drive back to headquarters.

Every Thanksgiving afternoon the local unfortunates were invited into *Duffy's Gaiety* and served food with drink; Rocco had a heart of gold for the ill-fated and a *sunday punch* for any wise guy who stepped out of line.

I had taken off Saturday night for a better paying gig and had provided a good replacement so I felt I had done nothing wrong; but when I went up to the bar the following night and asked Rocco for an advance of ten dollars, he threw a right hook. I pulled my head back just in time but his miss only made him more angry. He came out from behind the bar and chased me outside into the middle of Caughanga Boulevard. I kept back stepping as he swung wildly, never connecting because he had consumed too many drinks. I continued telling him that I needed ten dollars for cigarettes, milk and bread before driving home but Rocco was in his role of bull attacking matador. He finally went inside the club; I trailed behind him at a safe distance and once more asked for my advance. He saw red and the same procedure happened again; while being out in the street a few patrons left without paying so he returned to the bar and reluctantly gave me a *Jefferson note*. The next night he acted as if nothing happened; maybe Lenny or Herb put in a good word for me.

Ernie Kovacks, Heddy Lamarr and many of Hollywood fame came into *Duffy's* to see Lenny Bruce's improvisations and Rocco was impressed especially with the capacity crowds of star studded celebrities. Even O'Grady admired Lenny

and was aware of his addiction; yet he never arrested him. On one occasion O' Grady personally warned Lenny to cancel his routine about a *police raid*; well, Lenny used the routine on a televised program the next week and O' Grady did nothing. Perhaps, Lenny knew *something* and O' Grady thought it would be wise to let the *sleeping dog* lie.

Herb and Loraine had a new dream house on top of the hill overlooking the freeway between Hollywood and San Fernando Valley; you could see the lights of Hollywood all the way to the ocean and to the left with clear visibility, out across the valley to the San Gabriel Mountains. There was a tiled swimming pool built years before into the side of the hill and when the weather was hot, guests plunged in to refresh themselves. One afternoon Mandy and I took a dip and noticed that the black and white mosaic tiled wall at the edge of the pool exhibited an enormous spider extending perhaps ten feet up the steep incline. It surprised Mandy because she had read a description of this swimming pool in a novel written in the twenties by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Herb and Loraine were the type of musicians who daily jumped out of bed, breakfasted and began playing; they never waited for a rhythm section to arrive. However, others eventually came and from then on it was a continuous jam session. I remember Scotty La Farro practicing in a bedroom, Lenny Bruce sun bathing outside, a few were swimming beneath the *spider* while Herb, Joe Maini, Lerroy Vinnegar, Gary Frommer and Loraine played in the living room; it was jazz to swim by. Then tragically paradise was lost. Loraine died of walking pneumonia only a few months before their daughter's first birthday. Herb was out of town on a gig and returned devastated. All of the local jazz musicians attended her funeral at Forest Lawn. I walked passed the coffin and of course, looked at her. For me it was like an infringement and I felt awkward. To this day I have never looked in another coffin, not even my mothers.

Mandy and I had rented a house on Edgecliff Drive overlooking Hollywood; every day was for practice, rehearsing or jamming. I was lucky that my neighbor enjoyed the music. But we found time for occasional afternoons in Santa Monica

and picnicked on the beach with our homemade pasta salad. Dinah was two and Delia was soon to be on the way.

Every Sunday morning shortly after sunrise I began at the *Tip Top*, located on Main between Second & Third, then played sessions elsewhere that afternoon and evening. At the *Tip Top* one could acquire a stolen fur, diamonds or purchase the *substance* of your choice from the bar; the vice cops were paid off and rather well. Dave, the owner drove a green '49 Caddy (best auto GM ever made), bred prize winning racehorses and at the age of fifty-five could beat hell out of big youthful men. He enjoyed every punch he threw and if he experienced any difficulty, his mixologist, a tall Latino *queen* could jump over the bar and assist in the fight; he was a street killer rather than a street fighter. I held the seat as house pianist for two years. But on one occasion while eating pasticcios and playing only with the right hand, Dave fired me. The following afternoon I was rehired but he explained that I was being paid seven dollars a night to play with both hands. Once I made the mistake of bringing Mandy to the club. While we nursed our drinks at the bar during intermission, Dave became fascinated with her and remarked to the two narco cops standing beside him, "Think you guys can put the piano player away for a while?" One of the two detectives stared at me with the hypnotic eyes of a Doberman; his look of death was most convincing. After that night Mandy didn't join me anymore at the *Tip Top*.

Dave was stocky, appeared robust and healthy but actually he used hard drugs; periodically, cures were taken for weeks at a time. Once when collecting money I knocked on the office door, was told to enter and Dave seated at the desk continued preparing his injection while two detectives, waiting for their payoff, stood and watched. Unobtrusively, I said I could come back later but he told me to stay for a minute. After rolling down his shirtsleeve he handed the collector a swollen taped envelope and they both left; then he paid me as if nothing out of the ordinary had taken place. Dave the luminary had kept two of Los Angeles' *finest* and myself waiting for the duration his passage to paradise; I felt upstaged as I returned to the bandstand and resumed playing.

California represented the romantic multihued world of the fifties. Once while driving on the Hollywood Freeway, Clark Gable at the wheel of a Chevrolet in the other lane, looked over, smiled, waved and then sped away to exit on Sunset Boulevard. Another time, Edward G. Robinson partially opened the stage curtain in a nightclub, gestured with a cigar in hand and said to saxophonist Joe Maini, "Alright, all of you guys hands up." He sounded and looked the same as in his films; all of the musicians fell out laughing; little *Caesar* had stopped the music.

One day the police padlocked the door of the *Tip Top* by orders coming from the State Capitol Building in Sacramento, over four hundred miles to the north. The newspapers printed that there were so many arrests at this address, listed in the Attorney General's office, that he personally decided to close the premises. And whom do I see in a restaurant only a few months later? My man *smiling* Dave who happily announced that he had just bought *Jazz City* and the authorities had allowed him to keep his liquor license. He asked if I would like to work. My retort, "Oh yes Dave by all means; hell, I feel protected when I work for you." He liked that! A couple of months later Dave sold the club to Manyard Sloat and disappeared from the scene completely.

I worked often in *Jazz City* but one engagement still glows in my memory. I was asked to play solo opposite Sonny Rollins' trio. My fingers were glued all hours to the keyboard and following Sonny was a greater pressure than I could have ever dreamed of. Listening to his set and then playing mine certainly brought the best out of me. That autumn of '57 I transcended to a higher level thanks to Sonny.

Ornette Coleman telephoned; he was scheduled to record with his quintet for Contemporary Records and wanted me on the date. Although I found Ornette most compatible, I had to say that I was not the pianist for him because my perception is based on *well tempered* tuning and Ornette bends the tonality but I didn't know who else to suggest; Monk would surely not fit. I even suggested to Ornette that he record without piano. He argued, so we began rehearsing three times every week for five months. On each occasion as we played, he made changes in the music and I made these notations on manuscript. Then at the recording date in the studio he again made slight alterations and because of these many changes the musical

phrases sound molded; his compositions were actually shaped organically. I enjoyed the rhythm section and was stimulated by the support of Billy Higgins and Don Payne. Ornette moans, cries and groans within his own conception of tonality in a most soul disturbing way but since pianos and pianists belong to the *well-tempered* world of tuning, I don't share or identify with Ornette's emotional suffering in the way other listeners experience his music. I'll phrase in that Don Cherry was the true musical brother for Ornette.

Life was making music every waking hour on Edgecliff Drive. The piano was in the northwest corner of our living room. When practicing, the window behind me offered a view of Hollywood and looking out on my left was a panorama including Bear Mountain sixty miles away; but much closer, directly on top of the next steep hill, was Gannon's Manner. Ms. Gannon, widowed had lived for many years with her husband, a distinguished member of California's Supreme Court. In this very large home she rented rooms to many jazz musicians; it was a consequence of her late husband's disapproval of their decadent lifestyle. She loved to sip a fine wine and listen through the night to the music. The police never raided this address for Ms. Gannon had diplomatic immunity; it was a musician's paradise; one could get *everything* and do *anything* but she didn't seem to notice.

Stan Getz was booked (January '58) for two weeks in San Francisco's *Blackhawk Club* with Billy Higgins, Scott La Farro and myself as the rhythm section. I met and spoke with Stan the week before in Los Angeles and was surprised at his glowing healthy condition. He explained that it was due to being under a doctor's care. Stan received medication to remove his need for hard drugs plus number of preparations to activate the immune system, thus increasing stamina and mental alertness. Stan said he had never felt better. I believe to this day that the *Blackhawk* engagement was musically the peak of his career. Getz was magically successful with each and every idea phrase he attempted night after night; he certainly played with more maturity and I had listened to most of his recordings. The club was completely packed for all sets. But unfortunately on the closing night Stan fell under the influence and played the last evening in a drug induced state. Although his playing was flawless, the positive glow and spark was missing; there

was coolness in his expression; he was unable to sustain the quality of *joyfulness* in his improvisations that he had managed successfully the previous nights. It was disappointing but then I've always felt uncomfortable being around hard drug users; they turn me off and I'm sure the feeling is mutual.

Putter Smith knocked on our door, introduces himself and said, "I've been told that you like to play." He was a stranger but since he was holding a bass I invited him inside and we enjoyed the afternoon. As he left he asked, "Would you like to play tomorrow?" The bond was immediately established and he visited, with bass, everyday and this sharing of music continued until I departed Los Angeles. We developed together, played most everyday and years later whenever I returned, we immediately got in tune took up where we left off.

Had just finished an evening with Hal Gaylor and Frank Butler in trio. Hal drove me to his apartment to check with his wife Evelyn who informed me that Mandy was in labor at Presbyterian Hospital on Sunset Boulevard. Delia was born around six o'clock that morning, I hurried to the hospital, went upstairs and spoke with Mandy who had just come out of the recovery room; then we went together to see our second premature baby. Her birth weight, two pounds ten ounces was even less than Dinah's and naturally she was inside an incubator. I nearly felt ill, thought my luck was fading because of bruises from the forceps, she looked so small; but like Dinah, Delia set a record for gaining weight.

During the summer of '58, I worked in Louie Bellson's quartet featuring Harry Edison, Leroy Vinegar and myself. The quartet played only one title during Pearl Bailey's show at the Flamingo Hotel in Las Vegas. Musically we were red hot and Louie's solo, with strobe lights, was unbelievable. The first evening I went to the reception and said that I had a recording the following month in Los Angeles and needed a piano for practicing. I was graciously given a key to a room with an excellent Steinway [B] overlooking the pool and told that I could use the instrument at any hour without disturbing guests. I was in heaven and practically lived there but I was also careful to observe my watch so I could just make the quartet's appearance each show; after finale and bows I always returned to the Steinway.

Harry Edison had many stories to tell especially about Ben Webster the renowned tenor saxophonist and brawler. As one story was told; Joe Lewis, in the late thirties had recently lost to Max Schmeling and understandably Joe wasn't his usual tolerant self. But one evening in New York City's Harlem, Lewis escorted four beautiful ladies to a dance and all of them were seated at his reserved table. Every few minutes Ben, thoroughly intoxicated passed by Lewis' table and remarked loudly, "God damn prize fighters can't punch worth a shit and collect all that big money." On hearing this Joe turned to the ladies, "Please excuse me for a moment." Then stood just as Ben approached and with his right lower arm positioned horizontally the *Brown Bomber* gave the shortest jab of no more than six inches deeply into Ben's *breadbasket*. Mr. Lewis calmly returned to his table and guests; two musicians observing all rushed over and carried Ben, now moaning painfully, out the back door. They placed Ben on the horizontal door of a cellar and tried to revive him by rubbing fresh snow on his face. I want to add that Schmeling was fond of Lewis and not only attended but paid all costs of the funeral because Joe's debt to IRS was unresolved to his dying day. Of course, an explanation is essential in understanding Ben's early life. He was raised by his grandmother and she always woke him each morning by carefully going near the bed and poking his foot with a long broom because he always threw a punch the moment his mind shifted to a state of consciousness even as a small child. She would say, "Wake up Ben. It's time to dress, eat a bite and go to school." Grandmother followed this same procedure daily.

Another Ben Webster story; on Chicago's *Southside*, a large Afro-American policeman known as "*Two Gun Pete*" controlled the entire neighborhood. Pete also had a bar and if one of the locals passed by and noticed it empty, they went in for a drink because *Two Gun* was hell and his disposition was equipped with a very short fuse. He also had two beautiful daughters who never dated because all young bachelors feared for their life. One afternoon Ben had been drinking and was seated on a stool with one arm placed on the bar to cradle his head; he was sound asleep. Unfortunately, "*Two Gun Pete*" didn't know about Ben punching wildly when awakened. He goes up to Ben, slaps him on the back and before he can finish

shouting, "What's happening man?" Ben had spun around and caught him on the chin. "*Two Gun*" hit the wall, slid to the floor and a moment later he stood up to say the following, "Ben you are lucky that I like the way you play. "Now I want you out of town before sundown and don't ever return." Ben didn't play Chicago for about twelve years, not until after Pete's funeral.

When Quentin Jackson toured with Duke Ellington, it was always Quentin whose services were called upon to get Webster out of bed. All other musicians refused. On one of many mornings everyone except Ben was waiting in the bus so Duke told Quentin to get a pass-key from the receptionist and go up and get Ben out of bed. Quentin, 6'2" and weighing around 240 pounds reluctantly went upstairs, with pass-key, and ever so silently, smoothly slithered key into lock, opened and tip toed over to the edge of Ben's bed. In one blurred motion he jumped on top of sleeping body and pinned with his knees both of the saxophonist arms deeply into the mattress. Unable to punch, Ben would look up and ask, "Quentin, what are you doing up there sitting on my chest?" Quentin replied, "Ben, everyone is in the bus and waiting for you." "Well, get the hell off of me and let me get dressed; go tell Duke I'll be right down."

September of '58 and I worked an early morning jam session on Picco Boulevard; in walks Ben. He's smiling broadly as goes to the bar with a friend, listens and often nodded his approval directly at me. Someone announced intermission over the mike and as I passed Ben he turns to me with a vicious look and says, "So, you think you play good?" I answered loudly, "Ben, it's always a pleasure to see you," and continued walking through the crowded club. A moment later some young piano player, unknown to me approached and asked, "Hey man, can I sit in?" "Sure, you got the next set." And as bad luck would have it, Ben borrowed a tenor staggered to the bandstand, played and gave all the musicians hell. He stopped so many times and hollered repeatedly at the top of his voice; "You can't play shit." Those aren't the right chords." To the bassist and drummer, "Where's the god damn time?" The audience loved every moment of Ben's melodramatic performance. During next intermission I went into the rest room and there's Ben, on the throne, deeply asleep and he'd forgotten to flush. A few others

came in as I was leaving and I placed index finger to my lips for them not to wake him; with such an odor who opens their mouth to speak? I returned to the bandstand, played the following set and fortunately Ben somehow left the premises unnoticed.

Los Angeles' drummers of the fifties: Larance Marabel's incredible swing feeling drove and pushed soloists to the limits of their ability. His solos amalgamate an African tribal quality that always fascinated me. Frank Butler sang as flexible as Nat Cole, soloed with his fingers and knuckles as well as sticks. Percussionist Larry Bunker, also a vibraphonist and pianist with a harmonic knowledge that daunted many was a specialist with brushes. Also, Chico Hamilton and Chuck Thompson opened the expression of all improvisers with their exquisite brushwork. Billy Higgins' *finesse*, Stan Levy's *samsonian strength*, the *metrical linguist* Max Roach and last but not least, the *inventive* Shelly Mann. Their generated energy forged the timing of soloists and rhythm sections.

Answered the phone and on the other end was Dexter Gordon; he had three nights in a new club on Hollywood Boulevard that remained opened only for a week before being liquidated. During the first intermission I went outside and noticed four unmarked cars parked in a row with four detectives sitting in each. After the gig I went to the lady collecting admission and drew my evening's wage before leaving. Resenting my monetary action, Dexter telephoned the next afternoon and told me he was going to use another piano player who quite frankly was more of a *dealer* than a player. I answered, "Dexter, when you need someone who can play piano give me a call." He gave a slight laugh and that was that until nearly twenty years later when we played together in Stockholm.

The owner, from whom we rented, sold the house on Edgecliff Drive to an Orthodox Priest and we had to move. The Priest, straight out of the Mediterranean, visited and spoke with me about leaving our stove and refrigerator as a donation to his church and I responded with a distinct dryness, "No, I'll need to take both with me." He returned a few days later for another try but didn't manage to change my mind. We were appalled by the audacity and authoritative manner of this *saver of souls*.

We found a house on Altamont Place in Lincoln Heights and busily prepared, packed and cleared out of Edgecliff but as the piano movers took my piano (strapped to a skid) down a flight of stairs at the sidewalk entrance, the instrument slipped from them and descended. I was at the bottom and leaped in front of it to diminish the impact as it hit the sidewalk. Luckily there was no damage or injury but this bad omen continued. Unloading at our new address the movers dropped my piano from the truck but being inside the house I didn't notice. Putter witnessed everything and after the piano was in the music room he told me to play and examine it carefully. Fearing I would lose self control he had waited for the movers to leave before telling me; I've always held the opinion that Putter was born a wise man. The piano was still in tune and retained of its vibrancy. At last the Apollo and I had a sound proofed music room, my first; there were two windows on either side of one wall looking out into a ravine with undergrowth continuing up the side of a steep cliff with many animals thriving in this cove. There was an old overweight mocking bird that perched on the backyard fence and we held our musical discourse on many evenings. This bird could humble any musician; I whistled a four or five tone phrase and as it answered it altered a tone or two, then I repeated its approximated version and we continued this tonal dialogue for an hour or less before the bird flew off. This feathered friend was musically superior and I learned much from the experience.

But I had earlier heard about singing to mocking birds from a story regarding Charlie Parker; after finishing work at the *Finale* in Los Angeles he would go to a friend's apartment where a number of musicians also visited. And even though these musicians conversed, Parker remained silent with eyes closed pretending to sleep; his mind was probably constructing phrases to be incorporated in future solos. Around five o' clock as daylight began he would stand and announce that he had to leave and closed the door behind him. The same procedure followed night after night until the musicians, motivated by curiosity, decided to follow him. After a few blocks Parker entered Westlake Park, sat on a bench, unzipped his horn case and assembled the alto. Many birds were now awake and active but one mocking bird close by imitated each four or five-tone phrase executed

by Parker. It was an inventive conversation; such intervals as *do re me do re* from Parker would be answered by the feathered creature as *do re me la re* and this continued until the mocker flew away forty or so minutes later. I believe this communiqué between improviser and mockingbird is an interesting exercise for jazz musicians.

Around this time I met Peter Engelhart who studied with me and had just started a family with his wife Locha. He practiced, advanced and in late '59 he moved to San Francisco where he became established as a pianist/composer. We remained in contact throughout the years; in fact he was very helpful with my settling in New York. Peter later began designing metal percussion instruments for Bossa Nova and Latin groups. Being a pianist he understood the physics of overtones and the tuning of these unique sculptured pieces. We got together in Berkeley during the mid-seventies, played for each other then again in '91 with long interesting conversations connecting the years past.

In January '59, Art Auerbach invited me to his *Jazz Workshop* in San Francisco for three weeks with Johnny Griffin, Larance Marable and Carson Smith. This was doubtlessly Griffin's best playing; we followed Sonny Stitt's group and many said Griffin was far more interesting. The fifty minute sets consisted of two but never more than three titles; Griffin's playing was on front burner and it boiled. As a leader he was very demanding but always with optimism and a dash of humor; he made musicians glow musically. I was forced to improvise chorus after chorus; he literally pulled the music out me. At the sound check, Art gave me an extra key to the club and told me the piano was mine at any hour; of course the bar was locked. A few times I returned alone after the club closed and left with the crack of dawn. Art, a lawyer by profession had a warm humane manner that affected people. It was a mournful day for musicians and many others when he passed at the early age of forty-three.

Leroy Vinnegar phoned me to play in his trio at *Cirro's* of Hollywood fame. It had been closed for over a year and some gangster decided to reopen and have another try. We played one night to a near empty room and the place was closed the following day, permanently. If the walls in *Cirro's* could only speak of the

sizzling forties. Once upon a time in its heyday Heddy Lamar and Jack Warner, both staggering, were seated at a table in *Cirro's* and even before ordering (neither had the slightest idea *where* they were) he crawled beneath the table, ventured underneath her attire and soon she began a primal moan as though acting in a dramatic jungle film. The maitre d' (headwaiter) hastily placed two folding screens around their table, turned to the bandstand and whispered to Jimmy Rowles to have the band play louder. No maitre d' would dare place himself in the position of offending a Warner brother.

Putter Smith and his father Smitty rented a house on top of a mountain overlooking downtown Los Angeles in the vicinity of Lincoln Heights. Jam sessions throughout day and night; I got to know Smitty better and played for him often. He spoke about surviving San Francisco's earthquake in 1906 and living there at the beginning of the century. Saxophonist Warren Marsh was a regular visitor and a most impressive innovator; he absolutely had the proficiency of any saxophonist and played phrase fragments entirely new to my ears. Warren practiced all hours and taught; he never worked if music was to be compromised. When he died, he was playing *Dante's* in Hollywood and during the evening after finishing a solo he sat in his chair and fell over on the bandstand; never to get up again. Perfect death?

Practice, daily jam sessions, gigs each night and with the new decade approaching I sensed intuitively that a decline in work would soon begin and my calculation was correct. Whenever I didn't have work even for one night, I networked pianists by phone that I was available. Once in March '60, I phoned Jimmy Rowles and told him I didn't have a gig on the following Saturday night and he said he wasn't working either; I was shocked because Rowles always received the best jobs. I continued phoning other pianists and soon realized that Jimmy and I weren't the only freelancers without Saturday night. I frequently read business reports in magazines because luxury businesses are the first to suffer in economic decline and music tops that list; but there were other signs; something was definitely *wrong* in the wind. Mandy and I discussed our situation and decided it was time to leave Los Angeles. We sold all of the furniture and stored the Apollo grand; it was a heart twisting decision. Our last few days were spent at Putter's retreat. I

answered an advertisement in the Times to drive and deliver a new Citroen to a doctor who had recently flown for new employment in Paramus, New Jersey. We packed and glided east for New York, New York; the city so *sharp and hip* they had to name it twice.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

There was a tinge of sadness with goodbyes to Putter and Smitty. Then, as we drove along the freeway through downtown and East Los Angeles our stomachs twisted slightly with anxiety; were we making the right move? Noon traffic was light and soon we were ascending the San Bernardino Mountains. The smog had dissipated and our spirits brightened under the clear skies of late June; even our tempo seemed to accelerate as the Citroen cruised along Route 66 warmed by the desert world. An old thought from the not so distant past suddenly surfaced, I was heading east instead of west with the realization that I had originally traveled to Los Angeles for the purpose of returning to Japan. Now it was to be New York with Mandy and our two daughters. Even being in love with Mandy, I couldn't forget that first love. Then there were also other nagging questions, will schools for the kids really be better in New York than in Los Angeles? We were going to Manhattan Isle without work and only thin hopes of getting any. We stayed the first night in a motel somewhere in Arizona and next morning while checking out, the owner warned me to be careful on the highway because Indians would be driving and drinking; being an eighth Cherokee I laughed and promised him to be alert.

The panorama of the mountainous west was revitalizing but suddenly we descended that second evening into the plains of Oklahoma and the next afternoon uphill into Fort Smith, Arkansas. Here I stopped for directions at a gas station but couldn't for the life of me understand the accent and yet this was my home State. Visited two days in Little Rock so the grandparents could see our daughters and also I wanted Mandy to meet my first teacher John Summers. She and I attended

an evening choir rehearsal, however before entering the room we listened as John played one chord and then conducted the choir *a cappella*. His sound from the piano was larger than Oscar Peterson's and John was only playing mezzo forte; his heavily boned hand, amply fleshed with stout fingers, produced a sound like warm butter. The wide palm enabled him to reach major tenths; I had absorbed intuitively much about sound from listening to him play. My father and mother had moved back to their first apartment in downtown Little Rock. I played the Kimbal upright and it was dreadfully out of tune; I felt strange playing it and didn't want to press the keys because I recognized that its timbre had become too faint; like a dying voice. Perhaps my ten years away had been too long; I drove around Little Rock in a daze. I was in an ambiance of loneliness similar to graduation night in '50 and that drive through town in '52 after being discharged from military service. Back on the road we spent a night in the beautiful Appellations before our winding decent to the East Coast. Later we connected with the New Jersey Turnpike that took us through Lincoln Tunnel into Manhattan shortly after sunset on Sunday the first of July '60.

New York had changed; it looked dirtier than I remembered from my week's visit before the New Year of '51; there were so many papers and trash on streets and sidewalks. *Lights* were brighter on Broadway the decade before; it was a period referred to as the *good times* and it had certainly made its *roll*. We checked into the Great Northern Hotel on 57th and phoned Hal Gaylor in Greenwood Lake. Hal gave directions and early the next day we drove up, stayed overnight and fell in love with Greenwood Lake.

When the Dutch first arrived in Manhattan, Indians took them forty-five miles northwest to Greenwood Lake after winter ended. Now, over three hundred years later I'm arriving there on my second day. Let me describe the scenic view; a narrow road winds uphill through Sterling Forest, once owned by Lord Sterling of England, and at the top is a view of the nine mile lake below. This region was a dream in the early sixties but before the following decade, Ford's nearby mammoth automobile plant closed and within months Greenwood Lake had become quite

desolate. Sterling Forest and Greenwood Lake should have been a historical landmark protected by the Ministry of Interior.

Nevertheless, the next step of our agenda was to phone the good doctor who had previously flown east to New Jersey from Los Angeles, get directions and deliver the Citroen to his door; then have Hal drive us back into New York. Hal arranged with the bartender at *Jim and Andy's* (located on 52nd Street between Broadway & Eighth Avenue) to let me store our possessions, contained in many cartons, upstairs over their famous *watering hole* where musicians crowded every afternoon and night.

We moved into the less expensive Woodward Hotel (64th & Broadway) near the construction site of Lincoln Center. Hal and I visited *Jim and Andy's Bar* and I got my first job in New York; I must say that Hal Gaylor not only introduced me to everyone, he told them to hire me. However, this job actually was not on Manhattan Isle but in a small farming community of Pennsylvania at the local Veterans Hall. Now keep in mind that I was just some stranger from the West Coast to these musicians. During the first intermission an old man topped with a veterans cap and a medal of valor attached to his coat instructed all members of the quintet that we were to buy not one but two raffle tickets each and the prize was a leg of smoked ham. I explained, "This is my first job in New York City. I'm married with two kids and I'm working to collect coins; I'm not here to buy tickets." He became threatening, "You're going to buy four tickets now or I'll have it deducted from your pay." I continued arguing but it was hopeless. His behavior reminded me of some master sergeant from the First World War. We returned to the bandstand and after a couple of titles he abruptly stopped the music and began announcing over the microphone the winning number. But just before he said the number I jumped up from the piano and at the top of my voice, "Wait a minute I can't find all of my tickets." I now had the attention of everyone as they observed me searching my pockets, one after the next. His eyebrows lowered, he glared hatefully with one hand placed firmly on his hip while I'm being the comical one, "Wait, it's not in this pocket...wait, wait a minute...OK I've found it go ahead...tell me the number!" He barked the winning number, I waved the ticket overhead and shouted, "I won, I've

won the ham." The musicians stared blankly while many in the audience became suspicious that the raffle was fixed. The master sergeant, a mirror image of Hollywood's cowpoke actor *Gabby Hayes* and a few from the audience tried to buy the ham but I refused. The silent drive back to New York seemed much longer than five hours. When the musicians let me out of their car on 48th & Broadway, it was a bright Sunday morning and I proudly carried that smoked ham in a bag slung over my shoulder for sixteen blocks to our hotel; just like Al Capp's *Li'l Abner* of comic strip fame. Mandy could not really believe my story and we laughed over and over again with each repetition. Since we had a refrigerator the smoked leg lasted for two weeks; it had a most delicious taste.

Let me make a point here; rarely has any musician moved to New York and stayed; they usually returned home *coin-less*. As mentioned before, Peter Engelhart had studied piano with me; just before Mandy and I left Los Angeles he spoke with his mother, explained my decision for moving with family to New York and she wrote an eight hundred dollars check. Believe me that money enabled us to remain in Manhattan. Others helped too; Hal Gaylor went to the union and signed papers that I was needed on a job because the music could not be played to his satisfaction by any other available pianist; I was lucky.

The degrading and menacing experience, compulsory for all musicians, was to register with the police department for obtaining a New York *Cabaret Card*. Coated with plastic, exhibiting thumbprint and photo, this identification card was necessary for musicians performing where liquor was sold. Vice detectives, armed with handguns, worked in that office and their attitude towards applicants was brutal; every insinuated gesture was intimidating and insulting; they wanted any excuse to abuse. Let me remind readers that Lord Buckley, the comedian, suffered a heart attack while leaving the premises of the Police Cabaret Card Division and died. Buckley had a brilliant mind with an acid tongue and I can easily imagine the remarks he exchanged with these detectives.

Weeks later I was notified that my Cabaret Card was ready to be picked up. When I got there I was directed upstairs to the office of the Assistant District Attorney and was immediately asked ever so harshly if I had ever been arrested for

a felony. I replied, "Never" and with a malicious voice he asked, "What about your arrest in Las Vegas?" I said that I was released the following morning because there was no evidence. In raging anger he said he would investigate and do all in his power to prevent me from working as a musician in New York City. Another two weeks passed before I finally received my card and I accepted it with pride. I felt that I had won it; because when that department investigates they try their best to reject all applicants. I now realised that Mandy and I had moved from one police state only to replace it with another on the East Coast.

Each morning we searched for an apartment with reasonable rent and after a few weeks moved into 19 West 94th Street just off Central Park West. The building was a beautiful old Brown Stone and we had the first floor; all rooms were walnut paneling (a height of six feet) plus high ceilings (twenty-four feet) with two marble fireplaces; one bedroom, long hall with built-in closets, fully tiled bathroom, living room, small kitchen for \$125.00 monthly. I had an upright piano in the bathroom and it was a dream getting out of the bathtub, drying off and playing briefly before shaving; it was in this room that I first rehearsed with Billy Bean and Hal Gaylor. It was fantastic having this apartment with piano in New York City. I practiced and whenever I stopped to pour a coffee, I imagined after a few sips that another new pianist in town could be wearing down the ivories; I placed the unfinished cup on a table and returned to work. We had a few visitors; tenor saxophonist Walter Benton and Lynn Holiday but nothing compared to the activity in Los Angeles. Benton, one of my California favorites got a little work with Max Roach's quintet but his soul was too sensitive and he soon returned home. Once at a jam session I heard Benton comp better than any piano player; his chord voicing was interesting and he understood rhythmically what was needed for any soloist.

The 10th of December 1960 brought a beautiful madness for commuters; a foot of snow blanketed the city. I took a bus downtown to Battery Park, walked many blocks soothed by acoustics from the deep accumulation and then back again to the apartment, inspired.

I had an appointment with a well-established management/booking agency. He offered a contract and I told him that I must read it overnight; the next day I

telephoned and said it was unacceptable. For me to refuse his contract was a serious mistake as it circled around town that I was difficult; but if I had signed he would be entitled to part of all future earnings whether he or another agency booked me. I wasn't going to be one of those *bastards with talent* that he, I'm sure, prayed for nightly.

Every weekend we heard gunfire just outside our windows, the exchange of fire always continued for a number of minutes. These people didn't shoot and run; they stayed, took cover and traded shots. Never did the police interfere.

Pianist/arranger Howard Williams, whom I had worked and grown up with in Little Rock, had his trio in *Angelo's*, a small club on Second Avenue near 57th Street. I sat in every night and quite often they had afternoon jam sessions. The owner also played drums so the club's policy, bottom line, was music. I remember one jam session where the tenor player asked if I could play *Giant Steps*. Unable to say no, I told him to tell me the chord progressions. He didn't want to bother but I insisted and we played it. It was possible since I had practiced the bridge of *Have You Met Miss Jones* and from this sequence there is a harmonic connection with *Giant Steps*. I felt my self-esteem with a bit of pride but their reaction was cool and jaded; I thought, they should have such luck on their first attempt.

Hal Gaylor, plugging on my behalf, got me work with the Canadian vibraphonist Peter Appleyard at the *Round Table* and *Embers*. But I had to miss the first week because an employee of the Musicians Union deliberately tricked me; he gave directions, a few blocks away where I could quickly wire money to pay delinquent dues in Los Angeles and this fifteen minute time delay kept me from getting permission to work; his window was closed when I returned with my paid receipt. In those days the six month waiting period still existed if members transferred from one union local to another. Peter and Hal testified at the union that they had to have me as pianist with their group; this saved me financially. Following the *Round Table*, Peter's group backed Gloria D' Haven in the *Massonet Room* and that was a real test for me; one night, I left the piano music at my apartment and there wasn't time to return for it so I put a few pages of bass charts (music) on the piano rack and remembered her arrangements so she didn't notice I

played by memory; it reinforced again, never say "no" or "I don't know" or "I can't remember."

In October '60 Hal and I worked a week in Pittsburgh, about 450 miles from Greenwood Lake; Mandy, Dinah and Delia stayed with Evelyn. The first night in Pittsburgh Hal and I were unable to get separate rooms because of a hotel convention but we were promised our own rooms the following day. Later after the performance we returned to the hotel, exhausted from travel plus the gig with rehearsal and fell asleep. At ten thirty the next morning I was suddenly awoken from a horrible dream; a vision that was clearly an out of body experience. I had dreamed that Delia, a rather active child for only thirty-one months, had climbed over the wooden railing of the patio at Evelyn's in Greenwood Lake; I watched her as she fell two floors below and just before impact she turned and looked up at me. It was this moment that I jumped out of bed, Hal woke up and I remarked, "I've had a nightmare." I looked at my watch and somehow managed to return back to sleep. When we had breakfast around noon I told Hal about my dream. I thought often about this trance during the week but always made an effort to dismiss it. We returned to Greenwood Lake a week later and after distributing small presents to the children, we all enjoyed coffee with small talk about the gig and journey. Evie remarked, "Walter, you'll never guess what happened to Delia the next morning after you and Hal left for Pittsburgh." I stood up, "Don't anyone interrupt me. I want to explain the dream I experienced that same morning." I went with Evelyn to the large *L-shaped* patio off of the kitchen; it's at least twenty feet long with ten feet of width, I went to the exact spot and explained where, in the dream, Delia had climbed over and fallen. Evie was astonished; I had pin-pointed the location. Still with shock as she continued with details, "I had been standing at the kitchen sink when I suddenly turned and saw Delia climbing up. I quickly dashed, grabbed Delia's leg just as she was going over and pulled her safely back." It was even more mind-boggling when she confirmed that the time was 10:30; she had looked at the large clock above the sink. We agreed that my dream was an *out of body* experience.

The beginning hours of the New Year '61; as Hal and I went to collect our wages the bartender refused to pay and said the owner (gangster) was in the storage room. I went and as I entered the room he raised a quart bottle of vodka over my head; his partner standing behind him screamed, "No, don't." He hesitated to hit because he couldn't figure why I had a stretched grin with smiling eyes fixed on his; it unnerved him and we both were paralyzed in our tracks. Just at that instant Hal Gaylor hollered from the bar, "I have the money, let's go." On the way home about fifteen minutes after the event, my calm nerves shattered and I recognized the pattern; this wasn't the first incident where I remained for some minutes consciously unaware of the immediate danger. My neurological protective device had become rather distorted from *perils* of the profession.

By January '61 the apartment had become too expensive and we had to leave; Mandy took Dinah and Delia to stay with her sister in South Carolina while I resided with Howard in his apartment with our dog, Sam. Howard had an excellent record collection, he cooked great, we ate, drank wine, listened to recordings and of course, we were also damn good storytellers.

Let me explain that Sam was Mandy's dog. Visiting an animal shelter she chose Sam much to the disbelief of the caretaker. "Lady, we have so many dogs are you sure you really want this one?" "Yes, I've made up my mind." "Then please wait in the office." Forty minutes later two workers with protective arm sleeves managed to get a rope around Sam's neck. He was dragged from the cage and released in the office. Mandy beckoned in a seductive voice with outstretched arms "Come to me baby." Sam had found his new mom. As a young pup he was severely mistreated, beaten with coat hangers which resulted in his becoming an attack dog and he never hesitated to strike with or without provocation. So at Howard's apartment Sam was always chained to the radiator pipe and leashed with a choke chain for his necessary walks around the block.

I was behind in my payments and telephoned Budget Finance (offices were coast to coast) to inform their New York branch that I had moved from Los Angeles and now lived in Manhattan. I explained that I was without steady work but they would soon receive payments. Of course, this was foolish but I believed it was better

to be straight; a month later I got a call and a tough voice demanded disbursement. So I verbally attacked, "Look at your records, I have paid four loans already. I left Los Angeles without notifying the office, moved with my family to New York, then phoned and gave you my address information. I'm a pianist and I'll find work but don't phone me using a loud voice because you will disturb my practice. You will get your money but you'll wait and don't forget that I may need another loan." Success, I received no more calls and many months later they were paid; of course, I soon needed that next loan.

Hal got our trio its first break in February '61 from Columbia producer Howard Scott. Glenn Gould was scheduled to record but frequently he canceled so Scott told Hal to have his trio ready to record and since Columbia had already paid the engineer and studio time, our demonstration tape would be free. The phone rang, we rushed over to Columbia Studios on West 34th Street, the acoustics were perfect and I found the [D] fantastic. The result was a tape that prompted Orrin Keepnews of Riverside to take us into RCA's Plaza Studio to record *The Trio* in June '61.

Our Apollo grand was still stored in Los Angeles, so Howard Williams offered to have it shipped to his apartment, he would pay storage plus transportation costs and whenever I could reimburse him the piano would be mine once again. It was great of him and also it would be possible for me to practice whenever he wasn't at the keyboard. When the piano arrived I was in New Jersey which was best because it would have been a problem for me to watch movers hoist the blanketed instrument to the fifth floor of his apartment with rope and pulley.

Howard got me a weekend with Buddy Marrow's band. I was instructed to meet the lead trumpet player in a bar on 49th and 8th Avenue as he was transporting himself and three musicians in his new Buick convertible for the first gig in Virginia. I met them in the bar, introduced myself and explained that I had to take my dog with me. The trumpet player, wearing elevated shoes, had the temperament of a bona fide tyrant and became enraged when I mentioned the word dog. I calmly explained that Sam was a psychotic killer and I could not leave him in an animal shelter because he would chew through the cage and added, "If Sam can't travel

with me, we will stay in New York." I knew he couldn't locate another piano player on such short notice and being the driver, he was obliged to deliver us in order to collect his mileage money. We drove through Lincoln Tunnel and not one word was uttered so I broke the deadly silence, "Now listen, whatever you do don't say anything bad about Sam because he'll remember and bite hell out of you the first chance he gets." Even deadlier silence followed and was interrupted only with short phrases like, "Got a light?" or "Can we stop for coffee?" Around seven o' clock the next morning we parked in front of a hotel in a quite little town in Virginia. The tyrannical trumpeter said, "You'll never get a room in this hotel with that dog." I answered with shoulders slightly raised, "We'll see." I walked Sam over to a few trees and then took him inside the hotel lobby and directly to the reception desk; the musicians were in single file to register but I took Sam, on his leash, up to the end of the desk and motioned for the receptionist and whispered in my most dignified voice, "My dog is ill with a cough and I just didn't have the heart to leave him in a New York City animal shelter; now I'll keep him leashed to the radiator pipe, I assure you he will not jump on the bed and he never barks." The concerned receptionist with a respect for the well behaved *class* quickly gave me a key and said I could take the dog up to the room and fill out my registration later. I turned to the musicians with such a look of humility; the red faced trumpeter wanted to kill; the others stood with mouths opened. Oh, what a joy it was to win; a most glorious feeling but it was short lived. I traveled with Sam in the back of the equipment truck for the remaining two nights plus the journey back to *Big Apple*. Every Wednesday afternoon I went to the union where musicians congregated looking for work; a few from Marrow's band would ask, "How is Sam?" And I answered, "Sam is fine but if you get me a gig I'm sure he'll be more than appreciative." Laughter followed.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Somehow we all survived that winter and by the first week of March '61 the decision was made to form a trio with Hal Gaylor and Billy Bean. Evelyn (Hal's wife) talked her father into letting us rent a four bedroom two story log house on lakefront property which he owned. Hal and I rented a trailer and loaded our possessions stored at *Jim & Andy's*; at the same time Mandy, Dinah and Delia had arrived in New York from South Carolina and that evening we all were united in Greenwood Lake. Hal asked his father-in-law Frank Benz to let us have one of the grand pianos from his hotel/restaurant, *Linden House*; Hal and I moved the instrument over into the log house with a Volkswagen bus which resulted in my having a hernia operation in September, five months later.

Again, I was able to play all hours without disturbing anyone. Now it felt like I was living in paradise.

Billy Bean remained in Philadelphia but drove up often to rehearse for a week or so before returning home; after all it was surely maddening for him to stay in the log house with two families, four small children and two dogs. Billy would begin his mornings around four or five o' clock in the afternoon. He dressed in a robe and sat with his glass and bottle in front of the record player. As he listened to a recording he would sing along and harmonize an interesting inside voice-line; I was impressed; Billy had the ears of an elephant. Then he ate a bite had a cup of coffee and continued throughout the night with guitar and glass just playing and drinking until it was time to confront the next dominating sunrise, then he returned to bed. Billy was a pure intellectual improviser. He could have never survived for any length of time in the jungle business world of jazz. Billy's appearance and demeanor was as serious as any member of a judicial court. Today he lives with his brother in Philadelphia and never plays. He has made excellent recordings; but like nightingales retreating from cacophony, Billy withdrew from the masses and I sympathize completely; he simply wasn't made for this world.

One afternoon Hal and Evie's giant shepherd Kim was on one side of the full length glass storm door and Sam, half dachshound and beagle attacked; glass

shattered as he broke through, bit Kim's nose and held fast. Sam's body dangled in mid air because of Kim's height so we splashed a large pan of water on Sam; Kim was released and immediately rushed to the veterinarian. It's amazing that we all managed to live together for thirteen months with so very little friction; I practiced, composed, wrote trio arrangements and we rehearsed at every opportunity. I have many fond memories of our year in Greenwood Lake; it was a complete chapter in my life and during that period we recorded "*The Trio*" for Riverside. Thinking of success from that *date*, we only worked one gig, a private party in a publisher's Manhattan penthouse; but not together in trio. I played solo in one room while Billy and Hal played on the floor above. I was noticing a paradox in the world of jazz, our new release (*The Trio*) was played in the *Five Spot* during intermissions for months on end and Hal tried repeatedly to book us on their Monday off nights, but it was all in vain.

Hal continued introducing me to all of New York's booking/managers and most promptly declined to handle our trio; William Morris's Agency was the only one I found acceptable but of course, they were not interested at all. Two years later the Morris agency phoned but by this time Hal and I had better work than the agency offered.

In August '61 televised news showed construction of the Berlin Wall and like everyone, I was shocked; but how could I imagine that sixteen years later I would settle there and witness its crumbling in November '89.

I accompanied Dinah on her first day to elementary school in September '61. We crossed Greenwood Lake in a brightly red painted Indian canoe; the weather was perfect. I paddled back to the log house and Delia, looking from the window ran out in the yard to greet me; she was three and a half. I'm the luckiest father, both daughters were always interesting and never became problematic; they were so easy to raise.

Hal and I had a weekend in London, Ontario with Peter Appleyard's quartet and after the night's work we travelled a hundred or so miles to Toronto where his friend, pianist Maury Kay lived. At age twenty-seven Maury was the consummate musician; he improvised jazz beautifully on all instruments, even French horn and

could write for full symphony orchestra. I was astounded with his big band and arranging; these Canadian musicians were as good as any in New York City. Anyway, with the rising sun Hal and I entered Maury's apartment where he and a few others were sharing a fresh pot of coffee. Then we gathered around the piano as he played different sections of his arrangements in tempo; transposition was no problem. This continued until late afternoon when Hal and I departed for the gig. At the end of our engagement, we returned to Toronto and spent another day with Maury. During the drive I was briefed more about him. He and Hal had worked often in Montreal. Hal recounted an event one evening when Maury was only sixteen. A piano score for Westside Story had just arrived backstage and Maury, in a stoned stupor was asked to play it. He glanced quickly, flipping through the pages and then proceeded to play it in tempo as well as if he had thoroughly practised the music. Glenn Gould, three years older was a dark heavy shadow so Maury turned to jazz and lived under Peterson's even heavier cloud. However, Maury had his own way with music; Gould could never have managed Maury's flights of improvised fantasy. By the late sixties Maury had died; I heard that Maury's hair, because of his addiction turned from black to silver grey overnight; a mature musician with a mature mind who became a tragedy.

Musically I had developed during our stay in Greenwood Lake. I wrote an idea every time I went to the piano and had begun compiling a folder of phrase/fragments long before we parted from the log house.

Hal Gaylor was not only a musician. As a skilled modern architect he had built a beautiful four apartment hotel unit overlooking the lake and a three bedroom home above these apartments for Frank Benz and his wife; this was completed before our trio project. Of course, it was the most interesting structure in Greenwood Lake. Then after our trio disbanded he designed a dream home on top of nearby Mount Peter. It was in the shape of a crescent moon overlooking a patio and since the walls were glass you could see in every room when drapery was pulled to one side. It should have won a prize plus a featured article in the New York Times. Hal had aesthetic taste for music, design and especially in architecture.

We moved from the log house and rented an apartment nearby until Dinah finished the school semester. Since I drove each afternoon into New York City for work and returned in the early hours of the morning, I missed an unforeseen crisis. Mandy and Delia walked down the hill to meet Dinah as she got off the school bus. Since the weather was nice she decided to take the girls for a walk down a country road that passed some farm houses. Suddenly two German shepherd dogs belonging to one of the farms attacked them. Mandy hit the first dog on the nose with Dinah's school bag and then bashed the other one. Both dogs were a bit stunned and retreated perhaps twenty feet back. Terrified, the two girls ran to each side of the road. Mandy quickly got them together and behind her as she braced herself for the next assault. She continued hitting the dogs and managed to get the children up on the porch of a farmhouse. The owner, hearing the screams and barking rushed out and chased the dogs away. While Mandy explained the man interrupted, "Lady, this isn't the first time they have attacked. I suggest you notify the State Police." A trooper visited our apartment and informed Mandy that the owner of the dogs had been warned four times already and the dogs should be removed permanently; we agreed. I felt indebted and grateful to Mandy for she had courageously protected our daughters; no one was harmed.

Nonetheless, Greenwood Lake and the good times had come to an end; by June '62 we had found an apartment in Ridgefield Park, New Jersey. Bassist Don Payne hired me for *Billy's Black Steer*, a steak house in Roselyn, Long Island; three nights solo piano with trio on weekends and this lasted six months. But Don soon acquired better paying work and turned the job over to me. I hired a bassist and a percussionist from Rio de Janeiro who daily recorded all of the bossa nova productions in New York. But these Brazilian musicians, although allowed to record in studios, were absolutely forbidden to work nightclubs because of a local #802 union regulation; which I ignored for the simple reason that they played so well. The bassist John Sebastian knew only a few jazz titles but this was never a problem because he understood counterpoint and played bass lines intuitively better than most others; a phenomenal musician. My existence had always been on an edge near the abyss but much to my surprise when the restaurant was quickly sold,

the new owner replaced all employees except me; it was my *Black Irish* luck once again.

I still worked solo piano every Sunday afternoon at *The Cove*, a private boat club on Greenwood Lake and afterwards drove into Greenwich Village to play another gig, a total of eight and a half hours on my day of *worship*. There was one member nicknamed Big Vinny; he was Jewish, could discuss the style of every jazz pianist and was fond of my playing. When entering, he went behind the bar and slipped a hundred to the *mixologist*; then began preparing drinks for his friends and naturally kept me well supplied. Vinny was about ten years my senior and often mentioned his many evenings in Harlem listening to jazz throughout the forties; for a New Yorker he was an unusually *sharp blade*. One afternoon he introduced me to his mother and father who had owned a bar in the Bronx for many years; I found them nice but both were so reserved; their comments were limited to, “Yes, no or thanks.”

Being youthful and foolish, I had never considered alcohol as hindering my ability to drive but sooner or later everyone experiences a low energy day and liquor finally got the upper hand; it hindered my ability to keep eyes open. My dear Aunt Margaret gave me her vintage '51 Chevrolet Bel Air, in perfect condition, when she bought her new car. One Sunday at the *Cove* I had consumed far too much but waved farewell to Big Vinny as I drove out of the parking area and onto the narrow highway in the direction of New York. I thought I was in control but after passing a slower vehicle at the beginning of a serpentine curve I instantly became unconscious. But the vehicle and I continued straight ahead and crashed directly into the side of a stone mountain. The car bounced back onto the road and as I regained consciousness, my Bel Air sliced off three cable-linked concrete posts; brakes were applied and I stopped parallel to the road. A few people approached from nearby houses as I leaped from the car; I told them that I only had a check and asked for a dime; the telephone booth was standing a few yards away. I called *Linden House*, Evelyn rushed to the scene, I jumped into the van and we sped away before the police arrived. She drove me immediately to the doctor where my chin was stitched; my other set back was a chipped tooth and a demolished automobile.

The timing of this entire sequence would have been suitable for any James Bond movie. I called Mandy, told her to phone the club because I had wrecked the car, was injured and unable to work. I made an accident report with the State Police and they scheduled me for an appointment the following week with a judge. My Chevy was towed to a garage and I took one last look; the front bumper was vertically split in the center as if a knife had cut it, the battery was broken into very small pieces and the glass horn in the middle of the steering wheel had been completely shattered on impact with my chin. Now I was forced to use public transportation (bus-subway-train) to the gig in Rosalyn, Long Island. The following Sunday I kept my appointment with the judge, pleaded guilty, gave me a suspended sentence and a fifteen dollar fine. Then the magistrate proceeded to drive me to the *Cove* and throughout each intermission he told me about his previous career as an adventurous FBI agent; when he left the club a few hours later he had to be driven home; the judge drank heavily. The next Sabbath as I played, Vinny established himself behind the bar, nurtured me well and when I insisted that I must run to catch the next bus, he begged for me to stay longer. I ran out the door shouting *goodbye* over my shoulder just as the bus sped past. Vinny insisted on driving me to the end of the lake (a distance of nine miles) so I could catch the bus as it made its next stop. I noticed his girlfriend was wearing a serious face; she declined to accompany us. Instead, Vinny had a monstrous friend to ride along in the back seat. We sped away and he took the first of many sharp curves on this narrow road at seventy-five miles per. From the corner of my eye I observed Vinny sitting low in the seat and being so heavy his body didn't shift with the turns. It became clear why Vinny brought his big friend along; by holding onto the door handle as we took each curve on two wheels, his body weighted the car to avoid turning over and I held my door handle so that I didn't slide over against Vinny. As the foliage blurred I thought of California when riding with bassist Max Bennett as he accelerated his Jaguar roadster to its maximum; but this guy was much more daring than Max; Vinny courted danger. We overtook the Greyhound at ninety-five and a few seconds later screeched to a halt just as the bus pulled up at the stop; I jumped out and into the bus; paid and noticed both eyes of the driver's bulging. Looking out

the window as the bus continued I thought about Vinny's demeanor; he wore a smile and behind the wheel, Vinny was in his element. The following Sundays at the *Cove* I made a point of being early at the bus stop. The gig finally ended and a year later Hal and Evelyn mailed the front page of the local newspaper with a photo of my friend who outraced the Greyhound. Big Vinny had been arrested by the FBI in Greenwood Lake and charged with bank robbery; he was quickly convicted and sentenced. He had driven getaway cars for the legendary gangster of *banking* fame, *Crazy Joe Sullivan*.

Another lakeside saga; our neighbor Salvatore Burns (Americanized surname) lived two villas away from the log house and was written about in *Time* and *Newsweek* magazine. In '61 on a nocturnal adventure, he and three others went ashore in Cuba and recovered over a million dollars of casino deposits that had been buried in glass *mason* jars during the final days of the revolution. Salvatore was well over six feet tall and had a good two hundred and eighty pounds of solid weight. His even larger brother resembled a rhinoceros and once I happened to see him get out of his Cadillac with the greatest effort; the door opening just wasn't large enough. On a summer afternoon as I exited the local Post Office, two FBI agents approached and invited me into the back seat of their unmarked car, handed me a photo of Salvatore's brother and asked if I recognized the man. I answered that I had never seen him and they, "Are you sure?" I responded, "If seeing anyone so monstrous, how can one *not* remember?" They let me go. Months later I was surprised when Salvatore wanted to become a member of the *Cove* and on two different Sundays he made his appearance with the power of a steamroller. He met privately in the office with the Italian owner, who belonged to another ruling family, and was rejected; the owner's position was stronger but I must say that when Salvatore made a grand entrance it would make a pit bull retreat and cower under the nearest table.

I want to mention a special evening within these many episodes. In a bar on 52nd Street between Broadway & Eighth Avenue I met the bassist Wilber Ware and we played in duo; he was one of the most extraordinary bassists. He didn't need a *drummer*, his playing was *rhythmically* soulful and you felt that Wilber wrapped his

time around your improvised phrases. In Chicago while on tour with Thad & Mel's band in '75, I spoke briefly with Wilber; he had stopped by our hotel to greet us just as we departed for O' Hara airport.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

In spring of '63 I substituted in the newly opened New York Playboy Club. Kai Winding was musical director and afterwards I phoned him repeatedly that I wanted to work whenever there was availability. Days later I picked up the receiver and Kai told me to begin working the Playroom with bassist Ben Tucker, who was later replaced by Earl May; this was for the duration of eleven months. Next I went directly into the VIP Room (solo) for nine months and eventually performed in all other rooms. With this job it was possible for me to pay Howard the shipping and storage costs for my Apollo and have it moved from his apartment to ours in Ridgefield Park.

The Playboy had five separate clubs housed in one address 5 East 59th Street. It remained open every day of the year from eleven a.m. until four o'clock the following morning. Daily attendance the first year was 43,000 people with a line, through all weather, extending around the corner of Fifth Avenue. By the second year daily attendance dropped to approximately 42,000 and the third to 40,000; then it lowered to around 38,000 for the remaining years; during the seventh year lines were reduced to weekends only. Although Playboy was a private club, it didn't have a liquor license and singing was forbidden; musicians were not allowed to proclaim their titles and even the room director could not announce their names over the microphone; thus a pianist had to hold the audience's attention only by musical performance. New York's State Liquor & Beverage Authority permitted *membership establishments* to hire musicians who played only string instruments; drummers, singers or horn players were considered a show presentation and then a liquor license was mandatory. This was the reason the Playboy Club didn't have shows until their fifth year.

Fortunately I never met Hefner as I felt it was best to maintain a distance from the *top* in Chicago, nevertheless it must be admitted that he had a *luck* that stayed. When dismissed at Esquire magazine Hugh visited the bar of his friend Shelly Caston. He was unemployed and depressed; he only spoke about his dream of starting Playboy magazine. So Caston, understanding Hugh's limited financial resources, offered an office/apartment on the floor above which was gratefully accepted. With contacts in printing and publishing, Hefner created his first issue of the magazine. The first night Playboy hit the newsstands, Hefner and his newly acquired investor drove around *Chicago's Loop*. At the first stand he tried to buy a copy of Playboy but all were sold. The next stand was the same and subsequently all others; they could not find a copy within the *Loop*. The investor suggested that they immediately visit the printer. Unfortunately, the shop was small and the owner refused to print *around the clock*. So the printing shop was purchased and all employees worked in shifts twenty-four hours daily; as everyone knows sales skyrocketed. After a number of successful issues Hefner spoke with Shelly and told him that he wanted to pay his back rent on the office/apartment but since they were good friends, Shelly declined. Hefner proposed an executive position but Caston explained that he was happy with his bar; then Hef said, "You have always shown an interest in show biz, why not be the musical director for all of my clubs?" Shelly thought, "Now that's an idea." Hefner added, "I'll also need someone who is in the food business, do you have a suggestion?" "Yeah, a good friend of mine by the name of Arnold Morton, his father is a wholesale meat packer." And that's how Hefner acquired Morton as his vice president and Caston as musical director; from then on every position was quickly filled.

After the *hutch* in Chicago the next Playboy Club was built in New Orleans. Before construction began the magazine offered membership keys for \$100.00 each and every businessman wanted a Playboy-key. The clever aspect was that all expenditures for construction were collected in advance and this same procedure followed for the club in New York. Then other clubs soon mushroomed throughout the U.S. and eventually into Europe.

I remember in '62 when musicians spoke with drooling lips about the new Playboy Club as it was being built on 59th. They fantasized about the nice *sugar plum* work that would surely follow the grand opening. I listened but never could have imagined that I would remain employed for eight years not only as pianist but also as musical director and eventually entertainment manager. Hefner liked cool jazz and decided on Kai Winding as musical director of the New York club. Kai proceeded to organize the department with assistance from Musician's Union local #802 and the structure was set firmly. I know that Morton spent days on end trying to break down the music department but it took him eight years to do so. All pianos were new Steinways, tuned and serviced twice weekly by technicians from Steinway House. It was a dream for any jazz pianist; even Oscar Peterson came in and played on many occasions as well as Herbie Hancock. The club's roster of pianists included Monty Alexander, Larry Willis, Sanford Gold, Harald Francis, Jimmy Lyons and Albert Dailey. The bassists were Earl May, Bill Crow, Paul West and Wyatt Reuther. All of New York's finest substituted repeatedly; Ron Carter, Tony Williams, Jo Jones, Joe Henderson and Mickey Roker. I had Ben Tucker, Earl May and then Wyatt Reuther in duo; Bill Crow and Ronnie Bedford in trio; they sent in subs whenever they pleased. After the liquor license was obtained the house trio for shows was pianist Frank Owens, bassist Paul West with Ralph Jones on drums. Singers were Marlena Shaw, Cleo Lain, Lou Rawles, Elaina Woods, Linda Hopkins and many others. Kai had pianist Larry Willis, bassist Bob Cranshaw, drummer Al Foster and guitarist Les Spann who was later replaced with Al Gaffa. For the Party Room I had a quartet for dancing; Jerome Richardson on tenor, Bill Crow bass and drummer Bobby Donaldson. A few months later Joe Farrell replaced Richardson and Ray Mosca took over for Donaldson.

A tale that never fails to excite; Arnold Morton, Hefner's chosen Vice President flew in from Chicago to meet with New York's Commissioner for Liquor & Beverage. The purpose was to obtain a liquor license for 5 East 59th Street and when Arnold met the Commissioner, he was told, "Be here in my office tomorrow at noon with twenty thousand dollars cash in a *brown paper bag*." Certainly this Commissioner lacked class but Morton kept his appointment and placed \$20,000.00

on the Commissioner's desk. The Commissioner promptly took the *brown paper bag* of currency into the next room and to Morton's dismay, returned and said, "The liquor license will not be granted." He left the office with Morton just sitting alone without his little *brown paper bag* or a receipt. That evening Morton dined in the VIP Room as angry as a violent bull; his twenty thousand had *flown* out the window. But when a line of people are standing around the corner every night trying to get enter your private club, failure is soon forgotten. Of course, Morton never bothered speaking with musicians but those people around him *happily* explained everything in detail.

As with all large enterprises greed soon began, cutbacks followed and intrigue flamed. Morton wanted Caston to replace Kai; then Sam Donahue arrived as musical director for a reduced fee. Sam performed in each room as the opening act in addition to leading his quartet in the Living Room. Within two years Sam was forced to leave and I became musical director; also it made one name less on the payroll. Let me scan back to '63 at the end of my second week in the Playroom; Kai told me that I was to be replaced by Teddy Wilson. Knowing I would work two weeks longer, I discreetly replied, "Thanks, I have enjoyed working here very much." Days later Kai informed me that Teddy wasn't available and I should stay. The same weekend Kai announced that Eddy Haywood would replace me; then it changed to George Shearing, Ellis Larkin but none of them ever materialized and I remained. Musicians have to live with job insecurity but I had experienced so much of it that this was like a duck shedding water.

That fall I was shocked when President Kennedy stated on an evening newscast that if re-elected he would *clip the wings* of Hoover's FBI; then his assassination in Dallas soon followed. Naturally, Playboy closed since everyone was *glued to the tube*. The next surprise was an announcement on televised news that at eleven o' clock on the very same day, Nixon and Hoover departed from a nearby ranch, stepped out of the limousine at Dallas' Love Field and had a noon flight directly to Washington on United Airlines. Within that hour Kennedy was eliminated; all *hopes* were crushed. Subsequently, Oswald was shot by Jack Ruby

who just happened to own a local nightspot; I learned later that Tony D' Amore was Ruby's house pianist when that historical disaster happened. How can a world become so small?

Mandy and I were apartment hunting again but all were overpriced. One day while searching we spoke with a realtor and by chance Howard Williams happened to be with us. The realtor thought carefully and asked, "Were you in the military?" I answered and then he passed the question to Howard who also replied in the affirmative. "Well, why not put both of your *G. I. Bills* together and buy a duplex." We all agreed that it was a great idea and certainly we had never dreamed of buying. Within two months we moved from Ridgefield Park to 149 South Demarest Avenue in Bergenfield, New Jersey; a real home only seven miles from the George Washington Bridge with the convenience of public transportation day and night. The two story house was only five years old and in mint condition; such an incredible deal except for one drawback. A brook ran along the north and west side of our property. We had carpenters prepare the basement for finishing, so that I could panel walls, tile floors and staple acoustic tiles to the ceiling; thus we gained two rooms of which one was my music studio. However, the carpenters attached 2X4 wood frames (for partitioning each room) by nailing into the concrete floor instead of drilling and sinking bolts in concrete to fasten them as promised; this made new unsealed holes and water seeped in rapidly whenever it rained. Even with a sump/pump the piano was often standing in two inches of water. We paid a company twenty-five hundred dollars to waterproof our basement but flooding continued. Feeling ripped off I phoned the company and told them to do the job again but they refused. Infuriated, I went into my *acting bag*. I arrived at their office around seven o' clock in the morning when only the owner was there. I explained that I was a jazz pianist and had often worked for different Mafia families of which one in particular owed me a favor. "I want another waterproofing." He refused; I repeated my appeal politely. I graciously left the premises and early the next morning I was waiting for him as he parked in front of his office. Again, I repeated ever so nicely my threat and after thinking more carefully he decided to make a completely new construction; I couldn't believe I had won. The new design

allowed water to enter our basement through small pipes inserted horizontally along the foundation wall and this flowed into a gravel trench, ten inches wide, that had been cut by a pneumatic hammer into the cement floor; the water was then channeled into the sump/pump and siphoned outdoors. Since our basement had circulated heating, the combination of humidity and dryness was ideal for the instrument. With minimal soundproofing my playing disturbed no one's sleep. So after working all night I could come home, practice until seven thirty and drive Dinah to school; being young I rarely slept more than five hours.

In April '64 I attended Sviatoslav Richter's Carnegie Hall performance of four Beethoven Sonatas; I was never quite the same again. His was a sound, piano style and interpretation convincingly played in a manner that I had never heard before. Of course in live performance, Tatum's approach to the instrument was more persuasive than anyone I had witnessed but Richter's performance was beyond this world. Before falling asleep that night, I made up my mind to enter a Conservatory. I calculated that with such uncertainty in the *world of jazz*, with a wife and two children, I had no alternative but to learn more about piano literature and technique in order to make some *coins* teaching. At the Playboy Club I expected to be replaced any moment; job security is meaningless in jazz. I discussed with Mandy the possibility of attending school, she approved and I prepared my program. As the date in September arrived I took a bus into New York for my audition at Manhattan School of Music on 103rd Street in Spanish Harlem. I had worked the night before, practiced that morning, gave Mandy a kiss and I proceeded a few blocks towards the bus stop. But after turning the corner I walked back to the house and much to Mandy's surprise, collapsed in a chair mumbling, "I'm thirty-two; I can't enter school and struggle along with students so much younger. I can't do it." And then, "No, I've practiced...I must try." I was back on my feet, caught a bus and made it to the school in time. I waited in a depressingly dark hall for my name to be called and finally it was announced; I straightened my tie and took long breaths before entering the room. This delay of not more than thirty seconds had a positive reaction; the nine teachers, a few of the piano world's greatest, turned their heads towards the door as Robert Goldsand asked, "We're

waiting, where is he?" At this moment I entered, walked past with a nod and said, "Good Day" while continuing to the pair of Steinways and asked, "Which instrument has the better sound?" A professor volunteered, "The one on the right has an easier action." I replied, "I'll prefer the one with a better sound." I quickly sat at the instrument, placed feet over the pedals and with both hands resting on the keys, I felt like where I was born to be.

Through the years, I have often thought about this sequence; I had waited a moment too long; as I entered their heads were turned to me; I had greeted them pleasantly but they sensed my seriousness; I had chosen the better sounding instrument; prepared myself to play immediately and *all* was with a momentum.

One of the professors asked, "What will you play for us?" Being interrupted I slowly turned my head without moving feet or hands from the instrument and announced, "Bach Prelude and Fugue (book II) in C minor; Beethoven Sonata op. 27 #1 and two Chopin Etudes, op. 10 #4 & op. 10 #3. I played my best because my dear friend, a pianist/piano maker from Budapest, Rudi Steindl had prepared and coached me wisely. Afterwards a member of the jury asked, "It states on your application that you are a jazz improviser working six nights a week at the Playboy Club." I answered, "Correct." Another asked, "And you are married with two daughters? Perhaps the demands at school will be too much for you; it could affect your health and possibly ruin your marriage." I knew that in the early fifties if a professor even heard about any student playing jazz, the school dismissed the student without refunding any tuition. But this was '63 and as a result of Max Roach attending Manhattan in the mid-fifties, professors could now be at least tolerant. In '74 John Lewis organized their Jazz Department; such is progress. But this was the early sixties and after my audition the teachers held a brief discussion; no one would accept me. Heida Hermanns was a member of the jury, "I think that if he wants to pay he should be allowed to attend." All of the jury roared in chorus, "Alright Heida, you take him. "Oh no; not me;" and she was adamant. I met with Professor Rauscher, the Dean, in his office, "I understand your situation; I came to this country and worked nights in clubs, taught privately to make *ends meet* while studying. Now I'm giving you a teacher who is going to teach you a discipline like

you have never known." I thanked him and he gave me Heida's telephone number. Professor Rauscher taught orchestration, hated being Dean because it took time away from his work, which for him was as important as food and shelter. I phoned Heida in the evenings but she kept insisting that I could not study with her and argued that my health, job and marriage could suffer. I continued calling and finally told her that I would audition at Mannes School of Music if necessary; she then accepted me as a piano student.

I practiced but could not do everything she assigned. I remember trying for three days a *handicap method* without once succeeding. Never had I worked at the piano in such a way and it upset my entire nervous system. With only two days before the following lesson I had to make the impossible happen. I bought a bottle of Scotch and took an early afternoon drink; tried the *handicap* but no luck; rested on the cot beside the piano for twenty minutes; tried again without success; took a drink; returned to the cot; tried again, still it was hopeless; another drink and flat on the cot; tried again and like a *bolt from the blue* I got it. I felt as if I had broken through a *sound* barrier. Fortunately this was the only time a drink was necessary to fulfill Heida's expectations; she definitely was a task master of the highest order. Today I still work on these handicap methods which of course, apply to all music, *jazz* and *classical* as well.

Since Carnegie Hall was only three blocks away from Playboy Club I often hurried over during my first intermission, entered tipping the usher and listened to as many pianists as possible; even Rubinstein three times in one season. But whenever Vladimir Ashkenazy performed, I hired a sub and absorbed the entire concert. Once on a Sunday afternoon in '74 the hall was fully booked and folding chairs were placed on stage. Joe Davis, bassist and close friend, provided my daughter and me with tickets and we sat nearby the instrument. Being so close, the performance has even a greater impact; when we got home I played five hours; Ashkenazy is that inspiring.

Back to the late sixties; I had a lesson with Heida at her home in Westport. She maintained the highest level of teaching and was never at a loss for having a solution to make any difficulty (in interpretation) artistic. But on this particular

day she was in an unusually stubborn mood and throughout the lesson we worked on getting a huge fat sound from just one tone. I played *G* above middle *C* with the third finger of my right hand. She said my sound wasn't full enough and proceeded an octave higher, on a thinner string, with the fourth finger of her left hand, which is lighter boned and weaker; but her sound was certainly much fuller and richer than mine even though it wasn't louder; it undoubtedly projected more. She said, "Play." I made my best effort; "No!" And again she played the octave higher but managed a deeper sound quality. "Again," she demanded. This continued for over an hour; she used no other words, pressed no different key and always used the same finger of her left hand. All of this time she remained in a chair at the treble end of the keyboard reaching over with her left hand to play but finally, all patience was lost. Like a boxer with the right fist tightly clinched, she hit my right temple so hard that my glasses flew off and slid across the floor. Sustaining my most gentlemanly cool, "Heida, don't hurt *your* hand." She said, "Play." I did but only heard, "No," as she again produced a resonance weightier than mine. As I drove back into Manhattan mentally engrossed by this degrading experience, I hollered from the top of my lungs with all the anguish I was capable of, "Why am I tolerating such humiliation? Why do I continue going to school? I'm too old. Will I ever get it?" I felt half crazed. But with determination I continued daily and about twelve years later on an afternoon in Berlin, "Eureka! I've got it." Finally my subconscious understood which signals to send through the nerve/reflex system in order to match and satisfy the sound quality I desired. I could never have accomplished this feat without learning from Heida Hermanns, who had studied in the late twenties with Egon Petri and Artur Schnabel at Hochschule der Kuenste-Berlin.

One late afternoon the Playroom was reserved by Blue Note Records for a private party honoring Horace Silver's birthday. Horace sat at a front table; I approached him, introduced myself, congratulated him and spoke most favorably about his first trio recording in '52. After a few moments I returned to the piano and played his composition, *Room #608*. Our conversation on intermissions gave me such pleasure; he's great people and an inventive pianist/composer.

Kai had an intuitive feeling for hiring interesting musicians; one evening he asked me to join him downstairs in the Living Room to listen to a new pianist; it was the eighteen year old Monty Alexander with guitarist, Les Spann and Bob Cranshaw on bass. Kai asked, "What do you think of the kid?" "Well, I hope you signed him." Kai laughed. Monty was indeed a winner; even people unacquainted with jazz were touched by his playing.

Then there was Milt Buckner, who played solo (organ) for over a year in the Penthouse. Pianists should be acquainted with the radio broadcasts Milt made (on piano) with Lionel Hampton's band in the mid and late forties when he soloed in locked hands.

By '67, Teddy Wilson was finally booked in the Party room; I had begun listening to him as a kid and now we worked in the same club. I enjoyed so many conversations with Teddy in the musician's room up on the sixth floor where warm food was served in the canteen. When I told him that I had his solo album on Musicraft label, pressed in '45, and I thought it was his best recorded effort ever; He exclaimed, "You have that? "Man, they didn't even give me a copy or even bother to tell me when it was released." I commented, "It was given to me as a birthday present in '46 and I still listen to it." When I got home I played all tracks for the last time and gave it to him the next night at work; a 78 rpm album and in spite of the years it was in excellent shape. Teddy mentioned that he had studied privately with a Russian teacher for over six months before he made that recording. One of the originals was "Sunny Morning" which I later recorded on my Concord date, "Love Every Moment" with Larance Marabel and Putter Smith. I have in Berlin a CD of Teddy's complete solo recordings but the Musicraft date was not included and *this* was the best of Wilson.

Now I must *fill in* with my twin's part in this saga. After graduating from New England Conservatory Lenny married into heavy wealth but continued studying privately and worked only when personal obligations forced him to do so and this was rare indeed. In '68, Lenny played solo at New York's St. Regis Hotel on Fifth Avenue for a small gathering of around fifty international gourmet distributors. Just as the piano was being moved into the conference room, all were

congregated around the portable bar trading *shallow talk* when one of them, about sixty had a heart attack. All panicked, the house doctor was telephoned and to the disbelief of everyone, L.B. Hunt, the food and oil magnate, got down on the carpet beside the ailing man, began rapid pushups and cursed callously, “You weak bastard; if you’d taken care of your health and exercised you wouldn’t be having this attack now.” The man stared at the ceiling gasping for breath as he tried to ignore Hunt; but what else should one expect from a *muleskinner* who won a deed to an oil well in a poker game in Texarkana? Lenny was so shocked by Hunt’s behavior that he immediately phoned me.

Rudi Steindl had rebuilt a Steinway [C] vintage 1864 and invited me over to play. It had a new pin-block, strings and renovated action for a price that I’ve promised not to reveal. I couldn’t sleep and told Mandy at breakfast that I must find a way to sell the Apollo and buy that Steinway; within a week the transaction was completed. I invited Howard, Rudi, Al Haig and a few other guests to listen to Linda Kessler-Ferri playing her graduate recital-program; my Steinway and music room was now *initiated*. She gave the most beautiful performance and everyone was amazed. I studied with Linda during all school holidays, from her I learned *how* to color *tones*; she radiated with Russian Jewish motherly warmth that filtered through in her *style* and *sound*.

I want to make a point about practice. The objective isn’t to memorize in order to perform a piece of music. It’s to understand, develop technically and artistically all that can be obtained from the piece. I had to perform twenty minutes of my recital program for a jury at Manhattan at the end of each year. I had worked all possible hours of my free day that Monday but after retiring to bed at one o’ clock I soon realized that I had only practiced consecutive-tones from two, gradually increasing, until seventeen per tick (met. 40). Immediately I jumped out of bed, stepped down to the music room and played the section nineteen per tick, then returned to bed. The next morning at eleven I played for Dorslawsky, the tyrannical member of the piano faculty. Looking at her papers she mentioned that she had heard the first and second movements (Beethoven Sonata op.2 # 3) the year before and said, “I want to hear the fourth movement.” I replied, “Alright, but I

should begin with the third movement since you didn't hear it the last examination." She looked quite domineering as she gave her mother superior smile, "Let me hear the fourth movement." I played and when the theme (triads in first inversion) returned she gasped, "That's enough, I'm sure you will have a great recital." I had prepared and planed those inversions, following the descending sixteenth note run, to sound softly and fragile like when you visualize an animated Warner Brothers cartoon: where the cat, confronted with a vicious bull dog, smiles with teeth *cracked* and *shattering*; I had pulled it off and she was surprised; I had practiced that fourth movement.

After Julliard got their new location at Lincoln Center, Manhattan School of Music moved into the former building at 120 Claremont Avenue. For three hours the last Friday afternoon of each month, graduate students played a segment of their recital program; only twenty minutes was allowed by the professor who would clap hands at the sound of his timer and announce the next pianist who rushed to the instrument and quickly began. I played and also attended many of these classes to listen to the talented from every continent.

I remember a tall slender young lady from Rio de Janeiro at least six feet six in stature with arms a meter long who played Debussy with a transparent impressionistic sound that I had never heard before or for that matter since. Sitting on the back row in the auditorium with my eyes closed, listening to innumerable pianists, each of them sounding different and yet all played the same Steinway; I absorbed *tone colors* and couldn't wait to get home and expose my collection of *hues* alone on my instrument.

As I trekked by bus through congested traffic on the approach into Lincoln Tunnel, daylight began to fade and I stared through the sooty window thinking about the changing jazz scene. I could not act in accordance with screaming hyperactive tenor-saxophonists; my thoughts shifted to the natural talents such as Jimmy Ford, Hank Mobley or Freddy Greenwell. Then I thought objectively about my own existence in music. After moments of soul wrenching I angrily decided that I would play whatever came to my fingers, mold it to my liking and to hell with all who happen to disagree. I'll live to improvise within my own world of musical

thought. That same evening there was a private party in the Party Room for distributors and haberdashers of Adams Hats coast to coast; a room filled with men, each with a rectangular mind. As I played alone, four men stood near the piano; one interrupted with a request and I answered with a nod, "OK" but continued playing in order to finish the title I was already involved with. One said to the other three, "I know how to make him play it." He pulled a knife from his pocket and pointed the four inch blade close to my face. I could not have been more incensed; I was still infuriated from contemplating the ever so *changed* world of jazz on my bus trip into the city. Voicelessly I begged for bolts of lightning, "Take me *out*." The music's momentum died as I held the sustaining pedal while slowly lifting both hands from the keyboard. With index finger and right thumb I gripped the blade and ever so carefully pulled the knife out of his hand, examined it closely, noticed on the handle a 'W' enclosed with a circle which is the symbol for *Westinghouse*. With a most menacing tone of voice, "If it's Westinghouse you can be *sued*." It was a play on words of the old advertising slogan, "If it's Westinghouse you can be *sure*." Silence became solidified with my *death wish* as they faded into the crowd. I placed the knife with opened blade on top of the piano and completed my interrupted title beginning exactly where music's momentum had so unexpectedly disengaged. I then stood, walked from the piano and did not return until some hours later when the room emptied. I told the room director and he exclaimed heatedly, "Why didn't you tell me earlier I could have had his key revoked." I answered, "If I had spoken about it I would have lost control and then a lawyer would be necessary. It's better being *cool* than regretful." I had a drink, went over on Third Avenue and played a set with bassist, Don Payne and Joe Beck the guitarist; then returned for a late night breakfast in the Living Room and listened to Monty Alexander. It amazes me how music has the power to restore order *within* oneself; by this time (five hours later) my nerves had recovered; all anger resolved.

But the sixties were agonizing times and *much* in music was becoming difficult for me to tolerate. I tried listening to the new *Lions*; Coltrane I admired but he with Elvin and McCoy improvising on two minor-ninth chords for half an hour maintaining their highest volume throughout was too much for me. I walked

out of the *Blue Note* ashamed because they were great innovating players. In another season of the same year I went into the *Half Note* to listen to Dizzy play a slow medium blues in *D minor*; the next title was also in *D minor* at the same tempo and the third was indistinguishable from the previous titles; I paid and left. I walked a few blocks in confusion; how could I walk out on *him* of all people? Musicians may stone me but I'll stand with my decision; in music, boredom is deadly and playing at only one volume level or performing three titles in the same minor tonality and all in the same tempo is unacceptable; that's bottom line, *baby*.

After Sam Donahue left, I became musical director and my first project was the renovation of all four Steinways. I told the general manager that I could have Steinway make the repairs for one third of the normal price and he answered, "That sounds like a good deal." He didn't give a definite *yes* or *no* but it was enough for me to go into action. I phoned the technician, he came and removed one piano-action at a time, completed the work overnight at home, delivered it the next morning; no one noticed. A few weeks later I submitted the repair bill and from his desk he rose on both feet, "What?" In a reserved but firm voice, "The work has been completed and I'm the only one who could get it accomplished for such a bargain price. Immediately I had a Steinway placed in the musician's room; here I could play at any hour; any time of the year.

Heida had many finger, hand, wrist, elbow, upper arm exercises and I practiced all of them daily; religiously. It was always to press a key and hold it for sixteen seconds (as the sound slowly decayed) so that the muscles relax before playing the next tone; for every action there must be a temporary halt. As a conception, this method guarantees (within months) a complete change in the pianist's approach to the keyboard.

Of course, this did not pertain to my daily one mile run and gymnastics; with push ups, I sprung high enough to clap my hands twice before returning to the floor (twenty repetitions) and the same number for jumping jacks (touching toes and fingertips in mid air) among other exercises. I exaggerated everything; even ran up

seven flights of stairs each evening as I entered the club to get the key to the musician's room.

I had a lesson in '69 with Heida at her home in Westport and remarked that the lower arm felt puffy and slightly swollen, although it appeared normal. She suggested to end the lesson and phone her tomorrow morning. That evening in the club I accompanied a singer with my trio and during the last title of the first show the muscle spasm occurred; however I had three more shows to play. I took a tablecloth, tied my right arm in a sling and played the following shows only with my left hand; this was Thursday and I played this way three more nights before I could find and hire a substitute. One of the many doctors I visited advised me to buy a portable whirlpool, soak the arms repeatedly in hot water and then refill again with cold; I burned-out seven machines. I began practicing a relaxation exercise that helped more than anything I had experienced; I played one tone, inhaled and mentally imagined *warmth* in the finger as I exhaled, took another breath and imaged *warmth* in the hand and continued this procedure with each section, wrist, lower arm, elbow, upper arm, shoulder, neck and head before playing the next tone. After many months you can actually experience the *warmth* with each exhalation. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, classical pianists interrupted their performing careers to teach, practice very lightly and slowly for ten to fifteen years, before returning to the stage; this is why so many taught at Hochschule der Kuenste-Berlin and the Hochschule in Vienna. These two schools were a haven for pianists with damaged arms. I returned to the Playboy Club with the aid of my whirlpool and accompanied singers for four months on an electric piano before being able to play on an acoustic instrument again.

I was attending a Bartok analysis class at Manhattan with the pianist (Bartok specialist) Phillip Evans and he sternly warned that I could permanently damage my arm if I did not stop playing. The Dean advised me to enroll in a piano/literature class offered by an elderly professor (originally from Vienna) who played horribly but could manage all of the known piano/literature by memory. I was sure they jested and explained that I had many afternoon staff meetings at the club since becoming musical director and that I might have to skip some classes.

Then the Dean went on to tell the good part; the previous year this professor was put on the carpet for passing a student who had not done any work and had flunked all tests. The Viennese answered to the body of examiners, "How can one *not* give a passing grade to a young lady?" I enrolled and did miss a couple of his classes but I was the first student to complete the final test and the only student who improvised an assigned Beethoven cadenza; I failed the course. I think it was because of my association with Playboy or jazz, probably both. Anyway, I met him in the hall just after the semester ended and told him that I had enjoyed his lectures; he thanked me and said, "Well, to the next battlefield." I nearly smiled with eyes slanting to the floor, repeated my thank you, did a military about-face with heels clicked and never entered the premises on Claremont Avenue again; my days at Manhattan School of Music were behind me. I received from Heida the highest grade every semester for five and a half years; I could not continue after receiving a failing grade from an *unmusical* teacher.

My drummer Ray Mosca took off one night to play with Bobby Hackett's group in Canada and returned with the following account, "We flew up and were driven by van for many miles through Toronto's countryside to a mansion. The evening was formal and during intermission the men, a small group of seven, went into the library for cognac; the ladies had their *chinwag* in another room. Well, the host invited us musicians to join them and after entering inside Castro's finest cigars were passed around, booze was generously poured and soon their discussion began about the new tax increase for New York City and its five boroughs. They agreed many businesses would move across Hudson River to New Jersey but even there an increase was expected within two years; so if businesses moved their headquarters, tax problems would surely follow. All seven were as close as *kin* and they were angry. Now let me continue, the chief in charge made his proposal that they all move down to Atlanta; naturally, they always agreed because they were the *elite of the heap* and decided that Atlanta should be the next city for expansion. At the end of the meeting they told Bobby that if he and his musicians want to make a bundle, Atlanta was the place to invest. I couldn't believe my ears but Ray insisted the story was absolutely accurate and we observed the action unfold over the next

months; the tax increase made all newspaper headlines and true, many New York businesses moved their headquarters immediately to New Jersey. Within six months Atlanta was booming and Peachtree Center plus the Hyatt Hotel were blossoming. Actually, this group of men was responsible for making the city financially soar. This was '66. Ray and I laughed at how things were done at the very top.

Another story! A quiet, reserved, well natured businessman often came to the Party room an hour or so before it closed, palmed some *bank notes* in the room director's hand and asked him to encourage the people to leave for one of the showrooms downstairs. Then he would sit near the piano and listen privately; I played (classical and jazz) a lot of evenings just for him and the maitre d'. He loved music and we had many interesting discussions. A few years later while walking down the street I noticed a chauffeured limousine creeping along in heavy traffic; the window slowly opened and he waved, "Hello, Walter." Yeah, an entrepreneur from another mold; there weren't many like him.

Now for the capper; a young large room director (Mafia soldier) always greeted me with a squeezing hand shake that left me in pain for two or three days especially when I played. Each evening as I entered the Playroom he grabbed my hand and again pain over pain. I reminded him that I had told him before not to crush my hand but he gave an aggravated smile before turning away. One late afternoon he gave me his iron grip and I flung my hand and arm backwards like snapping a whip and he flew past me about ten feet and crashed against the wall; I couldn't believe my eyes; my thoughts flashed back to when I was thirteen and hit the *Mediterranean*. He was shocked, angry and with both eyes squinted, "Don't ever do that again." "Don't *you* squeeze my hand." And that was the end of his torture. He could easily have killed me. For days I wondered how I could have done that to him. Well, my muscles were relaxed; his slightly off balanced body weight worked favorably for me; to some degree it was *power of the mind*. Nevertheless, I had worked daily on Heida's exercises and my nerve/reflex system had changed; at the keyboard I had become a different animal.

I was visiting a number of doctors at this time, asking numerous questions to learn more about my problem because no one could cure a muscle spasm quickly. Sure, with a spam you can stamp letters at a post office but you can't play louder than *pianissimo* on piano. One factor is that every morning for over five years I had climbed into the bath tub with two plastic waste baskets, one filled with cold water the other with hot water to soak my arms; then I had emptied the water into the tub and bathed. As a result, less waste had accumulated in the tissue of my arm muscles. Rudi visited us and while discussing the problem suggested that I test only my left hand with Indian arm wrestling. We tried and much to my surprise, I won. Then I became even more curious, challenged musician friends and won even when they were physically stronger. How did I achieve this? I concentrated on my arm to move and again move a little more and realized that it was my *mental power* that activated my muscles. To play the piano is absolutely *mind over matter* and my muscles were responding to mental impulses.

Soon after becoming musical director, the general manager made a proposal that I should be the contractor for all of the hired musicians; this was approved by Chicago. I would have a private account for paying the musicians wages and withholding deductions plus union tax. My intuitive antenna flickered. He expected me to be flattered but I mentioned his proposal to Heida, at the lesson, and she advised me to get an appointment with her lawyer. This attorney of law negotiated all New York City transit (subway/bus) strikes which occurred yearly at midnight on the 31st of December, each New Year. I had two meetings with him and with each I felt enlightened; he was a small soft spoken man of high intelligence who was always in control of every detail; he was equipped with a truly superior mind. When I returned to the general manager's office I explained the percentages that would be necessary to offset the inevitable tax increases plus the need of a bond deposit to compensate any liable lawsuit, etc. The general manager thanked me and I never heard another word on that subject. Chicago had tried to place me in a vulnerable position and thanks to Heida's lawyer I sidestepped their proposal. If any musician hit a key holder I would be legally responsible and not the club.

A week after I was given an additional title "Entertainment Manager" the room director whom I had slung against the wall asked if I wanted to buy a new Porsche for five thousand dollars and he assured me the motor number had been changed. Instead I bought an unblemished Ford Galaxy from a retired Italian police chief in Northvale, New Jersey for two thousand dollars; it was nineteen months old and the speedometer read only twelve hundred miles. His wife had developed a rheumatic condition and needed a new car with air conditioning; my new galaxy was like a fresh *creampuff* and best of all it had the *original* motor number.

The New York Playboy Club gets a new general manager from Zurich. Morton had vacationed in Switzerland and was searching for a real manager/businessman and he got far more than he bargained for. Mario Staub was real to the core. He was strict and none of the employees liked him but we hit it off from the beginning. Occasionally we would walk around the corner and have a drink at Sherry Netherlands; he enjoyed listening to stories about Joseph Haydn as a *hunter* on Prince Eszterhazy's estate; also the legendary pianist Dino Lipatti was sacred to many natives of Switzerland and Mario's brows peaked when I told him that I listened often to Lipatti. Mario told me to speak with the musicians and tell them to dress in a black suit and tie. I answered, "Of course." Still wearing his straight face, "And Mr. Norris, do be easy on them." Then he would smile slightly as I tried not to laugh. When I had an appointment I always made sure to enter his office at the exact time to the minute. I would enter, "Good day Mr. Staub;" as he, discretely glancing at the clock on the wall, "Well Mr. Norris, when I have an appointment with you I can set my watch." And everything was an act, very official but always with a slight humor and as the expression goes, we worked "*Hand 'n Glove.*" There was an important meeting at Playboy's *center of operations* in Chicago on a Monday at nine o' clock a.m. and Mario was required to attend. He instructed me that he needed all figures of the weekly *profit & loss* report for each of the five rooms, in his hand so he could take advantage at the beginning of the meeting. I obtained figures from the cash register of each room after Monday morning's four a.m. closing and completed the report, slid it under the door of his

secretary's office so that she could read him the information (numbers) when he phoned her from Chicago; just minutes before the meeting started. When he returned two days later he told me that everyone at the meeting became attentive and with slacked jaws when he gave the figures from his note pad. Seconds later the silence was broken, "But how do you know these figures since the workweek ended only five hours ago?" "This report was given to my secretary an hour ago and I telephoned her just before we assembled for this meeting." Calm and cool, Mario had upstaged everyone with his Swiss efficiency and the remainder of the meeting went for the most part as he wished.

Eventually, when surrounded with mediocrity and incompetence, one suddenly finds themselves in a position that's completely unacceptable. By the middle of '68 Arlene Rothberg, formally manager of Woody Allan, had replaced Shelly Caston as director of entertainment for all clubs. She was fond of anything fashionably chic, insisted that acoustic basses be replaced with electric, as was the current trend, and unquestionably there were to be no drum solos; adding with scorn, "Walter, there are only two drum soloists, Buddy Rich and Gene Krupa. Hoping my dignified grin was convincing, "Of course, Arlene."

A few near the top in Chicago thought of a corrupt scam and decided to take an orchestration (for thirty five instruments) from a show in Las Vegas and have a musician on the Isle of Bermuda, reduce the orchestration to quartet, organ, drums and trumpet; with the money saved they could enjoy vacationing on warm sand under clear Caribbean *blue* and get a much needed *suntan* to boot. Unfortunately, the local musician in Bermuda didn't realize that he had to transpose the instrumentation and as ignorance would have it some parts of the reduction were taken from *Eb* instrumentation and a few measures later from *Bb* instrumentation; but all of these parts were combined together and notated (written) for one *Bb* trumpet part; a few rehearsals were necessary before we could figure *what* was wrong with the music; we examined measure by measure but without any luck; then by using only our ears we realized that the music was incorrectly transposed; bottom line, *Chicago* didn't pay the Bermudian correctly nor did he write *their* score accurately. To pay for this *direct from* Las Vegas extravaganza, cover charge

per person was raised from one dollar fifty to five dollars and key-holders were enraged.

Let me explain about these musicians; Renauld Jones of lead trumpet fame had been contractor for all of Nat Cole's big band tours; Stan Bernstein was an excellent pianist and knowledgeable organist; bassist Bill Crow and percussionist Ronnie Bedford possessed a special talent for solving any problem in music. Of course, I had to supervise all show rehearsals and we racked our brains through five rehearsals plus recopied the notation before there was any sanity in the sound of this music; we could not believe it; none of us had ever heard of such an *unmusical rip-off*.

The *executive leaders* at Chicago's *hutch headquarters* were not at all pleased of my report and decided that Arlene and Morton should journey to New York and straighten everything out properly. Arlene immediately complained, "Walter, why did you hire a bald headed trumpet player?" "He should wear a hair piece; he doesn't fit with Playboy's *image*." I carefully explained the background of my chosen trumpeter Renauld Jones and emphasized to her that his years of experience with orchestration had helped immensely in figuring out this transposition nightmare. "Well Walter, have him replaced with a younger trumpet player." I brought in the union representative of local #802 and he stated firmly to Arlene and everyone within listening range that Renauld must stay; it was not a closed meeting. Of course, by refusing her direct order I knew that I would soon be dismissed, so I took Arlene out into the stairwell and repeated, with indignation, that Mr. Jones will remain on the payroll. Although the show continued (even critics were bribed) it soon folded. Arlene wrote the general manager, Mr. Staub that I must leave. Mario then phoned Chicago that I would continue as musical director/entertainment manager; and Mario stood firm as this *tick-tack-toe* procedure persisted over two months. Arlene tried each night to reach me but the switchboard operator relayed her calls to different rooms and I always managed to be elsewhere; even when she phoned me at home, I was always out. Eventually *enough became enough* and I took the receiver; Arlene haughtily told me that I was to be replaced. "Arlene, if you have pencil and paper I'll explain the procedure you

must follow to fire me; write Mr. Joe Foss, the representative of the Musicians Union, and he will then inform you by dated letter that I will be granted an additional two weeks of employment. I departed Playboy just after daybreak on a cloudless Easter Sunday and felt so exuberant; inside my head I heard voices singing Handel's *Hallelujah* chorus repeatedly; I felt so tremendously relieved as I walked away from a managerial world created for and by the *irrational*. I drove home, poured 10 ounces, went to my Steinway and for a moment the feeling of disenchantment lifted; I felt free.

A few days before clearing my desk I had submitted to Mario Staub a full report, with the help of Bill Crow, as to how the show could have succeeded if only *they* had consulted a musician about reducing the orchestration and he forward it to Chicago. A year later I was phoned and told that all of the guilty were slowly dismissed within a period of five months; I suddenly realized that I was acquiring a taste for revenge. But now, without steady employment I once again began freelancing and searching constantly for *coins*. I started teaching privately and with a few nights playing weekends we somehow survived. This existence continued until March '74. But let me linger in these years following my dismissal at Playboy.

I had mornings for practice and about four o' clock every afternoon I drove to the home of each student trying patiently to bridge that enormous gap existing between beginner and amateur performer until ten each evening. During the early seventies, there was a shortage of piano teachers in New Jersey because of their preference to teach in New York so, I collected more of the neophyte than I could fit in my daily schedule. I love teaching piano because music is thought-provoking and the brain is constantly searching for solutions; also I sincerely desire to nurture those in need of motivation. I do not believe that my teaching hampered the ability to perform; of course, few share this opinion but its *how* one teaches that makes the difference.

I had a few students with talent; I remember a seven year old who was always serious about the piano; years later her mother told me that after becoming an adult, she married a man from Switzerland, moved there and became a member

with an orchestra in Zurich as a cellist. At any rate, this period of teaching with an occasional performance and practice became a routine subsistence.

When Rudi Steindl and his wife visited us from Florida, he examined my Steinway and became shocked. “What have you done to this action?” “I only practiced.” “But it looks like mice have been chewing the wood of the repetition.” I swallowed at the thought of possible repair expenses; but as always he immediately replaced all parts and saved our minimal budget once again. He and I played for each other days on end before he left for the Deep South.

Months later, I worked (full volume) on crossing hands in tempo (repeatedly) and broke the shaft of the *D* key two octaves below middle *C*. I took out the action and could not believe my eyes; the wood, to which the ivory is glued, had splintered completely. I phoned my technician Bill Campbell and he cried out, “Incredible, this I’ve never even heard of.” He came, glued, clamped it and by the next day the wood had dried completely and after reinserting the key I continued to *devour* the instrument.

I acquired a used dark green Volkswagen to transport my electric RMI keyboard, amplifier and speaker cabinet; with the back seat folded flat and front passenger seat removed, there was just room enough for me to fit behind the steering wheel. One cold February evening after a routine repair at the neighborhood Sunoco service station, I loaded my equipment and drove for a gig in Long Island. Going home at about five-thirty in the morning on West Side Highway next to the frozen Hudson River, I suddenly noticed smoke from the heating ventilators and immediately pulled over. As I jumped out of the car I saw that all of the back seat and keyboard was ignited. I hurried around, opened the passenger door, pulled keyboard and speaker out of the car in the nick of time but was unable to salvage amplifier and foot pedal. However, by this time the interior was completely inflamed since the upholstery was made of petroleum products. A driver stopped, offered help and took me to the nearest phone booth; I notified the police and then called Howard to drive me home. The next day I returned to make a photo of the car and could see that the battery plate, under the springs of the back seat, was tilted at an angle; it had not been fitted properly; the metal plate had made

contact with the metal springs of the seat because of the RMI's weight. The fire was indeed electrical. I wanted to confront the mechanic but couldn't; I was afraid of losing self-control.

Jay Dryer (tenor sax, pianist/arranger) phoned me to work a night with him in trio; we met on the bandstand. I was very impressed with his musicianship and tenor virtuosity but I didn't know he orchestrated and had taught himself to play piano marvelously. Months later he asked me to substitute one week in St. Louis as pianist/conductor for Nancy Ames, a most beautiful, intelligent and extraordinary singer. Jay had arranged all of the music for big band. I practiced and worked on the score but had never conducted and left much to be desired; Jay had to be flown in from New York and I sat next to him as he played piano and conducted the show. He is as much a magician as he is a musician. During one ending, Nancy held the last tone as the guitarist played a written solo phrase in slow tempo; Jay cued the guitarist who nervously hesitated as two quarter-beats passed by. But Jay continued conducting the guitarist who somehow began on the third quarter, in the right place, where the time had proceeded to. The result was that the guitarist missed the first few tones but recovered and continued; the music did not break down. Jay was a conductor who got a musician through the music even if the musician failed and nearly fell on his face. He played and conducted another performance or two and I finished the engagement. Jay can conduct an ensemble with his body and keep both hands in his jacket pocket. From this week's experience, I learned much from him and to this day I've never witnessed a more skilled conductor. As our flight prepared to land at New York's La Guardia, I asked for lessons and was accepted. I studied conducting with Dryer for a couple of years and also accepted other show engagements as pianist/conductor; I enjoyed this new musical adventure. I want to insert a short tale about Jay that was told to me by the percussionist, Ronnie Bedford. Jay had a studio date to play flute for a Pearl Bailey televised commercial; it was for some shoe company. The piano player had not arrived, expensive studio time was ticking away and the producer soon became aggravated. Jay suggested to Pearl that he should play the piano part. The recording tape rolled and the first take was a success. Pearl was overjoyed, "Honey,

you just saved my date.” A year later I saw this commercial a number of times on television and it sounded great; Jay’s timing was perfect and alone he could *swing* as hard as Basie’s band.

I received a call to play and conduct for an excellent young singer by the name of Rick Daniels and I had Jay Dryer write all of the arrangements. There were numerous engagements with different local bands during our three months of travel and all presentations were successful. But all good things come to a close sooner or later and one evening after a performance his manager asked my astrological sign. Many years before a friend had told me my signs but I knew next to nothing about astrology; so when I answered, the manager jumped up from the couch and said, "It will never work." I enunciated mildly, "What do you mean?" The manager repeated and then I replied imperatively, "I don't want Rick to ever hear your remark." Surely I had wasted my breath but at least I said it. Six weeks passed, they let me go and I have never experienced such a depression. I stayed in bed for three months and touched not one key on my Steinway; I couldn't, there was absolutely no music inside me. I visited a bookshop at an astrology school and purchased their best book; returned home and read in bed. This book was serious; there was no mentioning of lucky days, money making or everlasting love. I read, learned about myself and soon came to the conclusion that the manager was probably right. I kept track of the days and by the ninety-third I had recovered; returning to the piano brought joy to my heart.

In '72 I received a call from the Playboy Club; Mario Staub asked me to come to his office. I dressed, wondering what was in store as I drove once again to my old *stomping* grounds, 59th at 5th Avenue. I entered and he asked if I would accept working again; I replied without showing any reservations, "Of course." He continued that he had to have my assurance before speaking with Morton in Chicago. It was a great try but Staub phoned two days later and said Chicago refused. I was so relieved. I enjoyed working with Mario but I could not stomach that *old gang* from Chicago.

A year passed in the seclusion of Bergenfield; then surprisingly Jerry Dodgon phoned inviting Mandy and me to a piano party; it would start at dusk and

continue long after dawn. He and his wife Dotty had a paradise *neighbor-free* house in the woods of northern New Jersey. He assured that every pianist in and around New York would attend; it was an evening Mandy and I will never forget. To begin with, Dotty is an excellent drummer who also cooks like a goddess; she had prepared a beautiful buffet, there was plenty of wine, only pure listening with little whispering and the ambiance was effervescent. The real reason behind this party was that Phil Woods had left his Steinway [D] in safe keeping with Jerry and Dotty because he was touring Europe for a year. It was an instrument made in the late nineteenth century with a sweet sound. Since it was in need of major repairs Jerry telephoned his close friend, a piano technician in San Francisco and offered room and board for as many months as necessary if his friend could pay the cross-country flight; it was like a working vacation! The technician was well acquainted with Dotty's cooking and gladly accepted; his stay turned out to be nearly half a year. Sir Roland Hanna, Tommy Flanagan, Marian McPartland and others played; Hank Jones and Teddy Wilson phoned to explain that they couldn't get there because of a gig and difficult logistics. Mandy and I left the next morning just in time to get the kids fed and off to school. Although the nocturnal festivities were in the Northeast there was a touch of sunny California with all that took place that evening; it was the most memorable party ever stored in my brain cells. This brought me in contact with excellent improvisers and I've always loved listening to others play and since being isolated in my music room for so long it made me feel rejuvenated. Returning home I felt slightly changed and for the better; I practiced the same but inside, I was aware of an inner glow; like something, not knowing what, was about to happen.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Mother, age sixty-nine, died instantly with her fourth heart failure. All senses were numbed; my mind might as well have been stored in a subterranean vault; I felt as if I were a shell.

Six months later I was asked by a drummer to make an audition (as a sideman in trio) for a two month gig on a cruise in the Mediterranean that involved dance music for only two hours each night. My close friend Joe Davis was the bassist, so I accepted. Every musician in New York wanted this job. On the day of our audition as we waited for the elevator in a *skystretching, skyscratching*, skyscraper on Seventh Avenue, the doors opened and the musicians of one trio exited; when we departed from the building, after our audition, the next trio was entering. Personally, I didn't think we had a chance because the arm-twisting few with inside connections always win in this perpendicular metropolis. Nevertheless, my anxiety increased as our elevator ascended but once in the studio with an old Steinway [B] smiling at me, I felt at ease playing for the businessman seated in front of us. After we had offered him the usual mediocre titles he made a request. "Can you play Autumn Leaves?" I couldn't believe it; I wanted to answer, "Is a Pope catholic?" One could not help but envision leaves of *gold* from *heavenly* maples floating down through brilliant *sunrays* as I obligingly played my heart out. Grabbing the receiver two weeks later, I thought my ears were deceiving me as the drummer repeated that I must get passport and bags packed quickly for a transatlantic flight to the French Riviera. For years I had wished to see Europe but had forsaken all hope of ever getting there; only legendary names toured that continent; now I had my *dream with a rainbow*. Mandy agreed to remain home as Dinah and Delia were in school, so I departed eagerly at JFK for Paris, Nice and the glossy skies of southern France. This was back in September of '73 when food, wine and service on a tourist class journey was the equivalent of today's first class flights.

After landing in Nice we were driven east along the coast to Villafrance where we embarked on a cruise ship. After being assigned rooms and unpacking, we all met in the dining room. The gourmet kitchen was staffed with French chefs; seven course servings with a bottle of wine and once each week the menu was filet steak plus a full lobster. Two history professors from England had organized the tour; musicians were allowed to go on lectured excursion and I attended all. Our ship traveled during each night; so after our departure from Villafrance we arrived early the next morning at Catania, Sicily; the following day in Taormina, then in

Malta, next was Creta, Rhodes and Izmir with the final docking in Piraeus where we could spend an afternoon in Athens and a remarkable evening at the Acropolis. The passengers disembarked for their return flight to the U.S. as new guests embarked for a week's journey along the same route to Villafrance. Visually, each day was breathtaking and we ate and drank like Gods should...so playing two hours of boring dance music was indeed tolerable. When the eight week cruise ended we departed the ship at Villafrance with a fresh November sunrise. As we boarded the bus I looked up at a half moon and thought sadly to myself, "It was such a beautiful trip but I'll probably *never* get back to Europe again." There's an old saying, "*One should never say never.*"

Five months of winter had passed swiftly; it was now the spring equinox of March '74 and thanks to Jerry Dodgson's recommendation, I was asked to play Monday night at the Vanguard with the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis band. A real jazz gig with New York's *cream de la cream*. This was the ideal ensemble for me because Thad had written his arrangements featuring the piano to entice his brother, but Hank was usually fully booked in recording studios. It was customary for the piano to begin a title alone or in trio and continue for four or more minutes before the orchestra joined in. Even later within this same piece Thad might have given the pianist an additional solo, it was all up to him. Although self taught, he was one of the most natural conductors to be found. Consecutive Monday nights followed and by June a long tour of Europe and Scandinavia began with the first concert in Amsterdam. I couldn't believe after saying *never* that I was again back in Europe and so soon; I pinched my arm just to make sure I wasn't dreaming. During intermission the leading critic came backstage, introduced himself and explained that he had waited over fifteen years to hear me in person; *something* was happening. Nevertheless, each afternoon of every tour I found an instrument even if I had to rent a practice room from the local piano dealer; my fingers have always been heavily addicted to *ivory*.

It was the most successful tour imaginable with a final performance in Perugia, Italy and in my opinion this was the finest concert of them all. The main street extends for two very long blocks with our hotel at one end and the bandstand

at the other, next to the ancient fountain. No cars were allowed; masses with cushions sat on the thoroughfare's *square-meter* stone blocks (two thousand years old) and this entire area was so packed that musicians had to slowly step between people just to get to the platform. Repeatedly excusing myself, I finally trod my way to the piano and the people's enthusiasm was enormous. I was fortunate to visit Perugia again years later and was so disappointed to find that the large stones had been replaced with modern concrete squares; but such is urban development in the modern world.

Next morning the band departed for New York but Jerry Dodgson with family plus Mraz and I had to kill a week before opening at the *Domicile* in Munich, Germany. So we rented two small Fiats and drove directly east to Ancona; then up the Adriatic Coast to Venice, further north through Innsbruck and over to Munich; expenses were far more reasonable in the south. The trip was perfect because Dotty (Jerry's wife) had an intuitive *nose* for choosing hotels and restaurants. There was dinner at Harry's Bar in Venice with a white wine that made your taste buds jump to attention; a hotel in Innsbruck with a plaque at the entrance stating that Mozart was often a guest there on his numerous trips to Italy; as a symbolic gesture I enjoyed a bottle of wine while listening to a tape cassette of Mozart's A minor sonata by Lipatti. Then fifteen miles north of Innsbruck we turned off the autobahn and ascended a narrow serpentine road. At the top was a lake where we paused for a dip in water so cold that as soon as it became knee deep I ran back to the car to dry off; this road is the most beautiful short-cut from Innsbruck to Munich. Three years later I was able to take this same route again but time didn't permit any lake splashing.

During our second night in the *Domicile*, Matthias Winckelmann and Horst Weber of ENJA Records asked to meet me the following afternoon; they offered a duo recording with Mraz for the coming Sunday. A few years before I had thought that I'll probably never record again; and now after thirteen years I might get *back on the map* with a new vinyl LP. But not without a momentary set-back; Matthias phoned my room from the reception desk, "Well, I have bad news; the recording studio burned completely in the early morning hours." My gut contracted; the

heart sank. "But don't worry we'll get another studio," and he did. Trixi studio had one of the most sensitive instruments; a small Steinway [M] with a beautiful regulation. Herbert Klimt immediately became my favorite engineer; I felt he understood how to record my playing. Baldur Bockhoff, critic for *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, was present and he had already written an outstanding review of my solo evening in the *Domicile*. But by the third hour, the engineer warned that an electrical storm was approaching and if there was thunder, it would sound like a hand clap in the studio; we had to hurry and the moment after I finished "*Thumbs Up*" we heard a muffled boom. The recording date of *Drifting* was finished by the fourth hour and we headed directly to a restaurant. Later in the hotel I packed my suitcase but couldn't sleep, so had a few drinks and walked the streets with my adrenaline rush until the morning sun rose. As the taxi took me to the airport for the flight to JFK, I contemplated my next steps; something had to happen with this LP. Next week in New Jersey Matthias phoned and told me to sit down," I have bad news. There was an erasure in the studio just after your solo on "*Spacemaker*." He continued explaining that since Mraz was still in Munich and if I had no objection, he could record the bass solo alone; then they could splice (copy & paste) the opening melodic-section for the closing chorus. I responded enthusiastically; "Great! I'll have an unaccompanied solo by Mraz. This is better than finding *baskets of gold* at the end of a rainbow!"

Now, I must *rewind* a few weeks back. Throughout the European tour Mraz's bass had made strange vibrations and buzzing noises; he couldn't correct the problem and tuning was often difficult. He mentioned that the instrument was originally made in Venice and that it might sound better when we get there. I knew that wood in a piano vibrates and responds better when returned to the environment of its origin and of course, I know from my own experience that people are the same when returning to their birthplace. When we arrived in the *City of Canals*, we all checked into a hotel. As soon as Mraz and I got into our room he took off the bass case, "Well, let's see how it sounds." And with bow he sustained one tone for four or five seconds (the sound was magical) and began improvising; I went into the bathroom to allow him privacy and listened as he continued this one

extemporization for around forty minutes. George's playing was magnificent and the sound of his bass was free of all buzzing and weird vibrations. When he had finished I stepped out of the bathroom, paid my compliments, then walked down the hall, knocked on Jerry's door and described all that I had heard. By this hour everyone was ready to attack the restaurant so I went back to fetch Mraz and he said, "I think I'll play again." He began his next improvisation; I left the door open and hurried to Jerry, Dottie and Deborah and told them to stand in the hallway; we all listened for about half an hour with our heads lowered and shaking in disbelief. My ears had never heard a spontaneous bass solo of this magnitude. But Mraz had also grown hungry so we invaded Harry's Bar for a delightful evening. Later, I told him that he should record unaccompanied. Then I argued my point with him again the following day and he still thought it was an idea that wouldn't work.

So, to continue now that we are once again on *forward* instead of *rewind*; with my being in New Jersey and he in Munich, this erasure on "*Spacemaker*" was the perfect opportunity of having him improvise alone. Matthias, having fed Mraz with coffee and danish, put him in the car for an early ride to the studio. Inside, Mraz suggested that they play the last eight-measure phrase of the piano solo through his earphones plus the opening four measures of his solo and he would then begin improvising what would be used for the recorded insert. "But, when will I know to stop playing?" Matthias, answering from inside the recording booth, "We will wave our hands." Of course, the splice within the first four-measures of his solo is perfect and no musician could ever notice where it took place. Mraz occasionally glanced at the window of the recording booth while playing but Matthias and the engineer were so mesmerized by what they heard that they forgot to wave their arms. After four minutes and some seconds Mraz ended what I consider to be the best improvised bass solo I'll probably ever hear. Once again, my *wish* came true!

ENJA pressed quickly in Europe but it was another matter in New York; label producers didn't want to press because the recording was duo, piano and bass without *drums* and the reason is because the *cymbal sound* covers the hissing noise of *frying eggs* that exist on all LPs made with cheap vinyl; European pressings are made with a more expensive vinyl and their sound quality is far superior. People

continued buying directly from Europe while the three attempted pressings in New York failed miserably. John S. Wilson, critic for The New York Times, came to the house and interviewed. In addition he wrote a featured review for Hi Fi Magazine. Two weeks later I was on tour (coast to coast) with Thad & Mel. In each city I contacted DJs, provided them with a copy of *Drifting* and if I didn't meet any of them at the concert, I looked in *yellow pages* of the hotel telephone directory, took the station's address so that I could mail copies from the next town on our itinerary. I carried as many as fifty LPs in my suit case; it was so weighted the handle broke as I drug it along the carpeted hallway of a hotel. Tendons in my lower right arm became inflamed but I managed to perform because of my trusty whirlpool; it's a mystery to me that the muscle spasm didn't manifest again. Soon post cards from DJs arrived at my address in Bergenfield, my fortitude had prevailed; they even gave suggestions on whom I should contact. However, American buyers still had to order from Europe. Guitarist, Jim Hall told me to contact Charles Bourgiouis; I did and after speaking, I followed Bourgiouis' meticulous advice to the letter. "Mail *Drifting* to Ed Beach (at that time the leading DJ of New York) Whitney Balliett, Gary Giddens and John S. Wilson." Each address was shouted twice and then I had to repeat it. The following week Bourgiouis phoned the house, "Ed Beach is featuring you now; turn on the radio," and slammed his receiver. I obeyed and instantly clicked the button just as Beach began playing a number of different recorded versions of "A Child Is Born." Then Ed talked about me and the problems of getting *Drifting* pressed in New York. Within twenty minutes I received a call from Hank O' Neil's honey-voiced secretary that *Drifting* was being pressed immediately and it would automatically have distribution. I turned to Mandy, "Now that's what I call *power of the press, of DJs and of the people.*" Mandy and I splurged; we bought an excellent sound system; yes, indeed *something* was happening.

Mraz and I played the fourth of April '75 in *Bradley's* and Whitney Balliett wrote the best and most poetic review I've ever read. Gary Giddens wrote a feature review in *Village Voice* and John Wilson wrote again in the Times. Several months later I visited a mail-order record shop in West New York, New Jersey and I asked

the proprietor if he had *Drifting*; he answered that it was sold out but would have it again in stock next week. I handed him a copy of the many reviews and he laughed, "Those reviews by Balliett, Wilson and Giddens did the trick; immediately I got orders from Europe and Japan; I even sold multiple units." I asked him to explain multiple-units and he laughed again, "Many orders were for two to five LP-units with each sale." There was another excellent record shop in Greenwich Village; the owner led me to the back room and advised that I should record another LP; he personally would direct me to the right places to sell. But my touring schedule with Thad wouldn't permit such an endeavor. I want to inject here that the translation of Baldur Bockhoff's reviews impressed the media on the Westside of the Atlantic and a small snow ball began rolling but so much more accumulated after Charles Bourgeois, Whitney Balliett, John S. Wilson, Ed Beach and Gary Giddens went into action. It was an exciting *space in time* for me.

Soon, early summer arrived and another tour was set for Europe, Scandinavia, U.S.A. and Japan. Ernst Knauff, owner of the *Club Domicile* booked Pepper Adams, Mraz and myself plus an interesting young African drummer, Makaya Ntshoko for two weeks before Thad & Mel's band arrived. ENJA recorded us (Pepper Adams quartet) one evening in the club. Days later they realized they had enough for two LPs; *Julian plus Twelfth & Pingree*. On completion of the Europe/Scandinavian part of the tour we returned for Monday nights at the Vanguard plus a few concerts on the East Coast before continuing to Japan.

But within this schedule there was some time free and like the fool that must be, I bought a silent keyboard with screws to adjust the key-resistance. I'm unable to resist temptation especially when it means acquiring more playing-power; it was a ridiculous, absolutely stupid decision, however I'm obsessive. Within a week my tendons in the right arm became inflamed again. But not before I had practiced Bach's Well Tempered Prelude and Fugue in G major, Book II. Having gained strength quickly, I was able to bring out the melodic alto-voice over the repeated tones in the soprano-line of the prelude; also I could make this melody project when it was written in all other voice-lines. There had been a couple of days where I'd played with a power like never before or since but I was now crippled; doctors and

therapy followed. I soaked both arms in near scalding water before replacing it, minutes later, with freezing water by adding a bucket of ice. I did this four times each day and more when time permitted; soon the motor burned out and another whirlpool had to be replaced. Then at the piano, between soakings, I played and sustained one tone as I executed breathing exercises to relax each section of my arm before playing the next tone; the time-interval is about sixty seconds between the execution of each tone. Such was my daily routine; but I remember a number of times dressing just in time to drive to the Vanguard for Monday's performance with Thad and Mel. Musically, the result of this practice was miraculous; at times I couldn't believe *what* I played or *how* I managed to do it; the arms obeyed my mental impulses because all muscles were perfectly relaxed.

Bob Schillin, after introducing himself over the phone, "I caught your performance with Thad Jones and Mel Lewis on Channel 13 and I want to be president of the Walter Norris Fan Club." I confirmed, "Consider yourself appointed." I was invited to their home where I met Ann, his charming wife, and eventually their son, Scott, who is an accomplished classical pianist. I told them that I would soon leave for a tour of Japan with Thad but promised they would be kept up to date with all of my future activities.

Then the band zigzagged across the U.S. In Houston, we played a large club in the downtown section; on the first intermission I went to the bartender and asked if he knew how I could find Jimmy Ford and at that moment from the entrance, Jimmy hollered my name. He looked the same, little had changed in twenty-two years. He suggested that we meet in the morning at ten thirty and could play around noon for the jazz department at Houston University. I asked, "How's life?" "I'm cool man. I only drink beer and smoke squares." Sure enough, just before the hands of the clock clicked half past, James arrived at the hotel and we drove to the house of the professor who wasn't home but his door was unlocked, so we entered. As Jimmy opened the case of his alto, "Start playing some *Blues in F*," he joined in with the third chorus and soared. It was so typical; we had always begun playing whenever we met, always immediately and never a minute wasted. The professor arrived, rushed us to the nearby university and the performance was taped; later I

played the cassette for Thad and he was shocked, "Who's that?" "My good man, that's the legendary Jimmy Ford." The second night in Houston, Nancy Ames came and we exchanged a few words on intermission; I'll never forget the remarkable intelligence of this talented beauty. Billy Harper, himself a Houstonian tenor virtuoso, invited the band for a feast in a cafeteria owned by the Baptist Church; we all remarked about the delicious taste of southern grown food; the place was packed with people, black and white. It was such a touching moment; I felt warm vibrations from everyone.

Northwest to San Francisco's *Cow Place*; down to *Concerts By The Sea* and *Coconut Grove* in Los Angeles and then a direct flight to Tokyo for a month of performances from Sapporo to Kagoshima at the southernmost tip.

After twenty-three years of absence, Japan was exhilarating to say the least; everywhere I noticed change. From a country recovering just after a war to becoming the financial center of the pacific realm was astounding. However, I appreciated seeing the countryside, perhaps even more especially where it seemed little affected by modernization. But, I must tell of a strange experience in Fukuoka; the downtown section was unrecognizable with so many new buildings but looking from the window of the bus while being transported from the airport, the boulevard curved and this moment sparked my intuition; nevertheless, I still couldn't say what bothered me. The driver pulled over; we exited and checked into a large hotel but somehow I felt unsettled in my skin. That night at the concert, we played a montuna, I had a number of choruses and at one point of my solo I inserted a Japanese folk melody; by sustaining each tone (quarter equaling a whole note) it was difficult for listeners to differentiate but far to the back of the auditorium a few people screamed in unison and I knew I had indeed connected with them.

Returning ravenous, I took our hotel elevator to the roof top restaurant overlooking Fukuoka and after eating I walked outside on the patio staring absent mindedly for a minute or two at the boulevard far below. Next morning, within the second block as our bus trudged through traffic, I had that strong sense of *déjà vu*; there was the Central Cabaret dance hall where I played with the sixteen piece Japanese band in fall of '51 through spring of '52. Last night's hotel was

undoubtedly the same hotel I had taken when I first paired with my princess from Shanghai.

As for the visual world, I'm blessed with a photographic memory; then slowly the memory of that softly lit Japanese hotel room surfaced and I savored the feeling of youth's pure vivacity. A light rain began, the bus window became streaked as droplets joining and entwining with gravity's downward tug; gliding with the traffic's flow my eyes were numb, then suddenly I felt a sharp twinge inside my chest that lingered until I boarded the restaurant car of the train and swallowed a double shot of vodka. Looking out the window as panorama passed with acceleration, I thought of our taxi ride to her apartment in suburban Madashi after the first night together. When I stepped into the room of dark wood with straw matting, I knew I had entered the enigmatic and felt stamped that moment with an ambiance of oriental impressionism. I was nineteen; a most impressionable age. And now as I write, excited brain cells project that memory on an imaginary screen; it's absolutely mind boggling. The next morning on a hibachi, she made scrambled eggs with a side dish of fresh crabmeat for the revitalization of body with a fragile soul and slightly depleted brain.

Before the tour ended we played Kyoto and for me, that was my best performance; then back for a few concerts in California and Arizona before closing the month of November with our concluding flight to New York.

By the third week of the New Year, we had flown to Munich for another fourteen nights in the Domicile plus my last concert with the band in Cologne on the thirtieth of January '76. I had given Thad notice after receiving a written offer for a month tour of Europe with Mraz in March. It was like losing a rib to leave that band but at the same time I felt relieved to be off and beginning a new adventurous chapter that unfortunately, would all too soon develop into a *sink* or *swim* situation; and once again, I *swam*.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

My arrival in Stockholm, the first of February was in total darkness; everything was covered in ice and snow. Fortunately, Red Mitchell had fixed me with a room. I began phoning daily the agent in Amsterdam for three weeks straight but never got an answer; then finally, "Hello, tell me what's happening." "It looks bad!" "How bad?" "There's no work." "I'm stranded in Stockholm; if you hear of anything...phone for me at this number." I was engaged for two weeks, solo, in a club which turned out to be a month and then gigs poured in thanks to a featured article (I made the cover no less) written and photographed by the pianist, Ola Ringstrom; subsequently, musicians perhaps felt pity for me. Anyway, after three months in Stockholm I got a call to play a club in Oslo for a month (this was extended for three months) and concert bookings were mixed through all of this period. On my return flight to JFK, I thought to myself, I have never needed a booking agent; for out of my seven months in Scandinavia...I had only eighteen nights without work.

Reflecting on my Scandinavian journey...Stockholm had so many excellent musicians and quite a number of very interesting pianists. Everyone helped me; I had many duo concerts with Red Mitchell plus a festival in Norway with Red Rodney, Zoot Sims and Red Mitchell.

But Mitchell and I were of similar minds and there were so many hours for talk as well as playing...the two of us at the keyboard of his Blüthner grand; this was a learning experience. Bose Broberg, the producer for the radio, organized a radio production, quartet, with Dexter Gordon plus four nights in a club and Dexter was lovely and played with a sound as enormous as that of Gene Ammons; I think this was part of Dexter's strongest period, before cigarettes shortened the sustaining power of his sound. Let me add that Bose Broberg played trumpet like a Clifford Brown. I enjoyed many hours with Ola Ringstrom at his exceptional Steinway [B]

and found him a very interesting pianist/musician; Niels (Misse) Sandstrum too, an incredible tenor saxophonist who also played piano and Mozart so very well.

Then late one night with Ola in a small café, I walked Rolf Ericson and he told me that there would be an opening on piano for the S.F.B. Radio where he worked in Berlin. He asked if I would be interested and I replied, "Rolf, tell those people at the radio that I want that job" and twice again I repeated just to make sure.

I received a telephone call on Friday morning from a club/owner/musician in Oslo asking me to work, solo piano, beginning Saturday, the following night; I accepted but explained that my passport was at the Swedish Embassy waiting to be stamped. As luck would have it, a long weekend holiday of four days had just begun. The club owner said that he would meet me at Norwegian Customs, in the airport, and get me through the controls without a passport and that I should make the trip.

I bought my flight ticket, checked my baggage through to Oslo, and as I passed through customs in the terminal at Stockholm, the Swedish Police said I would need a passport to enter Oslo, Norway. I told them I was a pianist on my way to a steady job, beginning that same night, and although my passport was at the Embassy, I had to get on that plane; we went around and around and finally, much to my surprise, they said, "O.K. but customs in Norway will make you return here."

I took the flight knowing the club owner would meet me at the airport in Oslo, he did, explained all details to the custom official and I was allowed to enter Norway...without my passport. I opened that evening, six nights per week, and engagement was extended for a total of four months; business boomed. It was great, they provided me with an apartment and I could practice in the club every afternoon.

One off night, he took me with his band at the King's summer mansion, many miles outside of Oslo. The dinner event was for at least four hundred guests and he asked me to play solo; and although it was noisy, I took the people, and myself, back a couple of centuries with my improvisations; he couldn't believe it. But in truth, it was the setting of the room, the Royal countryside environment and

all of the waiters were dressed in eighteenth century costumes. For dinner, the musicians were seated in a large oversized kitchen and from my table I observed gourmet chefs in action. After a lion's share of food and drink we musicians revisited the bandstand to generate musical energy for dancing.

Another remarkable night was when Thad, Mel and many musicians from the band visited. The club was so packed that I had to get a chair for Thad so he could sit next to me at the piano. The club was so noisy yet, I managed to block it out; but I was performing solo four one hour sets six nights a week and practicing at least four hours every afternoon; that's conditioning.

Now, for a narrative about the [D] that Sviatoslaw Richter favoured over all other instruments. A friend managed to get the key, sneak me into the auditorium of Oslo University and led me to the instrument. I played only a few minutes, removed my hands from keys and remained silent for a moment. To this day, I've never heard a sound more beautifully rounded; I can't find words to describe. Unfortunately, we hadn't permission to be in the auditorium so I thanked my friend and we left the premises because it would have been no less than sacrilege since I was a foreigner, a jazz musician, and shouldn't have been there in the first place. An unforgettable experience and each time it surfaces, my blood stirs throughout body and mind...but you may ask, was it valuable for me? Yes, I remember the sound from this Steinway and try to achieve the proximity of it in other instruments when I play; that sound is recorded in my unconscious; do I really attain it? No, but since I do try, my sound is somewhat richer because of the experience.

I was given a party, at the club in Oslo, and collected so many interesting presents to lug back to New Jersey, especially a few large beautiful books of photography of Norway.

As soon as I unpacked everything in Bergenfield, Charles Mingus rang and asked me to join his quintet, Danny Richmond, Ricky Ford and Jack Wallrath. We worked a few concerts in New York City, Chicago and Connecticut. I asked Mingus, my first night, about Don Pullen and said that I thought Pullen was a good player for Mingus. He answered, "Man, I had to let him go...Pullen's dangerous." True, Pullen was from some small ghetto in Ohio and it was mentioned in an article

for "Time Magazine"...which wrote that the mayor, as well as everyone else, had served in prison and that shootouts in the middle of the street in daylight were common.

Mingus was very straight with me and we enjoyed talking about musicians and their recordings; he was surprised that I knew of so many from the late thirties and early forties. I played even better than my best for Mingus because I knew he would slam the lid of the keyboard on the hands of piano player who didn't please. When I had a solo, Mingus would shout over his shoulder, "Blow, Norris"...and I blew; tried to push all eighty-eight of those keys down at once.

Each night I left the house for work, I told Mandy if I wasn't home by five o' clock in the morning, that she should check with the police and begin phoning hospitals. She always waited up for me so she could listen to the stories of my perilous evening. Few people know that Mingus was capable of delivering a knockout punch with either hand; this is accomplished in Los Angeles in the late forties.

One night after a concert in Philadelphia, we go into an empty bar, it's late and after our second round of refreshments, the owner, and enormous Irishman in his mid fifties and with a roaring voice announces, "We're closing up everybody out." A long silence, and Mingus, with a lion's roar, "Well I've got a big voice too." ...silence cracked like crushed ice. We slowly got off our barstools and walked passed the ruby faced Irishman, standing there with a couple of his bulky cronies, fuming with anger...and I'm trying my damndest not to start laughing; this scene was suitable for a movie. As soon as we were outside we laughed extra loud so they could hear inside.

I told Mingus, he should have played piano instead of bass; it pleased him and I went on to add that I had listened to his solo piano LP in the fifties and was very impressed. He had an affinity with the keyboard, a sensitivity of touch and best of all, played uninhibited. I highly recommend the LP and also Susan Graham Mingus' book, "Midnight at Noon"...she captures and describes his personality better than anyone.

We had a concert, my last, in early December and unfortunately, I made a slip of the tongue remark; I said, "Charlie" instead of "Charles." I had been told that it angered him...but we were talking and our conversation was opening up more and I simply forgot; how many people do I know with the name Charlie? Why is it, everyone addresses him as Mingus instead of Charles...is it their fear of making a slip? His eyes became blood red...and at that moment the stage manager entered the room and announced for us to hurry on stage. The hour long return to New York City was in silence.

Next week, the S.F.B. Radio in Berlin, phoned and asked me to join their studio orchestra; I gratefully accepted. I knew Mingus was in Woodstock, some ninety miles to the north, and dialed his number knowing that he could never speed down and intercept me before my departure at JFK. He answered, gruffly, and I went on to explain that I had to go to Europe. He exploded, "What do you mean? I've written a bunch of music for you to play for a film in Mexico." I told him about my financial situation, that I owed everyone and finally I calmed him somewhat but thank goodness, he couldn't get his hands around my neck.

Mandy rushed me into the city where I took a shuttle bus, in midtown, to the airport and I was gone like the wind; what a relief, taking that first drink on board, above the clouds, thinking of the new Steinway [D] I would have for my work, in Berlin, and that it would be tuned by Gunter Klatt, one of the world's greatest technicians; in truth just as Rolf Ericson had promised.

It was painful to leave Mandy after being together for twenty-one years; I can only say that it's not for discussion. She was a great wife and mother but I'm sure she was happy to be away from my practice; no one would miss hearing that. Nevertheless, I borrowed three thousand dollars from the Musicians Union to pay off outstanding debts just to leave the U.S. with a clean slate.

As I flew over the Atlantic I thought about the previous night's engagement with Buddy Rich's quintet; we were introduced, Buddy was the perfect gentleman and on the bandstand he even had good moods. I was featured for a title in trio, Bob Cranshaw was bassist. I explained my arrangement; the first chorus piano alone, unprepared-modulation with bass for sixteen measures and then another

abrupt-modulation in trio as Buddy entered but only on hi-hat. I had committed Cardinal sin by telling Buddy to *tacit* and far worse *what to do*; without thinking I had taken the roll as leader. Maestro Rich played hi-hat the first chorus; never has a percussionist put forth such force. My purpose had been to build excitement with the merging of each instrument and when Buddy changed to ride-cymbal on the third chorus it felt like a hurricane had removed the roof of the club; it was unforgettable. Then word came from the bartender that Erroll Garner had passed in Los Angeles; it was announced and a moment of silence followed; I had lost a rib. I've heard pianists try but *none* came close to duplicating his timing. However, the thought surfaced about Columbia offering Erroll free practice time at Plaza Studios whenever it was not booked. That was back in the fifties and he often practiced during the early morning hours. They taped everything he played; he was preparing for the *Moonglow* record date at that time and if you listen to the beginning of Erroll's solo it should remind you of the movie theme, Picnic; Garner drank more heavily after that and avoided Plaza at all costs. I motioned for the stewardess to bring another shot of Absolute vodka and explained to her that I needed it to open the *doors of paradise*; she rolled both eyes.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

When I arrived, January '77, at West Berlin's Tegel airport, I was met by my new boss, the contractor for S.F.B. and driven to an apartment at 19 Hubertus Allee; entrance hall, large living room overlooking an even larger patio with real grass, maintained by the owner, large kitchen, full bathroom (washer-dryer) and bedroom completely furnished. From my corner, I could take a ten minute bus ride to the Radio House complex and without doubt I must admit that today's Berlin still has the best public transportation system in the world.

But, the S.F.B. musicians and contractor insisted that I buy a car, I argued but they persisted because we recorded in different studio locations on occasion and late at night.

But, what a joy it was to drive and always find a parking space even on Kurfuerstendamm, the main boulevard; it was really a city free of traffic problems. Of course, this was because of the very well guarded wall surrounding us; one could say that West Berlin was a jewel located in a cavity of the Russian bear's mouth which could suddenly close. Fortunately, I had the nerves of a foolish warrior.

I was totally surprised how West Berlin had recovered since '45...but on the other hand the government in Bonn, the former capital, had heavily financed all of the rebuilding; it was not necessary for S.F.B. (radio-television) to show a profit. The finest clothing could be purchased for one/fourth the price on Bahnhofstrasse in Zurich.

One must understand that in the world of institutionalized bureaucracy, each department has a yearly budget and they must spend their entire allotted amount, preferably by October, so that they can receive an even greater amount the following year; if they don't spend all of it by December, the subsequent amount is reduced. There is so much monetary cleverness to learn in life!

I was introduced to the S.F.B. musicians at a rehearsal, on my second night, and performance with them on the third; I was shocked by the opulence of the radio complex...and the band performed unusually well.

Afterwards in the parking lot, the contractor, Franz Fijal, said to me with heart felt sincerity, "Walter, just remember that if you need anything, don't come to me." I broke up with laughter, he looked puzzled...but when I explained the meaning of what he had said, his laughter became even louder than mine.

He arranged for me to play trio on any night I wasn't obligated to work for S.F.B. The club owner would take his calendar book and with my S.F.B. work schedule check the available dates. The club was suitably named, "Wintergarten" and it was a landmark villa located on Fasanenstrasse about half a block off Kurfuerstendamm and I had a parking space on the premises; let me add that Hubertusallee, where my apartment was located, is an extension of Kurfuerstendamm (the names change, but they both are one in the same street) so, it was a ten minutes drive to work.

Now for the crowning; the second floor of the Wintergarten was a brothel and one night the ladies visited the bar, ordered champagne, and listened; I was touched.

Berlin had a city regulation that jazz could not be played on Good Friday until after midnight; only classical music was permitted. I worked on my limited repertoire and played that evening a three hour classical program. Then, I was joined with bass and drums; baby, I was on front burner and boiling.

Buddy Rich performed in Berlin and I met him backstage to pay my compliments, "You do a *press roll* like none I've heard." He said, "I play it *single stroke* and you have no idea how it kills my arms." We went with others to a restaurant; Buddy ordered two dinners and absorbed every morsel. He explained, "When I perform I lie in bed all day and never eat until after the concert; then I make up for it." He could be difficult but as a musician Buddy was truly a giant.

Our band flew everywhere, Amsterdam, toured Portugal, London, Switzerland and even Los Angeles; but there was the *Opernball* in Vienna. Leonard Bernstein conducted the Austrian Radio Orchestra (with full strings) and the S.F.B. orchestra was seated next to them on the same mammoth bandstand; at least one hundred fifty on the floor dancing to Viennese Waltzes.

Time for an insert; the S.F.B. band had to play in Hamburg but there was a local pianist to play with them and he knew the show, so it wasn't necessary for me to be there. So Franz, the contractor, told his strict secretary that she should make out a check payable to me for a thousand marks. Not only eye brows stretched but her mouth opened; Franz, poor Walter will be left alone in Berlin while the band is in Hamburg; she mailed the check to me. Franz Fijal was formally a guitarist from Poland and he often sat and listened while I played even at his home...he tried to be a father figure to me and he certainly succeeded.

Well, I flew alone to Vienna, stayed in the finest hotel, and there is a knock on my door at eleven in the morning. It was the bassist, Hans Rettenbacher, who, unknown to me, had behaved terribly (he had to be restrained in a drunken scuffle) on the train trip from Hamburg to Vienna, and now wanted to be especially friendly to me since I had not witnessed the S.F.B. journey by train. He hoped to greet

others on the bandstand that evening as my buddy. He said, "Come, we are going to the Boesendorfer factory...I've arranged a tour for you." I grabbed my coat and we hailed a taxi.

Since I didn't understand the language, all went perfectly; Hans, brazenly told the director of the factory that I was the new pianist with the S.F.B. in Berlin and that I was a rich American who owned a Boesendorfer in the States. We were taken into the office of the director, who spoke some English, and with Hans' help explained the history of the company; it was indeed extraordinary. Then I was escorted through each department...and at the last, he opened the doors of the salon and said, "Here Mr. Norris, try them" ...and there stood twenty or so new instruments in all their glory; I pinched myself to be sure I wasn't dreaming... scenes from Louis B. Meyer's old Hollywood came to mind.

What amazed me, as I toured the factory, was that all, but about three, of the technicians were Japanese; perhaps, this explains why Yamaha improved so well in the years that followed. Hans thoroughly entertained and took me all over downtown Vienna.

Anyway, I was bitten and started thinking...there is a Boesendorfer in perfect condition at S.F.B. just standing in the corner and never being used. I go to Franz and suggest that the Boesendorfer could be easily moved into the storage room and I could use it for practice and the Steinways used for recordings would hold the tuning better. "What, you can't do such a thing, you are crazy...it would never be approved." So I went to Gunter Klatt, the piano technician, explained and of course, he agreed my idea was good...and then I urged him to approach Franz with the proposal pertaining to the Boesendorfer. It worked and within a few days it was just me and the Boesendorffer in complete privacy.

There was so much time for practice. I worked for S.F.B. only seventy-eight days that first year and was paid for thirteen months; well, until recently, in Germany, there were thirteen months payment each year and a good part of the thirteenth was paid to the tax department; happy tax collector and even happier worker.

Germany maintains a very imaginative accounting organism; money grows here, there and nearly everywhere in the domain; I'm still impressed with what all I've seen. So, I took advantage of my situation and worked until fingers literally burned ivories. The question with a job is... "what can you do with it?"

In the summer of '77, I had Dinah and Delia flown over and with my little Volkswagen, I drove my two daughters all over Germany and well into Austria.

But travel is never completely free of difficulty; one night we were returning (through East Germany) to Berlin and I overlooked the small sign for our turnoff and continued into the eastern sector. I hadn't realized until the highway became a wide boulevard in East Berlin and I couldn't back up twenty or so miles without being stopped by police from the East. We stopped at "Check Point Charlie" and we three were immediately pulled from the car, Dinah was rushed inside the building while Delia and I were being searched beside the car, all baggage was opened; I told Delia to remain in the car and I would go inside for Dinah. At this moment Dinah, in tears and with rage, was brought back (unharmed) and after unanswerable questions (we were unable to speak German and they knew little English), we were allowed to proceed; they were fast, all of this was in less than five minutes. Dinah was appalled that I could live in such a world; I assured her that I had access to the finest Steinways and Boesendorfer of any jazz improviser in the world.

Travel by train or auto through the eastern sector was dangerous and depressing and you could be shot dead and no questions could be asked. Months before, an Italian truck driver stopped at the check point and as he drove off he stopped and came running back saying, "My papers, I forgot one of my papers" ... the guards perhaps misunderstood; they shot him and the Italian government could do nothing; this made headlines on front page of a number of papers. But, with air travel you bypassed the East German control and life was beautiful, in a non-crowded, well-funded international city like Berlin. Best of all, it was possible to hear all of the pianists in Berlin that could be heard in New York; musically I was not missing anyone and in fact I heard some, here, that hadn't performed in New York; this applies to jazz as well as classical.

Small groups were formed within the S.F.B. when the big band wasn't scheduled to work. Rolf Ericson, formerly with Charlie Parker, led a quartet; Leo Wright, who had been a member of Dizzy Gillespie's quintet, had a quartet, Carmel Jones, previously with Art Blakey's Messengers, fronted a quartet and an extraordinary tenor player, Heinz von Hermann from Austria; I worked with each of them; so, musically I was not missing much by moving to Berlin. Carmel in particular was a magician whenever he improvised.

Alone Christmas '77, in my second apartment on the tenth floor of a condominium on Heerstrasse, a quarter mile from the wall in Spandau. And as I sat, with wine glass in hand, flares were fired into the air from the G.D.R. (German Democratic Republic) side within the stretch of sand along the *wall*, known as *no mans* land. I thought it was nice of them, a symbolic gesture of Xmas spirit...and a moment later I realized that someone was trying an escape to the *west*, hoping to be luckier during the holiday season; another risk was taken...targeted and downed. It's amazing how the same numbness of depression returns as you remember an event; brain cells, once activated, remember all.

Leo Wright introduced me to bassist, Aladar Pege, who resided in Berlin at this time, and we arranged a time to rehearse. I arrive but he's not there...and after waiting I phoned; he then accuses me of being late. It was a misunderstanding; 09:30 is expressed in German as *half ten* (*halb zehn*) and I thought it was *ten and half* (*zehn und einhalb*) which is 10:30; the difficulty was getting ready to bloom... especially since Aladar is serious about rehearsing...and I am also.

I took my English-German dictionary and wrote Aladar a letter, translated *word for word*, and mailed it to him. He phoned and we met a few days later; he said my letter was impossible to understand...so he invited me for lunch in his apartment. His wife, Agnes, prepared a delicious gourmet Hungarian dinner and afterwards presented me with a Hungarian-English book as a gift; our duo project had begun.

Matthias Winckelmann contacted me and proposed a duo concert with Aladar in May '78, recorded live, at the East-West Jazz Festival in Nurnberg. I labored on the Boesendorfer...and we also had a number of rehearsals...but on the

performance Aladar and I changed what had been planned and the feeling was electric; listeners in the packed Meistersingerhalle probably imagined *sparks* were actually flying. It was a great evening in spite of the fact that the engineer was absent from the sound check.

Nonetheless, Aladar and I were set as a duo and critics gave their approval. I rang Matthias, a week later, and offered to buy the tape...he called back, days later, and reported that the tape was missing; then the engineer found it and Enja pressed immediately. I've always thought that life is still a matter of luck, even when considering fate or destiny...after all, one can do everything correctly with producing a product but luck is essential for getting that product into the market place and still more luck is necessary for people to accept the product.

I managed to get two duo concerts with Aladar...our first was in Bielefeld, Germany and the other in Schwartz, Austria.

At the end of the evening in Bielefeld, I told Aladar that we had to play Schwartz the next night and asked what time should we begin the journey? He thought there was a night in between the two concerts and also that I was crazy. The promoter agreed with and translated for Aladar, "It's too far we will never make it in time."

We were on the road by 09:00, he stopped at a market and we bought sandwiches so he could drive without stopping. I began to realize that I was very wrong with the logistics but it's too late for apologies so he kept his foot nearly to the floor of the Lada station wagon.

Around five thirty that afternoon as we neared Munich I told him there was a shortcut and we would soon to approach the highway (autobahn) turnoff; he replies, "No, we stay on the autobahn all the way to Schwartz." I insist, "Man, I'm going to open with a Schoenberg piece tonight and I want to try it on the piano before we begin the concert." We argue and I know the turnoff is coming up soon so our conversation reaches a louder volume and at the last minute, he turns off and he is angry that he did it; we traveled in silence as we ascended through the

beautiful countryside. We stop for a warm meal at six o' clock and had to wait for the chef to heat the stove; Aladar decided to return to the car.

I apologize to the waitress and try to explain that we must cancel our order and leave. We take off in silence and shortly at the top of the hill is the lake that I had mentioned before on the trip with the Dodgons and Mraz in '74. Wow, I'm stimulated by the beauty...but Aladar, with both hands on the wheel is furious. He must have wondered to himself, how is it possible for an American, a fresh arrival in Germany, to know of a shortcut on the autobahn between Munich and Innsbruck?

We soon descend the two-lane road with many narrow serpentine curves and at the bottom we are back on the autobahn flying south to Innsbruck; we turnoff at Schwartz, just before Innsbruck. Of course, we had gained a good thirty minutes and I had time to practice and opened the concert with Schoenberg's Musette from the Suite for Piano op. 25. In those days I opened nightclub concerts with a classical title.

Herb Geller lived in Hamburg and played for N.D.R. (Norddeutscher Rundfunk) Radio and Television. Producers, Wolfgang Kunert and Kurt Giese invited me to play a few productions every year and Herb would book club performances before or after the scheduled date of the production. Herb and I had recorded and had worked much in Los Angeles and now we picked up where we left off.

There was an excellent nightclub named "Birdland" in the cellar of a building complex that a construction engineer had built and designed with Herb Geller, in mind, just as "Birdland in New York" had been named for Charlie Parker. Herb performed in the club as often as he wished.

Herb is a most proficient musician and has always practiced with dedication; often when I arrived for an N.D.R. production Herb could invariably be heard practicing in a room beneath the studio; at the specified time he comes upstairs and records with the musicians; but during the hour's lunch break he practices instead of eating and then continues recording the remainder of the day; he eats only before and after his workday. I have so many memories of his virtuosity...all stored inside the cranium.

I'll push *fast forward* to '94 in Mendocino, California, where pianist Kent Glenn presented Herb, Leroy Vinnegar, myself and an excellent drummer by the name of Mel Brown from Portland; this was a concert that I'm sure meant so much to Herb as he had not seen Leroy in many decades and this was revealed in Herb's playing.

Then as I listened to Herb in '99 at the Bonadventure in Los Angeles, all of the great alto players came to mind and I was aware that Herb had transcended, yet again, to a higher level; he had attained mind-boggling dimensions with his sound which had a timbre quality different from all other alto virtuosos; he's truly one of a kind.

Back now to the summer of '78. Mandy had spoken with Gus Statiras, owner of Progressive Records, and a trio date was scheduled for the 17th of July at "Downtown Studio" in New York's Greenwich Village.

I flew from Berlin and it was strange to be back on the streets in New York after eighteen months away; yet, I felt good about it...but it was like seeing the city with the eyes of a tourist; it looked the same as before except I felt differently than when I lived there.

The studio had formally been Hank O' Neil's, one of the independent producers who had tried to press *Drifting*, so I expected a better instrument than a wrecked [B] in much need of repair. Two keys stuck on the first take of the beginning title; a very bad omen indeed. On the last chorus of Cherokee another stuck and I mentioned it while listening to the playback and said, "I can live with it" (it didn't sound wrong) but the engineer later decided to make a splice; disappointedly, without success; this made the bridge of the song in the wrong place. At least thirteen keys stuck during that date and soon my anger got the better of me and I voiced my complaint to Gus...and completely ruined the relationship. Sometimes I burn bridges from both ends and start a third fire in the middle.

By this time Mandy had sold our house in Bergenfield and moved to Florida...which was the next mistake because Mandy has an allergic reaction with squares and expresses her opinion in a provocative manner that infuriates crimson texture of a southerner's décolletage and verbal sparks fly with the intensity of a

flare...when it happens I often pity the square. Naturally, I agree with her reasoning and assessment of others but she remains untamable, she could have never been a conformist. So, Mandy moved west to Tempe, Arizona and found people there somewhat less antagonizing.

The summer before, I had played solo in Rosenheim where I met Rolf Zitzlsperger of Lesegesellschaft (Reading Society) which is located in Mainz and we exchanged a few words after my performance. He approached his close friend, Peter Hanser-Strecker, director of Schott B. & Soehne Publishing in Mainz. Zitzlsperger, who also played piano, had probably suggested to Hanser-Strecker that I should be contacted in Berlin and if we meet, I could play my compositions for him.

I received Peter Hanser-Strecker's call one morning and since I had no appointments, we met at S.F.B. and I took him to my practice room and played a Noel Lee etude for him and although he had not heard this composition, he knew of Noel Lee. Well, our meeting continued for over an hour, I only played a couple of my titles but I praised Lee as the best modern composer, especially for the piano.

A few months later Zitzlsperger proposed that Aladar and I play a Poetry & Jazz concert with Karl-Heinz Boehm narrating. It was great for me, musically a different challenge, another chance to perform with Aladar and collaborate with the renowned actor, Karl-Heinz Boehm.

Not only was Karl-Heinz the son of the famous conductor but his mother was a celebrated actress; Karl-Heinz had studied with the virtuoso pianist, Wilhelm Backhaus.

I'll never forget him driving me to the airport and he had me listen to a cassette of a new release of Glenn Gould playing a Bach Partita; for his enthusiasm and remarks about this music made me feel that he was as serious as any musician. We had many interesting conversations about music; then, he told the story about a recent television talk show where he made a remark pertaining to the German public that they probably would not contribute the equivalent of the price paid for a package of cigarettes to the starving people of North Africa. Immediately German marks flooded into banks and post offices were overwhelmed with contributions.

Special accounts had to be opened at banks and the post as donators poured untold millions into coffers the starving.

The charitable offerings were such an unexpected success for Karl-Heinz that he decided on leaving for Ethiopia to set up communities with the first priority being clean water. And after changing professions he won the Man of the Year Award. But I must say that his determination was noticeable at the beginning; Karl-Heinz Boehm is a most remarkable individual and he has always been destined to be great leader.

So, after our first four or so concerts, the last being at the Opera House in Frankfurt, Karl-Heinz journeyed to Africa, established villages and stayed. But Aladar and I continued with Zitzlsperger's *Poetry & Jazz Concerts* for nearly a decade.

I met a beautiful and charming Parisian violinist, living in Berlin, whom I found irresistible and we were soon married. I felt that I had gained a new stability in life and introduced me to many classical musicians I would not have met otherwise. We went to Paris for five days and we walked everywhere as she guided me as only a native of that city can. She and Paris changed me and I felt challenged in a positive way. Three weeks later I performed with Aladar at Meistersingerhalle in Nurnberg; my playing had changed.

One evening, in Berlin, while discussing pianists, I mentioned a recording by Noel Lee and she said she knew him and that they had attended the Paris Conservatory together in the early fifties. She asked if I had listened to any of his compositions; I wasn't even aware he composed. She telephoned him and within three weeks a package arrived containing his piano compositions and also an LP recording of them. I began working on one etude, "For High Notes," and found it far beyond my capabilities. I was embarrassed to mention to anyone the technical problems I faced with this composition but I worked and nine months later I played it for her and others. However, I transcended a couple of levels with this piece. To this day, I have not heard any modern composer write more sensitively or intellectually for the piano.

In '79, I had legally divorced...so I began my second marriage with Marie-Rose van Deirse, the Parisian violinist, in Berlin.

Months later in October '79, I experienced dark spots in the vision of my right eye and also a couple of flashes with the intensity of a strobe light. The people at the radio had recommended an optician as I needed new glasses and I misunderstood and thought he was a medical doctor, because he also tested my glaucoma and his office was filled with optical equipment and he acted with such self importance and old world authority...so, I was examined and he told me exactly what I wanted to hear, "There is absolutely nothing wrong with your eye." I skipped out of his office and went directly to the S.F.B. and practiced for the coming concert in Budapest.

When I flew to Budapest, the plane was unable to land because of heavy fog so it returned to East Berlin...but there was a successful flight the following day; pressurized cabins in planes are bad for detached retina and I was unaware of this danger.

Following that concert Aladar and I had a week at the Domicile in Munich and once again, I was subjected to the pressurized cabin of the plane.

Meanwhile the dark spots and light flashes had increased so my wife accompanied me to Berlin's Steglitz Hospital and I was examined. The doctor immediately became excited and in full voice questioned my wife because my German was practically nil but I sensed that I was in a serious situation and had gone a step too far. The doctor phoned the eye station for a bed and my operation took place the following morning. Both eyes were bandaged and I was taken in wheelchair to the next ward and placed flat in bed.

It's an eerie feeling to be in darkness strapped to a stretcher and wheeled into an operating room and you can hear those attending speak and laugh; it is routine work for them but I understand nothing. I do know that I thought continually, "I'll get through this somehow; I have to."

I understood the seriousness of the operation when, two days later, I was wheeled on stage in the auditorium and the professor, who operated, explained and drew on the blackboard the method he used to the many students attending. Small

pieces of plastic had been inserted into the eye and melted by laser. To shorten my narrative...I had five eye operations within a six-month period; I could only see out of the corner of my right eye.

I had returned to work at S.F.B. and while Carmel Jones and I had coffee in the canteen we spoke about my operation. Carmel, a qualified astrologist with a certificate to teach, told me that he had made a chart progression on me and he couldn't figure out why my operation was in the beginning of January. I had told no one that it began in October. He continued and said, "The only time I see that it could possibly have happened in the last week of September or the first week in October." I was shocked but not surprised because everything in my life has been indicated, within a two week period of the progressions of the planetary aspect noted in my astrology chart; every major recording, every promotion, marriages, children...and even the operations.

Late August, we were in Paris to attend a concert by Noel Lee and afterwards we were invited to a party in his apartment. There were a number of people there and I was asked to play; I said I would try his etude, "For High Notes" but that I had operations for half of that year and wasn't too sure of the memory... but I played through it.

On another occasion, Noel listened to one of my LPs and commented after eight or so measures, "You think flat." I was astounded and replied, "You hit the nail on the head." His observation was exact and quite abstract; jazz is a flattened music in contrast to classical and you'll find most jazz compositions using a signature in one of the flat tonalities...more tonalities using sharps are found in classical music but jazz feels looser and consequently sounds flatter whereas leading tones are played a fraction sharper and there is tightening quality within the thinking; it's difficult to really explain and probably only a few musicians will comprehend.

By '82, my body was actually poisoned by all of the medication, while being on the table, during the seventh eye operation. I could not play and I had to record one title for Rolf Zitzlsperger in Frankfurt. I was desperate; Marie Rose phoned a professor, friend, at the university and he had suffered a recent hip injury while

skiing and he said, "There is only one person who successfully stopped my suffering, but she is a non medical practitioner." "What's her telephone number?"

An appointment was made with Renate Heidenreich and I stayed on the table for two hours. Anaesthetic injections at the joints of my arms, so that later, injections can be made more deeply at the joints. Afterwards, she said, "You can not play Tuesday or Wednesday but you can record on Thursday; and I did. But, as I left her office I thought that I had reached the end of my career; heavy depression and the weather was wet and dismal; one could feel so alone in West Berlin, surrounded by a wall of dull concrete.

Thursday I flew to Frankfurt, met Zitzlsperger and he drove me to the villa of the oldest banking family in Germany. With an engineer, I recorded and there was no arm pain. We had dinner, the chauffeur changed into his chef's uniform, and fortunately, the wine and conversation was good. I was taken aback when I was shown the grounds; it reminded me of Berlin's Tiergarten in miniature; a manicured forest; if only my parents or grand father could have seen this. Anyway, I felt honored.

Flew back to Berlin and continued my treatment with Renate for nearly ten years. She is responsible for my good health and throughout this period my cheeks were flushed.

But there was one incident; I was getting homeopathic injections in the joints of each hand and the potency increased each week; I got a call from Wolfgang Kunert in Hamburg to work a week with the N.D.R. band; I flew north and during the first day's rehearsal, my hands and arms turned scarlet red...Wolfgang called a doctor and a taxi and I departed for the hospital. The director examined me and asked questions but I couldn't know enough, it was after five o' clock, and Renate didn't answer the phone. The doctor said, "I don't know what she gave you but I'm having your arms bandaged and soaked with alcohol; you will take a taxi back to your hotel and stay in bed; tomorrow you can remove the bandages and if the inflammation has increased you must come immediately to the hospital and if your condition has improved, you can go to work at N.D.R.. And one last reminder, "Don't be near anyone who lights a cigarette or your bandages may ignite."

In the hotel, my mind was racing through the night and the next morning after removing the bandages, my skin was light pink. I made all rehearsals but only looked at the music and didn't actually play until the concert.

Heidenreich's distributor was in her office the next week, when I arrived for an appointment, and he explained, "The injections were combined with snake poison and it was attacking and destroying the toxic poisons which then went into your blood stream and eventually filtered out of your system. I had been cleansed and the deposits between my fingers at the knuckle had disappeared but it wasn't entirely over for everyone meets their Waterloo at some point in life; mine, some months later was the cancellation of a classical performance.

Heida had introduced me to Vivian Kirpatrick of Westport and she is one of the finest violinist to be found. She mailed piano parts of the program and I practiced. The music was difficult and gradually more deposits formed between my knuckles; I crashed into a deep depression and I recovered when Renate gave more injections but I knew that I could never prepare adequately for the concert because there was not enough time. I thought for two days and nights, picked up the phone and dialed Vivian. She was understanding but there wasn't time to get another pianist so she performed unaccompanied and received a standing ovation. I suffer horribly when I let anyone down; there's nothing worse than failure. Today, on reflection, I believe Renate saved my health and I'm still in very good condition for my age.

I recorded "Wings of Spring" in Berlin with my stepson, Olivier Peters, who not only is a tenor and woodwind virtuoso but also an excellent drummer, pianist and arranger as well. Joan Johnson, sang and contributed four very exceptional compositions; I'll add that Joan has written hundreds of compositions and also a chord substitution for *Rose Waltz* that is better than mine. Drummer, Vinny Johnson gave extraordinary rhythmic support and solos worthy of note. Gerd Mayer-Mendez, a strong walking bassist, produced the date. The engineer, Matthias Hartl was outstanding and truly understood how the piano should be recorded. Olivier's compositions were brilliant and his tasteful playing always soared over the rhythm section.

Enja suggested that Aladar and I should record a studio date, this first summer of the new decade, and much to my surprise the producer, Matthias Winckelmann, agreed that I include a classical title by Noel Lee, "For High Notes." Critics kept me afloat with favorable reviews of Winter Rose.

Opportunity rang and the contractor said that an Italian movie sound-track was soon to be recorded and Benny Goodman would be featured with orchestra and also in quintet and that Benny had phoned and told him, the contractor, to get Walter Norris on piano. I said there must be some mistake and the following day he rang again and repeated that, "Benny said that he definitely wants you." I told the contractor, "I know about Benny...he promises a flying carpet and when you're seated, he pulls it out from under you." "Also, I'm working with S.F.B. and I don't need any." He promised a prepaid flight with return, good money, hotel and assure me the Italian film producers were great and if Benny became difficult, I could head back early to Berlin. Then I asked, "And Benny said he had to have me? Something must be wrong." But, I was guaranteed over and again.

I landed in Rome, it was a warm February afternoon with bright sunshine and I taxied to the hotel where there was a message that I should be ready around seven o' clock for a meeting and dinner in a restaurant would follow. All went well at the meeting, Benny would soon arrive from the airport; and after "Hellos" we all piled into the van with Benny in the front passenger seat and he turns his head to the side and asks, "Walter, where do I know you from?" I had mentally made a bet with myself and now I had won; Benny is about to pull one on me. "Well Benny, you visited the Playboy Club in '67 and sat at a front table in the Party Room where I had a quartet featuring Joe Farrell and during intermission I went over to your table and greeted you and mentioned that I had enjoyed seeing your Bell Telephone Hour television show on my previous off night. "I don't remember." I retorted, "Well, maybe it will come to you later." Very dead silence followed! The film producer was driving and he was the type of gentleman any mother would wish to call him her son. Luckily, Benny was tired and we dropped him at his hotel and continued up the hill to the Chianti Restaurant. Now the other film producer had joined us at the long table and wine was poured with served food for hours.

I was taken early to the studio because I wanted to check music and the piano, a new Boesendorfer, that was a jewel. I waited in the corner of the studio until the tuner finished and went over to him, thanked him, complimented his work and he left. He was very nice and as well tempered as the instrument. I immediately burned, but softly, the keyboard with Noel Lee's etude, "For High Notes," and the producer was overwhelmed. Then I went through the music and found it horrible and with many measures of odd meters scattered about that weren't necessary (I'll explain why in a paragraph that comes later) but the composer was renown. I made a separate list of possibilities, harmonically, that we could at least improvise over. The other musicians arrived and set up their instruments; then Benny made his appearance.

He seemed in a good mood and then turned to me, "Walter, let's warm up with "Lady Be Good." Well, I have the greatest respect for Teddy Wilson and Benny's quintet with Lionel Hampton, I had seen film footage, in Berlin, of one of their concerts from nineteen forty and Teddy played with the energetic drive of a Bud Powell.

So, we began playing "Lady Be Good" and all is going, musically, very well; after my solo he and I played riff patterns, my lines in thirds with him, like a homing pigeon...he can't lose me and then he sustained a high tone through the A & B section and continued even after the bridge and then he's still demonstrating his breath control into the next chorus...but I know this trick and keep mental tabs on the form of the piece and sure enough, Benny abandons his high tone and, with clarinet, gestures the downbeat of the bridge...he is, without doubt absolutely in the wrong place but I join him at the bridge as though he were in the right place and by doing so he can not accuse me of being in the wrong place and if he does I am in the position of easily embarrassing him in front of others. We ended "The Good Lady" and Benny asks for a concert "A" and explained that the piano was tuned sharp. He then tells the producer to phone the tuner and get him back in here; the time is around two o' clock.

The tuner soon enters the studio in a very ill-tempered mood, his siesta was interrupted, in fact his anger is ready to make him explode. Of course, Benny can

use less or more pressure on the mouthpiece and this will make the intonation of his clarinet a bit sharper or flatter. He tells the tuner, "Give me an "A" and naturally he makes his pitch even flatter and continues with, "The "A" of the piano is sharp... make it flatter." With gritted teeth visible, he turns the tuning pin...then Benny lips the mouthpiece more firmly and now the piano sounds flat; on the third time, Benny removes the clarinet from his mouth and with a loud voice, "Can't you tune to an "A" 440? Tuner places his tuning hammer in his case and heads for the door.

I'm sitting in a chair and trying not to laugh; Benny starts playing another title with the musicians but without me. The producer came to me and suggested that I join the others and I replied, "Mr. Goodman must ask me to play." Again, the producer approaches me and I told him that Benny obviously doesn't want me and continued my explanation that Benny played with these musicians, without piano, last year; I'm the one, who is being ignored and I have no intention of asking Mr. Goodman if he wants me to play.

Their title was recorded so we all were invited inside the booth to listen. The recording engineer is one of the world's finest; in fact he recorded Artur Rubenstein's Carnegie Hall concert in '61 for RCA. Benny told him to stop the play back and shouted: "This sounds like hell; you can put those microphones away, I only want to use one." The producer spoke for the traumatized engineer, "But Mr. Goodman, the technology has changed since nineteen thirty-eight, we need these microphones for stereo and for matching an overall quality for the film's sound track." Benny insisted and after the next recorded title, without me, Mr. Goodman called it a day; everyone left.

The next day was recorded with orchestra so I practiced early on the unused, out of tune, Steinway and exited the studio when the first musicians entered and I by chance met Benny and the producer in outside parking lot. Benny remarked, "Walter, you cut out on me yesterday." "Why Benny, I couldn't tune up to you're A-440." He laughed!

I realized that Benny reminded me of my father, same generation, he even resembled dad...but there the similarity ends. I felt that I had Mr. Goodman figured out. I phoned the other producer's office and told him that I wanted to

return to Berlin. A meeting was setup for seven o' clock that evening and I explained that I simply wasn't needed. The producer wanted me to stay in Rome and that on Friday morning, after the completion of the production, he would record me playing the theme of the movie solo.

The producer threw a party on Thursday night at the Grand Hotel Plaza overlooking the Spanish Steps. While we were standing, talking with our glass in hand, Benny looks and speaks to me silently, only his lips move...so I ask, "What did you say?" Benny answers, "I didn't say anything." "Yes, you did speak to me but I didn't hear...what did you say?" "I didn't say anything." I stared at him... and then began laughing at him. *Benny the Badman*, stranger than strange!

I was introduced to the composer and he instantly began complaining. He said he was so relieved that it was all over. "What do you mean?" He went on, "The damn director is an ego maniac...he invited me, a number of times, to his villa and sang the melodies the way he wanted them written in every title of the score. He continued that the director was so unmusical and had the worst sense of taste. Well, this certainly explained all of those odd metered phrases in the score.

The next morning in the studio, I went to the Boesendorfer...but the tuner had neglected to retune the A above middle C thus the instrument was impossible to use for recording. I tried the Steinway but Benny had told the tuner to make it A-339 and when I played there were so many low vibrations from the bass register that again, it was impossible for it to be included at the end of the film. Then, the producer asked me to record just some old popular standard titles and that he would put them on some juke boxes and promised that my name would not be on them. I loved being in Rome but it was good to be back in Berlin.

Bob Schillin, whom I had stayed in contact with, booked me into some clubs and restaurants in New York with a few concerts in New Jersey. I must say that the stimulation of New York activated so many brain cells and I found it all completely exhilarating.

I flew back to Berlin only to turnaround and fly with the S.F.B. to Los Angeles, Berlin's sister city. We played the Biltmore Hotel, downtown Los Angeles

and the Palladium in Hollywood. How strange to step back after twenty years into an ancient time capsule; the coffee still tasted exactly the same.

And from my hotel room, I could look down on Sunset Boulevard, palm trees and purple sunsets. I thought of the movie, "Sunset Boulevard" it had struck a sensitive nerve back in nineteen fifty; the photography, innovative back then, had been so realistic and now a carnival touch had been added, but it was intoxicating. I sat by the pool, looking up at the Hollywood Hills and wondered aloud, "Why did I ever leave this?" "Was it self punishment?"

Fortunately, I was able to visit Putter, Verna Rose, Steve Huffstetter, Donna Lee and even Bo Boyd who had driven me from Houston out to Los Angeles back in '53. Had a beautiful session at Huffstetter's place.

During that same trip, I was interviewed by Will Thornbury on KCRW and he then wrote, what I consider to be, the best essay on me; this I later managed to have printed on the inside jacket sleeve of Inner City's LP pressing of "Drifting."

During the interview he played a cassette copy of my ENJA recording of Noel Lee's, "For High Notes" but his hook up wasn't correct and consequently, there was only silence, meaning erasure, at the beginning so, I had him stop the machine. After the broadcast, I played the rest of the title for him in the car as he drove me back to the hotel; I'm sure that's why he wrote the essay. I must add that Will Thornbury and Tom Schnabel, director of KCRW-FM, in Santa Monica went to great lengths with interviews on my behalf.

The flight back to Berlin was with mixed emotions; I knew the director of S.F.B. had canceled the band permanently but it would take a year for the paper work of partitions and court appeals to reach their final stage; and then it happened; my last performance with S.F.B. in the Urania Theater, on the Saturday night before Easter Sunday and when I left, I walked through the center of Berlin to my apartment as inner voices, inside my head, sang Handel's *Hallelujah*, once again. My liberation was also mixed with some insecurity...being in Berlin without steady employment.

Giorgio Cariotti, owner of the Quasimodo Club, had me work on many occasions but there was one evening with Lou Donaldson's quartet that made me a

Berliner. After the second title, Lou takes the microphone, turns to me and asks, "Where did you learn to play like that?" "Well, I listened to all of the good players." "Yeah, but who taught you to play that way?" "I just absorbed whatever I heard that was good." We played another title and then he takes the microphone, "Where are you from?" I smile, place my hands over my eyes and shook my head...and then looked up as if searching for an answer from above. About four people yell from the back of the audience, "He's from Berlin."

I smiled, threw them a kiss with both hands; it gave me the most warm comfortable feeling and I felt that I belonged. Lou gave up and we continued making music. He definitely was a hybrid of Charlie Parker's style but Lou's was such an individualized alto sound. But now, reading what I've written...I realize that I learned something about piano from nearly every race and nationality.

Giorgio needed me to work with Arnett Cobb because Arnett's pianist, with the sextet, missed the train out of Amsterdam. I entered the back door of the club and could see, through the parted drapery, Jimmy Ford; I couldn't believe it... Giorgio hadn't mentioned Jimmy. I shouted his name, we embraced, and I ran to the phone and even had friends calling local musicians to attend the performance.

Arnett played tenor, Jimmy on alto, a good trumpet man from Houston, his name I've forgotten and having just returned from New York, I was in shape. Something puzzled me about Arnett Cobb; his playing belonged to an earlier generation yet, when I accompanied him I got the impression I could use modern voicings and progressions and it somehow fitted with his style; Arnett actually opened me up. This is one of those *things* in jazz that you can't quite find the right words to describe. I experienced a strong musical vibration with Arnett.

Of course, Arnett being crippled from an auto accident was constantly in pain and had to keep standing on his feet...instead of sitting...even lying in bed to sleep was a problem. We invited them for lunch but Arnett's son and the trumpet player had to care for him and considering the stairs in our building, he declined. But, Jimmy and his wife came to the apartment and typical of his wild bebop character, he handed an empty beer can to Marie-Rose when she opened the door, "Here, can you put this someplace?" She, a Parisian princess, laughed but I could

have died. Marie-Rose smiled later as she remarked, "An empty beer can and I thought maybe he would hand me a rose." But Jimmy also brought his "toe" as he called it, in reference to the alto, and the two of us were playing...the moment the bag for his *toe* hit the floor. Jimmy and I had a way with music and whatever I can put into words will be understood differently by others...but now, we had completed a full circle from '52; he returned to Houston and within two and a half years cancer had taken another great player.

There was another flight to Budapest, in the warmth of summer, and during a long rehearsal break I walked down a street by the Radio House and dancers were having a class on the ground floor of a building with musicians accompanying; it was Hungarian folk music and for the first time I understood the sound of this music.

I had first heard Bartok in Los Angeles and it didn't thrill...then in New Jersey Rudi Steindl, who is originally from Budapest, played Bartok which I appreciated and Rudi is an excellent interpreter...next, I attended Phillip Evans' Bartok analyses class at Manhattan Conservatory, in '69, and he is renown as a Bartok specialist.

Now in '82, as I listened while standing at the opened window of the dance class, the tones had colors that I had not noticed the years before. Musically, this was one of the most striking revelations I've experienced and perhaps, also because it took so many years for me to realize. To enjoy the taste of an exceptional wine...it becomes even better if you are near the vineyard, with gourmet cooking and eating the food grown in that very same region. That's how I describe this sound I heard. To interpret Bartok, I find that some pianos help more than others.

Now that I've mentioned Phillip Evans, I want to say more about him. He is from Minneapolis, a heavy tall man, and although he specializes in Bartok he also plays all of the piano literature. For my ears, he sounds European but he has a quality few Europeans have. The one European whose playing reminds me of Phillip Evans is Aldo Ciccolini: even their physical proportions are quite similar. Unfortunately, Evans had many offspring so teaching was necessary to exist. His

two-hour classes, for me, were monumental...but during the cigarette break, he sight-read for the students; his style definitely changed mine.

A couple of yarns about Red Kelly of Tacoma, Washington. He was formally with Woody Herman's band, and others, of the late forties. Red had a nightclub and restaurant located, across the street from the courthouse, that was also opened for lunch during the day. He told me that one of the legislators came in for lunch one afternoon, quite frustrated, and said to Red, "You know, we are voting to change all of the street signs so that they read in Chinese and English." "What in hell is this country coming to?" "I got up and told the legislative members over the microphone: The Bible is written in English and if English was good enough for Jesus...it's good enough for me." Red said he had never experienced such a difficulty in keeping a somber expression on his face.

But, there is another story about Red from the early fifties when he still was bassist with Woody Herman. There was a wealthy rancher living outside of Denver who hired Woody's band, annually, for a festive evening with hundreds of guests. After playing, the band stayed overnight and Red was given a room with wall to wall white carpeting. About four in the morning Red needed the bathroom and got up searching for the desk lamp, accidentally knocked over a bottle of ink that flowed over the edge and onto the carpet. The next morning he was horrified as he assessed the damage and went to offer payment and apologize...but the owner had already left for distant parts of the ranch and the musicians were on the band bus ready to leave...and so Red, utterly mortified, got on the bus.

About nine months later the band was once again in Denver and played a hotel in the center of the city. Red, the next morning and still overwhelmed with guilt, took a taxi out to the ranch to apologize to the owner for ruining the carpet and fortunately, Red had the taxi wait while...he walked to the door and rang the bell. A lady opened and Red introduced himself and asked to speak with the owner...she said, "Just wait here a minute and I'll go find him." Red noticed a large cushioned chair on the porch and just the moment he sank in it...he heard a soft squeak. He had failed to notice that a very small dog was sitting in the chair

asleep; now, it would sleep permanently. Flabbergasted, Red ran to the waiting taxi and returned to downtown Denver.

I took another flight to Budapest, then a swift four-hour drive north in the mountains for a festival in a small village. On arrival, we crossed the only street and ate in the restaurant where a talented gypsy violinist played for the dinner guests. This was such a different world for me, and since I'm from Arkansas, I felt as far removed, here, as if I had been placed on another planet. And who is headlining for the festival? None other than Teddy Wilson and trio. I paid respects and we exchanged a few words before he performed...but I'm sure his tour schedule was tiring; he appeared to be completely exhausted and he was well into old age. Teddy had to leave immediately after his performance and it was my last time to see and hear him; it was his last year.

Aladar and I were interviewed after our concert and I mentioned about being from Arkansas, nearly half the circumference of this planet away, and now in this mountain village...that I felt so compatible with Aladar Pege, the bass virtuoso from Budapest. Although we often performed, we hardly communicate verbally... yet I feel that we have an understanding beyond expressed words. I say this because of the way that we improvise together. Hungary is a special link for me...thanks to Rudi Steindl, originally from Budapest, and the exposure to Bartok through Rudi and Phillip Evans.

My collection of G.D.R. currency, from concerts, was piling up so I went into East Berlin and after the controls, I went shopping for leather gloves and dress boots.

On my return, as I walked through the border control at Friedrichstrasse, the guard took me by the arm and escorted me inside a small room. I was told to wait as he took my passport and a box of new boots. Twenty-five minutes passed before he returned and informed me that I was not allowed to take boots out of the G.D.R.

I went into my Tex/Ark mentality and explained to him, harshly, that the "Culture Agency" (Agent for Culture) had told me that I could buy boots and take

them out of the G.D.R. I politely took my passport from his hand, the box of boots and walked out of the room and through the passageway to West Berlin.

The guard could have shot me, and no questions would be asked, but I later realized that what unnerved him was my mentioning the "Culture Agency" because he, the guard, might become involved with the bureaucracy and even questioned. The expression, *don't make waves* is universal. But, what I didn't know was that the G.D.R. regulation had been changed a couple of months before and the guard was absolutely correct; I was the one who was wrong. The *Golden Angel* was still sitting on my shoulder.

I had another concert booked in Budapest, a month later, but I canceled...it was three years before my nerves could take me, again, through G.D.R. controls.

Bob Schillin again had work for me in the New York and New Jersey area. Amos Kahn, one of the most dedicated people I've met when club owners come to mind, had me in Gulliver's where everyone listens. And one week of slave-labor (six hours and more per night) in Bradley's on a Yamaha upright (before Paul Desmond's Baldwin arrived) next to the air conditioning vent that hummed in the tonality of A-flat ...a blues in G was hell but the ambiance of the club's nightlife was pure Greenwich Village.

Best of all, Heida Hermanns, my former teacher, presented me in quartet with tenor saxophonist, Olivier Peters, my stepson, for a concert appearance in Westport, Connecticut.

Jerry Dodgon and Steve Huffstetter were in Berlin with Toshiko Akiyshi's big band and their next engagement took place in Paris. My wife insisted that I take the train and go with them to Paris (an opportunity to visit the French Radio about a concert)...it was fantastic talking with Jerry and Steve because we drank good wine as we listened to interesting cassettes throughout the trip.

On my return, just after daybreak, I was asleep when the train arrived in West Berlin and didn't wake up until someone banged on the door and said, "Berlin." I hurry and as I stepped onto the platform I realized that my glasses were on a table in the train.

I tried the door but it was locked so I shouted and hammered my fist on the door...I hear a loud voice far at the other end of the platform scream, "Nein" and I answer back, "Meine Brille ist im Zug" and continue bashing my fist on the door... again, "Nein." I hear the voice but without my glasses, I don't recognize that the three in uniform are East German Police...and they are approaching.

At last someone opened the door and handed me my glasses. I thanked them profusely, put on the glasses and turned around; I'm shocked. "Oh, bin ich in Ost-Berlin?" "Jawohl, mein Herr." Then, I turned around and saw a fourth guard standing only five yards behind with his machine gun now pointing at my chest; all of them were under twenty-two, a very dangerous age for brandishing automatic weapons. I turned again and asked the three, "Wo ist der Zug nach Berlin Zoologischer Garten?" ..."Da," as they pointed to the next platform...I hurried and once again, I got that old feeling of anxiety in the pit of my stomach.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

I was asked to teach at the conservatory, Hochschule der Kuenste Berlin, in '84. I could not imagine a more prestigious teaching position; every great pianist had taught there; Ferruccio Busconi, Egon Petri, Artur Schnabel and others. Even my teacher, Heida, had studied there with Petri and Schnabel in the late twenties. Keep in mind that when Vladimir Horowitz departed Russia, he came directly to Berlin and tried to study with Schnabel before eventually emigrating to New York City.

A few at the political level wanted me to teach jazz improvisation in the Hochschule but most of the professors didn't and I understood why. If classical students found difficulties with their teachers and their assignments, they might change to jazz, thinking it would be an easier workload to manage.

First: I had figured that sheer numbers would impress. But I was astonished when forty students attended my class the first day and the second day I had a total of forty-two. Each student received a one hour private lesson and there was a four

hour group class on Saturdays. I was paid very well but I was hired to teach only eighteen hours per week and I taught just over twice that amount.

Second: I was not allowed to grade, cancel or audition students...which left me powerless. The majority of my students had ended their classical piano lessons shortly after beginning; none would ever be able to give a two hour solo concert because they had begun too late.

But, the Hochschule did allow me to present student concerts each semester and I was pleased with the efforts of my students. Needless to say, not one professor ever attended any of my student concerts.

The Hochschule wanted me to organize a jazz department and I met with the representative of the Piano Department (classical) and also with the representative of the Pedagogue Department (classical) in the office of the President, Dr. Roloff-Momin. They wanted me to join either department but I insisted on a separate department for jazz and I wanted them to hire a minimum of five teachers; the Hochschule finally connected the Jazz Department to the Pedagogue Department; and by doing so, teachers of jazz would teach students to teach jazz; I argued that students must learn to play jazz before they can teach others. So, I chose to remain in the Drama Department where I taught jazz improvisation for piano and voice because this allowed me to work independently of all other teachers. I answered only to the representative of the Drama Department.

I flew out to California in '86 for some work and stayed with Putter Smith and his wife, Verna Rose but I also had to perform in New York and didn't have a place to stay and there, hotel costs can be damaging. Verna Rose took the phone and rang Judy Niemack in the Bronx, "Hey, I got Walter Norris here and he really needs a place to stay...can he have a room at your place?" "Well, you got it," as she handed me the phone and I wrote down the details and directions and was so surprised with Judy Niemack's response; she was so natural about everything and my problem was immediately resolved; she had a piano I would gladly use. Without the apartment at Judy's, it would have been impossible for me to work my six tours of New York city in the upcoming years.

Life was dangerous in the eighties...one night in an elevated subway, returning to Judy's apartment in the Bronx, some teenagers pulled the emergency brake and blew the electrical fuses...in darkness the train hobbled along to the next station...and then bright lights as six detectives ran through the cars...each with a 45 caliber automatic drawn and I'm sitting, as they rush by, with a pocket full of money; I was to leave for Berlin the next day.

I invited Judy, for the next semester, to conduct two workshops at Hochschule der Kuenste as I considered her an outstanding teacher and she even surpassed my expectations. Eventually she became a professor in Berlin's Hans Eisler University.

A few years earlier, Judy met guitarist, Jeanfrancois Prins, from Brussels, and gained a remarkable musician as well as an exciting husband. Today, they have formed a group, he also with his own, and both of them are busy teaching at Hans Eisler University and performing around Europe and the U.S.

Entering the apartment, on a Saturday after teaching the group class, I opened my mail and there were photos of Delia, my youngest, and her new husband Tony Grigsby, taken just after the ceremony.

I walked to a near by restaurant and sat at a table, ordered, and looked at the photos...one was a side profile shot and I became conscious of the fact that she resembled my mother. I had not remarked this similarity, genetic linkage, before; tears emerged. I knew that I always felt very comfortable in Tony's presence...and to this day believe he is good for Delia...but I had lost my baby.

I ate, unaware of any food taste or the wine...I was and felt alone...my wife had driven to Cameret, France and I was to join her the following week after finishing the spring semester. I walked and returned to our empty Berlin apartment and worked on the bridge section of "Modus Vivendi."

In '88, the new Jazz Department, under the protective wing of the Pedagogue Department, had been formed officially in the Hochschule...but I preferred independence and remained in the Drama Department. For the first time, students had to audition to enter the Jazz Department of the Hochschule. Although these new students, from all of Germany, were allowed to receive private lessons with me

but the ability level slowly became lower and after '90, I no longer bothered with presenting student concerts... simply because they couldn't prepare well enough to perform.

My second marriage was falling apart. She, Marie Rose van Deinse, was absolute perfection, musically and with all of the daily life; it continued beautifully but near the last, I believe I made her become more French and she, at the same time, brought out more of my American traits. There was friction.

I'm sure my practice became unnerving for her and the neighbors as well; next door, one had his entire wall bricked...even that wasn't enough so he bought the apartment behind his and had a doorway cut through the wall so that when I practiced, he retreated to the other apartment and closed the door.

She did everything for me...even got me the position at the Hochschule, bought a Steinway [M] (vintage 1926) that was even better than the "M" I recorded *Drifting* on...cooked and brought food to the hospital throughout the six months I spent there with my five eye operations. I think back and wonder *why* and *how* it went wrong but have no real concrete answer. Naturally, my obsession with work didn't help.

I moved to Kreuzberg, bought a Wilhelm Menzel (vintage 1920) and practiced around the clock; when, didn't I practice? There was a pianist, Pamela Scheiner, living in the apartment above who studied with me and we soon began sharing life as well as the keyboard together.

Berlin has a strong *free* music community. Pamela attracted their attention and performed concerts mostly in the G.D.R. She joined me on a few of my later trips to New York and it blossomed into a lovely romance and I'm sure her being two decades younger was a large part of it but we were compatible. It was perhaps the pressure of performing that activated a negative factor which she suffered from. Soon she made the decision to remain in New York for therapy; that was the summer of '90; I returned to Kreuzberg and my Menzel.

With each working trip to New York, I managed to have a few lessons with Linda Kessler-Ferri. By this time she had studied with two Russian professors from Moscow Conservatory, who had moved to New York, and on my off nights, I

traveled two hours by bus to Morristown, New Jersey where Linda played classical music (weekends) in a restaurant. I arrived early in the evening and stayed late; it was a paradise to listen to her after enjoying good food and wine; and I was always seated near the Yamaha upright piano. I remember Romolo, her husband, sitting with me as she played a Bach Partita absolutely perfect...I remarked when she had finished that I'd heard the best recordings and live performances and feel Linda's interpretation is even better...and how is it that she accomplishes this while having a lengthy conversation with one of the guests at the same time. I was surprised, when she asked me to play at the end of the evening because the piano was in great need of a regulation and some keys didn't sound when pressed too lightly; with strong fingers and a strong mind, all instruments obeyed when she played.

One lesson, Linda demonstrated a passage in a Chopin Ballad and brought out an inner voicing that I had never heard from anyone else...she expressed it differently and hers was a revelation to my ears.

Dinah, my first daughter, and Kent Matchael were married in Tempe, Arizona and fortunately, I had just finished a tour so I was able to attend, with Mandy, their Buddhist wedding; the ceremony was performed by a Japanese priest and it was all very touching; there was a small spinet and I played, "It Never Entered My Mind." Perhaps, one of the secrets of living is to be able to let go. And once again, I felt fortunate because I think this son in-law also, is good for my daughter.

Wolfgang Kunert, the N.D.R. producer, presented Chet Baker, his last performance with full orchestra, in Hannover. Chet arrived just after the orchestra finished recording the arrangements and tried to over-dub but he couldn't keep his false teeth in place because of the pressure of the mouthpiece but he managed to play the following day. One of the technicians in the booth was upset and couldn't resist talking about Chet, "He's destroying himself" ...and, "How can anyone with such talent ruin the health like that?" True, he looked horrible but he somehow played magically and two LPs were produced from that concert by Enja records.

After the afternoon sound check, Wolfgang invited me to join he and few others for a coffee with Chet. From the window, where we were seated, Chet could

be seen walking in the middle of the street, back and forth, looking for someone, probably a supplier, and we all waited impatiently...but at last he came inside. Chet is not a talkative type so after moments of silence he came out of his *triple* Capricorn shell and spoke about how he travels around in Europe.

When he drives from France into another country, he must find a small road near the boarder and spend a couple of hours searching a crossing at the boundary; hopefully, the customs officer will be female and with his fingers crossed, wearing a sincere smile, maybe he gets through; then he must drive hours more to get back on the autobahn. This was his excuse for being a day and a half late.

Whenever Chet drove into Italy, the officers would search the car thoroughly...then detain him while they made their computer search; sometimes they told to turn around and head back in the direction he came from.

The digital world had closed in on him; France was in the process of rescinding his license and he knew of no other country that would issue one. His situation was pathetic.

Then two weeks later, I receive word from Wolfgang Kunert that Chet had died in Amsterdam. We were all shocked and even more so because everyone, including the police, gave a different account of his death.

But he was always a mystery! His leaving Hollywood was a horrible embarrassment for the California State Highway Patrol.

Chet was opening for two weeks at Peacock Alley, located on the corner of Western Avenue and Hollywood Boulevard. He called a rehearsal for that afternoon and as soon as the musicians arrived the detectives were waiting for them with opened handcuffs...Chet, as usual, was a few minutes late and as he pulled up to the sidewalk, looking carefully before turning off the motor of his Porsche...they approached quickly with guns drawn; Chet mashed the accelerator to the floor but they couldn't shoot because of pedestrians passing. He sped away and within three blocks was on the Hollywood Freeway with a police car not far behind. They never caught him; the police contacted California State Troupers by radio and they tried setting up roadblocks to intercept Chet but he always had just gone by. The chace ended as Chet crossed into Arizona where he slowed to a normal speed and

continued driving all the way to New York City. Those State Troupers certainly experienced a black day out there in Sunny California's overheated desert.

On the eighth of November '89, in East Berlin, I played the strangest concert ever. Others had already performed and I arrived just in time to go out on stage to play solo for an hour. I was completely unaware that the border (The Wall) was to be opened at midnight...but everyone in the audience was well informed...they just didn't know what to do; in fact no one in the East wanted to venture out...most of them waited until the morning hours of daylight to see for themselves if they could gradually leave... and then they swarmed through.

So, the atmosphere that night in the theater (Volkstheater) was electrically static; something was *in the air* but you couldn't imagine *how* it could or would happen. I played to mild response and off stage just before returning for an encore, someone told me, "The Wall's opening." I turned and walked back on stage...but as I sat to play, I felt rather numb.

I had been provided with hotel and quickly returned, changed clothes, and took the elevator to the thirty-eighth floor to the restaurant overlooking the city. A few others from the concert joined and we ordered food and drinks...but the waiter only brought the drinks saying, "The chef will come soon." Our food was served four hours later; no one knew what to do; everyone sat and spoke quietly, "There's no military authority at this very moment." "And what if a squadron of foreign helicopters were to land with troops in the square below?" "What could we do?" ... it was a moment of helplessness for everyone.

Finally food came, I ate quickly, returned to my room, grabbed my bag and left immediately...with only one thought...get out of here and keep moving.

While walking on 'Unter den Linden' at five-thirty in the morning of November ninth, a car pulls up and with the window lowered, a man asks in German, I reply in English and then he asks, "How do I get to Check Point Charlie?" ...I told him to take a left on Friedrichstrasse; as the car continued; I

noticed Polish license plate. Within twenty yards, another car stops and I'm again asked for directions to Check Point Charlie and the license plate was also from Poland.

The sidewalks, on both sides, were suddenly filling up and everyone is moving towards Friedrichstrasse...no one is walking in the opposite direction. I'm moving at a fast clip but I keep repeating to myself that I must go faster; I take the border control at Friedrichstrasse because it's a number of blocks closer than Check Point Charlie and to my disbelief, the guards are waving all of the people through; not one passport was being checked...a few guards were even laughing; the *Wall* was really open! By noon, people in mass swarmed through all exits of the former East Berlin; this was shown on *ALL* television networks.

Berlin changed instantly. I could not walk on Kurfuerstendamm...there was no room...sidewalks were overflowing with people, some had to walk in the streets and this continued for months.

Citizens from former East Germany were given one hundred marks at the bank, even the children, and they came to spend.

Subways were so packed that you could only enter the train if people were getting off, otherwise the doors of each car remained closed; I remember waiting to get on and after the fourth subway passed, I phoned and canceled my appointment. Large busses came from Poland and other nearby countries with a few people buying cases of beer, or whatever, until they fill the bus completely...and then returned to the country of origin and sold it all.

While watching an American movie on television, shortly after arriving in Berlin in '77, I asked, "Is it possible that East Germans are watching, now, on this same television channel?" My friend answered, "Yes, for sure in East Berlin." "Well, such films as this will make many want to escape." Of course, I had no idea it would ever turn out this way. Now, chunks of the wall were being sold on the street.

I remember, six months after the Wall crumbled, two people on a subway platform recognized each other and screamed each others names with tears

flowing...they were related and like so many, they had been separated by the Wall since '61.

Now, I must sketch a description of my trip to Algiers in '89. Phil Wilson, from Berklee School of Music in Boston, performed a concert with me at the Hochschule. Phil and I had been trying to setup a student exchange between the Hochschule and Berklee.

On this trip he had a proposal...would I be interested in playing three or four concerts in Algiers and of course, my interest heightened when he mentioned bassist, Mads Vinding from Copenhagen and drummer, Ronnie Stephenson originally from England but currently living in Berlin. Phil went on to explain that he knew the Attache's wife, initially a Bostonian, and that they lived in Algiers and were connected to the CIA bureau there and she had asked Phil to organize a quartet to fly down and play. "You mean we are going to work for the CIA?" He answered in the affirmative. "Well, I've always wanted to have a stamp in my passport from a country in Africa."

We arrived in Algiers and were driven directly to the compound, briefed, and taken to where we would be housed.

Ronnie and I stayed in an operative's villa where we enjoyed conversation and good wine. My room, on the ground floor, opened onto a beautiful garden; Ronnie's room, on the second floor had a balcony overlooking the same garden.

Around three-thirty each morning, just before the light of day began, an amplified voice of an Imam (singer) from the Mosque began calling the people in for prayers. I had heard such singing in Berlin...but it held no interest for my ears, yet here, in the semi desert dryness, it had a beauty that touched my soul.

Let me explain that these CIA operatives were not tough brutes. They were highly intelligent scholars with thick glasses, who as children, had only read books and never ventured outside to play baseball; they spoke many languages and knew all the dialects of North Africa.

I had interesting conversations, on world issues, with them and naturally, I spoke my mind...anyway, they had me figured out and probably could second guess most all of my thoughts.

Our first performance was at the Embassy villa and we were a success because after the speeches the Algerian politicians and businessmen stayed and listened to us play and I'll be the first to admit...we had a quartet that was red hot and the music was exactly what the officials wanted because all of the previous years these local officials and entrepreneurs had stayed only to eat and left the villa as soon as their appetite was suitably contented.

The next concert was dull and the sparse audience was completely uninterested. Our third performance at the British Ambassador's residence was very interesting and fortunately he liked jazz.

Then two Algerian operatives drove us to Oman where we checked into a sleazy hotel that looked like some set out of the Bogart movie, "Casablanca."

I climbed two flights, got into my room, sat on the bed and observed my new surroundings...a light bulb hanging from the center of the ceiling...the lock on the door was simply a hook that anyone could push open...the paint, dulled by the passing of a half century or so, was the original coat...one chair that might collapse under the weight of a child plus a couple of nails in the wall for hanging hat and coat. I was skeptical as I sat on beds edge ...then I heard loud footsteps and a knock as the voice said, "We're meeting downstairs in the lobby and bring everything with you." Phil demanded that we be taken to another hotel...and to some extent it was a little better.

We played one title for the outdoor concert...and when Phil announced the next title, in English, you could hear remarks from the crowd out in the protective darkness of night...we didn't even complete the first chorus of the second title before small stones bounced on stage. Phil turned and said, "Let's go everybody off the stage," and I promptly departed, but not too fast. I didn't even wait at the van for the others; I practically became invisible as I walked back in darkness to the hotel...fortunately, unobserved.

When we returned, late the following afternoon, the CIA director of the compound congratulated us, "Well, I've heard about the concert in Oman and want all of you to know that you each deserve a medal." Ronnie responded, "Well, thank

you but I have allergic reactions to most metals except for gold or silver." We received no *medals* or metals...precious or otherwise.

New Years' Eve '90 and Berlin exploded with fireworks; Berlin was a city reunited and again, on the third of October, it became the capital of Germany.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Dick Whittington called from Berkeley, California and sold me on the idea of playing solo in Maybeck Hall; it's where he and his wife reside and also where they present Sunday afternoon concerts. We set a date for the ninth of April, it was spring vacation at the Hochschule so I arrive a few days before and played the most special Yamaha that I've ever encountered. On Saturday, the afternoon before the concert, Dick asked if I would be interested in recording and I said I was ready...so he gets Carl Jefferson on the phone and Carl says, "Walter, you must excuse me but I'm not familiar with your playing, in fact I don't know anything about you." "Well, Mr. Jefferson I've been living in Germany for more than a decade." "Yes, but since I've never heard of you I can only offer one thousand dollars for the date." "Mr. Jefferson I want to record." ...I had answered in a very business manner...but I thought to myself, "Good grief, only a thousand?" Then comes the capper, "Now Walter, I don't want to many original compositions, I prefer standards." "Very well, Mr. Jefferson." After hanging up I thought aloud, "Woe is me! Now I have to change the program."

Sunday I arrived...went straight to the piano but before I play ten measures, John Burk, the producer, handed me a pen and a publishing contract, for my originals plus a form for tax. This was the last thing I needed to think about but I chose to push the *well behaved/keep cool* button of my shirt, signed and filled everything out instead of insisting that I do so at the completion of my performance...as I usually do.

I tried to get my fingers through a couple of the neglected titles I had not planned on doing but interruptions followed with more interruptions and by this time I was ready to erupt as my temperament before a concert is rather volcanic.

Delia, seven months pregnant, and her husband Tony sat in the second row...and I certainly played the concert for them.

During intermission, Carl passed by and discretely whispered, "We'll double that," and continued walking. In my mind I hoped he meant the money. When the concert was over he came and paid his compliments and added, "I meant what I said before...we'll double that and I'll have Margy, a friend of ours, drive you out to the office."

And sure enough, when I entered his office at Concord Monday morning, he reached in his desk drawer and handed me a check for two thousand. "Walter, I'm sorry but I offered only a thousand dollars because I had never heard of you...but then after you played, I felt embarrassed with my offer." Well, it began and developed into a good business relationship; Carl and I had mutual understanding and respect for one another.

Margy and I had lunch, in a nice restaurant with many black & white photos of Teddy Roosevelt on his ranch, before returning to Berkeley; I hadn't realized that Concord and vicinity was so deep in the "Rough Ryder's territory."

That night, Monday, I played solo at Yoshi's and in my opinion, it was a better performance than Sunday afternoon at Maybeck; perhaps, because there was so much smog Sunday and I noticed a difficulty with breathing while playing.

With the next night free, I spent the evening at pianist/composer, Peter Engelhart's house in Berkeley and he prepared dinner and we caught up on all that had happened in the years past.

Then I was able to spend a few days with Delia and also had two radio interviews plus a seminar.

I flew to Tempe, Arizona to visit Mandy, who had just become a grand mother, and our daughter Dinah, who had given birth on Good Friday the Thirteenth of April to Holly, my first granddaughter.

I held Holly, dancing from room to room as I scat sang "I Got Rhythm" changes, anywhere from five to seven real minutes and she would look at me as if being in a trance. Musically, I believe it is extremely important to hold, dance and sing, especially with a newly born because it not only consoles but it gives them a sense of balance, timing; in any case, I feel that singing is our original language.

Yes, becoming a grandfather had a slight changing effect that continued and later made me even more aware that there is a bonding relationship between granddaughter, my daughters, Mandy and myself; it gave me a more complete understanding of my existence on this planet.

Three months later, Carl phoned and said he wanted to sign a recording contract and when it arrived I signed and posted it immediately, registered airmail.

Then, I was off to Switzerland for a workshop near Basel and took a couple of extra days to hike and think about material for the next recording that was scheduled with Concord; "Lush Life" the 13th & 14th of September at Coast Recorders in downtown San Francisco. Afterwards, I traveled by train to France where I was engaged for a seminar in Vars, France.

This was a classical seminar and the director/entrepreneur, a lovely lady, wanted someone to teach improvisation so Noel Lee suggested me; and soon I was basking in this newly found paradise.

The director had been difficult to reach, by phone, and she had not given me a definite starting date yet, I couldn't afford to be late so I arrived at the first part of the seminar; meaning I stayed for a month, attended a piano performance by one of the teachers on a perfect Steinway [D] each and every evening. My concert was scheduled for the last evening.

The majority of the pianists she had chosen were not exactly famous or well known names, but rather, I should say, new discoveries, an economic necessity with the exception for Noel Lee, Ramzi Yassa and Aldo Ciccolini.

Most of them had teaching positions in Paris at the Conservatory but they all possessed incredible technique and exceptional interpretative skills; especially Ramzi Yassa, of Cairo, who entered Moscow Conservatory at sixteen and won the Brussels Competition a few years later. Aldo Ciccolini, of Naples, at the Paris

Conservatory...and of course, the contemporary American composer and pianist, Noel Lee.

I had a hand full of students who arrived the last ten days. But, in the second week I was still without students so one of the violin teachers asked me to accompany her student...well, I had to earn my keep.

She was a young violinist, Catherine Fisher, from Bordeaux and played in such an animated style; full of life with audacity and yet, refined. We rehearsed, she was very positive and compatible, and we played a student performance with audience. Fisher and I made something with the music, Mendelssohn's violin concerto, and her very conservative French teacher became enthralled, came on stage and wrapped her arms around me with delight. I was awed by Fisher's musicianship. She soon became a member of the Bordeaux Symphony.

Aldo Ciccolini, originally from Naples, played one of the concerts. I'd heard his program played by all of the great pianists but this evening, I listened to interpretations I'd never witnessed before; his pedaling had style, he was different, I was in awe of his playing.

Another evening Ramzi Yassa, from Egypt, performed. He managed to create the illusion that he was playing on a different instrument for each composer. The only other pianist I've heard accomplishing this feat was Vladimir Ashkenazy.

I must tell the story of Ramzi's background. There was a very old Italian Master with a problematic lung condition and the doctor suggested that he move to the desert, so the old pianist establishes residence in Cairo; he began teaching Ramzi who was three or four...a few years later the teacher died.

At nearly this very same moment in time, an elderly piano professor at the Warsaw Conservatory, who also had a lung problem, was advised to move to the desert and of course, arrived just after the death of the Italian teacher; so, Ramzi continued his studies with his new Polish professor; then Moscow Conservatory and in Brussels prize soon followed. In my opinion, Ramzi is one of the most relaxed (natural) players ever; he is beyond the sense of the self.

Let me say that I never think of one pianist being better than another, such is for people who enjoy games and keeping score. I'll make the comparison of artists

with bottles of extraordinary wine; each artist and each wine is different; but you wouldn't want to miss experiencing of the wine's taste or the pianist's performance. For me, true living is to discover; and experience.

I returned to Berlin and immediately packed bags for another flight... another Maybeck Hall concert with seminar, plus a solo evening at Yoshi's and the *Lush Life* trio recording in San Francisco...then south to Santa Monica for a double solo concert with Dave McKenna the last week of September '90.

As I stepped out of the elevator, on the mezzanine where the performance was held, and I spotted Al Hicks, whom I'd not seen in thirty-three years...we embraced, talked and I gladly accepted his invitation for dinner at his house.

It was shocking to see Barbara, Al's wife; she was already with lung cancer and had aged drastically. She had been a most stunning beauty...but tobacco had dried her skin and hardened the deep wrinkles. We talked as we ate and drank in the same garden I remembered from my previous visit with Mandy back in '59. She died within the following eighteen months...life is so short and youth, so hastily lived.

Back and teaching the winter semester in Berlin, I answered a phone call from Franz de Byl, of the Floez Club, and he wanted me to play solo for three nights in November. I accepted and prepared six one hour sets with no titles repeated.

As I walked to the stage, the second performance evening, on the 17th, I noticed Kirsten...a beauty that I had seen in public on a number of occasions during the preceding decade. We had always exchanged a few words but I thought she had moved to Vancouver and was surprised that she had returned to Berlin.

We smiled and I began playing. During intermission I stopped by her table and was happy to hear that she would stay for second set. Then at evening's end, I went directly to her and explained that I had to get the money and invited her to go with me for dinner afterwards...and that was the beginning of a more serious relationship. But I sensed something besides her exceptional beauty, perhaps it was a well-tempered compatibility and strength of character but...I enjoyed being with her. She soon became my third wife.

I was invited as featured soloist with the Radio Big Band in Helsinki; it is the best in all of Europe. There were three days of rehearsal and it was in walking distance of the hotel; I had just flown from California so the jet lag was horrible.

Each morning, unable to sleep, I dressed, walked the streets of the downtown area and looked at the magnificent nineteenth century buildings created by the German architect, Carl Engel. Helsinki is strikingly beautiful.

The concert was on a Saturday night and the response of the audience was awesome but after the performance, I searched for a restaurant and since it was late, the only possibility to eat, was McDonalds.

I was alone and it was packed with loud intoxicated teenagers, I quickly wolfed down a cheeseburger, escaped and made my way back to the hotel. My depression made such an impression that I go to great lengths of being sure I'll eat well after playing a concert; this wasn't the first lousy meal following a performance. Some people eat to fill their stomach...I eat to think...however, it's best not to gorge yourself if you have no choice but to eat unhealthy food; one must always travel with a bottle of grappe for medicinal purposes.

Again to Berlin, a new semester at the Hochschule, teaching, and also planning for the next Concord recording.

Jefferson wanted a quartet CD. I thought carefully and decided that the quartet should either be with Joe Henderson or Bobby Hutchinson because these two not only played differently but they were musically contributing. I told Carl to approach Henderson with the offer and if he rejected, then ask Hutchinson because I had been so impressed with Bobby's performance, a few years before at the Quasimodo Club in Berlin. I was relieved when Joe accepted; I had played with him at the Playboy and even back then his individuality was thoroughly stamped... and I had never met Bobby Hutchinson. Nevertheless, after considering anyone on the scene, the bottom line was either Joe Henderson or Bobby Hutchinson and if only I were a big seller, I would have requested and recorded both of them in quintet; but I wasn't that lucky.

Kirsten and I, celebrating her mother's birthday, with members of the family sitting at tables and enjoying food and drink. While they talked, I thought over a

problem that had plagued me for years; with two fingers, I could execute $5/4$ and with the two remaining fingers, I could execute $4/4$ but I had never been able to execute $3/4$ with the thumb...all simultaneously...but then my subconscious projected the solution onto that imaginary screen in my mind. From the top of my voice, "I've got it." Everyone looks at me in silence; "Quick, someone give me a pen." And I quickly wrote.

Before, I had always tried in vain to divide a measure of $3/4$ into a measure of $5/4$ (which is impossible) but a measure of $4/4$ can be divided by a measure of $3/4$. This deed had taken me about twelve years; Gregoire Peters, my stepson, had shown me, in the beginning, the mathematics for dividing $4/4$ into $5/4$ but now I could add $3/4$ with the thumb; and it still took me years before I could write it correctly on manuscript paper...but it's my baby and it has certainly changed my playing. I demonstrated the above exercise in my documentary film, *from another star*, produced by Chuck Dodson in '05.

In spite of the schedule, I continued teaching, each year, for Peter Herbolzheimer's seminars for the Bundesjazzorchester; by far the best project I've seen. Here, I had met trumpet virtuoso, Tony Lujan; musically, we were like brothers and I find him to be a most exceptional teacher. Also, at these seminar/workshops...bassist, Mike Richmond.

Something I was noticing since the removal of the Wall was that I was no longer performing in the former East. Before, I played solo frequently throughout the German Democratic Republic. My phone would ring and the Agent for Concerts would ask me to perform; I would go through the border control at Check Point Charlie or the other control at Friedrichstrasse...and it was always an intimidating experience and if they wished they searched not only bags but your body...every coin had to be accounted for.

The car was always waiting for me and I was driven immediately to and from the concert again to the border control. If one asks, why? My answer is that it was an opportunity to perform exactly what I want to and it was a great musically experience. After all, I was prepared to change eighty percent of my program the late afternoon before my afternoon Maybeck concert in '90 and my arrangements

and compositions aren't easy for me to play by any means; what you can do depends on what you are prepared to do...even for improvisation.

An unusual proposal came from the other end, as I held the phone to my ear ...would I play through the showing of the 1924 silent movie film classic, "The Wedding" by Erik von Stroheim? I agreed and went to the theater where a projectionist ran the film so I could make quick notes for my preparation.

The next day after practicing, I decided to disregard everything and just look and play whatever my eye happened to sense from the flickering screen.

In other words, if there was turbulent water in a flooded river, instead of playing water-music I would improvise, the visual, and in an agitated manner but never did I play in the traditional style of a pianist associated with accompanying silent movies.

I was surprised how well the film held compositionally especially considering that it was originally four hours in length and had been edited down to ninety minutes; mostly because of deterioration, over the many years, to the celluloid. Of course, I continued improvising throughout the entire film and was amused to hear, later, that others had taken a break while the film was being projected on screen.

When the lights went on, they gave a standing ovation and I had to play an encore; this I hadn't expected because the audience was present for the film festival, not the music.

In the fall of '91, I rented Merkin Hall and presented a piano duo concert with Hal Galper and since Hal was with Concord, Jefferson contributed a thousand. I really thought there would be more people but attendance didn't carry the day by any means. I remember thinking, just before peeking through the stage curtains, "Well, if there are only a few, I've lost and the real test will be if I can still play knowing that I've lost. It cost three times what Jefferson paid and his contribution, although welcomed, was to be deducted from my royalties. Such realities in life are to be!

Hal played first, very well and I gather the public was satisfied by the reaction...then I played on the other Steinway [D] and it was my best and I regret

that the budget was tight and I didn't have it recorded. We concluded the concert playing a title together.

Soon after, I went into the lobby and the people were shocked; a couple of them, with head upturned, were turning in circles by what they had heard; I knew a few and spoke with them. I must say the instruments were fantastic and the piano-technician tuned perfectly.

The next afternoon, Heida presented me again in the Town Hall of Westport. As I greeted her, she asks, "How did it go last night?" I said, "Well, Heida it was my best playing." She counterattacked with, "Don't give me that." But I insisted, "It was my best playing...ever." Then she asked, "How long is your program?" I've prepared two forty-five or fifty-minute sets with a brief intermission in between. "My people will never remain seated that long. They'll leave at the intermission" "Well Heida, I can play all of the titles at a faster tempo." ...and smiled as her eyes held mine.

During intermission he came back stage and asked, "Who taught you to play that way?" "Heida, you taught me everything and I applied it all to improvisation." She quickly responded, "You worked...the others didn't work like you." "How do you do what you do with your left hand?" She quickly added, "But I don't see how you can do all of that with the left hand while the right is going elsewhere and so independently."

The moment was mine...and everyone stayed through both encores. That happened fourteen years ago and I haven't played in the New York area since... well, that's the way cookies crush and crumble.

In Berlin, I was experiencing more pain in my lower back, an occupational hazard for jazz pianists. One day the pain became so intense I hallucinated for hours...had to call and request an emergency doctor to the apartment who gave an injection.

I thought I might die, and it can happen; I got excited, "Man, I can't die...I haven't heard, or even received, my new Sunburst recording with Joe Henderson." I was serious and I wasn't about to go before that.

I has to be assisted (I could hardly walk) into Virchow hospital to be examined but a date for the operation was scheduled two days later.

The surgeon, genius, made a perfect operation...and I spent my sixtieth birthday in hospital bed. Carl Jefferson phoned my room and asked, "Do you need anything...do you need money...what can I do for you?" I assured him that all hospital expenses were paid and I was in good hands; his concern was touching and the bond between us was strengthened after that call.

Shortly after leaving the hospital my Sunburst CD arrived and I listened to many recordings of Joe Henderson and feel that Sunburst has his best playing. Six months later, he awarded "Musician of the Year" and recorded at that time... but Sunburst, I feel sounds more interesting.

Bob Schillin began having problems with his health and we agreed that it was too much for him to book me.

Around this same time Al Hicks began finding work for me in California. My work schedule, Berlin, was much the same as before but now it was time to record a trio date by the end of September '92 with Larance Marabel on drums and bassist, Putter Smith.

I told Carl I couldn't go back into Coast Recorders because the Steinway was in need of repair and the hammers were old and worn near to the wood but he assured me that it had recently been renovated and said, "Why, Gene Harris recorded there for us just two weeks and he said it was great."

Being in Berlin, I couldn't argue with Carl...but sure enough, the instrument was still horrible on the date with Joe Henderson. At the beginning of the second day's recording, I played the low F two octaves below middle C and told John Burk and Phil Edwards, "Concord can't release a recording that was made on an instrument with a low F so out of tune." "Don't worry I'll have it fixed." ...and Phil returns with the bookkeeper who is carrying a tuning hammer, "I'll fix that for you." ...and he placed the tuning hammer on the tuning pin and gave it strong twist, "It happens all the time...if it goes out again just let me know." I could not believe it...now it was sharp but I struck it hard and it flattened somewhat...I thought,

where in hell am I? Finished the date but it was like a real day of labor; then my recovery took most of the night.

Lady Luck kept blessing me. Larry Jackstien (originally from Lithuania) introduced himself backstage after I played at Concord Pavilion. He offered an invitation for me to play in Salt Lake City Hilton where he is Director of Sales and Marketing. He also plays exceptional jazz piano so his conversation held my interest. The hotel has a large conference room that easily seats eight hundred; Larry books established names and accompanies them with his trio.

I arrived in the late morning and he took me down to the generously proportioned Steinway House, the oldest sales room after New York City and I played on the Steinway [D] that was reserved for my concert that evening. Gerald Daynes, director of Steinway House in Salt Lake, his secretary and Larry Jackstien, came up to me. We are all introduced and Gerald Daynes asked, "Mr. Norris, how do you like this instrument?" "It's fantastic," I reply. "You know it's the instrument you'll use on your concert tonight." "Yes, I know." "Mr. Norris you are a Steinway Artist are you not?" "Oh, I'm afraid I'm not." "Well, Mr. Norris I think you should be a Steinway Artist." "Thank you, I like your idea." "Mr. Norris, you do own a Steinway?" "No, unfortunately I don't." "You are aware that all of our Steinway Artists own a Steinway?" "Yes, I understand."

For the first time, his secretary isn't wearing a smile. She is around fifty and probably knows more about her boss' business than he. Holding a yellow legal pad, a pencil with eraser...she is jotting down all that's said. But I continue adding, "I had a beautifully rebuilt [C] in Bergenfield, New Jersey, with a nine thousand serial number built in 1864." Secretary beams as she writes. "But I gave it to my wife when we separated." Secretary looks at me over her glasses with a narrow eyed expression as she slowly shakes her head. "Then I had the best Steinway [M] I've ever played, in Berlin." She's happy again and joyfully scribbles away. "But, then I left the [M] with my second wife when we divorced." She looks up as her hand, holding the note pad, lowers slowly as her arm straightens at her side; her lips slightly parted. And with my shoulders raised, I stopped talking. He breaks the silence, "Well, Mr. Norris I'm sure if you were to purchase a Steinway upright that

would be sufficient. "Oh, I could afford an upright." She is beaming and confident of the sale transaction. "Mr. Norris, please send your biographical information to my office as soon as possible and I will forward it to New York." "Oh, I just happen to have all of that information in the hotel room." Larry drives me to the Hilton, I prepare an envelope and then he takes the biographical info to Steinway House by three o' clock.

Man, I played that night and after the concert, I met Dr. Paul Pollei, Director of the Gina Bachauer Foundation.

Dr. Pollei invited me for a lecture and solo concert the following season and I returned to perform the next four consecutive years. I grew attached to Salt Lake. It's a Shangri-la (paradise) for pianists, the nearest major city is a thousand miles away...great technicians and the instruments are perfect ...interesting is that the audiences are sophisticated with contemporary music and improvisation; so I remained in the abstract (trance) for the duration of my visits.

The fringe benefit was that I could attend concerts each evening and I love listening to others play. Here, I met pianist, Stuart Issacoff who also is editor of *Piano Today*. We presented seminars together, a friendship generated and I contributed a number of articles for his magazine.

There was Stephen Meyer's performance that is stamped in my memory. For the first half of his concert, he played Liszt transcriptions by Clara Schumann, Beethoven, Horowitz and of course, titles by Franz Liszt. The second half, Meyer played Art Tatum that he had transcribed.

I never thought I would hear or see the day when a classical pianist would perform transcriptions of Art Tatum; and at the end of the evening I congratulated him and expressed my admiration of his interpretations. It took just over fifty years for a classical pianist to perform the music of Art Tatum and to my knowledge, Stephen Meyer is the first to do so.

I had, in '92, the choice of a Boesendorfer or a Hamburg Steinway to record "Love Every Moment" for Concord. My preference was the Steinway but when I walked into the studio a very young inexperienced tuner was tuning with a machine.

Let me explain that a tuning machine tunes scientifically correct but a piano tuned by an expert is not scientifically correct...nor is Mother Nature. The upper register must be tuned a fraction sharper or the instrument has a dull sound quality. I explained to John that I address all others equally and added, "But I don't speak to a tuner with a machine." Most people don't notice the difference when listening to a piano tuned by a machine but to have a sensitive pianist play on such an instrument is like having a beautiful prostitute make love to an old lunatic in an asylum. But, I somehow handle anything and I'm pleased with this fourth Concord recording too.

Finishing the date I flew south to Los Angeles for a solo performance at the "Bakery" and during intermission, a man approaches, compliments and tells me that he has a collection of piano rolls and an excellent player-grand; I ask, "Do you have the Josef Lhevinne's *La Campanella* and his *Blue Danube Waltz*?" "Yes, and I also have over three hundred piano rolls by Rachmaninoff and the only piano roll of Art Tatum made, *Get Happy*."

I was speaking with one of worlds leading collectors, Lenny Marvin. "I would like to invite you to my home in Burbank." "I have a seminar tomorrow afternoon near Burbank." I gave the address of the seminar, he attended; then Al and Frances Hicks, Kirsten and I followed Lenny's car to his place for an unforgettable evening. I sat at the piano while piano keys were depressed, as if played by ghosts; it was Tatum; it was perfect.

Ramzi Yassa phoned, from his hotel, that he was in Berlin for four days, rehearsing Rachmonioff's Second Piano Concerto with orchestra; and then he and orchestra will fly to Egypt for two performances. We were invited to attend the rehearsals; and what a lesson for me, sitting in front, about three meters from Ramzi and the orchestra; I didn't think, I just absorbed his sound of the piano.

He was in our apartment, after a rehearsal, so I asked if he would like to play the concerto because my piano is a different bird...and the acoustics of the apartment are unique. You can listen from each of the rooms and the sound is as clear as where it's coming from...so I knock on the door of the apartment across the hall and our neighbor, who loves music, opens. We just stood with both doors

opened and listened; she slowly shook her head in disbelief. When Ramzi finished I introduced my neighbor and he continued playing for all of us. My Menzel not only sang as never before...Ramzi gave it its voice. Words never suffice!

Now, for a subject matter of another kind and it isn't that I'm just complaining...but I want to describe conditions in the life of a traveling musician. I played solo at a festival in Vancouver, '92. The piano was placed where I directly faced a wall of high intensity bright lights and the stage manager was implicit that there would be no change in positioning of the instrument even after I explained that I have had many eye operations. I played but the next day when the plane climbed about the clouds the brightness of the sun was so painful that I had to cover my eye with my hand throughout the trip. The next day, in Los Angeles, I was examined by an eye specialist. After a few concerts, the eye gradually got worse and I was examined again in Berlin; an operation was necessary.

Yes, I should have been stubborn and canceled, because of the bright lights, in Vancouver, but in reality, I needed the "coins" from all of my weakly paid concerts.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

I was asked by the pianist, Ninowska Lourdes-Fernandez-Britto and Professor Thusnelda Nieto Jara, who is head of the music department, to teach a two-weeks seminar at the University of Mexico, in Mexico City. I was also to form a jazz department for the university. I suggested Tony Lujan to head the department and select the teachers since his Spanish is excellent. He completed a structured plan of the departments but I listened to him and made occasional comments. Our joint effort was mixed with pride and optimism but within five months the Mexican Peso had crashed. The jazz project was abandon.

I had become acquainted, in Berlin, with Ninowska, a close friend to Kirsten's, when she visited us.

While sitting and speaking with Kirsten, on the balcony, about our trip to Mexico City, I remarked, "Maybe, we should get married while we are there...it's such a romantic and beautiful city...it would be a shame to go there and not get married." I was surprised to hear her comment, "It might not be a bad idea" ... because we had agreed, when we met, not to get married since it's a lot of unnecessary paper work. Two days later I mention it again and she gave a similar response.

Due to her obligations at work, Kirsten had to delay her flight for ten days... so, after my arrival in Mexico City I spoke with Ninowska about the possibility of Kirsten and I getting married while we were in Mexico City. She was delighted with the idea and made telephone inquiries with the Embassies...I called Kirsten and told her to bring my birth certificate and all of her official papers; she arrived and after our blood tests, we went through all of the legal procedures in preparation of the marriage.

Well, we were married by a judge, an attractive lady, in an Aztec Chapel just off a large tiled court yard with a picturesque fountain; four young ladies, students, from the university were witnesses and I must say that everyone agreed the afternoon wedding ceremony was absolutely captivating.

Afterwards, we all went to a lovely restaurant for dinner and as we entered the maitre d' told us there was a door prize for all newly weds. Kirsten chose the lucky number and won a bottle of Scotch.

We had an invitation that evening at Thusnelda's with ten or so guests and I was introduced to the pianist, Frank Fernandez who happened to be in Mexico City to play a concert.

He is one of the most incredible classical pianists I've ever heard in my life... but he also improvises (classical) and announced that he would play, impromptu, perhaps a minute and a half, for each of us and when he ended each piece we all had to vote for whom he had played it.

Usually the votes were unanimous but sometimes one or two disagreed; but when he improvised for me I knew within two measures that it was for me and yet, the musical content of his improvisation was nothing that I would have thought of.

He had captured my character/personality and I really sensed it when he improvised for Kirsten since I'd known her for a few years.

Frank Fernandez is extremely intuitive and when you look into his eyes, you can easily imagine that he is on another wavelength; Frank is one of a kind.

That evening he played Schubert's Ave Maria, as a wedding piece for us, and tears flowed...in fact he has played it for us on other occasions, since then, and always tears flow down both cheeks; I have heard others play this piece but my eyes remained dry.

Frank is famous throughout all of South America but few, else where, have heard him; the world is missing a phenomenon; he is one of the greatest pianists ever.

Kirsten, Ninowska, Thusnelda and I flew to Merida, located on the Yucatan peninsula, a different Mexico with the Mayan culture. We had a guide and toured a number of the pyramids.

I gave a seminar at the Music School and later that evening the school threw a party for us in an open-air courtyard of the school. They moved a piano from the nearby classroom and it was a continuous performance (classical and jazz) until the sun reminded us that it was another early morning.

I remember there was a lovely lady who sang and accompanied herself on piano...much like Sarah Vaughan but she had her own style...with intensity and yet with a loose timing.

Returning to the airport in Mexico City we changed planes and glided north to Los Angeles on Malaysian Airlines with the most beautiful hostesses you can imagine; we told them we were newly weds and they showered us with Malaysian hospitality.

In Los Angeles, Al went into action. He wanted to have me appear on the Jay Leno Show...which is definitely impossible. Concord had tried for years and couldn't get either foot in the door.

There had been a scandal making front-page headlines on all of the major newspapers and accordingly, the director of the television station was dismissed.

The scandal was about one network forbidding an agent to book his client on the competing network and the agent used the right to work clause against them.

Al had phoned the network repeatedly and it looked rather hopeless, until he reached one secretary and when she said, "No way." Al replied, "Well I'll tell you what, if you let Walter play for the audience while the commercials are running I'll promise you that I won't put him on that other network's show."

A sensitive nerve was struck and within forty-five minutes the secretary phoned Al and said, "Have Mr. Norris here by nine-thirty this evening and we'll have him play during the commercials tonight."

Branford Marsalis led the band and supervised my rehearsal with his rhythm section. I was so impressed with him and his musicians; never was a second wasted or one detail overlooked. I was especially pleased that I could meet the pianist, Kenny Kirkland; I admire his playing and rate him above all of the younger pianists of his generation.

I played in a Concord Festival that summer and the Japanese producer/entrepreneur, Takao Ishizuka, attended and wanted me on the Fujitsu Concord Jazz Festival for October/November '94.

Next morning, we met in the hotel for breakfast and discussed details and I was surprised when he wanted me for anywhere between thirteen and eighteen concerts. I said, "If there are to be eighteen performances I'll play all of them."

The leader was Frank Wess and the other saxophonists were Billy Harper, Jeff Clayton and Houston Person; on drums, Louie Bellson, Louis Nash, Jeff Hamilton, Grady Tate and Billy Higgins but he later canceled because of illness; on Bass, Ray Brown, George Mraz and Niels Henning Oskar Pederson; piano, Tsuyoshi Yamamoto, Tee Carson and myself. Kenny Burrell on guitar and Carol Sloane was the singer.

Takao chose the titles for each concert and the line-up of the rhythm section; like a game of musical chairs. I was featured for one title, in trio, with Ray Brown and Jeff Hamilton and even then, Takao would change the bassist and drummer each night.

A large reception was thrown in our hotel for Takao Ishizuka and Carl Jefferson; there was assigned seating at that many tables and I sat next to a young American who taught school in a small nearby Japanese village.

He had already lived in the Orient for a year and hoped to stay; I found him interesting and he spoke about the aesthetic beauty of living in the traditional Japanese environment. I told him about my experience, some forty years before, in the Japanese culture. He then said, "From this hotel, in daylight, you can see the village where I live and if you have time, tomorrow morning, you should take a taxi there; the local people live as before...they prefer not to use electricity or what all we call modern conveniences of today."

Remembering to look from the hotel patio after breakfast, I could see a number of trails of smoke rising from the houses...but we had to leave at eleven thirty and there wasn't time enough to explore the village; I did have a few minutes wait before boarding the bus...so I just stood and stared at this charming rural community so that I had it mentally photographed in my mind.

What if I had been allowed to return to Japan back in '53...how naïve I was at twenty...could I have really survived? With reflection, I now realized it would have been impossible. Non-Asians may visit Japan but only a handful of can be absorbed, as employed professionals, in their society.

I flew back, first class, to Germany with Jeff Hamilton, as he had business with MOM Records; we enjoyed our conversation with much food and wine. It was a most memorable flight, as soon as our noon departure was airborne, the pilot announced that our route would take us over the North Pole and straight down to Frankfurt; hours later, I noticed the beginning of a sunrise and within ten minutes or so it was gone and we were again in utter darkness. I felt that the tilt and rotation of the earth had cheated me out of a day as we continued directly south towards Europe.

I had spoken with Mraz throughout the tour and agreed that we should record again...I discussed this with John Burk and about five months later we recorded *Hues of Blues*, May '95 in New York; this was my last recording for Concord.

Carl Jefferson died a month before the recording date and his passing ended my five-year period with Concord; it was like losing a rib.

However, *Hues* is an exceptional duo recording of Mraz and myself; John Burk made that CD happen and he also talked me into adding the solo title, *Afterthoughts*; the date had ended and Mraz rushed out of the studio for a flight to Japan. John kept asking me to record one piece alone, finally I gave in and I'm glad he insisted.

Al booked me again for a summer tour of California and another friend, in Los Angeles, put together a tour of Oregon and Washington for October.

Conducting business can be dangerous with friends because contracts are impersonal, cold and there is a tendency to avoid them. But contracts are necessary and prevent sleepless nights. Managers and booking agents will pressure a director of a venue, force their artist to perform on the date of your scheduled performance and your promised concert is overlooked, conveniently forgotten or flatly denied. It was not revealed to me until eleven the night before my departure, in Berlin, when I telephoned to give the time of my arrival in Portland. I could not believe my ears when I was told that there never was any concert intended for me on that date or even at that venue. Was I dreaming...had I imagined this concert? Never! Anyway it was too late to change tickets because my early morning flight departed before the tourist agency opened...so can you believe this itinerary? I flew from Berlin to Portland for a nonexistent concert. But I had already ordered over a hundred units my new release, *Hues of Blues*, which Concord Jazz had shipped to my friend's address the week before. I spent that night in a motel near the airport. The next morning, dear friend delivered the shipment of *Hues* to my motel room and we put a CD unit in each preaddressed envelope I had prepared in Berlin. I handed the large box of sealed CD envelopes, plus money for postage, and my friend mailed them the following Monday. I immediately boarded a plane via San Francisco, then Dallas, and arrived in Little Rock with an extra box of *Hues of Blues* under my arm; but during the flight, I opened my new CD (creation) and as I read booklet and examined front and back covers, I became a raging bull. It had been agreed that the quote, '*Norris is the Art Tatum of the nineties*' by Zan Stewart had been omitted.

I felt it unnecessary for Concord to clip my wings and phoned for an explanation. I was told that the new president thought it was in poor taste. I replied that it surely would have helped sales and hung up. Although I understood their position, I'll never forgive them; a few years later, all five of my CD productions were removed from Concord's warehouse.

I stayed the first night outside of Little Rock in a hotel near the airport and uncorked a bottle of California red to celebrate my return to the place of origin.

I left Little Rock in '50 and except for two returns of no more than a couple of days, the previous visit in '60. I realized I had been away forty-five years.

I took a taxi after breakfast and noticed the local accent I had been separated from as I talked with the driver; of course, I didn't recognize any landmarks until we paused in traffic. Then I noticed a pile of reddish clay earth at the edge of the street where construction work was in progress. Surely my stimulated brain cells had connected with the past yet, I couldn't say just what it was. Then we passed Fair Park golf course where father and I used to play and I could see the third hole of the golf course, naturally, it was unchanged. I couldn't believe the excitement; it was all such effervescent heady goose pimply stuff. I had returned home!

The cab pulled up at Capitol Keyboards, I paid and fortunately, tipped generously...stepped from the taxi with my baggage but forgot my raincoat in the back seat. An hour later the driver returned and deposited my raincoat inside the office of Capitol Keyboard; that could never have happened in New York City.

Minutes after my arrival at Capitol, Charles Price met and drove me to his house where I was guest. When I was age ten, I met Charles and his tenor saxophone at my first rehearsal with Howard's band, in the living room of my house, and now I'm returning to accept the Arkansas Jazz Heritage Foundation "Hall of Fame" award during the intermission of my performance at the "Afterthought."

Let me explain that the nightclub, *Afterthought*, had been a drug store with a soda fountain in the forties. As a teenager, I had frequented this place after viewing movies in Prospect Theater, just across the street, which now had become a parking lot.

Black and white photos, half a century old, hung from the walls in the back room of the Afterthought, formally a drug store, and for me this experience was like re-entering a half forgotten time zone of long ago; it was mind boggling.

I played a superb Schimmel grand, well tuned and regulated, thanks to CeCe Rich of Capitol Keyboard and it was the best instrument of my entire tour.

Many people in the audience were former classmates...some with their grown children and it was all beyond belief...I could only shake my head in bewilderment.

I realized all that I now experienced, was stimulating early impressions that began just after I entered this world. I had connected again with Little Rock. It was nothing less than a revelation. I was honored receiving my award during intermission.

I was carried by the wind, next afternoon west to Seattle as the muddled tour continued with Portland being the last concert on my itinerary.

People at the local radio station had stipulated that I perform only my original compositions for the concert. It was packed, many stood along the walls, and the audience not only stayed for both one-hour sets and three encores but gave a standing ovation as well.

As soon as I went backstage, I was told that my fee had been reduced by two hundred dollars and I had already drastically lowered it to five hundred; now that's what I call price breaking.

The next afternoon, on the radio interview, I announced my retirement from the music world. Was it because of the tour or the two hundred dollars? Well, I told the radio listeners that I would stay in the apartment with my wife and work only at the piano. Afterwards, I felt exorcised; a burden had been taken off my chest.

Back in Berlin, the piano tuner thought my Menzel was impossible to tune, he complained about the tuning pins and suggested that I buy a new Bechstein since he was employed at the factory. Then another technician, after examining the piano, informed me that the old instrument was not worth restoring and he offered

an instrument at a low price...adding that there would be no charge transporting the Menzel away. My depression plunged to a dangerous level.

I contacted Lutz Reibholz, who for over forty years was a technical-specialist with Steinway and he said, "There is nothing wrong with this piano." And proposed, that with minimal renovation it would be a great instrument. I phoned Rudi Steindl in Maitland, who represented Steinway for the state of Florida, and after explaining what all Reibholz told me, Rudi agreed. Then he faxed two pages of recommendations. Reibholz agreed with each point of Rudi's fax and work began.

I sat and observed Lutz regulating the action, shaving felt hammerheads, adjusting dampers...for two consecutive days, a total of eleven hours of skilled labor and I was so grateful that I had the time to witness the entire operation.

He ordered a set of bass strings that matched the timbre of my instrument perfectly. At the completion of the rejuvenated Wilhelm Menzel, I felt that I owned a collector's instrument. For my playing and writing, it is certainly the piano for me...but Lutz Reibholz also tunes in a special way that somehow opens up my musicality and stimulates my imagination.

Petr Pylypov, a promoter in Prag, wanted Mraz and I, in duo, for a festival in Hradec Kralove, home of the Petrof piano factory; his offer, in '97, was reason enough to step out of retirement.

Often, I feel as though circumstances are thrown in my path and then... destiny's wings swoop down and with both claws lift me by the neck and carry me safely from chaos.

In Prague, there are two railroad stations. The year before, when I visited, I used the station in the western section of the city and now on this trip, with my mind spinning improvisations, I absent mindedly disembarked at the same place as before, instead of remaining on the train until it arrived at the main depot where the driver was waiting to deliver me to Hradec Kralove for the festival.

I had told the promoter that I would be wearing a large dark-blue fedora and I walked slowly from one end of the station to the other. After ninety or so minutes I became convinced that something was very wrong.

I went to the window of a currency exchange, in the station, and asked a young lady if she could help me and explained my situation. She quickly responded, "I know Petr Pylypov, I used to work for him." I was so relieved that the world could be so small; she tried phoning his office without success, spoke to her boss, and took me to a nearby subway station and carefully explained the different trains (I quickly wrote as we walked) I would need to take in order to reach Hradec Kralov.

I thanked her as graciously as I could, the doors of the subway car opened, I jumped inside and waved from the window. After four major changes, in different stations, I boarded a packed train...but I could only stand in the entrance of the railroad car, with other passengers, and was crushed like a sardine. The others stared at me but with downcast eyes; they knew I was from another far away land and I realized the same...I was nearing the Ukraine.

Two hours later I stepped off and hailed a taxi to the hotel; I made it...I could not believe my journey and Pylypov couldn't believe his eyes; he had given me up.

Mraz and I went for our sound check but the action of the new Petroff had never been regulated; it was at least eighty-five grams to depress a key and a concert grand should be no more than fifty-two. It was impossible to make a glissando with the fingernail...playing that instrument was similar to driving a trailer truck without power steering. "No way, I don't play." "Wait, we have another piano in the storage room." It too was a new Petrof but the gram weight, of the key resistance, was about five grams less.

Of course, I had to play...they had flown Mraz all the way from New York City...so I angrily attacked the instrument and once again, it was the beginning step of a damaged arm.

The next night was in a club in Prague and the piano was absolutely horrible. Well, the best part was being with Mraz in his hometown and meeting his many friends from earlier times.

At home, I tried to recover but the arm was not going to play. I made an appointment with the neurologist, Dr. Walter Christie and he assured me that my

arm could be mended and took me to the rehabilitation section of Virchow Hospital; since I had spinal surgery at that hospital in '91, I qualified to enter their treatment center; I re-entered retirement.

I had been going to therapists since my arm spasm in '69 and I've met some whom I consider great but none measured up to the level of these at Virchow. In five months, I performed again but naturally, after the concert, the therapists had to work for weeks in order to stretch my muscles and tendons; they were as tight as steel cables. The therapists said, many times, that they had never seen anyone with muscles as tense and unyielding as mine. Now as I write, I'm in my eighth year of therapy with Frauke and Klaus Koenig.

I want to insert a story, happening over a decade ago, that describes business life at the top of society. It's told by a close friend and it takes place in a capital city...but I must withhold names to protect him as well myself.

He and other musicians were rehearsing in the penthouse of a leading industrialist who loved jazz. But regrettably, the entrepreneur was visited, unexpectedly, by two accountants (the equivalent of IRS) representing the country's tax bureau.

The two accountants informed the industrialist that he must pay a huge amount of accumulated tax. He retorted strongly that if he were forced to pay, he would close one factory with fifteen hundred workers and another factory with two thousand three hundred and that would be a lot to add to the city's unemployment figure. The accountants abandoned their effort and had a drink before leaving the premises. It's difficult being a tax collector in a small country but I wonder how that would have gone down in the U.S. with IRS...then again, it's all relative.

America House in Berlin presented an exhibition of the *big three* in jazz photography, William Claxton, Herman Leonard and William Gottlieb. I spotted Georgio Cariotti of the *Quasimodo* in the crowd and he was excited, "Claxton's are the best." I studied the exposition carefully because Leonard and Gottlieb are fantastic but later told Georgio that I agreed; I'm conscious of an aesthetic quality whenever looking at Claxton's work but with Leonard and Gottlieb, I'm reminded of *popping* flashbulbs; I feel that Claxton *listens* when he shoots. He spent an

evening with us, talked late into the early morning hours and it was most memorable. I remarked to my wife, soon after, that Bill is like being with a musician. The European counterpart to Claxton is a camera specialist, Joe Werkmeister of Munich; who also happens to click his *shutter* by *ear*. I observed Joe as he shot in the Philharmonic during a festival for Berlin's *Jazzdays*. Many photographers were busy capturing the performers gesturing but Joe just sat and listened to the music. Then as the soloist reached the climatic peak, Joe leaned forward, sighted and quickly snapped a few frames; then sat back and continued listening; Ernst Knauf's *Domicile Club* displayed Joe's unique collection of improvisers back in the seventies and eighties. Another name *popping* to the surface is Hans Albers of the Los Angeles Times. For no less than twenty-five years he was Peggy Lee's chosen photographer. Near the last, Hans decided, since Peggy had become so enormous, to have her seated, dressed in white with all white background, thus capturing only her remarkable face and concealing the contour of her massive body; she indeed possessed a captivating beauty that few of Hollywood could match. Luckily I talked Concord into using Hans for the cover photo of *Hues of Blues*. One more name I'll mention is the very imaginative David Brandt of Berlin; it was his idea to create the illusion of my having three hands on the cover-booklet of *From Another Star*. Reaching this length, I'll still add San Francisco's David Fisher to the list; he was unusually inventive with the *Sunburst* and *Love Every Moment* Concord covers.

Now I should explain a bit more about Lenny, my twin brother. As I mentioned in a previous chapter, Lenny married into heavy wealth in the fifties, but not legally, because he always tried to avoid contact with every institution; he even bought his illegal passport; he only played piano and composed. He often said that he was not a subject of any country and did not want his name connected with any numbers. Since we had gone our separate ways through the many years, his character developed quite differently from mine.

Lenny never filed a tax return nor did he have a Social Security number because he didn't need work...he didn't have a driver's license because he was provided with a chauffeur...telephone and utilities bills were never in his name. He

wanted to remain untraceable. He explained that life was so short that he wanted to practice and compose only to discover what surfaced from his unconscious state. This lifestyle provided him and his wife more time each day to be with each other...theirs was a perfect relation and they chose few friends.

When I told Lenny about meeting Frank Fernandez in Mexico City, he wanted to have recordings of Frank, which I sent, and was very much impressed with what he heard. Frank had purchased eight Steinways, for a million Marks, and Lenny helped Frank choose the instruments; two pianists were necessary because while one plays, the other listens carefully for vibrations from a distance of at least twelve feet. Since we look exactly like twins, Frank didn't notice any difference and of course, had no idea of my having a twin brother.

So, Frank phoned me to come to Hamburg to help him choose the pianos and at that very moment Lenny was visiting me so Lenny volunteered to stand in for me.

A week later, he phoned and said that it was so great hearing and being with Frank and that all went well at the Steinway factory; by the way, Lenny plays exactly as I do; we look and sound the same. Anyway, I thought that would be the end of it.

But in the fall of '97, Lenny informs me that Frank has invited him (as a favor returned) to Havana for a seminar and two concerts. "How did this happen?" "Well, I gave him the address of my summer home in Denmark and he wrote an invitation." "But, you can't go to Cuba." "Well, I am." I panicked but what could I do.

After Lenny returned to Denmark, he called and described at length his incredible trip. He played the National Theater and during his fourth title, the light went out completely. He said he could not even see the whites of the piano keys but he continued to improvise; chorus after chorus and still only in darkness. He said that it must have been just over three real minutes before the lights returned and the audience went absolutely wild...many jumped into the air, some waved handkerchiefs but everyone was screaming at the top of their voice.

Next, they flew him and a translator to Santiago de Cuba and this he felt, was Africa and contrasted completely from Havana.

He thought it was the greatest time of his life and pointed out that there were so many great classical pianists in Havana...but the folk, he emphasized, were also exceptionally musical...there was always singing and dancing in the homes and streets.

During his seminar at the Conservatory, he was taken into the office of the president and she explained the education system for music.

Every city and village has a "House of Culture" and local and traveling musicians can rehearse there free; this enables the children to listen and if there is one child with talent the locals will mention this to the musicians and they can give the kid a chance; this way they find the talented early, possibly before they become five or six years of age. Then they have twenty-two schools throughout the island that give music lessons...the best of these, when graduated, go to three schools and then a few enter the one Conservatory in Havana.

One point Lenny made was that he listened to many of the local musicians but none of them played inhibited...while they played, their bodies remained relaxed. "And by the way, Frank has no idea that I'm your twin and since he speaks little English...he couldn't ask or tell me anything."

I got angry, never I would try to do so...but Lenny should not have done this. Anyway, I shouted through the phone that, "I have filed tax returns with the IRS every year since my military discharge and I don't want to jeopardize my existence within society...I don't want anything to interfere with my music; in this sense, you can call me a conformist" ...and slammed the receiver.

That was the last I heard from Lenny. His wife phoned eight months later that he had been diagnosed, too late, with bone cancer and had left a letter to her, in his hand writing, explaining that he wanted to leave and die alone; he did not wish to see his own deterioration.

Lenny left for a destination unknown and no one has heard anything about him since; we believe he committed suicide...but true to himself, he absolutely left no trace. A month later, his wife left and is still unheard of.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Kirsten and I decided, in 98, to form a recording company for the sole purpose of recording and protecting myself. After all, you can take the best recording contract to a lawyer and after examining the fine print he will tell you that you have all the rights of a street musician; once you realize, you lose your taste for signing with any label.

So, Sunburst Recordings, Inc. was created, along with Sunhazed Publishing, as a negotiating wedge in the event we were to sell a production to another company. It was exciting and although it was work that took time away from the piano, I could manage to live with it.

What I didn't know is, that in Europe, a label must have fifty CD productions in its catalogue before the large distributors will accept your recorded production because they want to lower your percentage price; in other words, you have a new release and for them to take it...they want you to reduce the price of a number of your older productions. This simply squeezes the small label out of their game's way.

Anyway, Mike Richmond was in Germany for a Bundesjazzorchestra seminar and I could record, with him, on a great instrument in Berlin but I only had two days for recording. I had planned it in trio, with Bjorn Luecker on drums, and then add Gregoire Peters, on alto saxophone, for two titles in quartet.

I tried the piano and thought I had found a nightingale...then, a month later when checking microphones on a test recording, I noticed something had changed slightly with the sound...and six weeks later when we went into the studio with the musicians to record, the instrument no longer sang...and after two hours of recording I was shocked when faint ghost tones were heard when certain tones were played simultaneously.

The technician arrived within twenty minutes and corrected the problem but when I tested the instrument again, other ghost tones appeared. We ended the day's effort...but that night, I made the decision to abort the recording as Mike's fee was expensive and there was the risk of other ghost vibrations occurring. It was a new

piano and...as the green wood slowly dried, the tension within the instrument changed. After all, a piano has over thirty tons pressure from end to end.

Now I had to find a studio with an instrument and engineer worthy of a solo recording. After travelling and searching in two cities, the idea was aborted; instead, I decided to record *from another star*, in duo with Mike Richmond, at Systems II in Brooklyn, New York and I was impressed with the [D] and especially Michael Marciano, the engineer. Matthias Winckelmann, of Enja records, was so helpful in recommending the Brooklyn studio and also a pressing plant in Germany; without his advice, I would surely have made serious mistakes.

Pianistically, *from another star* is my best recording...and it sold very well at performances...particularly the California tour of '99. North Country Distributors ordered, paid and reordered many times, in fact they are waiting now for the next pressing.

But in Europe, the record business had changed and much for the worse; distributors influenced the record stores.

An example; a big chain store always stocked all of my CDs...and with this fresh CD, *from another star*, all thirty units were gone by the second week. I provide them with another thirty units and they went as quickly. After the third order was sold I said I would return with another box, he hesitated and said that he couldn't display them as he had done before but told me to bring them anyway. I had a tour, some other things delayed me, and I returned nine months later; there was no visible display of the CD and he had to look for them in the storage room; where my unopened box of CDs sat on the same shelf as before; not one was sold. He helped me but he couldn't continue doing so; I'm sure a distributor complained because my CD was selling and getting too much attention.

However there was a record store, Music Inn, owned by Jeanpierre and Anna Marie Prins in Brussels, Belgium and they sold *from another star*, as North Country Distribution did in the U.S. I was lucky, both North Country and Music Inn were always ethical with each business transaction.

The last concert of my California tour was in Little Rock, Arkansas at the height of the summer heat wave, August 9, 1999. Hot air burned nostrils of the nose at midnight; people avoided stepping outside the dwelling that was air- conditioned.

Kirsten and I were guests of Charles and Shirley Price; after my sound check, Jerry Barnes and his better half visited. It was the first time we had been together since '50; the day before I had spoken for an hour with Bitsy Mullins whom, except for a moment in Las Vegas, I'd not seen since '49.

My life has always spun in some kind of whirlwind, I've never known dull moments, and now among friends from out of the past, I felt that Little Rock was like an ancient port offering a calm inlet to me, an old seaman, for the docking of my sailing vessel; I was exhausted, I mentally and physically crashed the morning after my performance; the month tour was over and I took a strong swallow from my traveling flask after breakfast, just for an eye opener.

Charles and Shirley had a cook book, in their kitchen, from Evening Shade that caught my eye; on the cover was sketch of the mill with spring water flowing over the wooden dam..."Hey, that was my grandfather's mill." I continued speaking about Evening Shade and Charles said, "Let's all drive up there."

The trip was so good...my nerves were frayed from touring...and there were no clouds in the sky; just a scorching sun.

We arrived in Evening Shade and of course, for me, a half century had flown by with noticeable change.

Charles parked his big Lincoln sedan at the town spring, now dry, because workers had dynamited large rock while straightening a nearby curve in the road and this disturbed the underground water table.

It was at least one hundred degrees and I'm dressed as if I were in Hollywood; thin cotton canary yellow trousers with a see through blue shirt with a black undershirt underneath; I was cool, in fashion...the farmers probably tried to look the other way.

I didn't recognize the bank building at first and walked in a store and introduced myself and asked, "Where's the bank?" "Well, the old bank is next door but the new one is on the highway just as you enter town." And after exchanging

some words, I went out and crossed Main Street and then I could see the date carved into the stone of the building, 1924. We all walked in the bank, a few women were doing quilt work and after saying hello I noticed, painted on the vault door, 'The Bank of Evening Shade' just the same as before. I used to play hide and seek with my cousins in that vault; the doors were always open and only closed at night. Learned from one of the ladies that her husband, Tom Norris, was my first cousin, named after my grandfather, and I met him for the first time. They couldn't believe, how I was dressed; I felt a bit embarrassed.

Back in the car, we drove by my grandmother's house, which had deteriorated, and continued up the hill to the old Brian Sullivan house, turned around and I had a good view of the town...then we took the route west to the edge of town, stopped at my great-great grandparents home and it was in perfect shape; then back around through town and returned to Little Rock.

It was interesting for me to see Evening Shade, this shell of a village that had been so vital years before. But it surely would have looked better in late spring, all in green.

The old saw mill should have been preserved as a landmark. Unfortunately, Evening Shade road had been straightened and it now passed within fifteen yards of the mill which was now completely hidden with trees and thick foliage.

As a kid I had swam there and the cold spring water was so clear that when looking down from the diving board you could clearly see grains of sand ten feet below the water's surface. My body felt empty, like something had been removed, but memories of the past churned inside and this returning to Evening Shade had enriched my soul.

We stopped in Batesville to visit Jerry Barnes and spoke too quickly because there was so little time. But, he told a story about an Indian in Pine Bluff that I must share with everyone.

Dr. Barnes conducted brain research for the Federal Government at University of Arkansas and in the late fifties he learned that an American Indian, living in Pine Bluff, spent most of his hours sitting on the sidewalk with a sign around his neck which read, The Vanishing American Indian. Jerry and an

assistant drove south to Pine Bluff to interview and after tests the Indian had an IQ of 120 and was quite inquisitive when conversing with tourists; what I gathered from Barnes was that this Indian was positive and well-tempered.

But the purpose of the study was to learn how this Vanishing American Indian could go out on a railroad track, undetected in the darkness of night, and lie down beside the track...place his finger on the rail and wait for its amputation with the passing of a train.

Barnes explained to me that there are only four channels that carry pain to the brain and if all four channels are occupied with other thoughts, the brain doesn't receive a message of pain; on the battlefield a soldier can be so occupied of shooting the enemy, that he doesn't feel the pain of the bullet he himself receives from enemy fire. This Indian, who managed to place his thoughts, with intense concentration, elsewhere did not feel the pain of amputation; after many months he moved about only by sitting on a crudely made skateboard; his legs had become only short stubs and eventually both of his lower arms were missing; yet, he maintained his inquisitive nature. This report by the Ph.D. was translated into fourteen different languages including Russian. Perhaps, governments wish to learn how to train and condition their military so that if one becomes wounded or even suffers torture, they could escape pain by blocking the four channels to the brain. Even now as I write in disgust...trying to fantasize...if it were possible to travel in outer space to search for another life supporting planet, I would be the first to volunteer. A high price is paid when eradicating a race of people or capturing slaves; our souls are so heavily scarred.

Nevertheless, Jerry was always a brain among intellectuals; once he announced at the reception desk of a hospital, "I believe I'm about to have a heart attack" ...and then crumpled to the floor; he was rushed in for an emergency operation and remained clinically dead for twenty-two minutes. The surgeon warned Jerry's wife, "Although he has returned to this world, there may be noticeable brain damage" ...and as soon as Jerry regained consciousness he immediately recited poetry and quoted philosophers at length. The surgeon and his

assistant were astonished; everyone stood with lowered jaws as if they had become pillars of concrete.

But Jerry was obsessed with the writings of Cicero and also the book, Plato's Republic. What I can say about the Republic is that most all tyrants studied this book...anyway out of curiosity, I found it on a friend's bookshelf and when I got to the part where Plato writes about music, I closed the book and placed it on the shelf. I can not tolerate controls in any form or fashion...and to conform is not to feel free.

My whirlpool, at the completion of my tour, was packed in the basement. For forty years I had soaked my arms in the hottest water endurable only to be followed with ice water; I left like a lobster and my arms were as red as one. Through physical therapy, I had learned that the muscles in my arms were working less and the neck and back muscles were compensating by working more, so I decided to do without my whirlpool. Without therapy treatments from Frauke Koenig this would have been impossible.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Our new millennium arrived and my immediate thought was that with digital technology it was now possible to have an agreed time setting shaved down to the fraction of a second, world wide for the first time in history. Next I thought about the discrepancy with calendars; we do not have the New Year beginning on the shortest day of the year. New Year's Eve should be the twenty-first of December because afterwards we gain two to four minutes of sunlight daily. Our old calendar, Russian and Asian included, is from pagan times; so I celebrate each New Year on the shortest day of the year and again on the first of January.

Bert Noglik, musical director for the Leipzig Festival, arranged a duo concert with Aladar Pege on the ninth of October in the Opera House. The Steinway [D] was perfect and for the sound check I nearly burned too much energy; it swung so hard and I couldn't stop playing; this was one of the life's special moments in music. On this same evening Billy Harper's group also performed and

when they played *Funny Valentine* in a slow gospel tempo; I was aghast, it blew my mind and Aladar's as well. A quarter of a century before we were on Thad and Mel's band together; when listening to the inimitable Billy Harper, I'm always reminded of his *Houstonian tenor roots*.

The next morning at breakfast, Aladar, Kirsten and I had an opportunity to talk for a couple of hours because our flights were scheduled in the late afternoon. I mentioned I had read about the possibility of Franz Lizst being part Gypsy. "Never," Aladar answered and then proceeded to educate us about this untold saga that he claims has never been printed.

For the past five hundred years Gypsies have lived in Budapest, Hungary; originally they came from India and although they still continue living in their Cast system it is fading as it's absorbed by modern society. There are two classes of Gypsies; Sinti and Roma. The Sinti musicians are artists who perform only in concerts; Roma musicians are hired to play for celebrations such as weddings, in restaurants or nightclubs. These two classes have never ever been allowed to marry outside this Cast structure; there were no exceptions to this rule. A Sinti male is guided and encouraged to follow his father's profession; Aladar is a contra bassist, just as his father, his grandfather and great grandfather were before him. Of course, if a child hasn't enough talent he is encouraged to seek another profession; this I find as rather positive when you consider that the child from its beginning, hears father or mother or siblings practicing daily. Music is always in the home and naturally it is always performed with family gatherings. So the child is given instruction at a very early age and feels that he or she can eventually accomplish what father, mother, siblings, uncles, aunts and cousins all easily do. Aladar's father played in duo with the legendary concert pianist, Georges Cziffra in the cafes and nightclubs of Budapest; Cziffra needed money for food and shelter; which leads into the following story.

Cziffra could not get a performance in Budapest because Annie Fisher's husband controlled all concert halls and Annie passionately hated Georges because of his exceptional talent and especially since he was Gypsy; of course, Annie was Jew and these two groups that have always been at opposite poles. This is why

Cziffra also improvised; he had to work in jazz clubs in order to eat. But Cziffra fortunately concertized in Paris, also Carnegie Hall in New York, collected a lot of money and returned to Budapest.

Annie Fisher had a concert booked in the largest hall of Budapest and secretly, Georges Cziffra bought all of the tickets; Annie rejoiced when hearing that all seats were sold. The grand evening arrives; Annie walks on stage and sees Cziffra sitting alone in third row center. She is shocked but she must play or pay, by law, a heavy penalty for not performing. When she finishes the first movement of the opening sonata, Cziffra applauds and comments, "That was quite good Annie but I disagree with your tempo, for an Adagio it was a bit too fast, but do continue;" which she invariably had to do; this continued through the entire program. Georges Cziffra and Annie Fisher are included in a video entitled, *Great Pianists of the Twentieth Century* and Aladar's story made me appreciate Cziffra even more.

I want to say that the quarter century I've known and worked with Aladar I have never heard him express a word that his mother would not have approved of. Aladar, at the age of eighteen married his wife Agnes and the relationship is permanent. They have never smoked or drank intoxicants when preparing food, she is goddess of the kitchen; I'll never forget being a dinner guest in their Berlin apartment.

In '78, Agnes had to go to Budapest for a month and Aladar remained in Berlin to work so I made an appointment and took him to a very good restaurant; after a few bites I ask, "Is the food good? And he answers back, "Good but it's not from Agnes." Aladar didn't smile until she returned from Budapest.

Allow me to add another story...but names must be withheld for self protection. During the Cold War days an excellent concert pianist in the eastern part of Poland became politically in control of all concert events and activities; unfortunately, other pianists had no chance to be heard publicly. She was scheduled to perform in the main hall of the city; as she made her grand entrance on stage the audience applauded heavily and after a few bows she sits again placing her hands on the keys but the applause continues; she leaves the stage, the applause fades to a silence and she takes the opportunity to make her second entrance but again, the

jubilant applause persists, after more bows, and even as her hands touch the keys. Irritated, she walks off stage...waits...and makes another attempt at instrument, but it is impossible to play one tone because of the applause; she had to cancel the evening. Politically, she was not wise; she was just nine times clever.

Being fond of good food and wine increased my weight and the blood pressure readings climbed, despite medication, so I had to retire.

I continued my daily work at the piano and computer with renewed interest; I had no project, no scheduled date line...I worked on whatever came to my mind. I composed and then practiced what I had composed and each time I played it, I changed some intervals of the music notation and then entered the new changes in my computer.

I no longer wanted to perform on partially wrecked, horribly tuned instruments for people who were constantly trying to price break my humble fee.

I canceled three concerts with regret, closed my date book, remained in the apartment...just researching the stored music in my head and of course, reading, daily, only books I could learn from. After two years of this peaceful existence I managed to lower my weight and found that my blood pressure had improved; this was the answer...to keep the weight down.

All of this tranquility erupts...Frank Fernandez phones that he and his wife, Alina, are at the Berlin Hotel for a Tourist convention; Cuba is the featured country and he and Chucho Valdez will play and then many dancers with the Tropicana orchestra would follow; it was all to be an enormous extravaganza.

Two hours later the phone rings again, "We want to come over." They were driven over and we talked, ate a bite and drank. I thought he would be nursing a jet lag but no, he was ready to live.

He said he would open the convention with the J. S. Bach/Gounod, "Ave Maria." ...and added that a few had advised him not to do so because it was in Berlin. I understood the advice of the others, but told him to play it.

Hours later, with many drinks under his belt, he said, "Walter I play," and went to the piano. The action is extremely light, for my worn arms, and I observed Frank as he played my Menzel for the first time. With the first tone...he realized

and calculated the keyboard's action intuitively...and after the second tone the instrument was at his mercy. The piano had recently been tuned, his playing was letter perfect and Frank made it sing like the nightingale he consistently is.

A few minutes later, "Walter, I want to play tomorrow...call Steinway for me." I made an appointment and Kirsten and I picked up Frank and Alina at their hotel and drove directly to Steinway House.

We all entered, I introduced everyone to the director and we were shown the practice room. Renovation was under way in other rooms and a new roll of carpeting was stored against the wall...so the director opens the window fresh air but Frank is already playing like a possessed man. I thanked the director at the door as he left.

Frank played non stop for two hours and afterwards, soaking wet, he dries off with a towel and says, it's important for the muscles that I dry off and wait five minutes before leaving the room; he had another shirt to change into.

The next day, we all go to the ICC (International Congress Center) to check out the Steinway and much to my surprise it's only a "B" and not a concert grand because this hall holds two thousand people. Frank plays, I'm standing next to him, and he turns to me, "Walter, I'm not happy...the piano doesn't sing and the tuning is bad." Frank is definitely at a level just below anger. I go out into the auditorium and listen, as he continues playing, to find out how the instrument carries; there is no hope. The sound technician arrives, the piano will be amplified, but the quality of the sound system is more suitable for speeches or loud rock; it's a disaster.

However, Frank's hands are on the keyboard and he played for over an hour; he transcended the noise of stage workers and the many other people walking around on stage and talking...I sat down and listened.

I had phoned a few friends, the day before, but after observing this situation, I called them again and told them to stay at home; I didn't want them to hear Frank under these conditions.

Performance time; a packed audience, all involved with tourism, speeches and video screens showing paradise islands and finally...Frank is announced.

The conqueror walks to the Steinway, bows, and before he plays the fourth measure, Kirsten and I are in tears; his intuitive cerebral strength has miraculously forced this voiceless instrument to somehow sing...his sound was magnificent! Standing ovation with loud bravos; the audience rose in mass like you could expect at a pop concert.

Frank is unique and two titles were his debut in Germany...I'll never understand how those at the top (and I know that a few attended) can be so deaf, so blind. He has performed and recorded in Spain and I know of a concert in Paris where even the aisles were filled. Those who haven't heard Frank Fernandez have missed a phenomenon.

But what amazed me was that Frank and Alina didn't recognize that I'm not my twin, Lenny; but our difference is so slight and it's absolutely not to be found in the playing.

Chapter Twenty One

Then in January '04, with an e-mail from Osaka, Japan everything changes; I didn't know these people but intuitively sensed that their intentions were pure of heart. Hisayuki and Tamaeh Terais, owners of the OverSeas Club, invited me for two concerts. I discussed the proposal with Kirsten and she became excited about flying to Japan; I never travel without her.

But after not performing for two years, the muscles and mental stamina must be trained for six months and we kept a regimented program. She did everything in the house concerning the daily routine and I practiced until I felt fatigued then rested in bed and with renewed energy, returned to the piano; ten and more hours every day.

A week later, I received an e-mail invitation, from pianist and director of jazz studies, Albert Bover, to lecture the first week of May at the Conservatory for Music in Barcelona.

In the middle of all of this, I received word from Jim Porter, a classmate of mine throughout the school years but now Commissioner of Pulaski County, that I have been selected (Jim was on the committee) for "The Entertainers Hall of Fame" of Arkansas and the ceremony would take place the third of October '04. Now, I must prepare photos and other material for the exhibition; this was much more time consuming than I expected but I wanted everything to be exact.

It was a long road back before I noticed any improvement; the old, worn muscles didn't want to work vigorously, they preferred the life of retirement.

I can't exaggerate how quickly time has always passed for me...but now months were more like fleeting weeks.

October arrived as we landed in Little Rock, a new Buick was reserved for us, we drove into the city and soon parked in the garage of the Double Tree Hotel... which is next door to Robinson Auditorium where I played my first job, sixty years ago, with Howard William's band.

Then I lectured the next day at University of Arkansas and on the following morning we drove to Pine Bluff where I received my Entertainers Hall of Fame award; it was the third of October '04.

As soon as we checked in the hotel, Sam Stephensen from Duke University, interviewed me for two hours and the concentration was intense for me as I answered his questions.

Afterwards, Kirsten and I dressed and attended a light buffet reception at six o' clock. Then we were taken into the banquet room and at the entrance was an enormous floral arrangement that was strikingly beautiful... and we were seated with others at one of the large front tables.

The entire presentation was impressive, Lieutenant Governor Winthrop Rockefeller spoke and the event continued for two hours with large screens showing videos about each of the inductees and I soon became excited by it all. After my speech, I played "Afterthoughts" and "All The Things You Are" with bassist, Joe Vick and the audience went wild and were all standing; thought the applause would never end.

I was seated again at our table and about thirty minutes or so the ceremony was over; but not for me. For the next hour, I autographed as photos were quickly taken of me with so many different people, none of whom I had ever met...and for the first time in my life I realized how a celebrity feels and it soon became a bit exasperating; well, claustrophobic to say the least. Of course, I loved every moment of it and graciously played the part but I couldn't even take a sip of wine and my stomach was empty; people were constantly grabbing my arms, embracing me; I was completely helpless.

Then I was escorted out into the lobby where the exhibits were displayed and again, it was extraordinary...then, a lady approaches, "Do you remember me, I'm Marjorie Talbert?" And I recognized her. We had been classmates in our youth.

Well, I'm trying to describe the activity and exhilaration that filled the hall. I managed to reach and speak with Kirsten, who was also surrounded, and told her that I must go upstairs to the room and take my blood pressure tablets.

I turned on lights, as I entered, and went directly into the bathroom and while relieving my kidneys I noticed a bulge at the lower right side of my abdomen; it was a hernia the size of a tennis ball.

I sat on the edge of the bed stretched out with my feet on the floor, dressed in tuxedo with my pants down, trying to push the hernia back up inside. I realized that an operation was necessary but I wanted to avoid having it...but could I?

Twenty-five minutes passed and Kirsten, knowing something must be wrong, walks in, I explain, and by this time it had improved so within another ten minutes the crises was over...I got back up on my heels and we returned downstairs.

I was starved and fortunately, there was still some food (buffet style) so, with a plate full of food I seated myself at our table to crank up. Chuck Dodson, his father (an architect and piano technician) and Angela Barona, Chuck's camera technician, were still there. I had met Chuck before but now we began, in earnest, our conversation. He is a jazz pianist and film producer and I found him interesting especially when he offered to make a documentary of my life. "Great," but in the back of my mind I thought no more than just, perhaps.

Anyway, I mentioned I was scheduled to play a solo concert and give a seminar in April '04 at the University of Arkansas in Little Rock. He thought this would be a good time; he could film both the concert, seminar and documentary within that time slot.

Now the thought...if I can just keep the hernia inside until after our flight to Osaka...and we'll leave in seventeen days.

It was a sunny morning and Kirsten and I left Pine Bluff early so we could drive to Little Rock and enjoy some sightseeing before giving up the rental car at the airport and departing on our afternoon flight for Berlin.

In my Osaka contract (for the first time in my life) I was offered more money if I did not repeat any title in my program, with the hope that people would attend both concerts.

Well, the conditioning from practicing all of my waking hours paid off; I didn't repeat anything during the nine day stay and we had dinner at the club each evening; and naturally, I always went over to the piano and played a title or two.

The two concerts were so special for me because I knew that I probably would never again see Japan...I can say that Osaka '03 was the moment of my life.

I had an excellent bassist, Kazuhiro Sumi, who had studied with George Mraz and I must say that Kazuhiro greatly impressed me especially since we were only a duo and without rhythmic support from a percussionist.

For the first half of my second concert, pianist/composer, Minako Tokuyama attended, after traveling from Tokyo and had to leave during the encore on my first set to catch the last train home. She had studied with me at Hochschule der Kuenste in Berlin; she had won "Female Composer of the Year" in Vienna and it was she who penned, "Waltz for Walter."

I want to explain that although the OverSeas is a night club, it is frequented by many piano students who study with Hisayuki Terai ...so, it is also a social gathering place and it's aesthetically pleasing to the eye...one enjoys being there; it's modern but it still has that Oriental touch...louvered blinds and the club is located next to a charming passageway so you faintly hear people passing by and they can

hear that music is inside. Hisayuki and Tamaeh are gourmet chefs so, there was exceptional food and wine; one dish was sauteed for five days.

The afternoon following the concerts, there was a seminar with around twenty students and a dinner afterwards with the students and for me, it was a musician's paradise...eating, drinking and answering questions about music.

Next day, Katsutoshi Kodama took Tamaeh Terai, Kirsten and I, by train, to Kyoto for a tour of Kokudera Gardens and two Shrines; then, reservations in the most exquisite restaurant in Kyoto where we were served dinner by Geisha; this evening we were completely enclosed in a Japanese environment; for me, it was something like an out of body experience; for my mind swam with so many impressions.

Then the next morning...a tour of Osaka Castle, about which I had read, so brain cells were triggered again and over again. Afterwards, a special lunch in a small sushi restaurant located within an immense market hall; the owner brought us sushi topped with warm goose liver yet, every sushi serving was so different. We were told that people on business, especially artists, traveling from Tokyo make a point of eating at this sushi restaurant; it is that unique.

In the same market hall, we were taken to an artist who created a calligraphy for us; the translation is "no malice in the heart" ...from a fourteenth century Buddhist monk. Then he made a large package of bonito (shaved tuna) to take back to Berlin that we can enjoy it with miso soup for months.

There was so little time...but nonetheless, they had the taxi driver pass by the traditional Japanese landmarks home, where Junichiro Tanizaki , one of my favorite writers, had lived.

Can one get too much of something that's good? Perhaps, but when something is this good you can never get enough of it. It was with considerable difficulty leaving Kansai airport. Katsutoshi Kodama, Hisayuki and Tameh Terai had given Kirsten and I the most beautiful Oriental tour imaginable; they will always remain as our close cousins.

Back in Berlin, thinking I could put up my feet and relax, I turned on my computer and while checking e-mails I shouted to Kirsten, "You want to fly to Rome?"

Mr. Joshua Ramo, author and former Foreign Editor of Time Magazine, wanted me to play for his thirty-fifth birthday celebration in Rome, five weeks away in December. We, with his party, would have a private tour of the Sistine Chapel and the next evening, after the concert, dinner in Villa Borghese; the hernia operation would have to wait...even if I had to walk around with my hand in my pants pocket pressing it back in.

I was examined by the doctor/surgeon at Virchow Hospital and a date was set for the operation but she warned that if my hernia came out and stayed outside for forty minutes, I would need an ambulance and the operation would be in Rome instead of Berlin. Now, I realized the hernia was far more dangerous than I had thought in Pine Bluff.

We arrived in Rome and made it just in time to join the party of twenty for the Sistine Chapel tour and I was thunderstruck...there was more art than my mind could absorb. The Raphael ceiling was so magnificent that I felt intimidated; it impressed me more than anything else.

The next evening we entered a palace, built in 1530, and ascended three flights of marble stairs, twenty-five feet wide, and the curved ceiling had to be over thirty feet high. A uniformed waiter took our coats as another served champagne and we entered the home of a princess...I was shown the newly rented Steinway [B] and the party, now thirty, were soon seated...I played; my mind was intoxicated with art and this definitely stimulated my fantasy that was carried over into the performance; it was one I'll always remember.

Everyone in the party now hurried out of the palace and on to the street where we all were transported to Villa Borghese and we then entered inside, as a group, in total darkness; then spotlights illuminated Bernini's "Daphne and Pluto," sculptured in white marble...then we viewed rooms filled with paintings including a number of Caravaggio's.

The guide hurried us into the winter garden for a seven-course dinner served by uniformed waiters, in white gloves no less. The room was chilly so I ate with my coat and hat on; others did also but if I had caught cold, my operation would have been aborted. It was surprising to me to realize that the entire Ramo family was very well informed about jazz. It was an unforgettable experience.

Kirsten and I stayed in Rome another two days before taking a late flight to Berlin; early the next morning I entered Virchow for my hernia operation.

While recuperating after surgery, pianist, Albert Bover phoned that we had been offered a duo piano performance at the jazz festival in Girona, Spain next September '04. I accepted and was eager about this new duo piano project.

April '04 soon arrived and we were back in Little Rock. The first morning as the doors of the hotel elevator opened, we took our first step into the lobby and stared into bright lights, above a video camera, as Bob Dourough, pianist/vocalist/composer, greeted us with microphone in hand; my documentary, filmed by Chuck Dodson and Angela Barona , had begun...and on an empty stomach before my first coffee.

It was fantastic, as I had not seen Bob in over forty years and he and other friends gathered around and we exchanged remarks and comments before I was pushed in a van and driven to the university; and the excitement doesn't let up.

We sandwiched in the documentary with every spare hour found and the seminar and concert was filmed. I thought the documentary would be completed within these five days...but they said that they would fly to Berlin and continue filming; I said, "It sounds great, I hope it really happens."

As I finished my concert at the university, in Little Rock, and walked off stage, I realized my cousins are in the audience...and I was thrilled. We talked for some minutes but I had to leave with others...nevertheless, we met for dinner and enjoyed a long talk the next day; it was so good to be connected once again with Evening Shade.

Albuquerque was next on the itinerary for a family reunion with Holly and Emily, my two granddaughters, Dinah and Delia, my two daughters, their husbands, Kent and Tony and my first wife, Mandy. Dinah met us at the airport

and drove straight to a lovely Mexican restaurant where everyone was already seated at table. Every minute of this week was perfect. Dinah drove all of us to Indian ruins and museums and of course, much conversation but it was so special for me that we could play a lot together, four hands at the piano.

Then on to Los Angeles, Orange County and Santa Barbara for duo concerts with bassist, Putter Smith. We stayed with Al and Frances Hicks and enjoyed sunny California with many friends from days out of the deep past. Al had a grand piano so I still had something to work on.

It was the longest flight from Los Angeles to Berlin; we changed, at Charles De Gaulle in Paris, and walked through the section where the ceiling collapsed a few days later.

Rehearsed, at Steinway in Berlin, with Albert Bover in preparation of our piano duo concert for September and suddenly, the time had arrived for Chuck Dodson and Angela Barona to continue filming the documentary in Berlin.

I'm amazed how lucky they were with shooting the room where I taught in the Hochschule, the interview with Lutz Reibeholz at Steinway, Sedal Sardan's A-Trane (jazz club) with Gregoire Peters, at Sarah Hafner's and Jeanfrancios Prins with Judy Niemack; no appointments were made...it was all spun together on the spot.

Then, an early flight to Girona, Spain, where Chuck and Angela continued filming.

Personally, Girona was a perfect location for my documentary. It's a very old city with many sections renovated (modernized) yet, the charm and beauty of the old with the contemporary had been preserved and we found some delightful restaurants, one in particular that was specialized in Moroccan cuisine.

I had a Steinway for practice and the film was rolling through that and during lunch breaks with interviews continuing into the morning hours; we managed maybe six hours sleep and the same spun through all of the other four days.

Then they took off for more interviews in New York. Later, Chuck told me they have seventy-five hours of film that he has to edit down to a ninety minute

documentary. But Chuck's plans, in Little Rock, were that I was to complete an autobiography, write a second book on piano-improvisation, plus record a CD by April '05. Fate and destiny's impulsion tries to hasten me beyond my capacity at age seventy-three...however, with so much ahead waiting for me, I know I must work steadily... but at a turtle's pace.

I had already accepted, from Sedal Sardan of Berlin's A-Train Club, a solo concert for the eighth of October; his piano technician had recently renovated the Steinway [B] and I wanted everything especially good since I had not played Berlin in many years. So, Sedal had the piano technician make another adjustment the afternoon of my performance. I don't know of any club owner today, who would go to such lengths to please and I certainly appreciated it; for me, it was a most unforgettable evening.

Dr. Wolfram Knauer, director of Jazz Institute in Darmstadt, contacted me for a solo concert, with an interview in the intermission, for the tenth of December and this closed another demanding year.

I played a beautiful old Steinway [B] and during the intermission, Wolfram and I had a very interesting interview; the audience was superb...I wished I could have taken all of them back to Berlin with me; unfortunately, it wasn't recorded.

Now that I have completed this book, Dodson wants me to finish a second book, *Essentials for Pianist-Improvisers*, and prepare a CD...as he intends to package all of this when he releases the documentary in April '05.

The one fixation that has been so important all of this life is my work at the piano...because it keeps me physically active and mentally stable; and I do believe that music can do this for nearly everyone...even if they can only manage one hour of practice each day. Because an hour of playing or just listening to good music will nourish body and mind far more than an hour of television; I would never have traded my life with anyone. I've kept a low profile, I saved my time for my work, and I've never had to compensate a lawyer with a quarter of a million dollars because of signing a misleading contract, as a few artists have. Today, working in this world of music is far more cruel than half a century ago and unless musicians

organize a "society for musicians" for the purpose of keeping the music pure, I think aesthetic music will disappear.

In today's global work force, people do two jobs, instead of one, and they haven't the energy to be inventive because their leaders, at the top have organized the work programs, for those below, so that people do only as they are instructed to do; I love the expression, "You are paid to work this job...not to ask questions." Or, "You don't need to know, just do what you are paid to do." For those people, in such a trap, I propose that they spend an hour with music because music revitalizes. The future is quite easy to guess; the point is to exist as best as possible; and to do so you'll need to be indispensable to society; being prepared enough, is your only hope...and only your brain can figure solutions that will carry you through life's many crises...and crises, we all experience. I remember one late afternoon in Los Angeles we were wondering how we would eat the next day because suddenly, our pockets were empty...I was to collect a check, but that was three days away. When the phone rang, raw nerves triggered me to jump and at the other end, pianist, Lou Levey asked desperately, "Can you work for me tonight?" Another time I remember, with anxiety, was a Friday evening in Berlin when, living alone, I realized that I didn't have money to buy food through the weekend; Monday, I could get money but this Sunday I would be hungry...again, I was saved by the phone, "Hello Walter, I'm in Berlin...let's go for dinner and it's on me." It was the Munich critic, Baldur Bockhof.

I'll say this to musicians, if you can manage to survive, with good health into your old age, you will look back and feel that music enabled you to live in an enviable world. For music has the capability of healing all wounds and making your inner self glow.

AFTERTHOUGHTS

I phoned John Cain in Little Rock, January '05, and gave my belated New Year greetings. This man, who reminds me so much of Joe Henderson, spent his life in Community Radio and was blessed with exceptionally good taste in jazz. In his youth, he bicycled twice a week to Loneoak, about forty miles away on a dark highway to broadcast jazz; most all of his work was voluntary and the *coins* in his pocket were always at a minimum. I asked how development was progressing with the renovation of the Mosaic Templars on Broadway and Eight Street; this project is John's idea. And much to my surprise he happily announced that plans were set for the opening in 2006.

It was sad for me in '95 when I returned and found Ninth Street, the Afro-American section, had so drastically changed. Ninth Street had been an example for other cities, even much larger, to rival for up in the thirties, forties and fifties. Now, the Mosaic Templars will represent the Afro-American community under the auspices of Arkansas' Department of Heritage.

Honestly, I wish the City Fathers would encourage Afro-Americans to reconstruct their former district, "Ninth Street." I have visited many cities in Europe and found that Ethnic districts, populated by guest workers, are important not only for the particular ethnic group but the district gives a vitality to the entire city. Berlin is one of the most integrated of all European cities because, after the Second World War, so many foreigners were granted political asylum here. I truly believe that an Asian population is more contented in their own district and that this, as a norm, applies for all races; just as Afro-Americans desire to have their own community. The problem is not integration...it is equal pay for equal work... and equal opportunity.

I remember the first time I met John, in an interview for KRLR, it was in '95 and that same day there was a Muslim protest march in Washington D.C. and John asked, "What do you think about the demonstration in the Nation's Capital?" "Well, after considering the many racial problems that have happened in the past, I think if we can't live in peace we all are mentally sick." He looked into my eyes, smiled and began laughing softly. Today, I would give the same answer if I were asked about the world's ethnic and religious problems.

My dear and former classmate, Jim Porter, whom I'll refer to as *The Commissioner*, booked concerts...and once was thrown in jail when he engaged Ray Charles for a concert performance at Robinson Auditorium in Little Rock.

A story about Jim that must be told; Dizzy Gillespie's big band had a concert in Little Rock but there was a problem with the hotel; Jim fixed it. So, Jim and his wife, Vivian vacationed in New York City and attended Gillespie's big band performance in Birdland; they were seated in front of the bandstand and Dizzy recognizes Jim, stops the band and announces, "Ladies and gentlemen, there are two friends of mine here tonight, Mr. and Mrs. Porter from Little Rock; loud boos and hisses from the audience. Dizzy quieted them and said, "No, you don't understand...Jim Porter saved us in Little Rock...we didn't have hotel rooms and he fixed it." Now, the audience roars their approval and Dizzy picks up their table, places it on the bandstand, the Commissioner and his wife were Birdland's *guests of honor*; and the music continued. Now in '05, Jim is presented as a speaker on the subject of, the problems with segregation.

Most enthusiasts of Paul Desmond know that drinking did not interfere with his humorous intellect. Once when in Hamburg, he visited the nightlife on the Reeperbahn and sat at a bar all night long and even after the sun began its ascent, buying drinks for the girls...he enjoyed their companionship and humor.

Paul willed his Baldwin grand to Bradley's Bar and many jazz pianists are thankful for his generosity...me included.

Many are familiar with the story about his cremation but there is an additional ending told to me by Alan Schulz of KMRL-FM in Carmel, California.

Paul's closest friend, Jimmy Lyons, the critic in San Francisco with whom Desmond had discussed the burial services at sea; and I must add ,that Paul and Jimmy often played practical jokes on one another. Paul instructed Jimmy and his wife to take a small plane up and scatter his ashes over Monterey Bay; also, they should enjoy a glass of Champagne and pour an additional glass of the bubbly out the opened window of the aircraft, as a toast to Paul. Jimmy and his wife followed

instructions but when he held the full glass and opened the window, the rushing air made the champagne splash all over Jimmy's suit and impulsively he said to the heavens above, "Damn you Paul, you knew this would happen." Now Alan's ending to this story is that after they landed, Jimmy noticed a small bone wedged between the tail wing and the aileron cable...which he took home and his wife told Alan, months later, that Jimmy would drink late into the night and chat with the bone.

An insert about the past of long, long, ago. In the twenties many wealthy Russians moved, after the Revolution, to Shanghai and lived in the large hotels; a number of these hotels had Afro-American big bands for dancing. Buck Clayton spent a few years in Shanghai fronting a big band at the Canidrome Ballroom and also a small group that he led in the Casanova Club...returning to the U.S. in '36, he joined Basie's band. These Afro-American musicians in Shanghai lived better... some never even bothered returning Stateside. I've mentioned this because I have the information from a book published in London, "Big Band Jazz" by Albert McCarthy.

Also, mentioned in the McCarthy book is that Count Basie left Benny Molten's band and formed his own in Little Rock in '34. I am of the opinion that it took place in Kansas City but I do not think it was a printing mistake; perhaps, some of the jazz musicians stretched their stories when they got over and were interviewed in London.

Let me step back into even earlier years. Clifford Manderscheid had a traveling band as far back as 1916 and they worked the mid-west. To keep warm they had a wood burning stove on the floor behind the driver and managed to pipe most of the smoke through the side window. He was Mandy's father, my first father in-law; Mandy has an 8X10 photo of his band and, with the visible megaphone, you know it was before microphones. With four children, he had to let his band go. He became a nightclub owner and was successful even up to the year of his death, in his ninth decade. Five different managers were hired to follow Cliff and all failed. He knew how to run a cafeteria, serving the best food in town...a nightclub on the second floor and he booked special events on the third floor, all in downtown Sioux

Falls, South Dakota. He visited us twice in Los Angeles and we spent four consecutive hours at the piano in my music room on Altamont Drive. I remember him with admiration.

Cliff talked about club owners and, from him, I developed an interest in observing them: Oscar Crozier's, *El Morocco* in Las Vegas; Guido Caccianti, the *Blackhawk* in San Francisco; Art Auerbach, *Jazz Workshop* in San Francisco; John Levine's, *Lighthouse* in Hermossa Beach; Howard Rumsey's, *Concerts by the Sea* near Hermossa Beach; Max Gordon's, *Village Vanguard* in New York; Barney Josephson's, *Cookery* in New York; Bradly Cunningham, *Bradley's* in New York; Amos Kahn, *Gulliver's* in New Jersey. Yes, they were efficient managers and accountants but each of them was born with a personality that attracted people into their club. In Berlin...Giorgio Cariotti, the *Quasimodo*; Franz de Byl, the *Floez* and especially Sedal Sardan, manager of *A-Trane*.

A word about a few of the arrangers/composers in jazz. Buster Harding was probably the best big band arranger before Dizzy but with Dizzy Gillespie's introduction, in '45, to *Lover Man* raised the level of arranging in jazz; at this point in time, the arrangement became a composition...his introduction can not be separated from the melodic content of the title. If you try to write another introduction for *Lover Man*, it may be a disappointing comparison to Dizzy's.

All arrangements by Ralf Burns were compositional; they were united from the first to the last note. Bill Holman, Thad Jones, Alan Broadbent and Gerry Mulligan are all outstanding examples of what I would term, *compositional/arrangers*. If you perform their arrangements you don't want to change anything.

Harry Edison explained to me that many of the arrangements in Count Basie's band were put together by members in the different sections. Example, if the sax section played a riff like phrase behind a soloist and someone in the brass section figured out that they could add just a few brass figures to the phrases of the sax section, it became an arrangement. These arrangements were *cooperative* endeavors by musicians as opposed to a skilled arranger whose score is copied and the parts are passed out to each musician.

When I played with Frank Rossolino and Charlie Mariano, all arrangements were written by Bill Holman and you wouldn't wish to change a note even if you needed, because of time, to do so. Bill's writing is one complete statement from beginning to the end. Holman took *Stompin' at the Savoy* and changed the form; normally, *Savoy* sounds like a "shout and response" type of riff...but with Bill, *Savoy* became a composition. When melody shapes the form of a piece, or an arrangement, the music becomes classical.

Another abstract thought: instrumentalists should play the written page as though they were improvising instead of reading. When you listen to a bird sing an interesting phrase/pattern, it will never sound as if it were written. And if the bird's call is rhythmic, it will be perfectly timed but it will not sound like written notation. One reason is that the bird is singing a message of communication; unfortunately, many musicians, when reading, sound like organised office workers doing a job; they are not mentally singing what they are reading. Read as though you're singing...and write (arranged music) as though you're singing...music shouldn't sound systematically correct. Either you'll understand and agree, or misunderstand and disagree, with what I'm saying.

A special evening to top all? It was February and freezing in Berlin. Kirsten, our close friend Emine, and I went to a Turkish fish restaurant. In the daylight hours, it's a normal fish shop but at night becomes a restaurant in the back room. It is modestly furnished and only grilled fish is served. We enter, there are no other people, ordered a bottle of wine and all types of fish are served. It's so cold and I'm in the mood for heavy eating and drinking. Suddenly, a group of forty or so Turkish men, all dressed in black suits and white shirts with black ties, enter and order; all of them are Mayors of different tourist cities along the Mediterranean.

After three bottles of wine and continuous servings of fish, I began to feel warmth from the increased blood circulation. At this time a singer from Istanbul who accompanying himself on an Oud (guitar), takes a chair next to our table and begins performing Turkish folk music and all of the people join loudly in song. So, I

sing (scat) the intervals, like a homing pigeon, like a guided missile, with them; everything is in unison but when the guitarist played an arpeggiated vamp-section, no one else was singing, except me, and I'm singing the same tones the guitarist is playing and this everyone notices. On a short intermission, the guitarist asks Emine, who by the way is Kurdish and speaks Turkish, "He isn't Turkish....is he?" "No, he is an American jazz pianist." "I can't believe that...how does he know these songs?" "He doesn't...he is just faking it." "Was he married to a Turkish woman?" "No." "He had a Turkish girlfriend?" "No, he doesn't know any of these songs and he speaks no Turkish." The guitarist is shaking his head in disbelief. Then he continues playing with the group singing along. This lasts over an hour and a half. I sang through it all...for I was in voice that night.

The owner brought a complimentary bottle of champagne to our table just before the evening ended. Then, all of the Mayors had to return, by bus, to their hotels, but as they put on their overcoats they formed a long line and each shook my hand, congratulated me...and they all were so very polite and courteous.

As we drove home, Emine asked, "How did you do that?" "Well, it's a training to sing in unison, simultaneously with any music you hear, and since they used small intervals, without wide skips, in most of their Turkish songs...it was easy. Now I would have trouble if I had to sing along with all of the complicated intervals that Joe Henderson uses when he improvises. The three of us laughed because *Sunburst*, with Henderson, had just been released.

In '95 I visited John and Evelyn Summers with their daughter, Carol. Although they had reached the edge of ninety years the alertness in their thinking had not diminished. It was an emotional afternoon; I knew it was the last I would be with them and broke down as I departed. John taught me by setting an example as a dedicated musician and human being. He travelled by bus to New York City for two weeks every summer and studied privately; he practiced eight *real* hours each day. John was well read and he utilized every minute for his work. On one of my lessons at the church, a young man from the office upstairs entered the room while John was playing for me and rudely interrupted. John stopped, slung the

music book off of the piano rack and it slid across the floor. His voice loud and stern, "Don't ever interrupt me and make sure that others in the office never do your mistake." John replaced the music on the piano, "Sonny, never allow anyone to interrupt your playing." That was back in '42; it made such a permanent impression.

John knew I was a horrible reader because I always asked for him to play whatever we were working on so I could take his sound and my lesson assignment home; music for me was all by ear. Later in the sixties, I learned *why*; poor readers and improvisers are often left-eyed dominate. This means that when reading *music* and it becomes difficult the dominate left eye pulls to the left instead of continuing (sweeping) to the right; when reading a book in the classroom the left eye pulls to the left and eventually elsewhere; the student becomes a daydreamer. Left-eye domination begins before conscious memory is developed. One test is to aim at a target with a rifle; do you close your left eye to look through the gun-sight or do you close your right eye and aim with the left? Another test: if you have difficulty looking at a sign in the distance do you close the left eye or the right eye? I have made this test with many jazz musicians and ninety-five percent of the improvisers are left-eyed dominant; I'm extremely so. The cure is to close your left eye while you read and make the passive right eye work.

Which brings to mind a true story that reveals, so well, the times of today... but I'll not mention the recording label or the artist. An artistic improviser who always sold just over one hundred thousand CD-units was offered a recording contract, with one of the biggest labels, to make three CDs, one per each year. The label producer informs the artist, "Now here is a list of titles you are going to record and also a listing of the musicians you'll play with." The artist doesn't wish to protest, but thinks to his self...I would never choose those titles and although the musicians are good, I certainly wouldn't pick any of them. The first recording is released and although it sounds good, twenty-two thousand units are sold. His following do not buy because most of them wondered aloud, "Why did he pick those titles and those musicians to play with?" About nine months later, the producer

tells the artist, "Well, you sold twenty-two thousand but we want to sell at least somewhere near that one hundred thousand mark. So, the artist was given another list of titles, he would never dream of playing, and a list of different musicians he would never choose.

His second CD sold nearly twenty thousand but the producer reminded him that they still want to hit that big one hundred thousand mark. Months later, the label producer hands a list of titles and musicians to the artist for the third recording and says, "Okay now, this is your last chance." For me, that's organised big business that has little to do with art...but the fans of the artist want artistic music. The artist, feeling smothered in stupidity returned to a smaller label, chose the titles, hand picked the musicians and once again, began selling around one hundred thousand CD units.

I get together with a young classical pianist, Adina Mornell who also teaches in Berlin. She is the only one who allows me to offer a solution that is different from the accepted way of interpreting. By working this way I give my opinion of how intervals on the printed page should sound at this point of time and not as they would have in the past because now, we all judge differently for the reason that we have experienced modern music. It's impossible to remain in the past because we are all travelling through space. Even if you try, you and your perception are separated from those of a composer belonging to an earlier period because time is unstoppable. Our location in space constantly changes. I always look forward to our sessions because she can immediately play however and whatever I suggest; she's an exceptional to the rule.

I think that by forming a local society for instrumentalists it can help to keep the music pure. Organise a Sunday afternoon gathering of musicians and friends (children included) to listen. The OverSeas Club in Osaka is a music society and also Dr. Richard Hopkins in Helena, Montana, Ms. Shirley Beaty who was instrumental in Boesendorfer distributorship being established in Denver, Colorado...and very close friends, Putter and Verna-Rose Smith of Pasadena,

California who still have and always had, musical gatherings in there home; my distinction is that I played for each of them. Local societies are the hope for unadulterated music.

Perhaps, Bill Crow was the best influence on me of all the people I met while working at the Playboy Club. When I became musical director I told all musicians that I didn't want any *yes men* and I didn't want good news. We would all deal with real issues and all suggestions were welcome. We all worked together and ideas bubbled from Bill's mind...and musically too.

While I was with Pearl Bailey and Louie Bellson at the Flamingo in '58, I visited the "El Morocco" and the building had been completely rebuilt; it was new but the previous building had much more charm. I had consumed many drinks, it was around six o'clock in the morning, and for some reason I began playing at the blackjack table; I had never gambled in my life. All I knew was that if your cards totaled over twenty-one, you lost and if someone had cards closer to twenty-one than you, they won. I knew the dealer, Ms. Robinson, from '53 & '54 when I played there. She was a large woman, very attractive and with strong character...Pearl Bailey introduced this lady, her close friend, in the Flamingo as one of the best gambler in Nevada; "She can walk in a club with one dollar, win at Kino, go to the dice table and play the field, win enough to play poker and walk away with a bundle."

I was having a *winning streak* and didn't even know the meaning of the word; I couldn't lose. With two cards, I refused the next card and held with as little as fourteen...the dealer would "bust." I said, "I'm trying to lose, I can't take money from this club." I get two more cards and she asks, "Do you want insurance?" "What do you mean?" She explained that if I won I would get twice the amount of my bet. Reply, "I'm trying to lose, I can't take money from this place." Forty-five or so minutes later the table is full...I'm sitting on the extreme left and of course, the others are dealt cards which are better before I receive mine. I didn't lose one hand. Mandy was filling her handbag, over and again, with silver dollars and ordering drinks for so many strangers at the bar.

The next night Mandy and I return to the "El Morocco" and Ms. Robinson, the dealer, explained that if I had doubled all bets I could have won the club...and she was serious. She said, "I knew you were having a "luck streak" so I signaled the other dealer and when I saw him lose every hand, I returned to the table and dealt; I still couldn't win and signaled him again; Baby, you won every hand." I smiled and said, "If you want to win you have to play to lose, that's my secret." We laughed...then I went over to the piano and played. That was my last visit to the El Morocco and I felt that it would be as I drove away in vivid sunlight...as it was quite a late morning hour.

It's important that we remember the stories told about Art Tatum because each gives not only a perspective of his genius but the degree of his superiority. Two that haven't circulated too much were told to me by Alan Broadbent and Putter Smith. Rachmaninoff said to Tatum, "I know every tone you play in your runs, every interval used in your chord voicings and harmonic progressions but I can't play them in your time conception." Vladimir Horowitz memorized by ear Tatum's recording of "*Get Happy*" and telephoned and invited him over, "I have something I want to play for you." Tatum arrived sat in a chair and Horowitz played "*Get Happy*." Afterwards Art said, "That's very good but I might have played it this way," and proceeded to do so. When he finished, "Or, I could have played it this way," and again played a different version, "Or, maybe this way," at which point Horowitz grabbed both of Tatum's arms and screamed, "Stop, that's enough." Personally, I'm disappointed by Vladimir's reaction but people invariably differ from one another. Jimmy Rowles told me about the time played in Los Angeles. Tatum had the waiter place forty one-once shot glasses of whiskey along the entire length of the edge of an upright piano; the front of the instrument had been removed. Tatum began playing a brisk tempo only with the left hand as he drank from each of the forty glasses and then he continued playing with both hands. Jimmy and others were shocked nearly out of their mind. He added, "The musical energy was unbelievable." There are many similar Tatum stories and all offer much for contemplation.

There were numerous conversations with Lenny, my twin. Once after an election we spoke and he remarked, "If you are mature and intelligent, how can you take politics seriously?" Then continued, "When you understand how things are accomplished at the very top, you will never believe the media or any spokesman representing an institution." "Today, photos and videos can be edited differently and it's impossible for an expert to detect this manipulation." "I'll choose to ignore all organized information because I prefer to remain uninformed instead of misinformed and save my frail nerves."

Birds circle, above the ocean a couple of miles from land, when they spot a school of sardines and swoop down to snatch one with their beak...in less than a minute tuna swim up to eat as many of these small fish as possible...then sharks come to fill their stomach with tuna. In less than four minutes it is all over. True, this is Mother Nature but I'm not an instinctive predator. I'm a rational and ethical being. I don't torture or kill my *relations*. My reason for mentioning this is because I hear many young people do something unethical and give the excuse that it's Nature.

It amazes me that the American Indian culture accredited all animals as their cousins. Yet, science only recently recognized that humans are related not only to anything that was once skeletal but even with single cell life. Another aspect of American Indian culture is that was communistic; everyone had a job to do, they took care of one another, there was no individual profit gained from the labor of others and anyone who didn't fit in the function of the tribe was obliged to leave.

In the summer months, when I was sixteen, mother told father that he should take me fishing...so dad and I went up to Nimrod Dam and he bought a pole but no bait. He sat under a tree and looked at the water and I don't need to fish or hunt we can have a fish at the restaurant...I prefer to leave the fish alone and just enjoy the nature. I swam and we had a relaxing time but mother was disappointed that we didn't bring back some fish.

When you consider that the purpose of unemployment is to keep prices down and then compare this with human sacrifices made by the Aztec culture of yesteryear, I don't think we are any more civilized today.

With today's digital computerized globalization, we have many that are exhausted from over work on their programmed jobs where few decisions are allowed and eventually they become non-thinkers. Soon there will be more genetic food grown regionally because of the expense for food distribution. I'll always remember a Peanuts cartoon from long ago that went something like this; "After conducting a careful study of our society, we have reached the conclusion that the enemy is us." But then, considering the polluted environment, are we not self-destructive? Well, we are made of subatomic particles from the universe...which is designed to eventually self-destruct.

I do have hope for the future...there will be improvement because of computer technology. The young can find more information on-line than in any period of the past. Hopefully, their brains will digest their stored knowledge and constructive solutions will surface.

People share to a degree, a similarity in their thinking and are often in accord with certain thoughts...but each person perceives information differently because of past experiences. I hope that with sharing my thoughts and life experiences in this book some of you young people will allow your working skills to develop deeply in your subconscious and enjoy the fruitful results that will surely follow, some time in the future, when your stored data/information surfaces to your conscious mind. I have lived a prolonged existence and can ponder my past knowing full well that *everyone* I've known and *everything* I've experienced has affected me, luckily in a positive way; for this I'm grateful.

But, I will soon enter that fourth quarter of my existence and hope, whenever death visits, I'll be deeply asleep...but if not, perhaps the Grim Reaper will be gentle and not so horrible...after all, his heavy chains dragging across the floor will probably make a beautiful sound. But for whatever life's purpose may be it's certainly a most interesting experiment and I'm so glad, Mother Nature thought to include me.

CONVERSATION WITH LENNY

L N: “Let me explain why the value of the Dollar has deteriorated. It is simply theft by those at the top. I listened to the broadcast of a week long Senate Banking Hearing in ‘68 and only one speaker begged that the gold standard remain and explained the consequences if that standard was abolished. The people would lose faith and trust in the currency. France immediately demanded payment on our debt to them in gold bars and refused Dollars; it was televised on network news from Fort Knox but naturally everyone soon forgot all about that event. Wall Street’s monetary activities would become even more blatantly criminal.”

W N: “Do you think plastic credit cards will replace our currency?”

L N: “Yes, in less than half a century.”

W N: “Do you think the Dollar will be replaced by the Euro as the monetary standard?”

L N: “Absolutely unless the U.S. pays a large part of its debts.
Any currency without a gold backing is simply paper.”

W N: “What about Globalization?”

L N: “It’s a great means of avoiding the payment of taxes and even a better way of enslaving the masses. People fortunate enough to work are desperate to keep their job and most of them are doing the work of two; living conditions force the less skilled to work two jobs. The monetary world is against the poor because the poor, unfortunately are not interesting to the monetary world. It’s the monetary system that’s wrong; it breeds greed.”

L N: “What signs do you remember that signaled a decline?”

W N: “Do you mean which signs made me realize that we were hated instead of loved? Well, an imperial organism needs nourishment from the other countries and exploitation soon rears its ugly head, consequences follow. There was Guatemala in ’54 but at the same time one could also read about our activities in Southern Asia. Hippies in San Francisco around ’58 demonstrated that something world wide was wrong: Cuba’s revolution in ’59 and the missile crisis that soon followed, the assassinations of the Kennedy brothers, Martin Luther King and the race riots, Che Guevara addressed the United Nations. So many South Americans were employed at Playboy and a few commented their feelings and opinions regarding injustice throughout the world; the emotion that swept through the club at the news of his murder three years later. By ’68 I felt that it was too late; Man is unable to change the monetary system and everything must run its course...so I’ve run my course of action with my head buried in music.

L N: “When you think that after approximately 90% of the time that our planet has existed, visible life began and that the human being represents only an infinitesimal fraction of a second, religion becomes a valid question to ponder. I’m indeed spiritual and realize that I’m related to all animal and plant life but I can’t belong to any organization. Yet, religious organizations help people to lead more harmonious lives with one another. When praying, our subconscious listens, remembers our thoughts and all other information collected; then it sends signals throughout our body; it is the captain of our ship and can make one well behaved. I program my subconscious mind with music and philosophical thoughts in order to be artistic; life is a search for the aesthetics.