

July 1985

Vol. 4 No. 12

Wrapping It Up

This completes Volume 4 of the *Jazzletter*, issue twelve — the “July” issue. It has come to seem futile, not to mention impossible, to catch up the dates, and so with a single cavalier stroke I am wiping out the months of August, September, October, November, and December, 1985. We’ll start Volume 5 with a January issue.

I’m very happy to tell you that Oxford University Press will publish two volumes of the essays from the *Jazzletter*. If you’ve noted any errors in the various essays over the past four years, I’d appreciate your letting me know about them while I am still editing for the books.

There follows a list of the subscribers. A number of people have already resubscribed for Volume 5, and the rest are due with this or the next issue. I’ve compiled an index of the four years of the *Jazzletter*.

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WGBH Boston, WKND Boston, WBGO Newark, WCDB Albany, WEBR Buffalo, WLVE Miami Beach, WMID Atlantic City, WEVD New York, WAER Syracuse, WHYW Braddock PA, WYEP Pittsburgh, WRTI Philadelphia, WPFW Washington DC, WWRC, Washington DC, WBJC Baltimore, WEAA Baltimore, WZAM Norfolk VA, Cable Jazz Network, WFSS Fayetteville NC 28301, WMGI Gainesville FL 32605, WVIA Pittston PA, WAMO Pittsburgh, WJHU Baltimore, WRKF Richmond, WHRO, Norfolk VA, WLOQ Winter Park FL, WLRN Miami, WMNF Tampa, WFPL Louisville, WDMT Newberry OH, WNOP Cincinnati, WVPE Elkhart, WJZZ Detroit, WTMJ Miami FL, WNGS West Palm Beach FL, WMOT Murfreesboro TN, WBBY Westerville OH, WIAN Indianapolis, WBEM Minneapolis, WBEE Harvey IL, KVNO Omaha, KTCJ New Hope MN, WGCI Chicago, KJCB Lafayette IL, KWGS Tulsa, KSAX Fort Worth, KLSK Santa Fe NM, KCRW Santa Monica CA, KPCC Pasadena, KABF Little Rock, KWGS Tulsa, KERA Dallas, KADX Castle Rock CO, KKGQ Los Angeles, KSDS San Diego, KHRM San Diego, KIFM San Diego, KVPR Fresno, KRML Carmel CA, KDVS Davis CA, KKSJN Portland OR, KLCC Eugene OR, and NPR and/or college radio stations,

WBUR Boston U, WWUH U of Hartford, WCNI Connecticut College, WYBC Yale U, WPKN U of Bridgeport, WNYU New York U, WKCR Columbia University, WCDB Albany NY, WVKR Vassar College, WSLU Canton NY, WBFO State U of New York Buffalo, WRUR U of Rochester, WDUQ Duquesne U, WRKC King's College, WKDU Drexel U, WRTI Temple U, WAMU American U, South Carolina Educational Radio, WCVT, Towson State U, WUNC U of N

Carolina, WXDU Duke U, WFAE Charlotte, WUOG U of Georgia, WUWF U of Western Florida, WUFT University of Florida, WUCF U of Central Florida, WUSF U of S Florida, WVSU Samford U, WMOT Murfreesboro TN, WSMS Memphis State U, WJSU Jackson State U, WRUW Cleveland, WUJC Cleveland, WKSU Kent State U, WWSU Wright State U, WIAN Indianapolis, WFIU Indiana University, WCBN U of Michigan, WEMU E Michigan U, WDET Wayne State, WGVC Grand Valley St U, KSUI U of Iowa, KCCCK Kirkwood College, KALA St. Ambrose College, WUWM U of Wisconsin Milwaukee, WLSU U of Wisconsin La Crosse, KAUR Augustan College, KFJM U of North Dakota, WDCB College of Du Page, WNUR Northwestern U, KSMU Southwest Missouri State U, WCBU Peoria IL, KWMU St. Louis MO, KWUR St Louis, KCUR Kansas City MO, KBIA U of Missouri, KANU-KFKU U of Kansas, WWNO U of New Orleans, KLSU Louisiana State U, KCSC Central State U, KTCU Texas Christian U, KNTU North Texas State U, KVLU Lamar U, KAMU Texas A&M U, KUHF U of Houston, KRTU Texas U, KUT U of Texas at Austin, KGNU Boulder CO, KUNC U of Northern Colorado, KTSC U of Southern Colorado, KUER U of Utah, KBYU Brigham Young University, KUNV U of Nevada, KCSN Cal Arts, KLON Long Beach, KSPC Pomona College, KUCR U of California at Riverside, KUCI U of California at Irvine, KAZU Pacific Grove, KKUP Cupertino CA, KSCU Santa Clara, KUSP Santa Cruz CA, KSJU San Jose, KUOP U of the Pacific, KDVS Davis CA 95616, KMHD Mount Hood Community College, KMHD Mount Hood Community College, KSOR Southern Oregon State College Ashland, KBCS Bellevue Community College, KUOW U of Washington Seattle, KPLU Pacific Lutheran University.

In Defense of KKGQ

The Los Angeles jazz community has long grumbled about the city's major jazz radio station, KKGQ. They complain that it is too highly formatted, with a playlist like that of a pop-music station, and that the list contains too much that "isn't jazz".

I decided recently to find out for myself what the station is all about and to that end I listened to it at long stretches through the day and even the hours before dawn. I listened to it for more than a week.

I find the complaints to be, if not without foundation, at least seriously and unfairly exaggerated. And even those things that offend some people do not offend me. If the station plays so-called fusion in with the jazz, that's hardly a major sin. It permits one — assuming one is curious about these things — to find out without effort what is going on in these areas. If the station offers some Brazilian tracks and vocals by Sue Raney and Joannie Summers, fine. I don't get to hear them anywhere else. And I am bananas about Ernestine Anderson, who gets a lot of play on KKGQ.

The jazz community has rarely faced all the implications of the fact that this music has had to survive largely without subsidy, making its own way in a commercial world. Now, to be sure, a certain amount of subsidization has come about through the National Endowment of the Arts, but the complaints about this too are now being heard as the jazz world finds out what artists in Canada and other countries have known for some

Notice

The *Jazzletter* is published 12 times a year at Ojai, California, 93023, and distributed by first class mail to the United States and Canada and by air mail to other countries. Subscriptions are \$30 a year in U.S. currency for the United States and Canada, \$35 to European countries, \$40 to other countries. Subscribers can purchase gift subscriptions for \$20 U.S. for the U.S. and Canada, \$25 to other countries. Past issues can be purchased for \$20 U.S. per year, or \$2.50 per issues.

time. Subsidies, particularly government subsidies, are handed out by committees composed of people who (a) are often the worst sort of pedant, the kind of dessicated academic the politicians and bureaucrats recognize as "recognized authorities", (b) tend to favor the artsy-craftsy things rather than the vital and real, and (c) reflect a bias for personal friends or at least those who move in the right circles to get grants. Some people have become extremely skilled at getting grant after grant, and there are even professional consultants who specialize in manipulating the system to get grants for others. There is nothing wrong with grants. There is plenty wrong with who decides who gets them.

KKGO is not part of the admirable National Public Radio system. For NPR, people in Los Angeles can listen to KCRW in Santa Monica, who presents some very good programs, including the jazz show of Will Thornbury, an informed commentator on the music and its history. KKGO is a commercial station that has to pay its own way — like jazz itself. That means it must reach an audience of reasonable size if it is to attract the advertising that keeps it on the air. The logical thing to do, from a purely business standpoint, is to switch to a pop format, but the station's owner, Saul Levine, to his credit, has not done so. It seems to me that the Los Angeles jazz community is rather insensitive to what KKGO does do for and with jazz.

What is wrong with radio generally is its intense blinkered formatting. You get all classical music on one station, all rock on another, all country-and-western on a third, all jazz on a fourth. This leads to an incredible insularity of taste, with people entrapped in a love of one kind of music only. Nobody learns about anything else. If KKGO pulls in a younger audience through the poppish jazz it slips in along the way and this audience sticks around to acquire a taste for more substantial fare, well and good. And some of the pop jazz material is pretty interesting stuff in its own right.

The pop content is highest, as you might expect, during the day. The format loosens up as evening wears on, and Chuck Niles seems to have a fair amount of freedom to play what he likes. That is to the good. He has taste, great knowledge of the music, and a refined sense of pacing. He is one of the best-liked men in the music world, which makes him privy to a great deal of background information. The other on-the-air people are capable and attractive personalities, including Dick McGarvin, Gary Owens, and Jim Gossa. During the midnight-to-dawn hours, KKGO plays almost nothing but solid, pure, mainstream jazz.

A complaint one might lay against the station is that it doesn't do more teaching, more directly educational broadcasts, which would have the dual effect of raising the level of the audience's understanding while building a better and perhaps even larger audience for itself.

Recently KKGO did a four-day four-night tribute to Miles Davis. It was a fascinating marathon, a strong reminder of the scope and weight of his career. The station played material from all phases of his career, including some dubious recent stuff, along with the body of his finest work, particularly those monumental collaborations with Gil Evans, *Porgy and Bess* and *Sketches of Spain*. If you haven't heard them in a while, it's worth digging them out. They are masterpieces.

As worthwhile as this retrospective was, playing a lot of Miles Davis records and naming the personnel didn't offer

insights for that younger audience that may have been drawn to the station by the pop-jazz material. It did not educate them to the nature of his work and the range of his influence. It was well done. It could have been better.

The station is perhaps too strongly devoted to mainstream post-bebop jazz. I think it could do with some programs devoted to older jazz as well as the avant-garde. Those who don't like either one could skip the programs; but those who do would listen and the very presence of these programs would add to the scope and prestige, not to mention fairness, of the station.

There is one interesting specialized program as it is. On Sunday evenings, there are several hours of what is called Latin jazz. I had no idea there was so much interesting instrumental music being made in that other culture. The program is very instructive.

A radio station cannot be, by the nature of its need to please a broad and varied audience, one's personal juke box. KKGO is to be commended precisely because it doesn't restrict itself to preaching to the converted. We the converted have our record collections and through them can listen attentively and only to what we know and like — which most of us tend to do too much as it is.

KKGO has its shortcomings. But I think it's been bum-rapped. It is not only a very good radio station. It's one of the best radio stations in America.

Radio Romances

by Lyn Murray

In the late 1920s, all the major publishers of popular music maintained offices in Philadelphia. Feist had a big layout in a beat-up building on Market Street where a staff of piano players tried to pound the plug tunes into the heads of tone-deaf girl singers (when they weren't trying to do something else), vaudeville acts, male quartets, cabaret performers, and radio singers. I used to go there to pick up professional copies — the melody, words, and ukelele symbols printed on what seemed to be a low grade of toilet paper. That was where I met Joey Martin, late of Borrah Minnevitich's Harmonica Rascals.

Minnevitich was a big vaudeville headliner then. His act consisted of a bunch of kids dressed in rags playing classics like *Dark Eyes*, Rachmaninoff's *Prelude in C-sharp minor*, *Valse Triste* and *The Stars and Stripes Forever* on harmonicas, with Johnny Puleo, a fifty-year-old dwarf, in there for comic relief. Joey Martin had outgrown his costume, or something, and was out of a job. We decided to put an act together.

Joey was a south Philadelphia Italian with a nice personality. He smiled a lot. There were big spaces between his teeth which no doubt accounted for the beautiful sounds he was able to produce on his chromatic harmonica. He was a good dancer, too, but when he was doing his dance routines he perspired, and his feet didn't exactly smell like Chanel No. 5. The white cotton socks he wore at all times didn't seem to help. I was a dour character from the north of England, but I played piano, and when I sang you could understand the lyrics. Sort of like Fred Astaire. Anyhow, I taught Joey to sing — enough at least to join in our opening song, *Gee I'm Glad to Be Back in My Old Home Town*, and he taught me some steps and enough harmonica for the big finish.

We bought a second-hand trunk and got some guy to paint on it:

Martin & Murray
in
Funny Rhythm

and went to New York.

We spent the first four nights at the Mills Hotel, where beds cost fifty cents. The fifth night, broke, we rolled ourselves in newspapers and slept under the marquee of the St. James Theater where Walter Woolf was playing in *The Red Robe*. The next night we moved into the Cornell Apartments, 47th Street between Sixth and Seventh, a flea-bag patronized by the profession and run under a strict set of rules including "No Opium Smoking in the Elevator" and "Bury Your Own Dead".

This came about because Joey found out the night clerk at the Cornell was an Italian kid interested in learning the art of tap-dancing, free. He let us move in without paying the usual week in advance.

We unpacked the trunk and walked down to 47th and Seventh to join the crowd of actors on the sidewalk in front of the Palace. That's where we were going to play some day, even if it was only in the Number 2 spot on the bill. Mecca. A shivering kid with an armful of newspapers cried, "Phil Scott injured!" A man with his coat collar turned up and his hat down over his eyes pushed by muttering, "Fuck him."

From where we stood we could see that Larry Adler, the other harmonica virtuoso, was headlining a Publix unit at the Paramount. Joey said, "Hey, he's a friend of mine. Let's go over and see him." We walked — slowly, on account of hunger pangs — down to the Paramount. Joey smiled at the stage doorman and told him we had an appointment. We took the elevator up to Adler's dressing room, where Joey introduced me, told him how well we were doing, and hit him for fifty cents.

Down in the street, we pushed through the crowds to one of those off-Broadway Italian restaurants with the chef in the window cooking spaghetti. We went in and blew the fifty cents on two plates of spaghetti with meatballs, rolls, and coffee.

An agent we found lurking near a pay phone in the lobby of the Gaiety Building gave us our first job. Ebling's Casino in the Bronx, one performance, usual club-date scale, seven dollars.

We worked in tuxedos. Very classy. Except that Joey, because of his problem feet, wore his white cotton socks. Coming back in the subway, Joey took off his shoes. The people, probably thinking a gas main had burst, fought their way into adjacent cars and we were alone. I opened a window and put my head out.

Joey said, "Hey. How much we gettin' for tonight?"

I said, "Seven dollars."

He pulled off his socks, draped them over the back of a seat, wiggled his toes, and pulled a roll of bills out of his pocket.

I said, "What's that?"

He handed it to me, saying, "Count it."

I counted it. Thirty-five dollars.

"Where'd you get it?"

"I rolled a drunk in the men's room."

After that we slowly starved. We got by on change Joey borrowed from friendly Italian tap dancers — in those days the tap-dancing fraternity were twelve percent black and eighty-eight percent Italian — and on an apple turnover my mother

sent every Thursday.

I answered an ad for a piano player to go "out of town" and got the job. Joey and I dissolved our partnership and I left with a man named Hunter Copeland to join the staff of his radio station in Newport News, Virginia. And that's out of town.

The train pulled into the Newport News station. My new employer erupted onto the platform calling for porters. Hunter Copeland, a nervously energetic man, was into all kinds of businesses but devoted most of his time to running the radio station. He thought of himself as an impresario of the airwaves — a Virginia smoked ham version of Sarnoff and Paley but with more talent.

He hustled me out of the station, and I saw a broad rising sweep of verdant lawn at the pinnacle of which was a diadem, a jewel, a gracious white-pillared ante-bellum edifice: the Warwick Hotel.

Hunter said, "How you like it, boy? We got our studios up there on the fo'th floah. I made 'em a nice deal. They give us the space and ever' once in a while we say, 'This is WGH, the World's Greatest Harbor, with studios in the beautiful Warwick Hotel, Newport News.'"

We climbed the grassy slope. Hunter wasn't in such great shape but had a lot to communicate. "Boy," he gasped, "we got a racket goin' heah. You never saw nothin' like it in New York. Now, lookit. We goin' give you a car for yourse'f an' you goin' drive it over to Mr. Smith's gas station. And you goin' to say to Mr. Smith, 'I'm goin' to make you a little deal. You keep this car filled up with gas and oil and ever' night at six o'clock I'm goin' read an announcement over the air tellin' ever'body why they should come buy their gas, oil, and tars at Smith's Service Station.'"

We reached the top of the slope and went into the hotel.

"You goin' have a room right next to the station," Hunter continued. "'Course, you goin' to share it with Watt Watkins. You ever hear of him? You goin' to like him. He's my other piano player. You'll get along just fine." We got into the elevator. Hunter said to its elderly black operator, "How you doin', George? This Mr. Murray, my new piano player I brought down from New York." The old man greeted me. He was the first black serving man I had ever seen. There were lots of them round the Warwick Hotel. We got off the the elevator at the fourth floor and walked down a wide airy corridor with tall louvered doors in the Southern style on either hand. Hunter couldn't wait to show me the studios.

They consisted of one large room furnished with two grand pianos, a Hammond organ, three carbon microphones and, across one end, an observation gallery; a small adjacent room containing two turntables and a man talking into a table microphone; and, beyond, an office with two desks — one for Hunter, the other for his partner, Ellsworth Bishop. Mr. Bishop warily shook hands with me — another of Copeland's entrepreneurial extravagances? — and went back to his rate cards.

Hunter conducted me to a room next to the observation gallery, explaining on the way that his staff consisted of Lonsdale Skiles, chief announcer, Watt Watkins, pianist-in-residence, and Trost, the engineer in charge of the transmitter, which was located on a hill outside of town. In the room was a double bed, a wardrobe, a work bench littered with soldering irons, coils of wire, broken amplifiers, electronic components in

various stages of disrepair and, piled on the floor, boxes of tubes and other supplies. It was a mess. Lying on the bed was a dead body. This was Watt Watkins. Hunter woke him up and introduced me to him. Bubbling with enthusiasm and anticipation, Hunter said, "I want you two to get to work on some two-piano arrangements. The Ohman and Arden of the Peninsula!" Ohman and Arden was a popular piano duo of the period.

We left Watt to pull himself together and went down in the elevator, through the lobby, and into the barber shop, where I was shown off to assorted Chamber of Commerce types who were having their hair trimmed. Out in the street we walked a few paces to Pete & Josie's, a clean little hole-in-the-wall with a counter. The big man from New York was presented to Pete, a large heavy man with thinning white hair who looked like a retired truck driver, and Josie, an ample motherly woman who looked like the wife of a retired truck driver.

We ordered something to eat. As we were finishing, Hunter said, "You got money?"

I looked at him for a moment and said, "Sure."

He said, "You catch this, I'll see you later. I got to go do a little business." He left.

I ordered another cup of coffee. I asked Pete if I could talk to him privately. We squeezed into the tiny kitchen where Josie was making the hamburgers. I said, "He hired me in New York yesterday. I was broke then and I am broke now. He's paying me forty-five dollars a week. Can you carry me till I get paid?"

Pete opened a drawer, pulled out a book of meal tickets and handed it to me. He said, "This'll last you a week, son."

Josie wiped her hands on her apron, put a big loving hand on my shoulder, and said, "An' if he don't pay you at the end of the week, Pete'll give you another one."

Lonsdale Skiles, the chief announcer, was a married man. Watkins — whose bed I had to share — was not. He was a sweet, gentle, soft-speaking religious soul who played the piano by ear. Very well, too. Like all ear players he was most at home on the black keys. I was not, but after a year with Watt I could play passably in D-flat, although G-flat still eludes me.

My arrival at WGH expanded the on-the-air personnel by one third, and a schedule was worked out. The station opened at eight a.m. and signed off at about eleven p.m. Watkins and I opened on alternate days. The hotel switchboard rang our room at 7:45, and whoever was on piled out of bed and, still in pajamas, went next door to the studio and got Trost on the intercom to see if he was warming up the transmitter. Mostly he was and, at eight o'clock — Hunter insisted on it — the audience got a cheery "Good morning!" and a Boswell Sisters transcription. A transcription is a sixteen-inch record that plays for fifteen minutes.

Some months later, when we all knew each other much better, we did a different opening.

There was a party celebrating a new gas station account or a new piano arrangement of *Softly as in a Morning Sunrise* (Hunter's favorite song after *Mother Machree*) or perhaps the birth of Skiles' fourth or fifth child. Whatever the reason for it, the party went on till dawn. Out on the street, Hunter, wheezing and gasping, said, "It's too late to go home. Why don't we all go over and open the station?"

On the way there, we got into an argument about whether or not the gasses of flatulence were flammable. Watkins, the only

serious well-informed student of the subject, stated flatly that they were. When we got to the station, Hunter, taking a nip from the bottle in his desk drawer, recognized an opportunity to do something Sarnoff and Paley had never done. He said, "What time is it?"

"Ten till eight."

"Has anybody called Trost to see if the transmitter is on the air?"

"Yes sir."

"All right. Now heah's what we goin' to do. Skiles!"

"Yes sir?"

"Take down yo' pants. You too, Watt, you the expert. Now get yo' asses up to the mike, and Lyn, you get some matches ready. I'll do the narration. Reach me that bottle. Ah, thank you."

The longer clock hand came straight up, Hunter took another nip and switched on the mike.

"All right. Ladies and gemmun, now we gon' to bring you . . ."

"A cheery good morning," said Watt.

Hunter focussed on him, swiveled back to the microphone. "Ladies and gemmun, a cheery good mornin'. We bringin' you this mornin' a radio first! Ladies and gemmun, for the first time on WGH or any other radio station, we goin' to attempt to light a fart!" He pronounced it without an r. Weaving around, he whispered to Skiles, "Come on, Skiles, no you *on*. Let me have it on the count of three." Skiles hitched his butt around and Hunter called, "One . . . two . . ." I lit a match. "Three!" Skiles let go, I held the match close, and Hunter said, "Ladies and gemm . . ." as a pure blue flame reached toward the microphone. "Ladies and gemmun . . . well, I'll be goddamn!"

Then Trost's voice came over the intercom speaker. "What the hell you crazy bastards doin' down there? You wanna lose our *license*?"

Hunter pressed the switch on the intercom. "Trost, this is Mr. Copeland! Did you get that?"

Trost's voice: "I don't know what's goin' on down there, Mr. Copeland, but I cut them off the air after they said 'fart'."

Hunter, breathing hard, said, "Trost, you son bitch! You fired!"

It was as though we had conducted our own rating survey. Apparently no one listened to WGH at 8 a.m. except Ellsworth Bishop, who heard it in his car. He stormed in and threatened to fire everybody. But all he did, after he pried Hunter's fingers off the bottle, was to drive him home. Normally Skiles came in at nine and took over until noon, reading the news and farm reports, playing records, and putting on a fifteen-minute transcription when he had to go to the bathroom. We split up the rest of the day and occasionally Bishop, who had a rather pleasant fruity voice, would spell us. Watt and I did two-piano programs, I did a few fifteen-minute singalongs, Watt and I did some piano and organ programs, Skiles and I did an act called Stanley and Baker (humorous), Watt did some solo piano programs, and Skiles and I did a half-hour mystery show — haunted house stuff — which I wrote. We did our own sound effects until, on one show, Hunter, who was just walking through the studio on his way to his desk, got cut over the eye by flying glass.

Hunter came in each morning about ten, as surly as a bear who had been up all winter with his foot in a trap. Nobody spoke to him. He would sit at his desk, take a nip, get on the phone to see how his other businesses were doing, nip some

more, and make a call or two to drum up new accounts for the station. By lunchtime he was beginning to feel a little better. By late afternoon he was breathing hard and ready to help us lay out our programs.

At one of these boozy conferences, I suggested that if we put a microphone in each of the pianos and a couple more high up in the corners of the room, we could probably make the studio sound like Carnegie Hall. Wow! Great! Then a cloud. We'd have to buy another microphone. Bishop would never do it.

"Why boy," he said, "it wasn't so long ago we only had *one* mike in the whole station! When we had a senator givin' a speech up at the Hall, we had to sign off the air! Unplug the mike! Rush it out to the Hall, plug it in and say, 'Ladies and gentleman, we are resumin' our broadcast day from 'et cetera et cetera and so forth. Why I remember the time when we only had twenty *records* here! Now, lookit, tonight I want you to play . . ."

Usually Hunter went home to Hampton for dinner with his wife, an elegant, charming and beautiful southern lady, but often, when Watt and I went on at nine p.m. with two-piano stuff, he wouldn't be able to stand it. He would get in his car and come racing back to the studio, grab a mike, introduce himself, and sing. *Mother Machree*. He always sang *Mother Machree* in the key of E-flat.

In E-flat the phrase "I kiss the dear fingers so toilworn with care, O-o-o-h God bless you . . ." the "Oh" comes on a high G, and sometimes Hunter did not have a high G available. It had to do with the level in the liquor bottle at the end of the day. If there was a little left, he might make it. If it was empty, Watt and I understood, when it came to the high note it would be up to us. So on wet nights it went like this:

Hunter

Sure, I love the dear silver
That shines in your hair,
And the brow that's all furrowed
And wrinkled with care.
I kiss the dear fingers
So toilworn for me,

Watt and me

O-O-O-OH, God bless you,

Hunter

And keep you,
Mother - - -
Ma - - - CHREE!

Being on the air day and night, people could not escape us. We got invited to appear in person at high schools, veterans' hospitals, church suppers and rummage sales. And we got fan letters. Watt's came from ladies comfortably knitting or dozing in their rocking chairs, ladies who divined the purity of his character from the quality of his soft southern voice and the way he caressed the keys. Apparently there was a subtle difference in our radio personalities. My letters came almost exclusively from libidinous southern belles and, may I say, that can get you in a peck of trouble.

Like losing your job.

It started the day this very tall girl came into the observation gallery and watched through the glass. I was hunched over the

piano attending to my business when the laser beams hit me. I could see her out of the corner of my eye. She was my ideal of womanhood — nine feet tall, red hair, thirty-nine-inch hips and bust, and everything else in perfect proportion. She outweighed me by forty pounds and her breath was fogging the glass. She had driven two hundred miles from Rocky Mount, North Carolina, to see what I looked like.

After the program, Miss Rocky Mount and I drifted into the boudoir. She was out of breath from driving the two hundred miles, so I helped her undress. She stood a moment among the tubes, amplifiers, and umbilical cordage, a cornucopia of hills and valleys, a twelve-course feast for the gods, sweetmeats and ambrosia. She lowered her heavenly body to the bed . . .

Our idyll went on all summer, a theme and variations simmering and boiling, pianissimo fortissimo, until she made a demand — under the circumstances, not an unreasonable one.

At WGH we all worked seven days a week, and the Rocky Mount Venus wanted to be taken away for a weekend so we could be alone. Little things had begun to irritate her. Trost coming in for a spare part. Watt hanging around combing his mustache or changing his shirt. I agreed that she had a point, and my request for a weekend off was granted. Hunter Copeland and the rest probably figured if they gave me enough time with her, I would drop dead and they could then move in.

We checked into a lover's hideaway in downtown Norfolk on a balmy Saturday afternoon . . .

Ten days later I went to the bathroom and set off a five-alarm fire.

I made discreet inquiries and was directed to a Dr. Knewstep in Hampton. He looked at me and said, "My boy, you have got yourself a loathsome disease there, and it will cost you two hundred and fifty dollars to get rid of it."

Knewstep was a friend of Copeland's and told him what I had. "Keep away from me, boy," Hunter said. "Don't use the drinking fountain. And wash down the piano every time you use it."

Before the episode with the flower of Rocky Mount, an Armenian girl with black hair and a dark complexion suffused with the vibrant glow of health and anticipation had set her sights on me. Now I thought it was only fair to tell her why the consummation I so devoutly wished was, at least pro tem, out of reach. We were sitting in the studio car looking at the moon on the James River at the time. She flung her arms about me, gave me a passionate searching kiss, and said she would wait. We sat in the car for a few weeks, necking and waiting.

The sole bright spot in this dark period was a visit I received from three menacing and muscular brothers of Miss Armenia. They had heard I was messing about with their sister and wanted it stopped. Or else. I said, "Gentleman, I am innocent of this charge. Please follow me." I took them into the boudoir and unveiled the accused, encased in Dr. K's mummy wrapping. They apologized and, not going so far as to shake hands, left.

In time the course of treatment took effect and I began to feel my old self again. In high spirits on my program one day, I dedicated a song to Dr. Knewstep, *Ain't Misbehavin'*. It was a favorite tune of mine anyway. The management got some complaints. I believe it got into the newspaper in a veiled sort of way. And Hunter, complaining tearfully that mine was the only dose of clap ever advertised over the radio in the history of the Dominion, fired me.

Maybe he was looking for an excuse. It was 1930 and the

Depression was taking hold. With me gone, he would save forty-five dollars a week.

I went home to Philadelphia with five dollars in my pocket. I applied at all the radio stations I found listed in the book and, before the five dollars ran out, landed a job on the local CBS outlet, WCAU.

I settled down, fell in love, and got married.

Four times.

— LM

Lyn was born in London, England, December 6, 1909, spent his childhood in Lancashire, his adolescence in Philadelphia, and became an American citizen in 1929. He was educated at Juilliard and with Joseph Schillinger. From WCAU he went on to a distinguished career first as a choral arranger at CBS — anyone who recalls the era of network radio remembers the Lyn Murray Singers — and for Broadway musicals such as Panama Hattie, Let's Face It, and Finian's Rainbow, then as a motion picture composer. His film scores include The Prowler, Cinderella, The Bridges of Toko-Ri, To Catch a Thief, Son of Paleface, and many others. When last heard from, he had his nose buried in the score paper turning out the music for a series of National Geographic television documentaries.

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