Gene Lees
Jazzletter

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Letters

While listening to your fantastic new album, *Leaves on the Album*, with the tremendous artistry of Roger Kellaway and you, it struck me as being time to drop you a line to send my congratulations and also deepest hope that you will continue the excellent *Jazzletter*. With its information of all kinds, it stands totally apart from the third-grade mentality that permeates much of our media today. I have found something to cause me to think, to wonder, to reflect on that which we call the human conditon.

I have admired your use of our mother tongue to explain, interpet, expound, and challenge the minds of readers. This admiration goes all the back to Michigan State University the summer that our beloved Stan Kenton introduced us at his clinic there. I recall that our band was playing Bill Mathieu's great chart on *Meaning of the Blues* when Stan stopped us, had me come from the stage down to the aisle, and said, 'Leon, this is Gene Lees.'

Please keep doing what you are doing.

Leon Breeden
Professor Emeritus
North Texas State University
Denton, Texas

Perhaps my experiences are unique, but I find the music of most university jazz programs to be bland and uninteresting. The improvisations are scalar-chordal displays of technical proficiency, and ensemble passages have very little jazz feeling as I understand the idiom. Perhaps we as a developing culture have passed the stage where emotional content is important. The occasional rock that I hear seems to be screaming banalities contrived for effect and devoid of emotional content.

I find the *Jazzletters* the best reading of any material I receive. I was asked to address a class in the music school here not long ago, and I took your *Jazzletter* Vol. 3 No. 4, about the decline of the public transportation system and its effect on the big-band era and used that as basic material for my lecture. If I were teaching, I would use much of this material in classes that deal with concepts and ideas. A fault of many jazz programs, in my opinion, is that they deal primarily with developing technical proficiency and neglect the area of concept and ideas. Your *Jazzletters* fill a desperate need in that area.

Gene Hall, Nacogdoches, Texas

By strange coincidence, the two foregoing letters arrived on the same day.

Dr. Hall's criticism of the jazz-education movement bears all the more weight in that he is one of its founding figures. Gene established the Lab Band program at North Texas State, one of the finest jazz training programs in the world and almost certainly the best-known. He set it up in 1947 and headed it until 1959, when he left to set up the Michigan State program. His lifelong friend Leon Breeden replaced him at NTSU. Gene is now an adviser at Stephen F. Austin State University.

His criticism is echoed by many practicing jazz players, Phil Woods among them, and by a number of other educators.

His letter contains a startling idea — that our culture may somehow have passed beyond needing emotional content in its "art". One thinks immediately of the sexual impersonality of so much rock music, and of the passionless pattern-making that seems to be the sole purpose of a lot of contemporary "classical" music, not to mention the ice-cold but skilled improvisations of some of the newly-famous jazz players. Then one looks to the brainlessly gruesome horror movies that do well with young people. The emotional content is nil, the characters are cardboard, the stories are negligible — mere frameworks for sequences of sanguine slaughter. The vivid special effects become dull from their own excess, leaving one with only a vague curiosity about how they are done.

Beyond that, there are all the road-warrior type films. I was fascinated by Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome, *not because it is a bad movie but because it is a very good one. It portrays a dead post-holocaust world in which there are only remnants of civilization, and death is dealt out casually as a game. The film has almost no emotional content, and yet is strangely attractive — and extremely well-made. These films, which universally presuppose nuclear war, seem to be a desensitization we are by some visceral instinct putting ourselves through, inuring ourselves to the great slaughter our "leaders" are designing for us, resigning ourselves to our own obliteration.*

The moral achievement of politicians is that a very great many young children do not, according to a number of studies that have been made, expect to grow up. Is it any wonder that as they reach their teens they stare glassily at Friday the Thirteenth *and all its sequels and clones? The "me generation" has aged into being the yuppies, many and perhaps most of whom don't care whether the elderly get medical care, the greed of big corporations goes unchecked, and the philosophy that avarice is the highest motive of man has found a home in the White House and No. 10 Downing Street. Isn't it logical that our "art" — or much of it, at least — would reflect the dehumanization process that is going on all around us?*

Dr. Hall has raised an interesting and disquieting point.

To Be or Not to Be

We're going to make a decision in the next three or four weeks, you and I. You're going to help me decide whether the *Jazzletter* is to survive. At the end of each of its five years of existence, I have questioned whether to continue it. But never as seriously as now.

I'm tired, not of the writing and editing — which I love to do, particularly the latter, when I can deal with people as gifted as Bobby Scott, Bill Crow, Lyn Murray, Steve Allen, and all the other contributors. That's pure joy. What wears me down is the struggle to keep it going. And what makes the struggle the more

difficult is the fact that some people have let their resubscriptions lag well into the year. Resubscriptions were trailing in nine months after the start of the current volume year. This causes me to spend as much time keeping track of the circulation as I do on the writing. But there's a more serious effect. Tardy resubscription raises the cost of the *Jazzletter*. If everyone would resubscribe at once, I could cut expenses by ordering supplies, including paper, for the whole year, instead of nickle-and-diming it. And issues would not run late.

The *Jazzletter* would not have survived even this long were it not for certain people who purchased gift subscriptions, particularly Frank M. Tack of Los Angeles and David Logan of Chicago who have for several years donated large numbers of subscriptions to various institutions, including college radio stations. These gifts are enormously appreciated by such organizations, which are often chronically underfunded. Frank Tack and David Logan have bailed the *Jazzletter* out on several occasions of dire need.

So here's how we're going to make the decision. With the next issue, we will be at the end of Volume 5. There's no confusion this year: *all* resubscriptions are due. I would like to ask you to resubscribe now. I'll take all the checks that come in during the next month and throw them into a shoe box. If at the end of four weeks, enough of them have arrived, I will deposit them and continue the *Jazzletter* into Volume 6. If they are coming in too slowly, I'll mail them all back and close the *Jazzletter* down.

If more people would contribute subscriptions to schools, libraries, and other institutions qualifying as tax-deductible, it would help enormously. So would a sudden flood of Christmas gift subscriptions.

And I'm going to have to raise the price to $40, and gift subscriptions to $30. I've held it at $30 for four years, though expenses have soared in that time. When it first started, some Canadian musicians grumped that $25 a year was "a bit pricey". Really? In an age when dinner for two in a halfway decent restaurant will run you a minimum $50? And maybe a lot more? $40 is the price of two bottles of Glenfiddich (Johnny Mercer's favorite Scotch, and mine). But then, Canadians are not famous for loose wallets — maybe it's the Scottish blood that runs in the country's veins. (Come to think of it, we don't have one subscriber in Scotland.)

Anyway, I am reluctantly raising the subscription cost to $40. If you can afford more, send it. And if you can't afford that much, send what you can. And if you can't afford it at all, don't blush and dig your toe in the dirt — tell me, and the *Jazzletter* will be free until you're through the doldrums. (We have some retired people on our subscription list, struggling on fixed incomes in the face of the continuing inflation that Ronnie claims to have stopped.) But don't leave me hanging, wondering whether you're just one of the poetic procrastinators.

Henry Mancini, Francy Boland, and others have become disturbed when I have mentioned the possibility of terminating the *Jazzletter*. Hank said, "It's just really beginning to have its power and recognition." And I certainly don't want to close it down. There are so many people I want to write about — Benny Carter, Dizzy Gillespie, John Heard, Alan Broadbent among them. And there are issues that urgently need examining, such as the incredible massed lobbying effort of the broadcasting industry to push through Congress a bill that would screw songwriters almost totally out of their royalties and throw the United States into a cultural dark age, completely out of synch with the rest of the civilized world. Those two gifted lyricists Alan and Marilyn Bergman have been particularly active in fighting this travesty of legislation, this attempted rape of the talented for the profit of what Ayn Rand aptly called The Appropriators, and I want to do a story about the Bergmans and their efforts. I want to examine and explain what is going on there.

But I can't do it without you. So please resubscribe now. Not tomorrow. Now. If the resubscriptions come in too slowly and I have to close the *Jazzletter* down, you'll know that when your check comes back in the mail. But if the resubsciptions come in sufficiently quickly, and the decision is to keep it going, you'll know that, too, when the first issue of Volume 6 arrives.

Rated G for Genius

by Bob Waldman

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dejavue Press, publisher's of last year's critically acclaimed retrospective *Hot! Nutritious! Yummy!: Popcorn Machines of the Great Movie Palaces* ($39.95), is proud to announce a major addition to the library of performing-arts books: the discovery of a long-missing diary kept by composer-performer Nathan Steinstein.

Steinstein — a name synonymous with the Golden Era of Show Business, the 1930s. In a decade when every composer, writer, and performer was a genius, Steinstein was the genius's genius. Eight years old and a heady mixture of Freddie Bartholomew and Oscar Levant, Steinstein was at home whether in Shubert Alley, Carnegie Hall, or Beverly Hills.

The media have made little mention of Steinstein since his mysterious disappearance in 1944. (An increasing numbers of fans believe he was on the same flight as Glenn Miller.) Owners of the precious remaining copies of *Steinstein plays Steinstein on the Steinway* cannot bear to play the album in fear of wear or breakage. His movies, like so many '30s films printed on nitrate stock, have disintegrated.

Until the diary's discovery, the only visible evidence of Steinstein's existence was supplied by Walt Disney's *Fantasia*. There, in the orchestra sequences conducted by Leopold Stokowski, is Nathan Steinstein playing piano. Since the musicians were photographed in silhouette, there may be some doubt whether the pianist is really Steinstein, but as avid Steinsteinophiles are quick to point out, "The cowlick! The cowlick! It's *his* cowlick!"

Now these fans and anyone who loves show business have more than a cowlick. A few months ago, a grade-school composition notebook was discovered stuck with chewing gum to the underside of a table in the Beverly Hills Hotel's Polo Lounge. After thirty-nine years, the Steinstein Diary, a journal long rumored to tell all, had surfaced.

Announcement of the discovery sent shock waves through the entertainment industry. Immediately, "What did he say about me?" replaced "There's a lot of interest" and "Where's my Maalox?" as the phrase most often heard among show business veterans.

On April 30, Dejavue Press will publish a limited edition of the diary under its original title, *Composition . . . Name . . . Subject . . . Grade . . . School* ($59.95 before 5/31, $65 thereafter). The diary's publication will give new insight into the characters of the Broadway-Hollywood giants of the Depression years and their relationship with this young genius. As a preview, here are some excerpts from the period preceding and during Steinstein's first trip to Hollywood.

July 21, 1936

Had lunch at the Russian Team Room with Mischa Elman. He did his fat face for me. I giggled so much my tea came out my nose. Then he taught me how to do it. Mama says if I do it too much my face will stay that way. Lunch was good. Did you know caviar is fish eggs?

August 3, 1936

Jolie wants his name on the sheet music and my name off. I should have learned my lesson with *April Showers.*

September 17, 1936

Dinner at Reuben's with Orson Welles. Orson is old — twenty — and he's not even married yet. Orson wants me to write the incidental music for a street-clothes version of *Peter Pan* set in Union Square and Berlin. He wants Jesse Owens to play Tinkerbelle. I told Orson I would think about it.

P.S. Guess what. Reuben's is going to name a sandwich after me!

Oct ober 12, 1936

Played pinochle at the Friar's Club with the boys. If Irving Caesar tells the story one more time about how he and Gershwin wrote *Swanee* in fifteen minutes, I'm going to bite his kneecap!

November 8, 1936

Shirley Temple came to New York today. Everybody took pictures of us. She is cute, but Mama says it's all in the curls. I like Darla Hood better.

P.S. FDR was elected to his second term. I wrote a victory song for him — *Happy Days Are Here Again, Again.*

December 26, 1936

It's Xmas time and Papa bought a Lincoln Zephyr, a mink coat for Mama, and a Stromberg-Carlson Super Heterodyne Radio ("To hear her little bubbala," says Mama). And I got a raise in my allowance! It's now fifty cents a week!

January 2, 1937

Happy New Year! Mama and Papa are so good to me. Look what they sent out today:

Mr. Stuart Harrison
Vice President, Advertising
R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company
Durham, North Carolina

Dear Mr. Harrison:

Thank you very much for your letter of December 22. Regretfully, Nathan cannot appear in your "Camels Agree with Me" advertisement for obvious reasons.

As you are undoubtedly aware, Nathan's career is at its peak, and an offer of $10,000 is far below the current payment for his talents.

However, if you want to renegotiate, please don't hesitate to call us at ESplanade 6-4327.

Sincerely
Mr. and Mrs. Sol Steinstein
Personal managers of
Nathan Steinstein

P.S. Thank you for your generous holiday gifts. Our neighbors the O'Briens said the Smithfield Ham was delicious.

February 15, 1937

Hooray for Hollywood! I spent the day with George and Ira and we finally licked the problem. I can now ride my two-wheeler without training wheels.

February 23, 1937

Mama and Papa laid down the law. They won't let me say bad words unless they're about Harry Cohn.

March 10, 1937

As usual, W.C. Fields was acting up on the set today, so I put milk in his cocktail shaker. He got sober and threw up.

April 3, 1937

Had dinner at Chasen's with David O. Selznick. He taught me two important lessons about Hollywood. 1. Pictures about the South never make money. 2. Never call anyone who wears glasses "four eyes".

P.S. He spanked me for Number 2.

April 11, 1937

Rats! The Brown Derby got rid of its Children's Menu.

May 18, 1937

The Hollywood Bowl concert was tonight. I wrote a special version of *Peter and the Wolf* for the occasion, called *Peter and the Wolfe, the Crickets and the Mosquitoes.* People in Hollywood have to listen to music outside because it gets cold at night. "Otherwise," says Mrs. Chandler, the lady who gives the Hollywood Bowl its allowance, "they might fall asleep listening to all that *long* music."

May 24, 1937

The best part about going on radio is finding out which movie stars are bald. (Top secret: Bing Crosby, Fred Astaire and Baby Leroy.)

June 3, 1937

I saw Jerome Kern today at Hillcrest. After I caddied for him, I showed him a song called *Yucky.*

Yucky!
Never talk to me.
I think you're ugly
because you're yucky
just the way you look today.

Kern liked *Yucky* very much. He gave me a chocolate cigar.

June 10, 1937

Louella Parsons is interviewing me this morning. I hope she doesn't kiss me.

June 10, 1937

Afternoon — Yecch!

June 21, 1937

Hooray! Today was my birthday. All the kids — Mickey, Judy, Shirley, Spanky, and Darla (!!!) came. I'm three hours younger than I was in New York. Hollywood is a great place to live if you don't want to grow up.

— BW

Television writer Bob Waldman trained at Ithaca College under the late Rod Serling. Most recently he has worked on Steve Allen's The Start of Something Big *program. He lives in New York.*

To Russia without Love Part IV

by Bill Crow

Shopping for gifts and souvenirs in Russia wasn't easy. There wasn't much in the stores. Prices and production, fixed by the government, reflect neither value nor demand. I found a few souvenirs in Leningrad. Painted wooden toys were cheap and plentiful and most of us brought home a few. I found an inexpensive balalaika and a method book for playing it, some

books of art prints, and a couple of fur hats. Some of the guys brought home music by Russian composers. Jerry Dodgion found some nice flute pieces. And Turk brought back a good collection of Soviet postage stamps. When we left Leningrad, Mike Korgenowitz, the bass player, came to say goodbye and gave me a delightful carved wooden bear playing a bass. It now sits on my mantel shelf beside the balalaika, a set of nesting babushka dolls and a toy Kremlin clock tower.

John Frosk had been eager to reach Kiev. His parents were from the Ukraine, and he had learned the language from them. He had relatives in Kiev and had brought them letters from home. Arrangements had been made for a car to take him to see them but at the last minute, Terry Catherman advised him not to go. Terry was afraid the visit might cause problems for John's relatives after we left. John had no way of knowing whether Terry's fears were well founded, but he decided not to take the risk and cancelled the visit.

The police in Kiev came down hard on the fans. Several people were arrested at one concert for tape-recording the music. The tapes were yanked out of their machines and the recorders broken. They were also very tough when the fans wanted to run up to the stage to greet us after the concerts. There would be a line of very forbidding cops at the front of the orchestra section, facing the audience and effectively discouraging any demonstrativeness.

"Popsie" arranged an excursion for us on a motor launch up the Dnieper, and on another afternoon took us swimming. Going to the beach in the Soviet Union is not much different from anywhere else, except for the free music supplied by the government. On tall poles spaced regularly along the beach were loudspeakers tinnily broadcasting music none of us wanted to hear — stirring marches and "light" concert music played by what sounded like high school bands. The best strategy was to spread your blanket halfway between two loudspeakers. Or you might luck onto a speaker that wasn't working. I made a mental note to bring wire cutters if I came that way again.

While I was lying on the beach, a blond, suntanned young Ukrainian sat down beside me. He wanted to practice his English, and was very curious about life in the United States. He had many questions, which I did my best to answer. "Is it difficult to avoid military service in the United States?" he asked. I told him that, during times of conscription, it had been difficult but not impossible to avoid service. "Here, it is *very* difficult," he said.

One question was revealing. "Is it true, as I have heard, that two million people in your country do not have passports?"

I laughed. "A lot more than that," I said. "We don't need passports unless we're leaving the country."

His eyes widened. "Here," he said, "everyone must have a passport, and papers proving he has a job, and therefore a right to live where he is living. It is complicated to travel from one city to another for this reason."

"In our country," I said, "it's so easy to go from one place to another that the government has a department called the Bureau of Missing Persons, just to help people find other people who have gotten lost." This delighted him.

He wanted to know if I had anything from the States to sell him. "Nylon, anything made of nylon?" he asked. We had been warned not to make any deals of this kind because of the black market laws, and besides, I hadn't brought anything I was willing to part with. I gave him some Benny Goodman buttons and a postcard view of the New York City skyline.

It was in Kiev that Benny hired a Soviet crew to shoot some film for him. They covered our concerts, and shot some footage at a rehearsal of the local radio orchestra when Benny dropped by to play a little Mozart with them. Benny wanted us to spend our free time during the day acting out life in Russia for the benefit of the cameras. He couldn't understand why we felt it was an imposition to ask us to get on a bus and go around the city like a bunch of movie extras, helping his crew get footage. He assured us we'd be paid if he ever made commercial use of the film, but that was only part of our objection. We valued our free time and didn't feel like donating it to Benny.

Everyone in the band had brought some sort of camera, from Brownies to Leicas, and several of us had 8 mm movie cameras. Joe Wilder had a photographer's traveling case filled with professional quality equipment, including a 200 mm telephoto lens for his Hasselblad. Whenever he put this long lens on his camera, he attracted a crowd of interested Russians that wanted to examine it. The Russian photographers covering the tour were envious of the quality of Joe's equipment, and one of them borrowed his Hasselblad to take some pictures of the band. He shot up four rolls of Joe's film, then insisted on developing it himself. Later, when Joe asked him about the pictures, he said, "Nothing came out." Joe has his doubts.

As Joe was leaving the hotel in Sochi one morning, he passed Benny. Benny eyed the cameras and lenses hanging around Joe's neck.

"Joe, are you working for anyone?"

"What do you mean?" asked Joe.

"Are you taking pictures for some magazine?"

"No," Joe replied, "just for myself."

"Oh," said Benny, "because I thought if you were selling your pictures to somebody, I should get a cut."

Joe began to think he wasn't kidding. "You just never stop, do you, Benny?" he said, and headed for the seashore.

John Frosk was taking pictures in Kiev. As he focused on a building marked "Tsentr Kulturny" (Cultural Center), he noticed some people standing behind one of the pillars in front of the building. He zoomed in on them to have a closer look, and discovered it was Zoot and Willie Dennis, toking on Willie's pipe. John laughed so hard he spoiled the picture.

Phone calls to the states were expensive and frustrating, but most of us called home at least once. Transatlantic calls had to be placed in the hotel lobby where there would usually be one operator who spoke English. After ordering your call, you had to go back to your room and wait for it to be put through. The wait could be from half an hour on up, and you were trapped in your room until the phone rang. If you tried to call the operator, you always got someone who didn't speak English, and if you walked back down to the lobby to see what was happening, the phone might ring while you were out of the room.

During our last week in Moscow, several of us called home. The operator at the Warsaw Hotel made it difficult, even though they were charging fourteen dollars a minute for a call to New York. When a call finally went through, she would leave her line open, and no amount of pleading could convince her to hang up. The voice at the other end of the line was faint enough without the added interference of background noise from the hotel lobby coming through the operator's phone.

Benny called one last rehearsal in Moscow and ran over a lot of the new charts we hadn't been using. But on the concerts, he went right back to his old book. The mainstays of the program were *Bugle Call Rag, One O'Clock Jump, Don't Be That Way, Bach Goes To Town*, and the small-group numbers. The only modern arrangements we played during the last week in

Moscow were Tom Newsom's *Titter Pipes*, featuring Zoot and Phil, and Joya's set.

Several parties were given for us during the last week. Stan Wayman gave one at the Time-Life office, and there was a picnic with real hot dogs at America House, where the single men who worked at the embassy lived. Sam Jaffe of ABC-TV set up a jam session one evening at a Russian youth club, and Zoot, Phil, Joe Newman, John Bunch, Mel and I went over and played for a while. We found out later that they hadn't told any of the other guys about it, and there were some hard feelings.

The fanciest party was given at the U.S. Embassy on July 4th. We received engraved invitations, and were given a great welcome. There was quite a flutter at the party when several limousines arrived bearing Premier Kruschev and his entourage on a surprise visit. He congratulated us on the anniversary of "our revolution," and shook hands with each of us. Of course, we knew his face from television and newspaper photographs, but in person I was struck by the intensity of his coloring. His skin was surprisingly pink and his eyes a deep clear blue. He looked like a wheat farmer dressed for church.

After greeting us, Kruschev and Benny had a little chat out in the garden, to the delight of the reporters. Kruschev's comments about our music had been reported in various ways back home, depending on the publication. *Time* and *Newsweek* quoted him as having said, at the first concert, "I enjoyed it, but I don't dance very well, so I don't understand it." The AP stringer and the *Time* and *Life* reporters only used single phrases from this statement — "I don't understand it." "I don't dance." — making him sound brusque and insulting.

The New York *Times* covered his visit to the July 4th party. They reported the following exchange with Benny:

Benny: Ah, a new jazz fan!

Nikita: No, I don't like Goodman music. I like good music. I am not a jazz fan. I like real music. I don't understand jazz. I don't mean just yours. I don't even understand our own.

Benny: It takes a little time to understand it.

Nikita: Good music should appeal at once . . . it shouldn't take time.

(Both men agreed that they liked Mozart.)

Nikita: And yet you play this bad music.

Benny: We grew up with it.

Nikita: There are people and people in the United States. You can't say they all like jazz. Some like good music, too.

One afternoon Teddy Wilson asked me to come up to his room. He dug an electric hair clipper out of his suitcase and said, "I want you to cut my hair."

I told him I'd never cut hair before.

"It's easy," he said. "I'd do it myself, but they don't have a good mirror here." Teddy sat down and wrapped a towel around his shoulders. I walked around him, trimming carefully until I got the hang of the clipper. It was a little like trimming a hedge.

By the time I had him looking presentable, a couple of the other guys had wandered in and I wound up doing Phil, Zoot, Turk and a couple of others. Then I gave myself a trim, a fairly easy job, since I was wearing my hair very short in those days. When I walked into the dining room that night I got a hand from the band. I guess we had been looking pretty scruffy. Willie Dennis said he wished I had learned to cut hair a little sooner. In the States he visited his barber frequently to keep his hair and his slender moustache looking sharp. He had tried a couple of Russian barbers and wasn't too happy with the results.

I was glad that Joe Newman had brought a small portable radio with a short-wave band. We could pick up the Voice of America stations when they weren't being jammed. They usually let the music come through. The buzzing noise of the jamming would start when the western news programs came on. We only were able to hear the news broadcasts clearly once or twice while we were in the Soviet Union, and we began to realize what news junkies we were. We felt very cut off, not being able to read a newspaper or watch the six o'clock report. The English language newspapers in Russia were hopeless. It's frustrating to read whole pages of generalities with no facts. As imperfect as our press often seems, it is still wonderfully free compared to places where the press is state controlled.

Jay had been hocking us for weeks about the contracts. A few guys had signed them, and he used whatever leverage he could think of to get the rest of the signatures. Joe Wilder's trunk became a focus of his attention. We had been warned that the laundry service would be poor and dry-cleaning nonexistent in Russia, so most of us had brought suitcases full of extra clothes and drip-dry shirts, but Joe Wilder had the largest single piece of luggage, a steamer trunk full of the dapper suits he always wears. Jay told Joe that Benny was going to charge him for overweight baggage if he didn't sign his contract.

As well as being a flawless musician, Joe Wilder is courteous, cooperative, and sweet-natured. He was delighted to be in the band and was prepared to do a professional job, and he couldn't believe the way Benny was treating us. Joe never uses profanity. His strongest adjective is "blamed," his most violent epithet "shoot." If he quotes someone who uses strong language, he'll say something like, "He said to get the F out of here!" But he said the secret word in Tblisi when Jay told him that Benny was going to charge him for his luggage. It was the last straw. He indignantly refused to ride on the bus with Benny that night and walked from the hotel to the concert hall, a distance of two or three miles.

During the last week in Moscow, Jay told Joe Wilder that Benny wanted him to give all his lead parts to John Frosk, since Joe was going to Sweden after the tour and wouldn't be available for any work in the States. Then, on stage, Benny acted surprised that Joe wasn't playing lead on *Bach Goes To Town*. Before one of the last concerts, Benny called Joe into his dressing room. He said, "I just wanted you to know that I think you're a fine musician."

Joe wasn't having any. "As miserable as you've made life for me and the rest of the guys on this tour, do you expect me to be complimented?" he asked.

When Jay announced that Benny had received an invitation to do a week of concerts in Warsaw on the way home, nobody wanted to go. Jim Maxwell called his wife and told her to send him a telegram saying there was an emergency at home and he was needed. The telegram she sent said, COME HOME AT ONCE. THE DOG DIED. THE CAT DIED. EVERYBODY DIED.

We knew there were many jazz fans in Poland, and that we would be well received there, but another week with Benny was too much to bear. We had been counting the days until we would be free. We all refused the job, and the last few days were marked by a considerable amount of surliness from Benny and his staff. There was no mention of the triumphal tour of the U.S. that had been proposed before we left. Benny was flying to England, Newman and Wilder to Sweden, Bunch and Andre were stopping off in Paris, and the rest of us were heading

home.

During the last week, Jay and Muriel got tough about the contracts. They told us if we didn't sign, we wouldn't get our final paychecks. Before the afternoon concert on the last day, Benny called a meeting, at which we explained to him that it was the options in the contract that we objected to. They would tie us up for months with no reciprocal obligation on his part. He seemed to understand, and we played the afternoon concert hoping we had straightened things out.

Joe Wilder and Joe Newman were trying to get their flight information from Muriel. They were to fly from Moscow to Stockholm to meet their wives and wanted to let them know when to expect them. Muriel didn't get them the information, and before the evening concert, she repeated her ultimatum. No contracts, no paychecks. We talked it over and decided that the only remedy was to refuse to play the last concert until we got paid. At curtain time that night we were ready to play but wouldn't go onstage without the checks.

Muriel and Jay finally told us that all they really needed was the first page of the contracts, the agreement on wages, and we agreed to sign just that part. The other clauses were crossed out, the contracts were signed, and the paychecks were passed out as we were going onstage, twenty minutes late. Joe Wilder looked at his check and discovered that a couple of hundred dollars had been deducted for excess baggage charges. He told Benny he wanted his check corrected.

Benny said, "Come on and play, and we'll talk about it later."

Joe was adamant, and we played the last concert without him.

The New York *Times* reported the strike that delayed the concert but didn't explain the reason for it. The story said, "Band members had shown signs of being disgruntled through a good part of the tour. They complained that Mr. Goodman had picked old tunes that did not represent modern jazz. Mr. Goodman contended that such music would 'fall on its face' in the Soviet Union."

We didn't exactly go out in a blaze of glory. We just wanted to get the last concert over with and go home. We started one tune twice. Benny was standing next to Gene Allen at the left side of the bandstand when he counted off *Bach Goes To Town*. He did it so quietly that we didn't hear it over on our side. Only Gene and Jimmy Knepper and a couple of other guys near Benny came in. The rest of us started a few beats later.

Benny stopped the band and yelled, "Let's get on the goddamned ball!"

Mel Lewis yelled, "Let's have a goddamned beat-off!"

So Benny stomped it off loudly, and Mel yelled, "Attaboy!"

During the fugue section on that number, where Mel usually played hi-hats, Benny waved him out. So Mel folded his arms and didn't come back in until the final chord, letting the arrangement slowly settle under its own weight.

Benny started bugging Turk about something, and Mel told him, "Leave the rhythm section alone. Go back over and bug Gene Allen."

Benny asked, "Whose band is this anyway?"

And Mel said, "The State Department's!"

On the last morning in Moscow, as we were boarding the bus for the airport, a clerk ran out and asked us to wait. Then a maid came down with a pair of worn out sneakers and some other garbage that Phil had abandoned in his room. She presented the package to Phil as if she were restoring a lost child to its mother. The bus rolled away, and when it was too late to turn back, Zoot remembered a bottle of pepper vodka that had been given him by a fan. He had left it in their room, and it wasn't among the things the maid had returned. Maybe she thought it was a tip.

David Maxwell had been in a bit of a quandary about his position on the tour. Since Benny had denied that he was the band boy and was making Jimmy pay for his trip, he wasn't sure what to do when Benny told him to carry his luggage. Jimmy had advised him to be diplomatic and avoid confrontations. At the Moscow airport Benny told David to take his suitcase. David said, "I can't. I have Joya's things," and pointed to a pile of her luggage, with a camera case lying on top.

Benny knocked the camera to the floor and stalked away.

Joe Wilder decided to try one last time to get Benny to refund the baggage charge before he caught his plane to Stockholm. Benny said that such things were in Jay's department, and not his concern. Joe called him a schmuck, and said, "If we weren't here for the State Department, I'd jump on you and beat your brains out!"

Muriel squawked, "How dare you speak to Mr. Goodman that way!"

Joe had a full head of steam. "If it weren't for shame," he told Muriel, "I'd break your broom, so you couldn't fly out of here!"

Joe told me recently that he wasn't proud of having made that last remark, and had apologized to Muriel when he ran into her a few years later. "But I was really disgusted with Benny," he said, "and I still am."

We had gone through all the passport formalities at the Moscow airport and our bags were piled on a baggage cart in the customs area. Two men in military uniforms came out of an office. Our interpreters explained that they were going to do a spot check, rather than open all the suitcases. They picked out four bags, belonging to Joya Sherrill, Teddy Wilson, John Frosk, and me. They poked around among our clothing and souvenirs and from my suitcase extracted one of a dozen magazines of film I had shot with my movie camera. I had an old Bell and Howell that used metal film magazines rather than the reel film used by all the other movie cameras on the tour, and I guess they looked suspicious to the Russians. Then they pulled out a half-dozen 35 mm film cans in which I had been collecting sand samples for my dad. "And what are these?" asked the inspectors.

All my film and the sand samples were gathered up and I was taken into a private office, where a military officer interrogated me. I had Felix explain that my dad was an amateur geologist who had a small sample of sand from each place in the United States that he had visited. It gave him pleasure to examine them under a microscope. I knew he'd love to have sand samples from various places in the Soviet Union, so I had saved the 35 mm film cans that Stan Wayman was throwing away, and would scoop up a little sand wherever I went, scribbling the location on a slip of paper and stuffing it in the can with the sample: "beach at Sochi," "hilltop in Tblisi," "roadside in Tashkent," "bank of the Neva," "beach on the Dnieper," "flower bed in the Kremlin."

As I explained, I could see I wasn't convincing the officer. He was clearly thinking, "What kind of a fool do you take me for?" He told me they would keep the sand samples and the film, and I was free to go. I protested. I had been scrupulous about asking permission whenever I took pictures, and had been careful not to point my camera at any prohibited subjects, such as bridges, factories and airports. The officer said, "If your pictures are harmless, they will be returned to you." I groaned. They use the Agfacolor system in Russia, and this was Kodak film.

"Can't you have the film processed by your embassy in New York, and examined there?" I asked. "I'm afraid it will be ruined, and I will have no record of my trip and no pictures of my Russian friends."

The officer frowned. "Do you think we are so backward here that we cannot develop film properly?"

Before we left New York, a stupid editorial in the *Daily News* had suggested the planting of spies in the orchestra, and I guess the Russians had decided I was the one. I hated leaving everything but I was afraid that if I stayed to argue and became separated from the band, I might find myself in a real nightmare. Souvenirs of the trip weren't worth it. Stifling an idiot impulse to grab everything and run for the plane, I left the film and the sand on the officer's desk. I took my suitcase and boarded the plane, where the rest of the group was waiting.

As we took off, I remembered that I also had a Minox camera with me. I had found it about a year earlier on the Staten Island ferry, and was carrying it in my bass case. I had taken very few pictures with it in Russia, since I was having so much fun with the movie camera. If they had found it, I really would have had some explaining to do. A subminiature camera originally designed for spies, it would have been proof positive to the investigators that I was an agent.

In 1972 Thad Jones and Mel Lewis took their band to Russia, with Jimmy Knepper and Jerry Dodgion aboard. They met Felix, the interpreter who had seen me through the ordeal at the airport. He had since been hired by *Time* magazine and had visited New York a few years after the Goodman tour. He had tried to look some of us up through Benny's office but had been told they didn't know how to reach us. Anyone in Goodman's office could have told him to look in the 802 union book, and even lent him a copy.

Felix asked Mel to send me his apologies. He had tried to get my film back for me and discovered that, exactly as I had feared, all the film had been spoiled. "I could understand them ruining one or two reels, but all twelve?" Felix had said. He told Mel he got nothing but shrugs when he remonstrated with the authorities.

He also said that one of the sand samples I had collected, the one from the beach at Sochi, had shown traces of radioactivity. This was a new discovery, and indicated the possible presence of valuable mineral deposits nearby. Felix told them, "You should be giving this man a medal, instead of ruining his film!"

We arrived July 11 back at Idlewild, where Willie Dennis discovered his flight bag had been sliced open and his cigarettes and whisky stolen. The customs officer told him, "Take it up with the Russian embassy."

As we collected our bags and headed for the exit, John Frosk said to Zoot, "Let's check in and play some cards."

Outside customs, we were met by Jack Lewis, who was producing records for Colpix at the time. "You've got a record date tomorrow morning at Webster Hall," he told us. He knew Benny had been having the tour taped for an RCA album and he was out to steal a march on him.

It took George Avakian a lot of time to edit the tapes of the tour, and he didn't get the RCA album *Benny Goodman in Moscow* released until several months later. The Colpix album, *Jazz Mission to Moscow*, was out two weeks after we got home. The date was done with a slightly smaller band than Benny's. Al Cohn had written six charts for two trumpets, one trombone, four saxes and three rhythm. Since some of the regulars weren't available, Jack used two guys who hadn't been on the tour: Marky Markowitz and Eddie Costa. So we had Jim Maxwell, Marky, Willie Dennis, Zoot, Phil, Jerry Dodgion, Gene Allen, Mel, Eddie, and me. I think it was Eddie's last jazz date — a few weeks later he was driving home after drinking all night at the Half Note, and died in a crash on the West Side Highway. And Willie Dennis died in a car crash in Central Park.

On the record, the exuberance that resulted from the absence of Benny's heavy hand is quite evident. Phil played the clarinet solo on Al's amusing arrangement of *Let's Dance*. Zoot was in rare form, and Eddie contributed some wonderful choruses. We were all eager to play, and we enjoyed the date thoroughly. And I got *paid* for being on this album.

After the date, Mel dropped by the Metropole and ran into Gene Krupa. Gene gave him a hug and kissed him on the cheek. "That's for me," he said. He kissed Mel's other cheek. "That's for Davey," then a third kiss, "and that's for Sid. I hear you really gave it to the Old Man!"

Mel asked Gene why he had put up with Benny for so many years. "It was the best job around," said Gene. "Wherever we would go from there would have been down, both in money and in prestige."

It turned out to be a good thing we hadn't signed the contracts with all those options on our services. Benny's only gig right after the tour was a week at Freedomland, the amusement park that tried to be the Bronx's answer to Disneyland for a couple of years. Teddy Wilson, Turk Van Lake and Gene Allen were the only ones from the tour who took the job. Benny had to put together a whole new band. Howard Klein gave their opening night a poor review in the New York *Times*. After praising some of the individual soloists, he noted a lack of "force and drive" in the band, and commented, "The playing, although solidly professional, had a commercial ring that somehow did not support Mr. Goodman's monarchic claims."

I ran into Turk toward the end of that week and asked him how the gig was going.

"I'm not there anymore," he said. I asked what had happened. On the second night at Freedomland, Benny had waved Turk out in the middle of one tune. Turk started to play again on the next one, and Benny waved him out again. He didn't let him play at all for the rest of the concert.

Turk came to work the next night and was again waved out on every tune. He got Benny to one side at intermission and asked what was wrong.

Benny said, "You look tired, kid. Why don't you take the night off?"

Turk said, "If I'm not going to play, I may as well take the whole gig off."

Benny said, "I guess you're right, Pops."

Turk was still mystified. "Benny, what was it about my playing that you didn't like?"

Benny studied the ceiling. His right hand gripped an imaginary guitar pick and made a few tentative strokes in the air. "Hand didn't look right," he said.

A week or so later, I got a call from a guy named Joe Valerio. He said he worked for Radio Liberty, a private station that broadcast into the Soviet Union from transmitters in the West. He wanted to know if I had the names and addresses of any Soviet musicians who might like to have musical supplies sent to them. I said I did, but asked why they wanted to do this. Joe said it was good public relations. They would prepare packages of music, strings, bridges, reeds, records, etc. to be sent in my name, since the Soviet Union would only accept packages from individuals, not organizations. I gave them a list of things to

send, including the Colpix album, Ray Brown's bass book, published transcriptions of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie solos, and brands of strings, reeds and drumheads, along with the names and addresses of the musicians I had met on the tour. Valerio also asked me to drop by his office to record an interview for broadcast in Russia.

I went to the midtown address he gave me, and found a door marked *Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty*. I went into a large expensive-looking waiting room and gave my name to a secretary. While I waited, I looked at a photo display that showed huge radio towers in West Germany and read a description of the powerful transmitters they had there. Valerio came out and took me into a modern radio studio where Turk Van Lake was also waiting. An engineer set us up to tape the interviews.

"Who pays for all this?" I asked.

Valerio said, "A group of wealthy Russian immigrants who want to counteract Soviet propaganda about the West."

A few years later I read in the *Times* that Radio Liberty was funded by the CIA.

On the tape I talked about our trip without mentioning our problems with Benny, and spoke a brief greeting that I had memorized in Russian to my friends in the Soviet Union. I don't know if all the packages they sent in my name got through, but I did receive a letter from Konstantin Nosov in Leningrad, thanking me for the records and music books. Sometime later a package arrived from him containing some painted plaster figurines of traditional Russian folk characters. We corresponded for a while, and then I stopped hearing from him. I don't know whether he stopped writing or his letters just stopped getting through.

After he returned to New York, Joe Wilder made a complaint to Local 802 about the money Benny had withheld. 802 said it had happened outside their jurisdiction and sent him to the American Federation of Musicians, where he filed charges against Benny.

The day before the hearing was scheduled, Joe got a call from a secretary at the AFM. She said, "Mr. Goodman is willing to forget the whole thing."

Joe reminded her that he was the one making the complaint, and insisted on seeing it through as a matter of principle.

At the hearing Joe produced a receipt from the post office in Seattle proving he had sent home everything over his allotted forty-four pounds when Jay had first complained that his baggage was overweight. Nothing had been weighed after Seattle. Goodman and his staff had just assumed he was still overweight, and had used it as a pretext to harass him.

At the hearing, Benny said to Joe, "In all my years in the music business, you're the first one to take me to the union."

Joe told him, "That's because I'm not afraid of you."

The AFM officers reprimanded Joe, saying he should have played the last concert and then brought his grievance to the union.

They didn't require Benny to refund his money, and Joe never got it.

Joe told me he knew musicians who had been pressured into doing what Benny wanted through Benny's influence with their other employers. He said he wasn't doing any work that Benny could interfere with, and he certainly didn't ever want to be in his band again.

George Avakian told me he spoke to Benny a few years ago about the hours of tapes that he still had from the Russian tour. "You should rerelease that album with additional material," he told Benny. "There's enough there for a three record set. Especially the Joya Sherrill stuff, some of which is by arrangers who weren't otherwise represented on the tour."

Benny seemed to agree that it was a good idea. George felt encouraged. "I'm glad to see you've changed your mind about Joya," he said. "You remember you wouldn't let me use any of her numbers on the album."

"Oh, really?" said Benny.

George never did get Benny to begin the project.

In March, 1985, I was playing in a snowstorm in front of City Hall in New York with a group of 802 musicians protesting a discriminatory clause in the cabaret law. The guitarist was Bucky Pizzarelli. "Are you still talking to the Old Man?" he asked.

"I guess so," I told him. "I haven't seen him for twenty years." I had run into Benny once after the tour, at the New York Playboy Club, where I was working in the house band. Jay had called me once or twice after that for jobs that I hadn't taken.

"Well," said Bucky, "why don't you come and do this gig [illegible] us down in Jersey? Urbie will be on it."

"How has Benny been acting lately?" I asked.

"Fine," said Bucky. "No problems."

I hadn't been playing much jazz that winter, so I decided, what the hell. "Okay, I'll do it." Bucky gave me the address for the rehearsal, the apartment of a wealthy friend of Benny's on East 57th Street.

Benny was as cheerful and rosy as Father Christmas. "Nice to see you, Bill," he said as we shook hands. "I've been reading your little column in the union paper." We set up to play. Urbie Green hadn't come in for the rehearsal. We had Bucky, myself, Chuck Riggs on drums, Benny Aronov on piano, and Randy Sandke on cornet. Bucky had also brought along his son John and tenor saxophonist Harry Allen, a Rutgers student from Rhode Island whom Bucky wanted Benny to hear. We ran over a few tunes and took a break for drinks and hors d'oeuvres that our host had provided. Then Harry sat in for a tune, and played very well. It was a lovely, musical afternoon, and Benny sounded great. We all left smiling.

The job was at a restaurant near Atlantic City. A wealthy automobile dealer was throwing a wedding reception. A [illegible]b date band was there to play for the dancing. Urbie arrived, and we set up the bandstand. We were given a nice dinner, and then we played the first set without Benny. After a break, Benny joined us for a set, and that was it. The music was excellent and there was no hassle whatsoever. It couldn't have been more different from my experience with him in Russia.

For several months before his death, Benny was rehearsing and playing a few gigs with a new band, using a lot of the good young players around New York. It was the same sort of band he started out with, using the old book. Some of the musicians who were playing with him told me he was up to his old tricks — chiseling, hiring and firing people right and left, moving parts around, being hard on everyone. But they also said he gave them a lot of insights into the music. He understood those charts well and knew how to make them work.

At one rehearsal at the SIR studios, he asked where the men's room was. On being told it was up a flight of stairs, he said, "Oh, that's too far," and, in mixed company, proceeded to take a leak in the studio trash barrel.

On another occasion, he disapproved of the quality of the spread of cold cuts and salad that had been laid out for the band and sprayed a mouthful of soda over everything on the table, rendering it truly inedible.

He was sending one last generation of side musicians into the world with a brand new collection of Benny Goodman stories.

—BC