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Madame Chiang's Piano

by Grover Sales

If you haven't seen the charming South African film *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, do yourself a favor. This beguiling fable tells of the profound culture shock that occurs among the gentle little people of the Kalahari Desert when a Coke bottle tossed from an aircraft plops in their midst.

Something similar may have happened in the Himalayas in World War II.

During what Lenny Bruce and Studs Terkel called "the Good War," I was stationed in the foothills of the Himalayas, known as The Hump to those who had to fly "military materiel" over the awesome heights en route to Chinese troops under the command of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Chek in his war against the Japanese. Or so we were told by *Time*.

Given the state of propeller aircraft in the early 1940s, the huge loads they carried, and the nearly 30,000-foot Hump they had to clear, the crashes were frequent. My job in an outfit called Search-Rescue was to maintain radio contact with amphibious vehicles -- "ducks," as they were called -- looking for air crews who had survived these crashes. It was a bleak and lonely job, for no one ever did. One man almost made it. He bailed out in time, but his chute snagged in a tree that left him dangling a few feet from the ground. He panicked and opened his chest strap first, then his left leg strap, only to be hoisted upside down by his right leg strap, which he tried to shoot away with his pistol. By the time our people found him, the ants had left nothing but his bones.

What *Time* didn't report was that the "military materiel" we were flying to Chiang consisted of ice cream, broom handles, Kotex, and potted shrubbery to beautify the palatial palace of Madame Chiang, deified by *Time* as "The Missimo."

Reliable historians, including Barbara Tuchman in *Stillwell and the American Experience in China*, have now made it common knowledge that the corrupt Chiang gang spent more time suppressing social reform and dividing up booty paid for by American taxpayers than in fighting the Japanese. Chiang and his fantasist supporters in the American government -- the "China Lobby" -- pushed China into the embrace of the Communists. Joe McCarthy blamed our "loss" of China on a sinister coterie of pinkos, homosexuals, and Eastern aristocrats in the State Department, successfully purging from government valuable career foreign service officers who had dared suggest Chiang was anything less than a dedicated "freedom fighter."

The resentment of air crews ordered to fly nearly suicidal missions to bring the Missimo her Kotex reached a height when she arranged for a cargo of a Steinway piano -- a full concert grand. But our pilots were not without recourse. They were authorized, when losing altitude over The Hump, to jettison any or all cargo. This was not hard to do, since the aircraft they flew were adapted B-24 bombers and had bomb bay doors.

Somewhere in the vicinity of Mount Kanchenchunga -- height 28,146 feet -- the sport flying that mission called out to his crew, "Bombs away!" And down tumbled Madame Chiang's piano.

If a Steinway falls in a forest, does anyone hear?

Suppose it landed outside the cave of an Abominable Snowman. Keeping in mind the rise of the Cargo Cult in New Guinea during that war, did Steinway become worshipped as the first Jewish god of the Orient? Did the Yeti anticipate a Second Coming? If so, he hadn't long to wait. Within a month, another full Steinway concert grand was lifted into a B-24 for Madame Chiang.

And once again the pilot unloaded over The Hump.

The pilot's name, as I recall, was Ogden; I wish I could remember his first name. But he was a stone jazz fan, and we used to talk about music. I couldn't wait to corner him.

"Ogden -- could you *hear* it?"

"Oh Christ, yes!" he said.

"What did it sound like?"

"Man," he said reverently, "it was like the first time I heard Art Tatum. I couldn't believe such sounds could come out of a piano."

-- GS

A Jim and Andy's Jones

We had our second New York meeting of the Society of Singers in my house a few weeks ago, and about twenty singers were here, including Annette Sanders, Margaret Whiting, and Roberta Flack. The organization seems to be building and swelling.

I loved the articles on Benny. They didn't make me love him less -- just brought a smile to my face as I looked back to the days of Jim and Andy's and sitting in the back booth listening to the wonderful stories as people came in from the road. The *Jazzletter* satisfies that same Jones. Don't change a thing. I never met a *Jazzletter* I didn't like. As you know, there are times when I disagree with you, but you make me think and rethink my position and clarify. And how bad is this?

I smile when I think of Benny. I am aware of how much he did for us all. And I know that his behavior caused him more pain than it did anyone else. It's O.K. with me.

Ann Johns Ruckert, New York City

The *Jazzletter* is important to me because its discussions of the art and business of jazz are unduplicated anywhere else. Thus it is possible to learn something of the chicanery of record companies or the ins and outs of writing lyrics. The other important purpose for a layman like me is giving a sense of the humanity of jazz musicians and of those who write about them. The Goodman series is a case in point, fascinating because it explored a subject little known outside of a select circle. For me, the articles make his music even more enjoyable, because I now know more about the man. And speaking of a sense of humanity, the piece on John Heard was particularly well done.

Thomas E. Mason, Daly City, California

The articles about Robert Farnon and Jo Stafford and others are just as inspirational and consciousness expanding as something about "a leading hard-bop jazz immortal". What you describe are people who have made the *super* effort to

become creative geniuses who communicate.

Frishberg's letter was hilarious. I loved the Bill Crow writing.

Jeff Barr, Franklin Park, New Jersey

So Goodman was human, and therefore flawed; he put himself in the public eye, flaws and all. People who think you shouldn't print stuff like that would defend the punk who wants to be a star but will punch you in the mouth if you take his picture.

I have had ten contributors helping me with the book, several of them pop journalists. It bothers them that there are so many "jazz" entries. They don't understand the concept of the book, but I wonder if their attitude is analogous to, or a response to, the "jazzers" who would exclude Piaf and Percy Faith from the *Jazzletter*?

Donald Clarke, Norfolk, England

Donald is completing work on The Penquin Encyclopedia of Popular Music.

I never had any personal dealings with Goodman but several buddies have worked with him and I've heard my share of the stories both good and bad (mostly bad), so I'm sure the reports were true. However, while reading them I sensed a feeling of kicking a man when he was down. I can respect someone who had a complaint and faced the offending person with it, but somehow it seemed like those who had complaints and waited till the man died to express them (They didn't; the press ignored them. — Ed.) should have kept them to themselves. I realize that the readership is for the most part an inner circle, but even so. I feel that a publication such as yours should stick more to the music and what goes into making it.

We just heard on the BBC last night that Buddy Rich passed away and won't be surprised if and when similar tales come out about him. Whether true or not I feel it all boils down to a bunch of gossip. The space could better be used to help further our music and its appreciation.

Hope you're not bothered by my thoughts.

Al Levitt, Paris

One of my favorite Blake lines is, "The road to excess leads to the palace of wisdom." As a clarinet player I was inevitably fascinated by Bill Crow's Goodman series. When it comes to clarinet, you have to know too much before you know enough.

There ought to be artistic appraisal of Goodman's playing, and there will be. Goodman was in a Danny Kaye movie (with Armstrong and Tommy Dorsey) that I saw when I was nine that led me, after a one-day run around the trombone, to the clarinet. My teachers urged me to emulate his playing. Yet as a child I was not touched by Goodman, and I had to grow up before I would admit that he was a fine clarinetist.

I always dug the guys that Goodman listened to in his youth in Chicago, Jimmy Noone, Albert Nicholas, Darnell Howard and, I bet, though I've never seen documentation, Barney Bigard. I don't think Goodman achieved the heat of Noone or Howard, the lucidity of Nicholas, the fluid dexterity of Howard, or the artistic wholeness of Bigard. And I always dug the guys who came after him like Buddy DeFranco and Abe Most, as well as guys who do wonderful clarinet things on the side, like Art Pepper, Eric Dolphy, and Phil Woods.

Those other players seem to me now to be among the artists, Goodman — taking nothing away from his achievement as a band leader — the pop star. The Crow articles and the responses underline this view, especially Brad Terry's sweet recollection that takes us to the edge of recognizing Goodman as the kind of victim we've become accustomed to observing amongst recent pop stars.

What makes the *Jazzletter* is your Eye. The *Jazzletter* aims toward growth of our world, not narrowing by exclusion, secrets or mystification. I am again grateful that it continues.

Tom Schmidt, Fair Oaks, California

A doff of the cap to the *Jazzletter*. I savor every word. It reminds me of waiting for the 78's from Main Stem Records (as recommended by the all-nite frantic one). Same sense of anticipation.

Have you seen the ad for a book that tells you how to read a fake book? My God! What next? I swear, jazz majors have more literature than I had at Juilliard as a classical clarinet major. Maybe Carisi's right — an ability to play *Giant Steps* doesn't give one an insight to *All the Things*. Love,

Phil Woods, Delaware Water Gap, Pennsylvania

PS: By the way, Zoot and I examined the bathroom footprints. Wasn't us.

This is just to tell you very sad news — that my beloved husband, Bill, died on Sunday, March 22, of cancer, which he had had for five years.

Bill enjoyed your *Jazzletter*, as I do. I shall look forward to future issues.

We were going to add a few "humorous!" notes to Bill Crow's great articles about Benny Goodman.

Bill [McGuffie — Ed.] was a member of the B.G. British band, which, after recording *London Date* in 1969, toured Europe in 1970 and '71. I was with them, along with Bucky Pizzarelli's wife Ruth, for the whole of the former and most of the latter. And Bill was the only British member of the American All Star Sextet touring in 1972 with dear Zoot Sims, Peter Appleyard, Mousie Alexander, Bucky, Hal Gaylor, and Lynn Roberts. I have some amusing memories of that tour.

After a sumptuous lunch at the American Embassy in Paris, Goodman was sufficiently moved by the occasion to rise for one of his rare toasts — to the ambassador and President Nixon.

That prompted McGuffie to lift his glass to Her Majesty the Queen. "What's her name again?" Zoot whispered hoarsely across the table, cracking up everyone, including the white-haired ambassador, a man known to his staff as a "straight arrow" because of his keen sense of decorum. McGuffie's toast supplied the perfect set-up for Peter Appleyard to propose one of his own — "to my personal majesty, the King of Swing," a salutation so mellifluous that it was no surprise to learn later that the ambassador had been saving those very words for himself.

The poster in Amsterdam announcing the concert read:

Zoot Sims, Peter Appleyard, Buky Pizzarelli, Bill McGoofy, Elmer "Mausie" Alexander.

Notice

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So many of the Bill Crow stories are reminiscent of my husband's tours with B.G.

As Bill would say, Aye the best,

Rosemary McGuffie, Shepperton, England

Those west of the Atlantic who never heard Bill McGuffie play missed something unusually lovely. I first heard him on one of those postwar Farnon albums. And later I acquired some of his own records. He was a beautiful pianist, lovely touch and tone, and his influence may have been wider than people realize, because of a method book he wrote. Alan Broadbent told me that he learned a lot of voicings from it during his early studies.

Johnny Mandel did me a huge favor when he ordered me a gift subscription to the *Jazzletter*. I anxiously anticipate each issue, wondering whose names will pop up from my big-band days with Vaughn Monroe, Hal McIntyre, Skitch Henderson, and Benny Goodman. I love reading about many wonderful musicians I came to know and work with throughout my career, late '40s and '50s.

I guess I am in the minority of vocalists who have something positive to say about my experience singing (and playing some piano) with Benny. After I recovered from a car-bus accident with the Skitch Henderson band, Benny called me to join the sextet for his first European tour, in April of 1950. Roy Eldridge, Zoot Sims, Dick Hyman, Ed Shaughnessy, Benny and I were flown to Copenhagen, where Toots Thielemans and Charlie Short met us. We toured Scandinavia and Europe for six weeks. It was a once-in-a-lifetime trip.

Returning to the States, I worked El Rancho Vegas and other gigs with Benny. I recorded several sides with him between 1950 and 1955. (Among those released was a song I wrote and sang called *Toodle Ee Yoo Doo* on Columbia. Benny played an extraordinary solo on that.)

Benny always showed me utmost respect, and our friendship continued during the years I quit the business to marry and raise a family. He would call, and fish with my family and me in Florida on visits in the area.

When Atlantic signed me to a record deal last summer, Benny sent me a warm handwritten letter and a splendid quote for the liner notes.

I for one am grateful for having had the good fortune to work with him and those superb musicians. My memory bank is filled with great solos and the jumping arrangements from that special association.

Enclosed is a check for a subscription for Mr. and Mrs. Andy Roberts of Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Nancy Reed, Miami Beach, Florida

My brother John, who is a sports writer with the San Francisco *Examiner*, pulled my coat to the *Jazzletter* and the wonderfully evocative Bill Crow piece on "der Ben-gal", but I found many more treats than that, including but not limited to the remarkable correspondence that followed.

Your reference to the continuing and lamentable rift between so-called classical and jazz music puts me in mind of an interesting little piece of family business. My younger brother, Steve, who lives in Chicago, is the editor of *The Podium* which is the magazine of the Fritz Reiner Society, of which he is also president. Steve has long been mindful of the ludicrousness of the cultural enmity referred to above. He is quick to point out that it was Dr. Reiner and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra that premiered the *Concerto for Jazz Band and Symphony Orchestra* with the Sauter-Finnegan band in the the mid-1950s.

I note that Bill Crow was looking for three albums on which he appeared. I have two of them and would be honored to make cassette dubbings of these or make dubs for myself and send him the originals. Mulligan sure as hell knew how to pick bass players and Bill is a fine example of that fact. I've been enjoying Bill's music for thirty years and the least I can do is help him fill the gap.

As for me, I am a copper in a northwest suburb of Chicago and a lapsed valve-trombonist of once-middling inspiration. Isn't it wonderful to have Mr. Brookmeyer active again?

Well, as Mort Sahl would say, onward. Incidentally, don't stop giving the Gipper hell. Anyone with a life of the mind, a conscience, and a forum, who doesn't at least occasionally take that ignoramus to task is irresponsible in the extreme.

Tim Hillyer, Wheeling, Illinois

Bill Crow and Jimmy (Raney — Ed.) played together many times. He was always a favorite friend, with a wonderful wry sense of humor and a sweet nature.

Jimmy was asked to make the Russian trip and I was so disappointed that he turned it down. At the time, he had a flying phobia, which he has since conquered. I'm sure it was an incredible experience for those who went.

Lee Raney, Briarwood, New York

Lee is Jimmy's wife. Jimmy is well and living in Louisville, his home town. Their son Doug, whom so many of us remember as a toddler, became a rock-and-roll guitarist, then with the growing understanding that his father was one of the great and innovative jazz guitarists, followed in his footsteps. Doug is a superb musician who plays much like his father and lives in Copenhagen, where Jimmy sometimes goes so they can play together. On their recordings, it's hard to tell them apart. Jimmy also makes occasional appearances at Bradley's in New York City, but Doug, except for a Bradley's gig some years ago, has not played in the United States.

I worked with Johnny Savoy last week. He had called you to get the lyrics to one of your tunes. Why you expend energy on the "likes" of Goodman and Sudhalter when you can write so great is beyond me.

Ernie Furtado, New York City

I have a severe case of information overload and had targeted the *Jazzletter* to be on my hit list for this year. Too many periodicals, too little time. But after reading the astonishing reaction to the Goodman piece, I've decided to excise something else to make room for the *Jazzletter*. I really don't see what the fuss is about. Bill Crow did a professional job, as is his custom in music and journalism.

Dan Byars, Camden, Arkansas

While I understand Richard Sudhalter's point, the historical record on Benny — as on all public figures — needs to be considerably more fleshed out than it was during his lifetime.

Some people seem unable to distinguish an artist's work from his personal reality, but we *should* be able to make such distinctions. That is one of the points of the play and film *Amadeus*.

I first met Benny at a publicity "photo opportunity" that Universal Studios had arranged at the time I signed to play him in *The Benny Goodman Story*. I interpreted his somewhat withdrawn behavior to shyness; there was no unpleasantness between us.

One might assume that I got to hang out with Goodman while doing the film, but his work on it — recording the sound track — was completed before I took the *Tonight Show* out to

Los Angeles from New York for my eight weeks work on the picture. Benny's great admirer, Sol Yaged, gave me all the necessary lessons in acting like Benny, holding the instrument in the proper way, etc. The actual Benny — as even his dearest friends would concede — was colorless. So I had to take the liberty of livening him up a bit in playing the part. The real kicks in doing that picture came from spending weeks in the company of Gene Krupa, Teddy Wilson, Stan Getz, Lionel Hampton, Harry James, Ziggy Elman, and other musicians, some of whom I had admired as a schoolboy.

We now jump to about a year later, when the picture was released and I booked Benny as a guest on my old Sunday night comedy show. Benny wailed with his group. Then I walked on stage to exchange a line or two of dialogue leading into our performance of a little two-clarinet duet I had written and previously played with Sol Yaged. The high point of the exchange came when Benny forgot my name, which he had rehearsed earlier and which was written on his cue card. He called me "Pops". I didn't hold that against him, since I am sometimes a little goofy about names myself.

A few years ago I was booked as master-of-ceremonies on one of those shows that bring together performers whose appeal is largely to the over-fifty audience. Working with Ray McKinley and his orchestra were Bob Eberle, Helen O'Connell, and Benny. The event took place at an armory in New Jersey with well over 2,000 attending. A dinner was served.

Settings of that sort are often good for music but not particularly great for comedy, because at any given moment scores of waiters and busboys are rushing around serving dessert and coffee, picking up dishes, and generally making a great clatter. Also, with an audience of that size, especially when they've been served dinner, it's a bit of problem to call them to order.

The first half of the show went well. Then came an intermission, which was supposed to run fifteen minutes. But when after that time, I walked backstage and attempted to restore order, it proved impossible to do so. Most of those in attendance were walking around, visiting, going to restrooms, trying to find their way back to tables — it was real hullabaloo time.

Rather than stand at the microphone, like a jerk, endlessly saying, "Ladies and gentlemen, if we could please have your attention," I finally gave up, turned to Benny's rhythm section — already in place behind me — and said, "Guys, if we just start playing some music, that'll make the people drift back to their seats." And I sat down at the piano, kicked off a lively blues, and began to play. After about two minutes of music, the audience started to pay attention to what was happening on stage. I had intended, at that point, simply to introduce the great Benny Goodman and get off fast. I was just about to go back to the microphone when off to the right I saw Benny, his face a mask of fury. He was pointing at me and shouting, "Get off! Get off!" — unmindful, apparently, that I was only trying to calm the audience so that I could introduce him and we could all enjoy his playing. I simply cut the musicians off, turned to the microphone, and without waiting for the audience to stop applauding, said, "Ladies and gentlemen, the King of Swing, Mr. Benny Goodman!"

I thought that was the end of it.

Benny was terrific, as always, and played five or six numbers. He finally finished up with a flag-waver and walked off the stage to his left. Emcees — whether a performer is finished or is just doing a fake exit before an encore — are supposed to jump back on stage, encourage the audience to more applause, and shout, "Wasn't that wonderful, ladies and gentlemen?" I prepared to bound up the steps to whoop it up for Benny, but as I was passing him on the way he suddenly, to my astonishment, put a hand on my chest and practically pushed me back down the stairs. All of this, needless to say, in view of 2,000 onlookers. I had a hand on the wooden railing, or I would have fallen backwards. Once again, I had simply been trying to accommodate Benny. But, for God knows what reasons, he responded in what musicians who have worked for him have long known was an all-too-characteristic manner.

On another occasion, Benny and I were on the same show with Terry Gibbs, who frequently conducts for me. Terry recommended that I take along, to give Benny as a gift, a romping stomping Bill Holman arrangement of a song of mine called *Playing the Field.* Terry uses it with his big band, naturally doing a vibes solo, and Hal Linden, the actor — who is also a professional clarinetist — plays it in his nightclub and concert act. In any event, Terry said, "Benny will love this chart. Why don't you bring an extra copy along to the gig, and I'll give it to him?"

When we arrived at the date, Terry and I were shown into a green room where Benny was seated at a table with a couple of other people. I greeted him pleasantly, and got the customary Goodman blank response. Then Terry said, placing the envelope on the table, "Oh, Benny, here's a terrific arrangement by Bill Holman, of one of Steve's tunes. It makes a great clarinet solo, and I thought you'd . . ."

Benny pushed it away as if somebody had placed a dead rat in front of him, and sourly said, "I'm not interested in arrangements. I'm not doing any big band things anyway."

Obviously he was under no obligation to be interested in the arrangement. But what was striking about the moment was his rudeness. Most musicians, to convey the same message, would have said something like, "Thanks, man, I'm really not in the market for this sort of thing these days."

I learned only a few days ago something else about Goodman's personality. His stinginess. When Terry was working with him some years back, the two happened to share a short cab ride. The fare came to forty cents. Goodman asked Terry to give him the twenty cents for his half of the ride.

Steve Allen, Los Angeles, California

First, the idea of respect, raised by Dick Sudhalter. I happen to admire Goodman's playing, but I don't feel that I owe him any special respect for it. As Jackie Gleason put it, you can't take credit for your talent, because it's a gift from God. So my respect goes to God, not to Goodman. You can, however, take credit for trying to develop your talent to the fullest, and for that I do respect Goodman. But I'd equally respect a mediocre player who'd try to do the same thing. And anyway, diligence is only part of what elicits respect; the other part is responsibility toward one's fellow workers, and there's the rub with Goodman.

He put great bands together, but did he bring them to their full potential? Not according to the members of the band that went to Russia. And not according to what I heard on TV a few years ago from Wolf Trap — a band sadly devoid of swing and spontaneity. Several of its members told me later that Benny so cowed them that when concert time arrived their creative energies had been drained to a point of numbness.

Is that responsible bandleading? Does it command respect? And since Teddy Wilson and others of his early sidemen have said that Benny acted the same way in the old days, one just wonders how often through the years he kept his great bands from sounding their *best.*

This ties in with another point, the one raised by Bob Thiele: "Why not the art of Goodman, rather than the personality of Goodman?" Well, because jazz is such an interpersonal art,

dependent for its creative drive on a certain shared spirit among bandsmen. They don't all have to love one another, and they can even hate the leader, but to play effectively they must at least respect him for trying to present them as well as he can. The fact that Goodman failed to do so on that all-important trip to Russia should be duly noted in the history books and measured against his achievements. Because he was a bandleader, and specifically one representing our entire country, Goodman the artist can hardly be separated from Goodman the man.

Of course Bill Crow's piece should have been published, for all the reason you gave in the January issue, and I admire Bill's courage for writing it and yours for seeing it through.

On another subject, I share your lament over the "ghettoization" of jazz, and I agree that players and promoters of jazz should try to reach out beyond the fringe. In the various solo piano jobs I've done through the years I've derived the greatest satisfaction from getting my kind of playing across to people who, say, have never heard of Lester Young, but who remember Kay Kyser or Little Jack Little, and who respond warmly to a well-crafted melody and improvisations that keep melody in mind. My chief inspiration has always been Louis Armstrong who made each person in a theater or at home in front of a TV set feel that what he or she heard was directed especially to him or her.

There aren't many guys left like that, but for the last twelve years I've had the good fortune to have played regularly with one of them -- Doc Cheatham. Every Sunday, when our quartet does the brunch at Sweet Basil, in the Village, Doc makes new converts of people who wander in just out of curiosity, or who simply come there to eat. Doc offers an audience a graciousness and charm that is virtually extinct, and *boy*, do people love it -- young and old. I can think of no living jazz musician better qualified to reach those masses out there.

Incidentally, Doc is another musician who liked Benny Goodman. And the feeling was evidently mutual, because Goodman came down to hear and talk with him at Crawdaddy, where we were working in the late 1970s. I can't imagine anyone not liking Doc.

One last comment. There have been times when I've felt the urge to drop you a line suggesting that you publish more of this kind of thing and less of that, but then my old editor's instinct told me to leave the guy alone and let him do it his way. I mean: I wouldn't be thrilled at being told I play too many old sentimental songs. Straight ahead.

Chuck Folds, New York City

Chuck got himself drafted with that letter. I've asked him to write us a piece on Doc Cheatham. It's in the works.

The piece on B.G. is a must for his fans.

Jurgen Wolfer, Langenhagen, West Germany

Where do people come off acting like Goodman attained sainthood? Benny Goodman was the used-car salesman of jazz. Of all the fools I can think of, he is the one person jazz could have done without and gone on beautifully. It's one thing to be cardboard. Some people are, and can't help it. But to be a prick is something you need to work on, and think about, and act out in a horrible way. Goodman was a *studied* prick.

Bobby Scott, Forest Hills, New York

The opinions about Crow's perceptions and your response were fascinating. What a diversity.

Even if some elements of the *Jazzletter* might offend me, I insist on being able to read and learn from them, just as I do from the music. It provides an exceptional service in that it brings so many aspects of a creative music into greater proximity. A small mind may cancel a subscription. A mind at least marginally more flexible contemplates, possibly comp ins, then waits to see what succeeding issues offer.

The *Jazzletter* does, however, make an occasional factual mistake. It was my April 1986 letter, not one from our mutual friend Ralph Jungheim, questioning your support of KKGO fusion/semi-pop; then pointing to the approach of FM 88 KLON (California State University Long Beach) where I've done a mainstream-swing-bebop program for the past four and a half years.

No need for a hugs and kisses lovefest among all members of our endangered jazz species. There is a common cause to make. We have too much to accomplish for the music we all cherish.

Alan Harvey, Arleta, California

Several friends who worked for Goodman, some in his office, some as musicians, objected to the series on the same basis as Sudhalter, that to say anything even vaguely negative about the man so soon after his death was wrong.

My own feeling is that these people are at least a little upset that we've come a little closer to the truth about Benny Goodman. Now we know more of what those who knew him knew. After reading the series, I almost feel that I actually knew the man. Thank you Bill Crow, thank you Gene Lees.

Will Friedwald, New York City

I am amazed by the intensity of the feelings expressed concerning the splendid remembrance of Benny Goodman by Bill Crow. He was such an incomparable virtuoso that all details about his personality are fascinating.

One Monday night -- musta been in 1947 -- I attended one of the *Evenings on the Roof* concerts of contemporary music held, I believe, at the Wilshire Ebell Theater in Los Angeles. Benny was in the audience with Mel Powell. I sat just behind them and a bit to the side.

One of the selections was a piece for two clarinets by Richard Franko Goldman. Everybody in the audience knew that Goodman was in the house. The piece for two clarinets was a very "pucka-hoo pucka-hoo-hoo" legit-sounding formalistic exercise which apparently struck both Powell and Goodman as very funny. (I think they had overexpanded their consciousness behind some combustible sacrament.) They struggled heroically against the overwhelming urge to guffaw. Every time they seemed to get themselves under control, some particularly "abstract" pattern in the music would set them off again.

Benny slid down in his seat, he bent over with his head between his knees, he and Mel Powell did everything to keep from breaking up and causing a distraction. They were already getting dirty looks from the contemporary music fans who took their music very seriously in them days.

I taught the history of jazz for two semesters in 1979 and since then I've not read too much about jazz. I did hear something I've never heard the other night. There is a guy who plays the entire corpus of Charlie Parker's recorded output twice a year on KPFK. The last time I heard the show he played some records made in Chicago during the recording ban in the early 1940s in a hotel room, by Parker and Gillespie when they were both members of the Earl Hines band. Bird played tenor only. That music deserves careful scrutiny, because it is precisely from the transition time between swing and bop.

The African component of jazz comes from a very carefully selected personality type of African: the "can't-go-along-with-the-program" element in the population, which the tribal chiefs saw fit to get rid of for two hundred years by selling them to the

Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch slave ship captains. The members of the tribe, that is, who did not agree that the chief was the chief. Those with a pronounced incapacity for subordination. That is one reason why jazz is the music of insubordination par excellence.

The *Jazzletter* has got me thinking about jazz again.

Lou Gottlieb, West Los Angeles, California

Dr. Gottlieb studied composition with Arnold Schoenberg. He has a degree in musicology. When he has nothing better to do, he has for thirty years been one of the singers in The Limelighters.

One of the best-known stories about Goodman concerns The Sweater. We've heard it for years, with variants, but herewith at last the definitive version from a witness:

I played piano with Benny's quartet in 1963 and know the stories are true, though I understand there are people who, being listeners only, could be shocked at reading the material. Almost every musician from N.Y. to L.A. knew about his rudeness and strange ways. And a person's life is, I think, public domain once they leave this earth.

I'd been working with a trio at the Living Room on Second Avenue. Teddy Wilson used to come in quite often and listen to us, and we'd talk. So I'm almost positive he recommended me to Benny. Then we learned later that Benny would come in disguised, with mustache, different type glasses, and a beret on his head, sit in a dark corner and listen to check me out (and also singer Marian Montgomery) incognito, so as not to intimidate us with His Presence. He did this several nights, as we learned from the maitre d'. He hired both Marian and me for the dates.

I'm the one who started the story about The Sweater. I told the story to Merv Griffin and his staff of musicians. In fact I saw Merv interview Benny one night, and he asked about the sweater, and Benny just stared at him, with no answer.

I was at a rehearsal with Benny in his studio on 57th Street on a freezing winter night. It was like being inside a refrigerator. After a half hour, a lady who was there — I don't know her name, because Benny never introduced us — said, "Don't you think it's a little cold in here, Benny?" He said, "O.K., Pops." He put down his clarinet, went to another room and stayed for five minutes. Naturally we thought he was turning up the heat. But instead he came back with a big shawl sweater on and said, "How's that?"

Have time for one more?

This came from Johnny Frosk, who was lead trumpet with the B.G. orchestra on a TV special featuring Cleo Laine in the '70s. For rehearsal the band was swinging and sounded great. Benny had some dialogue and gracefully introduced Cleo, who walked out from stage right. The director said everything was perfect. So, they took an hour break for dinner, before shooting.

Returning for dress rehearsal, and film rolling, Benny and the orchestra wailed through their charts. Then Benny began his monologue, and proceeded to introduced Cleo, not knowing that the director had moved her in back of him, and with a swing of his arm, his clarinet got tangled in Cleo's beehive hairdo. They had to get scissors and cut out the clarinet.

Of course the hair was ruined.

And as Benny was walking away, he was heard mumbling, "Look what you did to my clarinet, Pops," while picking the hairs out of the mouthpiece and the reed.

My old boss Tommy Dorsey ('52 and '53) could not tolerate Benny. Tommy once punched Benny out. According to Tommy, Benny arrived on the set late when they were in a Danny Kaye movie together. Tommy said, "Benny, you've held us all up for an hour!"

Benny said, "Well, that's how it goes, Pops."

Tommy said, "Why, you son of a bitch!" and punched him in the nose. They had to hold up shooting on the picture for a day.

Tommy would tell a new jazz clarinet player to "play like Benny, but don't *be* like him."

Doug Talbert, Los Angeles, California

It was very encouraging to see, upon receiving the *Jazzletter*, that your ethics and morality have survived after more than twenty-five years of being in or closely associated with the music business.

I feel that your early writings in and editorship of *Down Beat* helped me to develop a sense of moral perception in relation to this music and its business.

Recently while visiting my mother in Montreal, I unearthed boxes of my old *Down Beats* and re-read the original 1962 accounts (among other articles) of the Benny Goodman Russian tour. I had forgotten what a serious publication this once was and I am glad to see the *Jazzletter* carrying on this tradition.

Peter Leitch, New York City

B.G. and the Soil of Fascism

I didn't understand it — a bill from the *Reader's Digest* for a collection of Benny Goodman records. I hadn't ordered records from the *Reader's Digest*. I have the RCA Goodmans. Then it clicked: a Goodman fan must have ordered the records sent and billed to me in punishment for permitting Bill Crow to tell a little truth about a man who seems to have levitated beyond regency to deity in the vision of his worshippers.

Stan Getz said in an interview that he doubted that you would find a Republican among jazz fans. He might have honed the point by saying he doubted you would find a Republican among modern jazz fans. For, as I noted in the three-part series *French Autumn Syndrome*, early in the history of the *Jazzletter*, a division exists between the fans of "modern" jazz and those of earlier styles of the music. Barry Goldwater is a Dixieland fan.

There is a hidden consistency of human character such that this yearning for stasis in art and all things manifests itself politically in the tendency to reaction, and the unbending traditionalists among jazz fans will usually be found to be Republicans — and in some cases, latent fascists. But the "modern" jazz fans tend to be comfortable with challenge and change, even glory in the unexpected, the adventurous, the open and free. This tends to make them liberals, and, in the American system of politics, usually Democrats, although we must not overlook the redneck Southern elements of that party. Then, too, a hostility to racism goes with the taste for jazz, which eventuates in a series of questions about how society is organized that tend to lead the searcher into the wicked ways of bleeding-heart liberalism. However, among my personal friends I number a Republican who is a bebop lover, and even a Lenny Bruce freak; and a liberal Democrat who clings to the belief that bebop killed the big bands. Such exceptions being noted, an approximate pattern is there, and the furor over the Goodman story makes this clear.

Implicit in Al Levitt's letter is, I think, a misunderstanding of the nature, ethical requirements, and place in society of journalism. And I am certainly not troubled that Al raises over Goodman a question that the fall of Gary Hart raised for all America. And for all democracies, come to that.

When a journalist asked, "Have you ever committed adultery?" Hart might have quoted the only memorable thing Chester Alan Arthur said in his whole life: "My private life is none of the public's goddamn business." Or he might have coined something as daunting as Grover Cleveland's reply to an inquisitor about his illegitimate son: "I have clothed and housed my bastard. Can you say the same for yours?" Had he been Jack Kennedy, he might have grinned and said, "Have you?" and gotten away with it. He did none of those things. He only said with plodding indignation,
"Oh, I don't have to answer that question." He didn't have to throw his last strike at that one — with quick wits he might have made a base on balls. He failed to do that, and in a trice he was revealed to be pompously self-involved and bleakly humorless. And a lack of humor is a serious matter in anyone, for it is the certain symptom of a graver malady, lack of perspective, lack of the sense of proportion of things. And that leads to very bad judgment. Another issue was what a French journalist described as the suicide wish inherent in Hart's catch-me-if-you-can taunting of the press about his putative passion for dancing the grand poontango. The reporter who asked the question about adultery was a jerk. But the world is full of jerks, many of them people with whom a president must skillfully and quickly deal. And Hart was revealed to be not very quick of mind when put under pressure by a jerk.

Ernest Hemingway, in an oft-quoted definition, called courage "grace under pressure." Should the Miami *Herald* have checked out persistent stories about Gary Hart's dedication to the great old game of grab-ass? Yes! Chester Alan Arthur to the contrary notwithstanding, a public figure's personality *is* public business, Benny Goodman's and Gary Hart's included, and I think we have a right to know that Gary Hart (a) was not serious enough of mind to give the presidency of the United States priority over his purported favorite avocation, or (b) didn't have judgment sufficiently sound to pay attention to the dangers of the press and the puritanism of the electorate. Did the Miami *Herald* do a good job of reporting? No. A resounding no. And every journalist I know thinks that. Did Bill Crow do a good job of reporting? Yes. A resounding yes.

That sleazy slipshod job the Miami *Herald* did on Gary Hart was one of the lowest moments in the recent history of American daily newspaper journalism. If I owned the Miami *Herald*, I'd fire everybody from the managing editor down to the reporting team that did sloppy surveillance and the photographer who failed to get pictures. But the story had the serendipitously salutary effect of revealing Gary Hart to be a man lacking judgement, perspective, and grace under pressure, and with a suicide wish. Would you want his thumb on the nuclear button? The present incumbent, who shares with Hamilton Jordan and the Los Angeles used-car salesman Ralph Williams the distinction of being unable to pronounce his own name, has proved how far into criminality a president can proceed before the Congress can find out — and how little it can do about it when it does. The British, by their system, would have him out of the job by nightfall, and the French conceivably would set off a national strike so severe that he would not be able to get across town. Gary Hart proved himself unfit for the oval office, and fortunately he did it early. The fact that the office's current occupant, that vapid marionette, that waving mountebank, that obedient servant of silent interests, that bear of little brain, that killer of trees and American Marines and sailors and those who go down in planes because he fired all the air controllers, that embarrassing poseur, that uninhabited windbreaker, that flickering wraith on the screen of history, isn't fit for it either changes nothing.

It took Alexander Knox to play Wilson in a film, Raymond Massey to play Lincoln, Ralph Bellamy to play Franklin D. Roosevelt, James Whittemore to play Harry S Truman. The incumbent presents a more difficult casting problem. To play him, the movie industry is going to have to come up with another John Agar.

A journalist's job is somewhat like a police officer's. He is not supposed to be the judge of the information he gathers. He should do the job as accurately as he can and let history evaluate the accumulated facts. As Bob Offergeld says, "We don't know who anybody is until they've been dead fifty years." And we never will know unless somebody records the necessary information as soon as possible — which is to say, before the witnesses are gone. James Lincoln Collier is researching a biography of Goodman, and some of what is in these letters to the *Jazzletter* will probably be in it. He can't interview Gene Krupa or Teddy Wilson or Harry James or Charlie Christian, can he? One of the problems of jazz is that it's had too much criticism and too little reporting. We need fewer self-assigned judges and more investigating officers.

It is not the *Jazzletter*'s purpose to "help further our music and its appreciation." Jazz isn't a cause, it isn't a religion, it's just a music. We are critical of the Russian press, whose philosophy is that the function of journalism is to *further* the cause of the State. The day the *Jazzletter's* purpose is to further anything except the truth, to the extent that one can find and discern it, it will be as depraved as *Pravda* and *Tass* — and Henry Luce's *Time*. Advocacy is not the function of journalism, though sad to say there are too many people practicing the craft who don't know this. When you embrace both the profession of music and that of journalism, you have to be clear about which you are serving at a given moment. If in the pursuit of truth we incidentally advance the appreciation of jazz (and all the arts), then that's a lagniape of the trade. And Bill's story helped heighten the appreciation of this music in that it showed why it sometimes isn't as good as it could be.

Journalism is a calling I take seriously, because it is the heart that pumps the information through the body politic of democracy: the implicit assumption that an *informed* electorate will make sound decisions — the recurring suspicion, as someone once defined this clumsy system of shared government, that more than fifty percent of the people are right more than fifty percent of the time. But they can't be right if they are not informed, and no one, absolutely no one, has the right to dictate what information they shall or shall not be allowed to receive. The Miami *Herald* proved that in some strange way, the press often does good even when it does badly.

As for Bill's piece being "gossip," the word is defined by various dictionaries as "idle talk" notable for inaccuracy. There was nothing idle about the first full report ever on the first official tour of the Soviet Union by an American jazz group. And it was very accurate.

No one has succeeded in discrediting Bill's story. As a matter of fact, no one has actually tried. Its attackers only insisted that it should not have been told, and when all other rationalizations have collapsed, the last creaky support for their position is that Benny hadn't been dead long enough. How long is long enough? Who determines that? What difference did it make to Goodman? As for Alice, Goodman's wife and John Hammond's widely-loved sister, she had been gone for some time. I don't know how his daughter Rachel feels about the series, which someone in the smarmy guise of kindness has almost certainly shown her. But Benny was not exactly Charlie your local barber. I also don't know how young John and Joe Kennedy feel about the stories of their respective fathers' and uncles' pass-her-around boffings of Marilyn Monroe. Such is the problem of the issue of famous sires. And if you don't want

the press and history to be interested in your behavior, don't claim to be a special person deserving special attention. You may get it. Like Gary Hart.

The reaction of the more vindictive Goodman fans has been an enlightening experience in that it has helped me understand the nature of fascism — whether fascism of the left, which is what Stalin established in the Soviet Union, or that of the right as elaborated by Mussolini and Hitler, exported to Latin America in the persons of countless fleeing Nazis, often with the help of U.S. intelligence — Claus Barbie among them — embodied in Pinochet, supported by the American political right, and abetted by the likes of Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North, Rear Admiral John Poindexter, and Major General Richard Secord. Their words and actions alike bespeak a contempt for the Constitution of the United States that is shared by the sportscaster in the White House.

Lou Gottlieb's point is most interesting. It had never occurred to me that the uncompliant individualists among the African peoples would be those the kings wouldn't want hanging around. Whether seized in conflicts with other tribes or tossed into the pokey for daring to question the authority of The Man, these would be precisely the people the local rulers would want to export. Put this together with the facts that American colonies were also a dumping ground, along with Australia, for Cockney recalcitrants, back when stealing a loaf of bread could get you "transported", that French Canada was likewise an *oubliette* for convicts of *le roi*, that vast thousands of Irish men, women, and waifs crossed the Atlantic to escape the mercies of His Majesty, and the image of an Irish French Canadian from New England named Woods (original name: Dubois) standing on a balcony in the land of Czars and commissars and flinging "Fuck you, King!" into the Russian night is peculiarly poignant.

Skepticism of authority is America's most magnificent heritage, an attitude that came bouncing like a wild basketball down through Rome and France and England to America, a gift to us all from crusty old Socrates.

But there is in America, as in Europe, another element, people seeking what Erik Fromm so aptly termed *Escape from Freedom*, people who crave kings, grand figures in uniforms and medals whom they can "idolize". O flags of Nuremberg. This element is by no means uniquely German, although the Germans in their passion for *Ordnung* strike me as rather more susceptible to it than some other nationalities. There are such people everywhere. They yearn for an ordered heirarchy, yearn to get off the roller coaster of change, escape the unceasing evaluation and decision-making that is more than one's right, it is one's duty, in democracy.

What I have come to see more vividly than ever before is that there is a mentality that is not only not disturbed by the suppression of information, it craves it. It demands the excision from discussion of anything that does not reinforce its beliefs. This is the lesson of North, Poindexter, Secord, and the more infuriated Goodman fans.

I have made the error of seeking a rational explanation of fascism. But the seeds of fascism — it's simple once you see it — are not rational. They entail the unquestioning acceptance of reassuring authority, Fromm's escape from freedom made flesh. The illumination of an ikon to bow to, who will always be there, unmutating. There are people in America who secretly yearn —indeed, yearn without even knowing it — for something like the restoration of George the Fourth. Such people cannot be at ease with a President of the Tenor Saxophone. They want a King of Swing.

In the last analysis, thoughtful men, Thomas Jefferson high on the list, have recurrently concluded that the benefits of a free press and free speech far outweigh their disadvantages. It is a tragedy that journalists did not expose to the American people the true nature of Chiang Kai-Chek and his gang. The information was tailored or omitted or altered to support the superstitions of the political right, and the consequence was a disaster of global proportions.

Is a question about how Madame Chiang got her Kotex too personal for journalism to ask? The family of the kid hung in the tree, if there are any of them around, might not think so.

Time left us a classic example of the horror of advocacy journalism. Had we had good solid reporting and enough of it out of China, maybe China today would not be Communist and the Korean and Vietnamese wars and the genocide in Cambodia would never have happened. Maybe Russia would have found a Gorbachev forty years sooner. How many American and other lives have been sacrificed to Henry Luce's neurotic manipulation of information to support authoritarian yearnings? Who, in the last analysis, is qualified to dictate what shall and shall not be told, about the Chiangs and the Goodmans, about that uninhabited windbreaker and about Gary Hart, or anything else? Fascism takes root only too easily in the soil of unquestioning idolatry, and once it does so it is extremely difficult to dig out. One sees this in the fury of the person who ordered those albums from the *Reader's Digest* and in the intellectual convolutions of those clinging to the idea that Poindexter, Secord and North were able to take over and run a critical area of American foreign policy out of the basement of the White House without the man who can't pronounce his own name knowing about it.

What happened to the State Department in the time of Chiang has happened again. But the difference is that capable bureaucrats such as Bud McFarlane seem to remember only too keenly the disposition of Owen Lattimore. The red-smear tactic of the political right is as effective as ever, as McFarlane made clear after saying his biggest mistake had been his failure to be more forceful in presenting his view that backing the *contras* was not an effective way to curb Soviet influence in Central America. Why didn't he do so? He answered, "To tell you the truth, probably the reason I didn't is because if I had done that Bill Casey, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, and Cap Weinberger would have said I was some kind of a Commie."

Looking back to that time when Eisenhower and Dulles undermined and eventually destroyed the power of France and England in the Middle East (so much for loyalty to allies) and stopped them from taking back the Suez Canal — leaving Republicans with short memories in our time to wring their hands that we don't get more help from France and England in the Middle East — one wonders if we might not all be better off if the press had had the bad taste during the war to tell the public what so many of its members knew: that Eisenhower was banging Kay Sommersby. If they'd done so, maybe those kids wouldn't have died on the Stark.

What should journalism suppress? What should it lie about? Are you wise enough to issue that dictate? I'm not.

Let there be idolators and sooner or later someone will hang a marionette on strings and make it smile for them.

That's what comes first, the idolators. Not the demagogue but those who are waiting for one. That is the soil of fascism.

As for me, I admire that restless recalcitrance that found a home in America and is at the very heart of jazz. And hearing it in the ear of the mind, I just love the sound of Madame Chiang's piano. A toast to Ogden, wherever he is.