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Letters

Capitol Records went to hell when Johnny Mercer and the others sold it to a bunch of talentless accountants. The label carried very little of what came to be called the British Invasion, and did not want to carry the Beatles, but were forced to by EMI, whereupon the Beatles carried Capitol for the next twenty years. The first Beatles records in the USA were on Vee-Jay, a black-owned Chicago outfit, which then went broke, partly because they had to buy pressings faster than the money to pay for them came in from the distributors. The Beatles brought in so much loot that Capitol became swollen with even more talentless people, and had to be rescued by EMI when the bubble burst in the 1970s.

I think the Beatles are ultimately of no musical consequence whatsoever, but were typical of a lot of English working-class entertainment; I question whether they were crappier than the Fabians and Frankie Avalons they washed away. The worst crap came in their wake. You raise the most interesting questions. You note that there have been few English jazz musicians of consequence; it was also the English who ripped off American rhythm and blues and tried to make it bear too much weight, inventing progressive rock, classical rock, art rock, glam rock, pomp rock, punk rock, etc. What is it about the English? Did American kids slavishly imitate them because they heard nothing else on the radio?

Anyway, I have to tell you that of all the multi-national labels, EMI has easily the best office in London, from the point of view of anybody trying to find out anything over here, and also operates the sanest reissue policy. It is EMI who are rescuing the best product from all their labels, digitally remastering Peggy Lee, Hoagy Carmichael, Billy May etc., to say nothing of *all* the Capitol albums of Nat Cole (at last making amends for the time Capitol told Nat it was now the Beatles' label). And re-launching Blue Note.

Meanwhile, Columbia Records in new York has a staff of one in its archive department. This person has all she can do to answer queries from in-house, let alone outside. And when I inquired about leasing old Percy Faith tracks for reissue, out of print for twenty-five years, the London office told me to talk to New York and the New York office told me – you guessed it – that I had to deal with London.

CBS Records was sold to the Japanese because they don't know what the hell they're doing, while the Japanese for decades have been reissuing all the best records of the century, from Hans Knappertsbusch to Hank Williams. The entire vault of Keynote Records in one sumptuous box. In the end we may have to be grateful to the most racist people on earth for rescuing our own musical culture.

Donald Clarke, Norfolk, England

Donald, an American by birth, is the compiler, editor, and one of the writers of The Penguin Encyclopedia of Popular Music, to be published this fall in a hard-cover edition of a thousand pages.

Looking for a Boy
Part I

On a winter day in 1935, an immigrant steel-worker drove twenty miles southeast down the Beaver Valley to Pittsburgh. In the front passenger seat of his old car was his only child, the only child he would ever have, a boy who strongly resembled him, though he already showed signs of growing taller than the father. He was taking the boy to town to see a movie, and he had his reasons, though for years afterwards – indeed for much of his life – the boy would try to fathom what they were.

Though the Great Depression was at its depths, the open hearths of the steel mills of Pittsburgh and its suburbs, and the coke ovens that supplied them with fuel, by day sent parallel streams of smoke down the wind and by night stained the overcast the orange of their unceasing fires. The soot and fly ash thereof, the boy in the car would say long afterwards, "murdered the air that we breathed." In winter the mills' effluvia stained the ground snow black.

Pittsburgh was a bizarre city. Its industries lay along the banks of its rivers, in the valleys formed by the Monongahela, flowing up from the south, and the Allegheny, coming in from the northeast to join it in forming the Ohio, which flows northwest past Aliquippa and West Aliquippa, then swings west a few miles farther on and finally south, at last joining the Missouri to become the Mississippi. The city came into being because of the confluence of its two rivers, which gave it upstream access to vast expanses of interior forest and farm lands, downstream egress to the Gulf of Mexico, and even access to the western prairies and the far reaches of Montana, where the Missouri rose. Paddle-wheel steamers came up river from New Orleans and passed within a few hundred yards of the boy's home in West Aliquippa. Sometimes he could hear a syncopated music coming from the boats as they went by.

Pittsburgh would have been an important city in any event, because of the confluence of those rivers, but the discovery of coal and iron ore – and also petroleum and natural gas – in its areas of immediate access determined its character. The opening of the railways assured a further supply of iron ore from the huge deposits of the Great Lakes region as well: Presque Ile Bay, on Lake Erie, one of the finest harbors in the St. Lawrence watershed, is only 135 miles to the north. But it was not just geography that determined the character of the city. Indelible imprints were made by the Mellon family with its banks, Andrew Carnegie, who arrived in the area in 1848 at the age of thirteen and became one of the major builders of its steel industry, and Henry Clay Frick, a native Pennsylvanian who bought up huge coal deposits and built 12,000 coke ovens to supply the steel mills of Andrew Carnegie and of the Jones and Laughlin partnership, the very ovens that contributed so much to the stench the boy in the car would remember ever afterwards. Its ovens and open-hearths made Pittsburgh one of the dirtiest cities in America.

But its industries were all in the valleys, whose slopes and palisades were thick with deciduous trees, fragile green in the spring and brilliant reds and yellows in the autumns, like the memory of a vanished time or a longing for another life. It was a strange and striking city, as indeed it remains, with its own special character and even beauty. The boy was in awe of it as the car crossed a bridge into the prow-like point of land between the Allegheny and the Monongahela. He looked up at the buildings as his father turned off the car's motor near Penn and Seventh. As they crossed the parking lot, the boy tripped over his feet. His father hit him; he would never forget the blow. His father called him, in the dialect of Abruzzi, a little *cafone*, a little hick, a rube, and told him he knew nothing, nothing of the world beyond their valley. Sometimes his father would call him, in moments of real anger, a *malo*, an animal. The boy learned the expression *porco Madonna*, a particularly harsh expletive. The term cannot be translated. *Porco* means pig, and *Madonna* of course refers to the Virgin. He would never forget the sounds of these words in his father's voice.

They passed under a marquee that announced the name of a theater, Loew's Penn, and the title of the talking picture it was showing. The father paid for tickets and they entered a luxurious cavern with a gold-and-white ornate ceiling that seemed as far away as the sky. They settled into seats of red velvet, and then the lights went down and at last out and the huge screen came alight, announcing the name of the picture: Cecil B. Demille's *The Crusades*. The boy would always remember the great images in black-and-white and tones of gray of knights in armor, Arab warriors in flowing robes, of caparisoned horses and tents and sand and huge faces that opened their mouths and talked. He had never seen a talking picture, only the silent comedies of Charlie Chase, Buster Keaton, Laurel and Hardy, Charlie Chaplin, and the Keystone Komedy Kops. But what he would remember most of all was the music, the sound of a huge orchestra. He had never heard anything like it, never heard anything much but the brass music of the Sons of Italy Band in which he played flute and piccolo. They played such things as the *Zampa* overture and *Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna*. He had the flute solo on *The William Tell Overture*, an instrument he had begun playing at eight. His father played these instruments, and he made the boy learn them. He had taken the wooden perch out of a birdcage, and when the boy in practicing hit a wrong note, the father would hit him on the head with it. It would puzzle him ever after: if his father didn't love him, why was he so insistent that he learn music? And why was he so concerned that he should have a sense of history, which, his father told him, was the reason they were seeing this movie?

NOTICE

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The movie ended. The wicked Arabs had been vanquished. The boy followed his father to the parking lot and their car. They headed north in the valley along the riverbank toward home. His father told him he would study hard, go to university, get a degree, become a teacher, and thus escape the steel mills. But the film had altered the boy's life in ways his father could not know. He had thought at first that there was a great orchestra behind the screen, but that just showed you what an ignorant little *cafone* he was. The sound of that orchestra was actually *in* the movie. And even as they drove home, a strange determination was taking form in the boy. He would not be a teacher at all. He had decided he would write music for talking pictures.

The next year, the band of Benny Goodman became a success, launching what would be known as the Swing Era. The boy was enamored of the bands he heard constantly on the radio, indeed by music of all kinds. He had an old wind-up phonograph the speed of whose turntable could be adjusted. He would slow it up to study the records made by the bands, particularly those of Goodman and Artie Shaw and Glenn Miller, trying to find out what they were playing by working it out on the piano. With painstaking care, he would copy them out on music paper. He wanted to study arranging. His father let him do it, even paid for the lessons. Why? Why, if the man didn't love him?

Their house at 401 Beaver Avenue was one block from the riverbank. Two islands lay just off-shore, Hog Island and Crow Island, owned by the great Jones and Laughlin Steel Company. The families of its workers were allowed to have vegetable patches there, and the boy and his parents would go out there to tend their garden. His mother made her own tomato paste, setting it in the sun to dehydrate according to ancient custom. And she made her own pasta.

The boy graduated from high school at seventeen. He met Benny Goodman, and wrote an arrangement for him. Goodman encouraged him to come to New York, holding out the promise of a job. The boy made the journey, but Goodman didn't hire him, and then the war came, and Henry Mancini went away to the Air Force and never lived in West Aliquippa again.

November 12, 1987.

The great scar of the Grand Canyon passed slowly under its wings as the jet coursed east at 35,000 feet. Hank didn't even look out the window. He flew far too much, had been doing it for years, to record movie scores or conduct symphony orchestras, to perform in small cities like Akron and Syracuse or at the White House for three different presidents or in London for the British royal family. Now he was going home. To his original home, not the big house in Holmby Hills or the other one he owned at Malibu or the third at Vale, which he visited mostly in the winter, to ski.

West Aliquippa was on the agenda of a five-day trip to Pittsburgh during which the boy who went to the Air Force, now sixty-three, but looking remarkably younger, would conduct the Pittsburgh Symphony. Loew's Penn, the theater where he had seen *The Crusades* was, alas, long since gone, he said. And so was another important locus of his youth, the Stanley theater, where he had studied arranging. Both gone.

Mancini has always been puzzled by his father. Over the roar of the jet engines, that sound of a monstrous wind, he said, "My father was a maverick. He was from a town called Scanno in Abruzzi, which is northeast of Rome, way up in the mountains. His name was Quinto. From what I can gather he was sent to live with an uncle in someone else's house for some reason. Maybe they didn't have room for him. He must have been ten, twelve, thirteen, and the uncle threw him out. And about this time he decided nobody wanted him there so he decided to immigrate. How he got from the mountains, we're talking about heavyweight mountains, how he got all the way from there to Naples to get the boat, I'll never know. He was all alone. This was 1910 or 1911. He must have been about thirteen.

"I can't figure it out. My dad was always very independent. Very much unlike the mould of the Italian. While other parents were fighting to get their kids into the steel mills, wanted to get me out. And all the other people were content and they would put him on about giving me music lessons. He'd say, 'All right, you'll see. You do what you wanna do, I'll do what I wanna do.' That was his attitude.

"There were a lot of blanks in his life. He never talked much. How in the hell did this kid start playing flute? How did he go from that and get into the steel mill? He was quiet but he could have a violent temper. I think he wanted to have more kids. My mother was a very tiny women, she was under five feet. They couldn't have any more kids after my birth. She almost died. At one time they were talking, which was very unItalian, about adopting, but they never did."

"What did being an only child – which is so atypical of Italian families – do to you?" I asked.

"I had to make do, learn to do things myself. I can still make it alone. It's just having to do for yourself."

Mancini never has a retinue around him, although he is one of the major concert attractions in America and indeed in the world: these coming four nights with the Pittsburgh Symphony were already sold out. He takes only a road manager and a key group of musicians with him, the rhythm section, the lead trumpet, and a saxophonist, most of them from the Indianapolis area. He calls them "my guys" and they are a close-knit group who have been with him for years. But they don't even travel with him. They meet him at the job.

"How did you get to writing a chart for Goodman at seventeen?"

"This goes back to the greatest influence I've ever had in my life, Max Adkins. I had taken flute lessons, piano lessons, and I started arranging on my own. I don't know why. I heard these bands on the radio. I can remember the Benny Goodman record of *Flat Foot Floogie with a Floy Floy*, all these things. I started to be very interested. As I said, we had a wind-up phonograph. It had the possibility of variable speed. When you slowed a record up, it lowered the pitch. Artie Shaw had just hit then. I would write out note by note all the Artie Shaw sax choruses in four parts. I would spend days winding the thing up. I was fourteen or fifteen."

"But you could hear all the lines, even at that age?"

"Yeah."

"Don't you think that's a good ear for a kid? To hear inner lines? And be able to write them out?"

"I guess. My ear has always served me. By seventeen I knew all the standard songs and the right chords. My father saw I was interested in this and he started sending me to Pittsburgh for piano lessons, because I had worn out a couple of teachers in Aliquippa. My piano teacher was named Homer Ochsenhardt."

"How do you spell that?"

"Who knows? Make it up. He was as German a fellow as you could ever get. I went through all of the piano books with him. He was very good for me. He was kind of a task master. Through him I heard about Max Adkins, who was the conductor of the pit band at the Stanley Theater in Pittsburgh. All the theaters that ran stage shows had to have pit bands. And the band Max had was about twenty or twenty-five pieces, and pretty good. They'd play the acts, the opening ten or fifteen minutes, the overture. The pit band would descend on its platform and disappear and the name band would be on the stage.

"But more, Max had devised a system of teaching arranging. We're in 1938, '39, or '40. The only thing available at that time was Frank Skinner's book on arranging, and it was kind of dated even then, it had the banjo and the tuba in it. I had already gone through that book. And Max had this system of teaching. I used to get the green bus in Aliquippa and go in for my lesson every Saturday morning. I used to get off the bus and go in the stage door of the Stanley. That was a real kick, to go backstage. Max's little office, where I took my lesson, was downstairs. Saturdays I used to look forward to, because I could be with him, and I'd see the show free, twice. The first show was ten o'clock in the morning, all the name bands.

"While I was studying with Max, there were four others studying with him: Jerry Fielding, who was Jerry Feldman then, Bud Estes, Billy May, and Billy Strayhorn. I knew Strayhorn then, and then he went with Ellington. I did a lot of arrangements for Max's pit band. I really worked on it. I was doing arrangements for little bands around there, although there weren't many bands to write for in the Beaver Valley.

"Max was a great saxophone player, to start with, as well as an arranger. He had many offers to go with the name bands, but he just didn't like the road. Benny Goodman came to the Stanley one week. Max took me into Benny's dressing room. I was seventeen, just graduated from high school, going in to talk to Benny Goodman. Max said, 'I'd like this kid to do an arrangement for you.' So Benny, in his most enthusiastic way – " Hank chuckled" – said, 'Yeah.' He had some songs in his room. He said, 'Here, do this one.' It was a swing tune, it had to be done with that style, moderate tempo. The band had no baritone sax at the time. I did the tune, and sent it on to Benny in New York. The band ran it down and he liked it very much.

"At the time I was also applying at Juilliard. And so it coincided. Benny said, 'Come on to New York.' He was very encouraging. I went to New York to see Benny and audition for Juilliard. I had no income. I was staying at the Picadilly Hotel. And the band was doing two or three weeks at the Paramount. He gave me something to do. He gave me a tune called *Idaho*. Mel Powell was the pianist with the band and Eddie Sauter was the arranger. I was in away over my head. I spent a week up in a little room almost in the attic of the Paramount Theater with

a piano. It was my first time in New York, all of these great people around me – making no money, but I had an assignment! So I made this arrangement. I was thinking, 'I've got all these great brass players,' and I made the mistake that all but the most experienced arrangers make: when you get a great brass section, you write too high. And so I proceeded to write the arrangement about a fourth higher than it should be. But hard! Hard! This doesn't make you any friends in the brass section. I thought I knew these guys, I thought they were all supermen. They were just human, and they had lips like everybody else. So they ran it down, and it was a disaster, I mean, it wouldn't play. It was just too hard. And so Benny called me in and he said, 'Well, kid, I don't think you're ready.'

"I had to do my audition for Juilliard. I had prepared a Beethoven sonata, but that's all. I did it for a panel of teachers and Dean George Wedge. They said, 'That's very nice, can you play something else?' I was stuck. I thought a minute and said, 'Yes.' I said, 'I've written this fantasy.' I hadn't written shit. I said, 'I've written this fantasy on Cole Porter's composition *Night and Day*.' So I sat down and for five minutes, I winged it. I put in every scale, every flourish, every run, did everything I could think of, five minutes on *Night and Day*. They said, 'Oh, that's marvelous.' And that's how I got into Juilliard.

"I turned eighteen while I was at Juilliard. I registered for the draft. There was a period before I entered school when I played piano. I was the pianist for the Bob Allen band, played the Pelham Heath Inn in the Bronx. I played with Johnny Long at Roseland Ballroom.

"The funniest gig I ever had, and here again I lost it, was with Vincent Lopez. He had the band at the Taft, and a noon radio show every day. No one knew it but he had a second piano on the stage. It was kind of hidden. So I was hired to play second piano. We got to these piano solos, and I made a big mistake: I played too loud and I played too much and I overshadowed him on the broadcast and never was asked back. He fired me right on the spot.

"The one other band I got fired from was Art Mooney at the Palladium. I was hired to play piano. They used to do sing-alongs with the glockenspiel. The band would sing, *I'm Looking Over a Four-Leaf Clover*, and it was my job to play the glockenspiel. And I really resented it. After about four or five bars, I started hitting wrong notes on purpose, right at the wrong time. He gave me the ray – he had a ray too, like Benny – and I got canned.

"And then I got drafted. If I had been drafted from my home town, I'd have been sent to the 66th Division, whose patch was a black panther's head on an orange circle. They were the grunts of that era. I would have been in the band of the 66th, with my friends. They got sent to Europe in the invasion as a unit. They took the brunt of the Battle of the Bulge. You're a band player until things get tough, and then you go on the line. And the band was wiped out.

"As a result of going from New York, I was drafted into the Army Air Corps. I had six weeks basic training in Atlantic City, in the dead of winter. I was supposed to go to the TTC, the Technical Training Command.

"This was a period that influenced the whole rest of my life.

"All the old hotels along the Beach, the Traymore, the Marlborough-Blenheim, were full of service men. We were at the Traymore. And at the Knights of Columbus Hotel on a little side street, Glenn Miller was forming his band, putting all the elements together in preparation for going to Yale. Arnold Ross was the pianist, Mel Powell hadn't come in yet. Trigger Alpert and Ray McKinley were there. I used to hang around there. I got to know these fellows pretty well, Arnold and Peanuts and Trigger. I hung around, being bug-eyed with these name musicians. I used to go over there after dinner. They knew what I did, I said I played flute and piccolo and piano and arranged, and they said, 'What are you going to do after basic training?' I said, 'I'll probably be a tail gunner or something.' They said, 'You'll be finished basic training in two weeks, why don't you talk to Glenn?' Glenn was at that time a captain. I said, 'Gee, I don't know him.' I was actually a little embarrassed and frightened, because he was at the top, I knew everything that band had ever recorded.

"But they got me an appointment and pushed me through the door. It was just a small office. He was sitting there in his captain's uniform. I didn't even sit down. I just came in and saluted.

"He was cordial. But then the only other big band leader I'd known till then was Benny Goodman. They both had a kind of chill about them. He seemed to me to be a very straight guy, and the guys liked him. He was very trim. He must have been in his thirties then. The office was very small and had a desk in it and a chair and a coat rack.

"He said, 'I hear you're an arranger. Do you write well, are you a good writer?' I said, 'Well enough, for what I've done. I also play flute and piccolo and piano.' He said, 'Okay,' and took down my name and serial number.

"The next thing I heard, when I finished basic training, I was assigned to a band, which was at that time the 28th Air Force Band, which later became the 528th. Without Glenn Miller, I wouldn't have been assigned to a band. He was very nice to me. He didn't have to do that for me.

"The band was being gathered in New Haven, Connecticut. All the guys in it were from New Haven. The band was sent in toto with the 28th Technical Training Command division. It was a very good band. I still have friends from that band. Some of them later went to name bands. The guy that helped me most was the master sergeant of the band. He was a Yale graduate named Norman Leyden. He had a degree in music, he was an excellent arranger and conductor. He was right under the warrant officer. Norman is now the associate conductor of the Oregon Symphony Orchestra. Miller took him away as an arranger. But I got to do a lot of arranging for that band. We were there in Atlantic City less than a year, then we were sent to Seymour Johnson Field in North Carolina, which was just hell. Bad weather, and the south. That's when the south was really the south. It was a bad place. The barracks were threadbare. The next place we moved to was Scott Field, Illinois, just outside St. Louis.

"The Battle of the Bulge had happened, and the waves of that began to be felt. The high command of the services, in their infinite wisdom, decided that the Air Force musicians would make great infantry soldiers. The bands were broken up. I was sent to Camp Howze in Brownsville, Texas, and went through

six weeks of basic infantry training. I went from there to Fort Meade, which was the Port of Embarkation, and then went overseas from there.

"I didn't know then about the guys from Aliquippa. I didn't find that out until I went back to Aliquippa. Several of my friends were in that division, kids I went to school with, and they were all killed.

"I was sent over in '44. The troop ship landed in Le Havre. I remember hearing about Roosevelt's death on a railway siding in France.

"I was assigned to the 1306th Engineers Brigade.

"They assigned engineer companies by height. Company A was guys up to six feet. I was six one, so I was assigned to Company B. You were assigned by strength.

"I remember going down through Luxembourg with the 1306th. We were on our way up to the front lines, and somebody pulled out my MO number, each profession has a number. I had 'musician' on my MO. Here's another piece of good fortune. The chaplain of the company needed an organist. He sent for me. He said, 'There's the organ over there.' It was a box, a GI pump field organ that they issued to the chaplains. My other duties were to set up services and drive the jeep for him. We'd go out to the various encampments and I'd go to the mess hall and find an orange crate or something, and set it up as an altar, and get the vestments, and then pass out the hymn books, and I'd play. Out in the middle of a field somewhere, playing this goddamn pump organ.

"The chaplain was not a very good man. In fact he was quite an awful man. Soft spoken. From the south. He got one of the engineering outfits to build him a trailer that we towed behind our jeep and that he could sleep in. Now I learned this from the guy I replaced. Before I got there, this driver would take him to Eperny in the champagne country. He used to load up the trailer with champagne, which he would buy for almost nothing. He would bring the champagne back and park the trailer and sell the champagne at vastly inflated prices to the guys on the line, but insisting on them drinking it there, because he had to take the bottles back. He made many trips back and forth.

"Now, we went through a lot of places where there were abandoned churches. He would take out the stained glass windows, some of which had been there for probably centuries, and take them to the engineers and have them crate them, and ship them home, these big packages. The guys in the outfit really didn't like him. They used to say, 'Tell it to the chaplain.' They didn't want to tell him anything. So he'd take these windows and I'd have to drive them to the engineers.

"We were just approaching Linz, in Austria, when the war ended. We were part of Third Army, under Patton. I remember seeing him ride by, standing up in the jeep with the helmet. Japan was still in the war. We were on our way to be reassigned to the Pacific theater. So the whole division went by truck convoy, I was driving the jeep, all the way down the Rhine Valley past these gorgeous places, dropped down through Lyons, to a marshalling area at Arles, just outside Marseilles. I made some friends with some bandsman who were stationed there. They were in search of a flute player. Anything I could do, they needed. I went to the warrant officer of the band, and asked if he could get me transferred. He did. I went with that band. So I'd been in the Air Corps, the engineering corps, and now the infantry. The band was assigned to Nice. Next thing I know I'm in another convoy in another service. We ended up at the Ruhl Hotel, right on the Promenade Anglaise. Nice was the enlisted men's rehabilitation center, Cannes was the officers' R and R.

"That was one of the best periods of my life, ever, in Nice at that time. Paradise. It was still a beautiful city.

"They had the quota system, and my number came up, and I left, came back through Marseilles through New York, was mustered out. My father was after me to go back to school. However, I went back to New York, and about that time, the Glenn Miller-Tex Beneke band was just starting out, and the chief arranger for that was Norman Leyden, my old master sergeant friend. He offered me a job, playing piano with the band and arranging. That was the tail end, when the big bands had their last fling, the end of the era. But still it was quite an impressive band, a good band. Jack Sperling was the drummer, Rolly Bundock was on bass. Conrad Gozzo and Pete Candoli and Steve Steck were in the trumpets, Jimmy Priddy and Paul Tanner in the trombones. It was a hell of a band, and we had thirteen strings, ten violins, two violas and a cello. That was my first experience with strings.

"So I went with the band and didn't go back to school. I felt this was an opportunity I couldn't miss. I could speculate as to what might have been, but I don't think I would have been further ahead. I don't know. I might have been further ahead in certain ways as far as education goes, because my musical education is a patchwork. I've had some great teachers, like Castelnuovo-Tedesco and Krenek, I've done a lot of study, but I have not had that formalized thing where you go through this which leads to that. But I don't think I'd trade it now.

"The big thing about the Beneke band was that I was there, I would write something, we'd rehearse it, and I'd hear it played."

I said, "How in the hell did you balance thirteen strings against all that brass?"

Hank laughed. "We usually didn't. In an up jazz arrangement, there is no way to do it, unless you're recording. I think they had only one mike on the strings. The bands in those days did not have many mikes, they were hardly miked at all. It was on the ballad arrangements that I really learned a great deal about balances. Thirteen isn't a lot. In fact, I remember after I was married, Jerry Fielding – we were living in the Valley, in our first apartment, in Burbank – called me one day and said, 'I'm going to have to write for strings here, and I don't know what to do.' He came out to see me. He said, 'You've been writing for Tex, can you tell me something?' We spent a whole day just talking about strings, and here I was, the expert – who had probably done about fifteen charts for strings!"

"But you'd studied the books, the Berlioz, the Rimsky-Korsakov, the Reginald Forsythe."

"Sure. But I hadn't had much experience with strings."

One of the things that happened to Hank with the Beneke band is that he hired a singer. Her name was Ginny O'Connor. She was a striking beauty from California, the daughter of an Irish American truck driver and a Mexican mother. She had been singing with Mel Torme's group, the Meltones; if you still

have the album of Cole Porter tunes recorded by Artie Shaw and the Meltones, give it a listen: she's one of the singers. But Torme was being pressed to become a single, which he did, soon to be publicized as the Velvet Fog. Ginny O'Connor was out of work. The Mello-Larks, the vocal group with Beneke, needed a singer. She applied for the job. The arranger who auditioned her was Hank. He liked her, she was hired. She had great skin, and high cheekbones, and she sang in tune. What more could a young musician ask? Hank proposed to her. She accepted.

She hated life on the road. He told her about seeing *The Crusades*, told her about his dream of writing for films. She told him she couldn't take any more of the travel, she was going home to California and she thought he should take his shot at the movie industry. And they both left the Beneke band and settled in Los Angeles. She worked as a studio stinger. Some weeks her earnings kept them going. It took Hank five years to get his first job in the movie industry – a staff job at Universal where he wrote material for some of the Francis the Talking Mule movies, and Abbot and Costello pictures, *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*, and some of the earliest rock- and-roll scores. Then Universal announced that it was closing down its music department, and Hank got his notice. Depressed, and with a son and twin daughters to feed, he was wondering what he would do next. He went into a studio barbershop for a haircut. On emerging he encountered young Blake Edwards, who said he was about to start producing a TV private eye series. Hey, maybe you'd be interested in working on the music, he said. Yeah, Hank said, what are you going to call it? *Peter Gunn*, Blake Edwards said.

As we waited by a luggage carousel in the Pittsburgh airport, someone whispered, "That's Henry Mancini." You often hear whispers around him. He's used to it by now. Other than rock stars, there is probably no musician in America who is as recognizable – from the album covers, of course, and his various television shows, including *The Mancini Generation* of a few years ago, and even a recent PBS special on him and his music. The Pittsburgh Symphony had sent a driver, who took us to the newly- built Vista Hotel. We checked into our rooms and went to sleep. The first rehearsal was set for the following morning.

The driver took us to Heinz Hall, a magnificent old theater refurbished a few years ago with a huge grant from the famous food family of that name and made into the home of the Pittsburgh Symphony. The band and Hank's road manager were already there: guitarist Royce Campbell, who at thirty-six has been traveling with Hank for seventeen years, saxophonist Al Cobine, bassist Steve Dokken, drummer Jack Gilfoy, and trumpeter Cecil Welch. They have all been with him for many years. Cecil Welch lives in Atlanta and has a Georgia accent. The others all live around Indianapolis. That always bemused me, but there was, as I was to learn, a simple explanation for it. Their affection and respect for Hank were obvious. And so was that of the orchestra. Larry Bunker, who played on a lot of his recording and film-score dates – along with Bud Shank, Shelly Manne, Ray Brown, Red Mitchell, Conrad Gozzo, Jimmy Rowles, Plas Johnson, and others of that stature – told me a long time ago, "Hank's dates are always relaxed and pleasant. But there's something about him, you don't fool around on his sessions."

The concert was to last two hours. And the rehearsal was scheduled for two-and-a-half hours. Hank is one of the few people in the world who can prepare a two-hour concert in two-and-a-half hours. Part of the reason is his "guys", who communicate to the orchestra. The brass section phrases to Cecil Welch's trumpet, and with his attack, I noticed, a symphony orchestra's brass was getting a jazz feeling. You don't hear that very often. Then, too, the orchestra doesn't play all the way through the two hours. In the *Pink Panther* theme, there are solos by Cecil Welch and Al Cobine against only the rhythm section: the orchestra lays out. Hank plays some piano solos against strings; and the strings are playing footballs, as musicians call them – whole notes. These passages are not hard to rehearse. What Hank learned that day with Goodman in New York long ago is evident in all the music he has prepared for concerts: he does not strain an orchestra. The advice not to do so is contained in *Sounds and Scores*, his text-book on orchestration that has become one of the standard works in the field. Hank says that a good many film composers who have in recent years done pops concerts with symphony orchestras present them with extremely difficult scores. He didn't name anyone, but I've noticed that Michel Legrand does it. The composer who does that chews up rehearsal time on hard passages, leaving an orchestra to scramble. The practice makes neither the orchestra nor the music sound good. And Hank is deliberately easy on orchestras, which is one reason they like him.

They also like the music. A woodwind player in the Pittsburgh told Mancini's guys, 'Jesus, you wouldn't believe all the crap we have to play in the pop concerts. This orchestra feels this is the best, that's the reason they like to see Hank come in. It's an easy gig, but this is music, and we recognize it and like it.' As a result of all this, Royce Campbell and the others said, Hank will complete a rehearsal with a good orchestra – and they rate the Pittsburgh among the top five in the country – in ten minutes under two hours, with a weak regional orchestra in ten minutes over two hours.

And this one came in almost exactly ten minutes under the two hours. "See?" Al Cobine said, as if he'd won a bet.

The orchestra's players were making their crowded way down a corridor to the dressing rooms. A tall violinist said to a petite girl walking beside him, "The thing I like about him is that he doesn't throw his fame at you." The backstage mood was good.

That evening Hank's "guys" and I were chatting in my room as we waited to meet Mancini for dinner.

The Vikings believed you were born with your luck, whether good or bad. I told Al Cobine that questions of talent aside, Hank seemed to have phenomenal luck. If he hadn't been drafted in New York, he would have been killed somewhere near Bastogne; if he hadn't met Glenn Miller, he would probably have been assigned as a tail or ball turret gunner, whose life expectancy in combat was – there were statistics on the subject – forty-five seconds. If he hadn't known Norman Leyden, he might not have been hired by the Tex Beneke band. If he hadn't joined the Beneke band, he might never have acquired a wife who was determined on his recognition as a film

composer. And as Hank himself has often said, if he hadn't needed a haircut that day at Universal, he might never have got the assignment to do *Peter Gunn* and therefore never gone on to score for Edwards *Breakfast at Tiffany's, Days of Wine and Roses*, the *Pink Panther* series, *Ten, Victor-Victoria, S.O.B.*, and more – not to mention scores for pictures by other producers and directors, including the recent Paul Newman version of *The Glass Menagerie*, part of whose delicate score I'd heard rehearsed that morning.

"You're right about Hank's luck," Al Cobine said. He is a big- chested man in his early fifties, a fine saxophonist, although he works mostly as an arranger, writing among other things many charts for the school-band movement. He also functions as Hank's contractor, and back in the years when Mancini carried a full orchestra on the road, Al hired his players. "We'll be in an airport in Vegas, and he'll throw two or three dollars in a machine, and he'll win two or three hundred. Once in Puerto Rico he walked into the casino for a minute and came out with fifteen hundred dollars."

"He has a great deal of reserve about him," I said, "at least until you get past it."

Al Cobine said, "I find it in his reticence to talk freely. He's a storehouse of knowledge if you can get him to talk. We've all observed for years how complex he can be. For example, he always seems to know who wrote the lyrics to songs. We started talking about some very early characters in jazz, and he knew all about them and what they did. And he remembers faces and names in all the orchestras. He'll ask about them, he has a deep memory.

"Another thing is that he's very patient with people. He can be cutting at times, but he'll say it and it's over and forgotten. In the early days for us, '65 or '66, we were in Buffalo or Syracuse, or somewhere in upper New York, on tour, and Smitty – Bob Smith – got bombed on his birthday. He was the first flutist and lead alto. This is when I was hiring all the orchestras for Hank on the road. We became his touring band.

"We had a combination of college kids and professional players from the area, and that was the magic combination, that youthful vigor mixed in with seasoned great players. Anyway, Smitty was a real lush, and he was bombed at nine o'clock or ten in the morning. I was going down for breakfast, and someone said, 'Have you seen Smitty? He's bombed.' So I went to a couple of the cats in the band, and I said, 'Get him sober, man, because in mid-afternoon I don't want him to go back to the bottle. Or we're in trouble.' The job was on the line, I thought. By that afternoon, they said, 'We've got it covered, man, we've been playing baseball with him, giving him coffee, he's straight.'

"That evening after dinner, I was standing out in front of the Holiday Inn and the bus was there, ready to go down to the concert hall. And I saw Smitty over talking to the lady at the desk, who was kind of attractive, and Smitty was not averse to saying, 'I'm a member of the Henry Mancini Orchestra, do you want to come to the concert with me?' He was making out at the counter there. So I stood there, and Smitty came out with this chick on his arm, walking right past me toward the bus. And I looked at him, and he was cross-eyed and gone, man, he was shot to hell. He'd probably gone back to the room and gotten soused up.

"I was really worried. Freddy Dale, Hank's manager and booking agent at the time, was an old friend of mine, but very very touchy about everything. So we got on the bus, we went down to the hall, we got in there, and I was getting ready to play myself, and I looked over the orchestra to make sure everybody was there, and Smitty was gone. No lead alto player. This was a big hall, packed, probably fifteen thousand people, and five minutes to count-down, I looked out there and Smitty was seating this lady. He'd gone to dinner with her. They'd gone to a seafood place. I sent somebody out into the audience, and they pulled him in, got his flute together.

"Now Hank in those days played the opening number on flute. It was *Mr. Yunioshi* from *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. It was the first tune after the *Moon River* theme. He always left his flute with Smitty. As soon as the theme came, he'd walk over to Smitty, who'd give him his flute, and he'd walk over to the mike and play with the woodwind section. Down beat happened. He walked over to Smitty and Smitty handed him a lobster claw that he'd had at dinner. Hank looked at the thing, and looked at Smitty, and threw it. Hank told me later, 'Man, I looked at his *eyes*, and I conducted at the strings all evening, I wasn't about to look back there at him.' Instead of getting angry, he just understood the situation and turned his back on it and took care of things. Took it in stride, and even with some humor. There are some guys who'd have fired Smitty on the spot. But he knew Smitty, he liked him, he realized he was a really fine player. There's not too many cats who'd do that."

"But how did all you guys out of Indiana get to work with him?" I asked.

Al said, "I formed a band in '56 or something like that. Struggling, starving. That's when I was in graduate school in political science at Indiana University, moonlighting in the music department. There was a really bad mouse band that played on campus, and got lots of work. This New York cat named Freddy di Francisco, who played trumpet, and I went to this rehearsal the same evening. We played on that band from September through New Year's Eve. And we really hated that band. Freddy was a business major at Indiana U. He said, 'Al, we've got to get off this turkey.' So we formed a quintet, and I wrote a bunch of George Shearing type stuff. What I didn't know is that Freddy was a genius at getting jobs. We did that for a year. In the meantime, he picked up a stack of contracts and wiped the whole place out. He had all the gigs. He formed an octet and then a big band, and he had guys like Jerry Coker and Roger Pemberton and Clare Fischer. I was writing for him, and Al Kiger did some writing. All the best guys in the area. I advised him on the musicians and the band, and helped get the charts together. Whenever he had personnel problems, he'd call me. And we became pretty good friends. Now he wasn't the easiest Italiano to get along with. He was aggressive, tough. And funny. He got his degree and in ten years he was in one of the new agencies that took on people like Mancini and Mathis. He changed his name to Freddy Dale. The company became Perenchio Artists. With Jerry Perenchio. Freddy's father was one of the really early writers of movies. His ambition was to become a big producer. He died of cancer about ten years ago.

"Hank had tried two other times, out of Seattle and out of Kansas City, to put a band together, and it didn't work out. He

didn't like the results. Freddy called me and said, 'Do you know who Mancini is?' I had a little record shop with a couple of other guys, and I'd just heard a couple of his new things. I said, 'Yeah,' and he said, 'Do you think you could put an orchestra together?' And I said, 'Yeah.' I'd already been doing a little of that around the area. Jack – " he nodded to Jack Gilfoy " – was there at the very first gig. So was Dick Dennis, who is to me the best on-the-road concertmaster in the whole world because he can take a diverse group of string players, including young kids, and he plays and makes a section out of it. The only reason Dick isn't with us on this gig is that you don't bring in your own man to an orchestra of this caliber and insult their concertmaster by replacing him."

Royce Campbell said, "This'll tell you something about Henry. We were in Canada on tour, Ottawa, and Dick came down with an illness where he was losing the feeling in his fingers. It was physically and pyschologically traumatic. It was creeping up from his feet. It turned out to be some rare virus. Henry lined up these doctors in Canada, the best people, and took care of Dick totally, paid for it all. It turned out that there were only two other people in medical who had survived this illness."

Jack Gilfoy said, "I had literally taped the bow to Dick's hand so that he could play."

Al said, "You can't imagine the conscientiousness of this guy. He's a full-time teacher, a marvelous guy, a Catholic mixture of Hungarian and Czechoslovakian."

Royce said, "I gotta tell you this story. Remember in Akron?" They all started to laugh. "We were in Akron, playing at the Blossom Center. Between the rehearsal and the concert, there was time to go to a fancy restaurant, so we go up to this place that's part of the park there. There were all these people who were going to go to the concert. One guy with stars in his eyes, we figured he was a fan of Henry's, was looking over at us. Now at that point, Al had had a lot of arrangements published for the music education movement for at least ten years. This guy goes right to Al and didn't even know who Henry was, and he shook Al's hand and said, 'I've enjoyed your writing so much.' Henry was eating his salad, not even looking up. And the guy raved over Al and walked away and never even noticed that Henry was there at all. And finally Henry looked over to Al and said, 'Okay, I'll give you Akron.'"

They laughed some more at this memory, and as the amusement subsided, Jack Gilfoy said, "There are guys standing in line for our jobs, if any of us quits, because the word is out that it's a good gig."

One of the reasons it is a good gig is that Mancini is a restaurant lover, and the group eats superbly. He asked the symphony players and others about the best restaurants in town, and that night we dined at a place called Franco's, across the street from Heinz Hall. Whatever the others had, I had superb softshell crabs. And in the midst of this glorious feast, Hank was already planning tomorrow's dinner at another place. And he always eats Italian. And he always eats before concerts, not afterwards, as so many musicians do; he says late meals interfere with his sleep.

At the concert's intermission, his dressing room was crowded with people. His expression would light up when he recognized faces from long ago, and he would ask after this old friend or that, after someone's brother, or a musician he had worked with in the early days when the Sons of Italy played on a bandstand in a vacant lot in West Aliquippa. "We would go on the road with the band," Hank said. "It was a direct carry-over from Italy. We once played in Perry Como's home town, Canonsburg. We played all over western Pennsylvania." The band wore gray uniforms with big lapels. Henry was too small for his: it hung on him awkwardly. He used to put olive oil on his hair to slick it. He remembers constant arguments within the band. "Maestro, troppo presto!" someone would complain to the leader.

I noticed a tiny but vigorous woman among the well-wishers. She was less than five feet tall, and I was astonished to learn that she was 82. She looked about 65. Hank brought her to meet me, grinning and with a solicitous loving air. This, he said, is Madeleine Paoline. She was his godmother, and friend of the family, and she had been his teacher in Grade Five. She sat down on a sofa in the dressing room, a little prim in manner, and formally erect.

She remembered that the conductor of the Sons of Italy band was Carlo d'Atri, an immigrant. Madeleine's husband played valve trombone in the band, which in the band's hierarchy made him second to the baritone horn, and her brother was the first clarinetist. They rehearsed every Sunday morning after church, and played two jobs a year – festas, which would be *feste* in the correct Italian plural. There were two of them, the festa of St. Anthony and that of Santa Magno. These events were the culmination of the band's year.

What was Henry like in the fifth grade?

"He wasn't a candidate for a Rhodes scholarship," she said. "But he was an alert boy, an average student. He was impish and with a subtle humor. He liked sports, which he was allowed to play until the time his mother or father would yell, 'Henry, time to practice.' He loved to eat. He doesn't look a bit different now than he did then.

"About a third of the class were Italian, and about a third of them were musicians. In West Aliquippa, when an Italian boy got to be about seven years old, he was sent to a teacher and learned to beat time. Many of them became teachers.

"His father married again after his mother died, then was divorced. He was so proud of Henry, it's a wonder he had any buttons left on his shirt. He would send clippings about Henry home to us from California."

The impression I was gathering of Quinto Mancini – correctly, the name is pronounced ManCHEEnee, not Manseenee – was contradictory. It would only grow more so. I was thinking about it as Hank and his guys and the orchestra started the second half of the concert.

(To be continued)