Gene Lees
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Mail Bag

During the Great Depression, a man came into a soup kitchen and, because he couldn't see very well, needed help filling out the forms. The next day, a volunteer brought him an old pair of magnifying glasses. The next week she brought a shoebox full of discarded glasses.

This was the start of what is now known as New Eyes for the Needy. Based in Short Hills, New Jersey, they supply millions of glasses to people all over the world. They don't solicit money, only discarded jewelry, glasses, and old trinkets.

In my work, I visit schools all over Maine presenting a jazz improvisation workshop. I've recently been to Vinalhaven with a talented, spirited group of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade kids, who are determined to have a band. There, as in most other schools in Maine, there are kids who want to play an instrument and whose families can't afford it. Rental to purchase plans are available, but for a lot of families, $20 to $40 per month for a musical instrument just isn't possible, so another kid falls through the cracks.

I would like to ask the readers to look in their attics and storage places. If Uncle Harry's old trombone is there, maybe we can polish it up and get it into the hands of some deserving kid. It won't do the squirrels much good, and besides, Uncle Harry might be pleased to know that, thanks to him, some kid was making music.

I can find good homes for almost any instrument.

If this works, we may need help collecting and even storing instruments, establishing nonprofit status, etc.

Perhaps people would contact me directly at 149 Maine Street, Brunswick, Maine 04011, or phone me at 207 725-5825.

This is a very new idea as far as musical instruments are concerned. But it certainly is not a new concept. New Eyes has been going strong since 1932.

I don't know who the man was who needed the glasses. But the volunteer who found him a pair was my grandmother, Mrs. Arthur Terry.

Brad Terry
Brunswick, Maine

Brad Terry is a fine clarinetist and, in addition, is one of the world's unbreakable idealists. And here's another organization that can use help:

Many thanks for your continued support. I hope it doesn't sound sycophantic to say that the *Jazzletter* is probably the most valid jazz periodical available anywhere and I consider it to be a most valuable addition to our collection.

The BIJS has been going since the mid-60s and serves to provide a resource for students, discographers, researchers and just the plain enthusiasts who want to read about jazz in all its forms. Unfunded, we struggle on with generous help from people like you and now have almost certainly the largest collection of material in the United Kingdom: 1,700 books, about 10,000 periodicals plus masses of material like concert brochures, newspaper cuttings, handbills, etc.

At the risk of overstretching your generosity, if you have copies of any of your books available, these would also help the cause.

If we can reciprocate in any way, do let me know.

Kind regards,

Graham Langley
Librarian
British Institute of Jazz Studies
17 The Chase, Edgcumbe Park
Crowthorn, Berkshire, RG11 6HT
England

If anybody on our side of the Atlantic has anything to contribute, I know that Graham will deeply appreciate it.

The Good Gray Fox
Part Two

I told Lou Levy, "I heard once that somebody asked Stan Getz for his definition of a perfect saxophonist, and he replied, 'My technique, Zoot's time, and Al Cohn's ideas.' I don't know if it's apocryphal or true."

"That's true," Lou said. "Stan told *me* that. And I've told it to other people. Stan's a fantastic musician. He's like a Yascha Heifetz with the saxophone. As Stan Levey once said, the instrument is like an extension of his head. But he speaks reverently of Zoot Sims and Al Cohn. He loves them forever and ever.

"I think of Al a lot. I miss him so much. He was a special person, as well as a special musician. There's no one left to play with. That's why I like to play with Stan Getz. With all due respect to the younger guys, it's different. Something's different. I don't know whether the tradition is missing or what, but something's different. Facility they've got. They've got all of that. We still have Hank Jones and Tommy Flanagan. Kenny Barron plays great. Tommy is wonderful. He is so understated. Perfect taste. No effort.

"But I miss Al Cohn. And I remember how all the guys in Woody's band looked at him."

"That band was pretty strung out when you joined it," I said. "Woody told me some stories about it. Some of them funny, some of them not so funny. And both Zoot and Al told me about it too. That's how Al lost his eye, he told me. An infection from a bad needle. He said, 'Losing your eye, that's a pretty good reason to quit.' And Zoot told me he got into a car with a girl he was going with and drove to California. He said he withdrew in the motel rooms along the way. And they both stayed straight."

"Well," Lou said. "Heroin was the drug of the period. Pot was already old hat. Cab Callaway was singing songs about it and making jokes about pot. And Harry the Hipster. Heroin was a serious habit, but that was the drug that everybody was

using at the time. I got into it."

"The guys who got into it either got out of it or they aren't here."

"Pretty much. There are a few who are still around who are into it. We don't have to name names, we all know who they are. I was not serious about it, not serious like some of the guys who aren't here any more. I got out. It took me a while. I finally just got disgusted with myself and gave it up."

"Do you want me to leave this out of the conversation?"

"Oh no, it's okay," Lou said. "I don't mind talking about it."

"Woody told me once that he was so naive he couldn't figure out why his band kept falling asleep."

Lou laughed. "Oh Woody! I remember Woody's expression. He'd just *look* at us! He didn't even shake his head. He'd just look. He never said anything to anybody that I can recall."

"I know he tangled with Serge Chaloff about it once," I said. "Serge being the band druggist. And yet it never affected the quality of the music in that band."

"Oh! The quality of the music was very important to them. They were very conscious of their image. What they were doing in their hotel rooms or on the bus or at intermissions was one thing, but on the bandstand they were real music-conscious. We'd all look for the opportunities to play. Sometimes Woody would get off the bandstand for the last set and go home. We'd drag out all the arrangements we really loved to play, Johnny Mandel's *Not Really the Blues*, and play them. There was so much we loved to play in the band anyway, Neal Hefti and Al Cohn stuff. The soloists were always at their best. In a theater, we'd find a piano in some room down in the bowels of the theater and jam between shows. Al, Zoot, Stan, everybody. Always looking to play. Whatever else suffered, the music never did. The band sounded healthy. We may have had some unhealthy habits, but the music sounded healthy. Great vitality, great oneness. One of the best ensemble bands of all times. It had a oneness like Ellington had when that band was at its best. Or Basie. They had those magic moments. The band would come alive, and you'd feel a shortness of breath, it was so exciting. Sort of like Dizzy's band used to be to me, his young, wild, wonderful band that recorded for RCA Victor. I felt that same kind of excitement.

"I was crazy for Dizzy's band. It was the most exciting band! And he was . . . forget it! The sting he had in his playing. The notes were so focussed in their technical control. So strong. I hear his beautiful harmonic playing. It can't be matched. I still think he's the most creative player, harmonically, of all the soloists today. It was electrifying. That was a great era, that band and Dizzy. They followed us, when I was with Chubby Jackson, to Sweden. He had Chano Pozo with him. They landed the day we left. That was, I think, the first time Dizzy was in Europe with the big band. That was 1948.

"I joined Woody in Aberdeen, South Dakota. I remember we played a big festival there. They had shows in the afternoon and at night. We played baseball when we weren't playing music. It was a rather rural beginning. We did a lot of ballrooms in the middle of nowhere. The guys were either playing baseball or playing music. That was the big thing. We had a damn good baseball team for guys who used to be not so healthy. We beat a lot of people, including the Harry James band. He was real serious about baseball. Not just, 'What instrument do you play?' but 'What position do you play?'

"We played Les Brown's band. We'd get to a town and we'd play the Legionnaires or the Boy Scouts. We had games everywhere. It was great, I loved it, staying in hotels, eating in joints. I played left field. Not a very good hitter, but a pretty good fielder, and I could throw pretty good. Until I got arthritis in my arm.

"Woody was very good to me. He gave me plenty of room to learn the book, to learn how to fit in. I didn't realize that I was learning without realizing the process. I learned how to do it. I learned how to play *Summer Sequence* and the little things in the intros. I'd heard the records enough to know. When a new thing would come in, he'd say, 'Make an intro.' He'd give the guys in the band an approving look without looking at me.

"They'd already done *Four Brothers*. I didn't do the Columbia sessions, I just did the Capitol sessions. *Lemon Drop* and *Early Autumn* and those things. *Not Really the Blues*.

"I roomed with Terry Gibbs.

"I lucked out when I was with Woody when we went on a national tour with the Nat Cole Trio. So I got to hang out with Nat a lot. He'd just got married to Marie. We played a theater with him in Toronto. I took him shopping. I found a clothes shop, the English Clothes Shop on Bay Street. He had a lot of stuff made. What a great experience, to sit there every night and listen to him. And then, in Vegas, later, I'd go and see him a lot. With Peggy, we'd follow Nat into the Sands hotel. We'd get there a few days early for rehearsals. I'd go every night to see both shows, Nat Cole standing in front of the band or playing the piano. God, he was so great. In a Las Vegas nightclub, he was heaven. He really was. It didn't have to be a concert hall. No matter where he was, he was fantastic. He was an effortless man. I did one album with him. I played piano and he sang. It was *Wild Is Love*. He was a magnificent man.

"When I got into the '50s, I started working with Stan Getz at Zardi's and places like that. And recording with him. Then I got with Jazz at the Philharmonic. I was officially with Ella Fitzgerald, but Norman Granz would mix and match sections, and I would end up with Dizzy Gillespie, Sonny Stitt, Stan Getz and Ray Brown, which wasn't too bad. I spent a lot of time with Stan on those tours. We had a lot in common. We liked the same kind of food, the same kind of jokes, the same kind of music. We did the same kind of good and bad things together. Laughed together. Did all kinds of crazy stuff. And that spanned many many years. And now in the '90s we're still doing gigs together."

"Let me ask you almost a philosophic question," I said. "In those days when you joined Woody, the amplification was so dubious, you often couldn't hear the piano player. What was

the function of being in the piano chair?"

"Well, yes, that's a funny position in a big band," Lou answered. "The piano is often unnecessary in a big band. Totally unnecessary. Which I used in my thinking about it. I stay out of the way. You've got chord symbols covered by sections of guys. What are you going to do? Duplicate the notes and get in their way? I would just stay out of the way, find a hole like Basie did. If there was a figure, and a breath, and if you could plink an octave that would sound effective, you put it in. Or sometimes you'd have a rhythm figure with the drummer. Sometimes the rhythm section would fall into a set thing. That's what you look for. You look for the places to utilize the piano. You don't look to be playing all the time.

"Playing behind a solo, you get to comp a lot. I learned how to do that. I was always considered a pretty good comper. And I consider myself a pretty good comper.

"That's what you do in a big band. Basie was a master big-band piano player. There was no one better.

"Now do you know who else was great in a big band, but in a different way? John Lewis with Dizzy's big band was, I thought, wonderful. He had a wonderful way of comping. He wrote a lot of the arrangements for Dizzy's band, but the pulse and excitement were beyond his control. He was low-keyed in all this turmoil that was going on, and it fit in beautifully, chomping away and contributing just the right things. I thought he was wonderful in that band.

"But Basie is the ultimate big-band piano player. What Basie was wonderful at was building the tension. You knew the band was going to come roaring in somewhere and stop your heart. He could bring the band in with a little figure, introduce the band into the arrangement in the most wonderful way, or he could surprise you and not do it and leave it to them to shock you to death. His dynamics were just superb.

"I stayed with Woody's band until the band broke up in Wichita Falls, Texas, which was late in 1949. It was at a country club. I remember changing in the locker room. I remember the last night very vividly. It was very sad. Wichita Falls, and everybody was going to leave. I was doubly sad because Woody took a small group to Havana, Cuba, and Ralph Burns stayed on to play piano. He had been traveling with us as arranger. I took his place so he could write. Woody took Conte Candoli with him, Red Mitchell, Bill Harris, Ralph, and I think possibly Dave Barbour on guitar. They stayed for a month or so and had a wonderful time.

"I worked with another small group with Flip Phillips and Bill Harris around the midwest, up into Buffalo and Toronto. While we were playing the Colonial in Toronto, they booked Lee Wiley for a week, and I got to play for her. A great experience. I was still a young guy, and she was a very unusual woman. She was sort of very attractive in a sensuous kind of way. She knocked me out. I don't know why, but she turned me on, although I never got close to her at all. Something about her style, and the way she sang. It was very, very special. I sensed that, which makes me feel good. I realize now how pretty terrific she really was. And I didn't know anything about Lee Wiley. I didn't know anything about anything, really. I was always the youngest guy in the band. So everything was still bright and new to me.

"Bill and Flip were terrific players. Jimmy Woode was the bass player.

"I was with a band with Louis Bellson, Terry Gibbs, Oscar Pettiford, Charlie Shavers, Nelson Boyd, and a clarinet player named Jerry Winters. We played a lot in the midwest. That band was gobbled up by Tommy Dorsey. He wanted to get Charlie Shavers and Louis Bellson. That's when I got fired from Dorsey. By the way, that was the only band I was ever fired from. Tommy wanted Louis and Charlie back in his band. So he hired our whole band. Oscar didn't go. Tommy hired the whole band and then proceeded to fire everybody except Louis and Charlie.

"Dorsey said to me, 'Kid, you play good. But not for my band.' How better can you say it? And he was *right*. I didn't like it and he didn't like it. They were playing . . . " And Lou sang the melody of *Song of India* the way Dorsey played it.

"I'd just been married. My first wife was from Minneapolis. My father-in-law was very successful in the dental journal publishing business. It was about 1950 or '51, and at the time the music business wasn't at its greatest -- for me, anyhow. My father-in-law made me an offer, a great opportunity financially. I lived in Minneapolis for three years in the medical publishing business. But I didn't stop playing. Conte Candoli would come up to Minneapolis and he'd hire me locally. Other people came up. I had my fingers in music still, but I wasn't making my living in music.

"The marriage didn't work out. It broke up in 1954. I moved back to Chicago. Frank Holzfiend gave me a job at the Blue Note, playing solo piano opposite whoever, and there were plenty of whoevers. I played opposite everything from the Woody Herman band to the Duke Ellington band to the Sauter-Finegan band. Here I was up against these huge organizations. But it was a lot of fun, and I learned a lot playing solo piano. Frank Holzfiend was a great guy. He was the best. There were other good club owners. Max Gordon, Ralph Watkins. But Frank was the best. That was in 1954. One of the bands that came in was Shorty Rogers with Jimmy Giuffre. Shorty and I were eating one night at the Corner House, near the Croydon Hotel, where everybody used to eat after the job.

"Shorty said with that slow way that he talks, 'Why don't you come out to California? You can do some of my work.' I thought about it and within a few months I took off for California. I got into the car and went. I was single and I went, and sure enough, I did start to do a lot of work with all the west coast guys."

"And that," I said, "was when you became known not as a Chicago musician but a west coast musician."

"Yeah, and I never felt that I was really a west coast player. My style of playing was not west coast. Not necessarily New York either."

I said, "Chicago has always had its own jazz tradition. Artie Shaw said they always had their own time feeling."

"Yeah," Lou said. "I guess *so*. It was right down the middle. That was sort of like Benny Goodman, Dave Tough, Gene Krupa. New York certainly has its identifiable feeling, and the west coast from that time certainly has its identity. Now I don't know whose identity is whose.

"Anyway, I came out here and worked for Shorty. I did a lot of fun work. Subbing at the Lighthouse, of course. Terry Gibbs' big band with Mel Lewis was really wonderful at that time. We were working at the Summit. Everybody was in the band. Conte Candoli, Frank Rosolino, Al Porcino, Charlie Kennedy, Med Flory, Richie Kamuca, Jack Nimitz, Johnny Audino, Buddy Clark on bass. Little groups would form out of that band, and I worked with a lot of them. And I was recording an awful lot.

"There was Dick Bock at Pacific, Red Clyde with Mode and Bethlehem, and Les Koenig at Contemporary. Plus the big labels were doing stuff. Capitol, RCA, Columbia. Decca was doing a lot. Shorty got me on the RCA label. I did a solo album, a trio album, and a quartet album. Within the course of a year and a half, I did three for a major label. You don't do that now. I'm not Miles Davis. I don't sell records like that.

"And then Larry Bunker got me on the gig with Peggy Lee. And that started a whole new life for me. Peggy Lee became half my life, and in a way still is.

"I spent fifteen years, off and on, mostly on, playing for her. I learned from her about as much about sensitivity towards music as I ever have in any situation in my life. Because it didn't involve just playing the piano. It involved lighting, and it involved staging, it involved scripting and format. You really learned how to put a show together, and not just play a tune. This is the major leagues. And major leagues musically, because you're working with Nelson Riddle and Billy May and Benny Carter and Johnny Mandel. She had everybody writing for her who was the best.

"I learned so much through her about sensitivity in accompanying, and paying attention to lyrics, and to the whole package. Not just the chord changes. And finding what far-out chord I could play instead of this one. This was the real truth.

"It afforded me the chance to make some money. Travel. It was sort of a musical good life. It was very, very nice, and a great learning experience. And that opened the door to work for many years for people like Ella Fitzgerald, Nancy Wilson, Lena Horne, Tony Bennett. I worked for everybody that was really good. And then for Sinatra. He told one of the guys in the band, 'He's going to be with me for the rest of his life.' But it didn't work out that way.

"After I'd worked with Frank for a while, he spotted me coming into rehearsal with a cane. He said, 'What the hell's that?' And I told him I had a hip problem. He said, 'You've got the same thing Sammy Davis has?' This was in Chicago, at the Chicago Theater. We were supposed to go on a tour of Italy. Bill Miller came over to see me. He said, 'I don't know how to tell you this, but the office told me to tell you to stay home. You don't have to go on the tour.' I was sort of shocked and disappointed. So I didn't go. Frank kept me on salary for not going. They kept me on salary for the rest of the year, and I had a hip replacement operation. And then I had the second one done. The pain is now totally gone.

"So that job didn't last long, the better part of a year. That was in 1987, I believe. I still occasionally play a party for Frank. I did one at Chasen's. I'm doing his Christmas Eve party this week. We talk a lot. We talk about music. He's a music lover. He always will be. He said a funny thing to me the other night. We were talking over by the piano. He came over and talked.

"I said, 'Pinky and I teach a class at the Dick Grove school on accompanying. Among other things we play records, and we talk about you a lot, and show how you're accompanied by some of these great people like Nelson Riddle and Don Costa.'

"He said, 'It must be very gratifying to teach. Education is so important. I came from a poor family that came from Europe. I had no education.'

"I said, 'It worked out pretty good for you, didn't it?'

"He said, 'Yeah. If it wasn't for music, I might have been a gangster.'

"Pinky and I have been together about ten years now. We're not married, but we're really close. She's a great singer. I wish there were more places for her to work. She loves to sing, and everybody loves her singing."

"There are no rooms for singers any more," I said.

"It's sad," Lou said. "You see all the kids learning, tramping in and out with their instruments and going to classes, and you think, 'Wait a minute, where are they all going to work?' number of the kids go through the educational process and realize how good music is, how good it used to be, and how good it could be.

"But the more they learn the more they become a minority, because the market out there is totally geared to mediocrity, to the uneducated and unmusical ear. I see these kids starting to realize what excellence really is. Pinky and I manage to do it by pointing out tradition, and listening to the right thing, and looking for the right thing. It's not showing them the right chord change, or one specific little lick, or anything like that. You show them where excellence is to be found, and when they get done, they show it in their playing and their attitude about music. And I think, 'Now that you've improved your taste, it might backfire on you. You're gonna be better and no one's going to appreciate it.'"

"Well, Ray Brown said something to me many years ago that I never forgot. He said, 'The better it gets, the fewer of us know it.'"

"Yeah!" Lou said. "It's sad. I don't let it get me down to the point of getting despondent. It's disappointing, it's

frustrating. You go for excellence, and where do you go with it? I've survived, but I'm glad that I got in the good part of it. I spanned the good decades from the '40s to now.

"Sometimes I think about being in the right place at the right time. When George Wallington got sick and I got the job subbing with Georgie Auld with Tiny Kahn, which led to my gig with Chubby, which led to my gig with Woody Herman. With Stan Getz, Zoot Sims, and Al Cohn in the band. I've spanned six decades of work with Stan Getz. And I've worked with him now in this year of 1990. I've had a lot of great musical and personal experiences with that guy. And five decades with Al Cohn. I recorded many, many albums with Stan on Verve for Norman Granz.

"Stan Getz is probably the best small-band leader I have worked with. He has great instincts for programming a tune, how long it should be, who should play when, what volume, what tempo. It's an educational process to work with him, and a lot of fun musically, too."

I said, "You once made a quip. You said, 'I'm so crazy I even got along with Benny Goodman.'

Lou chuckled. "I don't know whether 'crazy' is the word. I had some wonderful times with Benny Goodman. He liked me. That was in the late '60s or '70s. We did a month at the Tropicana in Las Vegas. Some band. Monty Budwig contracted the band. Monty on bass, Colin Bailey on drums, George Auld, Carl Fontana, Bill Harris, Jack Sheldon, Bobby Shu. It was an all-star band. Then Benny would call me to do concerts with him. And I did a tour of theaters in the round with him. He liked me, he liked my playing. And I love his playing! It was a real kick to play with him! To play in that quartet, you knew you were in fast company the way he played that clarinet. You'd be playing *The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise*, and you'd get to the breaks, and he'd go flying around. And then it was your turn, and you'd better be ready. I was ready. I was in good shape. I paid attention. When it gets that good, you rise to the occasion. The better it gets, the better you play, if you're a pro. He was a real inspiration. He did some kooky things, but he never did anything to me. I never suffered from him personally at all.

"I have a thing that I've always tried to bring to accompanying. I try to bring my jazz playing into my accompanying -- not just to be an accompanist, but to be able to be identified, to bring your personality into it. I don't strive to do that, but I don't try to bury my identity for the sake of the singer. I try to bring something to the singer. You bring something to them and they appreciate it. They know it's Lou Levy and not just some guy playing the piano okay.

"When I work with Pinky, one of my favorite acts, I try to make it a jazz piece, not just a pianist accompanying a singer.

"I love accompanying. Playing for Stan Getz, playing for Al Cohn. I played for Warne Marsh. I played for all those guys. I used to do duos with Al Cohn, and do duos with Warne Marsh. These guys can play, and it's fun to accompany them, it's a kick. Played with the Benny Goodman Quartet. It's accompanying. You compliment the guy, you're part of a package, you're a team. And it's a real kick to know that you did your part.

"That's why I can never understand why guys say, 'Oh, that singer! Did you have to invite a singer up to sing?' Of course, if it's a rotten singer, who needs it?

"When I teach my accompanying class with Pinky, I say, 'Look, you're not always going to be playing for a singer. You're going to be playing for an instrumentalist, and you should view it the same way. You're accompanying and complimenting. And you have to play real close attention to each thing. If they're playing the melody, you have to make sure that you're not just playing a chord change. It's got to match. You can't clash. You know how they'll play A minor seventh with a flat five. In the meantime, the melody is an E. I say, 'How can you do that? There's an E-flat in your chord, and she's singing an E.' I can't understand it. They don't hear it. They're unconscious of it. Your ear should *jump* if you hear something like that. I say, 'You've got to be conscious of the situation at all times.'

"And even when I'm playing with Stan, and we're playing a very fast tempo, I don't want to clash with him. Of course, with things going by at those tempos, you can get away with more with an instrumental than you can with a singer.

"But even so, always I'm accompanying. And yet, like I say, I'm always trying to add my personality -- to make it more interesting, as best you can, in good taste. The knowledge of the tune, then you have your own personal taste, your experience, your dynamics, your sense of tempo. Stan is great at tempos. He'd say to me, 'I'll start the first tune.' The tempo's great. Then the second tune's a ballad. Fine, that's no problem. The third one is the Luis Eca tune, *The Dolphin*. He turns to me and says, 'Gimme a good tempo.' It's instant reaction. Some people will freeze. He said, 'Okay.' And we went right into it.

"I have confidence in myself. I've built that up just from working with good people, plus experience and people saying nice things about you and not getting fired from jobs. Except for Tommy Dorsey. I was a bebopper -- more of a bebopper then than I am now.

"Even when you're playing by yourself, you're accompanying. You lay a groundwork down for your single thoughts. You're making a bed to express yourself from. It happens when you're playing alone or with an instrumentalist or a singer. When you hear a great arrangement, what is it but accompaniment for someone who's featured? Or if there is no one person who is featured, they're accompanying each other. To me, music is accompanying.

"It really is," Lou said. It's a lot of fun. It's real rewarding. There is nothing more fun than the camaraderie of music."

And Pinky returned with an armful of groceries and I went home.

A few days after this, I was talking to Peggy Lee on the phone. After exchanging a few funny stories -- she loves to laugh, and she laughs hard and long -- I told her some of what Lou had said about playing for singers and his rich working relationship with her. She began to talk then, rather

slowly, choosing her words pensively. This is what she said:

"When someone says they've learned a lot from me, especially someone I respect and admire as much as I do Lou Levy, I'm always overcome -- surprised and overwhelmed.

"Because when you're working together, the work takes over, and you don't notice. You put your heads and hearts together, and out of this you get a multi-dimensional view of the performance and how the audience is experiencing it.

"Lou is a huge talent. He had a wonderful reputation as a jazz pianist before he ever worked with me. When someone with that great a talent and reputation surrenders his or her ego for the sake of the performance, they seem to discover later that this has somehow improved them.

"I wasn't really aware that Lou took such careful note of all the details of performance, the lighting and all the rest of it. It pleases so much to hear that. Many jazz musicians don't pay that kind of attention to these details, which are so important to the performance. Lou was always very disciplined and correct, and so was Grady Tate. They got so they knew the lighting cues. You have to be careful with lights. They affect your mood when you're performing.

"Not that it was always that serious. There were a lot of funny times together. Lou is very funny. And Grady Tate was always cracking us up.

"One night I was doing something the band particularly liked. It was one of those moments when the people had stopped breathing. The band had even stopped breathing. And Toots Thielemans dropped something. We started calling him the Burgomeister after that.

"We all loved to play practical jokes. One night we opened in Philadelphia. My dressing room was so full of flowers that you could hardly move. It happened to be Lou's birthday. Grady and I and some of our friends took all the petals off all the flowers, and believe me, it was some job. The musicians had the petals under their music stands.

"We were doing *My Man*. I was doing the verse, just piano and voice. I had everyone cued. When we got to the modulation going into the chorus, the band went into *Happy Birthday* and threw the flower petals all over Lou. It came out perfectly. Lou is so cool. Nothing fazes him. But that did. He fell apart.

"But you had to be careful about these jokes. You had to let a certain amount of time go by before you could set up another one. We were playing Basin Street East. I had an apartment at the old Park Lane hotel.

"Whenever we had any kind of musical problem, we'd talk it over and work it out. I told Lou, trying to be very cool and serious, that I had something I wanted to discuss with him after the show. He came up to the apartment, and I took him into the library and said, 'You know what I want to talk about.'

"He said, 'No, I don't.'

"I was stalling for time. Finally I said, 'Well, if you don't know, we'll just talk about it later. Why don't you have a drink?' And I opened the library doors and outside were all the members of the band and people from Basin Street and a lot of our friends. It was Lou's birthday again.

"The other day I received a note from him. It was the nicest, kindest, most loving note. I got the impression that he considered those years a very special period of his life. We had a wonderful relationship. We were so sensitive to each other.

"I love Lou Levy."

End Notes

It is with amazement that I realize the *Jazzletter* in its next issue starts its tenth year. It has lasted longer than I ever thought it could.

I woke up with the idea for it one morning in May, 19[illegible] I went through my address book and compiled a list of names of persons who might be interested in subscribing to such a publication. Then I went through musicians' union books, seeking the names of old friends with whom I had lost contact, and drew those names into a second list. (I suspect that I am the only person in the world who has read the union directories of New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles from cover to cover. It was seriously boring work, and I can't believe it was all done with a typewriter.)

I sent out perhaps 200 copies of a letter of inquiry to these people. I mentioned the idea in conversations with friends. One of them, record producer Jeff Weber, insisted on writing me a check on the spot, thus becoming the *Jazzletter*'s first subscriber. He was soon followed by Kenny Drew, Herb Ellis, Johnny Mandel, Jerome Richardson, Sahib Shihab, Edmund Thigpen, and Phil Woods.

The first issue, dated August 1981, was about Jim and Andy's. Later, I realigned the dates to conform to the calendar year. To date, there have been 108 issues of the *Jazzletter*, containing approximately 865,000 words. At the [illegible] of its tenth year, we hope to index it.

Two collections of *Jazzletter* essays have been published by Oxford University Press. A third, *Waiting for Dizzy*, will be out in the spring. A fourth, made up of essays contributed by musicians, including Bobby Scott and Bill Crow, to the Jazzletter, is pending. Bill had been writing for years, but not in longer forms, which I encouraged him to undertake. Now Bill too has a book with Oxford, and he's working on a second. I'm pleased to have played some small part in this evolution, and a little proud of it too.

Many readers have been with us since the first year. There names are very special to me. And that is what gives me the greatest pride of all: who reads it. It is a very distinguished list.

You have permitted me and the other writers to experiment with techniques, and write to whatever lengths seemed appropriate.

You have expanded me. Indeed, you have expanded all of us who have been involved. "Thank you" doesn't even begin to cover it, but it will have to do.

So thank you. And a happy 1991.