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Mail Bag

In the January issue, Grover Sales misquoted the Tommy lyrics to *Colonel Bogey*. The correct words are good song writing for "folk" music:

Hitler!
Has only one left ball.
Goering!
Has two but they are small.
Himmler
Has something sim'lar,
But Goebbels
Has no balls
At all!

Of course, most of us have only one left ball, but who are we to quibble with poetry?

Art Hilgart, Kalamazoo, Michigan

Just a note to tell you how much I enjoyed reading *Meet Me at Jim and Andy's* -- so much that I purchased six other copies to give to friends. I appreciated your keen insight into jazz and understanding of the musicians who create that music. I speak as an insider. I play drums and percussion. I started as a jazz drummer and wound up eventually in the New York Philharmonic. But my "vitals" rest firmly in jazz.

Herbert J. Harris, New York City

On a recent trip to New York, I came upon *Meet Me at Jim and Andy's* quite by chance in the Strand bookstore. I do not think anything I have read about either the music or that period of New York evokes so clearly and powerfully, at least for me, that moment in jazz that I associated with Jim and Andy's and the New York jazz musicians who gathered there. Though I was young at the time, my uncle, Hank D'Amico, hung out there constantly, as you note, and every time my father (who at the time was also a professional musician) and I visited New York we would meet Hank there and have lunch. For me, meeting those musicians was like meeting movie stars, yet all I ever remember was their passionate devotion to music, kindness, and terrific humor -- all of which you convey, along with those stories I had forgotten or never got fully clear.

Though I was studying classical piano at the time, it was always their sound that shaped my conception of modern music, and like yourself and others, it was specifically Bill Evans who transformed my understanding of piano. Your essay brought very powerfully back my memory of the only time I met him and how characteristic it was that he took the time to tell me what a fine musician he thought Hank was.

Hank died when I was about fourteen and with that, for me, going to the bar and that world comes to an end. There was a great memorial concert, I recall, shortly after his death and afterwards his clarinet was hung behind the bar. But, as you recount it, both the place and that period of music were gradually coming to an end without anyone realizing it.

When I found your book, I was on my way to a surprise eightieth birthday gathering for my father, Jack D'Amico, in Buffalo. I was looking for a gift and I could not have found anything that meant more to him or gave him more pleasure than a copy of your book. We both want to extend our appreciation and admiration for such an elegant series of essays and a rich picture of a time, a place, and a music that mean so much to both of us. Sincerely,

Robert D'Amico, Gainesville, Florida

Re Jazz Party

Recently I suggested that we might hold a *Jazzletter* jazz party in Santa Barbara at the end of this year. The enthusiasm of people who wanted to attend -- from as far away as England -- was startling. Alas, it's not practical, at least this year.

It is true that hotel rates are at their lowest during that season, and a good many people find themselves with time on their hands in the week between Christmas and New Year's Eve. Rates at the Red Lion Inn in Santa Barbara, where I wanted to hold the event, which normally start at $180 a night, drop to $70 during that season.

The hotel will indeed be virtually deserted at that time. It has one booking, however: a company dance on the Saturday night exactly in the middle of what would have been our schedule, which will take up all the facilities of the hotel. And the costs were frightening. We would need to open up the folding doors between all the banquet rooms and use them for concerts. The hotel's charge for this? $10,000 a night. Thus the bill for five nights would have been $50,000. And that's before you've paid musician one, much less expenses and air fares and sound system and all the rest.

The fact that we probably would have sold out most or all of the hotel's 370-odd rooms for that week did not seem of much interest to the management. I have put off the idea at least until the end of 1992, in order to find a less expensive facility to accomodate us. I'll keep you posted.

The Nine Lives of Red Rodney

Part One

Red Rodney should be dead, instead of flying all over the earth in glowing good health, leading a quintet whose members are often a third his sixty-three years, playing better than he has ever played, and enjoying what one critic called "one of the most celebrated comebacks in jazz history."

"In fact," Red said, "the odds were against my coming back and doing anything."

They certainly were. Heroin was the elixir of bebop, but few of those who succumbed to its blandishments in the 1940s and '50s are using it today: they have either quit, like Red, or they're dead. A few, like Art Blakey, maintained their habits with such aplomb that they managed to reach senior citizenship before dropping of other causes. By and large, though, dirty needles, self-neglect, improper nourishment, sojourns in the slammer, and all the other concomitants of heroin addiction, took a devastating toll. Red Rodney is almost able to say,

with Job, "And I only am escaped to tell thee."

Red is briefly and pallidly portrayed in the Clint Eastwood film *Bird*, which attracted both high praise and a bored condemnation in the jazz community. They've never made a good movie about jazz, you'll hear it said by those who have not bothered to notice that they've almost never made a good movie about music period. Red is listed in the credits as being an adviser on the film, but his advice, he says, was limited largely to telling the young man who plays himself how to hold the horn and stand. There is a scene in which the Charlie Parker character upbraids him for having taken up heroin. Something like that happened in life: Bird, according to accounts I've heard from several musicians, urged his proselytes not to follow him into drug use. Few of them paid attention to his admonition; they paid attention to his example.

The question of drug use among artists is a very complex one. You cannot say you have examined a question until you have entertained all sides of it. I believe we have reached the limits of what the mind now can do, and are trying to exceed them. Asked what it took to be a writer, William Faulkner said, "A pencil, some paper, and a little good whisky." A doctor wrote a book two or three years ago to consider why writers are such drinkers -- Faulkner, Steinbeck, Jack London, and many more. The loneliness of the work, he said, is one of the causes. Nonsense. It's the sheer hunger for ideas. The writer sits there *in a loneliness he or she actually likes*, glass in hand, slipping into reconciliation and a resigned revery until something comes that is worth putting on paper. I have said repeatedly that you can write drunk, but you have to edit sober. Susan Sontag has written of her use of speed as an aid to writing. She suspects that Sartre wrote on speed, due to the sheer uncontrolled verbosity of his work. The problem is that all drugs suspend judgment. But isn't that, in an improvisatory art, just what you want them to do? Free you of that incessant, cruel, unsleeping, inner monitor that judges your every action even before it is completed?

I have a recurring suspicion that the next major leap in human intelligence will be chemically achieved. We seem to have no objection to the use of a drugs such as dopamine for those with Parkinson's disease or dilantin for epileptics, both neurological disorders; not to mention all the tranquilizers in virtually unrestricted use in our society.

Loren Eiseley in *The Immense Journey* compared the human mind to a telephone switchboard that you encounter in a small motel. The motel has only a dozen or so rooms, but the circuitry is sufficient for thousands of rooms. The expansion of the brain and the brain case occurred comparatively quickly in evolutionary time, Eisely reminds us. What is all that extra circuitry for? Will we some day learn to use it? Some day, I suspect, and perhaps soon, we are going to find a drug that will so expand are capacities that the man of the future will look back on us the way we do Neanderthal man. The odds are rather better that, given the ravages of nationalism, ethnocentricity, class distinctions, avarice, over-breeding, and all the other manifestations of our madness, we won't make it. But if we do, future man will see us as the last of the savages.

I suspect that it is this yearning for the balanced function of intellect and feeling, what Blake called the marriage of heaven and hell, the recurring suspicion that it can be achieved and that there is something *more* somehow, a something we glimpse occasionally and fleetingly through mist, a subliminal flash of a divine future, that has drawn men such as Parker and Evans into heroin. Eventually I asked Red Rodney what he thought, but his answer must be heard in context and so I will withhold it for the moment. Certainly no one can speak of drug addiction with a greater depth of experience than Red.

On the other hand, we should not dwell only on that aspect of his life. This is, let us keep constantly in mind, a brilliant musician, an outstandingly gifted man. One of the protegees of Charlie Parker, for three years a member of Bird's quintet, standing night after night beside Bird's horn and hearing its astonishing outpourings, Rodney was the first white bebop trumpet player. Red is uninhibited about discussing his past, and he is frank about it when young musicians ask him about it in music clinics.

It is an astonishing story. Red was in and out of narcotics hospitals, various jails, and other institutions of restraint, and spent long periods of time when he didn't even pick up his horn. He was hunted by the FBI, insurance detectives, and other investigators. He survived by cons and scams and fraud. This was, he will tell you bluntly, a time of his life when his improvisatory skills were devoted to criminal schemes. Some of his activities, in retrospect, are terribly funny: they have all the elements of a caper movie, except for those secondary characters script writers insert into the scheme to make dialogue. Red was a loner.

"I wasn't," he said, "the type of guy to go steal your horn and pawn it. If I were going to do illegal activities, I was going to beat the banks, the government, and the insurance companies. Those were the biggest thieves anyway in American life, and they were legal thieves."

He was born Robert Rodney Chudnick in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on September 27, 1927, the oldest of three children.

"My father was from Russia," Red said. "He was born in Kiev. My mother was born in Minnesota. For a while she was one of those traffic crossing guards. We were a very close family. Most Jewish families are very close."

Red's father ran his own little sheet-metal business, working as a subcontractor in construction. One of his clients was the firm headed by John B. Kelly, Grace Kelly's father. No one in Red's family was musical, and he is not sure himself from whence came his interest in music, although it began early.

"I joined a bugle and drum corps when I was ten years old," he said. "It was a Jewish war veterans post. My father was a member. I wanted to be a drummer, and they gave me the little snare drum to march with. They took it away because I was too small to carry it and gave me a bugle. I was heartbroken. It's funny. Within six months I was the best bugle player of that whole organization. There were kids in there fifteen, sixteen, even a little older. I was eleven by then. I took to it very quickly.

"The first of January Philadelphia has a big Mummer's Parade. All kinds of bands and acts and floats are in that parade. It's like Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade in New York. I remember marching in it. I played in other parades, Veterans Day affairs, with my bugle. I won a competition: best bugler in Pennsylvania. And my reward was a piston bugle, the old one valve on the side that you play with your thumb. The piston bugle was the progenitor of the trumpet.

"As a bar mitzvah present when I was thirteen, I got a trumpet. I already had chops, because I played the bugle. When I got the trumpet, wow! now I had three buttons to push, that would give me all the songs that I heard. I still couldn't read.

"The trumpet my parents bought me was the same trumpet I play now, a Blessing. The company had a deal with Gimbel Brothers. If you bought a trumpet there, you got fifteen free lessons. Then of course you continued. That was their pitch. So my father bought me the trumpet at Gimbels' and I got fifteen free lessons. It was very good for a beginner. But I had already had chops. The teacher didn't know what to do with *that*. I could play all the songs.

"And then of course I had to go home and learn how to read. I had all the text books that come with learning how to play the trumpet. I took to it very well. I was very good. That was my main interest. Most kids were out on the street playing ball. I liked that also, but I made sure to play, I always loved to play.

"It came very naturally. I guess that's the reason I learned how to improvise. I could play before I could read and play the text book material. I could hear it and play it. Then I did learn how to read. I've known some very great players who didn't know how to read, like my dear friend who's long gone, Bill Harris. He had to learn how to read with Benny Goodman and with Bob Chester's orchestra. Charlie Ventura had the same problem.

"If you're in a band and reading, doing it all the time, it's like reading the newspaper. But I find now that if I'm put in an all-star band, my God! Like a few friends of mine, now that we don't do it all the time. Old guys who can't even *see* the music, let alone read it! You end up fighting for the fourth trumpet chair.

"I went to school in Philadelphia with Joe Wilder. It was the Jules E. Mastbaum Vocational School. We had a great music course. Joe Wilder and Johnny Coles and I were in the school band. Buddy De Franco was there.

"My next adventure -- and it was a big jump -- came when the war broke out. All the good trumpet players were drafted. Here I am now, fifteen, sixteen, and working for all the top bands in Philadelphia and for Alex Bartha, the house band at the Steel Pier in Atlantic City on weekends. Ziggy Elman had been in that band. We'd play the first hour, then the name bands would come. And so I played with a lot of name bands because they'd come to Atlantic City minus musicians. They were getting drafted left and right. I played with Benny Goodman, I played with Jimmy Dorsey, whom I went with later, I played with Tony Pastor. It was very good experience. When I was about sixteen years old, Jerry Wald heard me at the Steel Pier, and asked me to go on the road with him. And I did. That was really my first road job. I stayed two or three months -- I really wasn't ready. I came back and went back into the Steel Pier house band.

"My hero at that time was Harry James. I liked Charlie Spivak. I didn't know *anything* about jazz. Not the slightest thing. James was a great player. He was a Louis Armstrong type jazz player. To the day he died, I loved him. He was tremendous. And he was a decent man.

"I went out with Jimmy Dorsey for about five months. I really wasn't ready to play that chair. He was going to replace me. He let me stay until we got to Philadelphia.

"I was married when I was eighteen. She's dead. We separated, and she got killed in an automobile accident in 1960 or '61. We had two boys, who stayed with my aunt in Las Vegas. One lives in Los Angeles now. He's working as a disc jockey on a couple of radio stations. The older one is in Las Vegas. He's superintendent of an apartment building. He's got two children."

Settling back into life in Philadelphia, Red joined a CBS radio band led by Elliott Lawrence. It is hard for people born after that era to grasp the range and creativity of radio's role in American musical life. Today it is a force for decay and debasement, but it wasn't in those days. In addition to all the remote radio broadcasts of the big bands and the various commercial network broadcasts that featured Woody Herman, Benny Goodman, John Kirby, and many more, and even full symphony orchestras maintained on staff by NBC and CBS in New York, many local stations had studio bands of their own, some of which were heard nationally through network hookups. The Elliott Lawrence band was one of these. Though it is little mentioned in big-band histories, the Lawrence band -- Lawrence in recent years has been a conductor of Broadway musicals -- was notable for intelligent, advanced arrangements. One of its writers was a young Gerry Mulligan. "I got Gerry in that band," Red said. "We stayed a year. That was the first I heard jazz.

"The studio band was a day gig. I would go around to the Down Beat club at night. It was the modern jazz club in that town. Bebop was starting to be played there. Dizzy had worked there two years before as the house trumpet player. His mother lived in Philly, and Dizzy lived in Philadelphia for quite some time. I didn't know who Dizzy Gillespie was, though. I went up there and tried to play. The piano player was a guy named Red Garland. I knew *Exactly Like You* and

Body and Soul and that's it. And Red Garland said to me, 'Young man, if you want to play with us, you're gonna have to learn some new tunes. So if you come in early tomorrow, I'll go over some with you.' How sweet.

"Next day I came in early and he taught me how to play the blues and he taught me *I Got Rhythm*. I didn't know what the changes were, I had no idea. All by ear. And I played in that band, a quintet, with a tenor saxophone player named Jimmy Oliver, who's still living in Philly.

"There was a streetcar conductor who used to stop the streetcar and run upstairs and sit in on drums. His name was Philly Joe Jones. He had the Eleventh Street run, and that's where the Down Beat was. The cars would be blowing their horns, people would be yelling, 'Get that damn streetcar moving!' They finally fired him, so he wound up working at the Down Beat.

"Red Garland left, to go to New York. The piano player who replaced him was Jimmy Golden, a wonderful player. He's dead now. He influenced more young jazz players from Philadelphia than anybody. He was a big influence on me. He was very prominent. He was the first of all the young bebop players. He was a little older than we were. He was really our mentor. He was between swing and bop. He taught me how to play all the standards. He was very good to us, especially all the white kids that would come around. Everybody at the Down Beat was black except me.

"There was a big night coming up. Gene Krupa's band came to town with Roy Eldridge. I'd already heard Roy on a big hit record, *Let Me Off Uptown*. I thought, 'Wow! That's sensational!' But it didn't have any attraction to me yet. That wasn't the Harry James tone. It was different. I thought it was sensational, but it didn't mean anything to me. Then I realized. Oh yeah. Roy Eldridge came to the Down Beat. Dizzy Gillespie was coming. And they were going to have a jam session.

"That was the night that Dizzy made me think, 'Oh my God.' I heard that Roy was great, but Dizzy was new. It was apples and oranges. You couldn't compare them. That night Dizzy showed us -- we were very young; I was eighteen years old -- the way to go. I even thought in my head, 'You know, if this guy didn't play such weird notes, he'd be great.' Roy played the notes that I could understand. Dizzy was playing harmonically things that I'd never heard.

"Three weeks later, I realized they weren't weird notes.

"There was my influence.

"Then I started listening heavily. I tried to play like Dizzy, which of course I couldn't do. The notes that he made were sensational. The fire, the time that Dizzy had! He's truly one of the greats of the instrument. We have to say Louis Armstrong, Dizzy, Clifford Brown, Miles of course. Miles is one of the greatest innovators. The only one I've ever heard play like Dizzy is Jon Faddis. Who does it very well.

"I was pretty lucky. Even back then, I had my own sound. Like it or not, it was me. You could always say, 'Well, that's Rodney.' But Dizzy's influence was already set.

"Now I became quite friendly with Dizzy. He's such a nice man. And he always was. He took such an interest in little young players, and he still does. He's a great teacher.

"I was still with Elliott Lawrence. We were becoming the heroes of Philadelphia, broadcasting every day in two sustaining coast to coast programs. It was a good band. And I played at the Down Beat club at night. I was earning about fifty bucks a week at the Down Beat, another sixty from Elliott. My God, I was rich! Living home with my parents.

"Dizzy was coming to visit his mother all the time. He'd always stop in at the Down Beat after his mother went to bed. His mother lived on Thirteenth Street, two or three blocks away. He'd walk over. I was always so happy to see him. He was my hero, he was my idol.

"He said to me one night, 'It's time for you to come to New York and hear my quintet. We're opening at the Three Deuces. And you'll hear Charlie Parker.' I'd already heard of Charlie Parker. Dizzy said, 'This weekend, you have to come to New York. You're ready.'

"So I go to New York. I go to Fifty-second Street. Dizzy puts me right in the front row. And I hear that quintet with Max Roach and Al Haig and Charlie Parker. And I . . . freak . . . out. It was like a religious experience. I sat there like I was listening to one of those an evangelistic gospel preachers. Oh my God. It left me talking to myself. I stayed until four o'clock in the morning, when they closed. And then I started walking around Fifty-second Street.

"I knew right then that that was what I wanted to do. That was going to be my life's work.

"Charlie Parker came over to me. Dizzy had introduced us. He said, 'So you work in Philadelphia. Where you going now?' I said, 'Nowhere.' He said, 'Come on with me. By the way, can you loan me ten bucks?'"

Red laughed at the memory. "I would have loaned him a hundred. Anything I had. So I went uptown with him. Then we came back downtown. We became friendly. I don't know why. It certainly wasn't the ten bucks. He befriended me.

"I asked him if he'd come to Philly to play with us. He said, 'Yeah.' And he came just a couple of weekends later to play with our group.

"He was wonderful.

"And I played with him. It was fantastic.

"And that was it. I was on my way to learning how to play the kind of music I had chosen. Of course, had I known I was going to take the same kind of twists and turns he took, I might have pulled up and thought a little differently.

"In those days, a lot of the older jazz players were putting the music down. I remember when bebop started how people put us down, including Louis Armstrong. I was very hurt when Pops put us down, because I loved him so much. So was Dizzy and so was Bird. In later years, he did admit he was wrong.

"Another hero of mine was Jack Teagarden. I remember how he looked at me, and I felt 'Why you little bebopper,' although he didn't say it. And that hurt me too. But he was so great. I loved him.

"As we get older, change is harder for us to assimilate. We

must never let ourselves get that way."

For all the complexity of the music, Red was playing it by ear. Bebop had enormously expanded the vocabulary of jazz, not only harmonically but rhythmically. The rhythmic displacements were disconcerting to some listeners, and musicians too. And the way Parker and Gillespie built melodies out of the harmonic extensions, the upper partials, produced disorientation in some listeners, and indeed still does. In a collection of essays called *All What Jazz?*, possibly the worst book ever on the subject, the silly English jazz critic Philip Larkin wrote:

"Parker . . . compulsively fast and showy, couldn't play four bars without resorting to a peculiarly irritating five-note cliche from a pre-war song called *The Woody Woodpecker Song*. His tone, though much better than that of some of his successors, was thin and sometimes shrill." In a footnote, Larkin says with the pompous tolerance of a lofty condescension, "I fancy, however, that Parker was improving at the time of his death, possibly as a result of meeting Bechet in France (Bechet was always ready to instruct the young.)" This of the encounter of one of the most brilliant musical minds of the twentieth century with one of the most over-rated players in jazz history. Though Bechet deserves credit as a pioneer, his work never approached the level of Armstrong's and he was hardly one to instruct anybody about tone, his own being strange and nasal and afflicted with a fast nanny-goat vibrato. His reputation rested largely on the praises of the French, and one suspects that they lionized him because he had as it were become theirs. He lived by choice in France, indubitable proof of the superiority of his intelligence, and lent a certain spurious legitimacy to their condescension toward "the Americans."

But it is hard to argue that Bechet had an important influence, except if you take seriously that parlor game in which you slow or speed up records and ask that the listener tell you who this or that sounds like. A 33 rpm record by Johnny Hodges played at 45 rpm sounds a little like Bechet. It is hardly likely that Hodges tried to imagine what Bechet would sound like if you lowered the pitch of the soprano and slowed the vibrato; musicians don't think that way. Larkin continued: "The impression of mental hallucination (Parker) conveyed could also be derived from the pianist Bud Powell, who cultivated the same kind of manic virtuosity . . . "

Larkin is dead but his work is carried stoutly on by Stanley Dance, who a half century after the fact, wrote in the January-February 1991 issue of JazzTimes that Earl Hines "hired Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie and foolishly provided bebop with an incubator." So much for what Earl Hines knew about music.

Ah well. There really is a Flat Earth Society.

One of the things of particular interest in Red Rodney's remembrances is that he takes polite issue with those who think of Parker's work as the product of a complex intellectual technique rather than the fluid intuitive process that is the well-spring of any unpremeditated art.

"At this point," Red said of his early days with Bird, "I was doing it strictly by ear. Some of our leading players still do. Look at Stan Getz. Anything Chick Corea threw at him, Stan played right off. Anything.

"I to this day feel that Charlie Parker didn't know where he was either. He seems to have proven it to me. Many times I asked him, 'Bird, where's the bridge go?' And he'd say, 'B-flat.' And it would be F-sharp minor or B, one of those kind of things. And I'd look at him and I'd see Al Haig laughing. And I'd ask him again, for another tune, similar type, difficult bridge. And I'd say, 'Where's the bridge?' 'B-flat.' And he'd give me that sheepish little smile and say, 'Well that's what I play.' So I often thought that maybe *he* didn't know. Now I know that he's written tunes. I know that."

"Well," I said, "I know from Dizzy that Dizzy often wrote them out. Bird would come over to Dizzy's apartment and play the tune."

"And," Red said, "Dizzy would write it down."

"So you're suggesting then," I said, "that this was entirely the invention of an astonishing ear."

"Yes," Red said. "I have no way of proving that except my own experience with him. A lot of people say, 'No no, he knew, he was very knowledgeable.' I don't think so. Dizzy, yes. Not Bird.

"At that time, I was harmonically very unaware of how things went. I was using my ears to hear everything. And, you know, that will take you a long way. In fact, I go to colleges today and listen to all of the materials they have to deal with and especially Jamie Abersol, who is awesome. He puts his things on the screen. He's so good, and so long, that he gets me sleepy, let alone the kids.

"Twice I've followed him, and I got up there, and said, 'I agree with everything he said, but he didn't speak about these two little things God gave us on the side of our heads. Two ears. They can give us the added salt and pepper and the catchup, the condiments, the color tones and the beauty. You must be able to hear to make beautiful music.

"A lot of times I'll emphasize that. But of course I know the importance of harmonic training. When I was in the Public Health Service hospital at Fort Worth, Texas, which is like Lexington for the West Coast, I took the Berklee correspondence course."

"Hey, I took it too," I said.

"You did? No kidding!"

"Sure."

Red said, "When I got to the chapters on chord progressions, I'd sit there and play them and laugh, because these were things I'd been playing all my life. And now they were telling me what I'm doing.

"I'll tell you who else took it," I said. "Clark Terry."

"No kidding!"

"Sure. Clark said it made him understand what he'd been doing all along by intuition."

"Exactly," Red said, laughing. "I remember writing my first arrangement for the band at Fort Worth. They were young musicians. It was thrilling. I never really became a good arranger, but I learned a little harmonically. This with all my experience helped me a great deal. Knowledge is important.

A little bit of knowledge is what I have, and sometimes that can be dangerous. The reason for the way I'm playing today, though, is that I have such young people with me. They're very young and modern. For the last twelve years I've had that. And so with the little bit of knowledge I have and a great deal of knowledge they have obtained -- they're all college graduates from great music schools -- I've come a long way. I didn't turn my ears off, the way a lot of people my age have done. They say, 'Whoa, wait a minute.' They're in their comfort zone, which is great. What they've done is enough. But it isn't my comfort zone. I have to go all the way, until I can't play any more.

"Well let's see. Philadelphia. I stayed with Elliott a little while longer and at the Down Beat. Gerry Mulligan went with Gene Krupa's orchestra as arranger in January of 1946. Gerry was the first arranger, back then, to write contrapuntally. He was young -- he was eighteen, like I was. He embraced the new music. He was a tremendously talented man. A whole generation of new young musicians do not know what a great musician he is.

"Don Fagerquist was leaving the Krupa band. Gerry recommended me, and they called me, and I was interested, partly because Dizzy and Bird were going to be at Billy Berg's on the West Coast. The Krupa band was going to make a movie and play at the Palladium, and be on the Coast for three or four months. I was offered $250 a week, the biggest salary I had ever dreamed of making. And Bird and Dizzy were going to be at Billy Berg's.

"And I liked the way Gene spoke to me on the phone. So I joined the Gene Krupa band. I didn't know then how great a man he really was. Oh! The greatest! He was the greatest leader of men I ever met. He was sensational. He was a beautiful man. He was a real intellectual. Artie Shaw was supposed to be the intellectual, and maybe he was. But I know Gene was. Gene was well-versed on any subject you wanted to speak about. He was a teacher. He would come back in the bus and speak with us. He was a mensch.

"Gene embraced anything new. Nothing frightened him. And he had what was really the first white name bebop band. He tried, he did it, he let it happen. He let the young guys do what they had to do. I remember he billed me as the surrealist of the trumpet. I didn't know what the hell it meant. I had to go to him ask, 'What does this mean?'

"Bird and Diz were not successful at Billy Berg's and the engagement did not last very long. Diz came back and Bird stayed there and got into Camarillo. He went berserk, he was so sick. Whenever he couldn't get drugs, he drank too much. It was like a nervous breakdown.

"I stayed with Gene's band a year. We worked all over.

"But Fifty-second Street was beckoning. I wanted to come to New York and really become a full-fledged jazz player. I left the band at the Capitol theater in New York. It was a difficult thing, because of Gene. I loved him. To the young ones he was like a father. He was never an employer or a boss. Never. He was so good. I've never met one like him. I loved Woody equally as much. But they were different. He knew how to get the most out of every person."

"I said, 'Bobby Scott always claimed that Gene was never a pot smoker.'"

"Never," Red replied unequivocally.

"Gene claimed those charges against him were a frame and Bobby believed it."

"It *was* a frame. It was definitely a frame. The band boy got busted in 1942. He set Gene up. He had the marijuana in his pocket. The charge was contributing to the delinquency of a minor. That case was a disgrace. Pat Brown, who was the prosecuting attorney who put Gene in prison, became the governor of California."

"When did you leave that band?"

"The beginning of 1947. I was nineteen. I was playing Monday nights at the Three Deuces or the Onyx or whatever club. I was doing the jam sessions that Monty Kay ran. And of course it still wasn't enough to live on.

"I went to join Local 802, and saw Sammy Musiker in the dues line. He had been a clarinet player with Gene's band. He's long dead. He asked what I was doing. I said I was trying to work out my union card, which took six months. He said, 'Well, you know you can play single engagements. I'll hire you.' Sammy was married to a woman whose father was a big, big leader in Jewish weddings and bar mitzvahs. Sammy took me with him, taught me how to do it, gave me the gigs. I'd work a lot of weekends. There was enough to make a living. In fact, they made me a third leader. They'd get three gigs in a night, they'd make me a leader.

"The bands were terrible, but Sammy himself was great. It taught me the standard tunes, and it gave me a way I could always make a living. I know how to do that. The bands of that kind today are much better than they were in those days. These kids can play jazz.

"It was an enjoyable year. I was learning, I was playing, I was hanging out with guys like Miles Davis and Fats Navarro on Fifty-second Street. We were all friends. Fats was far ahead of us.

"There was something Bird saw in Miles before anybody. And then I started seeing it. I didn't know what it was, but I knew I liked what he was doing. I liked his musical mind. I didn't think he could play the trumpet. He didn't do that until years later. But there was something about Miles that was fascinating. And, you know, he was a charming young man. Unlike his projected image. He was always pretty well-spoken when he wanted to be. You could see the breeding he had. That was obvious, even though he played it down. Miles was a gentleman, when he wanted to be. He still is, despite the terrible things you hear. Last year at the North Sea Jazz festival, he got off the elevator. He had his retinue with him. He saw me and said, 'Red!' and kissed me on the lips. He still remembers those days.

"I always knew that he had something. What it was I didn't know yet. It didn't take long. I was the third one of the triumvirate. We got all the gigs. We were sort of friendly rivals.

"For the whole of 1947, I did those weddings and bar

mitzvahs. For about six months I was with Claude Thornhill. It was a lovely band. This was the end of '47, beginning of '48. Lee Konitz was in the band. Gerry Mulligan was writing for the band. Sometimes he played. Gil Evans was of course the chief arranger. Gerry learned a great deal from Gil, and I think vice versa. Gerry was twenty years old. The music was well-written and well-played. It was nice. But I wanted to be a bebopper.

"I came back to New York in '48 and did the same kind of work, the weddings and bar mitvahs. Now we had the Royal Roost open, and I used to do a few gigs in there. A few jazz clubs would open and I'd get my share. There were about four trumpet players who were the journeyman. It was Fats, it was Miles, it was Kenny Dorham, who was wonderful, and it was me. We would compete for work. Fats was still the best of the four. He was still 'way ahead of all of us. Clifford Brown came directly from Fats. Directly. But then of course he died so young.

"Then I went with Woody Herman, the Four Brothers band. Marky Markowitz decided to stay in New York and go into the studios, and they offered me the gig. I pondered it. It was the fifth chair. Bernie Glow and Stan Fishelson were the two lead players. Ernie Royal played the high-note lead, plus the high-note jazz. Shorty Rogers was the fourth chair, and the jazz chair, and my chair was the fifth chair and the jazz chair.

"But Shorty was such a sweetheart. He'd write the solo on my chair -- like *Lemon Drop*. I said, 'Shorty, now that's not fair. Your wrote the arrangement.' He said, 'I want you to play it. It'll be good for your career.' He put all the good solos on my chair. And it was very good for my career.

"One of the incidents I remember is the time Dizzy led Woody's band. We were on our way back from California to play at the Four Hundred club, I think it was, in New York. There was a gigantic blizzard, and we were stranded on the train right outside Salt Lake City. The picture of that train snowed in made the cover of *Life* magazine.

"Dizzy had a one-nighter there that night, and because of the blizzard couldn't get his band there. So Woody and all of us got off the train, and we went to the place and Dizzy led our band with Woody. We played all of Woody's things, and some of Dizzy's. He didn't even have his music. But it was great. Next day we got on the train and we were able to move.

"I loved the Woody Herman band. But I was getting to the point where I needed to play in small jazz groups. I was looking for a way out. Zoot had left. Stan Getz had left. People were starting to leave.

"A lot of them were addicted to drugs. And I was accused of it then. I was not. I had never used drugs. I knew who was doing it and who wasn't. Most of the sax section was addicted, excepting Sam Marowitz. The Swope brothers. Bernie Glow. That band was crumbling. And all of a sudden I got a call from Charlie Parker. Wow. That was a call from God.

"I went to Woody and told him where I was going, with his blessing, of course. I joined Charlie Parker in 1949. The first gig I played was the Three Deuces in, I think, September. I'd been in a big band for a year. And here I was with Bird, and those fast tempos! That first night! Oh man." He laughed.

"Fats Navarro and Miles were there. Those two were in the audience. I was petrified. Petrified. It worked out all right. I rose to it. After I finished the set, they both came over and hugged me. They said, 'Man, you were great!' And it was so nice, feeling accepted by your peers.

"That was the turning point of my career and my life. Now I was going in a different direction. It was as if I had graduated high school and now I was going to college. This was my college entrance. It was college and graduate school together, my time with Bird.

"Bird was a very kind, considerate, thoughtful, humble, modest human being. He was genuinely concerned with everyone, and with all issues. He was a very brilliant man, though he had a limited formal education. I guess his natural ear enabled him to speak perfectly when he wanted to. He spoke like a college graduate, and more.

"He knew that he was that great. He knew the adoration other musicians had for him. He handled it very humbly and modestly. A lesser person wouldn't have been able to handle it as easily. I've seen guys who were great but not that great, and who got similar adoration, and it completely turned them around. It brought out the negative in them, rather than the positive. It didn't do that with Bird. He was a lovely man, a charming man.

"The first one who really told me about Bird and the heroin was Miles Davis. That's when I realized Bird was a junky. This was in 1946. Miles lived on the second floor and Bird lived on the third floor of an apartment building up around 145th Street. I went up to see Bird. He said he was busy and sent me down to see Miles. Miles was laughing. He said, 'Don't you know what they're doing?' And he told me.

"When you're very young and immature and you have a hero like Charlie Parker was to me, an idol who proves himself every time, who proves greatness and genius . . . That's a hard word to throw around. But you can't say less. When I listened to that genius night after night, being young and immature and not an educated person, I must have thought, 'If I crossed over that line, with drugs, could I play like that?'

"Drugs were heavily involved in that part of jazz music. It wasn't the swing players who were using junk. It was the new bebop generation that did that. And I was one of the last. I saw all these people doing that. I watched Bird, and I knew what he did.

"You want a sense of belonging. You want to be like the others. And so I tried it. And, you know, the euphoria can be compared to having an orgasm. It's so tremendous. I started snorting heroin. And then when my nose was too burned out, I started to use a syringe.

"It didn't take me long to get hooked. If you did it once or twice a week, it would take months. If you continue to do it every day, it can happen very fast.

"When Bird found out that I was strung out, he was *furious*. His attitude was 'Don't do as I do, do as I say.' He was

disappointed in me. He was very sad, very angry. But he was smart enough to know that once you're involved, there wasn't anything he could say. So we shared. Now we were on the road together and we shared all the time. He was great even that way. He was a genuinely nice man. He was disappointed that I had gone out and messed up, but once it was done, it was done.

"I was with Charlie Parker for most of the next three years. Some of that time, I was with Charlie Ventura. He had a big band. There were times when Bird would go out as a single, and I was with Charlie Ventura's big band only, not the small band. We did three weeks in Chicago at a place called the Silhouette. That's where I first met Ira Sullivan. His father brought him to see the band, and he came up and said, 'Well I play trumpet too.' He was playing saxophone across the street in a little club. I invited him to sit down next to me and read the music with me. I didn't know he didn't read music at all.

"At the end of that three years, the strings came in -- Bird with strings -- and there wasn't enough money to keep a trumpet player with the strings. Bird hated it, but he'd had a bit of a jazz hit with it. It was very restrictive for him. The agents and managers did it. Bird never knew how to say, 'No.' He'd say, 'Yes' to everything, then just wouldn't show up.

"And the rest of the time he was getting a lot of single work."

I said, "You can clarify an issue. The myth of bebop is that the music had a negative genesis -- an act of hostility to keep the white boys off the bandstand. If Dizzy and Bird didn't want them on the bandstand, why did they hire and teach them? Look what you tell me about the way Dizzy treated you in Philadelphia. Why did they hire people like Al Haig and Stan Levey? Why did Bird hire you, if that were the music's purpose? You cannot create out of hatred. And no one who has ever known Dizzy could believe it."

"I don't think that was a problem then," Red said. "I was treated like anyone else. Of course, there was a lot of Jim Crow in those days. A lot of it. And yet a young white boy came around, and man, I never felt any, any animosity. I never felt anything but love, and sharing.

"I don't know whether it's the same today, with the younger ones. I know if I were black, I would feel the same way. I would feel very antagonistic. I would probably rebel without good cause, instead of rebelling with sensitivity, but you don't know that when you're so young. And I can understand. I don't have to like it, but I can understand.

"But a man like Clark and like Dizzy, and so many others I can think of, no matter what they've been through, I think they do differentiate between those of us who feel for and believe in their cause and other people who may not. Still, they handle themselves beautifully. I have never once been made to feel anything but a friendly equal to Dizzy. I don't consider myself his equal, but he treats me that way. Clark's another one, a dear man. Clark goes out of his way to recommend me on things. I do a lot of college clinics now because of Clark. He never told me he recommended me. But I know who got me there.

"But the younger ones, I can see how they feel. I've felt uncomfortable on certain tours with certain young, excellent players. Years later, those very same people were much nicer. I got a very different feeling.

It came time to ask my loaded question: "Do you think it's possible that dope did help your playing?" Red's answer, when it came, was in accord with that of every other former addict to whom I have posed it.

"No," Red said, immediately and emphatically. "First of all, you have to be healthy to play well. And you're not very healthy using drugs. Nothing is working. Your cells are deadened. It's the greatest cure for the common cold there is." Red chuckled. "I didn't have a cold for twenty years. That's about all I can say for it. Now I know why there are codeine-based cough syrups. If you take some of that, you stop coughing.

"With heroin your cells are dead. All of them. You know, when a woman addict gets pregnant, she doesn't know it, because she doesn't menstruate anyway on heroin. It suspends menstruation. And addicted women don't show as quickly. They may be in the fourth or fifth month before they start having cramps and have to find out why.

"It puts all of your selves to sleep. That's why you have such terrible withdrawal when you awaken them. Your nervous system goes spattering around and around and around and up and down and it's completely berserk. And that's why you have such terrible discomfort. Your hair hurts, your toes hurt, your feet hurt, you're sweating profusely. You're shaking. You can't sleep. You can't eat. Your nervous system is upside down."

I said, "Philly Joe Jones told me he never had withdrawal symptoms when he quit. Philly said he never even got sick."

"I can't believe it," Red said. "I've seen him where he's had to go out and do crazy things in order to get enough money for drugs." Red laughed. "He took my car one time. We were on a record date. A Red Rodney-Ira Sullivan date with Tommy Flanagan and Oscar Pettiford. Philly Joe took the car and sent in Elvin Jones to finish the date. I said, 'Where's my car?' Elvin said, 'He's got it.'

"I loved Philly Joe. He was one of the most brilliant men I ever met. He was well versed in any subject you could speak about. I gave a twenty-fifth wedding anniversary party for my parents. Philly Joe was playing drums at the gig. He immediately went behind the bar and started talking Yiddish to all of them. I freaked out. He spoke better Yiddish than I did. I loved him dearly.

"He came back with my car two days later."

"Did you try to quit?" I asked.

"Oh! Many times! And, you know, a lot of people who stayed involved either died or got very sick or disappeared. Some of them left music, went into other fields to straighten their lives out. Stan Levey did. He became a photographer.

"I stayed. I stayed in music, and I stayed a junky."

(To be continued)