Gene Lees
Jazzletter

P.O. Box 240
Ojai, Calif.
93024-0240

October 1992 Vol. 11 No. 10

Travels with John

Back in the 1940s and early '50s, there stood at the head of Lake Ontario a place called the Brant Inn, which was one of the more sophisticated entertainment places in that area. It was there that I first heard the brand-new Lionel Hampton big band, and there that I interviewed a young and pretty Sarah Vaughan, who was even more timid than I, never foreseeing that one day we would be friends and I would write songs and she would record them. It was there too that a teen-aged Robert Farnon, working in his mother's band, met Don Redman, who showed him how to lay out a score instead of writing the parts out one at a time.

The Brant Inn was in the little town of Burlington, Ontario, population about 5,000, ten or fifteen miles from Hamilton, a steel town of -- then -- about 125,000 where I was born. The first newspaper I worked for was the Hamilton Spectator, and one summer when I was twenty, my city editor told me that the Burlington correspondent, an elderly spinster, was ill. He asked me if I would take the assignment until she was well. I said I'd do better than that: I'd move there for the summer. He was delighted, and I thought I'd pulled off the con of the year.

I found a small apartment in Burlington and settled into the easiest assignment of my life. There was almost nothing to write, but the locals expected it to be written. I hung out with the Burlington police force -- all three of them -- and toured leafy streets in their only cruiser, watching nothing happen in that safe and vanished era. I phoned in my stories, which were brief and trivial and took at most an hour a day of my time.

Frankie Laine's *We'll Be Together Again* and *Black and White* were on the juke box of the one local restaurant, and I had an album of Hazel Scott 78s. On one record she played boogie woogie, and on another something of Scarlatti, which I liked better than her boogie. That was my discovery of his music, and I remember those months as my Scarlatti summer.

I was an honorary member of the yacht club and went sailing with its members and printed the results of their Wednesday races. I'd phone in my morning story, short and trivial, then loaf on the beach all day. There were pretty girls and white sails on blue water and, at night, Scarlatti on my little phonograph.

One day I was out in a high-powered motor boat whose owner's name I have long since forgotten. A number of kids were on the boat. As we returned to the marina -- the term had not yet come into English from Spanish -- one of them, a seventeen-year-old boy, reached out to halt the boat from bumping into the cement revetment wall. Its momentum carried the boat forward and caught his hand between the bow and the concrete, slicing off his thumb. A doctor, who stood on the wall, said that if the thumb could be found it could be re-attached. And for the next half hour kids kept diving to find it. They didn't. I reported the story. In the days that followed I waited for that kid to go into shock at the loss of the thumb, but he never did. He took it with utter equanimity.

Standing nearby was a boy of nine whose presence I no doubt didn't notice. Years later, we became friends on a television show on which we were being interviewed. When he told me he was from Burlington, I mentioned the odd little accident and he said he'd been there too that day. His name is John Reeves.

John was a very famous photographer, one of the finest. He was also one of the funniest men I'd ever met, gifted with a spectacular impromptu eloquence, and a talent for seeing and describing the madness and incongruity of life.

About four years ago, John got tired, he said, of photographing beautiful bathrooms for magazines with the words "life" and "leisure" in their names. John wanted to do more portraiture, something he does supremely well, and said he thought he'd like to do a gallery of pictures of jazz musicians. He flew out to California, and I phoned some of my acquaintances and friends, and John started shooting, the first subjects being Sweets Edison, Pete Rugolo, and Johnny Mandel.

A few months later John said he'd sold McClelland and Stewart, a distinguished Toronto publishing house, on a book of these portraits, on the condition that I would write the text. Somewhat reluctantly -- I did not like the idea of writing a lot of brief bios on people -- I agreed, and thereby serendipitously embarked on a great adventure.

Over the next four years, I traveled with John, getting those pictures. We shot some of them at the Chicago Jazz Festival. John visited California three or four times, and we added Horace Silver and Jimmy Rowles and many more to the list. We drove down through New York State and Pennsylvania, shooting Jack DeJohnette and Warren Bernhardt and Bill Challis and Spiegle Willcox along our way. We were the recipients of the elegant hospitality of Hank Jones and his wife, and we spent several wonderful, warm and funny days with Jackie and Roy Kral at their home in Montclair, New Jersey.

I laughed at John's hilarious tales and observations until I ached. We stayed a night in Woodstock at a shabby and ancient motel whose rooms were equipped with twelve-inch black-and-white TV sets on which you could get the news, barely and through a sheet of snow, on two channels only. It was run by a woman in her forties, around whom John immediately spun a fantasy: she was a burned-out druggy from the 1960s whose wealthy father had bought this place for her to give her something to do and keep her out of harm's way. Remembering *Psycho*, I named it the Norma Bates Motel, and we left in the morning, with John telling a madcap tale about flying out of Kenya with a crazed pilot and a cargo of frozen beef; and about crashing on a glacier in western Canada and waiting for rescue.

Or of a time when he visited Zaire, where, he said, "they are capable of the most outrageously inventive larceny you ever encountered." The Canadian government sent a gift of six huge

Caterpillar road-graders to the country, and the Canadian ambassador made a lovely speech about friendship when she presented them. "Next morning three of them were gone!" John said. "Where do you hide three road-graders?"

John had been a lifelong jazz fan. But, unlike me, he had never had any professional contact with jazz people. One of his idols was Max Roach, for John had once tried to play drums only to realize how good Max and Mel Lewis and a few more really were. I told John to abandon any preconceptions he had about jazz people, above all that idiotic myth that they are laconic and ineloquent people. Often after a shoot, I'd say, "And another ineloquent jazz musicians bites the dust." The joke was abandoned because it became tiresome with repetition.

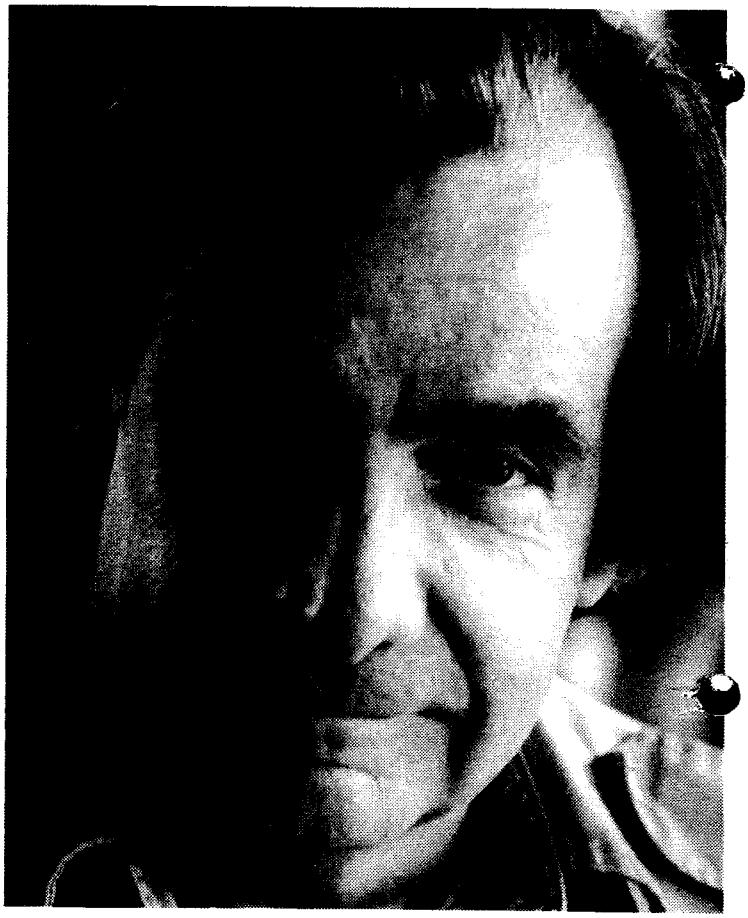
John in effect forced on me a rediscovery of the world of jazz as we hiked the number of portraits we planned from 50 to 75 and then to 100, somewhat to the horror of our publisher, since high-quality duotone black-and-white engraving is anything but inexpensive. I visited friends I hadn't seen in years, and discovered new people as we went in search of the gifted younger players, the very youngest of whom was Chris McBride, just nineteen when we photographed him in Brooklyn. I talked to Max Roach several times on the phone, but we simply weren't able to make our travel schedules match. Thus too J.J. Johnson, who had given up touring to nurse his wife after a stroke. We never did get J.J., but Max turned up in Toronto, and John dragged him off to his studio and they spent a delightful afternoon as John shot some great portraits of a great man.

All the while John was seeing these people through his special and sophisticated eye, I was watching him watch them, watching him explore a world of people I have through familiarity been in danger of taking for granted, too easily forgetting that many of the friends I have been fortunate enough to accumulate are musicians of genius. In jazz, genius is commonplace. The conversations that accompanied these photo sessions were insightful and warm. Two of them are reproduced in this issue.

When the book was done -- I have little hesitation in saying of his work, edited down from probably 20,000 pictures, that it is the finest gallery of portraits in jazz history -- John wanted to add his own foreword. It turned out to be one of the most moving and perceptive brief comments on jazz I have ever read. He wrote:

"Mum didn't understand it. Dad just plain hated it. I loved it .... We lived in and around the then small town of Burlington. I was fifteen in 1955 and "it" was all that jazz that I had recently been listening to. First I listened to radio broadcasts -- Joe Rico's *Jump for Joe* which came from studios "high atop the beautiful Hotel Stuyvesant" in the heart of downtown Buffalo, New York, and Dick McDougall's *Jazz Unlimited* which originated from downtown Toronto, Ontario. Next I began buying LPs and then as time went on I started to do my listening in clubs and bars in and around Toronto and Hamilton, the two big towns in my part of the world. Listening convinced me that music is the greatest of the arts and that jazz is the greatest contemporary music, thus the greatest contemporary art form.

"Love of jazz centered my adolescent struggles to grow up and away from my parents' benign tyranny. Jazz became the music of my life and the men and women who played jazz became my idols. I've had a great life being John Reeves the photographer, but in an absolutely perfect world I would have chosen to be Zoot Sims or Mel Lewis or McCoy Tyner.



John Reeves Photo by Gene Lees

"Confronting idols can be a tricky business. As I started this project I wondered if actual personalities would be able to sustain the burden of an admiration that's grown without any direct contact with them.

"Apart from my psychological concerns there was a need to arrive at a photographic form for my meetings with these artists. I have for years been an admirer of the beautiful photojournalistic and 'in-performance' work of shooters such as Milt Hinton, Herman Leonard and William Claxton, and I felt more than a

little inadequate to pursue my jazz subjects by walking down their photographic trails. Finally I arrived at the 'big face' portrait idea. I thought that straight intimate portraiture might yield viewers useful -- and different -- information that had not been provided in quite as much quantity by the other photographic approaches to jazz. Happily my years sojourning through Gene Lees' world of jazz threw me smack dab in the middle of the most altogether satisfactory group of people that I have ever encountered. What's more, my subjects seemed to relish sitting and being themselves for the camera.

"Somebody once said that there aren't any stupid jazz musicians because the music is too complex for a stupid person to play. That assertion proved to be astonishingly accurate. Again and again I found myself in the presence of musically gifted, intellectually vibrant, verbally articulate political and philosophic liberals. In the jazz culture the sexes, the races and the generations all play beautifully together. Jazz musicians take generous delight in each other's talents. They believe that the diligent pursuit of excellence leads to a more rewarding life and they want to believe that a free, sane, compassionate society may still be attainable.

"*Jazz Lives* has been the greatest experience of my life as a photographer. My adolescent judgment has been vindicated. My love for the music continues to grow and the knowledge that there really is a community of gifted, thoughtful people out there provides precious reassurance as I contemplate the future in troubled times.

"The good great American Dream is alive and well and living in the hearts of the world's jazz musicians."

A few months ago there was a tribute to Dizzy Gillespie at Carnegie Hall in New York. John flew down to donate a huge archive-quality portrait of Dizzy -- a serious and very pensive one -- to be auctioned off for charity.

Red Rodney's wife had the winning number, and Red bore it proudly away -- no doubt to hang it close to the portrait John did of him.

I can confirm that during all those shoots, over a hundred of them, John and I heard fascinating reminiscences and musings and funny stories in the conversations of our subjects. Here are two of them.

Jazz Goes to Brazil

According to Claudio Roditi, Bud Shank is wrong.

Bud has denied that the records he made in the 1950s with Laurindo Almeida for the Pacific Jazz label were influential in the development of the movement that became known as bossa nova. "The Brazilian musicians didn't need us," Bud said to me a couple of years back.

Claudio, now firmly established in New York and an admired trumpet and fluegelhorn player, says that due to a small historical accident, those records, on which Almeida played acoustic guitar and Bud played flute and alto, were indeed influential in Brazil. He remembers them well.

"My mother's sister was married to an American," Claudio said. "He had a collection of records. I was 12 when I heard them. He had those Dial sessions of Bird with Miles Davis. It blew my mind. I didn't know what it was called. I was already playing trumpet. And Roy Eldridge.

"I was born May 28, 1946, in Rio de Janeiro. My mother's from Minas Gerais. My father used to buy coffee. My father was the one who supported me with the trumpet and music. He died in '59.

"The bossa nova is different from samba, even though it came out of the samba. The rhythmic figures are more simple, less anticipated. The samba's very complicated because of all the anticipations. The music I write leans more toward the samba than toward the bossa nova. I grew up listening to the bossa nova. I grew up hearing all those fantastic tunes."

Claudio said that he began to hear a lot of West Coast jazz, especially Gerry Mulligan. "Everybody was telling me, 'Chet Baker is the one for you.' I went to a record store to buy Chet Baker, but they didn't have any. They had a record with two trumpets, Dizzy Gillespie and Roy Eldridge. That was the first record I purchased myself. I had no idea what it was. Everybody was into West Coast jazz then. These records were issued by Musidisc there. Any other stuff would be imported and harder to find. That's why West Coast jazz influenced the bossa nova people that much. I am quite sure Chet Baker was an influence. The arrangements of the period all sound as if they were influenced by Bud Shank or Gerry Mulligan or those cats. And mainly Mulligan."

At this point I told Claudio that Bud discounted any possibility of his having an influence on Brazilian music.

"He's wrong," Claudio said firmly. "I am talking about 1959, '60. All the Pacific West Coast jazz stuff was being issued there by Musidisc. Millo Sergio owned Musidisc and he put all this stuff out in Brazil.

"By chance, in '59, I found Miles Davis' *'Round About Midnight*. I bought that, and man, that twisted my head around completely. And then for years I could only listen to Miles Davis. I couldn't stand any other trumpet player. And then I heard Lee Morgan a little bit and I kind of liked that. The first time I heard Clifford Brown, Booker Little, I didn't like it. I remember the very first time I heard Freddie Hubbard, a record called *Open Sesame* on Blue Note. It didn't turn me on. I liked the way Miles played -- his tone, space, the lyricism, everything about Miles' playing. Later on I started listening to some other people, and then I realized the importance of the whole direction Dizzy set, through Fats Navarro, Clifford Brown,

Booker Little, and all those guys. That became my main line of thought. But I still love space.

"There was a French guy in Rio. He lived in Ipanema. He used to collect records, and all the jazz magazines. Every Friday -- this is early '60s -- from 7 until 10 o'clock, he had open house. Whoever wanted to come to his house to hear the newest shit in jazz was welcome. Fantastic. I went there every weekend. After 10 o'clock, we'd all leave and go to a bar and have beer.

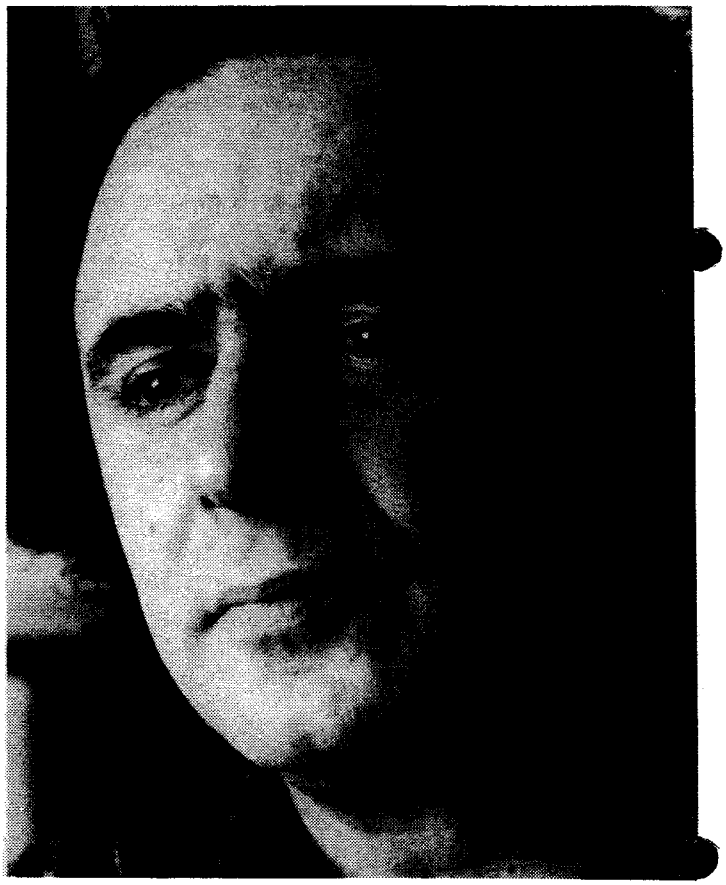
"This guy, Robert, he loved all the early stuff. He turned me onto Jabbo Smith. I mean, I've been hip to Jabbo Smith since the early '60s. And to Bix and Louis. Jabbo Smith had so much chops. The only thing that I skipped a little bit was the big-band era, because it wasn't happening when I came on the scene. In 1946, the year I was born, President Vargas closed down all the casinos. Before, they had gambling, and they used to bring the Dorsey band and all the others.

"In school, we were playing bossa nova. We had two rival groups in high school. The other group was led by a guy named Victor Brasil. I was bored to death in school. I heard this guy sitting next to me say to another, 'Hey, did you hear the new Art Blakey record?' So we started talking. It was Victor. It was great to have a buddy in school. Victor used to take Horace Silver's and Art Blakey's arrangements off the records. I used to play *The Girl from Ipanema*. So my love for the music has been since back then. I enjoy playing Brazilian music.

"I had a teacher in Brazil named Aurino Ferreira, who plays tenor and baritone sax. He opened my head up for something in music that really changed everything. He taught me about articulation. He had all these exercises to learn how to articulate on the trumpet and sound like the jazz people I was hearing on the records. I used to hear them and thought they were making it with the throat. He showed me where it is, on paper. And this cat opened my head. This was the main teacher I had in Brazil. Every opportunity I have, I mention his name. If I can play a little bit of jazz, it is because of the stuff he taught me.

"The reason I left is because it was very frustrating, wanting to be a creative artist there -- playing dance music. I was fed up with that stuff."

I asked Claudio about a famous little room at Copacabana beach called Bottle's bar. I was there in about April of 1962, and met Johnny Alf and some of the other Brazilian musicians. It was at that time that I met Joao Gilberto and Antonio Carlos Jobim and wrote the first of the translations I would do to Jobim's and other Brazilian songs. The first two were *Corcovado* and *Desafinado*. I remember going to Jobim's house on -- literally -- a rainy night in Rio. Joao Gilberto was sitting on the living room sofa playing and singing *So Danco Samba*. Jobim and I went to the kitchen and he poured Scotch and soda for us; we were to consume a lot of it together in the years ahead in New York. But no one much in New York had ever heard of him or Joao Gilberto at the time. We spoke French part of the time then because I knew very little Portuguese and he knew little English. Jobim poured me another and nodded toward the other room to indicate Joao, and said, "I'm crazy, but he's more crazy."



Claudio Roditi Photo by John Reeves

I met so many people during those weeks -- including Oscar Castro-Neves and Sergio Mendes, some of them to become lifelong friends -- in Bottle's Bar. When the exodus to New York began, my apartment on West 86th Street became the landing site. Airto Moreira and his wife, Flora Purim, remember that I lent them that apartment for a week when they first arrived. I have no memory of it, but I do remember when the members of the Tamba Four, including the superb pianist Luis Eca, who wrote *The Dolphin*, were constantly there.

I reminded Claudio of a music critic who used to come into Bottle's. In the ceaseless effort to look hip, he wore the darkest possible shades, despite the fact you could barely see in the dim light of the place as it was; he would almost grope his way among the tables. The musicians had hung a nickname on him:

Flavio the Vampire. I never knew why. Bottle's was on a little lane about a block in from the beach. I can remember leaving Bottle's and walking on the sand and listening to the surf in the small hours of the morning, elated merely to be in Rio and look up at Corcovado in the moonlight.

Claudio knew Bottle's well. "I used to play the Sunday afternoon jam sessions at Bottle's," Claudio said.

"It's gone now. Around 1965 the owners closed all those good little music places.

"I heard that in Vienna, Friedrich Gulda had organized a jazz competition. My mother helped me and I left. I met Art Farmer in Vienna, and Joe Zawinul. It was a great time. Then I got homesick. Let's face it, I had just come out of Brazil, trying. But I didn't have anything together. I came back to Rio, then in '68 I left to Mexico. In 1970, I left with a band Luis Eca put together to go to Mexico City. It was called the Sacred Family. We stayed in Mexico for a few months, played a gig in a hotel, came back.

"Then I said, 'Shit, I've got to go to the source.' Digressing into Europe and Mexico, when the place I really wanted to come was here. So in 1970, I moved to the States and came to Berklee in Boston.

"I was there just two semesters, then I ended up living in Boston for six years."

Recently he played on a concert tour of Europe titled To Diz with Love, with Slide Hampton, Red Rodney, Freddie Hubbard, Lewis Nash, George Mraz, Hank Jones, and played the Hollywood Bowl tribute to Dizzy Gillespie, as well as the Carnegie Hall tribute to Dizzy a few weeks ago. And he, along with Paquito d'Rivera and Dave Valentin, has been working with Tito Puente and The Golden Men of Latin Jazz. Claudio's most recent recording, *Live At Birdland,* is on Candid.

As John Reeves and I were leaving Claudio's apartment in Brooklyn, Claudio said, "Tell Bud Shank he's wrong. I've never met him, but next time you see him, tell him I said he's wrong. He was an influence on us. I am positive."

The Lion in Denver

"That was so strange," John Reeves said after our visit with Cedar Walton in Santa Monica, California. "To hear someone who isn't that old talking about that kind of fear."

He referred to our conversation with Cedar, who described a boyhood of growing up black in Dallas, Texas, enduring fear and a kind of deference for no other reason but color, in days when the front of the bus was reserved for whites. It was the more strange to John for having grown up in Canada. Not that Canada was ever or is now completely free of racism, but it was never entrenched by law. Slavery was never a significant part of the economy, and in any case it was ended in the 1840s not with a ghastly war but with a court case. A slave in Montreal was sold by his owner. The slave sued on the grounds that no man could own another and therefore he could not be sold. The court ruled he was right, and Canada became the first nation in the western hemisphere to abolish slavery. I had been flabbergasted by institutionalized American racism, but by now I was used to hearing friends and acquaintances like Art Farmer and Hank Jones and Benny Golson talk of it matter-of-factly. John wasn't. So our meeting with Cedar had been something of a revelation to him, another step in his journey of discovery.

"**The way they do things** in Dallas, Texas!" said Cedar, who was born there January 17, 1934. "You talk about conservatism! If you looked the word up in the dictionary, you'd see Dallas there. They suspect anything from outside Dallas. Even when Duke Ellington used to come there when I was a kid, the attitude was: We've got our own bands here. Who is this guy? They believed him once they heard him, but they suspected him. Unless it's made in Texas or grew up there. That's the attitude in Texas.

"The whole state is like that. They believe they can live without anything from outside Texas. It's incredible, man. I got a booking in Austin, Texas. It was like pulling teeth until they found out I was from Texas. They need to be really convinced."

"I've met a few Texans who didn't like it," I said.

"How can you like a place like that? Budd Johnson was from Dallas. There are a lot of good musicians from Texas."

"Where'd you go to school?" I asked. Cedar is a quiet man, and a very powerful pianist, not to mention a very good composer.

"Lincoln High School in Dallas. Then I went over to Dillard University, a great little school in New Orleans. Ellis Marsalis and I were freshmen together. He's a great educator. After Dillard, I transferred to the University of Denver and majored in music. I just liked the campus, quite frankly. I was on summer vacation with my parents. We were on our way out to California, but we just got as far as Denver. We stayed there and I visited the campus, and I said, Wow! Nice! So for no other reason, I picked it. It was new. The dormitories were new. And they had co-ed dormitories! I thought, 'Maybe I can meet somebody.'

"They had a good music department, too. Denver's quiet, it's not like Texas. There was a pressure lifted. Ethnic. It's not as blunt as in Texas. I grew up with the sign on the bus. You know, you had to sit behind it. Me and my mother would go shopping and . . . So that was something I found removed.

"By this time I had learned to be terrified by white people, in a sense. But I worked it out. I'm talking about 1951 or '52. 'Afraid' isn't entirely accurate. But there was a hesitancy on my part, simply because I just wasn't used to it. It's like going into a cage of lions. You're a lion yourself, but you've never been around that breed of lion. But I got used to it. I could relate

to the instructors. It turned me, I think, into a fanatic student in terms of trying to keep up. I zeroed in on my music. We had a nice curriculum. We covered all the instruments. We had to play them all. That gives you a great insight on writing because you've actually played them. Some of them will make you faint, like the oboe. I blacked out once. I learned the flute. It was fun. Here was a band full of people who didn't play those instruments. It sounded horrible, but it was good for you.

"I stayed there three years. Then I dropped out for a while, because my after-hours jazz activity started to accelerate. I had this gig starting at midnight. It was the drummer's group. The other guys were in their thirties. I was under twenty. I was just a student. I met people like Charlie Parker. He came and sat in. Jerome Richardson came through with Earl "Fatha" Hines. I met everybody who came through Denver, because I was playing the gig at the place they'd go to after playing a concert. It was a nice experience. I met Richie Powell. I remember staying up all night with him. He showed me some things. He was with Johnny Hodges. So was John Coltrane at that time.

"It was a good experience. I saw Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie playing chess on their intermission at the Rainbow Ballroom. I remember how impressed I was. Wow! Dizzy with his pipe, looking at the chess board! By the time Charlie Parker came down to our club, he had had a few drinks, and his sound wasn't clear. But his ideas were flowing, he just couldn't manipulate the sound I was used to hearing on records. But I thought he played brilliantly. For some reason he played everything in C. *Dancing on the Ceiling, What Is This Thing Called Love*?, and I think a blues. Then he fell asleep. It was a high bandstand. He asked for a chair. He was sitting right by me. I looked over and he had dozed off, in deep sleep.

"I dropped out of school because my jazz after-hours activity accelerated. And meantime the draft was always in the wings. I was avoiding it with a college deferment. Then with a friend of mine I drove to New York. A music fan, a college friend. He had been there a couple of times. We were going to share the expenses. We had about seventy-some dollars each, and my Chevrolet, and we made it, and still had some change left over. This was in 1955.

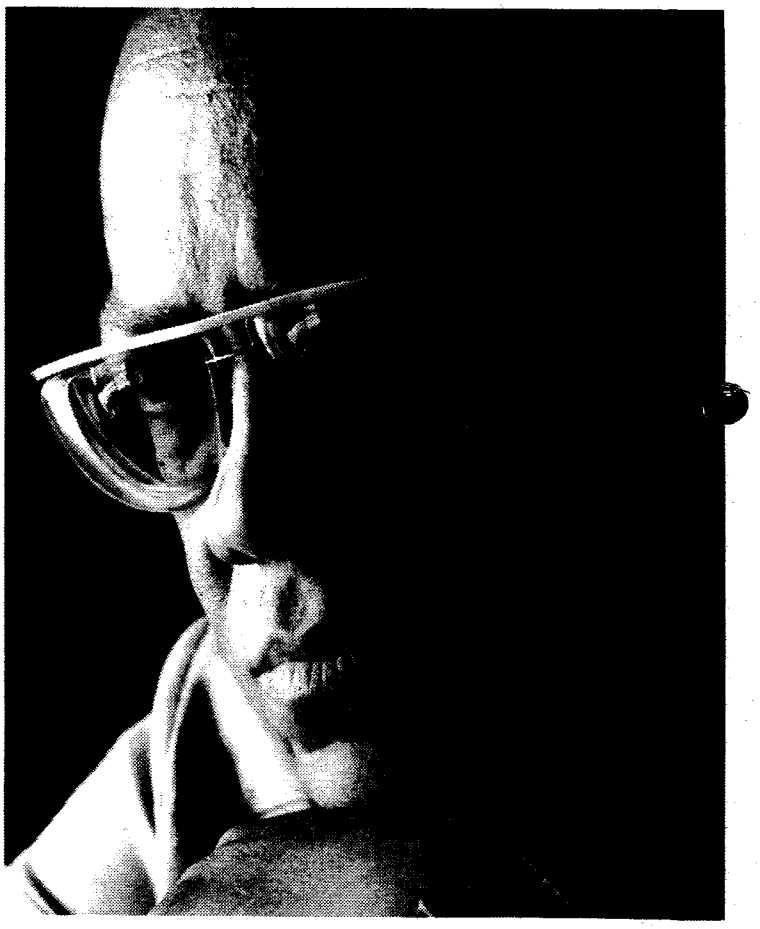
"We got to New York, checked into the Sloane House YMCA. Rooms were about eleven-something a day, and I looked for day work right away. I had a variety of jobs, including stock boy at Macy's, Horn and Hardart dish guy. I just wanted to stay around New York and see what I could do. My mother kept saying, 'Come home, son! You've got no business up there!'

"I started to get a few gigs, though. After a year of that, almost to the day, April 1956, I let Uncle Sam catch me. I went to Fort Dix. I ran right into Wayne Shorter. He was up there. He was playing weekends with Horace Silver.

"And then Duke Ellington came to Fort Dix. He actually let me sit in! Can you imagine? I said, 'Do you think it's possible for me and my friend, who is a singer, to do *What Is This Thing Called Love*?' He said, 'Yeah.' I couldn't believe it. I thought he'd say, 'Not now, son.' We went up and did it, just me and the rhythm section. Duke said, 'Go easy on those keys, young man!' Jimmy Woode swears it was him on bass. Sam Woodyard on drums. And the whole band joined in on the last chorus, like a clambake ending. I said, 'I'll be . . . . This must be a dream.'

"And when Duke came back, he said, 'I thought I told you to go easy!' I've got that in my memory to keep on track for a long time.

"I was at Fort Dix six months. Then I got into a special service unit, entertainment unit, at Seventh Army in Stuttgart. The Seventh Army Symphony was there too. Leo Wright was there, Don Ellis, Eddie Harris, and Don Menza. They had a band called Jazz One, and we had Jazz Two. We did a nice tour. Our duty for the first couple of weeks, once we got transferred into that unit, was just to go into the room and write



Cedar Walton Photo by John Reeves

music, go to lunch, come back, write music, go to dinner. Me, and Leo Wright, and whoever else we could grab. I was there eighteen months, playing jazz and touring around, until April of 1958."

"There was a jazz club in downtown Stuttgart," I said.

"Yeah. The Atlantic Bar."

"A dark little joint in a basement."

"That's right," Cedar said. "That's where I first heard the Modern Jazz Quartet. Or maybe it was Frankfurt. I met Milt Jackson at that time. We went out after the gig and jammed. He played the piano too. We've been friends ever since, very close.

"When I got out of the service, I *dove* back into New York activity, since I'd done all this practicing in Stuttgart. I gigged around, with people like Gigi Gryce, Kenny Dorham. Just nice gigs. I was still only twenty-two, twenty-three. There were jam sessions Monday night at Birdland. J.J. Johnson heard me. By the time I was twenty-four I was with J.J. That was my first traveling gig. Tootie Heath was the drummer. I replaced Tommy Flanagan."

"You came through to the Blue Note in Chicago," I said. "Because that's where I first met J.J."

"I seem to remember that's when I first met you," Cedar said.

"I remember Frank Holzfiend was having trouble keeping the Blue Note going. I had a conversation with J.J., who said, 'I can't pay the guys in my group what they're worth, and Frank Holzfiend isn't making any money, and this just isn't practical.' Or words to that effect."

"He kept the group together for a while," Cedar said. "Tootie Heath and I decided to defect, so to speak, to the Jazztet. We played Bird House in Chicago. We recorded live at Bird House. Curtis Fuller had gone by then. Tommy McIntosh had replaced him on trombone. We were almost a new group, me, Tootie, Tom McIntosh, Tommy Williams on bass. Only Art Farmer and Benny Golson remained from the original group.

"Later on, Benny and Art agreed that there was too much *music* in the sextet. Sitting there reading, it was unnatural: you needed to just come out and play. There was not that much room for solos. There was so much other work to do. But Benny realized that later. He threw away the book, in essence. It was a nice musical experience. Benny Golson, I think, is one of the world's most patient musicians in terms of getting what he wants out of people. That helped me a lot. It's a good memory. And it really prepared me for my next gig, which was Art Blakey. The horns were Wayne Shorter, Curtis Fuller, and Freddie Hubbard.

"You couldn't write enough music for Art. You'd write it now, you'd get it played now, and you'd get it recorded now. You can't ask for anything more, being an instrumentalist. A lot of people walking down the street regard music as something that's sung and instrumentalists as people in connection with a singer. Have you ever met people like that?

"Art Blakey was an education. You could apply everything you'd ever known about music. He would beg you to write, he would insist on it, he would hire you because you were a writer. The group played my music fast! They played it faster than I could. I said, 'Wait a minute, I wrote this thing.' People used to attend our rehearsals in New York. Word would get out that the group was rehearsing and you'd have an audience sitting there. It was nice.

"Art's dynamics! I watched him in amazement. We did a date for Riverside. I was just amazed how he, practically the first time through on a tune, memorized all the dynamics. That press roll of his. All these things. Then he'd be quiet. I just couldn't believe this guy."

"Buddy Rich also had a phenomenal memory," I said. "He once told me he thought it was because he couldn't read."

"Out of necessity," Cedar said. "Blakey too. Art would say, 'Go ahead and play it.' And he'd memorize it. It was the first time I had run into that kind of intelligence, without it being that kind of formal intelligence from books. That's another kind of intelligence.

"He was a great bandleader. It was with him that I first went to Japan, and we went to Europe. We worked and recorded all the time.

"After that tenure, I opted to stay in New York. By then I was married and had a family starting. I took a gig at the Five Spot on Eighth Street opposite Charlie Mingus. The trio opposite was led by Roland Hanna, who left. He left, so I came. Reggie Workman came in on bass. It was a permanent gig. Art seemed disappointed that I left, which was flattering to me. I was tired of the traveling. Now I don't mind traveling.

"After that I just freelanced. A nice period, freelancing, recording. I think I got my first recording contract during that time, with Prestige. I would travel then, but just little things. Slowly but surely I started to get my own gigs. That was a good feeling. I continued to record for Prestige.

"My son is thirty years old. He's married and lives in Jersey City with his family. My other son is twenty-eight, and lives in Connecticut, and my daughter is twenty-two, and lives in Manhattan. My wife and I got divorced. I remarried and had another daughter, who is now fifteen.

"I came out to California in February of '88. I was coming out here all the time, and sort of unconsciously deciding to make the move. I like to go in to New York, but I like it out here.

The Jazzletter is published 12 times a year at PO Box 240, Ojai, California, 93024-0240. Subscriptions are for the current calendar year, January to December, $50 U.S. a year for the U.S. and Canada, $60 for other countries.

"I played with Dizzy recently, on that European festival circuit. Every night, it was Phil Woods and Dizzy. Phil knows Dizzy's music about five times more than I do, because he's played with Dizzy a lot. A lot of those things, most of us know about 90 percent. But there are little things in them. With Dizzy you get the refined versions. That was fun, because we could have rehearsals in the dressing room without really playing. We could talk through these things and go out and play something new every night. It was great. Mickey Roker, Rufus Reid, Bobby Hutcherson, Steve Turre.

"I just made a record with Phil Woods and Jackie McLean, produced by Bill Goodwin."

An album he said he particularly likes is one called *Cedar Walton Plays*. "I'm very proud of that one, because I used a horn ensemble. It has an orchestral sound. It's not a lot of writing. Just little hits."

He has also done a couple of small stints of acting, the first of them in the film *'Round Midnight*.

"That was a nice experience. Dexter Gordon picked me for that scene where the character comes back to Birdland. It's ironic. I just did one day's work in a movie directed by David Lynch called *Wild at Heart*. I'm doing the same thing, on the bandstand and looking around occasionally. Same role. Maybe I'll get a career in that kind of role. It's a hard thing to show to your mother, saying, 'Mother, I'm in a movie,' and she has to wait all this time to see you."

Cedar, interestingly, is one of the few musicians who liked the film *Bird*. He said, "They weren't aiming at people who know something. I don't mind any movie. It's just a movie. A movie has to be about *something*. And it has to be through somebody's eyes. We can't help it if we know better. The truth is not as movie-like. Movies are a special medium. I just like movies, the way they're made and everything."

Cedar lives in a pleasant apartment not far from the sea. He had just appeared in a concert in Japan presenting ten jazz pianists.

"I love orchestration. I just don't get a chance to do much. But I did on that project there. I'm 56 years old. I probably won't be a great conductor. But that's one of my dreams."

"It's one of Roger Kellaway's dreams, too," I said.

"Roger Kellaway is getting his dream!" Cedar said. "He's a very dynamic pianist too. What I do with one hand, he can do with two. I say, 'Wait a minute!' And I can see how he does it, too, after hearing him every night. You can get a lot of stuff from him."

Cedar plays a steady circuit of festivals and concerts throughout the United States and Europe, and seems quite content with life. "The scene seems to have improved," he said.

"My most enjoyable thing is working with the trio. I like trio work. I have a delightful combination of gigs, assignments, projects."

Mail Bag

A friend gave me the Time Warner-Tipper Gore story to read and when I finished it I reached for my checkbook. Please start my subscription.

There was a conversation on a talk show on KNBR a few weeks ago. The caller had taken his family to a theme park in New Jersey called Six Flags. As they purchased tickets, he read the park rules, prominently posted. The park owner informed those about to enter their private property that they had the right to stop anyone at any time for alcohol, firearms, and drugs. The park owner also stated that the wearing of clothing with slogans or phrases which might be offensive was prohibited, and that anyone wearing such clothing would be denied permissi to enter. Furthermore, if after entering, an article of clothing with a slogan or phrase which the park owner deemed offensive was displayed, the wearer would be asked to leave.

So, if a visitor to Six Flags in New Jersey was wearing a tee-shirt with almost any one of the words from almost any Ice-T song, they would be either denied entry or, if they removed an outer garment and displayed a shirt with any Ice-T lyrics, they would be shown the gate.

The park is owned by Time Warner.

Tom Johnson, Pacifica, California

I really enjoyed your two-part article on Red Mitchell. I had the great pleasure of performing several concerts with Red in Sweden when I toured there several years ago.

Your article on Time Warner was most informative and eye-opening. I shall think twice before purchasing any issues of Time. Thank you.

Jennifer Hart, Denver, Colorado

Jennifer Hart is a pianist and singer who divides her time between Denver and Palm Desert, California.

Your lead-off article in the June Jazzletter proclaims the unspeakable, unimpeded cruelty of the Los Angeles Police Department and the Sheriff's Department.

Even among some doctors, a case report will speak of "a 21-year-old black female". Why not "a 21-year-old unmarried woman"? Why "a 50-year-old Mexican male"? Why not "a 50-year-old unmarried woman" instead of a 50-year-old black female"? Racism knows no limits.

Enclosed is another small contribution to help mitigate your already constricted resources.

Carroll J. Bellis, MD, FACS, Long Beach, California

I hope you continue this examination of free speech and the entertainment industry.

Bernard Brightman, New York, New York