Gene Lees
Jazzletter

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Mail Bag

I'd like all Red Rodney's friends to know that he departed peacefully and free of pain. My biggest fear, after learning about his lung cancer last September, was that he'd suffer. Thank God he was properly medicated at the end.

There was a memorial service on Sunday, May 19, in Delray Beach. It was a lovely observance and the chapel was standing room only. Red's son, Jeff, who was such a great help to Red and Irene during their illnesses, spoke to the assemblage about his father with great respect and love.

A few months ago Red asked me to deliver his eulogy. I feel especially honored to have been chosen and I spoke my thoughts with truth, affection, and the hurt that comes with losing a long-time, valued friend.

Mort Fega, Delray Beach, Florida

PS: Your health-care stuff was outstanding! Bravo!

My compliments for your issue on the Canadian health care system. As you know, Senator Wellstone of Minnesota is one of the authors of the single payer bill. As groups of physicians begin to realize that they would have more independence under single payer than they would under the Clinton plan, we're going to see an increasing interest in the single payer plan on the part of those who in the past strongly opposed it. I have added your article to my reading list for my course on health-care reform.

I must say I was initially surprised to see the article, but I'm really pleased that you did publish it. It certainly wasn't evident that your areas of scholarly focus have not previously included health care.

Again, my compliments for the beautifully done Canadian article.

Lester E. Block, DDS, MPH
Director of Graduate Studies in Public Health
University of Minnesota, Minneapolis

I am delighted that you pursue topics which go beyond jazz narrowly defined. The discussions of race in music and of health care were stimulating, and right on. I hope you continue to write about such subjects.

Michael Michie
Department of Political Science
York University, Toronto

My husband suffered a heart attack in 1980 while traveling in Canada and was treated in St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver. He would have died but for the excellent treatment he received. We are forever indebted to the Canadian Medicare system.

Mary Schwartz, London, England

Mary and her husband are Americans living in England.

Enclosed is a check for copies sent to Washington politicos.
As you can see, one of them replied.
It was an outstanding service you did.

Bernard Brightman, Stash Records, New York City

The letter of reply was from President Clinton.

Your friend Bill Feindel sent me a copy of your superb Jazzletter for February/March. I have rarely read a paper as powerful and poignant. It left me seething with anger that the "insurance principle" is being dragged through the mud by insurance companies, in fact negated by them.

Another outpouring of adrenaline comes over me as I read the Olympian, crass remarks and attitude of a few products of our medical schools — these inhabitants of the current human jungle. When they paid tuition fees at medical school, they paid about one tenth or less of the actual cost of their medical education, whether at a private or public university. They are, as my Australian medical students used to say, "a bleedin' disgrice". Admission committees must weed them out, by one simple question at their interviews: "What would you consider to be the optimal way of practicing medicine?"

I am enclosing a copy of my recent letter to the American College of Surgeons. One thing that has to be made clear to our American neighbors: The Canadian system is *not* free as Bush et al love to whine about. We pay for it in our provincial and national income taxes. You do *not* have to pay income tax in order to qualify. It is universal in coverage in any part of Canada.

William C. Gibson, MD, FRCP, Victoria BC Canada

FRCP stands for Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians. Dr. Gibson is also a fellow of the American College of Physicians. He studied at the Montreal Neurological Institute under the great Wilder Penfield. As you will see from his letter to the President of the American College of Surgeons in Chicago, he has a few other credentials. The letter is reprinted below.

Dear President:

Having studied at the Faculty of Commerce at the University of British Columbia before studying medicine at McGill and at Oxford, I am aware of the "insurance principle". I am aware, also, of the daily violation of this basic and simple principle by vendors of alleged health insurance today.

As a physician I resent the interposition of a profit-based industry between sick people and their medical attendants. Such intervenors add nothing to our care of randomly sick taxpayers, but operate a narrow-gate, systematic parasitic scheme which today adds 14 percent to the cost of medical care for those selected patients who are permitted to purchase it. Ailing citizens must pass

muster with a profit-making combine that, in effect, dictates what medicine shall be practiced and, in the future, what patients will be allowed to see what doctor.

As a citizen of an allegedly bereft country, medically speaking, I wonder if I might suggest that your College of Surgeons give up the use of the term "single payer system" and substitute for it "the American non-profit system" of health care. Anything which suggests that there is a "payer" of any kind causes the public's adrenaline to flow. The public needs reassurance, now, that no one is going to profit from introducing a patient to a doctor. Ever since medicine became a science, patients have sought out physicians without the need of entrepreneurs whose battle cry is "We can get it for you wholesale" — i.e., at their price. So the all-important trust between a patient and a freely-chosen practitioner is vitiated, and stamped on.

The term I propose would have a cutting edge to it — to cut right through the smoke screen now obfuscating the health equation. I suggest a term that squares with the facts, i.e. a non-profit care system. Compromised critics will scream to high heaven because the real truth is out.

In Canada, every doctor's income . . . from looking after patients in our universal scheme is published annually, and there are no surprises or backstabbing. The graduated income tax takes care of the national interest. Other income is no one else's business. There are no bad debts. Patients choose their own doctors. Money is never discussed. The overhead costs are less than two percent.

In British Columbia, where I reside, the top malpractice premium (applied to neurosurgeons and obstetricians, for instance) is $17,000 annually, and the health care system pays $14,000 of this, to the Canadian Medical Protective Association which the profession set up fifty years ago. General practitioners pay $3,000 a year.

If I might make one further suggestion, it would be that my American colleagues should insist that, as in Canada, health care delivery be managed by individual states. Our national government is prohibited by our constitution from interfering with health care when a Provincial plan encompasses such basic tenets as universality and portability.

(Let) me say, as one who has taught at the University of California in San Francisco, and at Yale, as a visiting professor, as a great admirer of American medicine, that I hope you eliminate crass commercial agents from your future plan for universal non-profit health care. Middle men, bankers, and touts may try to produce a circus atmosphere, but they cannot be permitted to turn illness into profits, while health care workers with hard-won credentials are isolated from suffering patients.

William C. Gibson, FACP, FRCP Canada, MD McGill, D. Phil. Oxford

Please send four more copies. As a former Montrealer, I'm glad to see the misinformation about the Canadian health plan set straight.

It's a shame that the single-payer system has received so little attention here. Unfortunately, so many would rather pay premiums than equivalent or lesser amounts in taxes. So many apparently prefer insurance bureaucracies to government bureaucracy. Don't they know that insurers' administrative costs run about 25 percent while our present single-payer plan operates with administrative costs under four percent?

Bill Falconer, Pittsboro, North Carolina

After meeting a senior editor at one of the major news organizations, Steve Allen sent him a copy of the February\March Jazzletter. Since his letter to Steve is a private one, I am not going to reveal the man's name or position. But it's an important one.

Dear Mr. Allen:

It was a pleasure to meet you . . . . And thanks for the Jazzletter. I happen to be a single payer man myself, although it's not my area. (Our organization) has run a few — not enough — pieces supporting the Canadian system. The problem is that the Clintons don't think it will fly politically. And the lobbies are *buying* Congress on the issue, as you know.

Thanks for passing Lees' stuff along. Best,

Name Withheld

I had long known that the insurance lobby and power-oriented politicians had deceived the American public grievously. Your courage in presenting the research so completely and clearly is admirable.

I took the issue to a career musician because of the concerns musicians have in regard to health insurance, but also because you mentioned the Toronto physician who had used electrodes on a child with spina bifida. Her two-and-a-half-year-old grand-daughter was born with cerebral palsy, which has a similar immature nervous system problem. The child's father phoned the Toronto doctor, they sent him copies of the research involved, and Paola is now sleeping with electrodes in place each night and already showing improvement. The family sends you their thanks.

Janet Kelsey, Kailua, Hawaii

It didn't take courage. It took a publication that is not funded by advertising. More and more I realize how the growth of the communications conglomerates and their alliances with advertisers are incrementally corrupting journalism in all media. The only newspaper I trust is the Christian Science Monitor, which, while always good, improves steadily. It is the best newspaper in America, and one of the best in the world.

And I do indeed plan to deal with other subjects, as Michael Michie (and many, many others) have urged. To deal narrowly with me would bore me and most readers as well.

In Search of Gerry Mulligan
Part I

When I became editor of Down Beat in May, 1959, I had a thousand fears. My professional experience was in newspapers, not magazines. One of the first things I did was to contact Don Gold, my immediate predecessor, who outlined the rudiments of the mechanics of the job. And I contacted Jack Tracy, Don's predecessor, who by now was a producer for Mercury Records.

A journalist learns early to be, or at least seem to be, impressed by no one. It is a working tool, nothing more, although some journalists begin to believe their own affectations.

By then I was a seasoned reporter. I had covered government at all levels. I had been a foreign correspondent, covering the French negotiations with the Viet Minh to get out of the morass of Vietnam (and was concerned that the Americans might be so full of hubris as to send in the Marines where the French Foreign Legion had failed). I had covered labor and management, I had covered fires and murders and murder trials and seen enough horror to last me a lifetime. I had been classical music and drama critic of the Louisville Times. I had interviewed any number of "celebrities", from the prime minister of Canada to the fine actor Larry Parks, one of those whose movie careers had been destroyed by McCarthyism, from Billy Gilbert to Elizabeth Taylor and Mike Todd, from Gregor Piatagorsky to Nat Cole. I knew a goodly portion of the major contemporary classical composers.

But of all the arts I loved (and I loved them all), my deepest love went to jazz. I had been listening to it since before I could remember, and with heightened passion after seeing the Ellington and Lunceford bands when I was about twelve. Benny Carter and Coleman Hawkins were gods to me.

And so I had lunch with Jack Tracy, and asked him a question: "Of all these people, who am I going to have trouble with?"

"Three guys," Jack said. "Buddy Rich, Miles Davis, and Gerry Mulligan." He added that, personally, he liked all three, but all three had prickly temperaments, and you had to accept them as they were, none of them more so than Buddy Rich. Perhaps because Jack had forewarned me, I had trouble with none of them, and indeed became very fond of the three.

And none more so than Gerald Joseph Mulligan.

I was always very aware of the writers. As much as I loved Lester Young and Teddy Wilson and Bunny Berigan, I was very conscious of the arrangers, Eddie Sauter, Edgar Sampson, Frank Comstock, Pete Rugulo, Billy Strayhorn, Jimmy Mundy, Sy Oliver, Ralph Burns. Among the bands I particularly liked were those of Claude Thornhill, Elliot Lawrence, and Gene Krupa. Mulligan wrote for all three.

I saw the Thornhill band in Hamilton, Ontario, where I was born. Its writers included Gil Evans and Gerry Mulligan, and I believe Lee Konitz was then in the band. It is possible that Mulligan was then playing baritone in the band.

The next year, by which time I was a reporter at the Hamilton Spectator, Gene Krupa came to town, playing at the Barton Street Arena. Hockey arenas were common locales for bands. Charlie Kennedy and Buddy Weiss were in the band, young beboppers. One of the pieces the band (probably the best one Krupa ever had) played was something called *Disc Jockey Jump*, and I had bothered to note who wrote it: Gerry Mulligan. That was probably the first time I heard his name.

One of the tenor players in the Krupa band was Mitch Melnick. Mitch was from Hamilton, and somehow or other I found myself at a party at Mitch's mother's home. More to the point, I was sitting on a wooden chair at the table in her kitchen, and seated opposite me was Gene Krupa, one of my gods, talking to me as if I were someone who mattered, even an adult and equal. He actually noticed my existence. I was twenty. Long afterwards, I learned from Mulligan and Bobby Scott and Red Rodney and others that Gene treated everyone that way. He was one of the most loved men in the history of jazz.

Al Porcino was also in the band. He introduced me to the boiler-maker that evening, whiskey in a shot glass lowered into a glass of beer. The drink sneaks up on you, and after of few of them, I left the party wasted.

The next day, remembering my conversation with Gene Krupa, I wrote a story about it and, without knowing anyone there, sent it to Down Beat. It was to be my first published work in that magazine. This would have been in 1949 or 1950.

By then, Mulligan had been one of the principal figures in what became known as the Birth of the Cool, although no one thought of it that way at the time. Miles Davis was the nominal leader on those records, which had a limited sale, but the music really grew out of the Claude Thornhill band. Thornhill wanted a particular sound, and got it: a kind of suspended, floating music, a cloudy and deeply romantic effect that put me in mind of Debussy. He had added two French horns to the band, and although Evans and Mulligan were architects of that sound, the sound itself, both of them told me emphatically, was Thornhill's idea.

With the big-band era essentially ended, despite the brave persistence of a few leaders, some of the now-unemployed veterans of that band found themselves hanging out at an apartment Gil had behind a Chinese laundry on 55th Street near Fifth Avenue in New York, Lee Konitz, Bill Barber, Joe Shulman, and Barry Galbraith among them. Also part of the group were John Lewis, Johnny Carisi, Gene DiNovi, Dave Lambert, Johnny Mandel, and George Russell, who had done some writing for Thornhill. And Charlie Parker.

Mulligan years later told me that the ideal they were seeking was to achieve the effects of the Thornhill band with the minimum possible instrumentation. Nothing might have come of this, except forgotten experiments, had Miles Davis not been yet another member of the group. "Miles, the bandleader," Mulligan wrote in

liner notes to the CD reissue of the album by Capitol. "He took the initiative and put the theories to work. He called the rehearsals, hired the halls, called the players, and generally cracked the whip."

The group was a nonet. John Lewis arranged two of the pieces the group recorded, and Johnny Carisi contributed a composition, *Israel*, which would become one of the best-known of all jazz standards. Mulligan wrote seven of the twelve charts recorded on those 1949 sessions, including an original, *Jeru*, a nickname that had been hung on him. He was the dominant writer.

The records were released as singles, and although they garnered some good reviews, they did not initially create much of a stir. The name *Birth of the Cool* would be attached to them only in a later Capitol reissue on LP.

Thirty-three years later, in early 1992, Mulligan would recreate that album for the GRP label, with John Lewis again on piano but Wallace Roney replacing Miles Davis. When Lee Konitz, unable to make the sessions, learned that Phil Woods was to play his part, he told Gerry, "I think you just invented the Birth of the Hot!"

For my taste, the recreation is the better album, partly because Mulligan has grown as a soloist, partly because Phil Woods lends a vital presence, and partly because I like the way rhythm sections, particularly bass playing, have evolved since the original was made. The tracks are longer. Also, of course, the sound quality is better; the first version was in mono.

The *Birth of the Cool* album was recorded by Capitol on January 21, 1949, April 22, 1949, and March 9, 1950, all in New York City.

Mulligan's interest in the format of those sessions continued, and in January, 1953, in Los Angeles, he recorded an LP made up almost entirely of his own compositions, including *Westwood Walk, Simbah, Walking Shoes, Rocker, A Ballad, Flash*, and *Ontet*. I was becoming very, very conscious of this Gerry Mulligan, thinking he was one of the most important composers in jazz — though who was I to judge? I also thought Nat Cole was one of the most important pianists. I was right about both. I not only loved Mulligan's writing — I soon knew all those charts by memory, and still do — I loved his work as a soloist. He played a sort of rollicking, charming, unpretentious kind of piano, and he produced lovely solos on an instrument usually considered unsuitable for solos: the baritone saxophone, which he played with a light and highly individual tone that is now imitated all over the world.

That ten-inch Mulligan LP was part of the sound-track of my life at that time, along with a ten-inch Nat Cole instrumental LP titled *Penthouse Serenade*. By then I knew from pictures what Mulligan looked like: a tall young man with a brush-cut and a body almost cadaverously thin.

The music from that LP is available on a Capitol CD somewhat disingenuously titled *Birth of the Cool Vol. 2*. Because the original record contained only eight tracks, Capitol filled out the CD with six tracks by Shorty Rogers and two by Miles Davis. Mulligan's music remains as fresh as it was at the time it was recorded.

By then Mulligan had a quartet featuring Chet Baker on trumpet, which played Monday nights at a club called the Haig. The group had made its first recording for Dick Bock's Pacific Jazz label in August of 1952, a little over four months before the tentet record. The group startled critics because it used trumpet, baritone, bass, and drums, but no piano, always considered essential to communicating the harmony of a tune. Much was made of this "odd" instrumentation. It lay not in arcane musical philosophy, however. The Haig's owner could not afford more than four men. Red Norvo had played there with only vibes, guitar, and bass. Mulligan also got along without piano.

The rapport between Baker and Mulligan was remarkable. The emphasis was on counterline, and it seemed to free both horn players for ever more imaginative flights. Michael Cuscuna wr[illegible] in the notes for a CD reissue called *The Best of Gerry Mulligan with Chet Baker*, "The limitation of two voices (and sometimes a third with the bass) seemed to ignite Mulligan's already fertile mind.

"Whether remodeling a standard or introducing an original, Mulligan stretched his limits and came upon a sound that was not only new and stimulating, but also incredibly fascinating and accessible to the general public. Four months after their first recordings for a then eight-week-old label, they were stars beyond the jazz world with full-page features in magazines like Time and choice engagements around the country." Mulligan was then twenty-five.

So much legend has grown up around Chet Baker that his musical brilliance is often overlooked. Baker was a heroin addict. So was Mulligan. Mulligan would eventually break free of it, but Baker would not, leading a strange, bohemian, itinerant existence, hocking his horn from time to time, sometimes without clothes, sometimes even without shoes, surrounded by people who seemed fascinated by the morbidity of his existence. He got his te[illegible] knocked out by dope pushers for failing to pay what he owed them. He spent time in a jail in Italy. A story went around that when he met pianist Romano Mussolini, son of the murdered dictator, he said, "Hey, man, sorry to hear about your old man." The story surely was apocryphal, one of those that grow up in jazz and remain in the repertoire for years, but three years ago I asked Katerina Valente if she knew if there were any truth to it. "It's not only true," she said. "I was *there*. It was at the start of a tour."

Time ravaged Chet Baker. I encountered him only once, when he came into Jim and Andy's bar to beg money, which the musicians willingly gave him. He looked bad. By the end, that clean-cut all-American-boy face was a barren desert landscape of deep lines and gullies. He died from a fall from a hotel in Holland. It is widely believed that he was thrown from the roof by elements of the Dutch underworld, among the roughest in the world, for not paying a dope bill.

Whatever the cause of the death, the legend obscures the talent, and part of that legend is that he was just a natural who couldn't

even read music. Mulligan is adamant in rejecting this.

Much of the music that quartet played was Mulligan's own. Only a few leaders, among them Dave Brubeck, Horace Silver, John Lewis, and Duke Ellington, have devoted their recording careers so extensively to their own compositions. What Baker was called on to do was very complex.

Mulligan told me recently:

"People love to say Chet couldn't read. He could read. It's not a question of whether he couldn't read chords or anything like that. It's that he didn't care. He had one of the quickest connections between mind, hand, and chops that I have ever encountered. He really played by ear, and he could play intricate progressions."

"I presume that in blowing, you're playing by ear too."

"Well at my best I'm playing by ear! But I often am saddled with thinking chords, until I learn a tune. And I have to learn a tune some kind of way. And, really, my connection between my ears and my hands is not that quick. Sure, when I've got a tune firmly under hand — which is different from having it firmly in mind — I'm playing by ear. It's taken me a long time to connect up."

"You said he could do that fast?"

"Yeah. Yes. Oh yeah."

"You'd run a tune by him and he'd get it?"

"Oh yeah. And in any key. He had incredible facility. Remarkable. So it's obvious that at some point in his life, Chet Baker practiced a lot. It's all well and good to be able to do that. You're not born able to do that. You're maybe born with a facility to learn quickly. It's like Charlie Parker. Everybody thinks Charlie came along full-blown, there he was. But as a kid, he was a heavy practicer. And Chet must have been too."

In view of its importance in jazz history, it is surprising to realize that the quartet with Chet Baker lasted only a year. Mulligan was arrested on a narcotics charge and sent to the sheriff's farm for three months, after which he returned to New York, where he established a new quartet with trombonist Bob Brookmeyer instead of Baker. With Jon Eardley on trumpet and Zoot Sims on tenor, the group recorded for Mercury as the Gerry Mulligan Sextet. But the quartet continued, growing constantly better, and it lost none of its momentum when Art Farmer succeeded Brookmeyer. The group (with Bill Crow on bass and Dave Bailey on drums) can be seen at Newport in the pioneering film *Jazz on a Summer's Day*.

And meanwhile, Mulligan made a series of albums for Norman Granz according to a formula Granz found appealing: mixing and matching various pairs of musicians. Mulligan recorded with Thelonious Monk, Stan Getz, Ben Webster (one of his early heroes), Johnny Hodges, and Paul Desmond, a particularly close friend.

When I joined Down Beat, I was well aware of the extent of the heroin epidemic in jazz. Yet the subject was kept hushed. Then Art Pepper got a three-time-loser prison sentence for heroin that infuriated me and I took part in a press campaign to get him out of San Quentin. The campaign eventually succeeded; the laws on drugs struck me, and still do, as idiotic. I finally persuaded the magazine's owner to let me devote an issue to the subject. I did an enormous amount of research on the problem, and, later, I asked many of the former addicts I was coming to know how and why they had quit. Al Cohn told me that an infection from a dirty needle settled into his eye, resulting finally in its surgical incision. "Losing your eye will make you quit," Al said in his sardonic fashion. Zoot Sims told me that he got into a car with a girl he was going with, left New York, and went through withdrawal in motel rooms as he made his way home to California. Howard McGhee told me horror stories of his addicted days.

And, later, when I knew Mulligan well enough, I asked him how he quit. Gerry, not entirely surprisingly, took an intellectual approach to the problem. He met a New York psychiatrist who was interested in the problem of addiction. The psychiatrist said he could lose his license for what he was about to do. He said that he was going to supply Gerry with good syringes and medical morphine, to replace the dirty heroin of the street. At minimum it would remove the danger and dark glamour from the practice. Morphine isn't as strong as heroin, but it's pretty good, as you know if you've ever had it in a hospital.

Gerry was playing a gig in Detroit. At intermission he went into the men's room, and he was inserting his nice clean medical syringe into his nice clean bottle of morphine when he stopped, thinking, "What am I doing to myself?"

He telephoned Joe Glaser, his booking agent, in New York, and told him to get him out of the job on grounds that he was sick. "And I'm going to be," he said. And he simply quit, going through the sweats and shudders and nausea of withdrawal.

I always thought this was a remarkable act of courage. But Gerry said, "What else could I do? It was destroying the thing that means the most in the world to me, my music. I had a reason to quit. Had I been some poor kid in a Harlem doorway with nothing to look forward to even if he does quit, I don't think I could have done it."

It could not have been too long after that that I joined Down Beat and had my memorable conversation with Jack Tracy. I did not foresee that Gerry's life and mine were on convergent courses; or what friends we would be.

I saw him in person for the first time at the Newport Jazz Festival on the Fourth of July weekend of 1960. He had just organized what he called the Concert Jazz Band. In a flurry of publicity, it was to make its debut at Newport. The big-band era was ended. Nobody — well, almost nobody — tried to launch big bands any more. The ballrooms and dance pavilions were gone, or no longer booked bands. *There's a dance pavilion in the rain, all shuttered down*, Johnny Mercer wrote in the lyric he set to Ralph Burns

Early Autumn. A new big band?

But I wanted to hear it: anything Mulligan did seemed likely to be innovative, as indeed that band was. I was backstage in a tent, talking with Dizzy Gillespie, when the first sounds of the band came to us. It was raining torrents. At stage left, the United States Information Agency had set up a shelter, a sloping canvas roof, to protect their television and recording equipment. They were recording the whole festival. The stage was chin high.

The band began to perform Bob Brookmeyer's lyrical arrangement of Django Reinhardt's ballad *Manoir de mes rêves*. In front of the stage, rain danced on a garden of black umbrellas. An imaginative cameraman panned across this audience in the rain, then across the stage, coming to rest on a great puddle, in which an upside down Mulligan was playing an exquisite obligato to the chart, leading into his solo. I was watching both the image and the reality. It was one of the unforgettable musical moments of my life.

I returned to Chicago, where Down Beat was headquartered. The Mulligan band was booked into the Sutherland, a lounge in the Sutherland Hotel on the South Side. It had a largely black audience and booked the finest performers in jazz, black and white alike. Its disadvantage to performers was that they had to play on a high stage in the middle of the racetrack-shaped bar, and a band of thirteen had little room to move.

The group was startlingly fresh. Later Gerry told me he didn't think it was really a concert jazz band; it was a first-rate dance band. But he underestimated it. It was a gorgeous small orchestra, with a sound unlike any other. Gerry told me that he had previously tried to make small groups, such as the sextet, sound like big bands; now he wanted a big band to play with the fleet levity and light textures of a small group. Unfortunately, its book contained little of Mulligan's own writing. He found himself so busy running and booking the band that he didn't have time to write. Much of the burden of the composition and arranging fell on Brookmeyer, one of the most brilliant writers in jazz himself.

Something was going on during that Sutherland gig that none of us knew about.

Gerry was going with and for some time had been in love with actress Judy Holiday, a gentle woman and one of the most gifted comediennes in American theater. She had just undergone a mastectomy. Gerry was playing the Sutherland in the evenings, then catching a red-eye flight to New York, sitting at her bedside as much of the day as he could, then getting an afternoon flight back to Chicago to work. He must have done all of his sleeping on the plane, and if he was drained and short-tempered at the time, it is hardly a wonder.

Some time during that week, I went upstairs with Bob Brookmeyer for a drink in the "band room", a suite of two or three rooms assigned by the hotel. Mulligan was in a bedroom with bassist Buddy Clark, whom I also knew by then, and they were in the midst of a heated exchange. Buddy shouted, "I'm getting sick of it! I'm tired of pulling this whole goddamn band by myself!" And Mulligan told him he wasn't pulling it by himself; he was getting plenty of help, and who the hell did he think he was? "I felt badly about that," Gerry told me some time later. "I didn't know Buddy was sick." Neither did anyone else, including Buddy. He had a rectal problem for which he later underwent surgery, and, he told me, his discomfort had made him very short-tempered. He regretted the incident as much as Gerry did. Buddy, with Med Flory, founded Supersax and wrote its first arrangements out of Charlie Parker solos. He died of cancer.

Mulligan, whose hair in those days was reddish blond, came out of the bedroom and stopped in his tracks seeing me, a stranger, in the band's midst.

"Who are you?" he said harshly.

I told him.

"Oh God," he said, "that's all I need: press."

"You don't think I'd write anything about this, do you?" I said. And I never did, until now.

Mulligan stormed out, and the band played its next set.

I do not recall where next I encountered him, but by then everyone in the profession was crossing my path. By the time I moved to New York in July, 1962, I knew him fairly well.

By then his influence, and through him that of Claude Thornhill and Gil Evans, had spread around the world. He had been a considerable influence on the development of the bossa nova movement in Brazil, for example, and that is aside from all the baritone players on the planet whose sound resembled his.

There is no questioning this influence of Mulligan on Brazilian music. I had just returned from a tour of South America, and in Rio de Janeiro had met Joao Gilberto and Antonio Carlos Jobim, both virtually unknown in North America, except to a few musicians such as Bob Brookmeyer, Zoot Sims, and particularly Dizzy Gillespie, always aware of developments in Latin American music. It was said that the album made by Bud Shank and Laurindo Almeida called *Brazilliance* had also exerted an influence, but American critics tended to deny this, probably on the Politically Correct grounds that West Coast jazz was unimportant, and even Bud Shank said to me once, "The Brazilians didn't need me." But Bud (who incidentally played alto on the Mulligan tentet album) was wrong. Claudio Roditi, the superb Brazilian trumpeter, told me that in the period of bossa nova's development, almost the only jazz records available in Brazil were those on Dick Bock's Pacific label. The Shank-Almeida album, he said, was indeed an influence. But the major influence, according to Gilberto and Jobim, was Mulligan, and the influence on Gilberto's singing was that of a French Caribbean singer — from Martinique, I believe — named Henri Salvador, whose work I knew and loved.

Jobim told me that part of the ideal of the bossa nova movement was to achieve acoustical rather than electronic balances in the music, one of the keys to Mulligan's thinking. Jobim told me at the time, "The authentic Negro samba is very primitive. They

use maybe ten percussion instruments and the music is very hot and wonderful. But bossa nova is cool and contained. It tells the story, trying to be simple and serious and lyrical. Joao and I felt that Brazilian music until now had been too much a storm on the sea, and we wanted to calm it down for the recording studio. You could call bossa nova a clean, washed samba, without loss of the momentum. We don't want to lose important things. We have the problem of how to write and not lose the swing."

Jobim came to New York that autumn for a Carnegie Hall concert of Brazilian musicians and, backstage, Gerry became one of the first American musicians I introduced him to. We were often together after that. Jobim's song *O Insensatez* begins with the chord changes of the Chopin *E-minor Prelude* and, as a send-up of Jobim, Mulligan recorded the prelude as a samba. Jobim and Mulligan remain friends to this day, and Gerry sees him whenever he goes to Rio de Janeiro.

All this time Gerry was going with Judy Holiday. He was not, as everyone seemed to think, living with her. She lived in the Dakota, on West 72nd Street at Central Park West, and he lived a block away. I wrote about their relationship extensively in a 1977 Jazzletter, in an essay called *The Last Days of Juniors*.

I saw even more of Gerry after Judy died. We both lived on the West Side, and, aside from Jim and Andy's downtown, we had two or three favorite restaurants in the area of Broadway and the west 70s and 80s, halfway between his apartment and mine, which was on West 86th. A lot of my lyrics, including those written for Jobim tunes, had been recorded by then.

Gerry loved theater, and we thought we should try to write a show together. We looked for an appropriate subject, and one of us came up with the idea of the relationship between Diamond Jim Brady and Lillian Russell. I learned that Brady's house had stood approximately across the street from my apartment, on the north side of West 86th a few doors in from Central Park. It had long since been replaced by an apartment building.

One of my happier memories is of that period when Gerry and ran around to libraries and pored over books, absorbing the life of Diamond Jim, getting inside his mind, acquiring a feel for the New York of his time. We sketched out a script, and I think it was a good one. We wrote some songs. Gerry arranged a meeting with Hal Prince. The receptionist said, "Are you *the* Gerry Mulligan?"

And Gerry said, "I'm the only one I know."

She showed us in to see Hal Prince. And Hal Prince told us that a Diamond Jim Brady project was already under way, with Jackie Gleason set to play Brady and Lucille Ball as Lillian Russell.

We left Hal Prince's office feeling empty, and no doubt stopped somewhere for a drink. Gleason and Ball would be perfect casting. All our excitement had been killed in an instant, and I suppose Gerry thought, as I did, of all our work being left to molder in a drawer. This would be the second disappointment of that kind for him. He and Judy Holiday, who was a gifted lyricist, had written a musical based on the Anita Loos play *Happy Birthday*. And although the songs were superb, Gerry had never been able to get anyone interested. One producer told him it could not succeed because the setting was an Irish bar. And, he said, "The Irish go to bars. Jews go to theater."

Gerry and I abandoned our Diamond Jim project. The show with Gleason and Ball was never made; it vanished into that limbo of unfulfilled Broadway projects.

One night Gerry and I went to see Stephen Sondheim's *Company*. Later we went to the Ginger Man for drinks and a late dinner. "I hate him," Gerry said. I said, "Me too." For Sondheim had done both music and lyrics, and both were brilliant. Gerry recently laughed and said, when I recalled that night, "I've been trying to hate him for years and can't. He's too good." I doubt that Sondheim has two more ardent admirers than Gerry Mulligan and me. Recently I listened to *Company* on CD. It remains, for my taste, the most ingenious Broadway musical ever written.

One night in Jim and Andy's, Gerry said he had tickets for a new play and asked if I wanted to go with him. We ran down 48th Street to get to the theater by curtain time. We saw Jason Robards in *A Thousand Clowns*. The co-star was a young actress named Sandy Dennis. She and Gerry would be together for years, and then separated. Sandy is now dead, like Judy, of cancer.

Being of English origin, I had for some time been noticing the scarcity of WASP English influence or even presence in American music, particularly jazz. Once, over dinner, I said, "Mulligan, you and I must be the only WASPs in the music business."

And, laughing, he said, "Speak for yourself, I'm an Irish Catholic."

Because he was not actively so, I asked him if he felt himself to be Catholic. He thought for a minute and said, "No. But I do feel Irish."

All this led to a series of observations on the ethnic origins of the Europeans in American jazz and popular music. Irish, Scottish, Welsh, yes; Polish, German, Jewish, Russian, just about any nationality you could mention. But very few English. Even those who bore "English" names, such as Joe Farrell, Louis Bellson, Eddie Lang, Will Bradley, and Glen Gray, had changed them to escape the prejudices of America.

Gerry and I used to talk about this, and it was during one such discussion that we discovered we had arrived independently at the same conclusion: white American jazz musicians tend to reflect their ethnic origins in the style of their playing. And although this is not a universal verity, it often will be found to be true. Gerry told me that once, when he and Judy were listening to Zoot Sims, who was Irish, she said, "There he goes again — playing that Barry Fitzgerald tenor." And she imitated Fitzgerald's laughter, Ah-ha-ha-ha-ha, on a falling melodic line. It is a remarkably perceptive insight. But, even more to the point, listening to Gerry on a taped interview, I once heard him say something with the exact, momentarily falsetto, inflection of Barry Fitzgerald. And one

part of Gerry's family came to America nearly a hundred and fifty years ago.

But speech patterns persist for long, long periods, and the accent of Normandy still echoes the speech of the Viking conquerors who settled there a thousand years ago, and is in turn the source of the French Canadian accent. Perhaps the speech of Marseille descends from the Phoenicians. You will hear subtly Swedish inflections in Minnesota, even in those whose people have been there a long time. In California, you'll hear Mexican rhythms and consonants in persons whose grandparents came from Mexico, and I once encountered a California girl with a New York City accent who had never seen the city; but her parents were from New York. New York-area Italians, such as Frank Sinatra and the late Richard Conte, dentalize t's and d's, and I don't know why. But that sound has persisted for generations.

I hear, I am certain, an Irish quality in Mulligan's playing and writing. It couples whimsy with melancholy, sadness with exuberance, it is at once lyrical and witty, and it is above all eloquent. I find that all very Irish.

Gerry's writing hardly stopped in the 1960s. He put together another big band and toured with it. Of late he has led a quartet *with* piano. He has continued to write for all manner of formations, including full symphony orchestra. An album on the Par label called *Symphonic Dreams* was recorded in 1987 by the Houston Symphony under Erich Kunzel. One of my favorite of Gerry's albums is *The Age of Steam* on the A&M label. Like the late Glenn Gould, Gerry seems to have a fascination with trains. His Christmas cards usually show one of the big old steam trains, often in a winter setting.

Proust points out somewhere in *Swann's Way* that fictional characters are transparent while the persons we know in life are opaque. Even those we know well are mysteries. We are mysteries even to ourselves.

So who is Gerry Mulligan? Where did he come from? Why does he love the old trains?

(To be continued)

One for the Road

"How tall are you, Hank?" I once asked him.

"Six one," he said, then with an impish grin: "Six two when I've got a hit."

That was so like him, modest and self-mocking. On another occasion, when he'd been playing piano, he said, "Well, there goes my one Art Tatum run."

He was in fact a good pianist. But it was as a composer that Henry Mancini left his mark on the twentieth century. He revolutionized movie scoring. Until Mancini, movie music was almost entirely derived from European classical music. Except for an occasional alto saxophone solo to make the point that the hip-switching girl in the tight dress was, in my grandmother's phrase, "no better than she should be," jazz was not used. Mancini proved that it was an expressive language capable of all the emotional nuances of classical music.

Not that he thought of himself as a jazz musician. But he loved jazz, and its influence was all through his writing, particularly his first big break-through television series, *Peter Gunn*. Gunn was a private detective who hung out in a joint called Mother's, where a little jazz group played. The jazz element was written into the story. The show was a hit, and Mancini's music so caught the public imagination that RCA Records issued an album of it, album that immediately shot to the top of the charts.

When he came to Chicago (probably in 1959), I interviewed him. Thus I knew him for thirty-five years.

Hank grew up in a little river-valley town called West Aliquippa, a few miles from Pittsburgh. It is a dead community now, the steel mills that fed it long closed. Seven or eight years ago, as I was helping him write his autobiography, *Did They Mention the Music?*, I went along when he was conducting the Pittsburgh Symphony. We visited his home town, fallen into ruins, including the house where he grew up. A solitary cat walked the grass-grown cobblestoned street. I took a photo of him sitting on the sagging steps of that dying house. It was a sad homecoming.

Hank's father, an Italian immigrant, helped him study at the Juilliard School of Music. Then in World War II Hank went into the army. After the war he became the pianist and arranger for the Glenn Miller band led by Tex Benecke. There he met Ginny O'Connor, a half Irish, half Mexican singer with the band. They married. A weakness of the autobiography is that Hank did not tell what a great love story theirs has been. One of the things I ad about Ginny is that, though Hank's incredible income helped make her the queen of Beverly Hills society — and I assure you, she is — she never forgets how she once had to save pennies to go to a Saturday movie to escape for a few hours from her poverty. Then, too, he didn't tell the reader what an important composer he was. Sometimes I got the impression that he didn't really know. It was Ginny who pressed him to settle in California and write film scores.

Hank was an extraordinary melodist. There are many educated composers who cannot write melody. Melody poured from Hank. *Moon River. Days of Wine and Roses*. And my favorite (and his own) of all his film scores, *Two for the Road.*

Hank was generous to other musicians, and with his money. He funded quite a number of scholarship funds, and he contributed enormously to charities.

I spoke to him on the phone a few weeks before he died. He was realistic about his condition, suffering from liver and pancreatic cancer. "I've had a very good life," he said.

That didn't help me when I got the news that he was gone.

Great musician, yes. But more.

He was a hell of a nice guy.