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Jazzletter

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Other Voices

Your mention of Ferde Grofé recalled an almost-forgotten incident. It also gives me the opportunity to tell you who I am.

During the late '40s, when I was playing piano and organ around Los Angeles, I was surprised when Mr. Grofé approached me one evening and complimented my playing. He told me about a new compositions he was writing (I think it was *Atlantic Crossing*, but my memory is somewhat hazy on that point) and he said he would appreciate having someone who understood the organ to assist him. I quickly explained to him that I had no formal musical training and that I was an exceedingly poor reader. I suggested that he talk to one of the many well-trained organists then playing in Los Angeles. He persisted, saying that he felt sure I could be of assistance to him. Somewhat reluctantly, I agreed to come to his home and discuss the matter.

I arrived at Grofé's door and was shown into a beautiful large room containing an electric organ. He placed a complex score on the music rack and asked me to play the section he indicated. As my face reddened, I desperately tried to make sense of his handwritten notation, but was clearly over my head. Though he tried to show me, I was forced to remind him that, as I had told him at the outset, I just couldn't read well enough. I'm quite sure that I couldn't have hacked it if it had been printed! He seemed to find it incomprehensible that I could play as I did without being a better reader. I again apologized and told him how honored I had been that he had asked me, and took my leave.

Though I still find it hard to understand why he had insisted on my coming, just meeting and spending a short time with the great man remains a pleasant memory.

I knew of his arranging for Whiteman — *Rhapsody in Blue* in particular — but I had no idea that his was the first form of the "big band" until I read your article. He was quite the man. I still love the *Grand Canyon Suite* and never fail to hear "Call for Philip Morris!" when *On the Trail* commences, as I presume all who are my age do in remembering that famous use of his music on the radio.

My only other near-miss with greatness occurred when Celeste Holm asked me, after I had accompanied her on piano during an Art Linkletter *House Party* radio broadcast — I played on that show for a couple of years — if I would be interested in assisting her during that summer (1950) in selecting and writing material for her appearance in New York in the fall. I was quite eager, of course, and spent many pleasant days in her home, working with her and a very clever lady whose name, I believe, was Dora Maugham, the idea person and lyric writer under Ms. Holm's careful supervision. I supplied the music. It was a fun time, and a great experience — until that fateful day when a registered letter arrived, summoning me back to active duty with the Army. I was a reserve Army first lieutenant at the time. You can imagine how devastated I was at the interruption in what I perceived to be my big chance! So, instead of going to New York with Celeste Holm that fall, I went to Korea with the others who were called back at the outbreak of the Korean War.

During the war I continued to think that when I got out I would be able to go back and have a career in music. But the cold fact of my lack of musical education convinced me that it was just a dream. After all, the only real creative accomplishments in music I had, other than the summer working with Holm, were one song written with Bobby Troup and another with Johnny Richards; — neither song went anywhere — and a setting of Houseman's *When I Was One and Twenty*, which I wrote and Dennis Day recorded and sang on the Jack Benny show. I elected instead to stay in the Army, and retired as a full colonel at the age of 49, with credit for over 30 years service. Fortunately, in retirement I have been able to play and compose for the Bohemian Club in San Francisco, and that has filled my musical needs quite well. I have no regrets; just a lot of fond memories.

I want to thank you for providing such interesting and thought-provoking reading in each issue of the Jazzletter. It not only keeps me in touch with the world of music then and now but addresses so many social issues of importance. I find that I am almost always in agreement with your points of few and take exception when some misguided reader resents your having strayed from the world of jazz. Though I fret when the publication is late, I am always amply rewarded when the issues arrive. Your beautifully crafted pieces mean a lot to *most* readers, especially this one.

Earl McCandless, Solana Beach, California

From time to time — after reading the Jazzletter or hearing you perform at the Knickerbocker grill in New York — I'm tempted to write to you and share some thoughts.

Volume 16, No. 4, about Helen Keane, opened a can of memories for me. Incredibly poignant, sad, happy, and full of "my" New York. Oh the stories I could tell, including some Bill Evans ones. When reading about your experiences in the jazz scene of N.Y. at that particular point, I want to step into a time machine and run like hell, back to Charlie's bar or Jim and Andy's and hear stories about Prez; watch Cecil Taylor saunter out of the union meetings, all hung up with his camera case and God knows what else, heading down the pike to Charlie's with Jim Gannon (bassist supreme and Pal) bringing up the rear, on his way to Chicago to join Woody Herman's herd with my hard-earned fifty bucks.

I'm one of the lucky ones, escaping unhurt from drugs and other demons. Some of the good-guy musicians (unlike Getz) helped me make it through many nights of gigs, unwasted. That was my school, the real school, as I view it now in retrospect.

Thank you for all the wonderful memories you help to conjure for me. You are truly a literary jazz Piped Piper.

I look forward to hearing and seeing you soon again. Maybe a return to the Knickerbocker?

Eve Short Braytenbah, Bucks County, Pennsylvania

Shiny Black Piano

There is a long room.
Many windows line one side —
The tables are set —
White linen, silver and sparkling goblets.

It is snowing outside —
Still, very still.
A few people are dining at the end of the long room —
The bar is empty.
At the entrance of the room sits a dark, shiny grand piano.

I have just finished playing a set of one hour and fifteen minutes.
No one knows it.
I am sitting quietly crying,
Waiting to play again, the dark shiny piano.

Eve Short, February 1997.

In September, I am going to record in New York an album of all the songs I wrote with Jobim, with Mike Renzi on piano and (if our schedules work out) Harry Allen on tenor, a sort of Getz-Gilberto revisited. I'll be doing two nights at Knickerbocker right before this, Monday and Tuesday, September 22 and 23. Knickerbocker's phone number is 212 228-8490.

I just finished your book *Meet Me at Jim and Andy's* and I wanted to tell you how much I loved it. I am 17 years old and have been involved with music since I was 4, playing the violin and more recently the oboe. Now I almost play guitar and am fascinated with absorbing anything I hear (or read) about jazz. The reason I say "almost" is because even though I have put an amazing amount of time into it already, I have only been playing guitar for 6 months.

The book has so much information about jazz and the people who made and played it that I am going to read it again before I return it to the library. You made the people come alive through your stories, and even though I am a musician and would understand those terms better than the average public, you took no assumptions about things or people. You talked about everyone like you knew them, and it's magical.

Karen Pogorzelski, North Tonawanda, New York

The Death of Glenn Miller

No doubt you saw the recent story, carried in *The New York Daily News* and other papers:

"BONN — A German newspaper said yesterday that Glenn Miller died of a heart attack in the arms of a French prostitute in 1944 and not, as officially reported, in a plane crash.

"The Bild newspaper alleged that the famed trombonist and exponent of the big band swing sound, who was portrayed by Jimmy Stewart in a film biography, met his death in a Paris brothel.

"It said the secret of how he died was discovered by German journalist Udo Ulfkotte in U.S. Secret Service files while doing research for a book on Germany's BND intelligence agency.

"Bild quoted Ulfkotte as saying the secret was a typical example of wartime misinformation and that the true cause of Miller's death was concealed to keep his legend alive and protect the morale of U.S. troops."

U.S. troop morale would be shattered by this? And what difference would it have made? The war was almost over anyway.

The story said: "Official reports said his plane vanished over the English Channel in December 1944. But Bild said that the wreck of Miller's plane was found off the French coast in 1985, and that there were no signs of a crash or human remains."

I see. The British and the Americans, having just heard that Miller died in a bordello, carefully loaded a Norduyn Norseman, built in Montreal, aboard a barge and towed it out into the channel and slipped it carefully over the side so that it sank to the bottom unharmed. All for the sake of a coverup. And just to make sure that no one gave away the conspiracy, they killed the two officers who were in the plane with Miller. Well, no, they wouldn't have gone that far. They would simply have paid them off to abandon their families and go into permanent hiding.

Several things about the story bothered me. One of them is what it tells us about the decline of journalism. I was bothered when *The New York Times* carried on its front page a report on Kitty Kelley's book on Nancy Reagan. Not that I hold any brief for Mrs. Reagan. But that the newspaper would repeat unquestioned some of the scandal of the book as if it were news told us all something about the *Times* itself. So too the Miller story, which was carried, among other places, under a two-column head in the *New York Daily News*. Nor did anyone on the paper see fit to ask the obvious question: what happened to the other two men, Flying Officer John Morgan, the pilot, and Colonel Norman Baessell? In my newspaper days, a city editor would have ordered one of his reporters to get on the telephone and check the story for credibility, not print it unquestioned, as *The Daily News* did.

Any number of planes disappeared over the English channel during the war. I lost one of my high-school friends that way: his plane just disappeared. The best guess about the Miller case came a few years ago from a South African bombardier with the RAF. As you probably know, there were standing orders that when Allied aircraft could not, for whatever reason (such as weather), drop their bombs, they were *not* to bring them back to England, because of the danger of their exploding on the jolt of landing. Aircrews were under orders to jettison them over the Channel.

The South African bombardier said there was a sudden break in the cloud cover in the moment after he dropped his bombs, and

he saw a high-wing monoplane below, probably that Norseman. The English pilot of his plane a few years ago confirmed the story.

Miller was an enigmatic figure. He could be cold, which is how the late Ray McKinley described him to me, but gentle and warm, as others have said. It carries some weight with me that Woody Herman considered him a friend.

Incidentally, in the movie "biography" of Miller, when his plane is lost, June Allyson, as Helen Miller, is sitting by the radio as it carries from Paris a "new" arrangement for the band of her favorite song, *Little Brown Jug*, written by Major Miller. Bill Finegan wrote that chart, and before the war at that.

Adding to the cruelty of that story about Miller dying in a bordello is that his two adopted children are still alive. It is perhaps a mercy that his wife isn't.

Greenwood Lake

I recently received a letter, and a poem, that shook me, for reasons you will shortly see. Both were further to the subject of Bill Rubenstein, whom I mentioned briefly in the May issue. I'd like to tell you more about him now.

Bill was an outstanding pianist, rather in the Bill Evans manner. The two Bills were friends. I think Billy Rubenstein arrived at his way of playing on his own; he and Bill were going in parallel directions, that's all. Exquisite classical tone, a more advanced twentieth century keyboard harmony, beautiful phrasing were all there to be discovered.

When I became editor of *Down Beat* in May of 1959, I had my face shoved in the drug problems of jazz whether I wanted it or not. First of all, Art Pepper was sent to prison in California for drug possession. It was his third bust and they were going to leave him there forever. I wrote some editorials attacking the laws in California.

And then I ran into the cabaret-card issue of New York City.

This was a ridiculous law according to which anyone who wanted to work where liquor was sold had to get a special card, the so-called cabaret card. This included waiters, waitresses, busboys, cashiers — and musicians. The card required police approval, and the process could only be described as insane. Well, also viciously unjust.

Anyone who had had any sort of a brush with the law was highly unlikely to get a card. And that meant some brilliant musicians were not allowed to work NYC clubs. Two of the victims of this system were J.J. Johnson and Bill Rubenstein. Rubenstein's was merely a pot bust, for which he had done time.

A lawyer named Maxwell T. Cohen went to war against this system, and I wrote editorials supporting him and particularly supporting J.J. Johnson and Bill Rubenstein, neither of whom I then knew personally. I forget a lot of the details now, but Max Cohen and I became friends and he paid me one of the highest compliments of my whole life. He said I was "the conscience of the music business." I don't know that I deserved it, but it was good to hear. And to the extent that it was true, it was out of a reflexive, almost helpless, intolerance of the wrong, coupled with a dogged wish to figure out what that was.

It has been said that I had a lot to do with getting the cabaret cards abolished, but that is untrue, except to the extent that Max Cohen was able to quote my writings in his battle against the system. Max Cohen, more than anyone else, got the system thrown out, and I have always admired him for it. When the lawyer jokes go flying by, I think of some people I've known like Max Cohen.

The communication that follows, if you are to understand why it upset me, requires some further amplification.

I met Bill Rubenstein in Los Angeles. I had never been there before. I had become friends — and I mean *close* friends — on the telephone with John A. Tynan, whose J.A.T. byline will be remembered by older readers of *Down Beat*. Jack, or Jake, as we who knew him well called him, was the magazine's west coast editor. He was such a thoroughly professional journalist that he became my right hand at the magazine. Jack ended up writing television news at ABC in Hollywood; he retired just a couple of years ago.

I asked Jack to rent me a car, having been warned that I could not get around Los Angeles without one. Jack — whom, remember, I had come to know only on the telephone — awaited me at the airport in company with composer Dave Axelrod, at that time a producer for Capitol Records. The car they had rented was a white Cadillac convertible. They laughed as they handed me the keys, saying they had picked it out so that I would not be conspicuous driving in Beverly Hills. Joke aside, I soon discovered the strange sensual pleasure of driving a convertible with the top down on a chill night with the heater on. It was September.

Two festivals had occurred simultaneously: that at Monterey and one in Los Angeles. Jack covered the one in Los Angeles, I covered Monterey. We wrote our pieces in the *Down Beat* office on Salina Street, in downtown Hollywood. Now, having worked on rewrite desks at newspapers and wire services, I considered myself fast. Really fast. I never met a reporter who could write faster until that encounter with Tynan. He was a veteran of one of the Hearst newspapers, and thus that rare thing in jazz: a writer with newspaper background, and therefore the discipline to separate fact from opinion. At that time I considered Jack the best writer in the field. He finished his report a good half hour ahead of me. We filed our copy to Chicago, and Jack introduced me in the days that followed to the music world of Los Angeles. I made at that time some friendships that endure to this day and others, like that with Bill Rubenstein, that ended only with death.

Jack and I went to hear Carmen McRae at some club or another. He introduced me to her, and to Bill, her accompanist. Bill might not be able to work in New York, but he could work on the road. For some reason we became immediate and fast friends.

There were qualities in Bill that drew me immediately. Some sort of strong softness, some kind of kindness, a sympathy toward others. He was also, of course, a superb musician. I stayed in Los Angeles about a week, and I remember Bill and me, and sometimes Tynan, tooling around town in that stupid huge Cadillac. There were jazz clubs everywhere in L.A. in those days, and we saw a lot of people.

The two-volume *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, published in 1988 by Macmillan, has no mention whatever of Bill Rubenstein, which puts him in a large and distinguished company. Peggy Lee is one of more than 100 serious omissions Leonard Feather and I counted in that book. Leonard's own 1960 *Encyclopedia of Jazz* contains this entry:

Rubenstein, Beril William (Bill), *piano;* b. Rochester, N.Y., 11/2/28. Mother pl. piano in sheet music dept. of 5 & 10 cent store. Studied w. private teachers 1933-43 in Syracuse. Joined Syracuse local in '43 and pl. w. dance band around town. Grad. Syracuse U. '51 w. Bach. of music, major in Composition. Pl. w. Ray Anthony, Feb '47-May '47; Buddy Rich, June-Sept. '52;; Salt City Five, Nov. '53-Mar. '57; Kai Winding, Sept. '57-July '59; Chris Connor from Aug. 59. Fav. Art Tatum; most imp. infls: Parker, Gillespie, Davis, Rollins, Young, the Basie band. Address 116 Ferris Ave., Syracuse 3, N.Y.

The period with Carmen came after the book went to press.

Bill's survival with Carmen will tell you something about the quality of his playing. Carmen was notoriously rough to work for. A superb musician herself, she was *not* one of the girl singers of musicians' jokes. Feisty, tough, utterly uncompromising, she was intolerant of anything but the finest musicianship. Some years later, I was about to do a vocal gig, and we needed a drummer. Oscar Castro-Neves, the great Brazilian guitarist and composer, who was working with me, said one of the best drummers in North America for Brazilian music was Joey Baron. At the time I had never heard him, and I asked Oscar about his background. He said Joey had spent a long time on the road with Carmen McRae. I said, "Call him!" (Oscar was right; Joey Baron is a magnificent drummer and percussionist, too little known.)

And Bill Rubenstein got along beautifully with Carmen. That alone will tell you how good his playing was.

I returned to Chicago, Bill to New York. I pounded at the New York City government on the cabaret-card issue, particularly defending Bill Rubenstein and J.J. Johnson.

In early 1962, as I have previously mentioned, I went to South America, and in Rio de Janeiro met Antonio Carlos Jobim and wrote my first lyrics to his music. I got back to New York in July, and called friends, among the first of them Art Farmer and Bill Rubenstein. Bill invited me to stay with him and his wife in their little apartment on Grove Street in the village, until I found a place of my own. All his kindness and generosity were manifest; I had no idea that he was strung out on heroin.

Bill liked cats, and had taken in a tiny kitten. I slept on a fold-out sofa in the living room. One morning Bill, folding it away, suddenly realized the kitten was caught in its mechanism. The little creature was killed; Bill was shaken. All his sensitivity was manifest in his grief over that little animal. I remember my sense of shock at the fragility of life, more intense at that moment than at any of the murders and suicides and plane crashes and fires I had covered as a newspaper reporter.

As I mentioned a couple of issues ago, Bill's friend and mine, the bassist Hal Gaylor, lived northwest of New York at Greenwood Lake, where his wife Evelyn's father owned a German-style hotel called the Linden House. Hal used to present jazz there on weekends. Bill and I would go up there for weekends, and make a little music. I remember that once, when Bill didn't go, my accompanist was Dave Frishberg. Indeed, that's where I first met Dave. I had no idea of the wit and poignancy of the songs that ran in his head, as yet unborn. Just a good piano player, that's all I knew about him.

Hal's wife Evelyn became one of my closest friends in the world. There was, and remains, something special in the relationship, as if she were my blood relative. We would confide in each other, nothing powerful or significant, just subtleties of feeling, knowing somehow that we would be understood. I felt brotherly and protective toward her; she seemed bossy and sisterly with me. And her dicta were usually right on the money. We speculated that the relationship was rooted in the fact that we were both Aquarians. But there have been plenty of Aquarians I didn't like, among them Stan Getz. I don't particularly believe in astrology, but then I don't casually reject it, either, having long ago come to feel that the unexamined dismissal of the inexplicable is fully as superstitious as its reflexive acceptance.

I had known Hal Gaylor from my days in Montreal as a young newspaper reporter. Leonard's encyclopedia noted:

Gaylor, Harold Walden (Hal), *bass*, b. Montreal, Can., 7/9/29. Father and sister musicians; began pl. clar. in school and in Royal Canadian Navy band. Stud. bass at McGill Cons. 1949 and began pl. prof. jobs. Won first place on TV shows over CBC '56; w. Chico Hamilton '57-58; joined Kai Winding Sept. '58. Fav: Ray Brown. LPs w. John Pisano, Billy Bean, Fred Katz (Decca); Chico Hamilton (Wor. Pac.).

Address: Linden House, Greenwood Lake, N.Y.

By then, however, Hal was with Tony Bennett, a member of the accompanying trio that included Ralph Sharon on piano and Billy Exiner on drums. I should add that the school he attended was Montreal High, whose alumni include Maynard Ferguson and Oscar Peterson. He and Oscar Peterson were friends even then. Hal always remembered listening to records at Oscar's house. One day Oscar drew his attention to a bass player, saying his name was Ray

Brown. "Some day I'm going to have a trio," Oscar said. "And he's going to be my bass player."

It was Ray's playing that really turned Hal away from clarinet to bass.

Hal was working the jazz clubs of Montreal when I knew him. One of his friends was pianist Paul Bley. I moved to the U.S. in 1955, and Hal followed not long afterwards.

I have good memories of those times at Greenwood Lake with Hal, and Evelyn, and their friends and mine.

Hal had a secret ambition to be an architect, and put in extensive study of the subject. He designed and built a house on a mountain top between Greenwood Lake and Warwick, New York, in lake country. It had the feeling of Frank Lloyd Wright. It curved around a sunken lawn. When I was working on my Lerner and Loewe biography in the winter of 1988, Hal and Evelyn rented me a room at one end of that house. On many mornings I would go out and stand by the road in the cold and wait for the bus to Manhattan, spend hours at the New York Public Library's music branch at Lincoln Center, lost in research, then bus it back to Greenwood Lake. We had quiet good times together, Hal and Evelyn and me. Hal was long past his heroin habit, and indeed working as a state-certified drug counselor.

It is against this background that you will understand why the following letter and the poem that accompanied it left me somewhat bent out of shape. I think it says much about jazz and the camaraderie of those who make it.

Bill Rubenstein had a quirk — a good quirk. He, like other pianists, was perpetually bugged at bad nightclub pianos. But Bill did something about it. He learned to tune pianos, and always carried a tuning hammer and the little black-rubber stoppers. At times it seemed he couldn't look at a piano without pausing to tune it. Modest to a fault, Bill was a better musician than he knew.

I had forgotten that Bill died not of dope itself, but of cancer, and this led me to reflect on what I suspect is a very deep disproportion of cancer deaths among jazz musicians. I have mused on the effect of smoking, pondering that even those who didn't smoke cigarettes (and there were very few who didn't) were exposed to smoke in great density in the nightclubs in which they worked. But then I have had to note that cancer in one form or another has taken the lives of many of my friends and acquaintances among jazz musicians who got into heroin, sometimes long after they had given it up. Gerry Mulligan and Al Cohn, for example.

The letter reads:

After reading that bit in the Jazzletter about when you stayed at Bill Rubenstein's, I thought of a poem I wrote a couple of years ago. I met you at Bill's. I was dropping in on Bill, and there you were, typing — what else? Bill, Hal Gaylor, and I had a good (great) trio for a while. Your Jazzletters warm my heart like nothing else, except the music.

Gerry Tomlinson, Manlius, New York

Gerry's poem follows.

Whenever I Pass Ferris (116) Avenue I Always Say B-I-L-L-Y

Do you remember Don Jose's where
we met one night (in '48)
Novelo introduced us, we played
and really swung!
You lived 'way up in Syracuse where
Bobby went to school. He brought you
down to visit once I saw you shooting pool
(from my house next door)

Then Bobby called from Syracuse to offer
me a gig. I had a wife and six month
child and said, "I've got to work!"

You helped me move — Park Avenue
(that house has long been gone) FLAMINGO, ANDY'S INN.

That was a long year in Jamesville Pen
for such a little weed.

The day you got out we gathered
at your house. We played and played and
laughed and played: how good to have you home.
Arnie, Stewie, Josh, Fats, Walt, Leo, Al Fink.

Then Andre's Tic-Tac Club, supreme — Kamels
(You too, John, when I pass your street)
Walt, you and me. Good band, man!

Back to the Apple, my divorce, your marriage!
49 Grove Street and drugs and more drugs!
We didn't cross paths too often then, not as
often as before.
I was doing very poorly, living here and
there.
Until I got a call from Kai — you
recommended me.

Those years with Kai, Jim Gannon, DeHaas,
Hal Gaylor — we had some great rhythm
sections!

We co-led the band at the Banker's
Club in North Bergen, N.J. Each Wed. we
got a headliner: Sonny Rollins, Illinois
Jacquet, Herbie Mann, Teddy Kotick on bass.
Alas! I couldn't get Prez, we had

only a $70 budget and Prez wanted $100, remember?
(We had Prez on the card but he
wanted a yard.)

In nineteen sixty-one Hal Gaylor and we
got together with Lenny and O.P.
The Vanguard's rare three-act presentation.
We were the third group on that bill
and we had a terrific trio.
How we mimicked Lenny B!

Everybody seemed to be saying, O.P., O.P., O.P.
I said I'll take Bill Evans. Whereon you
said as a piano player O.P. was unique *not*
as an original musician.

Soon after '63 we seldom met.
I remember hearing you were bar-tending at
the DOM. I went over to see you and thought
why are you tending bar when you could play better than who was performing there. Oyvay!
(I forgot about those times at Gaylor's — up
at Greenwood Lake. Do you remember me
falling asleep at the supper table?)

I can't remember how I heard that
you had cancer — Must have been Myril
or Stew. You phoned to say you were
coming through our country on your way to
that hospital in Buffalo. You tuned my piano
('75?) and played *By Myself* and *Alice in Wonderland.* I have it on tape.

You went into a coma that summer of '80
when I phoned Saint Vincent's all you said
was, "I'm tired of being afraid."

And then you were gone Bill
Stew and I went down and met Pat
and Myril and went thru your house
and I took some of your music, a few
records, a harmonica, your blue blazer
that I wore proudly for years.

That was 1980 Bill, now it's '95
and every time I pass your block
I realize I'm alive.

But as I said to Stewie soon after
your death, "Bill's dying is going to
make it easier when it's my
time to go." Thanks a lot Bill.

Gerry Tomlinson, 1995

The heroin years caught up with Hal long after he'd quit and become a counselor. He believes he must have contracted hepatitis C from a bad needle. His liver deteriorated badly. Three years ago, he was waiting for a liver transplant. It looked as if he wouldn't make it, but then, barely in time, a donor was found, and Hal underwent the operation in Cleveland.

It is now two years since the surgery, which was a complete success. Hal tells me he feels like a young man. He continues to work with drug victims.

I mentioned the following detail in a recent issue, which inspired Gerry Tomlinson's letter, but repetition in the present context seems necessary.

Hal buried Bill Rubenstein's ashes at the root of a youngtree on that wooded mountain near Greenwood Lake. I used to look out the window when I was working on the Lerner and Loewe book, and think that Bill was now a part of that tree. Hal and Evelyn were away every day, he working with recovering drug victims, she with alcoholics.

I have a taste for solitude anyway, and it was strangely peaceful to be alone all day on that mountaintop looking out at the snow and at Bill's winter-bare tree.

Hal by then had completely given up music: his purpose in life was helping other persons break away from dope. One afternoon he didn't, for some reason or other, go away to work. I was sitting at the computer, writing, when I heard a sound coming distantly down the long hallway. I got up, walked down the hall, and saw Hal, practicing his bass in the living room. I stood for a moment, deply moved, then went back to my room without his knowing I had been listening. I was thrilled. Hal was starting to play again. Now, he tells me, he is playing regularly, working gigs, including concerts. One of the great bass players.

A footnote:

When Your Lover Has Gone was written by an arranger and saxophone player with the Vincent Lopez band. He bore the name Einar Swan. If it isn't the only song he wrote, it's the only one that went anywhere, an odd little tune that is all the more touching in that its lyric has a naive, sophomoric clumsiness. I love that song.

Einar Swan, like Bill Rubenstein, is buried at Greenwood Lake. It occurs to me that he lives in that song, Bill in that tree, and Bill's kitten in my memory.

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