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Jazzletter

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Mail Bag

We are so glad you are writing the Clark Terry story. He is such an admirable man. I recall the chills I felt when he explained why his first wife could not deal with the "ofay" world. But I had *not* heard the carnival story where Clark was saved by whites. It's a matter of heart and soul, not skin.

— Iola Brubeck, Wilton, Connecticut

Iola is Mrs. Dave Brubeck.

Irving Bush's reminiscences about Ray Pizzi, Henry Mancini, and the Hollywood Bowl, reminded me of something that occurred at the Bowl the year before — in the summer of 1984.

I, a few of the other guys, and Hank were sitting outside behind the band shell, in our formal attire, before the performance, and Hank said, "You know, ever since I turned sixty in April, I've felt depressed. It's awful." Then he turned to me and said, "Ray, we must be about the same age. Are you sixty yet?"

I said, "I turned sixty-one in April."

And he said, "Yeah, how does it feel?"

And I remember answering, "Oh, sixty-one is fine, but sixty was terrible."

Little did we know that that was the beginning of Hank's last decade.

— Ray Sherman, Palmdale, California

Ray Sherman is a pianist of profound versatility.

The Triumph: Clark Terry
Part 3

In 1961, Clark Terry and Bob Brookmeyer formed a well-remembered and indeed rather celebrated group. It came about almost by accident, according to Brookmeyer, known as Brooks to his friends, as Clark is almost universally called C.T. It began at the Half Note.

The Half Note, at the cobblestoned corner of Spring and Hudson Streets in lower Manhattan, was an Italian restaurant and bar owned by the Canterino family. Sonny and Mike tended the bar, their father cooked, and Mike's wife Judy ran the coat room. An unforgettable fixture of the place was Al the Waiter, a wiry little man in a worn black suit, white serving towel over his arm, two books of paper matches in his belt. You could not pull out a cigarette without his appearing as if by magic at your side, a match already aflame, and with two books he could light two cigarettes at once, whipping out the matches, as Roger Kellaway put it, like six guns. And he always said, in reply to your *Thank you*, "My pleasure to serve you." The place is remembered — and with as much affection as Jim and Andy's — for its excellent Italian food and the Canterino family's hospitality to musicians and customers alike. The high bandstand was behind the bar, which was in the middle of the room.

"They were bringing in Tubby Hayes from England," Brookmeyer said recently. "They were worried about name recognition, so they asked Clark and me to come in with a group to help out. He and I went through some music, then got Hank Jones, Milton Hinton, and Osie Johnson. We went in for a week. It turned into four weeks, and that turned into four or five bookings a year. We went through every pianist in town until we got Roger Kellaway, and he became our main man. We got Roger from Chris Connor.

"Clark and I had worked for others all our lives, and now we had our own group. We made four albums, three for Bob Shad at Mainstream and one for Creed Taylor. It was a happy band."

Brookmeyer is one of the most intellectual (although he might take issue with that term) of jazz musicians. Known as an arranger and composer of rare attributes, he has been perhaps even better known as a valve trombonist, but he began his career as a dance-band pianist in Kansas City, Missouri, where he was born December 19, 1929. He did not take up the valve trombone until 1952, when he was twenty-seven. He became so adept so quickly that the following year he replaced Chet Baker in the Gerry Mulligan Quartet, known as the pianoless group, a particular irony in that both Brookmeyer and Mulligan played piano. He was with that group in 1953 and '54. In 1959, Mulligan formed his thirteen-piece Concert Jazz Band, whose personnel included both Brookmeyer and Clark Terry. Mulligan soon found himself so preoccupied with the problems, business and otherwise, of running a band that he had little time to write for it, even though, as he told me ruefully, he had wanted a band in order to write for it. Thus the burden of writing fell on Brookmeyer. He wrote the arrangement on Django Reinhardt's *Manoir de mes Rêves*, one of the most gorgeous charts in all jazz. Clark was one of the band's principle soloists.

Brookmeyer's playing could take on a casual, amiable, witty, almost country-boy air, but this was deceptive. Trained at the Kansas City Conservatory, he played in a highly compositional way. This, however, he attributed in one of our conversations not to the conservatory but to his late guitarist friend Jimmy Raney. (It was Jimmy who introduced me to Bob.) Jim Hall once similarly attested to Raney's influence. Roger Kellaway, another highly compositional improviser, in turn attributes this quality in his own

work to Brookmeyer. Thus there is an unsung influence of Jimmy Raney, the first bebop guitarist, on other musicians.

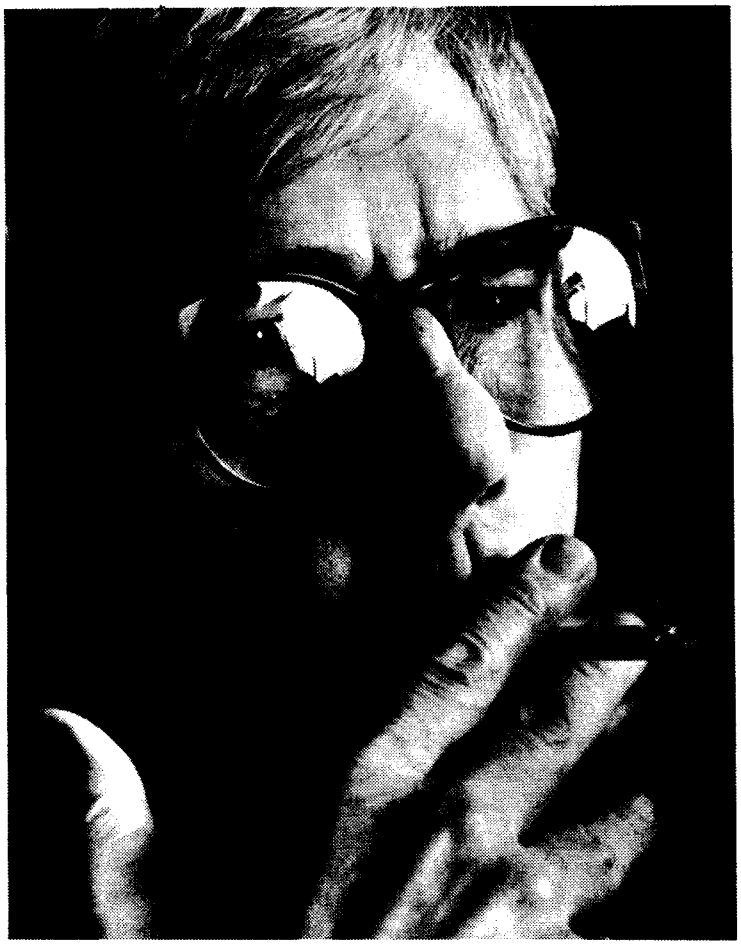
These factors contribute to one's understanding of the Clark Terry-Bob Brookmeyer Quintet. "I was perhaps more experimental than Clark, but that was all right with him," Bob said.

"Dave Bailey brought me into that group," Roger Kellaway said. "The way that bandstand at the Half Note was set up, the piano faced the far wall. The other musicians were behind me. There was no visual contact. Night after night, hearing the straight-aheadness of Clark and the unpredictability of Bob, it seemed intriguing to put those two things together. Doing that, with my Dixieland background and my interest in Twentieth Century classical music, was a major factor in the evolution of my style. Bob and Clark were enormously influential on me, and the two and a half years I was with them were very important in my life."

In those days, Brookmeyer seemed — to me at least — to wrap his sensitivity in a dry and quiet irony, a kind of self-containment. Perhaps he has changed, as we all have, but I was softly surprised when he recently volunteered this statement about his relationship with Clark Terry:

"We really loved each other. We had an unusual rapport, both as musicians and as men, a rare empathy as players. We still do."

Bob lives now in New Hampshire.



Brookmeyer Photo by John Reeves

While Clark and Bob had that group, Clark became heavily involved in music education — as Brookmeyer later would too. One early experience was to be bitterly disappointing, and apparently continues to haunt Clark. It was typical, however, that it did not deter him. This is what happened:

"In my home town, St. Louis," he said, "it was customary for the old farts to send the young musicians in wrong directions, to keep 'em from becoming a threat to their livelihood. If you asked them a question, they'd give you a wrong answer. Then they'd call each other up and gloat about it.

"I asked an old dude once how to improve my tone in the lower register. So he said, 'Son, you got a mirror at home?'

"'Yes sir,' I said. I didn't know. I wanted to learn.

"He said, 'Well son, you go home and sit in front of the mirror with the correct posture. Make sure you sit up straight so you have room in your diaphragm.' That part was correct information. He said, 'Look in the mirror and grit your teeth and wiggle your left ear. *Not the right ear*! The left ear.'

"I don't know how you'd do that anyhow. But I was naive enough to believe it, and tried so hard to do it that people would say, 'Have you seen that kid who can wiggle his ear?' But it was cruel, what he did."

I said, "Ray Brown told me that when he was coming up, he went to one of the older bass players and asked him a question, and the guy said, 'Kid, we figured it out. *You* figure it out.' And remember how in the old days trumpet players would put a handkerchief over the right hand so you couldn't see the fingering?"

"Yes! They did that! Yeah. And from that experience in St. Louis, I made up my mind that if I ever had an opportunity to impart knowledge to kids coming up, I'd bend over backwards to do it."

During the period with Brookmeyer. Clark wanted to try to get Harlem kids off the streets through music, not the passive listening to it, but the active making of it. It is interesting that his old friend Archie Moore was doing something similar through boxing.

Clark bought instruments for kids. "I got 'em in pawn shops, I got 'em anywhere I could. And we found a place to rehearse in a five-flight walkup. No heat. Cold water. Near 125th Street and Fifth Avenue. In summertime you'd burn up, in wintertime you'd freeze. Gene Ghee, I bought his first instrument, a baritone saxophone, and he's now head of the jazz program at Boys' High in Brooklyn, where Aaron Copland, Max Roach, Randy Weston went to school.

"We had a book by a cat named Fred Wayne, extremely talented. Could write his ass off, and *fast*, like Billy Byers. He'd give you an arrangement in two hours. Copied and everything. He kept us supplied with charts. We had sixty-some charts for the kids.

"We'd meet every week, and if I couldn't be there, I'd get somebody to direct the kids for me, Kenny Dorham, Ernie Wilkins, whoever was available.

"Don Stratton was a friend of mine. Good trumpet player. He went to school with Charlie Mariano, Nat Pierce, and those guys

in Boston. I first met them all when I was with Basie, playing a place in Boston called the High Note. Don became dean of men at Manhattan College of Music, which was up in Harlem. He made it possible for us to have facilities at the school. Suddenly we had school rooms, we had blackboards, we had chalk, we had music paper, we had listening equipment.

"I had to be away for a long time. Don took over for me, teaching the kids. A Caucasian, and the kids were black. While I was gone, the kids started dropping off. Not showing up. When I got back, Don said, 'I think I know the reason.' So I called a meeting of the band. One little motherfucker had the nerve to say, 'Well, man, we don't want Whitey teaching us about *our* music.' Now here's a bunch of kids who would probably never, ever again set foot in a major establishment of learning. Never.

"I said, 'If that's the way you feel, I don't want anything to do with it.' And I walked out. I don't even know where that library of charts is any more.

"Shortly after that, the Jazzmobile was born. They took my idea of getting all these kids off the streets and supplying them with instruments, finding a place to rehearse. They got grants and they got salaries."

The Jazzmobile was started in 1964.

Having fought white racism all his life, Clark in essence found himself in a two-front war, and his experience with those kids was one of the battles he lost. Another confrontation occurred in the early 1970s, when he had a band that played at Club Baron in Harlem. Clark has recounted the incident to me a couple of times, but an especially interesting account occurs in a 1987 interview he did with Hank O'Neal of Chiaroscuro records:

"It was a big band, about seventeen pieces, and it just so happens it was about half and half, blacks and whites. One night three big black Mafia guys, black Muslims, came into the club and they cornered me, saying, 'What are you doing playing with all these whites in Harlem?'

"I know they mean business and I'm a little frightened, but I know I've gotta be stern, so I say, 'Harlem has always been responsible for great jazz, all kinds of jazz, and big-band jazz has been missing for a number of years. There's been no big band up here for years, right?'

"They looked at me and said, 'Yeah, we have no big bands around.'

"Then I said, 'Well I feel it's my duty to bring big bands back to Harlem. And in doing so I choose the best musicians I can find and I don't listen with my eyes.' I think they're getting the message, and then one of them says, 'Well we got a kid here, a little black kid, and he wants to play, and we want to hear him play.'

"I said, 'That's okay. I've spent half my life making it possible for young musicians to be heard, so we'll bring him up on the beginning of the set and turn him loose.'

"So we start the set, and I asked Lou Soloff, who had the jazz chair, 'Lou, would you mind staying off and let this kid sit in?' He didn't have a problem and Lou got off and the kid came up. I kicked off with a medium tempo tune, one of Chris Woods' tunes, a very simple tune, very easy to play on, nice changes. The kid started when I kicked it off one, two, three, four, and I said, 'Hey, man, you play the music and when you get down to letter D, that's when you come in.' We started again, one, two, three, four, and he started in again. I stopped the band again and said, 'Hey, baby, no, you misunderstood me. When we start, you play the music. When you get down to letter D, then your solo comes, and we're gonna even open it up so you can play long.'

"He said, 'I just want to express, I want to express!'

"I said, 'Well, you're going to get plenty of chances to express.' So we kicked it off again. And he comes in wrong again. I was fed up and said, 'Express your ass off my stage.' I didn't care what the cats with the three guns said. When we came off, I went straight up to them and said, 'Now you see what you've done? You stuck your necks out to represent this dude to do something that he's not qualified to do, he's not prepared, he didn't do his homework, he can't read music!'

"In a low grumbly voice, one of them said, 'The little son of a bitch didn't tell us that.'"

At one point the French government invited Clark and several other American musicians to do some clinics. One of them told the young musicians there was no hope for them anyway — they were white, they were French, they would never get the hang of jazz. Clark was furious, telling the man they had been paid to come and he had no right to discourage young people who had hardly begun.

When he finished that story, his face clouded over and he said, in an almost ominous tone, "They can fuck with me, I don't care, *but nobody fucks with my kids!*"

The cloud passed, the sunlight returned.

"One of the ways I got into jazz education on a broader scale was through Billy Taylor and his group," Clark said. "He was doing clinics. At the same time, Doc Severinsen, Jim Maxwell, and Ernie Royal and a bunch of us would go around to a few schools and do trumpet clinics. So I got my feet wet. And I really dug it.

"What it did for me was to make me realize that it was important to the kids that those of us who have been blessed with capabilities pass along this thing called jazz. You can't document it on paper alone. Much of it, you have to sit there and let them soak it up by osmosis. I've been pretty much ensconced in that scene for some time. *Besides*! It keeps you *alert*! The kids ask you a lot of questions. And you've got to have some answers!

"I have a good buddy at the University of Iowa named Cliff McMurray. We've been friends for years and years and years. He plays drums, and he has knowledge of *all* the instruments. I met him when he was a student at Doane College in Iowa. He went on to teach in Anthon, Iowa. He had an all-girl trumpet section. He taught them all how to use plungers! It was so beautiful. I said, 'This cat is really something special.' And he liked the way I would teach kids. I use a system that is simple. It has nothing to do with theory, harmony, composition. It's just simple — basic common sense.

"For instance, I'd take a tune. The blues was the main vehicle. If they played the one chord — the tonic, the minor third, the

flatted fifth — they didn't know that it constituted half diminished. They didn't care what you called it. They called them the blue notes.

"We'd have the kids listen to the rhythm section and explain to them what the blues are, explain the chords, get the feeling of the blues instilled in them. Then just take any one of those notes, one at a time, use it. Create any kind of rhythmic pattern using that one note, start with the tonic. Taking advantage of space and time, which is the lesson that Basie taught *everybody*: the utilization of space and time.

"Then put the two notes together, the tonic and the minor third. Then the tonic and minor third and flat five. This is the system that we got so many people involved in. Later the kids would find out that these are the notes of the blues scale. They had a tendency to be able to really hear these things, hear the simplicity of it. And there's something Ellington taught all of us: Simplicity is the most complex form.

"It has to be difficult and complicated for some people to understand. 'Flat five, flat nine, baby.' But a simple one-three-five fucks 'em up.

"So we taught the kids how to do that.

"My friend McMurray thought we should start a band camp. We did, and it grew like mad. We ended up being able to hire people like Snooky Young, Louis Bellson, Ed Shaughnessy, Red Holloway, and some people from the University of New Hampshire. Kids would tell us that they garnered more from this one week of concentrated effort — rehearsal technique, improvisation, ways and means — than in a whole semester in a lot of other schools. A lot of kids went through there. The kid who won the first Thelonious Monk trumpet competition was one of them, Ryan Kysor. Ryan's one of our kids.

"The band camp grew to the point where it was invited to Westmar University in Le Mars. The Japanese bought into it and it became Teikyo-Westmar.

"Here's a school that had no athletic program, no football, no baseball, no basketball, no debate team, no public speaking. The jazz program was the only thing they had. We had quarters, in what at one time had been a dormitory, where the kids could practice all day — all night, if they wanted. It got to be very successful.

"Then the school got a president who said that if they got a subsidy of a million dollars, he wouldn't spend one nickel on the jazz program. He snatched the rug right out from under us. And now the whole school has gone down the drain. There is no more Westmar University. So right now we don't have a campus. We're hoping to find a place in the east.

"We had that camp for close to ten years. Marshall Royal was there for a couple of years. I was doing things also with Bob Lark at DePaul University. I've been to practically every major establishment of learning that there is, and a lot of the minor ones, too.

"I get along with kids. First of all, you've got to realize kids are people. Somebody loves them, somebody's paying for their education."

Bob Lark, director of the jazz program at DePaul, said, "He's one of the founding fathers of jazz education. He was one the first major jazz artists who regularly made himself available to students, not just college students, even public school kids, going into the schools.

"I came into contact with him professionally in 1987. I inherited the Clark Terry Great Plains Jazz Camp, in a sense, when I took my first college teaching job. It doesn't exist any more. For many years, it was held at Emporia State University in Emporia, Kansas. It featured Clark and a faculty big band, a la the old Kenton camps. Clark would direct the top student big band, from public school to college-age kids. Clark would periodically bring in some of his friends, like James Moody or Frank Wess. Students would be in improvisation classes in the morning, and in the afternoon every student would be in a combo, every student would be in a big band, and there would be master classes. Clark would be actively involved in all of these. He would meet with all the trumpet players in the afternoon and present a master class, and not just tell stories of his days with Ellington and Basie, although that was insightful. He would relay how he learned to play, who his mentors were and how his peers developed their solo skills.

"That camp went on through 1988. He made himself available to the kids, not only as a player but also by coaching them during the day, directing them on classic big-band charts like *Shiny Stockings*. He'd have a chance to play and talk with the kids and hear them play.

"He has a long history of doing this. He has directed camps in Iowa and Oklahoma as well. He's been visiting colleges and high schools extensively for more thirty years or more. I think if he even had nothing to say, and he has plenty to say, just the opportunity for students to get close and hear him and see him perform is valuable. He coached me backstage in some concerts in 1987. He still coaches kids in the importance of rhythm, not so much how many notes you're going to play but make sure everything has great rhythmic integrity, played in time. That's the big fault I hear with many college and public school kids.

"Clark doesn't have to do any of this. But he loves doing it. He's got something to bring."

Clark said,"We have big problems with a lot of people in jazz education because they can play their asses off but they can't teach. They get positions. Because they can play, people want them exposed to their kids. But they can't communicate.

"I remember an incident with a trombone player. The kids wanted some facts about depth of the cup of the mouthpiece and the rim and the depth of the backbore and so forth. He said, 'Well, I've got this horn and I . . . " Clark imitated a fast rising and falling passage. "That doesn't help the kids.

"Now Tom Harrell's good at teaching. He has feeling for kids. He knows they belong to somebody. You can't just fart 'em off, like I heard one cat say to a kid, 'What the hell did you do with the money your mother gave you to learn how to play that damn thing?'

"That's jazz education? Then I heard one motherfucker say to five little girls in a trumpet section, eleven, twelve, thirteen years old, he said, 'Come on, haven't you got any balls back there?' And

one little girl said, 'What's balls?' That's jazz education?

"Instead of explaining to them how to use the air column more, and use a diaphragmatic approach. You have to have a way of explaining to the kids what you want of them. If you'll explain it to them, they'll try it, and most of them will do it. They'll break their buns trying to do what you teach them, if you know how to teach them. But if you embarrass them, they may quit right there.

"So it's a very very interesting thing, jazz education, and we're lucky that we do have some knowledgeable and very sympathetic people in it. We've got tens of thousands of professors in colleges who can teach the kids the square root of a B-flat chord. But we don't have a whole hell of a lot of sympathetic people who know what jazz is all about, who have participated in it for a number of years, who know all the ins and outs, and then can explain to the kids how to give vent to their feelings and get involved in this music.

"Everybody has to be taught, somewhere along the way. In the beginning they all say, 'Where do we start?' And you say, 'Listen.' That was the only disciplinary word Ellington ever used. He'd say, 'Listen!' All he wanted us to do was pay attention. He later explained that this is complex. If you're playing in a section, you have to listen to what your lead player is playing, listen to the dynamics that he's using, listen to what the other sections are playing that contribute to the overall performance, all these things. Teach 'em how to listen. If they can listen, they can learn."

The quotation, often given incorrectly, is from Matthew:

The prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house.

At one time I think this was true in Clark's life, for once there occurred one of those rare moments when he surrendered to life's assaults, melancholy before my eyes, saying, "I can go around the world and be respected, but in my own house, I'm *nothing*." I don't remember where that happened, but I can't forget it.

In Clark's third marriage, this is not the case. His wife, a sensitive and articulate woman younger than he, is Gwen Jones of Pine Bluff, Arkansas, daughter of a lawyer, Theodore X. Jones (the X. is for Xerxes, which tells you something about the family) and grand-daughter of another lawyer. She was herself a paralegal, and is using her computer skills to help Clark assemble his memoirs. Her admiration for him is almost palpable, and it is personal: she said she had no especial knowledge of music when she met him.

I noticed on the S.S. Norway that she and two or three of Clark's friends were very protective of him. Clark has endured a number of illnesses, and years of diabetes. I knew that he was having trouble with his eyes, but now, it was obvious, as I watched him surrounded by admirers, that the problem had grown worse. I slipped up behind him and whispered our obscene greeting and he laughed that contagious laugh and said, "Hey, baby!" And I said, my concern probably apparent in my voice, "Hey, how *is* your eyesight?"

He pulled me close and whispered right into my ear, "I can't see *shit*." And he laughed! How do you laugh at *that*?

Soon he performed with what is pretty much his standing group now, introducing the members with lavish praise, and it struck me that its personnel reflected not only his musical tastes but his great heart, open to the world's diversity: two African Americans, himself and bassist Marcus McLaurine; two Jews, the marvelous pianist Don Friedman with whom he has worked for many years, and alto saxophonist David Glasser; and one Mexican-American, the group's drummer, who happens also to be a woman.

Part way through the set, he introduced her. He said, "You may think that's a little boy sitting back there, but it isn't. Sylvia Cuenca, from California!" And she stood up, long-haired and pretty. She is a powerful drummer whose rapport with bassist McLaurine lends great propulsion to the group. Later I asked Clark how he had discovered her, and the story again is an example of the huge heart and lack of presupposition:

"Every time we play the Village Vanguard in New York," he said, "on our last set Sunday night we have an open house. People always want to sit in, all during the week. But Lorraine — " he referred to the widow of Max Gordon and thus now the Vanguard's owner " — didn't want that. So I asked her, 'Can we have one set, maybe the last set when we finish the week?' She agreed. So I started that policy. We'd invite anybody who wanted to, to come up, and this little girl had been sitting in the room all week long, listening to the band. That last set that night, she sat in, and she played her little butt off. So the first time we needed a drummer, we called her, and that's how she came with the band."

The first solo David Glasser played that night on the Norway was electrifying in its first few notes. Glasser is a ferocious player, assertive, wildly inventive, daring, and with stunning authority. So I asked Clark, "And where did you get him?"

Clark said that his previous saxophonist had let him down by taking a more lucrative job when the group had a line of engagements ahead of it. He sent David Glasser as a substitute. And, laughing as always at irony, Clark said, "*That* was his mistake!" At the end of Glasser's solos, Clark will say, "Dangerous David Glasser. Dangerous. *Dangerous!*" And David Glasser is exactly that. His father, incidentally, is Ira Glasser, head of the American Civil Liberties Union.

Clark sits on a stool now to play. Given his vision problems, he is secure there, but the laughter is unimpaired, and so is the superb, soaring playing. The audience went wild over the group. All week.

In the late part of that week last fall on the Norway, after many long conversations, I put some formal questions to Clark.

I have always objected to the definition of jazz as a "folk music." For one thing, the formal training that underlay the work of so many of its pioneers, including Don Redman, with two conservatory degrees, Teddy Wilson, Earl Hines, James P. Johnson, and more, precludes it. And there is a political agenda behind that definition, which is essentially that art is propaganda.

This is a functionalist vision, as if art has to have some purpose other than itself to justify its existence. It may be used that way, of course, but this obviates achieving its highest level. I think Clark agrees with that, if not formally, for in his cabin — the window to the balcony open, the soft early-evening Caribbean air

drifting around us — he said:

"Some of the kids have gone to the extreme of using this beautiful music for the wrong purposes, such as rebellion and hatred. I think it's all love and respect for the people who support it and the people who are involved in it and the perpetuation of the craft. A lot of the kids just got into that bag, for whatever reason; they feel like they're justified.

"They're making their statements through their instruments. They don't have an opportunity to say it any other way, so they do it that way. But that's not artistic. I made a statement years ago, and I got a little flak for it. I said, 'The piano keyboard is made of white keys and black keys. And a note don't give a fuck who plays it so long as he plays it well.'

"That's the bottom line. That's basic."

I told him of a conversation I'd had with Sweets Edison. Sweets said, "Jazz is no folk music. It's too hard to play."

"Sweets was right," Clark said. "Louis Armstrong was being interviewed on the Johnny Carson show. Johnny Carson said, 'Mr. Armstrong, do you play folk music?'" Clark did a very precise imitation of Armstrong's graveled voice: "Pops said, 'Sure I play folk music! All music is folk music. Folks play it, don't they? You don't see no trees playin' it.'

"That always reminds me of the stupid question people ask, 'Where is jazz going?' I always want to say, 'I saw him coming out of Jim and Andy's the other day, and he was going up to the union to pick up some checks.'

"I don't believe in categorizations. There's only two kinds of music, as Ellington said, there's good music and bad music. What do they mean by folk music, anyhow?"

Clark is famous for his "mumbles" singing. He'll start out singing a blues with words that make sense and then the syllables degenerate into incomprehensibility, although they always sound as if he's saying something outrageous. Conversely, using a rubber plunger on his trumpet, Clark will do a blues that sounds as if he's talking, and what he's saying is obscene, and it's very funny. Blues *sacré et profane.*

Singing is part of his act. Many trumpeters have made singing part of their work, Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Doc Cheatham, Roy Eldridge, Ray Nance, Red Allen among them. It long ago struck me that, given the sustained evening-long endurance required in jazz trumpet, singing provides a way to rest the chops. Dizzy, and more so toward the end of his life, would sing a couple of tunes, clown with the audience, and then go into that foot-forward stance of his, put the horn to his mouth, and burn the place down.

So I put the question to Clark. Is that the reason? To rest the chops?

"Absolutely," Clark said. "Pops said so." The press may have referred to Louis Armstrong as Satchmo but his friends always called him Pops. "Diz and I used to go by and visit with him. Constantly. At one time several of us lived in a small radius in Queens. Pops' house was on 107th, Diz was on 106th, I was on 111th, Charlie Shavers was on 110th. Helen Humes. 'Bama Warwick. We all lived in the same area. Diz and I would call each other and say, 'Let's go bug Pops.' So we'd meet on the corner, and go and ring the bell."

There's an image to conjure with: Dizzy Gillespie and Clark Terry at Louis Armstrong's door, ringing the bell.

Again the evocative imitation of Armstrong: "'Yeah, come on in, come on in, Daddys.'

"We'd say, 'We come on by to get our batteries charged.' Which he kinda liked. He'd say, 'All right. Sit down there, I'll tell you all about the history of jazz.'

"One time I went to tell him that Quinnipiac College and Howard University wanted to give him honorary doctorates. They sent me, because I lived close by. I rang the bell. He said, 'Come on in.' I said, 'Pops, aside from getting my battery charged, I'm here on a special mission. Quinnipiac and Howard both want to give you honorary doctorates. And Quinnipiac wants to do their festival this year in your honor.'

"He says, 'Fuck 'em. Where were they forty years ago when I needed 'em?' But we talked a while, and he was always so nice and he'd put on that big smile, make you feel comfortable. He'd say, 'Yeah, Daddy, you know you're m'man. I got to tell you one thing, though, Daddy.' I said, 'What's that, Pops?' He said, 'You gotta sing more.'

"I said, 'Yeah?' He said, 'Y'see, people, all the people, like singin'. Besides, it's good for your chops.'

"He knew that years ago! It lets the blood come back. You know, you can blow your chops to hell if you're not careful. Ray Copeland did that, blew his chops out completely. He was on first call. They wanted all the high notes, and the hard lead parts — Ernie Royal and him. Ernie had the knack for that, him and Maynard Ferguson. These are phenomenal people, unusual people. That's the thing Ray and Ernie were called on to do, play high lead parts. The other times they would rest and play fourth and cool it until they came to another one of those show stoppers and they'd give them the ball again."

"Now," I said, "another point. As we were saying the other day, in the early days, these people were in the entertainment business. But somewhere along the way it began to be evident that jazz was evolving into an art form. When do they think that occurred? Do you think Louis Armstrong was aware of it as an art?"

"I'm sure he was," Clark said. "He must have been aware. He loved it so much that it became a natural part of him. He enjoyed it so much that people enjoyed the way *he* enjoyed playing. The entertaining thing to them was to see and hear him do consecutive high C's. They'd count them. A hundred and five high C's without stopping. Everybody was excited, and this became the pulse. It became an integral part of him, and he in turn inspired all the serious trumpet players from that point all the way down.

"And they all sang. Yeah. Pops says to me, 'Daddy, you gotta sing.'"

May Clark Terry sing forever.

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A Lengthened Shadow

Something catastrophic for jazz has happened in New York. I refer to the retirement at the age of seventy of Sheldon Meyer.

Sheldon Meyer, until recently senior vice president of Oxford University Press, is one of the most important men in jazz history, and if in fifty years various persons are researching this music in this time, they will be deeply in debt to him; and probably they will never have heard of him. He is a tall, indeed imposing, man with a round face, remarkably smooth and youthful skin, and equally youthful manner and bearing. He has a droll sense of humor, a quick laugh, and a remarkable lack of pretension for one whose career has been so creative and important.

Gary Giddins recently wrote in the *New York Times Book Review*: "'Midlist' is an industry euphemism for those writers who do not scale best-seller charts.

"Until the recent spate of articles about the woes of publishing, it never would have occurred to me that I was a midlist author. I write books about jazz, and from where I sit, midlist sounds like a promotion. Yet, along with several colleagues, I have never felt professionally marginalized in the publishing world, and for that we have one man to thank. On the occasion of his retiring from Oxford University Press, Sheldon Meyer merits, at the very least, a flourish of saxophones, a melody by Jerome Kern and a high-kicking chorus line salute. Over the past forty years, Meyer turned the world's oldest and most staid publishing house into the leading chronicler of jazz, Broadway musicals, popular-song writers, broadcasting, and black cultural history. And he and his masters made money at it."

A small number of editors have achieved great prominence, among them Harold Ross of the New Yorker and Maxwell Perkins, who brought to the world Ernest Hemingway, Thomas Wolfe, and others of that stature in the time when fiction still held sway as the major literary act. I think Sheldon's name, in the non-fiction area, belongs at that level.

Sheldon spent the first few years of his career at Funk and Wagnall's, joining Oxford in 1956. Funk and Wagnall's had published Marshall Stearns' pioneering *The Story of Jazz*. Through Stearns, Sheldon met Martin Williams, who was to become a friend and adviser, as well as writing a number of books published by Oxford. At Oxford Sheldon published Gunther Schuller's *Early Jazz*, which, as Gary Giddins points out, "remains the most important musicological statement on jazz's infancy."

I came to know Sheldon through James Lincoln Collier, whom I also did not know at the time. Writers about jazz are often notable for an ill-concealed jealousy and a sullen conviction that they alone know anything about the subject, that it is or should be their exclusive domain. Collier proved to be an outstanding exception. He had read some of the Jazzletters and told Sheldon about me, saying, "You should be publishing this guy." Then he wrote me a letter saying he thought Sheldon Meyer at Oxford University Press would be receptive to a collection of my essays. It was an act of generosity that would change my life.

I wrote to Sheldon Meyer, who had published several collections of the exquisite word portraits of Whitney Balliett. Quite timidly, I began by saying, "I am well aware that collections of essays don't sell." And I got back a letter saying, somewhat testily, "Mine do." He said he would very much like to consider a collection of my pieces. After reading a number of them, he told me on the telephone, "You have a reputation as a songwriter and as an expert on singing. I think our first collection — " and I nearly choked on that word *first* " — should be about songwriting and singers." It became *Singers and the Song* (a title he gave it) and it would win the ASCAP Deems Taylor Award. So would another collection of my work that Sheldon would publish, *Waiting for Dizzy*. (I've won it three times. Gary Giddins has the record: he's won it five times.)

In addition, Sheldon published my *Meet Me at Jim and Andy's, Cats of any Color*, and *Leader of the Band: The Life of Woody Herman*, and *Singers and the Song II*, due out in June — an expanded and altered version of the first book. He published Jim Collier's biographies of Louis Armstrong, Benny Goodman, and Duke Ellington. He published Ted Gioia's *West Coast Jazz* and, more recently, *The History of Jazz*, and two books by bassist Bill Crow, *Jazz Anecdotes* and *From Birdland to Broadway*, after reading some of Bill's delightful pieces is the Jazzletter.

Sheldon published Reid Badger's *A Life in Ragtime: A Biographay of James Reese Europe*; *King of Ragtime: Scott Joplin and His Era* by Edward A. Berlin; Philip Furia's *The Poets of Tin Pan Alley* (the best book on lyrics and lyricists I've ever read) and *Ira Gershwin: The Art of the Lyricist*; Joseph P. Swain's *The Broadway Musical*; Mark Tucker's *The Duke Ellington Reader*; *The Jazz Scene* by W. Royal Stokes; Arnold Shaw's *The Jazz Age;* Gene Santoro's *Dancing in Your Head* and *Stir It Up*; *The Frank Sinatra Reader* by Steven Petkov and Leonard Mustazz; *Bebop* by Thomas Owens; *The Jazz Revolution* by Kathy I. Ogren; *Too Marvelous for Words: The Life and Genius of Art Tatum*, by James Lester; Ira Gitler's *Swing to Bop*; Leslie Gourse's *Contemporary Women Instrumentalists*, and many more, including a new encyclopedia of jazz, on which Leonard Feather and Ira Gitler were working when Leonard died. Ira is completing it.

And Sheldon commissioned and published *American Popular Song* by Alec Wilder and James Maher, one of the most important books in American musical history.

I have a huge library of books on jazz and popular music. Probably half of them were published by Sheldon and Oxford. To contemplate the condition in which the documentation of jazz and American popular culture would be in had Sheldon Meyer never lived is gloomy act indeed. Most of those books would not have found an outlet without him.

And aside from the jazz books, Sheldon published Lawrence W. Levine's *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, Albert J. Raboteau's *Slave Religion*, John Blassingame's *Slave Community*, Robert C. Toll's *Blacking Up*, Nathan Irvin Huggins' *Harlem Renaissance*, A. Leon Higginbotham' Jr.'s *In the Matter of Color*, Thomas Cripps' *Slow Fade to Black*, Richard C. Wade's *Slavery in the Cities*, and a two-volume biography of Booker T. Washington by Louis R. Harlan's.

It is highly unlikely that the standard "commercial" publishing houses would have risked publishing such works, certainly the jazz books.

I once asked who actually headed Oxford, and was told that it was a group of anonymous dons at the university in England. I thought this was a joke; I learned that while the statement may have been hyperbolic, it was not exactly untrue. There is a certain amorphous quality about the upper level of Oxford University Press, but Sheldon Meyer lent to his division dignity, direction, and decision. When he started publishing books on jazz, his "masters," as Gary Giddins called them, questioned him. As Sheldon told Gary:

"I had some problems in the mid-60s. The head of the press in England said he had begun to notice some odd books appearing in the Oxford list, and I said, well, I'm responsible for them. Since he was a papyrologist — a guy working with old documents, old rolls of paper — he didn't have much connection with this world, to say the least. So I said to him, 'Well, look, as long as these books are authoritative and make money, it seems to me they're appropriate for the press to publish.' Fortunately for the future of my career, that turned out to be correct."

Read between the lines of that and you'll realize that Sheldon laid his career on the line to publish books about jazz. Thus it came to be that probably the oldest publishing house in England became the premiere publishing house on contemporary American culture.

As he told Gary Giddins, "I had an advantage in staying at one place for forty years. I never could have done the jazz list if I was moving around to three or four publishers during that period. It is kind of an extreme irony that the greatest university press in the world, with these high standards, should become the major publisher of jazz, broadcasting, popular music, all these areas. But I was there at the right time and I had a group of people at the press who had enough flexibility and understanding to let it go forward. Now everybody is enormously proud of this whole thing. I couldn't ask for a better career."

Sheldon Meyer has been an editor of brilliance, and if there is such a thing in editing, even of genius. I began to get a bad feeling a couple of years ago when his close friend and long-time professional associate, Leona Capeless, one of the finest copy editors I've ever known, retired from Oxford. And now that Sheldon too has retired, my unhappy capacity to reach conclusions I don't like tells me that much chronicling of American cultural history is never going to get done. The loss to America and to the world is inestimable.

In the past few years, I have been only too aware that primary sources of jazz history, and popular-music history, are being lost to us. The great masters, the men who were *there*, are slowly leaving us. I do not know who said, "Whenever anyone dies, a library burns." But it is true: almost anyone's experience is worth recording, even that of the most "ordinary" person. For the great unknown terrain of human history is not what the kings and famous men did — for much, though by no means all, of this was recorded, no matter how imperfectly — but how the "common" people lived.

When Leonard Feather first came to the United States from England in the late 1930s, he was able to know most of his musical heroes, including Louis Armstrong and Jelly Roll Morton. By the end of the 1940s, Leonard knew everybody of significance in jazz from the founding figures to the young iconoclasts. And when I became actively involved in the jazz world in 1959, as editor of *Down Beat*, most of them were still there. I met most of them, and became friends with many, especially the young Turks more or less of my own age. I have lived to see them grow old (and sometimes *not* grow old), and die, their voices stilled forever. And so, in recent years, I have felt impelled to do what I can to get their memories down before they are lost, leading me to write what I think of as mini-biographies of these people. This has been the central task of the Jazzletter. And always underlying my efforts in the past ten years has been the quiet confidence that, thanks to Sheldon, these works would end up between hard covers on library shelves for the use of future music historians. That is no longer so.

When I wanted to know something about one aspect or another of music history in the 1960s, I could pick up the telephone and call these older mentors, such as Alec Wilder or my special friend Johnny Mercer, or Robert Offergeld, music editor of *Stereo Review* when I wrote for it and one of the greatest scholars I have ever known. If I wanted to know something about the history or the technique of film composition, I could telephone my dear dear friend Hugo Friedhofer, who wrote his first film music in 1929. There was nothing worth knowing about film music that Hugo didn't know; and not much for that matter about the history of all music. I can't call Hugo any more. Or Dizzy. I can't call Glenn Gould either. Gerry Mulligan was ten months older than I. Shorty Rogers died while I was researching the Woody Herman biography; I was to interview him in a week or two.

Now, when my generation is gone, there will be no one much left who knew Duke Ellington and Woody Herman and Ben Webster and Coleman Hawkins. All future writers will be dependent not on primary sources, which all of these people were for me, but on secondary sources, which is to say documents. And earlier writings. And I have found much of the earlier writing on jazz, such as that of John Hammond and Ralph J. Gleason, to be unreliable — sloppy in research, gullible in comprehension, and too often driven by personal and even political agendas. Errors — and lies — reproduce themselves in future writings.

It is in this light that the great body of Sheldon Meyer's work must be seen. And no one has ever more fully embodied the dictum that an institution is the lengthened shadow of one man than Sheldon Meyer. What the world of jazz owes him is beyond estimate, and most of its denizens don't even know his name.

Sheldon continues as a consultant to Oxford, completing projects he initiated. But no writer who has dealt with him thinks Oxford will continue developing these hugely significant projects. And therefore much of jazz and popular-music history is going to go unrecorded, lost forever. We are fortunate, however, that Sheldon Meyer managed to get as much of it preserved as he did.

Salud, Sheldon. We all owe you.