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Make the Sucker Float

Part III

In 1963, Hank went to London to score Stanley Donen's romantic thriller *Charade*. The resulting main-title theme, with a lyric by Mercer, was nominated for an Academy Award, but lost out to *Call Me Irresponsible*. By now, Hank was an international celebrity. In the winter of 1967-68, he and Andy Williams did the first of several tours of Japan, and then played the Royal Albert Hall in London, selling it out for three concerts.

Of all the comedies Hank scored for Blake Edwards, the best known are the *Pink Panther* movies, featuring that clumsy Parisian detective Inspector Clouseau, played with brilliant invention by Peter Sellers. Sellers now seems so perfect in the part of Clouseau that it is hard to remember that Peter Ustinov was originally set for the role. At the last minute, Ustinov fell out of the picture. With shooting set to begin in Rome on Monday, Edwards telephoned Peter Sellers on Thursday. Sellers flew to Rome on Friday, and shooting began on schedule on Monday with him in what would be the best-remembered role of his career.

Sellers and Edwards did not get along well. Hank often found himself, given his perpetual apparent equanimity, acting as their mediator. But Edwards and Sellers had great mutual respect, and the symbiosis of their relationship was fruitful.

The saxophonist in the *Pink Panther* score was Plas Johnson. This reveals one of the characteristics of Hank's writing: his jazz background. He always wrote with the style of specific instrumentalists in his mind's ear, and this theme was written for Plas Johnson's big, solid tone, as the *Mr. Lucky* theme was written specifically with Buddy Cole in mind. There are several gorgeous ballads in *The Pink Panther*, one of them titled *Piano and Strings* that features another of the great jazz musicians, Jimmy Rowles.

(I remember Hank saying to me, probably in the 1960s, "I'm afraid we're not going to have Jimmy much longer." I knew what he meant, of course. He was referring to Jimmy's drinking. Jimmy outlived him.)

The *Pink Panther* was the name of a jewel in the story. Hank wrote the theme for the jewel thief played by David Niven, but Blake Edwards decided to use an animated cartoon of a pink panther under the opening credits of the film, and the theme became irrevocably associated with that little character. Since then a series of television cartoons have been built around it, and it is

seen now on television around the world.

"None of us," Hank said, "really foresaw what was going to happen in the years ahead to the *Pink Panther*, Blake, Peter, and me. This was, as far as we knew, a one-shot project, which we were very happy about — on a high, really, because the script was so good and the performances excellent. I don't believe that there were even the problems on the set that you so often run into in pictures.

"It was during the making of *The Pink Panther* that Ginny and I visited the town where my father was born. When we arrived in Rome, I hired a driver — I had no intention of driving those roads the way they were in those days. We traveled over a rocky, dangerous road through terrible terrain. It looked like a moonscape. I had never seen such rough country, rocky, bleak, jagged, and almost devoid of trees.

"I kept looking out the window and I said to Ginny, 'My God, how did my Dad make this trip? How did he get down to Rome and then to the port at Naples?' When he made that journey, not only were there no cars, there were no roads. I could envision him walking most of the way, perhaps hitching a ride now and then on a horse cart. The trip took us four hours. It must have taken him two or three weeks. I tried to put myself in that position, making that trip on foot, with very little money, knowing only that you had an appointment to leave on a boat, because he had arranged for a cousin who lived in Detroit, and whose name I do not know, to meet him at Ellis Island. It was mind-boggling that a boy could make that trip alone. Why did he do it? Why was he so determined? I couldn't begin to recreate that trip in my mind.

"At last we got to Scanno in Abruzzi. It was a typical mountain town with stone houses and cobbled streets. It probably hadn't changed in a century or more. The women still wore black and carried baskets of bread and various other things on their heads. There was an Italian wedding going on in a restaurant near the church. We went to the church, but we couldn't find any records, and as far as I knew I had no relatives there now. Or, if I did, my father never had spoken of them."

I'm not sure that Hank's conclusion that he had no relatives there was correct. In view of what Ralph Musengo told me, it's possible that Quinto Mancini didn't speak of relatives there because he hated them.

Hank concluded, "Scanno had a small country hotel, but there was no reason to stay. Ginny and I looked around, then had the driver take us back to Rome, over those awful roads.

"Now a freeway connects Scanno to Rome. There is good

snow-pack in those mountains, and the terrain is scattered with resorts. The international crowd hasn't discovered it yet; it's where the Italians go to ski."

The Pink Panther produced yet another Mercer-Mancini song, *It Had Better Be Tonight*. And so did *The Great Race*, a Tony Curtis comedy about an automobile race from New York to Paris. For this, Hank and Johnny wrote *The Sweetheart Tree*.

Hank's style was so distinctive that you can tune in during a movie on television and recognize his sound instantly. And yet it was amazingly versatile, whether he was scoring comedies like *The Great Race* and *A Shot in the Dark* (one of the Pink Panther films) or serious dramas such as *The Molly Maguires*, the suspense thriller *Experiment in Terror*, or *The White Dawn*, a picture about three Boston whale hunters stranded around Baffin Bay and discovered by Eskimos on an ice floe. Hank researched what little Eskimo music there is and developed a theme based on a simple rising two-note theme played on a recorder. I have always thought *The White Dawn* is one of his most interesting scores.

If film-score albums became a fashion in the record industry, Hank certainly was the most influential figure in establishing the pattern. And no one else ever had the sheer number of such albums released. Hank had become a national, indeed international, phenomenon, and it was almost taken for granted that each score he did would be released on LP.

Most of his albums, to be sure, consisted of his own compositions, but from time to time he would record the music of other composers, as in the case of Ray Bauduc's and Bob Haggart's *Big Noise from Winnetka*, a novelty hit from the big-band era, and Jimmy Van Heusen's and Sammy Cahn's *The Second Time Around*. But far and away the most successful of these recordings of pieces by other writers was his arrangement of the love theme from Franco Zeffirelli's film version of *Romeo and Juliet*. So popular did this become, and so associated with Mancini, that it is often forgotten that he didn't write it. It is the work of the Italian film composer Nino Rota.

From 1958 on, Hank averaged three film scores a year. Given his income from the constant showing of these films on television, the number of recordings of his songs, and the income from his concerts, he became no doubt the wealthiest movie composer in history, and certainly the most popular.

"By 1964," Hank said, "the kids were getting bigger and we were outgrowing the house. I was making the long drive into town to work, sometimes twice a day. Money was no longer a problem for us. We started to look for a larger place in a more convenient location. Through a real estate broker we found a house in Holmby Hills that had once been owned by Art Linkletter and rests in a pocket bordered on one side by Beverly Hills and Bel Air on the other. The neighborhood had a history. Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall had lived across the street. Judy Garland lived on that street when she was married to Sid Luft. Bing Crosby and Sammy Cahn both lived there.

"The move to Holmby Hills changed our style of life tremen-

dously. The house, a typical two-story Georgian red brick, which we eventually painted white, had a big pool in the back and a pleasant yard. It was set behind a circular driveway at the top of a small hill. The street, Mapleton Drive, was just off Sunset Boulevard, and therefore the traffic was heavier than we had experienced in Northridge. The kids could no longer leave their bikes out overnight or ride them safely up and down the street. And there would no longer be grungy little friends running in and out of the house, slamming the doors as they went. It must have been tough on the kids to move to a new place with built-in restrictions. On the other hand, each of them had a separate room and bath.

"For Ginny and me, the biggest advantage was that we didn't have to drive fifty miles a day, or more, to go to work.

"We all settled into a new way of life — life in the fast lane."

The money would roll in almost relentlessly. For Hank did not write for the transitory pop-song market. He wrote for film. At any given moment, many of his films are being presented on the television, and royalties are paid on the music in these (and all other) films by the broadcasting company. This meant that all his life, Hank received royalties not just on the famous pictures such as *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and *The Pink Panther*, but on earlier work such as his contributions to *Abbott and Costello Go to Mars*, *Abbott and Costello Meet Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *City Beneath the Sea*, *The Veils of Baghdad*, *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*, *Revenge of the Creature*, *Ma and Pa Kettle at Home*, *The Kettles in the Ozarks*, *Tarantula*, *Francis in the Haunted House*, and one of the first rock musicals, *Rock, Pretty Baby*. These royalties will be paid for fifty years after his death, which means that not only his grandchildren will receive them, his great grandchildren will do so as well. As he put it in one of our many conversations, "Movies are forever."

I once asked Ginny what had been the greatest shock when she and Hank passed quite suddenly from being a struggling young couple to being genuinely rich. "The need to be on guard," she said. "I didn't like that at all."

She continued to work as a singer long after it became unnecessary. Indeed, she was Hank's vocal contractor, assembling the choral groups heard on his albums and film scores, and sang with them. She always retained contact with her old friends among the studio singers. Some of them, and even some big stars such as Betty Hutton, Ella May Morse, and Helen Forrest, had fallen on hard times. Ginny became the founding president of the Society of Singers, an organization specifically set up to help them and others in similar situations.

At the organization's initiation, Ginny threw a party at their impressive — 11,000 square feet of floor space — Holmby Hills house. Just about everyone you could think of from that world of singers was there in the huge living room under a beamed high-vaulted ceiling. They gathered around the piano and suddenly started to sing — a grand chorus improvising the harmony parts on some song. They finished it and laughed and started another one. There must have been twenty of them — the King Sisters among them — all falling into their parts as naturally as breathing. It was

quite remarkable, and Hank said to me, affecting indignation, "Do you hear that? Do you hear what they're doing? Do you know how long it would take me to get a sound like that on a record date? Do you know how much it would cost me?"

Ginny eventually quit the business. It happened on one of Hank's own record dates. She and the singers she had hired arrived to find no musicians in the studio. Where were they?

Hank explained that the singers would overdub the voices on rhythm tracks that had already been recorded; full orchestra would be added later. "That's the way we do it now," Hank said.

"Not me," Ginny said. "When the fun's gone, I want no part of it." She said the warmth and camaraderie had gone out of recording, and besides there were other singers who needed the money, and she didn't. And after that session, she quit.

Ginny told me something that I found touching. Hank was in the habit at the end of a day of leaving whatever coins were in his pocket in an ashtray in their bedroom. Once after a concert, Hank put some change, a lot of pennies, into the ashtray. Ginny looked at it with a fixed stare. "I couldn't help thinking," she said, "how much that would have meant to me when I was a kid, saving pennies to go to the movies. Now they meant nothing."

Hank's relations with his father continued difficult. Hank said, "One thing that helped in raising the children was that Ginny and I held a united front. I can't ever remember speaking a word of anger in front of the kids. Chris has said that he has never seen me lose my temper. I don't know if that's good or bad. But Ginny bore the burden of the problems with the kids, and she came out the other end with her sense of humor and our marriage still intact. The credit is all hers.

"The kids brought out those curious qualities of personality in my father, who was a frequent visitor. They were well aware of his temper. Yet he used to take Chris to ball games, and Chris had good times with him. But my father would get very nervous when they were just being kids.

"Every December we strung up Christmas lights across the rain gutter and across the top of the window in Northridge. One year my dad said, 'Let me do it.' He got up on the ladder. The girls, who were then eight years old, were playing. They ran under the ladder and knocked it down. My dad broke two ribs in the fall. Of course the girls were horrified. The accident only added to his sense of persecution.

"We used to have informal dinners on stools around a low, large, cut-down round, antique, oak table. That table played an important part in our lives when the children were small. I used to diaper them on that table. When bedtime came, the three kids would run to the table and lie down on it, and I would put on their diapers and put them to bed.

"We often took my father for outings on the Gunn Boat." This was the name Hank had given to the boat he'd bought. "One Sunday afternoon, we decided to stay overnight at Newport Beach. He drove the kids back home in his car. When they got home to Northridge, Rebecca, our housekeeper, whom the kids just loved, made them dinner and gave it to them on that round oak table. The kids started giggling and fooling around. One of them did some-

thing, I have no idea what, that infuriated my dad. He put his hands under the table and flipped it over, sending the plates of pasta flying. It terrified the children. When someone does something strange and unexpected, you wonder what they are going to do next. But he did nothing. He'd got his anger out of his system and he never laid a hand on the kids."

Hank commanded enormous respect among musicians. I had been aware of it for some time, from the comments of studio musicians who had recorded with him in Los Angeles. No one ever saw him lose his temper or treat any musician with anything but respect. On that 1987 trip to Pittsburgh, I spent several days with him and the small core of musicians he took with him on tours of the eastern United States, Al Cobine on tenor saxophone, Cecil Welch on trumpet, Steve Dokken on bass, Jack Gilfooy on drums, Royce Campbell on guitar. They even went overseas with him, performing in Israel and Australia. A different group worked with him on the west coast, Don Menza or Pete Christlieb or Ray Pizzi on tenor saxophone, Mike Clinco on guitar and, often, Abraham Laboriel on bass. Hank always used the cream of west coast jazz musicians on his dates, including Ray Brown, Shelly Manne, Dick Nash, Plas Johnson, Jimmy Rowles, Bud Shank, Larry Bunker, and bassist Rolly Bundock and the great lead trumpet player Conrad Gozzo, the last two his friends since the Beneke days. Larry once told me, "Hank handles the show business world very well, but I always have the feeling he'd rather be hanging out with the guys."

Jack Gilfooy told me a year after Hank's death, "Hank never expected the impossible of you, and working for him was always a joy."

Al Cobine, who was Hank's contractor for eastern concerts for thirty years, said, "Almost all of that time, we had a working relationship. He was a very private man, and I respected his privacy.

"In the last five years, we became friends. It came about gradually, almost imperceptibly.

"He was so easy to work with. He was so loyal. And of all the big stars, I never knew of one who treated his sidemen so well."

A similar admiration was expressed by Ray Sherman, a widely respected pianist on call for all manner of record dates in Los Angeles. Ray recalled working with Hank at the Hollywood Bowl in the summer of 1984.

Ray said, "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, 'How does it feel?'

"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."

Hank won, by my count, at least twenty Grammy Awards (and seventy nominations), and four Academy Awards (and eighteen

nominations). He scored more than eighty movies and a number of TV films as well, including *The Thorn Birds*. He composed themes for something close to twenty TV shows, and recorded more than eighty albums. He performed, and I think this is significant in the life of a boy treated meanly by the Cake Eaters of his home town, four times at the White House and three times for the British royal family. I think he was rather proud of this.

Hank's was an astonishingly fertile life work, characterized by a supreme elegance. Of all the things I have heard said in praise of it, one stands out in my mind more than any other. A woman said it to me:

"His music makes you feel beautiful."

When I think of him, it is often of that last time together on the Norway. But more, I think of our trip to Pittsburgh, and West Aliquippa.

Before the concert on one of those evenings in Pittsburgh, there was a glorious Italian dinner at a restaurant, with Hank in an elated mood and ordering the wines with the grand satisfaction of some great signore entertaining his friends. "This is what life on the road is all about, man," he said.

The Musengos attended the concert. Backstage at intermission Hank's face was full of affection for them.

The next morning, November 15, 1987 in front of the hotel, Hank and I got into the Lincoln he had rented for five days, mostly for the use of his musicians. We drove out along the Allegheny River, with its many bridges, into the point of land where the Monongahela meets it, creating that prow point of downtown Pittsburgh called the Golden Triangle. We crossed a bridge heading north and found ourselves in a tangle of small streets in an area of small industries. "Hey, I remembered!" Hank said triumphantly as he made a turn into one of the streets.

"What, are you afraid senility is setting in?" I chided.

"No, man," he said, "it's just that it's been so long." We picked up a street on the northeast bank of the Ohio called, logically enough, Ohio River Boulevard. The day was clear, and exceptionally warm for November. The road ran along the shoulder of the high riverbank. Bare trees stood like black lace on slopes made brown by fallen leaves. The car rolled smoothly along to Ambridge, a community whose name is contracted from that of the American Bridge Company. We crossed the river on a long bridge, then swung north. We were now, Hank told me, in Aliquippa. Aliquippa at this point consisted of a treed slope above us on the left and a long — very long — expanse of abandoned factory on the right. I had heard about this, read about it, seen it on television, but all of it together had not prepared me for the vision of a dead industry. What had been the Jones and Laughlin Steel Company, stretched for miles northward along the riverbank, was a deserted dead thing, with smokestacks like the fingers of supplicant hands against the sky. All the prayers in the world wouldn't help: the massive mismanagement of the economy had done its work, and American capital had fueled the steel mills of Korea, among other countries, whose newer equipment and advanced management had destroyed the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of American

workers.

We passed long stretches of chain-link fence protecting properties whose furnaces would never be warm again. And a few miles to the south, in West Virginia, towns such as Davy were dying because Pittsburgh no longer bought their coal. In a strange bleak way, this vista of ruined industry was impressive. One thinks of America as young, and growing, and vital, not depleted and moribund. Yet Carbondale, Illinois, died when the coal was exhausted; and before that Nevada towns died when the silver gave out. But such cities died of the exhaustion of resources. The United States is a land of capable, willing, and skilled workers, a great people blended of all the nationalities of the world, and these Pennsylvania communities were dying not of the depletion of resources but the misuse and mismanagement of the economy. The terrible reality we were seeing was heartbreaking. And awesome.

I thought of something Hank had once told me, when I asked why he re-recorded his music when it was to be issued on LPs. He said that the moguls of Hollywood had stripped the money out of the old studios for their own benefit, failing to invest in new equipment, and so movie sound simply wasn't good enough for issue of the music on records.

I said, "Hank, do you remember a song Gordon McRae did called *River of Smoke*? It was about a worker who sees these rivers of smoke on the sky as wonderful, because they enable him to make the money to marry his girl."

"Yeah, I remember it," Hank said.

At last he turned off the highway. "Well, this is it," he said. "West Aliquippa."

It was the worst of all. Hank swung the Lincoln into shabby streets of a tiny town. They were paved with brick cobbles; the town had never even got to asphalt. Grass grew between the bricks. "Now at one time we lived . . ." Hank said, turning a corner. "It's gone!" We looked at an empty lot between two crumbling and deserted frame houses. "Wait a minute," he said. He seemed completely disoriented. He drove on. Nobody lived in these houses. This town wasn't dying, it was dead. "Now, this is one of the places we lived," he said. "This is 401 Beaver Avenue." We got out of the car and looked around. Hank walked up the short sidewalk to the house. The house, painted a hideous and flaking green, was in an advanced state of decay. I turned 360 degrees, surveying the decay of the community. I felt an overwhelming urge to restore these places, and realized even as I detected the emotion that such an attempt would be futile. I thought about the condition that the wiring of these places must be in, the crumbling foundations, the dry rot and wet rot of the wood, all the ravages of neglect. There was nothing you could do for this town but put it out of its misery: burn it to the ground and let nature reclaim this devastated terrain.

I tried to imagine the boy Hank had been, playing stickball in the streets. I listened for the cries and laughter of children. I heard nothing, not even wind. It was a still day. I turned and looked at 401 Beaver Avenue. Hank was sitting on the steps to its porch. He was wearing an exquisite black windbreaker of thin glove leather, and a black Greek sailor's cap, purchased perhaps in Athens. Then,

just for a second, I almost saw the boy who used to practice flute in this house.

We got back in the Lincoln. Ahead of us a cat crossed the cobbled street. We drove around the town a bit: it comprises no more than ten square blocks. Hog and Crow Islands, where Hank's mother once tended her vegetable plot, were gone: landfill had joined them to the shore, and on it stood a large steel plant. It appeared to be fairly new, but it was deserted.

We passed a building whose windows and doors had been bricked in. Why? Why preserve it? It would never be used again. "That was the Sons of Italy hall," Hank said. One house we passed had a well-tended little vegetable plot in the backyard. An old man was standing looking at it. Somebody still lived here. I wondered what he thought of the Lincoln passing by. "We lived here for a while, upstairs," Hank said. It was a two-story building of flats. "There was a fire, and I remember my father carrying me down the steps." But the steps were gone, and the sagging balcony would fall in a year or two. "Over here was the Serbian hall, and that empty lot, that's where the bandstand was, where we played in the Sons of Italy band."

We left West Aliquippa, and not far away turned into the main street of Aliquippa proper. Hank said it was named for some ancient Indian queen. Its main street lies in the length of a wooded ravine cut eons ago by some feeder of the Ohio. It was a much larger community, not yet as dead as West Aliquippa. A few people were to be seen on the street, though they seemed to be going nowhere in particular. Storefronts were boarded up, there was trash and broken glass in the gutters and on sidewalks, and weeds grew in cracks in the cement. "How do you feel, seeing this?" I said.

"Empty. Hollow," Hank said. "Just hollow."

He headed the car up a slope of the river bluff. "This was my high school," he said. It was an extensive brick plant on the brow of the hill. We got out. "I want to see if I can find the band room," Hank said. We entered a door and looked around. Hank walked ahead of me. A small stern woman in her sixties emerged from an office and said to me severely, "Can I help you gentlemen?" Hank was too far ahead of me to hear her.

"My friend," I said, "used to go to this school, and he wanted to look around."

"And who is your friend?" she said, with no diminution of suspicion. Maybe she thought we were dope pushers.

"Henry Mancini," I said.

"Henry!" she cried, her face lighting. "I graduated with you!"

And she rushed toward him. I thought she was going to embrace him. She told him about her family, and Hank remembered them. Hank said he was looking for the band room. She led the way, and they talked about old friends.

We climbed a flight of stairs and in a dusty cluttered office the woman introduced us to the band director. This is how the world has changed: the band director's name was Victoria Eppinger, and she told us she had graduated from the University of Illinois. She was in her late twenties or early thirties. What's your instrument? I asked her. Would it be harp, piano, flute, the instruments girls traditionally play? "Trombone," she said.

"I've found a lot of clippings about you," she told Hank, and dug them out. "I've only been here this year, and I'm still going through old files." She showed us the newspaper clippings, most of them about his occasional returns to Beaver County, to play benefits for one cause or another. "Henry Mancini Returns to Help," one headline proclaimed.

She even had his high-school year book. The entry on Hank said that he wanted to be an arranger and hoped some day to have his own band.

We went into the band room. Two boys were sitting on folding chairs, looking at music stands. "Hey, that's the same piano!" Hank said, looking at a scarred old brown spinet standing against the wall by a blackboard. The keyboard cover was secured by a padlocked hasp. "I think that's the same goddamn padlock! I used to play this piano!"

We went to the school's main office. The lady who had greeted us so severely introduced Hank to two women on the staff. One of them asked Hank if he remembered So-and-So, her cousin. He did. At last we left. We were standing in front of the school's pillared portico when a black man in his forties with a compact, neat, muscular body approached us and said, "Aren't you Henry Mancini?"

"Yes," Hank said.

"You went to this school."

"Yeah," Hank said.

"I work here," the man said. He had a bright, warm, accepting smile, which Hank reciprocated. In photos Hank sometimes has a rather stiff smile, not unlike the uncomfortable smile of Glenn Miller, but in person it is ready and easy. "Man, what a pleasure to meet you," the man said, pumping Hank's hand.

In 1946, Pittsburgh instituted a grand reclamation project. Blighted areas were razed and laws were put in place requiring the steel and coke industries to put scrubbers on their stacks and cease their pollution of the air. Today the rivers of smoke are gone and Pittsburgh is one of the cleanest cities in America. Further, its dead industries are being replaced by computer and communications companies and it is becoming a major medical and educational community. It is a great city, rated by surveys and studies as probably the best in America in which to live. And its orchestra is superb.

I had become curious about the two theaters that had played such an important role in Hank's youth — the Stanley and Loew's Penn. He'd told me as we were on route to Pittsburgh that they were both gone now, victims of progress. But since our arrival, he'd learned that the Stanley hadn't been torn down. On the contrary, it had been refurbished at a cost of millions and now was named the Benedum Center. Its stage had been enlarged and now it was a home for opera and musical theater. *I Pagliacci* had just closed; *Cats* was coming in next week. And Hank had arranged to go through it when we got back from Aliquippa.

We stood in the wing stage left, watching a crew break the set of *I Pagliacci*. "I used to stand here and watch the bands," Hank said. "You know that mist they use on movie sets for effect? Well,

they didn't need that: the air looked like that on this stage in those days. You could always smell the coke ovens. I remember watching the Ellington band here. You see that first balcony out there? Well in the 1937 flood, the water was right up to there."

Hank asked someone on the Benedum staff about the basement of the place, where he'd studied with Max Adkins. But the whole basement had been restructured and that office was gone. Hank asked when the old Loew's Penn had been torn down. He was told that it had never been torn down: on the contrary, it had been restored on a grant from the H.J. Heinz people, and it was now Heinz Hall, home of the Pittsburgh Symphony.

It hit us both at the same time. I said, "That's where you're standing to conduct. Just in front of the proscenium! Right where the screen was on which you saw *The Crusades*."

On November 17, 1987, Hank and I returned to California.

Hank was one of those fortunate souls able to sleep on airplanes. I envied him this ability. After a while he awakened.

I felt I had come to understand something about the Peces and Mancinis. Most of the immigrants to America came from deep poverty, from a desperate peasantry. The Pece family had money. And so, until his father was cheated of the house and the lands around it, did the Mancinis. Possibly — we'll never know now — this was the reason for Quinto Mancini's silence: a bitterness that he, of that landed family in Abruzzi, had to work in a steel mill. James Joyce's short story *Counterparts* describes a man's frustrations during his working day which, at its end, he takes out on his kid. Maybe that's what Quinto Mancini did. But he made sure Henry had his music lessons, and Henry never went to the steel mills. Who wrote, "We are all the victims of the victims"? I told Hank what Ralph Musengo had recalled of the family history, the theft of the house and land in Scanno.

"I never knew that," Hank said, and fell silent.

"Helen," I said, "gave me an impression of your father as a warm and affectionate man."

"Yeah," Hank said. "Well, that's what he showed to the world. It's not what he showed me."

After a time, Hank opened the handbag he carried in travels, took out Pat Conroy's novel *Prince of Tides*, and began to read. Something gave him pause, and he sat pensively for a time. Then he handed me the book, tapping his finger on the final paragraph of an early chapter. "Read that," he said, and I did:

"When parents disapprove of their children and are truly deceitful about that disapproval, there will never dawn a new day in which you know your own value. Nothing can fix a damaged childhood. The most you can hope for is to make the sucker float."

In October of 1993, my wife and I went on a jazz cruise of the Carribean on the S.S. Norway. Hank and Ginny booked themselves aboard the ship, brought their friends, the great comedy writer Larry Gelbart, and asked to be seated at our table. The week was incredible fun, and Larry brought out the funny, relaxed side of Hank. I had no idea that this was the last time I would ever see Hank. Within weeks of our return to California, I learned that he

had cancer.

Hank knew his cancer was terminal, and he handled it with surprising calm, if not serenity. Al Cobine told me that Hank wrote two letters to what he called "my guys." In the first of them he urged them all to take care of their health, saying, "In three months I'll be out of here." The second letter was a simple good-bye.

I have long since learned *not* to avoid contact with friends who are in the late days of their lives. I called him and we talked for perhaps twenty minutes. He said, "I've had a very good life." He asked me to call again, and I did, several times. He handled his approaching death the way he handled everything: with equanimity and grace.

Henry Mancini died June 14, 1994. He was three months short of seventy years old.

Ginny sold their house and lives in a penthouse in the Westwood area of Los Angeles. She travels a lot.

"He's always with me," she told me not long ago.

Mail Bag

I am currently working on an article for *Glenn Gould*, the magazine of the Glenn Gould Foundation, comparing the musical theory and practice of Gould with that of jazz musicians. I received from the National Library of Canada's Gould archives copies of letters you wrote Gould. Your name was already familiar to me from your writings on jazz (and from being a fanatical Bill Evans enthusiast) but I had no idea you were also a friend of Gould's.

I wonder if you have any recollections of Gould, his thoughts or writings, or anything else about him that might be pertinent to my article, and if you would be willing to share them with me. I am particularly interested in Gould's relationship with Evans. I know they had one of some sort because Gould refers to it in one of his published *Selected Letters*. It might also interest you to know, if you don't already, that Evans was apparently Gould's favorite jazz pianist. A list of the records in Gould's collection that I obtained from the National Library lists seven Evans recordings (and also records by Tristano, Jarrett, and Peterson) as well as the score of Ogerman's *Symbiosis*, which was recorded by Evans.

I was pleased to see the quote from Gould in one of your letters calling Evans "the Scriabin of Jazz". Could you tell me the source of that quote and your thoughts on it? As I interpret it, Gould was comparing Evans to Scriabin that they formulated a new harmonic system for their genres of music, in each case a departure that was at once radical and firmly grounded in tradition, and that in each case the departure added a new sensibility to their respective types of music. Incidentally, not all classical musicians and writers are as informed on jazz as Gould was; the footnote on Evans in the *Selected Letters* book, appallingly, identified him as the fusion saxophone player of the same name! I sent a letter of correction to the publisher which was eventually printed in the Gould magazine.

I would be most grateful if you could spare a moment or two to reply.

— James G. Shell, Roanoke, Virginia

Glenn Gould: a Memory

After receiving (and replying to) this letter, I wrote to the National Library of Canada, where Glenn's papers (as well as many of my own) repose. Glenn never wrote me letters; he phoned, often at strange hours and from strange places. He called me once from Northern Canada, where he was exploring some trunk railway line, and another time from somewhere in Newfoundland. Sometimes when he had some sudden enthusiasm to share, he would find the nearest phone booth and call from there. He loved to drive, and told me once that he particularly loved driving in rain or fog. He liked the isolation, the privacy of it. How Glenn would have loved the cell phone. I think too he would have loved email, and I'm sure he'd have become a virtuoso in its use. Since he lived mostly at night, his calls might come at three a.m. This bothered me a lot less after moving to California because of the three-hour time difference with Toronto. Now, when he called at two or three in the morning his time, it was only eleven or twelve for me.

How did Glenn come to know Bill Evans? Because I introduced them. I am certain that I gave Glenn several of those Bill Evans albums, although I think it likely that Bill himself gave him *Symbiosis*, which came out after I moved to California.

What did Glenn have in common with jazz musicians? Time, for one thing. He had time like a great jazz pianist, and because of it his playing, particularly his Bach performances, really swung.

When *High Fidelity* was preparing to publish his essay *The Search for Petula Clark*, a wildly improvisatory piece that arrived in the New York office in a rather confused order, I was asked to edit it, which was a little like handing me a hot potato. Everyone was in awe of Glenn, seen as an austere and distant eccentric.

I am not sure whether I had already met Glenn; it seems likely that I met him through the late Robert Offergeld, the music editor of *Stereo Review* when I wrote for it. Bob was one of the great mentors of my life.

I could not in conscience let that piece go as it was. So I bit the bullet, got out my pencil, and dug in. I sent it back to Glenn in Toronto, expecting some flight of temperament. Instead he phoned me and thanked me for the judicious editing. The version that appears in *The Glenn Gould Reader*, a collection of Glenn's writings edited by Tim Page, is the one with my editing, from the November 1967 issue of the magazine. Seeing that I got on with him, the magazine asked me to photograph him in a car, for the fantasy of the piece is his musings on Petula Clark while he was driving, which he always was. I spent a day with him in New York, and photographed in a convertible, and we became friends.

When the Walter Carlos album *Switched-On Bach* came out, the magazine asked me to write a piece about it. Nobody much knew what synthesizers were. But my friend Rachel Elkind had produced that album, she introduced me to Walter Carlos, Walter introduced me to Robert Moog (pronounced to rhyme with Vogue, by the way, although you rarely hear it) and the two of them explained more or less how the instrument worked. There were polyphonic synthesizers yet, and that album was made in line-by-line overdubbing.

I felt I had done my homework on synthesizers. But what about Bach? I obtained a second copy of the album and sent it to Glenn, who loved it. The expertise I managed to display on the subject of Bach wasn't mine, but that of my secret weapon, Glenn Gould. As for Glenn's knowledge of jazz, it was limited. As I consulted him on Bach and other matters, when it came to jazz he consulted me.

I soon found myself on the list of friends he telephoned. Glenn lived his social life on the phone. Even then, his telephone bills ran to four figures each month. But if that's what he wanted to spend his money, he had lots of it, not only from his obvious career but from the stock market. His broker said he was a virtuoso at that, too. He had close friends he had never met face to face. Though he and I lived less than three blocks apart on St. Clair Avenue in Toronto, I was in his physical presence only four or five times. I get annoyed at seeing him referred to as reclusive. His friendships were legion; he just lived them on the telephone, and very richly. When I got a call from Glenn, I'd put aside whatever I was doing, for I was about to have some fun.

He and Bob Offergeld had a curiously abrasive friendship. One of the reasons was the way Glenn played Mozart, of which Bob disapproved. In that idiot argument that goes on in exalted classical circles over whether Mozart or Bach was history's greatest composer. Bob was a Mozart man; Glenn was firmly on Bach's side. I guess Bob didn't like it when Glenn said of Mozart, "For me, the G-minor Symphony consists of eight remarkable measures surrounded by a half hour of banality." And I don't suppose Bob liked it much when Glenn said Beethoven was "one composer whose reputation is based entirely on gossip." I liked what Glenn said about Schoenberg: that he "doesn't write *against* the piano, but neither can he be accused of writing *for* it." And Bob was one of those who was infuriated at Glenn for giving up public performing, which Glenn did in 1964, after nine years of a spectacular concert career. He was only thirty-two.

But he didn't quit recording. On the contrary, his output was prodigious, and through an astonishing range of repertoire. He compared it to making movies. He wanted perfection. This led to rumors that his records were spliced together in bits. Andrew Kazdin, who produced a lot of his albums, said that quite to the contrary, Glenn would make complete takes, and then choose which sections he wanted to edit into the final performance.

His playing itself could irritate people, who considered a lot of his interpretations arbitrary and eccentric. I found them very fresh and different, shedding new light on familiar music and introducing me to music I had never known. And there is no questioning his eccentricity. One of the things that bugged Offergeld, who down deep really cared about Glenn, were his unhealthy dietary habits, which leaned strongly to scrambled eggs and the like. Bob said irritably to me, "He's going to die young of a stroke."

George Szell said of Glenn, "That nut is a genius." Somebody else said that he was "profoundly strange," and I can't quarrel with that. He was shrouded in some inner vision, a man wrapped in his own genius. Glenn was weird, no doubt about it. But he was also genuinely benign, and far from being forbidding or dour, he was genuinely funny. He had an uncanny ear for accents and voices and

an ability to imitate their voices and accents. The German composer Karlheinz Klopweisser (Glenn in a flowing white wig and granny glasses) or (in a shorter white wig and bushy white mustache) the English conductor Sir Nigel Twitt-Thornthwaite were among his nuttier inventions. I wallowed, when he called, in his maniacal extemporizations. He had no better audience than I, and he knew it. Great pianist — one of the greatest of this now-ending century — brilliant and iconoclastic scholar, all that aside, Glenn Gould was a genuinely funny cat.

In 1993, a Canadian director named Francois Girard made a picture called *Thirty Two Short Films about Glenn Gould*. I rather dreaded seeing it, since I am often made uncomfortable by actors portraying persons I actually knew. It's an odd little picture which mixes short interviews with bits in which actor Colm Feore plays Glenn, often in short monologues. But I finally watched it and liked it a lot, and I'd like to commend it to you, particularly if it turns up on television. I think it gives you a remarkably strong image of the man, and the actor captures Glenn quite well, even to his gestures and way of moving.

The relationship between Glenn and Bill Evans began just after Bill recorded *Conversations with Myself*. I knew how much he loved Glenn's playing. Indeed, he'd said, "If I could play Bach like that, I'd be a contented man." And Glenn had a new album about to come out — Mozart sonatas, as I recall. I had what I thought was a stroke of genius. I suggested to the editor of *High Fidelity* that we try to get Glenn to review Bill on one page and Bill to review Glenn on the other. Both of them agreed. I sent Glenn a test pressing of Bill's album, which caused him to say to me, "He's the Scriabin of jazz," an oft-quoted remark. (I did not know at the time that Bill was a Scriabin lover.) I got a copy of Glenn's new album for Bill, and then the deal fell through: Bill chickened out. I think he was daunted by the task.

By 1970, I was living in Toronto. Bill would play the Town Tavern from time to time, and call when he'd checked into his hotel room and, often, come for dinner. He was at our apartment once when the phone rang. It was Glenn. I said something like, "Hey, there's someone here I want you to meet." And I put Bill on the phone with Glenn. The conversation must have lasted an hour; there were no short conversations with Glenn Gould.

When I learned Glenn had a copy of Claus's *Symbiosis*. I called Claus, who told me that he had exchanged some correspondence with Glenn about it. Claus also told me that he had written a piano concerto that he had hoped to see Glenn record. Glenn died before Claus could send it to him. Although he was most renowned for his Bach, Glenn was very interested in much contemporary music. Claus, by the way, noted that one thing that was electrifying about Glenn's Bach is that he played it without pedals.

Glenn never married. The movie raises the question of whether he was homosexual but doesn't answer it. I don't think so, not that it matters beyond the fact that the question often came up for the reason that, as Anatole France put it, the strangest of all sexual aberrations is abstinence. Glenn was afraid of germs and physical contact, one of the reasons he lived his social life on the telephone. He had a lot of women friends — on the telephone.

Insofar as Glenn's eccentricities are concerned, some of them make good sense to me. He used to soak his hands and forearms in warm water before playing. He groaned when he played, but a lot of pianists do that. And he sat on a funny little chair that squeaked when he played. But he seemed to find it comfortable. Glenn told me he had suffered since childhood from the effects of a back injury incurred in a fall. I think that chair helped him.

As for what was considered his ultimate eccentricity, ceasing to play in public, he was hardly alone in that. He didn't like the life, the sense of being some exotic creature on display. And there is a tremendous pressure in that. Singer Jo Stafford gave up public performing with a lucrative Las Vegas contract awaiting only her symphony. Artie Shaw, who also hated the life, quit playing entirely in 1954, at the age of forty-four. Saxophonist Charlie Kennedy, a beautiful player, quite the business. Trombonist Milt Bernhart walked away and became a travel agent. Drummer Stan Levey became a photographer. Drummer Pete La Roca quit the business at the age of thirty to become a lawyer. Arranger Marion Evans (of whom much more in a later issue), quit the music business to become a financial consultant, and a very successful one. In 1832, at a peak of his development, Rossini at the age of forty went into comparative seclusion and composed only a little. Jean Sibelius quit composing around 1928.

Admirers who would give anything to have the talents of these people are baffled by this. But to the artist, the process is often the thing. One strives to master a certain thing, and having done so, grows blasé about it, seeking the next challenge. Some become bored by the whole process. This is the to something Offergeld taught me: "Real revolutions in art come from masters who have grown bored with their own work." And to Jobim's perception that "we value least the talents that come easiest to us."

On October 4, 1982, I worked on a song withat Roger Kellaway at his house in Malibu. We worked late and I stayed over. In the morning, I was oppressed by melancholy, and kept thinking about Glenn. I drove home to Ojai, remembering how Glenn said he loved to drive in rain and fog.

As I walked in the door, a television newscaster said Glenn Gould had died the previous day. Cause of death: stroke, as Bob Offergeld had predicted. He was ten days past fifty. And another odd thing: Glenn had predicted that he would quit playing the piano at fifty. He did indeed.

When I learned from James Shell's letter that some correspondence I'd had with Glenn was among his papers at the National Library of Canada, I wrote to ask whether I could get copies of whatever was there. There wasn't much, some stuff about early issues of the *Jazzletter* and a piece of humor I had written, which Glenn liked and had called me about it. (He said, "It's almost as good as one of my pieces.")

Then I saw something that gave me a bit of a choke. A photocopy of a Christmas card I'd sent him from California. It was dated in Glenn's handwriting: December 1977.

He'd kept it through the five years he had left to live.

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