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The Man that Got Away
Part II

Marion was at the peak of his musical career when, seemingly abruptly, toward the end of the 1960s, he simply walked away from the business, leaving his friends startled. Even more startling was the fact that he became a financial consultant. I remember saying to someone or other at the time, "Any guy who can think voice leading the way Marion can shouldn't find the stock market all that difficult."

But there was much more to it than that. I didn't know it but Marion had not two but three professions.

"I was born," Marion said, "on May 1, 1926, in Goodwater, Alabama, which is south of Birmingham. My father was in two businesses, lumber and banking. My Uncle Will was president of the bank, and he was the one who got me interested in finance.

"Not that I was interested at that time. But it is the vocabulary that you pick up. Long-term interest rates and amortization and accrued interest and things like that. I knew that about the same time I knew the C-minor chord. It's an acquired language, and I really intended to go into finances. I never intended to be a musician.

"But I had a very intense musical education because of my mother. I didn't have much choice. I worked the harmony exercises and started the violin and fought my way back from the violin teacher every Saturday afternoon."

"How old were you when you *started* to study harmony?"

"I have no recollection of not doing it. It was just something that I did. When I got out of high school, I went to Auburn to study engineering. The reason I went there was that they had a wonderful band and I wanted to play trumpet with it. It's a very big university now, but at that time they didn't even have a music department. That's the band Urbie Green came from. Later Toni Tennille sang with the band. Toni Tennille's father played drums with the band in 1930.

"They have a very good music school there now. In fact the guy who basically endowed the college had once been a member of the college dance band. He left huge amounts of money to the school but with the provision: it's okay to play the cello, it's okay to be an opera singer, but you gotta have a quarter in Glenn Miller, a quarter in Benny Goodman, a quarter in Tommy Dorsey. In other words: I don't care what you major in, but you've got to study a little bit on the history of jazz, or commercial music, or whatever you want to call it.

"That band is so over-endowed that they have asked people not to make any more donations. When we were there, we had our own house, which we called the Cat House. We worked usually on Fridays and Saturdays.

"Today, if you want to go there, and they're looking for a new trombone and you can make it, you do the rehearsals, you don't have to be a music major. You can study law or whatever you want, but if you can get into that band, you have your full tuition, everything, paid for. The competition is ferocious, but you have your entire college education paid for.

"I studied engineering until I got drafted. And that changes your whole life. After I had been in the Navy about ten minutes, they assigned me to the Marine Corps, and I wound up in the Seabees. I went overseas with the 19th Construction Battalion, the First Marine Division, and spent a year and a half on Okinawa."

"Did you ever talk to Jimmy Koulouvaris about the Seabees?"

"Oh sure. He was part of it. When I first went overseas, one of the first people I met was Sam Donahue. He had the Navy band that Artie Shaw had had. Obie Massingale was in the band. Osie Johnson was the drummer. I first saw that band on a place called Mog Mog Island in the Ulitha Group, about a day's travel from the Philippines.

"I met these guys from New York, who had played with this band and that band, and the initial attraction after I got home was to show business. I had to come to New York and see all that stuff when I got out of service in 1945.

"I went to the conservatory in Birmingham because there was one man that I wanted to study with who at that time was getting his PhD in composition at the Royal Conservatory in Toronto. His name was G. Ackley Brower. He was Percy Goetschius's assistant at what later became Juilliard. At the turn of the century, it was the Institute of Musical Arts, and Walter Damrosch was the president. Even as late as 1946 or '47, they did not offer a PhD in composition anywhere in the United States. But the Royal Conservatory offered it, and every summer G. Ackley Brower went up and wrote a symphony and all of that, and got his PhD. And I wanted to study composition with him."

"Did you get a bachelor's?"

"Yeah." He laughed. "I haven't seen it since I graduated. Nobody ever asked me for it.

"I came up to New York in the summer — probably 1947 — and studied three months at Juilliard. I still wasn't sure I was going to be an engineer. What are you sure of at that age? I didn't get a degree at Juilliard, but I studied there until I went to work.

"A friend of mine from the band in Auburn played lead alto in the Tex Beneke Glenn Miller band. One weekend Tex and the band came through Auburn. I wasn't able to go to the concert because that weekend my grandfather died. When I came back the

following Monday, my friend told me he'd given Tex some arrangements I had written for the Auburn band. I was ready to kill him. I was just hanging out with the band. I was trying to decide to go into engineering.

"About six weeks later, I got a beautiful letter from Tex. By then I figured they'd burned the arrangements. He said, 'As you know, we don't rehearse when we're on the road. We didn't get around to playing the arrangements until we got to the Palladium.' He offered me a job. I showed up twenty-four hours later in New York. Tex is a very nice man.

"I started writing for him. Henry Mancini was still there. I sort of replaced him, writing. He went to California.

"This was approximately 1950. There was a man named John O'Leary who had been with the original Miller band. He was sort of the road manager. Dick Gabbe was the agent for the band. They had an office on the second floor in the old Piccadilly Hotel. And they had all the old Miller records there, all the air checks, all the old arrangements.

"John said he had to have a plywood thing built on the wall to hold these huge platters, fifteen-minute broadcasts. Miller would play them once or twice, to try to figure out how to make the broadcasts better. John labelled them and put them back, and they were perfect.

"I called RCA. I think it was Eli Oberstein. I told him what I'd found. He said, 'Lock the door and stay there. A Brinks truck will be there within an hour.' They transferred them to tape. They released a lot of them."

(The Reader's Digest label has a four-CD package, titled *Glenn Miller Live,* derived from the broadcast material Marion found.)

"I saw a lot of scores by Jerry Gray, who wrote tons of things for the band. And Bill Finegan, who was an idol of mine. I had the original Glenn Miller arranging book. Bill wrote some wonderful arrangements for the band, but Jerry Gray wrote it by the pound, y'know. Glenn would redo it with a pencil on the top of the saxophones or at the top of the score. He would make very detailed rhythmic notation, for the phrasing. And I thought, 'What the hell was he doing?' And it dawned on me after a while that he was having the band play the implied lyrics of the song. You could tell from the lyrics, if you knew them.

"All these things were very systematic. It was like a one-act play. The format was clear. From a short introduction, which was basically meaningless, the band would play eight bars in the Miller style with the doo-wahs and the brass and the clarinet lead and all that. If Miller didn't like it, he'd change it. And then there would be a modulation into a vocal. And the rhythm section, while they kept going in time, wasn't playing just straight four, they'd play backbeats on two and four, and Glenn would come out and announce. And he would look at the band and say, 'Here is so-and-so to sing *I Love You.*' The band would go doo-doo-doo, a big button. And then they'd go into straight four again. The audience would turn and look. They were sort of cued. I watched them many times. The guy'd have the arm around the girl, and they'd look up. And then the band would hit straight four. At the end of the song, sometimes the band would be ritarded.

"One of the things he did on almost every arrangement was a cut-off on the fourth beat, whereas most people end on the third. Ritard, turn around, and big ending, and everybody applauded. It was a one-act play. It was very successful and they didn't deviate much from it."

Beneke's name had grown increasingly prominent, but he still was only a salaried employee of the Miller estate. Beneke wanted more credit, and Don Haynes, who had been Miller's pre-war manager and executive officer during the war, and he had a parting of the ways. Haynes ordered the Miller arrangements picked up by court order, which was a little silly in that at that time arrangements could not be copyrighted. The charts were seized at the Palladium in Hollywood. Marion said that Tex chatted pleasantly with the sheriff, who apologized profusely for taking the arrangements. And Tex said, 'Well, it's been nice chatting with you, but we've got to go back to work.' And they went up and . . . . " Marion sang the opening lick of *In the Mood.* He said the band played the book from memory.

Beneke told me they'd known for weeks that the situation was coming to a head, and so he'd had copies of the music made. There were no photocopy machines in those days, and this had to be done by hand. Trombonists Jimmy Priddy and Paul Tanner did some of the work.

Marion said, "But by that time the band really could play those charts by ear. I did record copies of *Juke Box Saturday Night,* and some more. I'm not sure I'm the first to ever say it, but I've been blamed many times for saying, 'It's too bad Glenn didn't live and his music had died.' That's been around a long time."

The version attributed to Jake Hanna is: "Don't you wish Glenn Miller had lived and his music had died?"

Maron said, "Did you see that thing that went around all the fax machines in the music business, *Help Stamp Out 'In the Mood'?.*"

"Oh sure. *To qualify, play this lick ten thousand times.*" At one point I sent it to Rob McConnell. He sent it back with the inscription "I *have* played it ten thousand times."

I asked Marion: "Did you study with Schillinger?" Miller of course had done so.

"No, but I studied with Ted Royal, who taught at Juilliard, which is how I got into the Broadway show thing." Marion orchestrated a lot of Broadway shows, starting with Lerner and Loewe's *Paint Your Wagon* which, he agrees with me, is a really bad show; and the movie is worse. On Broadway, he worked on *Almost Crazy, The Boy Friend* (with Julie Andrews), *House of Flowers* (with Pearl Bailey and Diahann Carroll), *Mister Wonderful* (with Sammy Davis Jr.), and *What Makes Sammy Run* (with Steve Lawrence), and more.

"The Broadway show thing was a factory approach to writing," Marion said. "Horrible. Horrible music. Ted Royal taught the Schillinger system. I sort of took to it. I think one reason was my background in engineering. It was something I sort of identified with. Nothing that I used too much one way or the other. All you have to do is tell a bunch of musicians that they're studying something mathematical and you've got a riot on your hands.

"One of the most famous examples that Schillinger used came to me from Lyle Dowling, who I also studied with. Suppose you had a piano that had only four white notes on it, C D E and F. How many different melodic thoughts can you write, using just those four notes? It's an exact mathematical amount. It's called the factorial of four. Four times three times two times one. It comes to twenty-four. There are immediately twenty-four possible combinations, without any rhythmic variations or octave changes, or anything like that.

"Immediately, instead of beating your head, you know there are twenty-four. So listen to them, depending on your background, your inclination, your character, your training. At least you begin more to work with these. For all we know, Beethoven might never have thought of more than nineteen or twenty of them — we don't know that.

"A lot of famous people studied with Schillinger. Lynn Murray studied with him. Glenn Miller. George Gershwin studied with him four and a half years.

"I was recently looking at *Porgy and Bess*, and it's just full of Schillinger. I can see all the techniques. But of course, with a George Gershwin, it doesn't matter who he studied with, he's going to write great music.

"People do Schillinger a certain amount of disservice. The basic problem is that he was not nearly as good a musician as he was a mathematician. His book was lousy, from a musical point of view. If you're a musician, and you play one of those exercises, it'll turn you right off. But if you're in mathematics, you wonder how he came up with that. I think there's some good thoughts and some bad thoughts in that book.

"I'm pretty much a Percy Goetschius product. Goetschius wrote basically all the great books on classical composition. In the 1880s he was a professor of composition at Stuttgart. I don't think very much has improved on those books since."

"There are five volumes of the Goetschius books?"

"At least. I don't remember how many volumes, but there are a lot of them."

"And you still give them that high status?"

"Oh absolutely. I mean it's not tone row. It's not Igor Stravinsky. But if you want to know Beethoven, you want to know Bach, you want to know the entire tradition, that's it. The guy I studied from, D. Ackley Brower, is the one who translated all those books from German to English. He also translated Sergei Tanief's book on convertible counterpoint. He taught in Russia a hundred years ago. Mr. Brower left all those books to me, and they have never been published. I have all the original manuscripts. Sergei Tanief was the boss on convertible counterpoint.

"As far as I know, I have the only English copy of his work. Mr. Brower had been the chief editor at Carl Fischer and Company. He was not the world's greatest musician, but he knew which side of a B-flat a stem went on, and that was more important to him than what it sounded like. But, y'know, there's a place for that too."

"So you used as teaching tools Farnon records and the Goetschius books."

"Absolutely. The very first time I ever heard of Bob Farnon, I was driving in a car with Tony Tamburello. You remember Tony? We were in New Jersey somewhere. I was driving. Tony had the radio on. We heard an arrangement of *Donkey Serenade*. I just about drove off the road. I had to pull over to the side and listen. When I came to a phone, I called William B. Williams at WNEW, and said, 'Who is this?' and so forth. And that's when I found out that Tony knew him. Bob had been living in New Jersey for a while. He had come down here from Canada."

"Yeah. He came down briefly after the war, and didn't like it, and went back to England."

"Right. I wrote him a fan letter. He came over. I had an album that had just been released. I think it was *Two Cigarettes in the Dark*. I had an all-night party for him, and every arranger in the world I could think of showed up. I still have pictures of them. Whichever album it was, a week later there were a lot of broken pencils around."

"Quincy Jones," I said, "said that if you'd fired a bomb in that apartment that night, there wouldn't have been another note of music written in New York for at least five years."

"He was right. Milt Hinton, who had been on the road with Dizzy with Cab's band, had known Farnon from Toronto before the war. Dizzy was working at Birdland. Quincy went over and got Dizzy and brought him to the party about two o'clock in the morning. It was sort of philosophical time. So, Dizzy, being the clown that he was, started kidding Bob, knowing he used to play the trumpet. He said, 'Ah, you never could play the trumpet. You were a lousy trumpet player.' Bob said, 'Well, you know, the first time I heard you play, with Cab's band, I just couldn't believe it. I knew that was it for me. I came home and I made a lamp out of my trumpet.'

"On that note, Milton Hinton said to Dizzy, 'That's the greatest contribution you ever made to music.'"

"Okay, Marion," I said, "that's cute and funny, but the story's dubious, and I'll tell you why. Bob's brother told me what happened that night. Bob and Dizzy went somewhere and jammed all night. And Dizzy told me, in that funny way, he was *glad* Bob abandoned the trumpet, because, Dizzy said, he was one hell of a trumpet player. So they were putting each other on. And of course that session started their friendship, up to and including the concerto Bob wrote for Dizzy that never got recorded, and indeed the friendship lasted until Dizzy's death. Dizzy used to stay with Bob at his house in Guernsey."

"Well, you know music stories and war stories," Marion said. "After forty or fifty years, they get better with the telling. But that's a cute comment by Milton."

"How did you get to be known as such an arranger for singers?"

"Oh God, I don't know. I think I went through about twenty years of being totally impervious to my surroundings. I was busy all the time. I never thought about the entertainment business. It was just notes by the pound, busy busy busy all the time."

"Tell me about your partnership with Don Costa."

"Well, when I was writing for Tex, Don was writing for

Vaughan Monroe. And it turned out that both bands had the same copying service, a guy named George Green. When I was going to Juilliard, there was a man in the class with me studying Schillinger. His name was Harry Miller. Harry was quite a bit older than me. And Harry had been a vaudeville comedian, interested in music, wrote a few songs but didn't have much background. We became good friends. I'd help him with his harmony exercises and so forth. He had a daughter named Nollie Miller, who was a dancer on the Vaughan Monroe show, the *Camel Caravan*. Harry told me they had this crazy guitar player who wrote music for the show, named Don Costa. Some years later, I was up at George Green's having a score copied. George introduced me to Costa. I remember the first thing I said to him was, 'Oh you're that crazy guitar player.'

"We went back to Don's house. He got an album out, Dave Raksin's music for *Forever Amber*. Don played those old 78 records. I said, 'God, I've worn out two sets of those. That's my favorite movie score of all times.' So we started playing it on the piano, and we became fast friends.

"Over a period of time, we had to write so many things. I'd help him when he'd get hung up and he'd help me, and next thing you know we were working together. We had an office at 1595 Broadway, a block up from the Brill Building. It later became sort of a rock-and-roll building. We would do record dates, whatever it was. Sometimes I'd start at the beginning and write half way and he'd write the end, or the other way around."

"You told me once you couldn't remember who wrote what."

"That's right."

"It must have been something like the Spencer-Hagen partnership."

"That's right, it was. Herb Spencer and Earle Hagen. What a musician Herb Spencer was. Well, when you're writing it by the pound, the thing is to get it to the record date. Costa and I had sort of complementary backgrounds. We came at the music business from the most 180-degrees diverse backgrounds that two people ever had. I came from a very strong academic background, and Don's was, like, if it don't sound good, he won't play it. He was such a wonderful natural musician, and did not have a lot of technique. But the music was so musical. At record dates, I'd see him run the orchestra down, and every time he'd play it, it would sound better and better and better. He would go 'way in the booth, and somebody else would conduct. The band would figure out where to cut the notes off and how to phrase it, and fix a note here, and next thing you know, they're *into* it much more deeply than they would be with someone like me. His music would just get better."

"You mean his notation was careless?"

"Yeah, to a great extent. But he was a very fast writer, and that was great too. It wasn't laborious. It was right off the top, it was very natural sounding. The last thing he thought about was whether or not it should have an eighth note tied over. That was wonderful at the session. First time you'd run the arrangement down, every hand in the band would go up. And everybody's in conversation. And Costa would go into the booth. He'd come back twenty minutes later and the band would have it figured it out, what they were gonna do. And they were *into* it. If they weren't into it, it wasn't going to happen."

"You mean they *liked* the writing."

"Oh! They understood what he was trying to do. You should have seen one of those parts after the record dates. The pencil marks on it looked like chicken scratchings. But they *really* got into the music, strong into it, and their sense of what he was trying to do got better. If he stayed away thirty minutes, it would get still better. It was an interesting thing. I came more from an engineering approach. I would play something down, and it wouldn't sound much better if I stayed there three weeks. Don and I learned to complement each other.

"I learned *a lot* from him, just in his basic musicality. And then of course Bob Farnon comes along, and that blew the whole thing out.

"Bob's talent is always superior to his intellectual knowledge. You can get anybody with reasonable intelligence, if they want to do the work and learn. But when you get somebody with Bob's ability, he would have done it without it. Don Costa was a perfect example of someone who achieved wonderful results with very little training. If Don Costa had had a formal education and studied a great deal, like Bob, I don't know what he would have achieved. It was amazing what he could do. Bob has a lot more structured outlook on what he does than you might think. It sounds so easy; but of course that's what it's supposed to sound like.

"People like that with marvelous ability naturally, most time they're far ahead of their intellectual learning, and they do things that nobody told them they couldn't. Bob is an exception to anything.

"Bob messed up everything for everybody. Once you heard him, that sort of ended it. I was a big Victor Young fan until I heard Bob Farnon, and that ended Victor Young. Not that I didn't like Victor Young. It just took care of it. I didn't play any more Victor Young. I didn't play any other records except Bob Farnon: how to write for orchestra, that was it, end of story. And still is."

"And what is it about his writing?"

"It's indefinable. Well, I can define it up to a point. Here is a person with infinite talent who also has a very strong academic background. I mean: he *understands* what he's doing. That takes it up to a certain level, but past that, there's no conversation about it. He's got it all. He has a certain Mozartish quality about him, in the sense that Mozart would write some of the worst music you ever wanted to hear, because he didn't labor over it. But that very quality also puts you in the position to write some of the greatest music in the history of the world, because it's a spontaneous combustion kind of thing. I think Ravel once said that his greatest problem was that he wrote masterpieces. And it's true. He wrote perfect things. Bob can put something down, and it's nothing, but for the most part, when he wrote something that was sensational, there was nothing like it."

"You said to me once that he had formidable orchestral technique, and his talent exceeded his technique."

"That's right."

"Which is to say that it isn't merely mechanical."

"Oh absolutely not. Because orchestration, in the ultimate, is an extension of the compositional process. It isn't something that you just arbitrarily say, 'Well, I'll have the oboe play that rather than the violin.' It's all part of the conceptual process in the hands of a Farnon. Also, Bob was one of the few arrangers who actually *composed* an arrangement for the orchestra. It wasn't just an arrangement; it had a huge compositional element about it. And I think the most outstanding part about him is how easy it all sounds, how effortless. It all came together for him. It had nothing to do with him; he didn't have anything to do with the genetic structure of Bob Farnon. He's a guy who happened to be in the right place and had the right education and woke up one day and he was the greatest arranger the world has ever known."

"Bob told me he started by writing parts, not scores."

"I did too. Neal Hefti and a lot of people did that. Many people would gravitate to putting four pieces of paper one on top of the other, and writing four parts, but as you graduate into more experienced composition, you create scores to express that."

"Marion, how well did you know Billy Byers?"

"Few people knew Billy as well as I did. We had the same birthday, on May 1. I was a year older than Billy. Billy was the first musician I ever met when I left home. I was in Hollywood. He was with a youth band that played Hollywood during the Second World War. Billy played trombone with them.

"In later years I worked with him a lot. He was an amazing musician. I think most people in the business knew that. Back when you'd go in and do four sides in three hours, I always thought, 'I want Billy Byers on this session.' And if you had a hot band you'd get Al Cohn with the saxophones, because if you'd get into trouble on the session for reasons you can't anticipate — crazy singers who want to do it up a third; or wrong copying on the parts — all you needed was Billy Byers and Al Cohn. You're running around trying to keep the singer from committing suicide. You'd go and talk to them for ten minutes, and Byers or Al Cohn would have it all fixed when you came back. You didn't have to tell 'em to do it. I often wondered why arrangers never did lean on musicians like that.

"I used to love to do orchestra sessions with Corky Hale, because there's nothing she can't do in any key, on harp, piano, sing it, tap-dance it, whatever. I had a session once with Tony Bennett. Tony comes in and wants to do the verse without the orchestra. Fine. Maybe his is the correct judgment. I said, 'Corky, play the verse.' 'Okay.' She plays it better than you could begin to write it.

"You've got to have people like that when you're under pressure, or else you'd flip out. I didn't know why arrangers didn't take advantage of people like that. Not only could Byers write, but he could play the trombone as well as anybody. You could have four other trombone players, and not as good as Byers, and none of them had musical background like his. He just took care of everything. It was wonderful.

"We were real good friends."

"When did you really chuck the music business? God knows you were successful enough. And more importantly, why? The rise of rock and roll?"

"Well, you look around, and there was one band in town, the *Tonight* show. And they were about to go to Hollywood. What was gonna replace it? Nothing. And I always thought the stupidest thing you can do in the world was to go to a rock-and-roll session with a toupee.

"At that time, if I'd had three kids and a mortgage and a house in the country, I'd have been doing whatever you have to do. I wasn't gonna starve. But I didn't have any obligations. And I like finance, so the hell with it. I made plans to get out of the music business a couple of years before I did."

"When you were doing all those record dates, I presume you were making investments."

"Always. Always. Always did that, all my life. It's like anything else, it can be a vocation or avocation."

"I suspect that it's something you can't *get* interested in. You either are interested or you aren't."

"Unfortunately, you look around today, and most people have *gotten* interested in it. The neighbor next door bought something that doubled his money. And you see huge amounts of money going into it, and you've got to stand back and look. The same thing is happening here that happened to the music business. Jim and Andy's wasn't going to go on forever. And neither is this bull market. I look at these poor guys from the *Tonight* show and everything and they're over in New Jersey selling accordions and guitars or something. They're not doing what they want to do."

"What did you do? Did you just look around one day and decide to quit?"

"It's more complicated than that. It was an emotional thing. I suddenly realized that I was becoming emotionally very difficult to deal with, which is not a nice attribute. I always thought that if it got to the point where I didn't like the business, I should get out.

"The worst experience I had was, Barbra Streisand's manager called me to do an album with her . . . . "

"You're talking about Marty Ehrlichman."

"Yeah. I just didn't want to do the album. And I couldn't get him off the phone. He kept saying, 'How come you don't want to do an album with her?'

"So, stupidly, I said, 'Well, I just don't like the way she sings.'

"Now if you're in the music business, you don't do that. If you want to do an album, who else are you going to do it with? Barbra Streisand, Tony Bennett, Frank Sinatra, people like that, that's who you want to do it with.

"A couple of days after that, I said, 'What the hell am I doing, turning down an album with Barbra Streisand? That's stupid. I gotta get out of it. 'Cause I'm gonna *get myself out of it* if I keep doing that.'"

There is more to that Marty Ehrlichman story than Marion apparently remembers; I remember it because I laughed so hard over it at the time.

Marion can sound like a real country cracker when he wants to. Given Marion's brilliance, Johnny Mandel — who's been a

friend of his since they were young guys getting established as arrangers in New York in the late 1940s — thinks he does it to let people think he's a little slow. Indeed, that may be a trick of Southerners; I've encountered it before. Marion has a weird way, as one speaks, of listening with what seems like a blank and uncomprehending stare. Anyone dumb enough to think that Marion doesn't get it is in for a rude awakening. As Mandel put it, "If he arrived to fix your plumbing, you'd have serious reservations about his competence. And all the while that mind is working . . . . "

Marty Ehrlichman wanted that Streisand album written in only a few days. He told Marion that Barbra could give him an hour of her time on Tuesday or some such and they wanted to record the following Monday. And Marion told him, "Well, Marty, that presents a bit of a problem. Y'see, the machine I use to write all mah music is broke, and ah have to write all them notes by hand."

Marion used to claim that at Columbia Records, engineers were hired and promoted by seniority, not ability. If the company posted a notice that a position was opening up in engineering, the janitor with the greatest seniority would get the job. Once, Marion told me, he wrote an album for Steve Lawrence and Eydie Gormé. He took the tape home to listen and next day went into the Columbia offices at 799 Seventh Avenue, just up the street from his apartment, and played it for the chief engineer, saying, no doubt in his deceptively unruffled way, "How many men do you hear on this?"

Marion said, "You could hear the wheels turnin' in his head. He knew it was more'n ten and less'n a hundred. Finally he said, 'I hear about fifteen.'

"I said, 'You're right. That's what I hear too. And I used thirty-five fuckin' men on that date. Now I have an interest in financial matters, and I calculate that Columbia Records is losing three million dollars a year on musicians who never get heard.'

"In fact, I remember the day I finally made up my mind that I would get out of the music business. I was doing an album with Steve and Eydie. We had a big orchestra. Frank Laico, the chief engineer — who did everything with Tony Bennett — couldn't be there. They sent a guy in who edited records up on Seventh Avenue. He'd never done a session before. They've set up the orchestra and we're about to start. We run the music down. I look over and I see the boom in front of the violins. It's all the way down on the floor. The mike is lying on the floor. I figure somebody's going to come out and fix it. We get ready to make a take, and nobody had done anything.

"I got down on my knees and crawled across the floor and started tapping on the microphone. Is anybody here? And I hear, 'No no! You're not supposed to tap on the microphone. Don't do that!'

"I said, 'I'm glad to know the mike is on, even though it's in the wrong place.'

"'Oh? Where should it be?'

"I said, 'Well, how 'bout we raise it up?'

"The sound was so bad, that I finally said, 'This is it.' I don't think I ever did another session after that.

"Psychologically, you reach sort of a crescendo. I figured that for most people in the pop music business, you've got a period of about ten or fifteen years, a window, and you identify with it. And music passes by and you no longer identify with it. One of the primary reasons for being in music originally is because you love it and enjoy it. And if you don't like it, you should get out of it.

"I went into the institutional money management business, managing other people's money."

"How did you break in, how did you have the credibility?"

"Oh I knew more people in the investment business than I ever did the music business. I was already doing it. I just quit the music business and kept doing what I was doing.

"I was in the money management business all through the '70s and early '80s. I had a great deal of money under management. One institutional account was four billion dollars. I had another account that was multi-billion, the Avon Foundation. It's a foundation from the original founders of Avon, with a strong bias toward medical research. They give about fifty million dollars a year to Columbia Presbyterian Hospital and places like that. And I used to manage the foundation's money.

"Over a period of time, if you call up your favorite stock broker, and say, 'I want to buy three hundred thousand shares of IBM stock,' he won't fill the order for you. The next thing you know you'll be on the phone to one of the partners at Merrill-Lynch. You won't be talking to the stock broker. When you get to the big money, to the institutions, those calls bypass the retailer who sells you a hundred shares of High Speed Yo-Yo. You're talking to one of the partners and he's going to get the commission on the three hundred thousand shares of IBM stock. And when you manage four billion dollars, a typical trade would be a hundred million dollars. And the commissions on that are pretty staggering. You make a lot of friends if you pick up the phone and buy a hundred million dollars worth of stock. Most times they can't even fill the order. They'll go out and buy it in the secondary market.

"I always knew how it worked. The problem was that the back-office operations got extremely complicated.

"At that time, Wang Laboratories had the first really great mini-computer. I bought the thing and brought it home, and then I called them up and said, 'Where's the program that does the back office?'

"They said, 'What are you talking about?'

"I said, 'Well, I just paid $55,000 for a mini-computer and it runs like a Model T.' They didn't have a back-office program.

"So I wrote a program to do my back-office accounting. Over a period of time, friends would come by and say, 'Oh, you've got a computer system. Boy, we need that.' So I gave it to a few friends and the next thing I know, I was in the computer business. And it got to be a bigger business than my money management business, so I sold the money management business and I set up a company called Maximum Data.

"We had the first international portfolio management system. This was a thing called pooled industry knowledge. When I first went into the computer business, I got a guy at Oppenheimer Company to do a study for me. I said, 'I want to know why most computer software firms go out of business.' I found out it was because they customized everything. Each client has a slightly different system. So I never customized it.

"I went to some of my clients, each one of them noted for some

particular thing. For example, Deutschebank is the world's foremost authority on accounting in Germany. If Deutschebank does it *wrong*, it's okay. Merrill Lynch, who was my first client in asset management, Salomon Brothers, Shearson-Lehman, Bank of Tokyo, Nomura, Mitsubishi, I had a deal with each one of them where they would keep me advised on what was necessary to keep the system up to date. And each one of these was an expert on some particular thing.

"One of the partners of Keystone Investment Management Company called me up one day and said, 'We just got a billion-dollar account from Canada, and one of the requirements is that we have to report all of their holdings, no matter where they are, in Canadian dollars. And we have to diversify globally, we've got to buy Japanese securities, everything, and we have to report it in Canadian dollars. What will it take to change your system, because we've never managed anything but U.S. dollars before.'

"I said, 'You don't have to do anything. It's sitting right there.'

"I said, 'Press this button over there, enter a trade.' And all of a sudden he saw a different screen.

"He said, 'Where'd that come from?'

"I said, 'It's been there for seven years, you've just never used it. Deutschebank designed that portion of it.'

"I took the point of view that nobody knows enough about the business to do it all. You've got to have help from all these people as a daily thing.

"This got to be a hot item. International investing began to come in five or six years ago. And I had the only software that would handle international investments. It's a very complicated area. That's why I made deals with all these people to advise me on this.

"For example, the head accountant of Merrill Lynch, Ray Kern, worked in my office while I was developing a part of the system. He did it for nothing so he could have input into the system. I asked him a particular contract question one day, and he said, 'I don't know about it.' So he picks up the phone and calls Zurich, and says, 'Hi, Hans, this is Ray. Get so and so and so and so and get on a plane. You're going to be here about two weeks.'

"This is part of Merrill Lynch's contribution to my system in order for them to get the system. Hans comes over. We've got the blackboard and the tape machine and we spend two weeks in my office, and what I learned about how to deal with foreign currency forward contracts, nobody else in the country knew. There are probably well over a trillion dollars a day done in forward contracts. You're going to Hamburg, Germany, in March. You want to buy an automobile. It's selling for $20,000 here and 40,000 Deutschmarks. See, Germany doesn't care about the dollar. When you get there, they want 40,000 Deutschemarks. The currency could fluctuate in such a manner that it might take you $30,000 to buy the 40,000 Deutschemarks. So you can do a forward hedge. But unlike corn or other futures, this is a currency future. The accounting is different in each country. It's controlled by treaties between nations. Very complicated.

"This thing grew and grew and got out of hand, so I moved out of New York up to Purchase, and then I got tired of that too. I recently sold that business."

"So now you're retired?"

"No, just tired."

"You told me you just wrote a chart for a band."

"Yeah, a bunch of guys. The Geritol age, over in Jersey."

"Was it fun?"

"Yeah."

"Do you want to do more writing?"

"No."

"None at all?"

"Well, I may write my mother a letter or something. I don't have any desire to go write a hot arrangement for eight brass and five saxes. Not that it might not be fun, but I have other things I'd rather do."

He sang a commonplace big-band lick. "How many of those things can you write?

"I see those people wearing toups playing *In the Mood*."

And then came an afterthought about the complex computer program he had developed: "And you know something? All of that put together is nowhere near as complex as the development section of the Beethoven Fifth Symphony." Pause. "There are millions of computer programmers. There's only one Beethoven."

During our Jim and Andy's days, I thought Marion was probably a permanent bachelor. He would turn up now and then with some good-looking singer, but I always suspected them of wanting his charts. Then, to my surprise, in 1990, at the age of sixty-three, Marion got married.

Teresa Rinaldi is an opera singer, a strikingly beautiful woman who now teaches voice at New York University. She is Italian by blood, and her father too was an opera singer who eventually settled in the South. She's an incredibly good singer: I've heard her on tapes and seen her on a video Marion played me, over her objections. Her father is dead now, and her mother lives with Marion and Terri in their large and beautiful home in Connecticut. Marion is a gourmet cook and a lover of good restaurants. A few months back I drove out from New York to visit them, and ended up staying with them for a few days. Terri has never had the recognition that I think she deserves. The reasons, I suspect, is a basic shyness, and a lack of arrogance about her abilities.

"I met Terri in 1965," Marion said. "I was living in New York. She's also from Alabama. She's from Birmingham. She had been Miss Alabama. When she went to Atlantic City for the Miss America contest, she was a trained opera singer. All ten of the girls that year were opera singers, but she won the talent contest and got a full scholarship to Juilliard. We had a lot of mutual friends back in Alabama.

"She was in California for many years. She sang with Nelson Riddle's band on the road. She did a lot of studio work, she did roles in a lot of Broadway shows, *How to Succeed in Business*, she sang in Vegas. She's got an extensive background. She's a very talented musician."

In other words, she and Marion had known each other twenty-five years when they got married. Not exactly a matter of impetu-

ous haste.

They talk occasionally of giving up their house in Connecticut and moving back to Alabama.

In considering the Broadway shows Marion orchestrated, all the singers he wrote for, and all the TV shows he did, I was startled to learn he had worked on one that I remember vividly: a musical called *Marco Polo*, written not for the theater but expressly for television. It starred Alfred Drake and Doretta Morrow, and it had a charming score by Clay Warnick and Mel Pahl adapted from works of Rimsky-Korsakov, including *Scheherazade* and the *Antar Symphony*. It had, further, some clever lyrics by Edward Eager.

Thinking back, one realizes that the TV industry could presuppose the existence of an audience large and literate enough to appreciate that show. When *Hair* hit Broadway, it should have been obvious to everyone that the era was over.

On learning that Marion had worked on it, I hastened to my record collection and found that I still have the Columbia LP of that score. I've been carting it through every move of my life for more than forty years. It must have been presented about 1957.

When I told Marion I had a copy of that LP, he said, "I'm amazed. I didn't think a single copy of it still existed."

"Well, mine is in pretty bad shape." (By the way, does anyone else have a copy of that album — a clean one?) Some tracks are so badly marred that the needle skips. Through the scratchy sound, it remains a fine piece of work.

The charts are by Irwin Kostal, Billy Byers, and Marion, though only Kostal's name appears on the album cover. They're superb. They avoid that thin, kitchy Broadway-score kind of texture, and largely avoid a sound I detest, even in opera: strings doubling the voice line. The arrangements are rich, as befits music adapted from Rimsky-Korsakov, and rhythmically varied and propulsive.

Listening to it again, I couldn't help thinking about the present state of television, when the "artistic" content of PBS often includes reverent histories of rock (currently PBS is touting a two-hour concert by the Rolling Stones), and even the Bravo network caters to the lowest common denominator of taste.

Can you even imagine today's television doing a show like *Marco Polo*? Or for that matter, presenting plays like *Marty, Twelve Angry Men*, and *Days of Wine and Roses*, all of which began life on television?

Those days in New York came to an end as rock and roll gained ascendancy. One of the first arrangers to drop out and go to Hollywood was Henry Mancini, whose subsequent career hardly needs recounting here.

Claus Ogerman, saying he had grown tired of "writing string roofs for rock groups," gave it all up, went home to Germany, and dedicated himself entirely to composing orchestral music. He now lives in Munich, writing things like his *Sarabande-Fantasie, Preludio and Chant*, and *Concerto Lirico*, all three of which are on a new CD by the London Symphony Orchestra and the National Philharmonic Orchestra London. The violin soloist is Aaron Rosand.

(I find these works extraordinarily beautiful. It is fascinating to hear "classical" music written in our time that does not succumb to a kind of pointless experimentalism, that is lyrical and lovely and emotional. You should be able to order this CD in a good record store. It's on Koch, an Austrian label, with an American office: Koch International, 2 Tri-Harbor Court, Port Washington NY 10050, toll-free number 800 668-3482.)

In 1969, one of Marion's star "students", Patrick Williams, after a career writing for singers as well as his own albums, moved out to Los Angeles. Since then he has written more than 200 film scores, as well as an enormous number of television scores and themes. Los Angeles had its own big contingent of superb arrangers, such as Ralph Burns, Ralph Carmichael, Nelson Riddle, Frank Comstock (who wrote a lot for his friend Doris Day), and Johnny Mandel. Like Pat, Johnny went into film scoring. Another of Marion's students, J.J. Johnson, began scoring films and television. So did Oliver Nelson and Benny Golson.

If you've never heard of Billy Byers, it's hardly your fault. He moved to California and in his later years lived in Malibu, a short distance from Johnny Mandel, who said of him: "I think he was the best of us." He was content to live his life invisibly, the ghost of Quincy Jones. He died on May Day, 1996, at the age of 69.

Now and then Pat Williams returns to his first love, arranging. He wrote both the Sinatra *Duets* albums, a new album by singer Monica Mancini of her father's music, and his own instrumental album (on EMI-Capitol) titled *Sinatraland*. Mandel, whose superb film scores include *The Americanization of Emily, The Sandpiper*, and *Harper*, also has returned to arranging from time to time, writing albums for Natalie Cole and Shirley Horne. But such assignments are rare.

And even film-scoring work has largely dried up for composers, with producers who grew up on rock using records for sound-track or electronic "scores". Benny Golson and J.J. Johnson went back to playing jazz; J.J. made an album in England with charts by Bob Farnon, one of his idols.

Two or three years ago, musicians in Los Angeles delighted in a story about a trumpet player who played a studio date in a large orchestra. He said later, "Man, it was great! We must have put two synthesizer players out of work!"

And so, as much as I would like to hear Marion's writing again, I hold my tongue. Urge him to return to the music business?

What music business? The days of musicians criss-crossing New York in taxis, on the way to countless studio dates? They're gone, like the snows of yesteryear.

And Marion is the man that got away. ■

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