Gene Lees Ad Libitum

Jazzletter

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Homages

I visited the graves of two friends in June. One was that of Johnny Mercer in Savannah, Georgia. Somebody had placed a little toy grand piano on the tombstone. Beside it was a paper cutout of a grand piano top, and some coins. Steve and Nancy Gerard (Nancy is Johnny's niece) told me the coins and flower are always there and they have no idea who leaves them.

From Savannah I drove to Baton Rouge, where I gave a concert at Louisiana State University. I had a lovely quintet to play for me. The pianist Willis Delony is an associate professor of music and the bassist Bill Grimes is a professor of music. The guitarist, David Bivens, is a freelance musician from New Orleans, and drummer Troy Davis is a regular member of Monty Alexander's group, while trumpet and fluegelhorn player Rex Richardson is a former member of Joe Henderson's group now touring with the group Rhythm and Brass and working on his doctoral degree at LSU. I sang some of my own things and a number of Mercer's. The next day I gave a sort of seminar to students.

As you may know, Bill Evans had strong connections with Louisiana, though he was born in New Jersey. Bill was graduated from Southeastern Louisiana University, which is in Hammond, about forty miles from LSU. LSU is about to rename its concert hall in his honor. I was introduced to an artist named Ed Pramuk, who is painting a triptych that will be hung there.

I was startled when Ed asked me if I wanted to visit the Bill's grave. Bill was buried, I was told, in Baton Rouge. I had had no idea of that; indeed, I didn't where Bill was buried.

His brother Harry was with the music department of the Baton Rouge secondary school system. Harry (whom I also knew) committed suicide and I have been often quoted as saying that Bill committed the longest slowest suicide in musical history. Bill is buried beside him.

I couldn't pass through without going to that cemetery. Bill and Harry are buried beneath a big live oak tree. A year or two ago lightning struck that tree. It was not expected to survive, but it did, and a scar runs right down its trunk to the ground. Bill's tombstone — a match for that of his brother — is a flat slab not unlike the one in Savannah on Johnny's grave. Its inscription is a simple:

William John Evans

August 16, 1929 — September 9, 1980

I kissed my fingertips, touched them to the stone, as I had done at Johnny's grave, and told Ed, "Get me outta here."

The Genesis of Max Morgan

For Britain and the nations of the Commonwealth, World War II began in early September of 1939, when German troops rolled into Poland and Britain was morally and by treaty compelled to support the fallen nation. Of all the Commonwealth nations, Canada was the first to declare war on Germany, and my father made the dark joke that had Britain not joined us within hours, we'd have been in a lot of trouble.

Surely no one thinks Hitler would have stopped when he had devoured Britain. Once Britain fell, and he had added the British as well as the French naval forces to his own, he would have had an armada that the U.S.A. could not have countered. He would have mounted an island-hopping campaign through the Hebrides to Iceland to Greenland, after which he would have taken Canada, and then the United States. The route was known to Lief Erickson. Had it not been for Britain and her children nations, there's every likelihood that the Germans would have followed the Viking route to Canada, and then attacked the United States, which was completely unprepared for war. Hitler's one attempt to cross the Channel was made, stupidly, with soldiers in wooden barges. The British ran pipelines under the channel, and when the Germans approached, they pumped gasoline, which rose to the surface. Spitfires and Hurricanes strafed it with tracers, and young Germans burned black washed ashore for months afterwards. The British always behaved as if they were ashamed of this desperate (and ingenious) action, but in view of what we later learned of the extermination camps, it was more than justified.

It is habitual for the Americans to say that they won the war, and in some ways they did. It is equally valid to say that the Brits won it by stopping the Germans in the Battle of

Britain and giving the Americans time to get ready. Zealand, and India. Victory has many parents; defeat is always an orphan.

Franklin D. Roosevelt fully grasped the scope of the German threat from the very beginning. But he had to deal with the isolationists in the ever-glorious Congress, which had refused to ratify U.S. membership in the League of Nations and thus contributed directly to the deaths in World War II of 80,000,000 people, no small number of them Americans. And he had to deal with Americans of German descent, some of them members of bunds. He had to bring such people over to his views, or try to, and indeed he never succeeded: the U.S. entered the war only when Pearl Harbor was bombed.

I was eleven years old when World War II started for us in Canada. I remember as the Germans advanced into France asking my father, "Have they gone as far as they did last time?" and he would say, "No," and then one day he said, "Yes," and France fell, and I was truly frightened.

During all this period, Roosevelt did what he could while various members of the Congress were busy leaving headprints in the sands of time. He set up lend-lease with Britain to provide the British navy with aging American destroyers. One of the most peculiar actions of the war involved the AT-6, a low-winged monoplane, painted yellow and called the Harvard Trainer by the Canadians. Had the Americans flown these aircraft to Canada, it could have been construed as an act of war against Germany. And so they were landed at the border, and the Canadians pulled them across the line with ropes and flew them away. It was one of the oddest fictions of the war, and only I seem to remember it.

The British set up a considerable portion of their intelligence operations in, of all places, the former girls school on Jarvis Street in Toronto that was by then the headquarters of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, well out of the danger of German bombers. The late Lorne Green was a part of that operation, though what he did he never told me.

The British established what they called the Commonwealth Air Training Plan. All the air force recruits from Britain itself, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as those who had escaped the German occupation — French, Polish, Norwegians; there were a lot of Norwegians, tall, blond, handsome, and the girls were nuts about them — were trained in Canada, before returning to England for the eventual assault on Germany. One of the main training camps was just outside St. Catharines, Ontario, ten miles or so from the Niagara River and the American frontier. I grew up in St. Catharines, as did Kenny Wheeler, my friend in high school.

A number of the boys about to graduate, or recently graduated, from our high school were of military age. Like boys eternally, I idolized some of those older kids who, for reasons unknown to me to this day, took a protective interest in me. One of them was named Gordon Olson. Another was Russell Kempling. A third was Ian Cromb, whose parents were from Scotland. Ian worked summers as a lifeguard at Jones Beach, which was just adjacent to the Lake Ontario end of the Welland Canal. I remember, the summer before the war, Ian explaining the elements of atomic theory to me in a rowboat in moonlight on tranquil water.

Gordon Olson, Russell Kempling, and Ian joined the Royal Canadian Air Force. Not one of them came home. Ian was lost on a flight over the English Channel — he was, I think, a bomber pilot, probably twenty years old. For weeks after he was lost, I visited his mother to ask if he had been found, and one day she told me that he was presumed dead.

During those early years of the war, my mother and father would pick up hitch-hiking young airmen training at the St. Catharines base, and sometimes they'd bring them home for meals. A group of young English airmen were at our house almost every weekend, including one from Lancashire (where my father was born) named Harry McGlynn, and another named Tommy something, who was a little older than the rest, thirty-two. I think. Tommy was chosen to become a bomber pilot. I learned that the British sought out the most reckless kids for fighter pilots. They wanted the superb reflexes, the best they will ever be in your life, of the very young for this work. But for the steady determined job of bomber pilots, they sought older and more settled men. Tommy's wife had been killed in the German bombing of Coventry. Before the war Tommy had been a golf pro in Hamburg, and he had a lot of German friends. And it was in Tommy, I think, that I first saw the madness and contradiction of war, for all he wanted to do was kill Germans and, when the war was over, go back to Hamburg and his friends there.

Perhaps in the end it was a good thing that the U.S. did not immediately enter the war. Those two years and three months preceding Pearl Harbor gave the country time to arm. My father always said that the conversion of civilian industry to war production in the United States and Canada, seemingly overnight, was one of history's miracles.

The boys in my school were given classes in aircraft recognition. Silhouettes would be flashed on a screen, and you would be asked to identify the plane. I didn't even have to study. I always got ten out of ten, because I was so fascinated by flying that I devoured flying magazines. I not only could recognize any military (or civilian) aircraft, I knew their specifications, including armaments, flying speeds, handling characteristics, climbing rates, power plants — which ones had Pratt and Whitney engines, which had Rolls-Royce — and all the rest. I even knew something about the nature of deflection shooting in combat. I knew instantly at sight the

Bell Airocobra, the P-38, Mustang, Grumman Avenger, Spitfire, Hurricane, Bolton-Paul Defiant, Fairy Battle, Lancaster, Mosquito, Liberator, Mitchell, Marauder, PBY-5, B-17, ME 109, ME 110, Focke Wolfe 190, Junkers, Heinkel Bomber, Stuka, even the Ryan Trainer. They were beautiful planes, masterpieces of industrial sculpture, and utterly individual. The modern military jets have nothing like their character. Long afterwards, in the late 1970s, I was out in the yard in Tarzana, California, when I heard that unmistakable drone of several single-engine aircraft. I looked up, saw a flight of planes, and said, "Hey, those are Vought-Chance Corsairs!" They passed on, heading west, and a few minutes later I heard a similar drone, and saw another flight, and this time I said, "My God, they look like Japanese Zeroes!" And they were. I didn't realize that they were shooting the *Black Sheep Squadron* TV series about Pappy Boyington, some of the flying sequences out over the Pacific..

Years after the war I found that my friend Gerry Mulligan also knew all those aircraft, and I used to call him Mr. Mulligan, for one of the pre-war monoplanes. It was a small joke between us. I still know many of those aircraft. I even remember the big-nosed pre-war Bee Gee racer, and especially the twin-pontoon Supermarine that was the precursor of the Spitfire.

During those two years and three months preceding Pearl Harbor, there were any number of young Americans who saw the war as a moral issue. They came up to Canada in quantity and joined the RCAF, offering their lives, and a lot of them losing them.

The uniforms of the entire British Commonwealth were identical, both the formal uniforms and battle dress, which consisted of a short, waist-length jacket later adopted by the Americans and named, ironically, the Eisenhower jacket. The air force uniforms were a gray blue, also adopted by the U.S. when the Army Air Corps became the United States Air Force. The only way you could tell what country a young man was from was by a shoulder flash. These read: France, Norway, Australia, Poland — there were a lot of Polish pilots, and damned good ones — and so forth. Some of those boys my mother and father picked up along the highway were Americans.

Now here is another fictional nicety of the war. Some friends of mine, veterans of the RCAF, long in the tooth by now, tell me I'm wrong about this, but I don't think I am. I have a strong visual memory. The niceties of international law forbade these young Americans from wearing a shoulder flash that said USA, for that too could have been considered an act of war. So my memory tells me that the flashes the Americans wore specified the state each man came from, and you'd see Montana, New York, Idaho, and of course Texas. There were so many Texans in the RCAF that they took to calling it (wouldn't you know it?) the Royal Texas Air Force. I remember one kid we picked up on an icy day; he must have been from Corpus Christi or San Antonio or someplace in South Texas, because he'd never seen snow, and he said, laughing, "Ah cain't hardly stand up!" I still remember his voice.

And when they all came to our house, English kids, French kids, Scots, Australians, Americans, there were good times. One of the attractions was my record collection, which was already considerable. They played my Tommy Dorsey and Benny Goodman and Duke Ellington records, the Count Basie and Woody Herman Deccas, the Cab Calloway Okeh records, because of course big-band music was the musical *lingua franca* of the whole western world. Ah, those American kids. We were so grateful. We felt so alone as a nation, and here they came, with their youth and their American optimism and their bravery.

This is something you may not know. It is American law that any American who serves in the armed forces of another country loses his citizenship. The U.S. authorities, however — perhaps on Roosevelt's orders — turned a blind eye on the service of these kids with the RAF and RCAF. Indeed, when the U.S. entered the war, they *wanted* those kids back. For they had modern air combat experience, and probably no one else in the entire U.S. military did. Some of those kids transferred to the Army Air Corp to train others. However, some of them stayed on to be with their new friends.

I wanted nothing so much as to join the RCAF and fly. The war ended when I was still three months under age, and I went off to Toronto to be an art student at the Ontario College of Art. Many of my classmates were returning veterans, including a few Americans — it was an exceptionally good school, which drew students from all over North America. I remember them in their flight boots that winter and gold-rimmed aviator sunglasses on sunny days, and magnificent fleece-lined flying jackets. I so envied them that I bought a number of pieces of military clothes, including a flight jacket and boots, at a war surplus store in Buffalo, and wore them. I thought of them as vastly mature men, though they were probably all under thirty, and many under twenty-five, and they wouldn't talk about the war, except to tell ribald and risible stories of their adventures. Many of them were as able at music as they were at art. An old upright piano, not particularly in tune, stood in one of the halls of the school, and there was one young man who would sit there, pensive and apparently melancholy, between classes, and play Bach, and play it well. That was the first time I ever heard *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*, and understood where Teddy Wilson (of whom I was a fanatic admirer) got it.

Nine years after the war, my newspaper — the *Montreal Star* — sent me to Europe to cover military matters and the French government. I did a lot of flying with the RCAF, but as a passenger, to be sure. Nonetheless, in the bigger planes, the pilots often asked me to come forward and take the co-pilot's seat, and I learned a lot about flying. I also learned that young fighter pilots are crazy bastards. The RCAF at that point was flying American F-86 Sabrejets, and the pilots offered to take me up for piggyback joyrides along the line of the Iron Curtain. Not when I saw how they flew. Their sport was trying to land, at the end of a patrol, with as little fuel as possible. If the gauge said there was still fuel, they'd go up and go around again. The guy with the most fuel in the tank got to buy the beer; and the ideal was a flame-out when the plane touched the runway. No way was I going up with those lunatics. But they were fun to hang with.

I went to the Canadian fighter base at Gros Tonquin in France to do a story. I was introduced to the commanding officer, who rose from the desk in his office to shake hands — I can still see him — and greet me. He had a Brooklyn accent! I of course immediately asked how this could be, and he told me that he had joined the RCAF during the war, married a Canadian girl, risen in rank, stayed on after the war and become a Canadian citizen, and now was commander of this base. He had been one of those kids by the highway.

I think Ian Crumb, in that rowboat in the moonlight, instilled in me a permanent fascination with physics, and often when I think about subatomic particles and their nature (to the extent that I can understand this arcane subject) I think of Ian. To this day. None of the other kids who joined the RCAF from my high school came home either. I can merely think their names, all these years later and I have to swallow hard. They are on an honor roll in my mind.

Some time in 1999, I got a call from a man who introduced himself as Brooks Branch. He said he was developing a project, and a friend had suggested that I was the perfect man to work on it with him, since I had lived in France, and I was in California and accessible while he, Nat, was in New York. I will ever be grateful to Nat for this, because the project turned out to be fascinating. Let me tell you a bit about Brooks Branch.

He is tall — about six foot five — slim and dark-haired. He is cordial, affable, open, completely lacking in any trace of the devious. He was born in Salt Lake City. One of the things we found we had in common is that he began as a painter. He was widely exhibited and published when he was still quite young. He joined Sequoia Communications as creative director, producing books on museums, national parks, music, and fashion. He founded Paper Dog Publishing for projects on music and the film industry, and he won awards from the New York and Los Angeles Art Directors' Society, as well as an American Design Award, and others. He then became a consultant to EMI, SBK, and A&M Records, then head of the creative division for licensing at Paramount Pictures, overseeing strategic brand development on such film properties as *Star Trek, Wayne's World, Forest Gump, Clueless*, and *Mission: Impossible*. He left Paramount to work as a consultant to the heads of various companies, including Virgin, MGM, NBC, Pepsi, Universal, Turner, and the Discovery Channel.

And at this point he founded Aerobleu. Tired of merchandising and brand-name jargon, he put his emotions into the idea of a somewhat mysterious former pilot who owned and ran a jazz club in Paris in the years right after World War II, and then disappeared. This was a complex merchandising idea, like that done for a movie. Except that there was no movie. Brooks set it up to revolve around posters, stationery, dinnerware, and high-end merchandise.

Brooks had a name for this fictional character: Max Morgan. He asked me to write Max Morgan's story in the form of an incomplete diary that someone has discovered. In his original conception, Brooks wanted him to have been a pilot in the Spanish Civil War, but I told him I thought this was impractical: the Loyalist forces of Spain had little if any air defense. The forces of Franco had the help of the German Luftwaffe, testing their planes and tactics for the first time on living targets. Then, too, this civil war experience would make Max the wrong age. Having already in my head so much knowledge of World War II aviation and the kids who fought the Germans, I suggested that we make him an American who joined the RCAF, like so many of those kids we picked up along the highway. Brooks bought the idea enthusiastically, and from there on he left me alone to invent the character and develop the story of Max Morgan, following only loose guidelines. I never met anyone I so enjoyed working for as Brooks Branch. The originating idea belongs to Brooks; but Max is mine.

I certainly did not depend on memory, although I certainly drew on what French friends, when I was living in Paris, told me of the post-war years. I talked to men who had been in the RCAF during the war, including the late Eric Smith, a close friend of Oscar Peterson's and mine, who was a bombardier. (You have probably heard the story of the magnificent Allied precision bombing that took out the railway yards in Cologne while sparing its famous and glorious cathedral. "That's baloney," Eric said. "I know too many guys who tried to hit it, including me. We just missed it, that's all.") I talked to Alyn Ferguson, who flew P-38s during the war, and about whom I later wrote in the Jazzletter. Eric led me to friends

who had been fighter pilots.

I steeped myself in the atmosphere of Paris in the years right after the war. I did not see Paris until 1954 when, as I have said, I was sent to cover military and political stories in Europe. But the memory of the Occupation was still fresh in everyone's mind, along with the slow and painful recovery of the late 1940s. I watched certain old movies, such as the Fred Astaire-Audrey Hepburn *Funny Face*, which was filmed (magnificently) before De Gaulle ordered the buildings of Paris cleaned and restored to their warm yellowish stone color; in the immediate post-war years, they were gray with grime. I watched all sorts of documentaries on the air war.

I read immensely about pre-war flying, and of course, I read every book I could get my hands on about the RAF, the Luftwaffe, and the Battle of Britain. Such were the German losses that Goering halted the attacks. Had he and Hitler only known it, they could have, with perhaps two more weeks of bombing, brought Britain to its knees, because the Brits were running out of aircraft and fighter pilots. It was one of the many mistakes the Germans made. One of the largest was Hitler's decisions, in his spasms of infinite omniscience, not to develop long-range bombers and to halt the development of jet aircraft. The more I have studied World War II, the more I have become convinced that we "won" it only because the Germans' mistakes were more numerous and egregious, such as the failure to blow the bridge at Remagen, than ours.

In that research on the Battle of Britain, I came across many stories about the bitter ironies of war. The radio operators of the RAF were all women, for the good reason that their higher-pitched voices would cut through interference and static. During the German bombardments, they came to recognize the voice of a young German fighter pilot to whom they took a liking: he seemed always to have a sunny and humorous disposition. I assume they spoke German; it would be only logical that some of them would, in order to monitor what the Germans were saying to each other. An RAF pilot nailed this guy, setting his plane on fire. As the plane fell, the girls could hear him cursing Hitler and crying out for his mother, and they were all screaming, "Get out, get out!" But he didn't, and several of the women burst into tears when his radio went silent. Then there was a young German pilot whose plane got shot up. He managed to land in a farmer's field. The plane rolled forward and hit the farmer's wife. The young man got out of the plane, saw her lying dead, drew his pistol, and shot himself.

The events that surround Max Morgan's Paris club, Aerobleu, were just as carefully researched. Nothing that happens to the real-life jazz musicians who come in and out of this story are false to the time period. Everything that happens to them in Max Morgan's diary actually could have happened — or did. I read everything I could find, and even consulted my dear friend Francy Boland, the brilliant Belgian jazz composer and co-leader, with Kenny Clarke, of the late and lamented and superb Clarke-Boland Big Band. Francy played piano in that Salle Pleyel concert at which Miles Davis and Charlie Parker performed

Balzac said that the characters in his fiction were comprised of pieces of people he had known. "But the soul of a Balzac character," he said, "is always Balzac."

Thus it was with Max Morgan. I had written no fiction since the 1960s, when a lot of my short stories were published in New York. Max became as real to me as any of the living musicians I have portrayed; and yet in another sense, during those months of steeping myself in research and this project, I *became* Max. Just as, in studying Woody Herman's life for the biography I wrote, something of Woody became part of my memories forever, so too with Max.

At a technical level, the project was difficult., since it had to be in the form of a diary. There are advantages to a first-person narrative, widely used in detective fiction, albeit with the odd conceit that anybody remembers huge blocks of conversation verbatim. One advantage, particularly evident in the fiction of James M. Cain, Raymond Chandler, and Dashiell Hammet, is that you need know and project only a single viewpoint, rather than taking on the godly omniscience that goes into third-person fiction, so superbly applied in Steinbeck's great masterpiece *East of Eden*. (The song lyric is the only literary form I know that is very often in the second person, specifically second-person singular.) But if I were to write Max Morgan's story as a diary, I could put into it only that which he would commit to paper, not that which he takes for granted. But that which he takes for granted often would be information the reader would need. It would be, I recognized from the beginning, like walking a high wire.

Brooks had the whole manuscript set in type to look like handwriting. It was published between covers made of aircraft aluminum by Chronicle Books in San Francisco. And, in collaboration with Verve Records, Brooks had me execute a second project: an album compromising jazz supposedly associated with Max.

Max Morgan is not the first fictional character in the history of music. Among the most successful examples are the hilariously awful recordings of Jonathan and Darlene Edwards, in real life Paul Weston and Jo Stafford, and the magnificent, nay brilliant, recordings of Peter Schickele in the persona of the inept composer P.D.Q. Bach. There have been many such put-ons in music, including the Shorty Pederstein interview and the three-handed pianist named Buck Hammer, palmed off on an unsuspecting public by the late Steve Allen.

Brooks wanted to print a poster with Dizzy Gillespie's

name on it. Though he was under no legal obligation to get clearance, he wanted to do so as a matter of courtesy. I put him in touch with Dizzy's widow, Lorraine. She was wonderful, he said, gracious and helpful, and granted permission without hesitation.

There were some quite striking reviews of the whole project. The *Village Voice* said: "In 1954, the legendary Paris jazz club Aerobleu closed its doors. After years of sessions with the likes of Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis, and clientele like Ernest Hemingway and Pablo Picasso, Aerobleu was, as jazz historian and former *Down Beat* magazine editor Gene Lees recently described it, where 'much of the history of jazz and art in Paris was written.' There's one catch: Aerobleu never existed. An amazing collection for jazz aficionados and lovers of fine work alike." *Playboy* said, "In Paris, after World War Two, the place to be was Aerobleu ('the spirit of cool') where Dizzy and Miles hung out. OK, so the club is fictional."

There was one grumpy review, in Harper's, of all places. Somebody groused that the whole thing was a hoax. Yeah, right, okay. It's a hoax. So smile. Ellery Queen never existed either.

The best reviews I got on the diary came from a film actor friend, who said he couldn't put it down and wished he were young enough to play Max, if a movie were ever made of the story. The other came from a former pilot, who couldn't believe that the diary wasn't real, and upon hearing that it was fiction, said, "Well, whoever wrote it, that guy had to have been there, because he really knows what he's talking about."

I told him I was the writer, and I wasn't there, but I feel by now (deeply) as if I had been.

The project is on-going. Brooks continues to work on it. There are going to be five Aerobleu jazz clubs in the United States, the first of them opening in Harlem.

Who, in the end, is Max Morgan? I drew for some of it on what pianist John Bunch told me about his experience as a B-17 bombardier, shot down over Germany and imprisoned in a stalag (*The Hot Potato*, in the *Jazzletter*, April 1994), and conversations over the years with composer Alyn Ferguson (*The Boy in the P-38*, *Jazzletter* December 1999, and Percy Heath, who also was a fighter pilot during World War II. Max Morgan is Russell Kempling and Gordon Olson and Ian Cromb. And Harry McGlynn from Lancashire. He's all those kids along the highway in those early years of World War II. He's some kid with a shoulder flash saying Montana. He's the kid from Texas who couldn't stand up on the ice. And a little bit of him is me.

This is the diary of Max Morgan. And the story of a jazz club in Paris that exists only in my imagination. And that of Brooks Branch.

The Diary
Part One

Friday, August 2, 1946

I wish the old man had given me another name. No one should ever name a kid junior. It causes confusion, even when someone calls the house and says, "Could I speak to Max?" and the answer is "Which one?" That caused me some problems, and the problems are only worse when you hear a name as bright as his. As I grew older people would say, "Are you any relation to *the* Max Morgan?" And that went on even in England, when some of the older officers would say again: "Are you any relation to *the* Max Morgan?"

So what does that make me: *a* Max Morgan, some indeterminate Max Morgan, a generic Max Morgan?

Strange. All the complicated machinations I ended up involved in, and my nearest brush with death came from those three little sons of bitches.

Already the past is slipping away from me. There seems to be still another Max Morgan, the one I once was, because even as I scratch this out, that Max Morgan seems to be receding from me. I can't believe it was the same guy. I suppose that happened when those three little bastards stood me against that wall and I shut my eyes, certain that my life was ended. After what I've been through and what I've done, maybe it would have been better. But life certainly clings. It is one thing to be at risk, to think that you may die, it is quite another to *know* this is the end. The shots, the loudest noise I ever heard or ever will hear, came. And then I realized I wasn't dead, and opened my eyes, and those three little bastards, they must have been all of 15, were laughing. I'd love to forget that moment, but I can't. I still hear that sound. And every time I shave and I see that little scar on my cheek, where the chip of stone cut me, I am reminded.

There is so much more. I don't even want to think of it. Thank God for the Countess. I doubt that I'd have made it without her.

Sunday, August 4, 1946

I wish I'd known the Old Man better. I guess I really began to understand him when we tangled that first time with the ME 109s with their yellow noses. For the Old Man, it was Von Richtofen and the Flying Circus, Spad VIIs against the Fokkers. For me it was Spits and Hurricanes against the 109s.

Paris is as good a place as any to think things through. I even owe that to the Old Man. He taught me to love flying, and he made me learn French, and even instilled some sort of love of things French. I never saw France until now, except from the air.

Wednesday, August 6, 1946

The French are backward about jazz. They still think it's all Sidney Bechet. And of course Coleman Hawkins. He spent some time here in the '30s, they tell me. So did Benny Carter. But the French await Bechet's return as for the Second Coming. They have never heard of Dizzy Gillespie or Charlie Parker, or the Earl Hines band, though in all fairness I have to say Americans aren't much more aware. But then neither was I. The new music certainly came as a shock to me when I got home. That Charlie Parker concert at Town Hall in September was mesmerizing.

And the Spotlite Club in October! Parker is amazing. The guy's a volcano of invention. Liked his trumpet player, too, some kid named Miles Davis.

At the end of the last set, I spoke to Parker. I said, "I really love your music, Mr. Parker. It's wonderful." I was still in uniform, hadn't bought any civvies yet. He was incredibly polite, and beautifully spoken, almost professorial. "You're in the service," he said. "Yes sir," I said. "Royal Canadian Air Force." He said, "So. You're a Canadian. I said, "No, I'm an American." And then he startled me. He said, "Could you lend me ten dollars?" I said, "Yes." And gave it to him! Then he said, "Where are you going now?" I said, "Nowhere." He said, "Want to come up to Harlem with me?"

I went with him to some club, met a lot of his friends, and heard him jam till dawn. Unbelievable night! I'll never forget it.

Went to the Commodore record shop and bought armfuls of the records that I had missed. Got one of the first new record players, listened all day. *Billie's Bounce* on Savoy, went back to the Spotlite at night. Night after night. 52nd Street loaded with music. You can go from one joint to another, it's all music. Just wanted to hear more of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, but they went out to Los Angeles.

Got *Lover Man* and *Shaw Nuff* on Guild. Got some wonderful Lester Young stuff on Commodore, made pre-war, but I'd never heard it. Some stuff on Columbia by the Woody Herman band, just marvelous and totally different from the stuff I had on Decca when I went away.

Jazz is in total ferment. And Europe is unaware of it. I hear the Swedes are hep, though. A guy was telling me last night, when I went to hear Claude Luter, that the Swedes — not being occupied by the Germans — were the only country in Europe where the musicians could get the newest American jazz records. So they knew about Kenton and Woody Herman. The Swedes will probably be the best European jazz players, although I am still not convinced that Europeans will ever really get the hang of it. I don't think such strongly traditional societies can get the feel of music that represents such freedom.

I'll prowl the joints tonight. Maybe I'll get to hear Django Reinhardt.

That guy last night told me the Germans actually executed people for playing jazz.

France is in disarray. It's a sad thing. Went shopping for civilian clothes today. The pickings are poor. Should have shopped while I was in New York.

Met an interesting girl last night, named Leslie Nash. Sort of from New York by way of South Carolina. She's got a slight southern accent. She seems a bit of a rebel. Likes jazz. She hangs out at the bar at a jazz club of sorts called Le Chat Lunatique.

The bartender is guy named Jean Pierre, an African of some description. Says he worked in New Orleans before the war.

Sunday, August 17, 1946

What I did in '39 wasn't really different from what the old man did in the First War. I never asked him, but I suppose his motive was the same as mine. The moral issue was clear to me, and the U.S. was equivocating. I suppose that's the reason he went to France in 1915 and joined the Escadrille Americaine. He just did it. He nailed a German L.V.G. reconnaissance plane, and after that he tangled with the fighters. I think he said it was in 1916 that the French changed the squadron's name, after the Germans complained to the U.S. of A. about it, to the Escadrille Lafayette. They shot down 57 German aircraft by war's end. I guess I never told the Old Man I was proud of him. But he never told me he was proud of me either. I didn't know who he was until he was dead.

But I sure got sick of hearing, "Are you any relation to *the* Max Morgan?" And then, when I'd say yes, somebody was sure to say, "That explains why you're such a hot pilot." No it doesn't. It is something you learn, although I suppose some of us have more aptitude for it than others.

I only wish I'd had that aptitude for music.

The Old Man started me early. I think I was thirteen when I soloed over Kansas. And I guess I was fourteen when I got the knack of the Immelman turn. Somehow the Immelman is associated in my mind with French subjunctives. He drilled me on subjunctives. I hated learning all that. But thank God I did.

And of course my love of jazz came from him. I can close my eyes and hear his Bix records. The Jean Goldkette band and McKinney's Cotton Pickers coming over the radio from Detroit. The Casa Loma band. Louis Armstrong's Hot Fives and Sevens. Earl Fatha Hines. Up through Benny Goodman and Lucky Millinder and the Duke of Ellington and the Count of Basie. How I loved it all. The movie score of my childhood.

There's no question that jet aircraft are the wave of the future. I could probably get a job with an airline. But no. I never want to fly again.

Sometimes I can't quite grasp that I'm still alive.

Sunday, August 31, 1946

This is such a wonderful city for walking. At first I wanted to talk to nobody. Just walk and look, and let the war go away, though that's not as easy as it might be in Peoria or someplace like that. It was only two years ago that the Germans stormed the Préfecture de Police to try to root out the FFI people. It's such a beautiful building, almost medieval. You can still see bullet marks in the stone of a lot of buildings around there. I know what happens when bullets hit stone. I can look at the scar.

And the food shortages here are bad. Not to mention the disaster of the transportation system. The Germans stole all the buses and trucks when they pulled out. And they say the military commander had orders from Hitler to raze the city but he wouldn't do it.

The sense of time and history that hangs over the city is wonderful. Lutetia, they called it in Roman times. And then Lutèce. I wonder where it got the name Paris. I love the bridges. There are 48 of them across the Seine in Paris. I made a gaffe yesterday. I asked some French people the name of one bridge I found beautiful. They said it was Pont Neuf. Thinking it meant Bridge Nine, and wanting to know the system of the bridges, I said, "Which way is Bridge Eight?" They laughed, and one of them explained that it meant New Bridge, not Bridge Nine. But they didn't seem to hold me in contempt, and thanked me yet again for what "we" had done. Then they said I had a good accent in French. They are always amazed when some damn foreigner speaks it well. I suppose I owe the accent somewhat to Jean Marc. Languages are like music to me. You have to hear the sounds, and I imitated him. That's another vision I can't lose. Getting there three seconds too late and watching that FW 190 nail him, watching him go down on fire.

I suppose he's the real reason I came to Paris. He just wanted to get the war over and go home to Paris. I guess I had to come home for him. Besides, here I'm anonymous and it feels safe.

I think I'll stay for a while. Sent for my records and my new record player. Wrote to the Commodore record shop, asked them to get me the new Charlie Parker record, *Ornithology* and *A Night in Tunisia*.

Monday, September 2, 1946

Went back to Le Chat Lunatique and have the hangover to prove it.

A good group there, all French, including an excellent trumpet player named Aimé Barelli. And the music wasn't ersatz Bechet. I heard the real Bechet on 52nd Street, just before I went up to Toronto. Barelli is really good. Django Reinhardt came in late in the evening. It's one thing to read about his crippled left hand, but to see him get over that guitar fretboard with only two fingers is one of the wonders of the world.

The joint is in an old wine cellar in the Hotel Hector Berlioz in St.-Germain-des-Pres. The hotel was a Luftwaffe officers' club during the war. I wonder if I shot down one of its denizens. Or if one of them shot got Jean Marc.

I know I'm putting off seeing his family.

Monday, September 9, 1946

Paris needs its face washed. The dark gray grime of centuries is on all the stone, including even Napoleon's Arc de Triomphe. The statues are all streaked, dark stone with pale lines descending, caused by rain. It's as if all the stone faces of Paris are weeping.

Maybe I belong here. I feel as if I have no country now. What the hell, I was twenty when I went up to Canada in '39. From then on I was flying with the Canadians. And the Norwegians and Poles who'd escaped to fight. And the Aussies. And the Free French, like Jean Marc. Jean Marc must have been the illegitimate son of an angel and a vampire bat. He'd laugh when we got back from a flight. I wonder if he was laughing inside. I never was. I'd laugh, but it haunted me that I hadn't killed an airplane, I'd killed a man. Somebody was in that aluminum coffin when it went down. But I still hope one of our guys got the one who got Jean Marc.

Such contradictory feelings. Sherman said war is hell? It's worse. It's lunacy. Decorated, praised, glorified, legal lunacy. Medals for murders. Murders well done.

Regal legal lunacy.

I wonder if Le Chat Lunatique is open this early in the day?

Flight Lieutenant Max Morgan. Erstwhile American. Now? God knows. There is nothing for me there. The Old Man is gone. The kids I knew are either dead or they're grown-up strangers to me. My mother sure as hell isn't interested in whether I survived or not. Come to that, I wonder if she's still alive. I can't forget that one encounter with her just before I came overseas. I picked up a hop with the U.S. Army Air Corps out to San Francisco, went to see her in her fancy mansion. Didn't meet her husband, and she showed no inclination to introduce me. A frosty lady, but beautiful. I got the feeling that the only thing she was interested in was money, and when the Old Man lost his, she left. Leaving me with him. And I'd always thought it was his fault. She didn't

even ask about him. Her maid served me tea.

Checked in at the field, managed to get a hop out that night to Buffalo. Took the bus over to Toronto, and three days later I was on my way to England.

It occurs to me that if I went to Metz and shot two Germans, I would be arrested and tried and probably go to the guillotine. Well I killed two Germans over Metz three years ago and they gave me a goddamn medal for it.

Legal lunacy. I wonder how I'd have made it through without the Countess.

Wednesday, September 11, 1946

Decision made. I walked out on the Pont Edouard Sept, my favorite bridge in Paris, and dropped the medals in the Seine. I'm ashamed of what we did. Not of the flying, but of the rest of it. It's still hard to think about.

War over. Hah. I only wish it were. I must see Jean Marc's family. Tomorrow maybe.

Sunday, September 14, 1946

I finally went. I called Jean Marc's family, then went out to Sèvres to see them. Cool gray day. Very distinguished people. His mother, beautiful woman, and his father, and his two sisters, one of them older than he was, the other younger. They had received no word of him except the official communication from the Canadian government after the war. During the war, they'd had no word of him at all.

I met him at Manning Depot in Toronto. He'd joined the RCAf instead of the RAF because he figured, not unreasonably, that some of its people would speak French. And the one he met who did was me.

We were sent to basic training, and it was pure luck that we got assigned to advanced training together, flying the Harvard Trainer.

I told his family what a great flier he was. We had mock dogfights together. I showed him a lot of stuff I'd learned barnstorming with the Old Man, and before I knew, Jean Marc was a better pilot than I.

We went to England together, assigned to the same Spitfire squadron. We always spoke French to each other in the air. He saved me twice. Maybe more. How can you remember? Everything is spinning up there, glorious, godly, and deadly.

His older sister said, "I want to know exactly what happened." She said that not knowing was worse than knowing. So I took a deep breath, and went over it in graphic detail. I said, "If I'd got to him three or four seconds sooner, he might be alive."

She said, "And you might not be. You can't carry this burden. Jean Marc did what he wanted to do, and he had a friend."

It felt like an expiation.

Went to Le Chat Lunatique afterwards. Heard a pianist named Bernard Peiffer. Phenomenal technician.

I envy jazz musicians. They have their instruments to vent their feelings. The rest of us are stuck with words, and they aren't very effective. I sat at the bar thinking about my phone call to the Old Man just before I left for England. I wanted to tell him that after seeing my mother, I understood him better. But I couldn't get it out. Whatever he felt about me, he couldn't get it out either. It was an awkward conversation, and it was the last one I ever had with him.

Friday, September 20

My records arrived. The only ones broken were *Salt Peanuts* and Woody Herman's *Your Father's Mustache*. My portable record player arrived, too, but I can't find a hardware store that stocks a converter. The French are not on 110 volts. Have this great stack of new records that I can't listen to. Talk about frustration.

Wednesday, September 25, 1946

Got a converter! One of the French musicians found one for me. On the condition that he and some of his friends could come by and listen with me. They came to my hotel, all crowded into my little room. We listened all afternoon, and in the evening the concierge complained. One of them sweet-talked her, we turned the sound way down, and we listened at least until four o'clock. Then they all went home, saying things like Dizzy and Charlie Parker were a revelation.

Sunday, September 30, 1946

The town is filling up with American students, guys over here on the GI Bill of Rights. The Sorbonne, which I can see from my window, is loaded with them. I can recognize them even at a distance by the way they walk, even by hand gestures, so different from the French. And of course so many of them wear parts of their uniforms. Why? Because they're used to them? Why do I wear mine? What attachment is there? I want to forget the war, but then, that flight jacket probably saved my life in the stalag. God it was cold that last winter. I'll keep it as long as it lasts.

Another gang of French musicians came by yesterday to listen to my records. The word is apparently spreading about my collection. They talk to me as if I'm some sort of authority on jazz. I'm just a lover, not an expert. But I'm glad I had those three weeks on 52nd Street. That alone was worth going home for. I wouldn't have gone, either, if I hadn't had to settle the Old Man's estate with the lawyers.

That was almost as much of a revelation as the birth of rebop. The lawyers told me that anyone who held onto their

stocks in the '29 crash for the most part saw them soar in '39 and '40, and the Old Man held onto his, and then he bought stock in anything related to aviation.

I certainly didn't feel at home in the States, except on 52nd Street. All my friends gone. Billy Wilson dead at Anzio, Chuck Winston one of the casualties on the Yorktown. I suppose a shark got him. So many more. Or they'd moved away, a lot of them to California. I felt like a stranger. But, what the hell, why not, I'd been away nearly a quarter of my life, and my best friend wasn't any of those guys. It was Jean Marc. Nothing to stay for. Things were so simple then.

I wish I had whatever it takes to be a musician, but those childhood lessons did no good whatever. The only thing I've ever done really well is fly. And find trouble. And I don't even want to fly. Just let me listen to music, please, whoever you are.

Max's Maxim: hangover ends at noon, although this last one made it to three o'clock.

A ta santé, Jean Marc, wherever you are.

Monday, October 8, 1946

The word of my record collection keeps spreading. Just got a new batch in from Commodore. Left an order to ship to me once a month, anything good and new. I had three batches of musicians up here last week to listen. The concierge is not happy. Nash suggested we hold sessions at Le Chat Lunatique. We're going to try it Monday midnight

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Monday, October 15, 1946

Couldn't believe it. It seemed like half the musicians in Paris were at Le Chat Lunatique to listen to my records. The talk was incessant and excited afterwards, with musicians going to the piano to try to figure out what they'd heard on the records.

Even the owner came by, Madame Christophe. She loves jazz. Talked to me for quite a while. I stayed sober. My records are making me a celebrity among the musicians.

Edvard came by. Sat at the end of the bar by himself, but later we got a chance to talk.

Got a message from the Countess and called her. I told her I wasn't sure I wanted to stay in Paris. She thinks I should — it's safe here.

Tuesday, October 30, 1946

I'm a celebrity of sorts. Hugues Panassié, the big-wheel French jazz critic, wrote an article denouncing me and Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker. He said rebop isn't jazz and that I am a heretical proselytizer of untruth. But what the hell, I feel honored, being mentioned in the same paragraph with Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker. The publicity only increased attendance at my record sessions. We pipe the music through the club's sound system. The pianists who come by are in love with the Bud Powell records. The jazz keeps me sane here.

Monday, November 5, 1946

Madame Christophe asked me for a name for the sessions. I was half loaded at the time and had Jean Marc on my mind. That gorgeous day, the orange of flames, and the brilliant blue of the sky above us. Blues for Jean Marc. I said, without thinking, "Let's call it Acrobleu at Midnight. Acrobleu à Minuit."

Friday, November 30, 1946

Nash is a good kid, though a little pushy. I wish she weren't as wild as she is. She runs where she wants, does what she wants. I think she thinks she can shock me, or maybe seem grown-up or something. There was a certain temptation the other evening. Maybe she was casting a hint, maybe she wasn't, but just in case, I said, "Listen, kid, everybody gets the idea that when you're in a prison, what you want most is a woman. Well when I was in the stalag all I could think of was is how much I wanted a good steak."

Monday, December 3, 1946

Spoke to the Countess. I told her about my midnight sessions. She said it's good for me to get lost in the music for a while.

Friday, December 7, 1946

Pearl Harbor day. Roosevelt was right. It's a date most of us are unlikely to forget. But by the time of Pearl Harbor, the war for me was already two years old and I'd lost a hell of a lot of friends in the Battle of Britain. You reach the point where you don't make friends. It makes it easier.

I wonder if I really would have gone to Canada if it weren't for Mary Ellen. I don't know when I began to be suspicious. Whatever her faults, she could never be called an accomplished liar. I waited outside the apartment on 88th. Watched a guy go in. She came out with him. He kissed her. I came tearing across the street and hit him with a force I didn't know I had. But he hit me back, and she was screaming, and the next thing there was a cop there, breaking us up, and saying, "Who started this?" and she said that I did. And he handcuffed me to a post. Went to a call box, sent for a car. Police car pulls up. They ask for identification. I said it was in my back pocket. He got it out, read my name, and damned if the first thing he didn't say wasn't, "Are you any relation to *the* Max Morgan?" I said, "No." He said, "You're lying, kid. It says right here on your driver's license, Maxwell

Morgan III. You even look like him." He asked what the fight was about. I told him. The other cop gave him a look, and he took off the handcuffs and gave me back my wallet. "Have you simmered down now?" he said. "Yes," I said. "Your license says you live in Brooklyn Heights" "That's right." And he says, "Girls are like subway trains, kid: there's always another one coming. I tell you what. We're taking you to the subway at 86th and Lex. You go home. And if I see you in this neighborhood again, I'll run you in."

I spent that summer alone a lot. Everybody knew a war was coming, and the Old Man kept saying the U.S. wasn't ready for it. Is anybody ever ready for a war, except the ones who start it? If it weren't for Mary Ellen, I guess I might have waited till Pearl Harbor finally got us into it. Everybody else did. No, that's not so. Not all the guys from Texas and Illinois and South Dakota and California who went up to Canada when I did. There was a hell of a crew of us. Most of them dead now.

Wednesday, December 12, 1946

Went down to the club Monday, and the first thing that happened is that Edvard says with a strange smile, "Bon soir, patron." I said, "What do you mean, 'boss?' He just kept smiling and poured me a drink. Several other people had strange smiles, including two of the musicians I'd got to know pretty well.

Then I saw Nash. She'd been in the lavabo.

"What's going on?" I asked her.

"What do you mean?" she said. "You mean you didn't buy the club?"

I told her I hadn't the slightest idea what she was talking about, although I got an odd feeling. She changed the subject and asked if I had seen what Panassié had written about me this week. I said I didn't want to read it. So she started to read it to me. He said I was a corrupting influence on jazz, and that my Aerobleu sessions were leading French musicians astray, and more to that effect. It was stupid, and it made me angry.

Sunday, January 12, 1947

I put a call in to the Countess to find out what the hell she had done. Couldn't reach her.

Tuesday, January 14, 1947

It got very celebrant over the holidays. My circle of acquaintances and friends keeps expanding because of the club. Josephine Baker, Edith Piaf, Pablo Picasso. I can't say that I understand his paintings, and I certainly don't like them. I like Piaf, though. She says and does what she pleases, whatever it costs her. Jean Paul Sartre comes into the club. I've now read several of his pieces. There is less to his work than meets the eye. You read one of his books, and find that every long and loquacious and obtuse chapter can be summed up in the end in one not particularly profound line.

Friday, January 17, 1947

Found myself in some heavy poker and drinking sessions. Now poker is something I'm really good at. I remember one guy who seemed to be Russian, who asked if I'd ever flown a DC-3. Nope. But I flew Blenheims. He said he owned a DC-3. The drinking got heavier. Dawn arrived, gray and cold as only Paris can be gray and cold — damp and blood-chilling. The Russian, if that's what he was, asked us if we wanted to go to Algeria to warm up for a day or so. He said he had to make a delivery there. So we all went out to Le Bourget and got into this DC-3. It was a pre-war job, built in 1939, and apparently a passenger rather than transport job: it had seats, so it had been in some sort of commercial civilian airline use, not military. God only knows how he got it, and I kept my curiosity to myself. There were a few big cartons at the back of the plane, under a tarp. We took off, the Russian doing the flying, and the drinking continued. I fell asleep. When I woke up I went forward, and that Russian was also asleep, and nobody was flying the plane. It was on auto-pilot. I slipped into the co-pilot's seat and started shaking the Russian. No luck. He snored. Then we hit some turbulence. I took over, after all the times I've said I never wanted to fly again. There was nothing but water below us, and lots of it, so it had to be the Mediterranean. I started looking around for maps, and then the Russian woke up, and we found our position. We landed at some obscure airfield and some guys came out with guns and unloaded the cases which — it seems likely — contained more guns. There is a revolutionary movement against France in Algeria, something I've heard about called the FLN, and I suspect our Russian is a gun-runner. He was jubilant when he got back into the plane, sobered up enough to take the controls, and we flew to Algiers. Went into town and got drunk again. I remember some party on a beach, and then in a hotel the poker game went on, and somehow I won everything, including the DC-3. The Russian signed over the papers, and then he just disappeared.

Sobered up somewhat, examined the plane. It looked as if it had been pretty well maintained. And here I am, stuck in Algiers with an airplane I don't even want. But I flew it back to France. Had a hell of a time landing at Le Bourget. The French wouldn't let us land, then relented when I said we were running low on fuel. On the ground they questioned the plane's papers, questioned me, held us for hours, then said they were letting us go but impounding the plane until they could investigate its registration.

Woke up this morning with one the finest hangovers I've ever had. I don't care about the DC-3. The French can keep it. I don't want to own a jazz club and I certainly don't want to own a DC-3. If I could find that bloody Russian, I'd give it back to him.

Sunday, January 26, 1947

Got called in by the French aviation ministry about the DC-3. There is some question about its original registration that they can't unravel. Therefore they can't release the plane to me. I told them they just don't seem to get it. I don't care, and they are welcome to keep the DC-3. The guy said I was being unco-operative. I told him a DC-3 wasn't what I'd hoped to find in my Christmas stocking. He didn't get that at all. They don't have Christmas stockings in France.

Now a Spitfire! She was the Lady, the true aristocrat of aircraft. I told him, "See if you can trade it for a Spitfire. That would be another matter." The guy had no sense of humor. I told him I had no more time to discuss it, just keep the bloody airplane. And I left.

There's only one way to deal with the French bureaucracy. Ignore it.

I'm beginning to have fun with the club. But I have no interest in the mundane details. I told Jean Pierre he was fully in charge of the liquor and food purchases. I don't want to look at the cash register. And I'm thinking of asking Nash if she'd like to run the place.

Nash thinks we should change the name from Le Chat Lunatique to Max Morgan's Aerobleu. I don't want aging veterans of World War I asking if I'm any relation to *the* Max Morgan. More important, I don't want my name on the place. I don't need that kind of visibility.

Wednesday, January 29, 1947

Somebody said in the club that Maurice Chevalier had been a collaborator during the War. Jean Pierre asked him what a collaborator was. Wasn't everyone who worked in the Metro or served dinner to German officers or cut a kraut's hair a collaborator? Wasn't everybody who drove a train a collaborator?

And I thought about — hell, I thought about it when I was doing it — the fact that every time I strafed a train, I probably killed some poor railway workers. Did that make me a war criminal? What about the guys who bombed St. Lo? How many French citizens did they kill?

A young guy was sitting at the bar smoking a cigarette. He said he was a musician. He's from Belgium, Namur, I think. He said when he played piano in jazz clubs in Belgium during the Occupation, there were usually German officers in the audience, there just to hear the music. He said, "Does that make me a collaborator?"

He asked if he could sit in. I said, "Sure." And he can play. He's only seventeen. He has a kind of dark sense of humor. I asked him his name. He said it was Francy Boland. I asked him if he wanted to go to work for us as house pianist. He said he was going to finish his degree at the Liège conservatory and then come back to Paris. If the club still exists, I said, he could count on a job.

Panassié denounced me again. Wrote that the young musicians who were listening to my records were reflecting the influence of Parker and Gillespie, and this would be the downfall of jazz in France.

The air ministry called me at the club. The guy said I had to do something about the DC-3. Somebody had to pay its rental charges at Le Bourget. I told him what I'd told them before: they were welcome to the bloody plane. The guy said I had no respect for the law. I told him he was absolutely correct and hung up with a bang. Shouldn't do that. You can't get telephones in France, and if I'd smashed ours, we'd have had problems, though Jean Pierre could probably scrounge one up on the black market. He seems to know a lot about that.

The food supply in Paris has improved.

Sunday, February 8, 1947

The air ministry guy actually showed up at Aerobleu last night. It was very loud. Josephine Baker came in with some of their friends, and the band was hot and heavy. You couldn't hear yourself think, much less talk, and this guy kept shouting at me that I had to do something about the plane. I shouted back that the damn thing was of no interest to me. Finally this guy is pleading with me. I thought he was going to cry. He said there was no provision in the ministry's regulations for the acquisition of a DC-3, and the Russian had totally disappeared, and the title of transfer appeared to be perfectly legal, and would I please, please go to Le Bourget and claim my airplane. At this point Jean Pierre got into it and said it was my duty to do it; I think he was pulling the guy's leg, though. Nash got into it. She said it would be fun to have an airplane. I shouted back at her — and at that point the music stopped and you could hear me all over the club in the sudden silence — "Do you want to pay the rent on it?"

In the end I told the guy, whose name is Achilles something-or-other that yes, I would come by and sign the papers. My character has clearly deteriorated. I am becoming a weakling. I have acquired a nightclub I didn't want, and now I have a DC-3 I don't need. I have been manipulated by strangers.

The club, I admit, has become real fun.

So long as I don't have to run it.

(To be Continued)