

The Diary

Part Two

Friday, February 15, 1947

Went by the air ministry, signed the papers. I am now the owner of a DC-3. And that means I have to pay the hangar fees. The whole gang at Aeroblu insisted on coming out to Le Bourget to see it. Nash was giddy about it. But before I fly it again, I'm going to go over every inch of it myself.

It was pretty dusty inside. Nash found a broom and started sweeping it out. I said, "Do you think that's going to make it fly better? If you're so anxious to go flying, try your broom." She laughed and took a swing at me.

To my surprise, I found I wanted to get some tools and open the cowling and get my hands greasy again.

I've been sober lately, and I think I'd better stay that way. I could end up with another nightclub and aircraft I don't need. Funny thing is I'm getting an itch to fly.

Monday, February 18, 1947

I've come to realize that the drug of choice among French jazz musicians is hash. The word is that there's a lot of heroin these days in the jazz world of New York. I'm told there's a lot of it in the Woody Herman band. The younger guys are imitating Charlie Parker, thinking if they do what he does, they'll play like him. A sad illusion. Nobody can play like that. There was always a lot of reefer in the jazz people, even before the war, but I'm told heroin is becoming an epidemic in New York. Over here, though, the drug is hashish, which is logical, given the long French involvement in North Africa and the casual travel back and forth across the Mediterranean. I've told the musicians to be discreet about it. Don't fumigate the club with the stuff. I don't want any trouble with the flics.

Tuesday, February 26, 1947

Piaf came in last night. Sat and talked for quite a long time with me. She can be quite funny. Said she has always wanted to sing comic songs, but the French won't accept her as anything but a tragedienne. She said that at one time during the Occupation, she and her secretary had lived in a fancy bordello frequented by Gestapo officers. They were always

after her to perform in Germany. She never did. I told her about the conversation we'd had about collaborators. Did the girls of the bordello who had been with German officers consider themselves collaborators? She got fierce and said, "No. And some of them, after the Liberation, had their heads shaved for it, and they didn't deserve it. The French too can be cruel, mon cher ami."

She said she's planning a tour of the United States this fall, probably November, with a male choir called Les Compagnons de la Chanson. A young man came by to pick her up. Small, intense, maybe 22 years old. She said he was her lighting man, and told me to take note of his name, which I did: Charles Aznavour. Don't explain why I should take note of a lighting man, but she's never wrong about talent, it seems.

Wednesday, March 20

I've been sober a lot lately. Haven't been to the club much. Nash and Jean Pierre seem to be running it well. I go in for my record-playing sessions mostly, but the regular sessions are doing great. *Down Beat* even mentioned the place, saying it was the hotbed of bebop in Paris. They're calling it bebop now. I guess that name will stick.

Found a good French aircraft mechanic, and we've been working on the DC-3 together.

Thursday, March 29

Jean Marc's sister came by the club. She was with a guy named Paul Duclos, one of Jean-Marc's childhood friends. He'd flown with the RAF. He and Jean-Marc left France by different routes. Jean Marc managed to get to Canada by way of Panama, and Paul had gone to England and joined the RAF. The reason we'd never met in England was that he was in a squadron of Mosquitoes and Jean Marc and I were flying Spits. We sat in a corner and talked all night long. First guy I've met I really felt like discussing the war with. He wanted to know exactly what had happened to Jean Marc and I told the story again. I presumed he had read Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. But of course, he said: he was one of my first heroes, and because of him, he said, he went to England determined to be a flier. I said Saint-Exupéry had been one of my heroes, too, during the barnstorming days. We talked

about *Wind, Sand and Stars* and *Flight to Arras*. He said, "I presume you read them in English." I confirmed that. He said, "Of course it would not read as well in translation." I said, in French, that I would expect a Frenchman to say that. And we laughed.

By the end of the evening, I felt as if I'd known him for years. I told him about the DC-3, and he asked if he could come out to Le Bourget and look it over.

Wednesday, April 11

Paul Duclos has been going out to Le Bourget with me almost every day, getting his hands dirty. His plane was shot up pretty badly in early '44. He managed to get it back to England and crashed. Spent more than a year in a British military hospital. Finally got home. He's very enthusiastic about the DC-3. We're going to take it up soon. Paul has some bad burn scars on his arms. He asked where I got the scar on my cheek. He's the first person I've told.

Funny. He felt the same way I did. Never wanted to fly again. But overhauling this crate has given us both the urge. He came up with a wild idea. We should trace some of the routes of Saint-Exupéry.

I said, "I presume you don't include the flights in the Andes. He almost got killed there."

"I'm not that crazy," Paul said. "Anyway, he almost got killed everywhere. And finally did. I wonder what actually happened to him."

I told him. Saint-Exupéry was assigned to Allied Photo Reconnaissance Command in Tunisia. "They trained him in a P-38 Lightning," I told Paul. "The American regulations set the top age for that aircraft at thirty-five, and he was already forty-three. But he talked them into it. He flew eight reconnaissance missions over France, and never came back from the ninth. They figure he went down in the Mediterranean. July 31, 1944. There was speculation that he had engine failure, but I didn't believe that: the P-38 is twin-engined, and can easily fly on one. It's a highly reliable aircraft. He was probably shot down."

"I haven't read any of that," Paul said. "How do you know all that?"

I realized I'd said too much. "I heard it from friends," I told him.

Paul was silent for a while. Then he said, "And how did he talk them into breaking regulations?"

"He was a charmer," I said. "A compelling man."

"Did you know him?" Paul said.

"Well, I met him."

"How?" Paul said. He was pretty incredulous.

I thought I might as well tell him. Some of it, anyway. "*Wind, Sand and Stars* was published in English in 1939, just

before the war. He came to New York for the press presentation. They needed someone who knew flying and spoke French, and my father recommended me. So I met him. I can't say I got to know him well. He went out to Long Island to meet Lindbergh, and I went along, and that was about it."

"What did they talk about?" Paul said, fascinated.

"War. Flying. German air power. French military weakness."

Paul found this all amazing, and was all the more enthusiastic about our trip. He wanted to know more, but I really couldn't tell him all of it.

Paul suggested we start with the flight from Toulouse to Perpignan, and that seemed appropriate.

Tuesday, May 14

Paris is slowly but surely coming back to life. It's easier to get taxis, you can now buy new underwear, if only one to a customer, the store windows have more goods in them, and the theaters and music halls are open and roaring. Paul and I have been working to put the plane in perfect condition. We sent for some new parts. Its hull is now shiny, because while we've been waiting, we buffed it. One hell of a job. But it looks almost new.

Thursday, June 1

The parts arrived.

It almost seemed symbolic that they got here on the same day they opened an exhibit at the Orangerie of art the Germans looted from French Jewish homes. I wanted to see it but was told it was impossible to get in. The Countess arranged a private after-hours showing, and I went with her. Wonderful stuff. Van Gogh, Vermeer, Fragonard, and more.

I'm just letting Jean Pierre and Nash have their head. The place is doing extremely well. I've discontinued the midnight record sessions. Nash has turned them into open sessions, and musicians are jamming until dawn. Big crowds, too.

Monday, July 25

Paul and I took the DC-3 up. It flies beautifully.

Strange. I've begun to feel very at home in Paris. My French has lost, apparently, any trace of accent. And some of the French folk that I meet, with their fathomless conceit about their language, simply won't believe I'm an American. And some try to guess where I'm from, saying Tours or Lyon, and one of them said I must be Belgian, and from Brussels. Paul finds this infinitely amusing, and he's taken to doing an imitation of the American accent. Not a very good one, but it takes in the French. A rather sophomoric joke on our part, but it amuses us.

Some very good young European jazz players coming by

to play. Several young Swedes turned up the other night and played very well indeed. And there are a few young Americans, over here on the GI Bill to study composition with a woman named Nadia Boulanger at Fontainebleau. I keep hearing her name.

Monday, July 28, 1947

Paul and I took the DC-3 up for an hour on Sunday. She purred like a kitten. She may be no Spitfire, and Paul says she's certainly no Mosquito, but a solid dependable aircraft. A model of flight stability. These damn things can really fly.

Took her up again Monday. After giving us some argument, the air controllers finally let us take her low over Paris. We flew down the course of the Seine. I'd never seen Paris from the air. And neither had Paul, who grew up here. Seeing all the monuments I'd seen in pictures as a kid, the Arc de Triomphe, the Eiffel Tower, Sacre Coeur, Notre Dame and the Il de la Cité, this fabulous tapestry of stone and river, I thought I would cry, and when I looked over, Paul was in tears.

Yesterday he gave me a present: *Wind, Sand and Stars*, *Flight to Arras* and *Night Flight* in French editions.

Couldn't resist it, told him the next day I thought they read better in translation.

Tuesday, July 29, 1947

Oh my God! Another delay, and this one a bad one.

The cops have been sniffing around the club. There's nothing I can do about it, of course. But then there's nothing they can do about me either. Unfortunately, they've forbidden me to leave Paris. I'll wait them out.

Sunday, August 3, 1947

The flics say I can go. I told everybody that Paul and I are leaving Saturday, come what may. We're flying to Toulouse, then to Perpignan, then back to Paris.

Tuesday, August 5, 1947

Toulouse

The flight was wonderful. Soft, serene sky, the exquisite patterned farmland of France. Almost due south. Sometimes I had the controls, sometimes Paul did while I took the radio and the maps. Again we talked about Saint-Exupéry. Paul said, "You remember he tried to fly to Saigon? He had no radio."

"Yes," I said, "and I don't get that either. The French air mail service had been using radio in Africa for years and years."

After a while I said, "Does something feel different to you about this flight?"

"Yes," Paul said. "I wonder what it is."

"Nobody's shooting at us," I said, and we laughed.

We passed over the western edge of the Massif Central, then landed at Toulouse.

Staying overnight. Tomorrow Perpignan. A short flight.

Wednesday, August 6, 1947

Perpignan

Followed the Ariège River part of the way. Staying fairly low, to see the world below. Not an aircraft in sight. Paul said, "Do you realize, a few years from now, we wouldn't be able to do this? I think we'll never again have the sky to ourselves like this. It will be full of planes, and ground control will own it all. This is the last freedom."

Finally, we had to climb to go over the edge of the Pyrénées. The Mediterranean came up ahead of us, a vast silver sheet, and we descended to the coastal plane and the airfield at Perpignan. It felt strange, setting foot on the tarmac and thinking about Saint-Exupéry landing here twenty years ago.

Found a little hotel and a nice cafe and got a little drunk. I read aloud from *Wind, Sand and Stars* — in English. "It's better in French," Paul said.

Friday, August 8, 1947

Perpignan

Got drunk again last night. Not very, just a little, and Paul came up with an idea. I thought about it for a minute or two and said, "Let's do it." Didn't want even to acknowledge the world — the worlds! — we had left behind, but in the end decided I'd better tell Nash, or everybody would be looking for us. Sent her a telegram: Gone for a while stop don't worry stop take care of things stop see you when I see you stop Max.

Sunday, August 10, 1947

Marrakech

Yesterday we left Perpignan early and headed at first due south over the Mediterranean.

Then we came on to Marrakech, the birthplace of the little slave, Bark, that Saint-Exupéry had bought from the Moors at Cape Juby and carried off in the mail plane and then set free at Agadir. Saint-Exupéry doesn't tell us whether Bark, whose real name was Mohammed something, ever got home to Marrakech. The French airplane mechanics collected a thousand francs for him, saying he would need it, but after Saint-Exupéry set him down in Agadir, the little guy went mad with freedom and spent all his money on gifts to children. I hope he got home; I doubt it.

Sunday, August 16, 1947

Cape Juby

Yesterday I made a proposal to Paul at breakfast. You're crazy, he said.

"Why shouldn't we?" I argued. "He flew to Patagonia."

"No," Paul said. "It's insane. And besides, I have to see the people at Air France."

I asked him if he really wanted that job. He said he did. I said that I'd see what I could do. Then I laughed and said Patagonia was only a joke, and Paul said, *Salaud* in French and *you son of a bitch* in English.

Sunday, August 23, 1947

We flew east, touching down at places Saint-Exupéry mentions in describing his life as a mail pilot for what eventually became Air France. Casablanca, Agadir, Cisneros, Dakar. We looked down at the yellow desert below, remembering how Saint-Exupéry described the casual murder by the Moors of French pilots forced down by problems, and wondering if they would do so to us if Aerobleu got into trouble. Paul and I talked about our own experiences with the RAF, and I told him some things about Saint-Exupéry's experiences early in the war when he was one of the most brilliant officers in the Armée de l'Air, and the French lost 500 of their 650 fighter aircraft to the Germans and Saint-Exupéry said they had merely been sacrificed. The next line of defense would be Britain, crazy bastards like Paul, Jean-Marc, and me. Were it not for those Spitfire and Hurricane squadrons, and above if it weren't for that 100-octane fuel, the world would be speaking German. Or learning it fast.

When we reached Algiers, I telephoned the Countess. She said she needed to see me.

Paul and I found a florist and bought a wreath. We had no idea where Saint-Exupéry's P-38 went down, but it seemed likely that it was somewhere north of Corsica. Corsica came up on the horizon to our right. As it receded behind us, I dropped low. I was flying, Paul had the wreath. He opened the window and threw it out. Then we set a course for Paris.

Tuesday, December 2, 1947

Paul got his job at Air France, so I don't see much of him. So I have no regular co-pilot. But Paul has introduced me to some of his friends and in a pinch, I can usually find somebody. Including Paul, when he's got time.

The club continues to prosper. Nash is doing a great job. She tells me some people have been nosing around daytimes, asking about me. I go by mostly late at night.

The cab drivers are on strike.

Tuesday, December 9, 1947

Lena Horne is playing the Club des Champs-Élysées for two weeks. The place is jammed and you can't get reservations. The Countess, as usual, was able to pull strings. She got me two reservations. Said she couldn't go herself. So I took Nash, who was dazzled. So, for that matter, was I.

What a stunning entertainer. In a white gown, with that gorgeous smile. Did a lot of songs I like, *Just One of Those Things*, *The Man I Love*, *Stormy Weather* (of course), and a very suggestive *Honeysuckle Rose*. *France Soir* called her opening "a triumph." I'd call that an understatement.

Friday, December 19, 1947

The musicians tell me that Lena Horne and Lennie Hayton secretly got married at one of the *mairies*. The next day they left for the States. It seems they have a problem at home. He's white.

Wednesday, January 14, 1948

I met Don Byas yesterday! He recorded here!

Charlie Parker told me in New York that Don Byas was one of the significant figures in the development of bebop. Wonderful music!

One of the guys at the session told me a story. It seems Byas was reluctant to leave the Count Basie band but wanted to strike out on his own. He didn't know how to hand in his notice, and finally he went up to the Count and said, "Basie, in one month I will have been gone two weeks."

He told me he plans to live in Europe permanently, maybe in France, maybe in Holland. He didn't say so, but I got the feeling that racism in America was one of the reasons for his decision. I told him he is always welcome at the club, any time he wants to drop by.

Sunday, January 24, 1948

Don Byas came by last night with some friends. They played till all hours. What a night.

Friday, January 30, 1948

The ads are up on the Kiosks: the Dizzy Gillespie band is coming to Paris, playing at Salle Pleyel at the end of February. I can't wait. Dizzy and Charlie Parker are the polarity of the new jazz. I wonder how it will sound with a big band?

Wednesday, February 11, 1948

The changes in Paris in the last six months have been amazing. The shop windows are full, though money is still scarce. If you have dollars, you can do very well. I bought a lot of clothes last week. A couple of great sweaters, some shirts, some beautifully tailored slacks.

Maybe it's symbolic. The word is out among the jazz

musicians that Bill Coleman is coming back. I first heard him on Fats Waller records, but apparently he lived here for several years before the war. He has such a gorgeous tone, and such beautifully melodic ideas. I am anxious to hear him in person.

Sunday, February 29, 1948

The Dizzy Gillespie concert last night was all I had hoped for. He has a fabulous band, full of wonderful players who obviously revere him. The band is wild, but in some sort of strange controlled way. The audience went nuts, myself along with everybody else. He is one of the truly great musicians I've ever heard. And he is a born, natural comedian. I spoke to him backstage. A cordial, modest, gracious man, rather different than the beret-and-horn-rimmed-glasses image put out by the press. The American press makes him look a fool, a clown. And he can be a clown, but a very serious one. I was as in awe of him as I was of Charlie Parker when I met him. I told him I'd met Parker in New York. "Was Yard nice to you?" he asked. I realized it was short for Yardbird, which is what Parker's nickname used to be. Now people call him Bird, but Dizzy apparently calls him Yard. "Oh yes sir," I said. "He was beautiful to me."

He asked me what I did. I told him I had a little jazz club called Aeroblu. He'd heard of it. He said, "So you're *the* Max Morgan?" For the first time I, not my father, was *the* Max Morgan. I smiled. But I was monopolizing his time. It seemed every trumpet player in Paris wanted to talk to him. They crowded around him, wanting to ask him questions. Some of them struggled with English, and I started translating for them. Dizzy said he would be glad to show them some things, but the theater was closing for the night.

I said, "We could go over to my club."

The musicians lit up like lamps, and the next thing I knew we were in a convoy of taxis on the way to Aeroblu. When we got there, Dizzy ordered a brandy. One of the musicians told him there were only two other jazz clubs in Paris, L'Orientais and the Tabou. They were Dixieland clubs. He told Dizzy that Aeroblu was the only club in Paris devoted to bebop. And Dizzy warmed to me even more. The kid (he must have been all of eighteen, and I didn't recognize him) told Dizzy that Aeroblu was the place to be.

I don't know how word spreads, but while they were talking and Dizzy was showing them things on his horn, musicians from all over Paris were crowding in. You couldn't move.

Finally, Dizzy and some of the musicians went up to the bandstand and started to play. Some of them were terrified of performing with him, but Dizzy grinned and made jokes and got them all playing their hearts out. I guarantee that all of

them ever after will say that evening was the greatest music lesson of their lives.

Toward dawn, it ended. I asked Dizzy if he was hungry. He was. We went over to Les Halles for onion soup. Dizzy loved it. He said, "What I'd like now is a piece of carrot cake." I told him I'd never tasted carrot cake. He said, "What? You never had carrot cake? That's criminal!"

Finally we left, and I dropped him off at his hotel.

Now that I think of it, it was the greatest music lesson in my life too. What a night. John Birks Gillespie, genius and maybe saint.

Monday, March 1, 1948

Dizzy came by last night with some friends. Seems he has friends everywhere. Stayed only a little while this time, but he lit the place up. What a gentleman.

Monday, March 8, 1948

Really good musicians of the new generation keep turning up at Aeroblu, including Americans who have come over to study with Nadia Boulanger. She has a formidable reputation as a teacher, and according to what the Americans tell me, she is having a huge influence on American music.

Tuesday, April 12, 1948

The Countess called. She's glad Aeroblu is busy, but thought it might be a bit dangerous for me to be in the spotlight so much. She's right, of course. But what can I do? Especially now, after the murder at the club, she thinks it's time for me to get away. And I think she's right.

Thursday, May 13, 1948

The most amazing thing. A parcel arrived at the club. It had a French postmark, so I guess somebody must have brought it from the States and mailed it here. No return address. Inside the brown paper there was metallic green paper, and inside that there was a carton. I opened it. There was some kind of cake, and on top of it an envelope. The envelope contained a postcard, a photo of New York City, and on the back a message: it said, *This is a carrot cake. Eat it. Love, Birks.*

I felt incredibly privileged, one of those people who could call him Birks.

The cake was delicious. Everybody had a piece. "I'll always keep the card

Wednesday, June 9, 1948

Things go on. It's all slipped into a sort of strange but pleasant routine. Brioche and coffee in the cafe in the morning, read the newspapers. They're still pretty thin. The French

still can't get paper. And of course they're short of hard currency.

Drop in at the club a couple of times a week just to listen. A lot of young bebop players coming up. The place doesn't need me. I book the musicians and let it go at that.

Friday, July 23, 1948

The newspapers say it is the biggest summer for American tourists since before the war. The college kids are all over St.-Germain-des-Pres. The French have started lighting the famous edifices and monuments again: the Arc de Triomphe glows in the night. So do Notre Dame, Ste. Chapelle, and Place de la Concorde. It's becoming the City of Light again. Thrilling to see.

Wednesday, August 11, 1948

Damn. It seems that somebody got into my room and stole my log. I've looked everywhere. That really bothers me: somebody wants to know where I've been and what I've done. There was nothing important in it, but I hate to lose it.

Pierre Langel, an outstanding young French pianist, and his friend Philippe Leclerc, a very good bass player, told me they had a job in London. But they didn't have the money to get there and asked if I'd lend it to them. I said, What the hell, I'll take you there. I haven't been back to England since I got out of service, and I felt like looking into the jazz scene there. Besides, things were getting a little sticky around here.

I heard some very good English jazz musicians. I was particularly impressed by Ronnie Scott. Seems a lot of them have been working dumb jobs on transAtlantic liners, just to get to New York to hear Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Bud Powell.

Decided to go out and see my old field. It's overgrown with grass. How quickly nature takes over. I stood for a long time, imagining us all taking off, and so few of us left now.

British customs and immigration people are a pain. They held me up for an hour when we arrived. No problems leaving.

Wednesday, November 17, 1948

Paris seems very gray and chilly after the weeks in Algiers. I really like the climate there. I got sick of the weather here and at the club I asked a bunch of people if they felt like going to North Africa for a day or so. So at the crack of dawn, we piled into the plane and left, heading for Oran. Some of the musicians began to jam, and everyone had a fabulous time. I think I can damp the engine sound even more. Maybe hang some of these big quilted blankets they use when they move pianos.

Aside from anything else, musicians are funny. We went

to a cafe in the La Blanca district that had been recommended to us. But the place was alive with flies. They were whizzing and zooming and going in those aimless circles that flies do. When the waiter came François Leclerc, the trombone player, said without a hint of a smile, "I'd like a bowl of those flies, please."

The waiter *didn't* smile either. He said, "We only have them on Fridays." And everyone roared. The waiter then smiled. We had great couscous.

Two days of sun and sand and a lot of booze to get the chill out of our bones and we came back to Paris.

Monday, December 13, 1948

The padding has made the plane much quieter. A bunch of us went to Rome and back. Another airborne jam session. Haven't laughed as much in years.

Friday, December 24, 1948

Merry Christmas, whoever you are.

Wednesday, February 9, 1949

Several Cubans have turned up in the club lately, asking if they could sit in. I think they are what they seem, musicians. I doubt that they really know anything. Some are here to study music, some to study other things, but a few seem to be prowling around in search of mischief. They're the ones to watch.

One of them sat in on piano, Armando something-or-other. A really excellent player. I don't know whether what he does should be called jazz, but whatever it is, it's pretty exciting.

Got talking to him. He speaks quite a bit of English, not much French. Told me a lot about nightclub life in Havana, hot and heavy with elaborate floorshows and passionate music. All of it designed for American tourists, along with the gambling and prostitution. He's bitter about the prostitution, "We turn our sisters into *putanas* for the Yankees." That nightclub stuff is the commercial music. But back in the hills, he said, where the people remain completely illiterate, African rhythms survive in forms far purer than you can find in Africa. In Africa, he said, the European influence is far stronger. Interesting. Dizzy Gillespie is very interested in the music of Cuba. Maybe that's one of the reasons.

Armando said there's a lot of unrest and even violence at the University of Havana

A very intense young man. But he doesn't know the half of what's going on in Cuba.

Thursday, April 15, 1949

There are more and more people who want to go up with me, particularly for the flying jam sessions. But the plane only

seats 21, so I have to be selective. I had to meet the countess in Rome. So we put together a small band, invited some of the regulars at Aerobleu, including a couple of actors from the Comedie Française, and left.

It was a funny trip, as usual. Everybody was loaded, if not with booze then something else. Once we got there, I told everyone to be back by 10 the next morning and left to meet the Countess. I don't know what they drank in Rome, but they mostly slept all the way back.

Friday, April 16, 1949

It's confirmed in the newspapers. Charlie Parker is coming to the first Paris Jazz Festival early next month. I can't wait. I hope I don't have to go to Havana at that time.

Monday, April 24, 1949

They're going to play at the Salle Pleyel: Charlie Parker, Kenny Dorham, Al Haig, Tommy Potter, and Max Roach. And there's a group playing opposite them, led by Miles Davis, the young trumpet player I heard that night in New York with Parker. It should be quite a concert.

Tuesday, April 25, 1949

Charlie Parker is playing two concerts. I hope to go both nights.

Wednesday, May 10, 1949

God, what a concert. Before it started I ran into a bunch of English musicians in the lobby, guys I'd met in London. A fine drummer named Alan Ganley, a saxophone player named Johnny Dankworth, a tenor man named Ronnie Scott, and several more. They were staying at the Hotel Sphinx, and they were incredibly excited about seeing Bird, as they called him, in person. The announcer stepped up to the microphone and said, "Le Festival Internationale de Jazz est ouvert." The audience went wild.

Then Sydney Bechet. The way the audience behaved, you'd have thought it was the return of Jesus. Pete Johnson. Then a group with Don Byas and Big Chief Russell Moore. Then the Miles Davis group, with Tadd Dameron on piano. Davis is developing into something fantastic, a personal way of playing. And then what I was waiting for: the Charlie Parker Quintet. God, what a thrill. The music was good until then, but when Parker went on, the place exploded.

I went backstage afterwards. It was chaos. Everybody was trying to get Charlie Parker's attention, and I turned to leave. But I caught him giving me some kind of look, and I hesitated. I said to him, "I guess you don't remember me."

He said, "Of course I do. It's Max Morgan, isn't it? Mr. Aerobleu."

"Yes," I said, astonished.

And he reached into his pocket, got out his wallet, and said, "Here's the ten bucks I owe you." I was flabbergasted. He seemed to ignore the people around him. He said, "Dizzy told me about your club." Everybody was trying to talk to him, and I thought I'd better leave. I told him I was coming back for tomorrow night's concert. "Where are you going now?" he said.

"Nowhere," I said.

He said, "I'm meeting some friends. Can we come by your club?"

They did. Bird brought his horn and played.

Tuesday, May 17, 1949

What a time in my life.

I went to the second Salle Pleyel concert Tuesday, May 10. I went backstage at intermission. Charlie saw me and came to me, looking serious. He said, "I've got a problem tomorrow." He said he and his group had to play a concert in Marseille. There'd been a screw-up on their transportation, and he didn't see how they were going to get there in time. He said some of the French musicians had told him I had an airplane and I'd flown some of them to gigs. That was a new word for me. "This would be a great imposition, but is it possible?" he said, and I said, "You want me to fly you guys to Marseille? Of course I'll do it."

When we were airborne, Charlie asked me if he could come up to the front. He sat in the co-pilot's seat, fascinated by the landscape below us, by the instruments, by the plane. I got the feeling he was interested in absolutely everything. And then he got out his saxophone and started to play. Then the drummer came forward and started playing on the wall! My private concert. And when we sighted Marseille, Charlie started playing *La Marseillaise*!

The quintet played their concert Tuesday night, and the next night another one at the Rex movie theater and, afterwards in club called Martinez et Christera. At one point I called the Countess, who said she needed to see me but when I got back would be soon enough.

We came back to Paris early Thursday morning. I was already in the habit of calling him Bird. (He objected to "Mr. Parker".) They had a session at the Colisée movie theater. He invited me. I asked if I could bring a guest. He said, "Of course. Not too many, though. It's a private recording."

I knew Nash would be in seventh heaven. I couldn't see taking anyone else.

They recorded *Ornithology*, *Out of Nowhere*, *Lover Man*, and some other tunes I didn't know.

I had to slip away to meet the Countess. She said it was time for me to head for Havana. I wanted to tell her I was

staying here in Paris — I just wanted to go back and hear Bird — but I knew she was right.

I found out later that Miles Davis met Juliette Greco. I can't imagine a less likely couple, but apparently it was love at first sight, he with his dapper and fashionable clothes, she with her stark existentialist's black. He doesn't speak French and she doesn't speak English. They turned up together at Aeroblu, and I saw her introduce Davis to Sartre. I have no idea what the conversation was about, but it would have been interesting to be a fly on the sugar on their table.

Then Davis sat down at a table with her, alone, and it was as if no one else existed in the world. They held hands and stared at each other.

Some French girl came up to him and started gushing. He looked up at her with an icy glare and said, "I ain't got no free fucks to give away." It was one of the most withering remarks I ever heard, but funny in its way. I don't know whether the girl even understood it.

At the end of the night, Bird thanked me for my help, and I thanked him for the music. I couldn't say it had been one of the most exciting weeks of my life; that would have embarrassed him, and me too. We shook hands and he left.

I couldn't sleep for hearing the music in my head. And I knew that the sweet life in Paris was coming to an end. From now on things were going to get complicated.

Tuesday, June 14, 1949

That young Cuban pianist came in again Saturday night. His name is Armando Sanchez, and he can really play. You can see the inspiration Dizzy Gillespie gets from this Afro-Cuban music. It's wonderful stuff rhythmically.

This Sanchez is one of those studying with Nadia Boulanger, and you can hear he has a great classical piano technique, along with a feeling for jazz and for that Caribbean sound. I asked him to come in again next Saturday. This time, I told him, it's for money, not just to sit in.

Tuesday, August 10, 1949

Armando Sanchez has become a regular. Handsome guy, small and dark. And he's acquiring quite a following. There are apparently a lot of Cubans in Paris, and some of them have been coming by.

Ironical, really.

Saturday night, however, there was some sort of row. It was all in Spanish, of course, but I could get the drift of it. It had something to do with the government and Cuba's president, a guy named Grau. One of the Cubans took a swing at another one, and it looked like it was going to turn into a free-for-all, but Jean Pierre broke it up. I knew he was strong, but I didn't know he was that strong.

At the end of the evening, I asked Armando to have a drink with me. He is uncomfortable with me. If I read him right, he likes me personally and that bothers him because he hates Yankees. He didn't say that, but you could feel it. He came here from the University of Havana, which is a hot-bed not only of politics but of violence. In Cuba, he said, political argument often ends in assassination or murder.

I wonder if he was trying to sound me. Who sent him? To see where I stand on things? I wasn't about to tell him.

Tuesday, September 27, 1949

I find myself listening closely to what Armando Sanchez tells me. He is very familiar with the ferment in the Caribbean. He is friends with a student activist named Fidel Castro. I think Armando has begun to trust me, and what he's telling me is sincere.

He says the night-life in Havana is fabulous. The Countess insists that I not let him know that I'm going there. At least not yet.

Wednesday, October 13, 1949

Armando may have to go back to Cuba for a while.

Sunday, October 17, 1949

The Countess called. She told me to leave as soon as possible for Havana. I may have to give Aeroblu to Nash. This is not exactly what I had in mind for my life. I called Armando. Asked him if he wanted a ride home.

Sunday, October 27, 1949

Havana

Flew to the Azores, 740 miles west of Capo Roca in Portugal. Deep green on the Atlantic blue. Landed at Santa Maria airfield. Took an hour to eat and refuel and stretch my legs. Took off again and headed west. Ran into some turbulence an hour out, which really frightened Armando, but it was nothing serious and it soon passed. What was notable was the serenity. Nothing much to see, just ocean, and I thought of the fright of Columbus's crew when the water went on for weeks. Amazing how the world is shrinking. The lands grow closer together. So do their troubles.

Landed without incident in Havana. Armando wanted me to come with him and meet his musician friends, but I told him I had other things to do and we parted. Probably forever. The city seems peaceful, and it certainly is colorful.

With all that's about to break loose here, I wish I were here only for the music.

Maybe another time.

Here the diary ends