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Alas Our Poor Language

Doug Ramsey, Richard M. Sudhalter, and I, being ex-newspapermen, and Doug a broadcast journalist as well, have been collecting grammatical horrors and fad usage by TV reporters and anchors and newspapers, and of course public officials, conspicuously including the present President, who can't pronounce "terrorist." Or "nuclear". (Neither can Jimmy Carter, and he ran a noo-cloo-yur submarine, which is a sobering thought. But then Ronald Reagan and Hamilton Jordan couldn't pronounce their own names.)

The aberrations include the mispronunciation of February. Its first r is following the dear departed d from Wednesday into silence. Sudhalter heard someone on NPR say *Antartic*. And I've heard *anticlimatic*. One consistently encounters *less* for *fewer* as in "less tickets," heard on CBS News in Los Angeles, "fewer lines, less wrinkles" in an Avon commercial, and on both CNN and Fox News, "(Ossama bin Laden) travels with a small group of less than ten people."

That should read: "fewer than ten persons." The use of *people* as a plural for *persons* was once forbidden on most newspapers. A people is an ethnic group or populace of a nation. You will notice that when *Time* selected three outstanding women for its cover this year, it did not call them "people of the year" but "persons" of the year. I was rather pleased recently to note that the signs above the diamond lanes on California freeways have the decency to say that they are reserved for vehicles carrying "2 or more persons." In time it will become "2 people". Count on it.

And lately we're hearing *amount* for *number*, as in "the amount of complaints." As for *thankfully* and *hopefully* they're a lost cause. So is *venue*, which once had a specific and useful meaning. The past participle of the French verb *venir*, it means and only means the location of a crime and the jurisdiction of the trial that grows out of it. It does not mean nightclub, theater, or football stadium, and assuredly doesn't mean a magazine. In the latter case, the proper word would be forum, and in the plural, fora. But *venue* in its gross misuse is, I fear, here to stay. *Absent*, like *venue*, is a legal term that has spread. Sudhalter notes that the original title of a 1981 Paul Newman movie was *Absent Malice*. He said: "They changed it to *Absence of Malice* because during the preliminary screenings no one had the faintest idea what the title meant." It is now commonly used to replace "without".

And can anyone make sense of *pushing the envelope*, an expression originating among the early astronauts, more renowned for daring than literacy?

Then we have *arguably* which is arguably one of the worst neologisms of recent years. It has a connotation of belligerence. "Schmooz is arguably the best tenor player since . . . ." How about "possibly" or even "in some opinions" or the non-confrontational "some would argue?" Who wants to argue? Dreadful word. And then there's the ubiquitous *in-depth* in which a preposition is stapled by a hyphen to a noun to produce an adjective to precede a noun, as in "an in-depth interview with Kenny G."

Watch out for: *as we speak, even as we speak, at this point in time, case in point, literally, basically, below the radar, that said, up close and personal, mind set, level playing field, raise the bar, fire storm, feeding frenzy, end game, woken, viable* (hopelessly separated from its original meaning in biology), *front* or *back burner, bottom line, meltdown, go there, resonate, so to speak, any time soon, jump start, in a heartbeat, in a New York minute, comfort zone, defining moment, ratchet up, non-starter, utilize* for *use*, *lay* for *lie*, *legs* (as in "the story has legs"). *Like* in place of *as* has become almost universal. Sudhalter points out that the lyric of Hoagie Carmichael's 1939 *I Get Along without You Very Well* contains the line, "I've forgotten you just like I should." But the commercial slogan "Winston tastes good like a cigarette should" probably is most responsible for its spread.

And there's *I* to replace *me*, because it seems to sound more elegant: "Please excuse your husband and I," in the 2002 version of *The Count of Monte Cristo*. *Bottom line* shows no signs of going away any time soon. A new one seems to have arisen recently: *uptick*. One horror is the use of *unique* in a comparative form: very unique, somewhat unique. It means, and only means, *one of a kind*. Becoming

ubiquitous is *epiphany*, diluted to meaning a revelation, major or minor, about anything.

So is *if you will*. Watch CNN for an hour and note how many times you hear it. It's like Chinese water torture.

Syndrome is hideously and pervasively misused, as in the 1979 movie title *The China Syndrome*. It is a medical term meaning the collective symptoms and signs characterizing a disease or abnormal psychological condition. *Riveting* is favored by movie reviewers, as in "a riveting performance."

Most anything, for *almost anything*, once considered the property of Li'l Abner, Barney Google, Snuffy Smith, Mortimer Snerd, and Clem Caddiddlehopper, now is seen in prominent newspapers.

Dick Sudhalter said, "You hear a lot of solecisms. For example, the use of 'notoriety' when 'fame' is meant, and 'disinterested' to mean 'uninterested.'" Disinterested means detached, fair, impartial. Dick continued:

"I've even heard (on NPR) 'sunk' used as the simple past of 'sink,' as well as 'shrunk' as the past of 'shrink'; and, believe it or not, 'drug' as the participle form of 'drag'."

In another note, Sudhalter said: "Now you've got me thinking about it even in my sleep. Woke just now to the following:

"1. The reconception of certain clearly plural nouns as singulars: 'data, phenomena', and that old standby 'media'."

"2. What might be called the furniturification that has turned 'chairman' and 'chairwoman' into the absurd 'chair'.

"3. Substitution of 'hung' for 'hanged' in discussion of executions.

"4. 'Pro-active'. What makes it any better than simple old 'active'? Nothing against neologisms, if they add something or provide a shade of meaning hitherto not easily achieved. What, if anything, does 'pro-active' add?"

And how about "criterion" and "criteria", used interchangeably?

And "snow showers" and "rain showers" in weather reports? "Showers" used to mean light rains, and it meant water. Light snows were "snow flurries", as opposed to snowfalls and heavy snowfalls and blizzards.

And have you noticed the gradual disappearance of "an" as the indefinite article before words beginning with vowels? I thought this was the practice only of the abysmally uneducated, but saw an example in the February 24 *New York Times* that described a woman as "a indexer". Where are the copy editors of yesteryear? And of course the distinction once applied to the definite article is also being lost: it was pronounced *thee* before words beginning with vowels, *thuh* before words starting with consonants. But you'll hear "thuh answer is to read thee book," or variants thereon.

And such has been the power of the radical feminists that TV writers and reporters are terrified of using — pardon me, utilizing — the word "man." You'll hear such tortured stuff as "When police broke into the house, they found three dead subjects and an individual with a shotgun. They arrested the gentleman." They arrested a man or a woman, not an "individual," and he was hardly a gentleman.

I actually DID see a book on display that was described on its dust jacket as a "herstory". "History" has nothing to do with "his." We got it from French *histoire*, which merely means "story", and it came in turn from Latin *historia*.

"How many times," Sudhalter said, "have I heard the horrific *spokesperson* used when the gender of the speaker is obvious?" Right. And anyone who ever says I was a newspaper person is liable to get a kick in the venue. I was a newspaperman. When will we hear *sideperson* for a musician? And you have surely encountered the radical feminist *womyn*. I figure that the troglodytes of women's lib will demand the abolition of the very word *person*. Then you won't even be able to use the term *spokesperson* because it contains the word *son*. I propose in all such instances the substitution of *thing*, which is surely gender neutral, and womyn can be called *wothings* and *spokesthings* and *anchorthings*.

Which leads me to thoughts of an occasion when I was having lunch with a young woman who went on about wanting to be viewed exactly as a man would be. I said, very sweetly, "Well, if it's any consolation to you, I don't find anything feminine about you at all." So help me, she muffled a little sob, joking, to be sure — but she got the point.

Roger Kellaway and I were up for the score of a television movie which had been produced by a woman. I had lunch with her to discuss the picture. She and a girlfriend began a close interrogation to discover whether I was feminist correct, and when I had had enough of that, I said, "Well if we do this song, I know the perfect chick to sing it."

"Chick?" she sniffed. "Chick?"

"Yeah, chick," quoth I, knowing the gig was blown anyway.

Aside from the fact that I like them musically, I just adore the Dixie Chicks for shoving it into their collective face. They've got what so many of those broads would love to have: looks and talent.

Back in the 1970s, a woman in a western Canadian city was elected alderman. A feminist reporter asked her if she would demand a change of title. Her reply was, approxi-

mately, this: "No! I fought for it, I won it, and it's mine! I'm an alderman!" Good on her, as they say in Canada.

The fastest-spreading fad expression seems to be "at the end of the day." I heard it three times in about two minutes on a television news-talk show. *Went missing* is another newy, and spreading just as quickly. Of the Laci Peterson disappearance in California, and similar cases, you'll hear those TV newscritters say she "went missing," as if she loped off on a romp and may turn up laughing. The oddest use yet of this anomaly occurred in a story about the theft of Cher's wig (one of those thunderously important items that more and more clog the TV news). Some pretty little newsthing said the wig "went missing." On its own? I guess it had legs.

The newest newy is *embed*, meaning to assign journalists to military units. It's ghastly. It arises out of the news censorship exercised in the Gulf War, product of the hostility of the military to freedom of the press and the burn they got from the news coverage of Viet Nam. The new idea is to "embed" reporters and thereby control them. Doug Ramsey said, "The Pentagon invented it and the journalism establishment, 'the media' (retch), bought it and disseminated it. I sat on two groups of military and journalism experts during the nineties. We were supposed to come up with ways to cooperate that would assure both security and the greatest possible freedom of information in the next war. This kind of military control of reports was precisely what I and a few others argued against. Here it is. Ernie Pyle, R.I.P."

Doug was senior vice president of the Foundation for American Communications, educating professional journalists to improve reporting on economics, science, and all manner of specialized subjects.

Dick Sudhalter suggested a category of brainless tautologies, including: "'General consensus' (a consensus is by nature general), 'from whence' ('whence' means, of course, 'from where'), 'a propos of (the *of* is redundant); 'off of' (no comment)." I gave Dick a bit of an argument, citing Psalm 121: "I lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." (One of my favorite tautologies was on the menu of a diner near Lake Placid, New York: au gratin with cheese.)

Doug and Dick and I have been noting some of the anachronisms in movies. One might deplore the restoration of anything like the Hays Office to control the content of movies, but I wish some of the releasing studios would establish an Anti-Anachronism Office to look over scripts in pre-production. The lapses suspend the suspension of disbelief. One example is "Check it out" in movies set in earlier times, such as westerns. Up until recent years, "check it out" was said of library books, not as a synonym for "investigate." "Had it", as in "I've had it," derives from a World War II expression of the RAF, and it meant killed, dead. But you'll hear it in movies set in periods well before that. James Arness says "as we speak" in the 1987 film *Alamo: 13 Days to Glory*.

I have yet to hear "the whole nine yards" in a movie set before the 1940s, but we can expect to hear it utilized any time soon, if you will. That said, it refers to the length of the ammunition belt in the P-51, and, I imagine, other fighter planes of World War II, which was twenty-seven feet.

"Hold your horses" dates from the time when automobiles were first appearing on the streets and frightening horses. In a 2002 TV production of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, Patrick Stewart, as Scrooge, calls from his bedroom window, "Hold your horses!" The automobile had not yet been invented. Sudhalter noticed that in the movie *The Road to Perdition,* set in 1931, one of the characters says, "I'm outta here," which is a recent expression. And, Dick added, "In one scene, a radio is clearly playing Fletcher Henderson's record of *Queer Notions*, composed and recorded in 1933.

"Come to that, were records being played at all on the air that early?"

I don't think so; the prohibition was, I believe, still in effect. A little inscription on record labels read, "Not licensed for radio broadcast." I don't think the ban began to break down until the late 1930s.

I have noticed big-band source cues for scenes in the 1930s that use baritone in the sax section. But then, I am still bothered by the use of electric guitar in westerns, including the series *Bonanza*. Where is the amp plugged in?

But back to *outta here*. It occurs in the 2002 film *Joe and Max*, about the friendship between Max Schmeling and Joe Louis, in a scene set in 1938. Indeed, everything about the film is anachronistic, and some of it is simply stupid. After World War II, Schmeling (who was anti-Nazi, and suffered for it) comes to Chicago. Getting off the train, he asks a boy where he can find Joe Louis. He is too block-headed of course to ask the Boxing Commission for an address. After two or three such scenes in which the boob (Schmeling was quite intelligent, in fact) asks black people on the street where he can find Louis, he is directed to some cafe. As he enters his way is blocked by black men who say he's going to find trouble. Then Louis appears and says, "He's with me." The idiot or idiots who wrote that scene have no sense of the social atmosphere in a time before (one would presume, or I'm outta here) they were born. In the 1950s and '60s, in Montreal, Louisville, Chicago, and New York, I often went to black

nightclubs to hear music, sometimes alone, sometimes with someone else white, and sometimes with someone black. I never encountered danger or hostility, though I sometimes drew curious glances. I often encountered an almost formal courtesy. And specifically in Chicago, even in black-owned clubs, the personnel, including headwaiters and waiters, discouraged black patronage because the uptown white customers tipped better. That's documented in Dempsey Travis's book *The Autobiography of Black Jazz*. The scene in *Joe and Max* then is cultural and historical nonsense.

Sudhalter said, "In the recent *The Quiet American*, the eponymous character, a deep-cover CIA guy in early 1950s Viet Nam, refers to an event as 'something else,' by way of high praise. Far's I know, only jazzfolk were using that expression in them days — and certainly I've never met a Langley type who was remotely hip."

Yeah, well that's because it's hard to get a job writing in movies if you're over thirty. A lawsuit charging age-ism in the film industry is under way, but the little kiddies, to use Lester Young's expression, go right on turning out this anachronistic balderdash. Dick added:

"The character in the film is supposed to be a Bostonian, yet he pronounces Faneuil Hall as though it were a French name. Any Bostonian worth his beans knows it's fan-you-ill."

Oh, and visually? In the godawful 1987 *The Untouchables* with Kevin Kostner, there is a scene in which the cops make a warehouse raid, their axes smashing wooden cases of booze identified as Canadian by big red maple-leaf stencils on their sides. The red maple leaf did not come into use as a symbol of Canada until February, 1965, when the Canadian ensign was replaced by the present flag, two broad red bars at either end of the panel with the red maple leaf on a white field in the middle. That flag and that symbol certainly weren't around in Al Capone's Chicago. There are other idiocies in that picture. To help out the Americans against the bad guys, the Mounties come charging across a border bridge on horseback The Americans too are on horseback, although how these city slickers suddenly became expert equestrians goes unexplained. Why the horses in the first place is a mystery: one of the techniques of the liquor smugglers was to hide the stuff under the floorboards of cars. The Mounties certainly had no authority to fire guns and take part in arrests on American soil. Furthermore, the making and export of liquor were not illegal in Canada, and so why would the Mounties be involved in the first place? David Mamet wrote that script, and it's a crock not only of anachronisms but lies as well. (Capone and Elliott Ness never met in real life.) But then, I am always mystified by the esteem in which Mamet is held. And what were the production designer and art director doing to earn their money?

One of the neologisms is *buzz*, meaning information, now widely used in television political news. And there's *heads-up*, as in "He'll give me a heads-up about that." Is a *heads-up* the same as *the skinny*? *Skinny* used to be an adjective meaning thin, but it has become a noun meaning, apparently, inside information. *Skinny* is, I suppose, no worse than the old *low-down*. It doesn't bother Doug Ramsey, who says that we have to allow for the inventiveness of slang. He is quite right about that. Consider the word *sidetrack*. It obviously is derived from railway speech, but the word has become part of the language, and there is no real synonym for it. Words change their meanings with time. When Christopher Wren built St. Paul's Cathedral, it was said that it was "awful and artificial." This was praise, meaning awesome and artistic.

Coinages happen in all languages. We derive the word *lieutenant* from French. Rarely does anyone examine it. *Lieu* means *place*, *tenant* means holding. So it means "place holding" and tells you why the casualty rate is high among junior officers. *Maintenant* consists of *main, hand*, and, again, *tenant*. Held in the hand. Immediate. Therefore now. Julian Jaynes argues in *The Emergence of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* that there are no abstract words, tracing many of them back to Indo-European. All abstract words have roots in the concrete, even our strangely clumsy verb set meaning "to be".

Sudhalter sent me a note saying:

"A reader less concerned with language use might well interpret all this as pedantry, therefore not worth taking very seriously. Seems to me that what we three are actually doing is addressing the music of language. The way I see it, all these trespasses, great and small, violate the beauty, the cadence, rhythm, euphony and inner grace of language, just as surely as wrong notes violate the integrity of a musical line. I'd suggest you amend what we've done by explaining this to readers. Explain that hearing the beauty of language mauled offends purely musical sensibilities. It's no accident that all three of us are as committed to beauty in music as we are to language. There's a direct correlation, and it needs to be explained. Otherwise more than a few folks are going to sit back and think, 'Oh lighten up, you guys! (Itself an ugly, overused phrase.) Quit nitpicking (another cliché). Or woids to dat effect."

That's all true. But for me, the issue is the simple grinding repetition of coined phrases. Whoever was the first to say, "at

the end of the day," came up with something vividly evocative. It's when you hear the talking heads of TV use it three or four times in fifteen minutes that it takes on an abrasive quality. More than anything, I regret the loss of clarity that these abuses of the language are bringing about. It is no consolation to hear from French friends that the same thing is going on with their language.

At the end of the day is heard twice in the 1986 film *Up Close and Personal*, whose background is the TV news business. If the film, with Robert Redford and Michel Pfeiffer, seems like a flagrant knock-off of *A Star Is Born*, they may well be because Joan Didion and Dominick Dunne wrote the script and also that of the Streisand version of the story. Never let it be said that Hollywood doesn't recycle.

When I became editor of *Down Beat*, John A. (Jack) Tynan was the magazine's west coast editor. He began his career as a reporter in the city room of the *New York Journal-American*. He said recently, "It was a kind of training that has just disappeared." Jack could write copy, and excellent copy, faster than anyone I ever knew. After several years at *Down Beat*, Jack became a news writer at ABC-TV in Los Angeles. Now retired, he lives in Palm Desert, California.

"One of the problems, of course, is the lack of background in some of the younger people," Jack said. "I had an experience with a young news producer. 'They're putting a star in the Hollywood Walk of Fame for Paul Robeson,' I said. He looked at me blankly and said, 'Who's Paul Robeson?'

"I think that at base the cause of the sloppiness is the decline of the spoken word in the family. In the past, if you were inclined to bring home the street speech of your buddies, your parents would correct you. That's no longer so."

True, no doubt. But I think nearly fifty years of illiterate song lyrics has made a big contribution. For better or worse, popular music is a powerful teacher and shaper of language, and I think the damage done by nearly a half century of rock and hip hop and rap is beyond estimate.

At the end of the day it is futile to lament these neologisms — pulling a Canute, if you will and as it were. We have tolerated the disappearance of the singular *thee* and *thou*, a devastating loss to the English language. Maybe we should succumb to the neologisms and even spiff up some of our old literature for modern youth and the vast inert audience of television. We could have:

Taken all in all, he was an individual. Or rather: a individual.

A Individual for All Seasons.

What a piece of work is a individual.

The child is father of the individual.

There's no venue like home.

In my father's house there are many venues.

Mitchell Parish's verse of *Stardust* could be improved: "And even as we speak, the purple dusk of twilight time steals across . . . ."

And another: "When the in-depth purple falls . . . ."

This point in time is the winter of our discontent.

Or . . . whatever.

Down Beat Daze

In the previous issue, I raised the subject of the falsification of jazz history by writers, working from secondary sources, who weren't there and do not have personal knowledge of the people or the events. An egregious example occurred on February 15:

> CHICAGO (AP) — Jack Maher, who served more than three decades at respected jazz magazine Down Beat and its parent company, Maher Publications, has died. He was 78.
>
> Maher died Friday at Good Samaritan Hospital in suburban Downers Grove. The cause of his death was not specified.
>
> "Jack Maher was a cheerleader, a taskmaster, a visionary, a curmudgeon when he wanted to be, and your grandfather when he wanted to be," said longtime Down Beat staffer Frank Alkyer, whom Maher appointed last year as his successor as publisher.
>
> Maher was credited with transforming Down Beat into a leading forum on jazz, with a roster of writers who included Leonard Feather, Nat Hentoff, Dan Morgenstern, Ralph Gleason and Ira Gitler.
>
> The magazine was founded in 1934 to chronicle the comings and goings of touring swing bands.
>
> A previous owner forfeited the magazine to his printer, Maher's father, John Maher.
>
> Maher immediately changed a number of his father's policies, including one which had frowned on putting pictures of black musicians on Down Beat's cover.
>
> "The cover is the vehicle used to get potential readers into the magazine," Maher said in 1994. "Down Beat has always championed jazz, which has meant

championing African-American musicians."

Maher is survived by his wife, Pat, a sister and six children.

Neil Tesser sent this out on the internet with the following comment:

> What a crock. When I worked at the magazine in the early '70s — and others will back me up, since this policy existed into the '80s — Maher was a prejudicial oaf who did everything he could to AVOID putting black faces on the magazine's cover, on the premise that they sell fewer copies. (The same went for women, by the way.) He was also noted for calling us editors into his office and asking us to try to emulate the success of his favorite magazine, Golf Digest, in shaping new features. (This, in fact, is how Down Beat's "How To" column originated; Maher enjoyed a similar column in his fave golf magazine, and even used the same title for the Down Beat feature.)
>
> It is my understanding that Maher's father brought in all the heavyweights listed in the article above, not the son . . . and that under the son's tenure, most of them left as quickly as possible.
>
> I understand that this involves speaking ill of the dead, but history should not be rewritten in the form of a eulogy, let alone a badly reported obit. Besides, I think I earned the right by speaking ill of him when he was alive. In my experience, he was a petty, bullying, barely literate, condescending brute.

The AP story is derived from the obituary published in the *Chicago Tribune* over the byline of its arts editor Howard Reich. Third Reich, as some Chicago musicians refer to him, is, in common with some of the writers at the *New York Times*, one of the more abject lackeys of Wynton Marsalis. His story is filled with misstatements and lies. He writes:

"Mr. Maher built *Down Beat* into a leading forum on jazz. Its distinguished roster of writers included Nat Hentoff, Leonard Feather, Dan Morgenstern, Ralph Gleason, and Ira Gitler."

It implies then, but doesn't quite state, that he brought these people into the magazine. He did not — not one of them. Hentoff in fact had been fired under the aegis of his father. The titular publisher was Charles Suber. Chuck said to me recently on the telephone, "I fired Hentoff." That story is complicated, but Hentoff was gone before I became the managing editor, and later editor, although the difference was academic. The first issue to bear my name on the masthead is that of April 16, 1959.

Ralph Gleason was gone from the magazine by then. I hired him back. I also brought Ira Gitler into the magazine. Leonard Feather had been with the magazine for many years before any of us. I hired Don DeMicheal, a fine Louisville musician, and trained him as a writer and editor; Don in turn hired Dan Morgenstern after I left and Dan succeeded him as editor. Jack Maher was responsible for none of these hirings. I in turn was hired by Chuck Suber. DeMicheal later recalled to me that on the day I left, he said, "Do you have any parting words of wisdom for me?" I said, "Yeah, fire Gleason."

Why? Because he was trouble. His copy was often late, creating serious problems in putting out the magazine. He was arrogant, and he was also ignorant in many areas. He thought he was the world's Only Champion of Negro Civil Rights, and he resented Nat Hentoff's preeminence in this area. He screamed if you altered his copy, which was often sloppy and even ungrammatical. Don fired him a few months after I left.

Gleason told Frank Kofsky, self-avowed communist, that he was fired for being pro-Castro. Kofsky wrote it into one of his books, another example of the falsity in jazz history. Hell, in those days, everybody was pro-Castro.

For the record, I also brought the late John S. Wilson back to the magazine.

Reich's *Tribune* obit said, "Though Mr. Maher's father famously had resisted featuring black musicians on *Down Beat*'s cover, Mr. Maher immediately changed that policy."

That is, and I cannot resist use of the word, unadulterated bullshit. *The Times* of London got the story right. It said, "In later life, notably in a 1994 *Chicago Tribune* interview, Maher liked to claim that he had taken a hand in breaking down the color barrier by representing African-American faces on the cover of the magazine, in contrast to the attitudes of his father. In fact, this had happened during his father's tenure, and it was the magazine's editor, Gene Lees, who desegregated the covers in 1959, with images of Cannonball Adderley and the guitarist Freddie Green being printed alongside the white swing players who had been the public faces of the journal since its inception.

"In fact, despite his later claims, Maher's colleagues of the 1970s and 1980s had to work hard to prevent him returning to the social mores of an earlier generation, and until late in his life it remained an uphill battle to persuade him to include women on his covers.

"*Down Beat* was home to many of the leading writers in

jazz, including Don DeMicheal, Ira Gitler, Ralph Gleason, Nat Hentoff, Dan Morgenstern, and Lees himself, most of whom flourished during the era when Maher's father was in charge."

Sir Robert Walpole said, "Gratitude, in my experience, is usually the lively expectation of future favors." I am baffled therefore by Howard Reich's fawning writings about a man who, being irreversibly dead, was no longer in a position to award him any benison. But Reich is now entrenched as part of the Chicago's artistic life. And he is probably that paper's most denigrated music critic since Claudia Cassidy.

When I was at the magazine, Orrin Keepnews, then president of Riverside Records, said to me that advertising in *Down Beat* did nothing for record sales. Why, then, did he spend the money on it? He said, "The musicians see the ads and it reassures them that I'm working for them." When I wanted to quote that about ten years ago, I phoned Orrin, who now lives in San Francisco, and asked if I had it right. "Yes," he said. "But how can you remember something like that thirty years later?" I can, but never trusting anybody's memory, I always check. So I decided to take a look at *Down Beat's* covers during my durance there.

That first issue with my name on it has some semi-abstract drawings and is labeled the 7th annual Dance Band Directory issue. It was already assembled when I got there. The next cover, April 30, has a mawkish clown-posed picture of the Dukes of Dixieland (or the Dicks of Duxieland, as some musicians called them; actually I liked the group, and so did Zoot Sims). On the left side, as usual, there was a vertical bar listing all the supposedly great stuff there was to be found inside. The reason for that is that when magazines were put on racks in stores, the left side of the cover usually protruded. The next issue, Special Reed Issue, is somewhat less cluttered. It features photos of four musicians, Stan Getz, Buddy DeFranco, Paul Desmond, and Gerry Mulligan, all of them white. The next issue, May 28, has Peggy Lee on the cover, and the next, June 11, features the Kingston Trio, of all people. The next one, June 25, is the Special Guitar Issue, and features four guitarists, Freddie Green, Barney Kessel, Tal Farlow, and George Van Eps. One of them was black. The next issue, July 9, features two small photos at the bottom, Danny Kaye on the left, Louis Armstrong on the right, in front of a line drawing of Red Nichols. Both were in the movie *The Five Pennies*. The next issue, July 23, is a montage, a stylized painting of the set of *Porgy and Bess* with a photo of Diahann Carroll superimposed on it. The movie was just coming out. The next cover, August 26, features a photo (not a very good one) of Duke Ellington, an inevitable subject, even for Maher. Ellington had just had the famous triumph at the Newport Festival and walked off with the magazine's own critics' poll.

Then my hand starts to show. The September issue features Jonah Jones. He was a commercial subject, even to John Maher, with huge record sales. Trained as a commercial artist and designer, I hated *Down Beat's* covers. They were as cluttered as a pawn-shop window. The Jonah Jones cover is simple, a full-bleed photo. A bleed, in magazine parlance, refers to running the photo off the edge of a page.

The photo was provided by Capitol Records. John Maher, who was nothing if not cheap, didn't believe in paying for pictures. He thought the record companies should provide them. But I wanted special and stylized photos, and to get them I used a freelance photographer named Ted Williams, who had been on the staff of *Ebony* and had done some previous work for *Down Beat*. Ted remains one of my closest friends. He lives now in Los Angeles.

Lambert, Hendricks, and Ross had become very hot in the business. For the September 17, 1959, issue Ted took a marvelous and humorous and simple photo of the three of them, Dave Lambert and Jon Hendricks nose to nose and Annie standing behind them with her hands lovingly on their necks. The photo must have driven Maher batty: a white woman with her hand on a black man's skin.

The October 15, 1959, cover has exactly what I was looking for, photographic power and simplicity. Ted took the picture: Cannonball Adderley from a low angle, standing with hands folded, almost regal, his alto resting on a drum stool at the left of the page. That photo is a work of art. The story on Cannonball was written by Barbara Gardner, who told me that as far as she knew, she was the first black ever to write for *Down Beat*; she would not be the last. Not long after that, I hired (as a freelance) Marc Crawford, like Ted a veteran of *Ebony*. Later he was on staff at *Time*. The next issue, October 29, has another of Ted's brilliant photos, this one of Oscar Peterson sitting, back to the keyboard, hands extended, cigarette in one hand, expostulating elegantly on some subject.

By the end of 1959, I had obtained Maher's permission to hire an art director, a gifted young man named Bob Billings. It was simply too much for me to edit the magazine, write for it, and lay it out. The look of the magazine, which I think I had already improved, grew much better after Bob arrived.

On February 4 I put Quincy Jones on the cover. The February 18 issue, on Chicago jazz, featured John Frigo, Lurlean Hunter, and Johnny Griffin, standing in front of the

famous water tower. Ted took the picture.

The June 23 cover has a knock-out photo by Ted of Dizzy Gillespie. July 7 is Ray Charles. The August 18 issue has a photo that has become fairly famous: Eric Dolphy sitting alone on a rock by the sea, playing flute all for himself. I took that picture. I wish I had a print of it now. September 1, another of Ted's superbly imaginative photos: Benny Golson and Art Farmer, standing in the rubble of some building. It's a marvelously textured piece of photography. The November 10 issue is on San Francisco jazz, and features a group of musicians on a cable car, almost all of them black.

And then came the confrontation. Chuck Suber's immediate boss, a man named Lou Didier, was listed on the masthead as president. One day he came dithering into my office and said, "Mr. Maher said to tell you: 'No more Negroes on the cover.'" I said, "Then you can take a message back to Mr. Maher. Tell him: 'I quit.'" Didier told Chuck Suber to speak to me because I was going to quit. Chuck asked why. Didier told him. Chuck said, "Then you can give a message to Mr. Maher from me as well: I quit too." Didier dithered into Maher's office, and the issue evaporated. For a while. But Maher pressed his argument that black faces on the cover of the magazine lowered sales, which was bizarre in that most of the magazine's own poll winners were black. He refined his argument. He said they cost sales in the south. Don DeMicheal, himself a southerner, said, "Southerners don't read about jazz anyway. They listen to hillbilly music."

John Maher — a handsome man, by the way — was an anti-Semite. He was also cruel. He bred horses, and he once told me, "One thing kills horses, and it kills men, too: frustration." And he practiced the arts of frustration on the magazine's staff. He knew Jack Tynan's wife was Jewish. And he said, straight to Tynan's face, knowing Jack needed the job, "A Jew can't let a dollar pass through his hands without trying to keep part of it." Well isn't that what business is about?

I did not leave *Down Beat* over the race issue, although fighting Maher's bigotry was a constant drain on my energy. During one of his cut-the-budget paroxysms Maher said I would have to give up one of my staff. Since the staff consisted of DeMicheal, Bob Billings, and me in Chicago, Tynan in California, and a New York editor, there wasn't much to cut. Maher fingered Billings, and tried to make it seem that the decision to dump him was mine. I said I wouldn't fire him. Maher said I had to. Bob didn't deserve it. He had done a great job. So I quit instead.

I did it before I was ready. I had no reserves. I needed some income. Someone introduced me to the editors of the *Chicago Defender*, who asked if I would become a copy editor there. They seemed almost timid about it. I said, Sure. Whether I was the only white who had ever worked there, I do not know, but certainly I was a novelty.

This was in the winter of 1961. I worked a late-evening shift. A young black cop used to come by and get some of our coffee, a very good-looking guy who was completing a bachelor's degree in sociology and planned to leave the police department. He taught me a principle. He said that in any bureaucracy, or any business, a black man (we didn't use that term in those days) would usually be found to be more intelligent than a white in a similar position, for had he been white he would have moved farther up the hierarchy. I have found this to be generally true, and I added a refinement of my own. Since women suffer discrimination in employment, if you can find a black woman with whom to deal, chances are that she'll be about three times as bright as any white male in her position. I can't say that it always works, but it's a pretty good principle.

In those days, remember, you would never find a black reporter on a white newspaper. This was long before Ed Bradley, Bernard Shaw et al. And the black reporters at the *Defender* had little if any training or discipline. I was in an awkward position. If I did hard editing, would they be resent it, coming from a white guy? But I couldn't patronize them by letting sloppy work slide by. One young man struck me as being a potentially fine reporter, but he knew almost nothing of newspaper disciplines. I was hard on him, and I assumed he hated me. I taught him not to use clichés, taught him to check his spellings, be sure of the meanings of words. I'd edit his copy to severe newspaper standards and call him over and show him what had done wrong.

The paper offered me a permanent job, but I wanted to move to New York and write my songs. I gave my notice. The young man I thought hated me came to me and begged me to stay. Astonished, I told him I couldn't. And he said, almost with tears in his eyes, "If you won't teach us, who will?"

I hope he found other tough editors. Too bad the new generation isn't encountering them. I have often wondered what became of him. I hope he fared well.

And I have rarely so much as looked at a copy of *Down Beat* from that time to this.

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