Gene Lees Ad Libitum

Jazzletter

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The Journey: Milt Bernhart

Part Four

One morning a few weeks later, I was lying half awake listening to the news on TV. I was jolted upright when the newscaster said that the prominent jazz musician Frank Rosolino had committed suicide after shooting his two young sons. Old newspaper reporter that I am, I picked up a phone, called the LAPD homicide office in Van Nuys, and asked who was handling the Frank Rosolino "case." After a moment a man came on the line and I gave my name and asked about Frank.

"Did you know him, sir?" the man said.

"Yes, I did."

"Then perhaps you can help *us*. We're just puzzled."

"So am I," I said, and told him about the Colorado trip.

"Is it possible that drugs were involved?" he said.

"I don't know. Nowadays you always wonder that."

As it turned out, drugs were not involved. Frank had gone into the bedroom where his two boys — darling little boys, handsome and vital and smart and very good looking — and shot them. He had killed Justin and himself. Jason was alive, and as we learned later, permanently blind.

Roger Kellaway said, "I've had friends who committed suicide, but I never had one who killed his kid." Roger and I attended the double funeral. The two coffins were together. I couldn't face looking into them. Roger did. He leaned over Frank's coffin and said, very softly, "You asshole."

That kind of anger was general. Some years after that ghastly event, Milt wrote a piece in the newsletter of the Big Band Academy of America expressing his undiminished anger at Frank. Frank left a scar on all of us who knew him that simply will not fade away. I hadn't listened to one of his records since that date in 1978. But when Milt started talking about him, I got out one of the old LPs and played it, once again astonished at Frank's facility, brilliance, and humor. It had me on the verge of tears, and I took it off.

Some time after the killing Roger Kellaway and I were on our way to a record date. We saw a little lost boy, perhaps five, standing on a corner weeping. We stopped the car. I told Roger to go on to the record date and I'd meet him there.

I took the boy's hand. We were in front of an apartment complex. We entered the grounds and I asked people if they knew the boy. A tall, quite handsome man, probably about fifty, approached and asked what was wrong. He said he was a police officer and suggested that we take the boy up to his apartment. He gave the boy a dish of ice cream, which calmed him and stopped the crying. The man called the LAPD, said he wanted a car immediately, and told them to put out word about the boy. The police soon located the mother: the boy had wandered off while she was grocery shopping, and she was frantic and had called the police.

I asked the man what he did specifically. He said he was head of homicide for Van Nuys. I asked then if he remembered the Frank Rosolino case. He did indeed. I asked about drugs. He said the coroner had found no trace of drugs in Frank. And then he said: "In this kind of work, you see all sorts of things and become inured. You have to. But that case really bothered us. Two of my guys went out there and saw what happened and they came back and sat down and cried."

A rumor circulated two or three years ago that Jason, who was seven when Frank shot him, had died, the universal reaction to which was: "It's a mercy." But after Milt raised Frank's name, I did a little checking. Jason hasn't died. He is in an institution for the blind and retarded. He is thirty-one.

"Frank was one of the Cass Tech kids from Detroit," I said to Milt. "Along with Donald Byrd and Pepper Adams. A lot of good musicians came out of that school too, sort of like your Lane Tech, I guess."

"I know," Milt said. "Frank and I talked about that. Once when we worked together, a television special. I was just astonished by Frank. I watched him carefully. Frank sat next to me. Everybody was having a good time. He kept everybody in laughter. He used his whole book, his act. Finally, I said, 'Frank, I'm going to demonstrate something. You're gonna do it. Most of these guys don't know it. You don't need that trombone to play like Frank Rosolino. The mouthpiece will do." This wasn't something that was even in his line of thinking. The trumpet section was all the jazz guys. Everybody stiffened up. I said, 'I'm gonna prove it.' I got a pack of

cigarettes from somebody and inserted the mouthpiece into it. I said, 'He's going to do Frank Rosolino. I've never heard him do it, but I assure you he will sound like Frank Rosolino.' I gave it to him and he went bu-diddlya-diddlya-whee," Milt sang in Frank's style. "Music is coming out. Enough so that it could have been recorded and it would be Frank. Somebody might say, 'He has a mute on it.' But it was buzzing. And he was to all intents and purposes humming before the sound left his mouth and turning it into notes. He couldn't understand that.

"I was sitting at home watching television one night. The contractor called. He said, 'Can you get to Radio Recorders fast?' Somebody hadn't shown for a studio call, *The Cincinnati Kid*. It was the first picture Lalo Schifrin wrote music for. He had called for Frank Rosolino. No show. So they called the nearest person. Dick Nash wasn't here yet. Dick would certainly have done it. It was the likes of Bud Shank and Bob Cooper on the date. Lalo had asked for people he had heard of. And he was doing juke-box jazz in the picture. I really wasn't going to do Frank Rosolino. I said to Lalo, right away, 'I'll play the changes, and pretty soon I'll close my eyes and fake 'em.' There were choruses for everybody. There were a couple of things I think I could do a little better than Frank. A pretty ballad. Frank really couldn't do that. Everything had to be twisted, had to have his style. I never heard him play a Tommy Dorsey solo. He couldn't move the slide in Tommy's click style. And so he would have to buzz it. The sound would come out of the horn, but it wouldn't sound pretty. And Frank was never bothered by this.

"The worst part was that he showed up after an hour, and the contractor wouldn't let him in. I could see him through the glass. Frank is out there, looking panicked. I finished the date and walked out and said, 'Frank, sorry.' And he looked downtrodden. And after that I got a lot of calls from Lalo Schifrin, who did a string of television shows.

"One thing leads to another, and I didn't want it that way. If you played badly on a date, you were given a chance. Not much. But if you were a no-show, you were through.

"And it just broke my heart about him. I said to him on more than one occasion, 'They're not going to call you, Frank, on a symphonic call for a picture. You're a big name. What are you doing in L.A.? You need a manager, of course.' He said, 'How do I get a manager?'

"I said, 'I don't know. But they're around. Drop a note to Norman Granz or somebody.' He didn't know how to do that. He knew how to play when the time came. Outside of that, he sat around the house moping. That led to using cocaine, I suppose. Occasionally, with the guys who did that. Because that's the way Frank went.

"At one time, my situation was good in the studios. And then came rock. My date book was getting thinner. I wondered about others. Some of them, Dick Nash was one, were getting calls, you can depend on that. Lloyd Ulyate, probably the number one call in town, along with Dick. Dick Noelle was one of the best lead trombone players. He had been with Les Brown. Dick Nash can do everything."

I said, "J.J. Johnson had been in Los Angeles for years, writing movie and television music. When things began to thin out for him, too, he decided to pick up his horn and go back out playing jazz. Same thing with Benny Golson. And J.J. called Dick Nash and asked if he could come over to see him. He brought his horn. He told Dick he wanted to play for him, and Dick asked why, and J.J. said something to the effect that he was a little frightened to go back to the horn after all these years. He said to Dick, 'I want you to check me out.' That is the kind of respect Dick commands."

"That's right," Milt said. "First time I heard him, he had been with Billy May and Les Brown on the road. Larry Bunker came by the Lighthouse and said, 'I just came back from a couple of weeks with Billy May's band. There's a kid who's Ted Nash's brother, Dick. Maybe I'm wrong, but I think he's just sensational.' I said, 'I've just got to hear him.' I thought, A new guy in town. That happened to me when I got here. I sat next to Sy Zentner in the studio, and he never spoke to me."

"He was an odd guy," I said.

"A prick," Milt said. "He played in a very strange style. He was not a jazz musician. André Previn was at MGM when they were doing musicals. I started to get calls on musicals. And I got some money. Sy was very much in the first chair at MGM, his name on the music stand. I followed him, once or twice. I had maybe four bars of blues, and Sy couldn't do that, and he hated me. Previn became very much one of our gang. He wanted to be the piano player on our dates.

"I'll tell you a story about that. The first time that any of us, including Shorty, met Previn was on a record date at RCA. Jack Lewis was a producer there. He got the brilliant idea of combining Shorty and André on an album, which is around. They were gonna take pop tunes, standards, and one of them write an arrangement on the melody with jazz choruses, and the other write an original on those changes. We had the first date. The band was Shorty Rogers' Giants size, tuba, trombone, French horn and saxes, including Art Pepper. André walked in and introduced himself. He was

maybe eighteen or nineteen. We start to play. We play the chorus and come to a break, and the first solo is piano. It was kind of a finger-snapping bouncer. We were doing the run-through, then we start the first take. We come to the break, and André is alone. Rhythm stops. In two beats he's three beats ahead of the beat. I'll never forget the feeling. Tension. Nobody knew whether he was kidding." Milt sang a rising tempo. "He's running. We can't continue. We were speechless. Who was going to say, 'You're rushing!' We took another number that didn't have a piano break. We finished the first date. There wasn't a second date for nearly a year. And I found out later that Shelly got him on the phone a couple of days after the first date. You can't teach anybody not to rush. But André got over it! If there's a rhythm section, he's not pulling. Now Oscar Peterson can really pull."

"Well," I said, "when the trio with Ed Thigpen would play the London House in Chicago, Ed would sometimes stay at our apartment. He was and still is one of my close friends. Oscar was bitching to me at some point, saying, 'Ray Brown rushes.' And Ray Brown a few days later said, 'Oscar Peterson rushes." I mentioned this to Ed, who said dolefully, 'They both rush.'"

Milt said, "When they had Barney Kessel in that first trio, Barney rushed somewhat too. He'd tap his foot, which I was forbidden to do. It made you a cornball. I did it on the Boyd Raeburn band, and I was told about it.

"André had never even played jazz. He just knew he could do it. He had ears. A genius. But when it came to time . . . . So Shelly invited himself over to André's and they had sessions together. And he told him, 'When you're playing alone, just think to yourself, 'I'm rushing,' and you won't. And so Previn began to be very dependent on Shelly and asked for him on every date that resembled jazz. And Shelly began to do all of André's pictures, and Hank's too. They thought the world of Shelly. He could do a lot of things on percussion that a lot of drummers wouldn't want to do.

"André went to the Pittsburgh Symphony as conductor in the late '60s. Shelly called me at my office and said, 'I need a couple of round-trip plane tickets to Pittsburgh.' I said, 'What for?' He said André's going to do an album with Itzhak Perlman.' So I said, 'What? What kind of album?'

"Shelly said, 'It's going to be me, Jim Hall, Red Mitchell, André, and Perlman.' When he came back, I said, 'How did it go?'

"He said, 'Well, the first date that André did with us, the same thing happened with Perlman. André wrote chord changes for Perlman. He didn't know what they were for. He'd see C minor seventh and say, 'What do I do?' They had to call off the first date, and André wrote out choruses for Itzhak, which he played immaculately. The album's not bad, really. Shelly said — Shelly was great for this — 'Don't play every note with its exact value. Goose a couple. Fall off a couple. You'll know when.' Shelly could do that. I think if you mentioned his name to Perlman, he would brighten up.

"But as far as André was concerned, nobody but Shelly could keep time. He had him all over the country, and all over Europe. It wasn't really a surprise. Shelly was kind of a house mother. On Stan's band, he was not quiet about things he didn't like the band doing. He was outspoken. Nobody else said a word. Well, Buddy Childers had a big mouth. Shelly, we all figured, was a very, very, very talented fellow, and André was right.

"Talking about time, and the studios, I'll tell you a story about Ray Brown, and I wouldn't if he were still with us. At a certain midpoint in my Hollywood career, I got a call from Columbia Pictures, and I saw on the podium Quincy Jones, who was by now very well established."

"With the writing of Billy Byers behind him," I said.

"Mostly," Milt said. "But by the time I did this picture, Billy Byers and he had split. Billy told me while we were doing the Jerry Lewis show. Billy was writing an arrangement for somebody else while we were doing the show. The trombone section was one for the books. Me, Frank Rosolino, Billy Byers, and Kenny Shroyer on bass trombone. Byers brought his homework, and was writing arrangements for other people. In pen and ink."

"Yeah," I said. "On Dachon."

"He loved to show off," Milt said. "I said, 'Is this for Quincy?'

"He said, 'No, we're through.'

"I said, 'Really? What's up.'

"He said, 'Well, something I thought I should have had a credit on.'

"I said, 'Well, I've heard a little of that. That's a drag. But obviously, you're not hurting."

"He said, 'No, but I thought we were better friends.'

"Anyway, I had this picture call with Quincy, and it was a Carey Grant movie. There was little or no jazz. It called for a lot of comedy cues. But somebody said, 'Hey, Ray Brown's on this call.' I said, 'What?' Ray had until shortly before been with Oscar Peterson for years. I guess it got into *Down Beat* that he was going to settle on the West Coast. Word got around fast among bass players. I heard that one of them said, 'Does he have to come *here*?'

"And Ray immediately got everything. On this date, there were two or three bass players, because they've got legit cues. Everybody's looking at Ray with total adoration. I didn't know him well enough to go over and say hello.

"First cue, Quincy probably picked on purpose. He was so proud, he was beaming, that Ray was there. At Cue M-1, he said, 'Ray, this is yours.' This kind of music, a lot of the time, got done to click trick. They've got cues to meet. And Quincy never could do that. He's got time, to be sure. He can snap his fingers in good time, he can do that. But to conduct an orchestra to meet cues on screen, he got the message early and he used click tracks. This cue began with eight bars of walking bass, alone. So they start the clicks, eight in front, and Ray plays. And he's rushing. We all hear the clicks, and we hear him. After a bar of playing walking bass, he's into the third bar. Another Previn. So the lights go on. And Quincy is going to excuse it. He's protective. He says to the sound cutter, 'Are the clicks on, or what?' Not too friendly. The cutter said, 'Oh yeah, didn't everybody hear it?' Everybody said, 'Yes.' Quincy said, 'Check your plugs, Ray,' doing his best to protect him. We go again. And Ray is even faster. He was a little nervous. It's hard to think of Ray as nervous, but he was."

I reminded Milt of what John Clayton had recounted at Ray's funeral, which we had attended only a week or two earlier. When John, as one of Ray's young students, told him he wanted to do studio work, Ray unleashed a stream of profanity and said, 'Listen, studio work is ninety-five percent bullshit and five percent terror."

"It's true," Milt said. "Anyway, that cue never got done. It got passed. Quincy said, 'I've got to fix it up,' standing in the way of anyone faulting Ray. But everybody heard it.

"I don't know whether he went to somebody, or somebody like Shelly with André and took him in hand — and Ray was close friends with Shelly. Maybe Shelly said, 'Ray, you're rushing,' and 'rushing' wasn't the word. The time came when I worked with him again. And I noticed immediately. We were doing click tracks again, and he was on it. It was really the run-out from Oscar. Oscar could go."

I said, "In some of the London House live recordings, there's some rushing going on. But they did have the capacity to generate tremendous excitement."

"If they weren't playing time, to click-tracks. Herb Ellis was with them for a long time, and I don't think of Herb as a runner."

"Roger Kellaway said to me once, 'A lot of guitar players have flaky time.' I said, 'What do you mean by flaky time?' And after a short reflection, he said, 'Well, they rush.' And Herb Ellis never rushed."

Milt said, "I think Herb held them."

"Now," I said, "how did you go into the travel business?"

Milt said, "In the early '70s, I began to read the handwriting on the wall. Fewer movies with large orchestras. By that time rock was everywhere. And the synthesizers. A guy named Paul Beaver was the first in town, with a synthesizer that took almost half the stage. And that's funny now. And it didn't sound like anything. But they were starting to use him more. All the guitar players were finding devices. And when the producers, especially the younger ones, discovered they could get the music much cheaper, they did it. There were spells where I didn't get a picture call for six months. Record dates, the trail ends. The only thing that kept us working were television variety shows. I did a string of them, the Jerry Lewis Show, which went for a couple of years and paid the bills, and *Hollywood Palace*, which had a very good band. And the most unlikely one of all, I got a call for the *Glenn Campbell Show*, which ran for three years. And the bandleader, you would never guess in a million years, was Marty Paich. He hit it off with Glenn. We never played much. Long tones. Marty didn't know a thing about sound chambers in the trombone. We had to play a lot of French horn notes, and almost always had to move the slide a mile. Most arrangers and composers had no idea. They taught themselves. So I worked with Marty for a couple or three years. It was basically cowboy music. Toward the end of the run, Sarah Vaughan was a guest, I can't imagine how. Marty had never written a note for her, and you never saw anyone more excited. And from that performance, he began to do a lot of her material, record dates, concerts, the Hollywood Bowl. He became a madman because Sarah was going to be there next week. And he wrote well. Marty was very good for the job, doing the job no matter what the music was, and if he saw anybody snickering, Get out. We're paying you.

"And also, he was very good for a certain kind of West Coast time jazz. But for strings, he surprised me. He had studied. Most of the arrangers had played with bands like Goodman or Kenton or Charlie Barnet and didn't know strings."

I said, "I remember André told me once that somebody wrote as if he thought strings were the world's biggest saxophone section."

Milt laughed, and then said, "Anyway, the work began to trail off. I wasn't out of business but it was nothing like it had

been."

"How much did you work at the peak?"

"I'm getting a yearly payment for films that are now on television. It's a producer's share of a share. So it isn't big, but if you did a lot, it ends up money. So I look at the list, and think, I didn't do this! How could I? Let me read some of it to you. It's six pages. *Airport, All the President's Men, Alvarez Kelly, American Beauty.* How come? Because they used a record I was on. That got into the union contract, due to pressure from the guys here. *Assault on a Queen, Back Street, Bad News Bears* — with Jerry Fielding — *Bad News Bears Breaking Training, The Ballad of Josie, Beach Red, Beyond the Valley of the Dolls, Big Mouth Billy Jack, Big Mama White Mama, Bless the Beasts and the Children, Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice, Bullit, The Busybody, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, Cahill U.S. Marshall, Cancel My Reservation, The Carpetbaggers, Cat Ballou, Chisholm, The Cincinnati Kid.* I'll stop here. That's alphabetical."

"But as I said, my date book was looking thin. So I began to look for a business. But what kind of business? There was a travel agency at Hollywood and Vine, Kelly Travel Service. It caught my eye. I thought, 'Why don't I talk to the lady who owns it?' And I said to her right out, 'What does it take to set up a travel business?' She said, 'You don't want to start from the bottom up. You want one that is in operation and has a couple of employees. What do you do?' I told her, and she was impressed, and she said a lot of her clients were people in film production. She was getting old, wanted to retire, but she hadn't started looking. She said she had a couple of employees that I should keep if I bought her business. And she figured that I could do it. I said, 'I've never been in business.' But I figured I'd better give it a go, because I couldn't see myself in the music business for much longer. New people were coming in, and they were all rock people.

"We talked some more, and I looked at her books, and brought in a lawyer friend, and she said, 'Make me an offer.' Her business was very good. She had companies in production at Paramount and especially United Artists. One thing I didn't learn until I took the business was that they don't pay you right away.

"After two weeks as the owner of a travel agency, I was looking at accounts receivable. And I realized that I'd be finished if I didn't get the money. And they were people like United Artists. I spent three or four days making the rounds of these companies, and I'd worked in pictures for ages. But I always got a check: there was a union. But now I don't have a union. I'm a vendor. They certainly used my tickets. And they liked to travel first class. I had names that we all know. Robert de Niro. You'd never heard his name at that time. First job that we had for a picture company was *Godfather II.* I did some fast talking to the treasurer of each company, and they didn't want to pay, because they had been trained to hold back on everybody they could. That's part of film production: you pay those you have to. And if you never need to pay the others, don't. And I fell into that category. So I was lucky enough to get what was owed me, which was five figures, big ones, the first two weeks I was in business. And I could have been tempted to continue.

"Now somebody calls me from James Bond. They're going to go to the Orient. It meant a lot of tickets and a lot of money. And I said, 'No.' And the man said, 'What? We've been dealing with your company!' I said, 'No, no, no. Sorry. You'll have to put money down in front, more than half — three quarters.' And they didn't want to do that, and word got around fast in the picture business."

"And you lost the studio business?"

"All of it. Now I kept my mouth shut among my friends in music. You know that if a guy gets into another business, real estate or something, it's the last thing guys want to hear. If you hand cards out at studio calls, it's a mistake. It says to them, 'Obviously he's panicked, and I won't use his business.'

"Irv Cottler figured he was through with music. He wasn't getting many calls. So he bought a liquor store in the San Fernando Valley. But he didn't know enough to get a no-compete clause in his contract. And the fellow opened up another store across the street. And it killed the business. He had put fifty or a hundred G's into stock. Word was that Irv was getting ready to do himself in. His wife was frantic. But Frank Sinatra heard about it. I don't think Irv told him — he wouldn't. Frank said, 'What's the matter?' Irv told him. Frank said, 'Do you want to work for me? I'll pay you so much.' And that's how it started with Irv Cottler and Frank.

"It never got to that with me. We had other clients. In the building there were a couple of insurance companies, a number of lawyers. I began to realize that I shouldn't hand them a bill, I should ask for a credit card. Otherwise I'm supplying money for travel. A few musicians asked me to send them a bill. One of them owed me a couple of thousand bucks for a year.

"Ray Brown heard I was in this business and called me. He said, 'You mail the bill to . . . .' I said, 'No I don't.' He said, 'What do you mean?' I said, 'Ray, I can't have bills flopping

around your office.' And you had to see his office: there was paper everywhere. He said, 'What do I have to do?' I said, 'You've got credit cards?' He said, 'Yeah.' I said, 'Well that way it's paid to me immediately, and you won't be sent a bill for a while.' We went that way for the rest of our time together, which lasted until he died in Indianapolis.

"I was crossing Vine Street one day, and Benny Carter was crossing the other way. He walks me to my side of the street and says, 'Give me your card.' I hadn't seen him in ages, but I had worked a couple of studio calls with him. I said, 'I don't think I should. I don't want to solicit you, Benny. That's not what I do.' He said, 'Gimme the card!' just like that. And we began to transport him around. Mainly where he went was Copenhagen, South America, Europe. And he was then in his seventies. Actually, he went somewhere not too long ago.

"I became more and more a musician's travel agent. After a while, the wives began to know me. After I got the travel business, I kept my mouth shut and continued to get studio work. My son David runs the business now."

"And you run the Big Band Academy of America. How did that come about?"

"After I started in travel, a man knocked on the door and introduced himself as Leo Walker. He was a salesman for a paint company. But his lifelong passion was big bands. He wasn't a musician. He wondered what I thought about starting an organization that remembered.

"We went to lunch a couple of times. He wanted to get musicians and singers to join together once a year, and if it really hit it off, more than once a year, have a dinner, and talk about old times. I thought it was not a bad idea.

"We had the first meeting in the back of a restaurant in Tolucca Lake, maybe seventy-five people. The bandleaders ran the gamut. One was Les Brown. Another was Alvino Rey. I wondered why Leo never asked the jazz-band leaders. Stan was in town. Leo was looking for the great old names of yesteryear. Some Mickey Mouse. Art Kassel was one. He showed up, and Lawrence Welk, and Johnny Green. Johnny told the jokes at a dais.

"After about three years they moved it to the Sportsman's Lodge, which could accommodate six or seven hundred, although we never got more than three hundred. A dais but no band. Once Steve Allen was called in as emcee. The first thing he said was, 'How can you have a big-band reunion with no band?' The place came apart. Leo Walker was afraid of the bands. But he had a board of directors now, a non-profit organization, hoping to get a newsletter, and draw people from around the country.

"A couple of years went by and I went to these get-togethers. Billy May would be there. Nelson Riddle didn't like the idea and he wouldn't go. I said, If you want the era back, you have to settle for everything that went with it. World War II, the Holocaust, the stock-market crash, the Depression.

"Most nostalgia people would settle for that. And I steered clear of it. And one day, Leo Walker said, 'I'm kind of sick, and I'm leaving town and I'm going to dissolve the organization.' Mainly at our board meetings we're sitting around listening to Leo Walker talk about Glenn Miller. And not even Glenn Miller. Blue Barron. And members of the board were people I had recommended. Billy May, Frank De Vol, Gilda Mahon who had sung with vocal groups.

"But on this afternoon that he was going to dissolve the organization, the board of directors didn't like that. They looked around. Is anybody interested in taking it over? Frank De Vol looked at me blankly. Wally Heider looked at me and said, 'Why not you?'

"I said, 'I've got a business. I really can't afford to do this.' Before the lunch was over, I began to think that maybe I could change the direction of the organization. And I could get up and say something — I've got an ego, like everyone — and also say something about those who never got a peep. We could do an afternoon or evening honoring somebody. Leo Walker had a baby over this. He tried to get a petition to prevent it. And so I began a newsletter in 1975-ish. I was going to do a mailing to everyone who wanted to join.

"I got it up to about three mailings a year, two pages.

"The membership is now two thirds out of town, just this side of five hundred members.

"I started to call local players and house bands. I tried it with Les Brown once. I started with Bob Florence. I had Bill Holman. We've done Billy May. We did Johnny Mandel. A band doesn't get a chance to play those things very often. Barnet's book is worth playing again. And Woody's."

Milt, then, is involved in honoring the music of an era of which he was a ubiquitous and invaluable part. Few men in music have had the scope of experience of Milt Bernhart, now seventy-six. It's odd to think of meeting him so long ago, when a boy of fifteen got the autograph of a boy of seventeen and each of them was embarking on a long journey.

You can reach Milt, Kelly Travel Service, and the Big Band Academy of America at 1438 Pepper St., Burbank CA 91505.