Gene Lees Ad Libitum

Jazzletter

PO Box 240, Ojai CA 93024-0240

August 2004 *Vol. 23 No. 8*

The Anchorite

Part Three

When *The Trouble with Cinderella* was published, it caused a stir but sometimes for the wrong reasons. The attitude toward it was often one of surprise, as if one had come across a bear riding a bicycle. This bespoke underlying assumptions that jazz musicians are illiterates and bandleaders only baton-waving clowns. And it expressed a peculiarly American belief that no one can do more than one thing well — an article of faith whose father was probably Henry Ford.

"It is a very strange thing to realize you are no longer a person," Artie told me. "You have become a thing, an object, and the public thinks you belong to them.

"A guy yelled at me, 'We made you!' I said, 'Well, break me, man. If you're powerful enough to make me, break me. I'm waiting. Do it.' They look at you, baffled. Another line is, 'Who do you think you are?' And I'd say, 'I know who I am. Who are you?'

"You can't believe the things that happen. A guy once came up to me and said, 'Remember me?' I said, 'No.' At first I used to say, 'Yeah,' but that can get you into trouble. The guy said, 'Remember the Cornell prom?' I said, 'I don't remember. It was just one more one-nighter.' For me at that time, one out of maybe two hundred a year. The guy said, 'I was there.' I said, 'No kidding.' But even so, why should I remember you?' He said, 'I asked for *Begin the Beguine*.' 'Oh, well sure. You're that one. Now I know who you are.' So help me Jesus. I make that up not."

Artie chuckled. "Another guy — oh, God! — said, 'Remember me?' And I said, 'Nope.' And he said, 'I used to sit behind you at Dwight Street School.' I left Dwight Street School when I was nine. At the time he did this, I must have been fifty. Which makes it forty-one years. I said, 'Do you expect me to remember that?' He said, 'Well I remember you.' I said, 'Would you have remembered me if I'd become an insurance man?'

"It's crazy," he said. "I guess lots of people are conditioned to be stupid."

"Do you think it's as bad in Europe?"

"It's just as bad, but there is one good thing about it: they have respect. They have a certain respect for people who are no longer big stars. They seem to recognize that in order to have become a big star, you had to have had something going for you."

Examine that carefully. He regretted, maybe resented, *not being* remembered, and I saw evidence of that more than once. He came close to admitting it. He said, "You get used to it, and you just don't get over it."

He said, "I used to get a lot of criticism for being 'nasty' to fans. But I don't think I was being nasty. I remember walking out of the Stanley Theater in Pittsburgh one time, and this kid came up to me and was very aggressive about getting my autograph. I finally said, 'Wait a minute, what do you want this for?' And he said, 'Well, I admire the way you play.' So I said, 'Well get a clarinet and learn to play,' and walked away. That's what I think you should do if you really admire something.

"I just remembered something. When I was about ten years old in New Haven, some kid came up to me and said, 'Hey, come on,' and I said, 'Where we goin'?' and he said, 'The Rialto Theater,' or whatever the hell the name of the place was. They were playing *Son of the Sheik*, or one of the old Valentino movies. He said, 'Valentino, Rudolph Valentino, he's gonna be there. Let's go and watch him come out of the theater.' And so we went. We stood in the alley leading to the stage entrance and, by God, here came Rudolph Valentino. Surrounded by people. And I looked, and there he was — the Sheik. Well, the kid grabbed me and said, 'Come on,' and I said, 'Whatya doin'?' 'I'm gonna get his autograph. We'll talk to him.'' And I said, 'Well jeez, I don't wanna talk to him.' I pulled back. So you see, even then, I felt that way. If there's someone you look up to, well, leave him alone, man. Don't invade his privacy.

"The point is that I learned that I had lost my privacy. And you know, it's taken me forty years to get it back."

There's something Artie never seemed to understand about fame. In the arts it is *necessary*. If you don't have it, you can die with none of your art ever being sold or appreciated, as in the examples of H.P. Lovecraft and Van Gogh. In other professions, it is necessary that you command high respect among your colleagues and professional peers: they're the ones who recommend you, whether you're an electrician, a heart surgeon, or an engineer. But in the arts,

what the public buys — and what the corporations involved in the process sell — is not your art but your name. If you're going to get exposure for your work, *you* have to be what the Hollywood film industry calls bankable. And Artie accepted, more or less unexamined, the premise of such people: that if it sells it isn't good, and if it doesn't, that's some proof of greatness. That isn't true either.

He said, "You can't bury shit deep enough that the American public won't dig it up and buy it."

"Why do you limit it to the American public?" I said. "Have you seen Italian television?" And that was before some of the Scandinavian television stations had such things as on-camera enema contests, where the trick is to see who can hold it the longest.

"Some people like fame," I said.

"I wonder if they'd like it if they had it long enough. Johnny Carson hates it. Johnny told me he hardly ever goes anywhere because someone is always trying to pick a fight. I'll tell you another guy. Mohammed Ali. People are always taking a poke at him. What can they lose? He can't hit them back.

"You're public property. People are always asking me, 'Don't you miss playing?' Well of course I miss playing. But not enough to give up what I've got now. It's like having a gangrenous arm. The only thing you can do is amputate it. Obviously you're gonna miss the arm, but if you don't cut it off, you'll die."

He wrote *The Trouble with Cinderella* at a place he owned called Picardy Farms in Pine Plains, New York, between December 1950 and February 1952. The following year he was called before the House UnAmerican Activities Committee, whom he told that he had attended the postwar World Peace Congress because he was interested in peace and world justice. HUAC said it was a Communist front organization. He told them, or so he told me, "Show me a Republican-front group that believes in peace and I'll join that too." He outsmarted them, in other words. It seems unlikely that they would be deterred by such a defense. And long afterwards there were veterans and victims of the witch hunts who claimed he finked on his friends, but they're all dead now and you can't ask them.

With the anti-Communist hysteria still in the air, he moved with his latest (and last) wife, Evelyn Keyes, to Spain, where they built a beautiful and luxurious home near Catalonia. He returned to the United States in 1960, settling in California. He always blamed Kathleen Winsor for his trouble with HUAC, although in what way, I don't know.

We talked on the phone — usually at length — at least every other day, on all manner of subjects. He said he'd quit smoking at seven packs a day. I quit at three. He said that his disgusted sensitivity to cigarette smoke had reached the point where he could smell it from the car ahead on the highway. I told him he was crazy. Within a year of quitting, I could too. I considered him just about my closest confidant.

One day, to my surprise, he told me on the phone he was thinking seriously about forming a new band. He said that, if he did, he'd limit himself to hiring and rehearsing it. Then he would send it on its way with someone else as its leader. That struck me as being like deciding to get a little bit pregnant.

One day he told me he was indeed forming a new band. It would be led by clarinetist and saxophonist Dick Johnson. Artie was doing the hiring in conjunction with Johnson, and rehearsing the musicians.

He had insisted that there would never be an Artie Shaw ghost band. "Ghost band" was a term coined by Woody Herman, describing bands with leaders now dead and led by other musicians, as in the case of Buddy Morrow and the Tommy Dorsey band. Woody too vowed that there would never be a ghost band with his name on it, but toward the end of his life he relented, realizing it would give employment to young men in a business in which it was increasingly difficult to make a living. There have been various editions of the Count Basie band since his death, but as good as some of them have been, they are not Basie bands to me. You can't have a Basie band without two elements: Basie and Freddie Greene. What Basie did with that band from his keyboard remains mysterious. And the idea of an Artie Shaw band without Artie Shaw struck me as extremely strange. And there was this oddity about it too: it would be the only ghost band with a living ghost.

He went back east to debut the band, playing the initial engagement at the refurbished Meadowbrook Ballroom. Someone who attended the opening said that it was fascinating to watch him. At first he watched the audience suspiciously, but as its perceptive attention and warm applause continued, he gradually unwound and finally said to them with a grin, "Where were you when I needed you?"

The answer was that they had always been there. He had abandoned them, they had never abandoned him. What, then, was the bitch? Was he now admitting he had always needed them but couldn't face the truth of it?

Everywhere the band went people said it was a superb organization. Sometimes Artie led it; much of the time it was led by Dick Johnson.

Then he told me he'd had it; he'd let Dick Johnson continue with the band, he wanted nothing further to do with

public appearances. "I was right the first time," he said. It was as if quitting the business had become his life's work.

Rossini pretty much gave up composing at forty, and so did Sibelius at about the same age. They apparently made no fuss about it: they just quit.

Early in 1982, Artie phoned to urge that I see a showing in Los Angeles that evening of a documentary film about his long-dead hero Bix Beiderbecke, made by a German-born Canadian film maker named Brigitte Berman. I made the trip, and saw the picture, a very sensitive and illuminating piece of work. Artie is one of those who discusses Bix on camera. Afterwards I attended a party with a number of elderly musicians who as members of the Whiteman band had known Bix and who discuss him, as Artie does, in the picture.

Two days later Artie called to be sure I'd seen the film. He sounded slightly annoyed. "I thought you were going to call me back and tell me what you thought about it," he said.

I told him that I'd found the film so powerful I could hardly bear to talk about it. I said, "It left me with a terrible sense of melancholy. I feel as if I had known him, almost as a close friend, and I am overwhelmed by a sense of loss."

"Melancholy," Artie said. "That's a good word for it. I saw the picture again yesterday, and it left me in a peculiar state of mind. Full of rue."

A few months later Brigitte Berman called him. She'd decided on her next film project: a documentary about him. She began shooting.

In February of 1987, Artie was hospitalized for emergency prostate surgery. He was on the operating table for five hours and nearly died. I told Ginny Mancini about it. She said, "Don't worry about him. I worked for him. He's too mean to die."

Little over a month later, on the night of March 30, 1987, Berman's film *Artie Shaw: All You Have Is Time* won the Academy Award for documentaries. Artie attended the ceremony with her. They ran a gamut of clicking cameras, photographers grabbing pictures of the celebrities. Not one of the cameras was aimed at him. A reporter asked him how he felt about this. He said, "It took me thirty years and I had to grow a beard and lose my hair to achieve this condition."

A few weeks later, he stumbled and badly broke his right arm. It was slow to heal and remained in a cast for weeks. "Did you ever try to clean your teeth with your left hand?" he said. I have seen him angry — and two of his ex-wives, Evelyn Keyes and Lana Turner, have testified in their autobiographies to his volcanic temper — but never depressed. Now he was depressed. After many months the arm began to heal.

"I was half awake at five o'clock this morning," he said, "and trying to work out the clarinet fingering on *All the Things You Are* in F-sharp, which presents some serious problems on that instrument, and then I woke up and thought, 'What are you doing? You don't do that any more. You don't have to solve that problem.' This is thirty-five years after I gave up playing."

I met Artie in 1967. A novel of mine, whose protagonist was an American singer in Paris, based a little bit on Eddie Constantine, had just been published. I got a call one day from a voice that said, "This is Artie Shaw." Given that he had been one of the idols of my childhood, this gave me something of a start. He explained that he was now out of the music business and was producing films. Thinking back, I recall no film that he ever produced, or at least completed. He said he wanted to film my book. He asked me if I were interested, and of course I was, and we arranged to have lunch. He said the story needed a few little changes, and we had several more meetings. With each change that he wanted to make, I came gradually to realize that he was turning it into the story of Artie Shaw, and my role in the project was that of amanuensis. He didn't want to collaborate, he wanted to dictate. I suddenly realize — a Eureka slap to the forehead! — that as he could not work as an arranger but would give ideas to Jerry Gray for execution, he actually could not write prose and was addicted to the illusion that he could.

This process trailed on for a time, and then I moved to Toronto, where I worked for the next four or five years, mostly in television and radio. When next I encountered him, in circumstances I no longer recall, it was in California. And, again he wanted me to write with him.

Asked in the *LA Weekly* interview why he never fell prey to drugs (many musicians didn't, but let it pass), he said:

"I never wanted to screw around with drugs because I have enough trouble sober trying to figure out this puzzle called living. What is it? Who are we? Where are we going? Any thoughtful person realizes the answers to those questions are a complete mystery. I certainly don't have the answers, but I do believe there's something here that doesn't meet my eye. We have no concept of what the force is that made this topsy-turvy, insane cosmos, but something did. You can't make me believe it came out of nowhere and is nothing but an inane joke. How do you explain Bach's B-minor Mass, or the proportions of the Acropolis?

"I think we are to God, if there is such a thing, like a microscopic cell in the left toenail of Gary Kasparov in the middle of a chess match. That cell has as much awareness of

what Kasparov's doing as we do of God's activities. We like to presume we know about the universe, but we don't know what we're talking about. We have finite minds, and we're dealing with something called infinity. The most one can hope for is to live a good life and try to leave things a little better than he found them."

And he thought that out all by himself? A classic example of Artie Shaw wading up to his ankles in the ineffable, and Arthur C. Clarke said it better: "The universe is not only stranger than you can imagine, it's stranger than you can imagine." Still, I think it was Artie who turned me onto reading *The Dancing Wu Li Masters.* I know we talked a great deal about physics and cosmology, as well of course about music.

A rumor had gone out that Artie Shaw wrote his solos in advance, a denigration that compliments their compositional integrity. But his solos on alternate RCA Victor takes, recorded probably minutes apart, are distinctly different, and. There is a version of *Stardust* taken from a radio broadcast of December 23, 1938, in which his solo is not only different from the well-known one recorded in 1940, but if possible, even more brilliant. The rumor may have had its source in the fact that on his major hits, Shaw did play in personal appearances the solos he had recorded. So did the side men. He told me that the reason for this was that if the audience didn't hear exactly the solos that were on the records, they thought that ringers had been imported into the band.

What Shaw did do was to write out saxophone choruses, even marking the breathing places, and turn them over to his arranger, who in the early years was usually Jerry Graziano, who changed his name to Jerry Gray. "Jerry came very close to being to me what Billy Strayhorn was to Duke," Artie said. "He was a pupil and he was a friend. I taught him how to arrange. Remember, I was an arranger before I was a bandleader. Jerry started with my string band in 1936. He was my first violinist. And he played some jazz accordion. Later, in 1939, when I broke up that band, I called Glenn Miller and told him I had a few people he ought to listen to. Jerry did Glenn a lot of good. Jerry wrote *A String of Pearls* for him." He did Artie a lot of good too: the chart on *Begin the Beguine* is his.

Because, then, of the relationship between Shaw and Jerry Gray and because of his habit of writing out the sax choruses (and Artie was a sought-after lead alto player before he was known as a clarinetist), there is a stylistic continuity in what he plays and what the band plays. The sax-section choruses, in effect, are orchestrated Shaw solos.

Even Artie couldn't remember whether he or Jerry Gray wrote certain things during the 1938-'39 period. "I didn't write too much for that band," he said with that touch of sarcasm that sometimes came into his voice when he was talking about his former self. "I was too busy being a celebrity."

And in fact, that very celebrity got in his way in the jazz world. He was seen as a famous and glamorous figure, not as the exquisite, brilliant jazz musician he was. It also went unnoticed that his musical idol was Lester Young. In 1984, he told Loren Schoenberg:

"Hell, Lester Young had more of an effect on me than any clarinetist.

"Lester and I were friendly, and we would go out and jam together when he was with Count Basie. We also sat around his hotel room in Harlem playing, just the two of us. I was always after Bill Basie to let him play more, because Herschel Evans was doing most of the soloing at the time. Bill said something of interest to me: 'When Lester plays, I kind of lose the band.' You know, Lester played in another dimension than the band did. It was the same with Thad Jones twenty years later. He would go off into another place. Lester played very, very relaxedly; he wasn't pushing the beat. If anything, he was lagging behind it. This was *not* done at that time. His ability to handle eighth notes without rushing them was beautiful. Also, Lester played *music* first, jazz second. When Lester would play something, and I would follow him, we were kind of meshing. It was a very interesting kind of juxtaposition of two quite different sensibilities doing almost identically the same thing. He knew I dug him, and I knew that he dug me. *Dig* is a good word there — not just understood, not just heard, but dug. Got underneath."

And of course, Lester Young drew on Bix Beiderbecke and Frank Trumbauer, according to his own testimony and that of his brother Lee. So did Artie.

Shaw told Schoenberg, Lester Young "played better clarinet than guys who played 'better' clarinet than he did. The formulation of the idea in his head, musically, came out of his horn."

Once my wife mentioned on the telephone to Alan Stein, my New York lawyer (and friend) that Artie had been over the previous night for dinner. Alan said, "Who?" And she repeated the name. He said Artie had been a client of his when Alan was just starting his career in the company that would evolve into the distinguished law firm of Zissu, Marcus, and Stein. Alan told her, "Listen to me, Boobie. Do not let that man into your house, into your life, even into your thoughts. He is one of the most evil men I've ever known." Leonard Zissu, the senior party, dumped Shaw as a client. I never heard Alan speak of anyone else like that.

Woody Herman was equally adamant on the subject. Woody was to play an engagement at the Holiday Inn in Ventura, about twelve miles south of here on the Pacific Coast. Woody had called me, and I was planning to go. Once you had worked for him, and I did, he *owned* you. He became your father. Every musician who ever played in that band feels that way. I suggested to Artie on the phone that day that he come along to hear Woody. After a decent display of reticence, he agreed. And so we went and had a nice table near the band. Somebody wanted to get a picture of Woody, Artie, and me together. It is probably the only photo ever of Woody and Artie.

1991 Photo by John Reeves

Artie, me, Woody, Fred Hall

Well, sir. The next morning, at no more than 9:30, I got a call from Woody. He said, "What the hell are you doing hanging out with Artie Shaw?"

I said, "Well, Wood, I've got to know him pretty well in the last year or so."

And Woody said, "Listen, Paaal, just when you think you know Artie Shaw, that's when you'll find out you *don't* know Artie Shaw.".

He had fallen far from glamorous movie stars by now, of course, and seemed to need the attention of any waitress we encountered. For all he denied a craving for attention, he was unnerved when he didn't get it, and once was ingenuous enough to say, "It's like an addiction." He meant fame. And I suppose it becomes a condition of existence, like sun and rain to a construction worker or wind in the face to a fisherman. I once saw Harry James leaving the Showboat in the basement of the Empire State Building. He went up the staircase and crossed the lobby with two or three strong-armed attendants fending off crowds that were no longer there. It was sad.

Although Artie was nearly twenty years older than I, I had long since ceased to expect young women to pay attention to me. As Johnny Mercer once wistfully put it, "I'm still looking, but they're no longer looking back." And one late evening, Artie and I were leaving a restaurant not far from his home. A young woman — a student by day, I suspect — who was making change for us at the cash register, hardly looked up except to say, "Thank you."

Artie said as we stepped outdoors, "Do you realize that to her, we're invisible?"

No, I hadn't realized it, because I hadn't even thought about it.

He was asked by an interviewer, "Why did you marry so many times?" He replied: "Because I was famous. That attracts women like flies . . . . That part of my life is over. Somebody said that being freed of the need for sex is like finally being allowed to dismount from a wild horse."

But he still had the need for its attentions and the obeisance that went with a fame long vanished.

The first woman I watched him damage was young, and while not a raving beauty, rather pretty. She was probably about twenty-two, and he around seventy. She was a musician, playing in a chamber orchestra in a concert we attended in Ventura, California. He immediately began chatting her up, and in the days following took up with her. When I was with them, I noticed his ruthless domination of her. He even told her how to practice. And once, when he had issued some command or another and turned away from her, she bared her gnashed teeth at his back, I saw the situation. She had a nervous collapse in time, and spent some time in the psychiatric ward of a hospital. She has long since recovered and married — happily, I heard.

The next woman was a reference librarian, age about fifty. In those days before computer research, I used to call her regularly at the public library to get such things as the date of some historical event. She was highly intelligent and very interesting. When Artie needed to look up something or other, I gave him her phone number. Next thing I knew she had given up her job at the library and was living with him.

She catalogued his vast collection of books, he ruined her financially, and when he was through with her, he dumped her. She lives now in Oregon, happily, I hope.

The third woman in this sad collection was an Australian secretary. She wrote him a fan letter. He wrote her back, and,

as we have noted from Sammy Cahn, his letters were apparently captivating. He induced her to come to California, and she too lived with him, helping him organize his interminable autobiographical novel. He broke her heart too, and she went back to Australia, on her own money and broke. But not before telling me some things.

She was privy to his phone calls. She said that a number of times, he had put me down to I know not whom. Artie had asked me to agree to be his literary executor. I agreed, without giving it much thought, and forgot about it. She told me that she overheard him telling someone that I was perpetually pestering him to make me his literary executor. Nor was I, she testified, the only friend he bad-mouthed and even betrayed.

But the fourth woman he attacked suffered the most, and to great financial cost. She made the film on Artie with her own money and what she could raise from acquaintances. Artie had nothing to do with it, except that he was its subject. Keep this in mind about documentaries, whether for theater distribution or television. The subject is, like the subject of a magazine article or any other essay, *not a participant in the process*.

And when Brigitte's film came out, Artie demanded fifty percent of the proceeds, when Brigitte had not yet even recovered the costs. This got really ugly. He sued her — he was notoriously litigious — in a Canadian court. He had no written agreement with her, and the Canadian judge threw the case out. So Artie sued her in California. She was kept constantly flying back and forth for court appearances, to her immense financial suffering. The judge put a gag order on the verdict, so she won't reveal the terms to me, but I can deduce from what she *won't* tell me that Artie lost. After putting her through two years of hell.

There is one other victim of this malevolence, and it surprised me: Evelyn Keyes. The actions came after he was dead, reminding me of the line in *Julius Caesar*: "The evil men do lives after them." Evelyn Keyes was the only wife he did not derogate, at least to me. I met her just once, in 1987. It was on or about his seventy-seventh birthday, which means it was somewhere in the vicinity of May 10.

Keyes was born November 10, 1919, in Port Arthur Texas. As every biography on her notes, she is best remembered as Suellen in *Gone with the Wind*, a distinction to which she made ironic reference in the very title of her autobiography, *Scarlett O'Hara's Younger Sister*. It is a an interesting book, and since she wrote some good columns for the *Los Angeles Times*, I believe it was not ghost-written. It is amazingly frank, even about her own rather casual sex life, and the portrait she paints of Artie is not flattering. Above all, the writing is good, very good. A lot better than Artie's and a lot more objective in the examination of the self.

In her early movies, she projected a lovely mixture of innocence and unaggressive sexuality, making her the ideal object of any adolescent boy's romantic fantasies. Recently I tried to find her and called friends in the movie industry to see if they knew where she was, among them Dana Wynter and Angie Dickinson. Neither could help me. Angie said, "I met her only once at a party at Irving Lazar's house. I remember thinking how beautiful she was."

Keyes married Artie in 1957. They separated probably around 1970 but did not divorce until 1985. It was therefore two years after their divorce that I met her. A wealthy friend was throwing a birthday party for Artie at a Beverly Hills restaurant. Artie asked my wife and me to accompany him. When we reached Beverly Hills he said he had to make a stop to see Evelyn. She lived at that time in an apartment building on the west side of Doheny Drive, just south of Sunset Boulevard. We went up to her apartment, which my wife remembers as drab but I remember as merely small. So was she. By then she was sixty-eight. It has been said, and I cannot remember by whom, that in any love, one loves more than the other, and the one who loves least controls the relationship. Artie had come by to pick up some little present she had for him, and it was clear to me that she still was in love with him. He controlled the situation, and he was not gracious about it. Lofty is a better word. Even patronizing. I remember her, and so does my wife, as pathetic. I wondered why she was not invited to go with us to the party.

We left, and Artie told us that he was leaving everything he owned to her. I was surprised, but not very, when a few months after his death I read that Evelyn Keyes had sued him, or his estate, for $150,000, the sum she attested she lent to him when he was in poor financial condition, having paid most of his money in settlements of his divorces. He needed the money to sue record and movie companies for moneys he claimed were owed to him. The suit said that he had promised Keyes half the money he recovered from his law suits. Keyes claimed she never got her money. He left his money to the Artie Shaw Foundation and Living Trust whose trustee was attorney Edward Ezor. I called Ed and he confirmed that the suit had been filed with him but legitimately could not tell me more than that. He said, "Follow the litigation."

I asked him where Evelyn was now. He said she was in an assisted care facility in Santa Barbara. Beyond that, I did not pursue the matter. I don't want to bother her. She is eighty-seven. I liked her.

On first learning that Artie had bad-mouthed me, I was blind with fury, but that passed. And in any case, I was in

well-known company, Lana Turner, Ava Gardner, Benny Goodman, Henry and Ginny Mancini, Glenn Miller, Fred Astaire, Frank Sinatra, Upton Sinclair. I made no sudden and dramatic break with him. I simply phased out the relationship: I ceased calling him and didn't return his calls. Eventually he must have got the point, and I didn't speak to him in his later years, nor would I call him when I learned he was ill.

I do not know when Artie began what he thought would be his magnum opus, since he seemed to have been at it forever. It was a novel whose protagonist was named Albie Snow. Initials A.S., get it? "It's fiction, though," Artie said. "I'm having fun making this guy a genius."And fiction of course allows a writer to take liberties with time and sequence, to combine several characters into one for the sake of story organization. Artie wrote painstakingly, constantly revising, always seeking what Flaubert called *le mot juste,* that perfect word. He said, "I've got twelve hundred pages of manuscript and I've just got the guy up to the age of twenty-three."

He would never complete it, and apparently continued working on it during the years I had no contact with him. At least two persons who visited him said that he insisted that they listen as he read a chapter, and in the case of the unlucky ones, two chapters, aloud. I went through this ordeal once. The writing was pretty bad, heavy, humorless, and without grace of style. He wrote like someone playing piano with gloves on. He favored colloquialisms and contractions in the belief that this made for naturalism, never having grasped that naturalism in art is achieved by cunning artifice as, for example, in the work of Marlon Brando or Peggy Lee.

A day after the death of Woody Herman — this would make it October 30, 1987 — I was with Artie. Woody had been relentlessly pursued, prosecuted, and persecuted by the Internal Revenue Service for taxes that should have been waived, even when he was dying in hospital, as he ultimately did, exhausted, drained, and hollow.

"There are three things I have promised myself I will never be," Artie said. "Poor, dependent, and sick. I've got a gun for that. I'm seventy-seven," he reminded me, and then chuckled. "I'm too mean to die," he said, echoing Ginny Mancini. "I won't give the sons of bitches the satisfaction."

He didn't use the gun, though he was at the end partially blind and confined to a wheelchair and helpless.

He was estranged from his sons. The day after his death, the *New York Times* interviewed Jonathan — his son by Doris Dowling — by telephone. Jonathan, now fifty-two, said:

"My father was a deeply miserable human being. That's the side of him that most people who haven't been closely associated with him never see."

Of the whereabouts of his half-brother, Jerome Kern's grandson Steve, Jonathan said, "God only knows." Steve would be sixty-four. "According to Artie's version," Jonathan continued, "when my brother first went to visit him, my father said, 'What do you want? You're nothing but a biological happenstance to me." He had said the same thing to me. I just made it difficult for him to dodge me."

Finally, very late in Shaw's life, Jonathan made contact and spent about a year with him, only to find himself suddenly cut off again.

"I got to know him very well, and we had some great times together," Jonathan said, and I could say the same. "But bottom line is that he was absolutely unable to maintain a relationship. He was abusive, condescending, mean-spirited. I felt it was to my advantage to maintain the relationship because it was in many ways cathartic, but no one with any self-respect will put up with that kind of abuse.

"He died alone and miserable, as he chose to do."

One of Artie's friends was the late Fred Hall, a pioneer broadcaster, a sweet kind man with a tendency to hero-worship. I think he never met a celebrity he didn't like. If you were famous enough, you could do no wrong. After several years of the silence between Artie and me, Fred said, "Why don't you call Artie some time?"

"Why?" I said.

"Well," Fred said. "My wife and I have talked about it. She agrees with me. I think Artie is bereaved over losing your friendship. That's the only word, bereaved."

I doubt that. He had had too much practice over the decades in losing or destroying friendships.

Composer Allyn Ferguson, who knew Artie quite well, said, "Artie was ashamed of being a clarinet player."

This led me to recall something Antonio Carlos Jobim said to me once: "We value least those talents that come easiest to us." And music came terribly easily to Artie, both as a child and later. In one of our conversations, I discovered that he did not know harmonic theory as well as I did. But oh what I'd give to have his ears! He didn't *need* to know. He could hear, and his intuitions led him infallibly. I am reminded of something Gerry Mulligan said about Chet Baker when I asked him about the rumors that Chet couldn't read. Gerry said, "He could read. He just didn't have to."

Artie wanted to "be a writer" because he thought it was a higher art. It isn't. Music is the highest art: as Walter Pater said, "All the arts crave after the conditions of music." Music requires no subject matter, it is a complete abstraction — and much abstract painting emulates it, badly — and is the only

art that works *directly* on the nervous system and thus the emotions. T.S. Eliot wrote that poetry could communicate before it was understood. Try hearing a poem in a language you do not know. Words *always* communicate a measure of meaning, no matter how incompetently strung together. Artie cultivated writers, and claimed as friends Nathaniel West, Dorothy Parker, John O'Hara, Gene Fowler, John Steinbeck, Sinclair Lewis, and S.J. Perelman, whom he refers to in *Cinderella* as Sid, just to let you know. After a dinner party at which a fellow guest was Upton Sinclair, Sammy Cahn asked him what Sinclair was like. Shaw answered, "Well, he was dull. I had to do all the talking." Yeah.

Artie didn't really want to write. He wanted to "be a writer" — that is to say, he wanted the role. It was a pose, the chief problem being that he didn't know that. His only subject was himself, and he wrote of nothing else in his endless attempt to understand. He failed even at that. And, like Sartre, he never wrote a chapter that couldn't be said in a paragraph.

The Trouble with Cinderella contains some bad writing, clogged with affectations of just-plain-folks diction, such as "a fellow's gotta make a living somehow, what the hell." And it thunders with Olympian counsel, as in the comment on psychoanalysis, "Let me assure you that through this process a guy can learn a hell of a lot about himself that he can learn in no other way" and "The way we behave is to an enormous extent the way we have been conditioned to behave."

Wow. Who'd have guessed it?

He never mentions by name any of his famous wives, simply telling you the marriages were no good and praising himself for not tolerating them. He contrasts himself to those among his friends who put up with unsatisfactory marriages. This leaves a conspicuous hole in the book.

His editor, whoever that may have been, failed to excise its excesses. Artie apparently did not understand (or maybe never heard) that keen bit of French literary counsel: "The adjective is the enemy of the noun, the adverb is the enemy of the verb."

And he had no sense of structure. He tells us of being sued for killing a pedestrian in New York but never relates the disposition of the case. And he tells us nothing of the death of his mother. The book has, however, good passages, especially some of those on the musical experience. There is a chapter on rehearsing a big band that is instructive, vivid, and sensitive. Good stuff.

What he doesn't say, of course, is what he probably noticed no more than a fish is aware of water: he was unable to sustain a marriage, a friendship, or a band.

The book-ends of Artie's life are found, it seems to me, in that strange and untrue account of his rejection of his mother and the true accounts of his rejection of his sons. He told these tales, apparently with pride, as examples of his control, his immunity to the call of plebeian sentimentality. And this brings us close to the cause of his anguish:

The clue to his character lies in what he said about Frank Sinatra singing such "trivia" as *I Get a Kick Out of You.* That is not so much a love song as a serrated satire on that effete wealthy world and the characters who inhabit it that Cole Porter knew so well. Artie just didn't get it. Lorenz Hart's *The Lady Is a Tramp* is another such piece.

And Howard Dietz said it: we're all *Dancing in the Dark*:

". . . waltzing in the wonder
of why we're here.
Time hurries by, we're here
and gone."

The great songs contain rich distillate of the human experience. Listen to the lyric of *Estate* in Italian, or Mercer's *One for My Baby*, a poignant portrait of the evening of a drunk. Think of *She's Funny That Way*. Is there another work that so movingly evokes the heartbreak and humiliation of the Great Depression?

Artie was fond of a quotation he attributed to Milton, but I checked and found it's from A.E. Houseman's *A Shropshire Lad.* I think he saw himself in it. I do too:

I, a stranger and afraid
in a world I never made.

Recently I re-read *The Trouble with Cinderella.* It had an odd effect on me, a sudden sadness for this man I once considered my friend, and for a little time after I closed the book I missed him desperately.

In Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*, a letter written by the consul to his estranged Yvonne contains this line:

Love is the only thing which gives meaning to our poor ways on earth: not precisely a discovery, I am afraid.

Perhaps not. But it's the discovery Artie never made.

One recent night I had a dream about him. He was in a small stand of slim saplings, a fragment of forest, almost like bamboo, in shadows cast by moonlight. With the clarinet raised high, he was producing those wonderfully clear and penetrating high notes of his.

I said, "Artie, what are you doing out here in the middle of the night, practicing?"

I never got an answer. I woke up.