SGene Lees Ad Libitum &

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Mail Bag

I greatly enjoyed your pieces on Glenn Miller; a wonderful description admirably researched that will surely set the record straight for generations to come. Perhaps as a follow-up you might want to explore the hoary old rumor that Miller survived the plane crash and fathered a child by a woman in Paris whom he was on his way to see (and apparently saw?) Perhaps this falls into the "Elvis Presley Is Alive and Well" mythology of the music scene but it was raised by a researcher some years back and got picked up in the popular press.

Thanks for continuing with what is in my view the best publication on jazz.

— Geoff Blowers, Department of Psychology, University of Hong Kong

In reply

I've examined the rumor and talked with men who were with Miller until that last day. The late Robert Farnon was to lead the Canadian band of the Allied armed forces on a pre-Christmas BBC broadcast to be shared with the Miller band. Bob was to broadcast from England, Miller from France. Bob said he and the Canadians, on standby, were waiting and waiting, and then got word that Miller had never arrived.

Don Haynes, Miller's peace-time manager for the band, and now aide, saw Miller off on that morning of bad weather. I talked to the late Mel Powell, who was one of the members of the band awaiting his arrival in Paris. Miller's time is completely accounted for, particularly in two British books about his time in England, including one by Chris Way called *Glenn Miller in Britain* and an exhaustive two-volume set titled *The Glenn Miller Army Air Force Band.* How did Miller get into France in advance of the army in order to have this tryst with the French girl? With northern France crawling with retreating Germans, it was hardly a place for an American officer to go wandering around, with or without trombone case, looking for a little romance.

A variation on the tale held that Miller died in a jeep crash on his way into Paris. And then there was a — somewhat more credible — post-war hypothesis advanced by a member of the RAF.

After the P-51 Mustang, built in the United States to British specifications, joined the arsenal of the Allied forces, the air war changed since the plane's drop tanks and range let it escort bombers all the way to Berlin and back. Thenceforth air traffic over the English Channel increased.

If for any reason, such as bad weather or mechanical problems, it became impossible for Allied bombers to complete a mission, the pilots were under orders to jettison their bombs in the Channel rather than land with them aboard. An RAF member said that as his plane was crossing the Channel in heavy overcast, they let their bomb load drop. And just at that moment through a break in the clouds they saw a smaller aircraft below them. He thought it might have been the Norduyn Norseman in which Miller was flying and that the bombs might have hit it. It's a lot more plausible than the pregnant French-girl story, which is evident nonsense. Ray McKinley, who was the drummer with that Air Force band, thought the story improbable. It is at one with the tale that John F. Kennedy had been rendered a vegetable at Dallas and was being kept alive in some secret nursing facility, or the various Bird Lives, Valentino Lives, and similar urban legends.

One funny story came out of all this. Willie Schwartz, as most of this readership probably knows, played the wonderful lead alto parts with the Miller pre-war band and all those clarinet octave leads that gave the band its distinctive sax-section sound.

Some years after the war, a guy approached Willie holding a small box of some kind. He opened it and showed Willie a bit of desiccated turf. He said, "Do you know what this is?"

Willie confessed ignorance.

The guy said, "This is the last piece of ground Glenn Miller ever set foot on."

Willie said something to the effect of "So?"

The guy said, "What do you think I should do with it?"

Willie said, "You could try smoking it."

Vanished Friend

By Doug Ramsey

Richard M. Sudhalter gave elegance and exactness to speech, writing and music-making. Dick's perfection of expression came in natural flows, whether he was writing, playing the cornet, or chatting over dinner. Gene Lees observed that Dick was the only person he knew who always spoke in perfect sentences and paragraphs. Sudhalter's mastery of language is everywhere in his biographies of Bix Beidebecke and Hoagy Carmichael, and his monumental study *Lost Chords*. Currents of coherence, logic, passion and humor are equally evident in his playing.

A few years ago, a stroke robbed Dick of the ability to play and caused halting speech. Then a disease called multiple system atrophy (MSA) attacked him and, over a few years, shut down his body. He lost speech and the use of his limbs. The disease left his intellect intact but destroyed his ability to communicate, the thing he did extraordinarily well. Friends and admirers around the world donated to a fund for his medical expenses and there was a benefit concert, but MSA is progressive and incurable. Dick died in a New York hospital.

He sometimes used trumpet and he had a distinctive way with the flugelhorn, but he preferred cornet, the instrument his hero Beiderbecke stayed with despite the trumpet's having come to dominance in jazz. Dick was a man out of his time in other ways too. In an era of increasingly casual dress, he preferred the bespoke tailoring he learned to love during his London years as a UPI correspondent. He was open-minded about new developments in jazz, but had a firm attachment to the emotional and intellectual straightforwardness of Bix and the Chicago school. You can hear it on all three of his instruments in the CD *Friends "With Pleasure"* with friends including Dave Frishberg, Daryl Sherman, Dan Barrett and Bill Crow, among others. Sudhalter is exclusively on cornet in *The Classic Jazz Quartet* with Dick Wellstood, Joe Muranyi and Marty Grosz — a gathering of four spirits aligned in their love of music, writing, and clowning.

Because of its subtitle, *Lost Chords: White Musicians and Their Contributions to Jazz, 1915-1945* was reflexively attacked by partisans who chose to see it as an effort to diminish the importance of black musicians. Had they bothered to read the book, they would have found that Sudhalter does quite the opposite while balancing the historical record of achievement in jazz and providing deep insights into the nature of the music. As a player, Bix was his hero and primary influence, but Dick also wrote beautifully about Louis Armstrong in, among other pieces, the notes for *Hearts Full of Rhythm, Vol. 2*, a CD with some of the music Armstrong recorded for Decca, a small sample of his ability to draw on the present in illuminating a performance from the past.

Pianist Bill Evans used to insist that excision of sentimentality yielded the purest form of romanticism. My bet is he'd have been delighted with what Louis does with *Once in a While*. Even on paper its lyric teeters precariously on the edge of bathos. Yet Louis manages (how? what's the secret?) to strip away the self-pity and make it affecting, even poignant.

A few months after Dick's stroke, I was in the lounge above the front lobby of the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York. His close friend Daryl Sherman was playing Cole Porter's piano and singing. She told me that Dick was going to try to be there, but not to count on it; he was having some bad days. Soon, though, I saw him making his slow way across the room to where our friend, pianist Jill McManus, and I were listening to Daryl. He was impeccably turned out in sport coat, slacks and tie, just the right late-afternoon outfit for the proper New York gentleman of the 1940s, a decade in which I think he would have preferred to live. When Daryl took a break, the four of us sat chatting. Dick's wit and incisiveness shined through the slow speech, but he tired quickly and returned to the apartment to rest. After that encounter, we talked by telephone a few times. Then, he could correspond only by email — then, only through relays from other people — then, not at all. One can only imagine how it was for this most articulate of men to be imprisoned within himself, unable to express ideas or emotions.

Dick wanted to go, I'm sure of that. His ordeal is at an end. Knowing that it was inevitable and coming soon did not prepare me for this depth of sadness. His music, his books, the good luck of his friendship, will enrich me for the rest of my life. — Doug Ramsey

By Terry Teachout

Dick Sudhalter wrote three of the most important books ever published about jazz and American popular music, *Bix: Man and Legend; Lost Chords: White Musicians and Their Contribution to Jazz, 1915-1945*, and *Stardust Melody: The Life and Music of Hoagy Carmichael*. He was also a trumpet player of great elegance and distinction who didn't make nearly as many records as he should have, though *Melodies Heard, Melodies Sweet* show him off to the best possible advantage.

In private life Dick was as dapper as his playing, and old-fashioned in all the best ways. He liked Chicago-style jazz, British tailoring, black-and-white movies, Marmite, and *The*

New Yorker before Tina Brown got her hands on it. Not surprisingly he was a little bit at odds with much of the modern world, and I suspect that he would have been vastly happier had he been born in 1908 instead of 1938. He was also a pessimist by nature, but like many such folks, he gave more pleasure than he got — and, I suspect, got more pleasure than he usually cared to admit.

Dick and I were close friends, and so it grieved me deeply when his body began to betray him a few years ago. First came a stroke that robbed him of the power to play his horn and left him increasingly slow of speech (though not of mind). Then he fell victim to multiple system atrophy, an appalling disease that in time made it impossible for him to talk at all. That such an ailment should have struck so brilliantly articulate a man was one of those horrific ironies with which life likes to remind us that it holds the whip hand.

I knew that Dick wanted to die — he told me so while he still could — and so I suppose I should be glad that his suffering is now over. Yet I find it impossible to greet the news of his death with anything other than black sorrow, thought it will some day be a comfort to have his books to read and his records to play. When I heard that he was dying, I sat quietly in my hotel room for a few minutes, then opened up my iBook and listened to the sweetly elegiac performance of Duke Ellington's *Black Butterfly* that he recorded with Roger Kellaway in 1999 (it's in *Melodies Heard, Melodies Sweet*). It isn't given to many of us to write our own epitaphs, much less play them, but I can't think of a better way to sum up what Dick Sudhalter was all about than to listen to that song.

— Terry Teachout

And my own reflections

It used to be said, rather commonly in fact, that jazz musicians were not articulate. After exposure to almost every prominent jazz musician, I concluded that if anyone found one of them inarticulate, it was because the musician either didn't like or didn't trust the person or both and was disinclined to reveal himself; hence the occultation in an idiosyncratic slang. Jazz musicians used to speak in a laconic argot that, it occurs to me now, came not from being inarticulate but the opposite: a curious inventiveness with language. That's when a car was a *short*, an apartment or residence was a *pad*, harsh weather was known as the *hawk*, *feel a draft* meant to feel hostility (originally, racial hostility; Lester Young invented the phrase), *latch onto* meant take up or grab (usually ideas or viewpoints), and *dig* had so many nuances — to understand, to like, to have insight, to appreciate — that it led to a phrase in jest: You've got to dig it to dig it, you dig it? And it made sense. *Groovy*, *crazy* and *gone* meant good and led to a short tale (apocryphal or not; I first heard it from members of the Les Brown band) about a musician asking a waitress for the cherry pie listed on the menu. She says, "It's gone." He says, "Crazy. Bring me two pieces."

Mundell Lowe once told me that he thought they spoke that way because of a kind of embarrassment at the low-life they had to deal with, such as gangsters, nightclub operators, and agents, and a consequent vague shame at their profession. That of course was well before universities added jazz courses to their curricula and ruined it. To teach anything, you have to codify it, which is why so many of the latter crop of jazz musicians sound alike, and certainly uninventive.

I found this argot so colorful, so interesting, so amusing, that I absorbed it into my own speech habits to the point where it became reflexive. Jazz slang has either disappeared or been absorbed into the general lexicon to the point where I saw *latch onto* in a *New York Times* editorial, and a U.S. senator say *pick up on*. The well-spring of that invention seems to have gone dry. I think it was the invention of black folk, and in its use by black musicians, white musicians found it engaging and took up its practices. From them, back in the days of network radio, it turned up on broadcasts by the likes of Bob Hope, and passed thence into American speech to the point where, no longer arcane, it lost its value. I find that I still say *dig* no doubt because, as Artie Shaw observed, in its broad ambiguities, it is useful.

One of the expressions that has passed into common usage is "cool" which originally meant restrained in expression, particularly as applied to the playing of Miles Davis and those musicians he inspired to understatement. Now it is used indiscriminately by young people to mean good, okay, acceptable, and it has spread so far that even the French use it. It makes me cringe when I hear, "C'est cool."

Thus too *chops*. Hamlet says of Yorick's skull that he is "all chop-fallen." How this came down to mean a trumpeter's lip, I don't know. But it passed from there to mean any kind of technique, including a pianist's. Now you hear Washington references to "political chops."

Hooked originally meant to be addicted, particularly to heroin, and it invoked a vivid image, as of someone hung up on barbed wire in World War I. But language tends toward dilution, to fading, and now it merely means to like or love something a lot, as in a program for children called *Hooked on Phonics*. No one, as I have observed before, who spent any time at the alas long-vanished Jim and Andy's on West 48th Street in New York would ever have considered jazz musicians inarticulate; their conversation at the bar and in the booths was incessant and, I assure you, literate and funny.

Eddie (Lockjaw) Davis was brilliantly intelligent and articulate. Al Cohn was so much so that in the late afternoon, we would all wait for him to show up with his latest lode of jokes, something like three new ones a day.

Al could put a spin on words. Denmark has a brand of beer called Elephant. When Al turned up at a club there to play, he was asked, "Do you want an Elephant beer?" Al said, 'No, I drink to forget." That was one of his most quoted quips, and so was this one: when a vagrant approached Al and said he was an alcoholic and needed a drink, Al peeled off some money, then as he gave it over said, "Wait a minute. How do I know you won't spend this on food?"

His remarks keep echoing down through the dwindling ranks of older jazz musicians. And just the other day I heard one new to me. Soon after he changed residence, he encountered a friend who asked, "Where are you living now, Al?" Al said, "Oh, I live in the past."

Paul Desmond aspired to be a writer, and his speech, as fluently inventive as his playing, reflected this. Artie Shaw abandoned one of the most prodigious talents in jazz history to take up the dogged pursuit of a writing talent that was marginal at best; but he wanted it. Dave Frishberg got a BA in journalism from the University of Minnesota and has written some elegant vignettes that I was privileged to print in the *Jazzletter*, as well as some breath-takingly original lyrics. Jimmy Raney could write. Bobby Scott wrote classic essays for the *Jazzletter*. Bassist Gordon (Whitey) Mitchell wrote a hilarious piece on what it was like to work for Lester Lanin. I printed it in *Down Beat*, Lenny Bruce read it, wrote Whitey a fan letter, and Whitey turned from playing to becoming a screen writer and, later, producer. Steve Allen, who began as a band piano player (he played piano better than he ever got credit for, and he was an astonishing vibes player) wrote something like 27 books. Dave Tough, a very bookish person, wrote a column for *Down Beat*. Eddie Sherman, who was a saxophone player, wrote a humor column for me at *Down Beat* under the pseudonym George Crater and ended up writing for *That Was the Week That Was* on television. Alyn Shipton in England is a bassist and author who wrote a fine biography of Dizzy Gillespie. James Lincoln Collier, a trombonist, and Ted Gioia, a pianist, have written two of the best histories of jazz and many other volumes besides. Ted has a degree in philosophy, politics, and economics from Oxford and an MBA from Stanford. Because I wanted musicians who could write, I hired my friend from Louisville, Don DeMicheal, a fine drummer and vibes player, as my assistant editor. He became my successor when I left the magazine.

And that doesn't take into account all the musicians who have been amateur painters, including Miles Davis and George Wettling, some of them very successful ones at a professional level, as in the case of Les McCann. It has been my experience that talent in the arts is a sort of universal, with the individual settling on one of them as a profession.

These reflections arise on the occasion of the death of Dick Sudhalter, who was both a writer and a cornetist of considerable melodic grace, his playing unashamedly modeled on that of Bix Beiderebecke, of whom he co-wrote with Philip Evans a biography that is unlikely to be surpassed, *Bix: Man and Legend.* Dick told me he was working on his book when he learned that Evans was also researching one and they decided to pool their efforts. Evans later complained that he was the main author of the book, but in view of Sudhalter's other output, I hardly think he needed a collaborator. The evidence is in his 2002 book *Stardust Melody: The Life and Music of Hoagy Carmichael.*

But the most important of his books was the huge *Lost Chords: White Musicians and Their Contribution to Jazz, 1915-1945*, published by Oxford in 1999. I read it first in manuscript, whether because Dick or Sheldon Mayer, our editor at Oxford, asked me to. The problem was its sheer size. Sheldon told me it simply was not practical from a cost standpoint to print so huge a book. He asked me to use whatever influence I might have (which was nil) to persuade Dick to cut it down. I discussed it with Sudhalter on the telephone, but he was inflexible — he was in fact a rather inflexible man — and I certainly could see his viewpoint. The very power of the book lay in the depth of its research and its exhaustive documentation in areas no one else had even touched. I thought it was a masterpiece, and told Sheldon so. Sheldon said it could not be published without subsidization, and since most of the granting foundations — particularly the MacArthur genius awards, which are a joke — are all but irrelevant, I had no idea where Dick might find it. But he did. Oxford published it in its full size and weight.

While he (and I and a lot of us) were awaiting the public response, I warned Dick to prepare himself, and reminded him of *some* of the response to my book *Cats of Any Color.* While most of my book dealt with the racial discrimination black musicians have experienced, the last third or so of it dealt with the anti-white attitudes manifest in Wynton Marsalis, the greatest politician in the history of this music, and his "critic" friend Stanley Crouch. It received a few reviews calling me a racist. Since *Lost Chords* was apostasy against the orthodoxy that everything of value in American music had black origins and no white man ever contributed anything to the art of jazz — a popular position among French critics; and Ralph J. Gleason actually said so in

writing — I told him he could expect even a harsher assessment. He said he was prepared for it. But you can never prepare yourself for insult, and when it came, I think it hurt him. He called my house after the savage treatment of his book, but I was away. He talked to my wife, and he cried.

Dick defended himself in an interview with *Contemporary Authors*, saying, "The angrier the denunciation, it seemed, the less the writer had actually read." I'd had the same experience. Dick said his book was a history, not "a racial screed". He might have added that some of its castigators were on dubious ground, since few of them could read music or knew musical theory and Dick had made his points with notated transcriptions and chord changes. It was no more a book for amateurs than Alec Wilder's *American Popular Song*. They are books that require reflection and musical knowledge.

Lost Chords was and remains one of the most important books ever written about jazz. It is nothing less than brilliant. It did *not* ignore the black contributions to jazz; it *did* explore extensively major areas of the music's history that almost all its other chroniclers had ignored, partly, I suspect out of a fear of being thought illiberal. This had occurred to me repeatedly in an inchoate form. But I knew that jazz trombone had been revolutionized by Jack Teagarden and Tommy Dorsey, and no one overtook Teagarden until J.J. Johnson emerged in the early 1940s. And Dorsey changed the tessitura of the instrument, showing its possibilities as a maker of lyrical melodic lines, and influencing almost all trombonists thereafter, including those in symphony orchestras. It always seemed to me that there was an influence of Bix Beiderbecke in the playing of Miles Davis, and finally I asked him if he'd listened to Bix. He said, "No, but I listened to Bobby Hackett, and *he* listened to Bix." And of course Miles was a major influence on many other trumpet players, though none achieved the pervasive lyrical melancholy of his playing.

Lester Young and Charlie Parker attested to the influence of Jimmy Dorsey on saxophone. Gerry Mulligan too admired Dorsey. Since I never cared for Dorsey's playing, this left me baffled, but who am I to argue with those three worthies? He *was* an influence, and this cannot be questioned. And not only on saxophonists but also players of other instruments.

Then there was Red Norvo, the primary explorer of the vibraphone in jazz. There are those who would give that credit to Lionel Hampton, but part of it certainly belongs to Norvo. Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw were both powerful influences on saxophone and clarinet players. Sudhalter includes them in his chronicle, along with Bud Freeman, Bunny Berigan, Pee Wee Russell, and others.

I heard one or two tracks of the Benny Goodman 1928 Brunswick sessions when I was young, but their significance went right by me. I am deeply grateful to Art Hilgart for sending me a CD burned from an LP that was probably issued about 1949 or '50,with liner notes by Irving Kolodin. Kolodin was a rarity for his time (1908-88), a classical music critic — for the *New York Sun* and *Saturday Review* — who had an interest in and knowledge of jazz. Indeed, he knew much more about jazz than most jazz critics of the time knew about classical music. Kolodin also wrote program notes for the Metropolitan Opera and the New York Philharmonic.

Artie Shaw told me once that the underlying factor in the evolution of what became his style was an attempt to play alto saxophone the way Bix Beiderbecke played cornet. He may have worshiped Louis Armstrong, and he did, but Bix was the influence on him. And in that time, he was, as these Goodman recordings show, far from being the only one to submit to that influence.

A British jazz critic once wrote that Bix made history but didn't influence it. This is blithering nonsense. But I had never realized until I heard these 1928 Brunswick sides how much Benny Goodman was also influenced by Bix. Kolodin writes in his astute liner notes:

"Turning back the clock is a pastime that has its fascination in any field, and particularly in the field of jazz. Here, in these selections which, more than twenty years ago, were shaping the careers of such noted jazz musicians as Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller, Jimmy McPartland, Fud Livingston, Joe Sullivan, Bud Freeman, and others.

"Just what a prodigy the youthful Goodman was may be gathered from a matching of dates — his birth in May, 1909, and one on the work sheet of the session in which *Wolverine Blues* and *Jazz Holiday* were made: January 23, 1928. By any system of figuring this adds up to less than nineteen, truly a tender age in the tough school of dance music. And, as these selections attest, he was a gifted performer on the alto and the baritone sax and a better-than-fair trumpet player, as well as an amazing clarinetist.

"Since all of these recordings were made while Goodman was a member of the Ben Pollack band . . . some documentation of that orchestra is in order. Pollack was a Chicago drummer who grew up under the influence of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, with whom he played for a while, and his roots were thus firmly embedded in rich jazz soil. He has won a place in jazz history for two things: the probable introduction into white jazz of four-beat drumming (most of his predecessors had been content to mark only the two main accents with the foot-pedals) and a talent for engaging young musicians of promise, from Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller through Ray Bauduc and Eddie Miller to Harry James and Freddie Slack.

"Though it is the general opinion that the Pollack band of the Goodman-Miller period (roughly from 1925 to 1929) was never quite as good as it might have been, it had a decisive effect on the career of these two men. Certainly Goodman learned a lot from those sessions between 'the two Bennys' as they were known in those days; and Miller had a first opportunity to exercise the arranging skill with which he has been associated ever since."

There are eight tracks on the Brunswick LP release, presumably the complete output of those *Benny Goodman and his Boys* sessions: *Wolverine Blues, A Jazz Holiday, Muskrat Ramble, After Awhile* (written by Goodman and Bud Freeman), *Room 1411* (written by Goodman and Miller), *Jungle Blues, Blue*, and the notorious *Shirt Tail Stomp*.

Kolodin wrote of *Wolverine Blues* and the other tracks: "They show Goodman, Miller, and McPartland to be completely under the spell of Bix — a fact reflected in the title as well as the music, for the band of Beiderbecke's early period around Chicago was, of course, the Wolverines. Nevertheless, each converts the influence in his own way into exciting music: Jimmy (McPartland) in his vigorous lead, Miller in his connecting breaks, and Goodman in his facile, sometimes raucous, clarinet. That influence, incidentally, was absorbed at first hand." Bix was very much a living presence in Chicago at that time. He lived three more years, dying in 1931 in Queens, New York, of complications of his drinking.

Goodman's solo on *A Jazz Holiday* sounds like a transcription of a Beiderbecke solo. So does Miller's eight-bar trombone solo, as well as the fills he plays behind other solos. Goodman takes one solo on alto, sounding much like Bix, and even one on trumpet. Then there is the notorious *Shirt Tail Stomp*, which I — as a kid — thought must be a joke. Nothing could be this bad unless it was a joke. And it was, with each musician playing in the worst taste he could muster. But the worst (and best) solo is by Miller, whose trombone seems to summon memories, as Irving Kolodin put it, of "the lowing herds of his native Iowa."

To hear Goodman and Miller at that period is fascinating, because of the growth of both musicians in the few years that lay ahead. From *Blue*, recorded June 4, 1928, to *Moonlight Serenade*, which Miller wrote as an exercise when he was studying with Joseph Schillinger and recorded in 1929, seems like a distance of a thousand miles. And *Moonlight Serenade* by its ubiquity causes us to lose sight of what a good and subtle composition it is.

I don't know whether you can get any of these records. I can't say that I'm mad about them, but they are of historical interest if only for their presage of the big-band era soon to come — and their documentation of the enormous influence of Bix Beiderbecke, an influence Dick Sudhalter recognized profoundly.

I met Dick in a peculiar way. After the Benny Goodman tour of Russia, I heard many of the musicians who had been in the band during that curious safari recount the cruelties of Goodman's behavior. He was already notorious for cancelling numbers when a featured soloist got more applause than he did, and there were legends about his almost catatonic insensitivity to others. He never bothered calling anyone by his name, addressing everyone as Pops, and the joke was that he even spoke to members of his own family that way. When Arturo O'Farrill first wrote for the band, Goodman addressed him as Chico, which is condescending in Spanish, the equivalent of "boy," and Chico got stuck with it.

One of the musicians who told me tales of the Russian tour was bassist Bill Crow, who was in the band at that time. Early in the days of the *Jazzletter*, I told Bill that I thought he should recount the adventure in full for the sake of future biographers and historians. To make the piece libel-proof, I advised Bill to use no adjectives whatsoever about Goodman, since they could be construed as evidence of bias, and to cite Goodman's cruelties and arrogance only in incidents that could be corroborated in court by other members of the band. I wanted the piece to be so bullet-proof that when Goodman took it to his lawyer or lawyers, he would be told that he had no case. Bill did all of this, and I divided the piece into three parts on which Bill worked hard.

And while I was having this material set in type, Goodman died. Since I doubted that the *Jazzletter* would survive beyond the end of that year, 1985, and in consideration of all Bill's work, not to mention the duty to history, I printed it.

I got a belligerent letter from Sudhalter, denouncing me and Bill Crow for such bad taste when Goodman had been dead only a matter of weeks. I found his reaction bizarre, and told him so. Goodman hardly cared. And what was the difference between intimating that Goodman was a prick and that Beethoven was a prick, even though the latter had been in the land of shades rather longer? We had a turbulent exchange and in one of his letters Dick launched a lethal assault on Dizzy Gillespie in particular and bebop in general, saying it was "nervous music." I pointed out to him that "nervous" was a subjective state in the recipient and not a description of the music. I told him the statement told me nothing about the music but a lot about him. I concluded eventually that Dick had a taste for the predictable, and Dizzy's sudden flights and excursions away from the center delighted me and a lot of other people but clearly unsettled Sudhalter. Dizzy was one of the greatest musicians in jazz or

any other history, but Sudhalter simply would not acknowledge it or perhaps could not even hear it. His tastes were hermetically sealed in time, the era of what he heard in his adolescence, and they were armor plated.

I once had a conversation with Mel Powell about the evolution of jazz in the 1930s and '40s. Earlier jazz was largely triadic. It has been said that jazz follows the harmonic practices of classical music by about fifty years. Gradually jazz embraced the harmonic practices of Debussy, Ravel, and Stravinsky, and Bix was said to have had a particular taste for Paul Dukas. It began to use what I called additives, that is to say additions to or extensions of the chord, such as sixths at first, then major sevenths, ninths and thirteenths, or alterations, such as the flatted fifth or raised ninths and elevenths, and chromatic chord subscriptions. What was disconcerting to the traditionalists was not so much the flatted fifth as a chord but the practice of landing on it as a melody note. There is one chord that makes me think of Stan Kenton. I discovered it on my own, and when I asked Stan what it should be called he said it was a suspended fourth, and explained that the third was raised a half step. Johnny Carisi stripped it to its essence when he said to me, "The third is always moveable." I have a sort of permanent background taste for suspended fourths and minor ninth chords. In any case, all of this was known in European music even before the start of the twentieth century. Why did these practices, I asked Mel, come so slowly into big-band music and jazz? Was it because the public wouldn't accept them? "I'll surprise you," Mel said. "It was because the bandleaders couldn't accept them," and he told me of Goodman's screwing around with his charts and particularly those of Eddie Sauter.

He was born Richard Merrill Sudhalter in Boston on December 28, 1958. His father was a saxophonist with a large record collection and an adoration of Bix. Roger Kellaway, who was born in nearby Waban, Massachusetts, a little under a year later, on November 1, 1939, remembers that much of his early exposure to jazz was in Sudhalter's basement, listening to his father's records.

He said, "It was the first time I heard Bix, the first time I heard Hoagy Carmichael's *Bessie Couldn't Help It*, and the first time I heard Joe Venuti's *Barnacle Bill the Shithead*. Dick's father was named Al, and he played wonderful alto. He played with us. Sudhalter's basement was one of the most important influences of my life." By the time they were in their teens, Sudhalter and Kellaway were playing in Boston night clubs. Sudhalter got a degree in English literature and music from Oberlin, Roger a degree from the New England Conservatory.

Then Dick became improbably a reporter for United Press International. A friend of his from that period, Michael Miner, media columnist for the *Chicago Reader*, wrote on hearing of his death that they'd met "in 1968 in London, when he showed me where Fleet Street takes lunch. A few weeks later he drove from Germany to Prague and was, by his account, the only Western journalist in Czechoslovakia when the Russian tanks rolled in and crushed Dubcek's reform government. His reward was the bureau in Belgrade, where in '69 he tooled me around town in his little car telling stories about Tito and how he'd covered a Communist Party congress in Bucharest knowing no Romanian.

"We were friends virtually by definition, both being overworked, underpaid, and happily put upon by the same wire service, me in Saint Louis. Sudhalter had gone to Europe to make music, but journalism always interested him too, and he asked UPI's Frankfort bureau for a job after finding out that pretty much alone among major media in Europe, UPI would, if it could spoon a couple of beans from the bottom of the barrel, hire someone on the spot. By the mid-70s he'd left UPI and was back in the States."

A 1951 novel by Reynolds Packard, called *The Kansas City Milkman*, was read gleefully by reporters all over America, particularly the young ones, including me. It is a scathing picture of the operations of UPI, then called only UP. The title stems from the constant admonition to the reporters and rewrite men that all their stories be immediately comprehensible to the Kansas City milkman.

It is probably because of that novel, coupled with the shabby salaries they paid, that made me turn down a UPI offer in Paris in 1959. I wish I'd taken the job, and had stayed for maybe six months before switching over to writing in French for one of the French newspapers. Foolishly, I came home instead. Margaret Yourcenar translated her own novels from French into English, and incidentally taught herself Japanese, German, Spanish, Portuguese, and modern Greek. Her *Memoirs of Hadrian* remains one of the greatest novels I've read. The Irish scholar and poet Samuel Beckett, who spent the World War II years in the French underground, wrote most of his later works in French, including *Waiting for Godot*, and translated them into English. Jorge Luis Borges wrote in Spanish and English. Joseph Conrad made the transition first into French and then into English. Nicholas Nabakov wrote in English.

How I wish I'd taken that job and stayed in France. The road not taken. There are lots of those in everyone's life.

While Dick was researching his biography of Bix, he visited the library at Williams College to look at arrangements

written in the 1920s for the Paul Whiteman band. He decided to organize a band to play these charts and on returning to London, where he was living during his tenure at UPI, he organized a band to play them under the title the New Paul Whiteman Orchestra. One of the matters on which Dick and I agreed was the Whiteman band, which was egregiously trashed by later jazz critics, perhaps because of his billing as the King of Jazz, a title he did not himself invent. Whiteman may not have been a jazz musician himself, but he certainly knew and appreciated the good ones, and he hired them, including Joe Venuti, Red Norvo, and of course Bix.

Under Sudhalter's leadership, this reconstituted band, staffed by some of the best British musicians, was applauded enthusiastically at a jazz festival, and went on to successful performances at Carnegie Hall and elsewhere. Dick of course played the solos originally assigned to Bix.

These performances revealed just how good the writing for that band was.

I was much intrigued by it, including some charts in which Bill Challis used six saxophones. A few years ago, by now resident in California, I was in New York for a few days and went out to Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, to interview Bill Challis about his years arranging for the Paul Whiteman and his friendship with Bix. He was living with his brother, Evan Challis, and his wife. Evan was Bill's curator and protector. Bill had been married once but was divorced.

It was Bill Challis who transcribed Beiderbecke's piano compositions, including *In a Mist* and *Flashes*. He told me that he could never get Bix to play any of them the same way twice; without Bill's patience we would not have these jewels. I wanted to know more about Bix, but Bill said, "Well, he was a drinker and I wasn't, so I never knew him well."

Everyone who knew Bix, including Joe Venuti, was reluctant to talk about him. They surrounded him with silence.

Artie Shaw believed that heavy alcoholism in a man usually is a manifest of the effort not to face his own homosexuality. He cited several instances, but I don't buy it. Further, heavy drinking is common among writers, particularly great writers, such as John Steinbeck, Ernest Hemingway, Dorothy Parker, William Faulkner, James M. Cain, Dashiel Hammet, and, by some fragmentary testimony, Bill Shakespeare. A physician once wrote a book on why writers drink, but I found it fatuous. I think it is out of the desire to diminish the barrier between the left and right brain, to permit one to transfer spatial thought over into the mechanical region that permits execution, as in writing or making music. It is about the unending struggle in the artist to lower inhibition, to attain immediate and unhesitant expression. Something of this is captured in Joyce Carey's novel *The Horse's Mouth*. It is the yearning to achieve thought beyond thought, the haunting feeling that there is something Out There just beyond reach. You cannot play music or for that matter ride a bicycle until repetition has rewired the brain and conditioned the muscles to the point that one can act without thought.

When I asked Gerry Mulligan, who was a very consciously conscious person (and we were quite close friends) if he had to *think* about what he was playing, the chords and relevant scales and such, he said, "Sometimes. But when I'm playing well, I don't."

It is the yearning for that ecstatic state that permits free unimpaired expression — what Roger Kellaway calls "getting out of your own way" — that causes artists of all kinds to drink or use drugs.

Dick Sudhalter, I think, was incapable of that, nor do I think he even aspired to it. When I said he spoke in perfect sentences and paragraphs, I would add that he played that way too. His very lovely playing was premeditated. To some extent we all do this; otherwise we could not speak. We are always a few words ahead of ourselves, and Robin Williams at his best makes free-association into exalted comedy, switching thought directions on a dime, as it were. That's what Dizzy could do; he was one of the most gloriously uninhibited men I ever knew, which is perhaps what made Sudhalter uncomfortable, those Dionesian flights whose directions you could not even try to anticipate. Dick wanted life to be ordered and orderly, which was manifest in his impeccable London dress code. He wanted what the Germans call *ordnung*, order, and his name was German and, like my father, he spoke the language.

That sense of order is perhaps one of the reasons he spoke beautifully. He was a very handsome man, and his speech went with his looks and his careful perfect attire. But he lacked a sense of humor. I recall what Woody Herman said of Willis Conover: "Don't you know what's wrong with your friend Willis Conover? He has no sense of humor." I defended Willis's wit and beautifully constructed puns. And Woody said, "Wit and humor are not the same thing." It's a distinction I have never forgotten. Dick was a lot like Willis; and they were both very serious about everything. They lacked that inner laughter that illumines even the darkest thoughts, like Rembrandt's underpainting, without which you cannot write tragedy.

But he was a fine and graceful musician, and a good man, and had he never done anything else in his life — and he did — he would have a place in history for *Lost Chords*.

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