Michael Steinman's Jazz Lives blog:

Pianist Bob Greene left us late in 2013.

Bob devoted his life to celebrating Jelly Roll Morton and his music. He wasn't the only pianist who has done so, but his emulation was fervent. I saw him summon up the Master at Alice Tully Hall in 1974 with a lovely little band (Pee Wee Erwin, Ephie Resnick, Herb Hall, Alan Cary, Milt Hinton, Tommy Benford). They couldn't quite turn that austere space into a Storyville bordello or the Jungle Inn (it would have required an architectural reconstruction taking years) but the music floated and rocked. Across the distance of the decades, I think of Bob as a brilliant actor, committed with all his heart and energy to one role and to the perfection of that role — not a bad life-goal.

Bob was respected by his peers. **Mike Lipskin** said, "Bob was a fine performer of Jelly Roll Morton compositions, and devoted much of his life to keeping the memory of this giant early jazz pioneer alive. I had the pleasure of seeing him in concert many years ago." And a man we just lost, **Bobby Gordon**, told me, "I have fond memories of Bob for 40 years. He was always enthusiastic about music. I recorded with him 40 years ago and most recently for Jazzology. It was wonderful to record with him again, and a joy to be with such a remarkable talent. I will miss him…a dear friend."

Bob Greene died October 13th 2013 and Bobby Gordon on December 31st 2013. Gordon was known as a clarinet artist who painted with sound.

Here's a beautiful expansive piece by Hank O'Neal, a very lively evocation of Bob:

The first time I saw Bob Greene, he was playing a poor electric piano with a fairly loose ensemble, on the back of a flatbed truck. The band on the truck was trying, unsuccessfully, to recreate the feeling generated by old time bands on wagons in New Orleans. It is a long way from New Orleans to Manassas, Virginia, and 1967 was a half a century removed from those heady days in the Crescent City. I don't remember the enterprise stirring up much support for the first Manassas Jazz Festival, but Bob was on board because his old friend, Edmond "Doc" Souchon was also there, and Doc had probably asked him to come along. I know it happened because I have a snapshot to prove it. In another snapshot from the same day, he's playing cornet.

Could this be the occasion remembered by Hank O'Neal (other musicians unidentified)? It is definitely Manassas!

You have to look pretty hard to find out anything about Bob. He's not well-known today, rarely mentioned in any of the standard jazz reference books, and you have to dig pretty deep to come up with any information at all, but the bits and pieces are there if you look for them. And the story and the music he's made along the way are both wonderful.

Bob's first love was Benny Goodman, Jess Stacy, and the swing guys who were all over the place when he was a teenager. He could still, when asked, do the best imitation of Stacy I've ever heard, but at some point, he heard Jelly Roll Morton, and was hooked. Until his death in 2013, he remained one of the foremost exponents of Jelly's music in the land. There are other guys who could play more notes, play "King Porter Stomp" louder or "Fingerbuster" faster, but when it came to really delivering the goods, with just the right mix of technique, exuberance and sentiment, nobody else even came close.

There are other guys who play Morton's compositions well, in the style, often with more sheer technique, but, for the most part, this is just a portion, usually a small portion, of their repertory. The music of Jelly Roll Morton and some of his circa 1900 contemporaries, made up about 90 percent of Bob's playbook, and the telephone doesn't ring very often these days, or any other days for the past few decades, for someone to play a recital of Morton's music. Which was just fine for Bob. He never had any intention of being a fulltime musician. The world was just full of too many other things to try.

Bob made his first recordings in 1950 with Conrad Janis (Circle) and in 1951 with Sidney de Paris (Blue Note) and recorded intermittently for the next sixty years, whenever it was convenient. His performance schedule was about the same. He played in and around New York City in the 1950s and Washington D.C. in the 1960s because he was writing some pretty fancy stuff for assorted notables to read on radio or in political speeches. Goodness knows what else he may have been up to. When he wrote a book about the OSS exploits of his cousin, Paul Blum, he had no difficulty gaining access to the highest levels of the intelligence community. But back to the music.

After Bob climbed down off the back of the truck during the ill-fated parade in Manassas, I discovered he could also play a real piano and when he played Morton, it was special. As I've suggested, he made up in spirit and authenticity what he may lacked in a formidable technique. Not that he made mistakes, he didn't, but to this particular pianist, passion was the point, not technique. He had all he needed to get his point across. Much in the same as Thelonius Monk. Other people played "Just A Gigolo" better than Monk, but nobody played it with more quirky feeling.

The first time I really heard Bob was when I was asked to round up the gear to record a band to be led by the then legendary, now largely forgotten drummer, Zutty Singleton. The gear came from Squirrel Ashcraft, the recorder, microphones, even the take-up reels. It was February 12, 1967, I remember the date with great affection because it was the very first commercially released record I ever worked on. It was also my first encounter with Zutty, still a marvellous drummer, and the only person I ever heard in person who could almost simulate a melody on the drums.

Bob Greene was a strong presence among many exceptional players that day and the highlight of the recording, to me at least, was a duo, just Zutty and Bob, on "Cake Walking Babies from Home". I don't know if Jelly ever played the tune, but if he did, he would have played it like Bob played it that day, and maybe Zutty would have been around to make sure. This was Johnson McRee's first record for his Fat Cat's Jazz label, and except for a solo outing by Don Ewell, perhaps the best record he ever produced.

In the 1970s, I asked Bob to record for Chiaroscuro on many occasions, but he always declined. There was always a semi-legitimate excuse. He was the only person I asked to record in those years who didn't jump at the chance, including Bob's first idol, Jess Stacy. In the late 1970's Bob assembled his World of Jelly Roll Morton band, made a fine record for RCA, played Carnegie Hall a few years and toured successfully with the group. But most of the time he was in between New Orleans, Paris, Tokyo and New York, rarely in any place for very long. He slowed down long enough to record all the Jelly Roll Morton tracks for Louis Malle's fine film, "Pretty Baby", and he enthralled audiences with his Jelly Roll show at numerous Floating Jazz Festivals. I recorded one of these shows in the late 1980s. Maybe I'll listen to it one day and see if it should be released.

In 1994 we produced an event for Cunard on Queen Elizabeth 2, a 12-day survey of the music of New Orleans, and Bob was on board, as both Jelly Roll Morton and as the pianist with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band. The New Yorker's noted critic, Whitney Balliett, was also on board, in disguise as Baby Dodds, tastefully accompanying Bob on a snare and cymbal. Romantic that he was, Bob fell in love with the ship and was heartbroken when he learned that much of the furniture in the ship's Theatre Bar, where he held forth nightly with Whitney, was to be taken off QE2 when it reached New York, and given to the Salvation Army. He decided he had to have a table and four leather chairs and set about finding a way to work it out.

When we docked, I left via the crew gangway, and saw Bob at the other end of the pier in heated conversation with a man in a Salvation Army uniform. Longshoreman were hauling the furniture and putting it inside a truck. I later learned that Bob got his furniture. The deal was for a table and four leather chairs, in the best condition possible, delivered to his home on 92nd Street. In exchange, Bob promised to assemble a band, including Whitney, to play for a Salvation Army Christmas party. A decade or so later Bob moved out to the end of Long Island and that old Theatre Bar furniture moved with him, a few miles closer to Southampton. This is the kind of thing that appealed to Bob.

If Bob had worked at a career in music half as hard as he worked at getting that furniture, who knows what might have happened? But perhaps nothing would have happened, which is the case with most people who try to have a career in

jazz, and he wouldn't have had nearly as good a time as he had for the past 91 years. He was one of a handful of pianists I'd go out of my way to hear because he always made me happy. He had the same effect on others.

In November 2006, he toured Japan and a lot of other people went out of their way to hear him. After that he began working on a project to present a Jelly Roll Morton show at Jazz at Lincoln Centre but it didn't work out. A year or so after that he asked what I thought of getting him together with Joshua Bell for some duets. I thought it sounded like a good idea, that Bell could do a lot worse. That didn't work out either but an awful lot did and the music that resulted was simply wonderful.

Danny Barker, Ernie Carson, Bob Greene, Herbie Hall, Milt Hinton, Tommy Benford, and Effie Resnick.

Categorized | Arts

A Jamming Weekend Here: High Profile Musicians Make Local Stops

Posted on 11 January 2011

By Claire Walla

One night in the 1980s, Lorraine Gordon asked her friend Bob Greene to play piano as a warm-up act at her club in Greenwich Village: the Village Vanguard. Greene had made a name for himself in the jazz world decades earlier as the preeminent authority on the great New Orleans keys player Jelly Roll Morton.

But Green's job at the club lasted only one night.
"I was at the piano, playing Jelly just as well as I could," Greene recalled, "And a guy comes in, puts his horn case on top of the piano, takes off his coat and throws it over the piano — while I'm playing — and says, 'Are you the piano tuner?'"
Greene laughed. Today he says he doesn't remember who the main act was that night because he left before the set even began.
"That was my revenge!" he quipped. "I'm just amused. For him, that music was so primitive."

But for Greene, it's a passion, and this weekend, he performs the music of Jelly Roll Morton and other greats in "A Trip Back in Time," a jazz concert at the Unitarian Universalist meetinghouse in Bridgehampton. Greene will also play classic tunes from Chicago and other jazz scenes of the '20s and '30s, peppered with a bit of history. Joining him to make a trio will be John Bucher on coronet and banjoist Bob Barta.

Though he loves the sounds of New Orleans, Greene grew up in New York where, as a teenager in the 1930s, he first heard jazz on the radio by way of Benny Goodman and his big band sound.
Greene taught himself to play his favorite tunes by slowly sounding out each melody on the piano. It wasn't until the '40s when, on the advice of clarinetist Bob Wilber, Greene started listening to the music of a largely forgotten pianist named Jelly Roll Morton.
"I had no idea what Jelly was doing, but it was an orchestral style," Greene said. "In his right hand he'd have the trumpet and the clarinet, and in his left hand the octave would be passing notes to the trombone. It was a full, rich sound."

It was a sound that Greene perfected and the '70s and the early '80s, Greene traveled the globe with "The World of Jelly Roll Morton," his band devoted to the music and history of the musician and the New Orleans sound.

Greene never planned to be a professional musician, but it was his love for jazz that brought him success. He was working as a writer for Edward R. Murrow at the Voice of America in 1969 when he went to the New Orleans Jazz Festival and convinced its organizer to let him play a few Morton songs while the crew was changing sets. Morton had died in 1941, and even though he had lived just a few blocks from the venue, Greene said he was largely unknown at that point.

“People knew his songs, but the man had vanished,” he explained.
So, Greene told the audience a bit about Jelly Roll Morton and played a few songs before launching into “Tiger Rag,” a song named for the way Jelly used his elbow to play the keys, making a sound like a roar.
“You know, New Orleans people, when they hear music with a swing, they second-line. On the street they march behind the band; in this auditorium, the whole place was clapping,” Greene grinned. “Jelly was back in New Orleans.”
On Sunday, January 16, Greene will offer songs by Morton and other New Orleans greats like King Oliver, Louis Armstrong and Bunk Johnson with stories of their lives. He’ll also touch on the Chicago sound and musicians like Eddie Condon, Jess Stacy, George Wettling and (his favorite) Bix Beiderbecke. “A Trip Back in Time” begins at 2:30 p.m. at the Unitarian meetinghouse, 977 Bridgehampton Turnpike, Bridgehampton. Tickets are $20 ($10 for children). For details, call 537-0132.

http://www.easthamptonstar.com/Obituaries/20131024/Robert-S-Greene
http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/25/arts/music/bob-greene-pianist-and-jelly-roll-morton-devotee-dies-at-91.html?ref=obituaries&_r=0

Bob Greene, Jazz Pianist, Dies at 91

By BRUCE WEBER
OCT. 24, 2013 NEW YORK TIMES

Bob Greene, a pianist who was so besotted by the controlled yet fevered jazz of Jelly Roll Morton that he abandoned a writing career to perform the Jelly Roll canon and spread the Jelly Roll gospel, died on Oct. 13 at his home in Amagansett, N.Y. He was 91.
The cause was lung cancer, said Diane Fehring Reynolds, a friend.

“If there were such a thing, Greene would hold the Jelly Roll Morton Chair of Music at an Ivy League college,” Whitney Balliett, The New Yorker’s longtime jazz critic, wrote in The Atlantic in 1998.
Such was Mr. Greene’s devotion to Morton, a swaggering, seminal figure in jazz — pianist, bandleader and “the first important jazz composer,” according to The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz — that he viewed his task as not simply to play Morton’s music also but to recreate it, performing and recording the music as Morton himself did.
“He gets inside Morton’s music,” Mr. Balliett wrote.
Morton was born in the late 19th century in New Orleans and grew up in the city’s distinctive musical atmosphere. In his playing and writing he drew from it, fusing ragtime, the blues, spirituals and Latin music from the Caribbean into songs that were contained by compositional form and yet exuded an earthy drive.

Bob Greene in 1974. Such was Mr. Greene’s devotion to Jelly Roll Morton, the self-proclaimed “originator of jazz,” that he viewed his task as not simply to play Morton’s music, but also to recreate it. Credit Lawrence Fried
In the late 1920s he put together a band known as the Red Hot Peppers and recorded songs with them that melded composition and improvisation, with each of the brass, woodwind and rhythm players getting to show his stuff within the framework of Morton’s writing.

Through the 1970s and ’80s, Mr. Greene toured the country and the world as a Jelly Roll evangelist, bringing Morton’s music to France, Denmark, England and Japan, both as a solo pianist and as a bandleader. He can be heard playing Morton’s music on the soundtrack of Louis Malle’s 1978 film, “Pretty Baby,” about a girl — Brooke Shields in her first major role — raised in a New Orleans brothel, circa 1917. “There’s such a vitality to his music,” Mr. Greene told the online arts magazine Joyzine. “Yet it’s not wild — it’s contained by the forms in which Jelly wrote: the limited harmonies, the very formal three-part structure of his songs, the fact that each song could only last about three minutes.” He added, “It can get very hot, yet it never explodes because it’s locked into these restrictions. Within these imposed boundaries, it’s almost Mozartean in its magnificence.”

Mr. Greene was introduced to Morton’s music in the 1940s — Morton died in 1941 — and though he was a serious, self-taught amateur musician, he never planned to be a professional. Rather, he made a living writing documentaries for radio and television. But as he told the story, his career pivoted in June 1968; he was about to join Robert F. Kennedy’s campaign for the presidency when Kennedy was assassinated.
“When Bobby got shot, I realized that the time had come for me to get into music full time,” he told Joyzine. “Certainly, if he had lived, I wouldn’t have devoted myself to Jelly the way that I have.”

Jelly Roll Morton in 1938. Credit Library of Congress, via Associated Press
By 1969 he was playing recitals of Morton’s music in New Orleans. In 1973, he introduced his own version of the ’Red Hot Peppers’ at Lincoln Center as part of the Newport Jazz Festival in New York. The next year, the band returned to Lincoln Center, where, John S. Wilson wrote in The New York Times, it “not only played ‘those little black dots,’ as Mr. Morton always instructed his musicians, but projected the flavor of Mr. Morton’s music — the breaks, the slurs, the accents, the coloring.”

Robert Stern Greenstein was born on Sept. 4, 1922, to Oscar Greenstein, who ran a textile concern, and the former Elsa Stern, and grew up on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. His father’s business foundered after the stock market crash in 1929, and the family’s circumstances were considerably reduced for a time, but Mr. Greenstein remade his fortune with a company that made name tags. The father changed the family name sometime after 1939, Ms. Reynolds said.

Mr. Greene graduated from Columbia in 1943 and began writing documentaries for radio and then television, winning Writers Guild awards in 1957 and 1962 for history-based radio scripts. In 1964, writing for Voice of America, the federal government’s broadcast network, he was nominated again.
Mr. Greene taught from 1954 to 1962 in the dramatic arts department at Columbia, where he earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in theater arts in 1958. He leaves no immediate survivors.
“If it was once done so perfectly, why do it again?” Mr. Greene once asked aloud, voicing perhaps the most obvious question about his devotion to Jelly Roll Morton. “I can only say: Because there’s beauty there, there’s excitement, there’s love. If that can be transmitted to a live audience, some of the aroma of the original happens again.”

Correction: November 13, 2013

Because of an editing error, an obituary on Nov. 1 about the jazz pianist Bob Greene referred imprecisely to Brooke Shields’s role in the 1978 film “Pretty Baby,” whose soundtrack includes music composed by Jelly Roll Morton and performed by Mr. Greene. While it was her first major acting role, it was not her first role of any kind.
A version of this article appears in print on November 1, 2013, on page A29 of the New York edition with the headline: Bob Greene, Jazz Pianist, Dies at 91.

BOB GREENE

June 5, 2008

DEAR LEIF,
IN ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTIONS

When my father was a banker - before the Crash of 1929 shot everything to hell - we lived on Park Avenue and had a fancy Sohmer piano with pretty legs, which is obviously why my mother chose it. The piano itself was a dog. I had a few lessons on it with a frustrated pseudo-intellectual named Sylvia Wollman, who had a silver Eversharp pencil and would bang you on the knuckles if you didn't hold your fingers in an impossible position. She knew nothing about music. What I loved was march music. It swung. I would stand before our old Stromberg Carlson radio and conduct when it came on. Obviously, I had something. My parents thought it was cute. They gave me to the above Sylvia and I obviously got nowhere with her. I was at an age when I needed proper teaching. With the Crash the sadistic Sylvia was dumped and the Sohmer went into storage and we moved to the Croydon Hotel.

There, with my poor father broke and my mother distraught, she still though maybe I should have piano lessons. She took me to the Hecksher Foundation on upper Fifth Avenue where they gave inexpensive lessons. It went no better. They asked me what I liked. I said "March music!" I'd never heard jazz but it was close. So, they gave me Schubert's "March Militaire." It was in the key of D, a lousy jazz key, and didn't have a note of swing in it. They tried "The Bear Song" to see if that would help. That was the end of my piano lessons. After that I would be self-taught.

In 1936 we moved to an apartment on 86th Street and the Sohmer came out of storage. I played around with the black keys. The piano was still a dog, but better than nothing. At Public School 6 my classmate and desk-mate was Willie Kapell, the future great William Kapell, who was born three weeks after me in 1922 and lived only a few blocks away. His folks owned a little book and stationary store. They were broken like everyone else. Willie and I were friends, and he would come to the house and play some Mozart or Beethoven and my father would marvel at his fingers, like a cat's paw, he would say. On graduation from public school, we both went to the same party. There, on an upright, we played a duet, the "Isle of Capri," all on black notes, for those were the only ones I could work. Then Willie got a scholarship and went off into the musical world. Harold Schonberg, the writer and critic, said he was "the most promising of all... his playing had that indefinable thing known as command, and he was well on his way to being one of the century's important pianists when his plane from Australia went down shortly before arriving in San Francisco." It was September, 1953.

My Isle of Capri partner had crashed after a concert tour in Australia. Only recently had it been discovered that someone recorded him over the air and the records will be released, fifty-five years after his death. He was that good. Meanwhile, I had taught myself a little piano. Listening to the Goodman band, hearing Stacy, stumbling on Bix and feeling the earth shake beneath me. God how I love his tone! In 1941, just before the war, we sold the Sohmer and my father took me to Steinway Hall where with his few precious dollars he bought me a fine new Steinway upright with a dark mellow tone. We must have tried every piano on the floor before we chose that one, and it was a lovely choice. I think of Willie every time I pass it. For there, across the street, stands Carnegie Hall. I played it with my band. Willie never did. And I think back to that graduation party where we shared the same keyboard, our lines of fate crossing and where, for a moment, time stood still. I have a picture of Willie and myself on our graduation the afternoon of that party. February, 1936. The very beginning.

The Jelly Roll album you speak of was the General, "New Orleans Memories." But the real link to Jelly was the "King Porter Stomp." I loved when Goodman played it. I thought it was his best tune. When I got interested in Jelly, I found the 1949 Melrose publication of "Jelly Roll Morton's Blues, Stomps and Ragtime." In it, to my delight, was the "King Porter Stomp." My favorite Goodman tune and Jelly had written it! It was both discovery and coincidence, but it started me on my Morton way. There was another element. Much as I loved Stacy, and that right hand with the little inside trill, his left hand presented a problem. Stacy used tenths. My hands are small and try as I would, I couldn't stretch a tenth. To my delight, with my ear and my small reading ability, I could see that Jelly rarely used tenths. When he didn't stride, he played trombone figures in octaves in his left hand. At least that would be possible. But as for the rest, it was a mystery. His riffs, his breaks, his harmonies, were like delving into a pool. I kept a notebook which I still have, trying to decipher how he got the sound he did. The terms I used weren't exactly musical, but they got part of the job done.

Nice middle-class families at that time didn't encourage jazz. It was something you did on the side, after school. You learned under the counter, so to speak. Milt Gable and Jack Crystal were both wonderful. I used to go into their Commodore shop at 136 East 42nd Street and ask what I should listen to. They steered me onto Louis. But it was Bix who moved me most. Jack spun for me "In a Mist." It was a mystery. They didn't seem to care if you bought a record or not. They really wanted to help, and they welcomed kids who dug the music and were eager to help. Eventually I bought some Goodmans and later some Commodores with Wild Bill. But that wasn't the point. Milt and Jack Crystal welcomed you. It was real kindness and understanding. I also visited the shop they had at 46 West 52nd Street, but not as often. It seemed quieter, less colorful.

I didn't discover Jelly with them. Jelly came after the party on Broadway, with Hyman and Bob Wilbur, when Wilbur asked me if I'd ever heard Jelly. I said I didn't know who he was. Wilbur said "I think he'd be a natural

style for you." I have the date of 26 August, 1949 on my copy of the Melrose folio of Morton tunes so 1949 sounds right for that light from the sky.

You mention the Janis band. The Janis band came about because of Rudi Blesh. I must have met Janis at some private jam session. Frankly I don't remember. But I do remember Blesh driving part of the band up to Bridgeport, Connecticut, where we had some gigs in a Club Tiptoe for a while. With Freddie Moore and later Wettling. I still have the little fake book of chords I used then, learning the tune. I regret leaving the band. I had been making a living as a radio script writer and put together a book on writing scripts for radio. Harper's saw it, said radio was going out, but asked if I could do the same thing for television. I said I could, not knowing a thing about the medium and not really liking it. But Harper's was big time. So I agreed to do the book, quitting the Janis band unwisely to concentrate my time. It was a mistake. Elmer Schobel took my place in the band. I wish I had known more about him. For he was the one who transcribed those Jelly solos in the Melrose album I was trying to learn! But all I saw was the fellow who took my chair in the Janis band, and I was jealous. I didn't realize his connection to Jelly until, years later, when he was playing piano at the Fifth Avenue Hotel in the Village and I would walk over and sit with him during intermissions. He was an awfully nice guy. He was trying to invent a better electric shaver then. But I still didn't know that he knew Jelly, and must have worked with him in Chicago doing those Melrose transcriptions. The questions I could have asked! Bill Russell never forgave me when I told him the story.

The first jazz jobs I played were with Janis. They were both big, wooden, and huge and down on the lower East Side. I remember Bob Maltz sitting downstairs at one of them - or his mother - selling tickets. They weren't very much. But upstairs was wonderland. All our heroes. And when we played there – I forget which one – it was pure heaven. "Baby Dodds and his Jazz Babies." That was the first Janis band I played with and I think his first band as well. And I remember Jack Crystal, with his long sad face and big heart, welcoming us there and making us comfortable. I think Jack was responsible for hiring us. Later I played some solo piano at the Central Plaza. Alan Lomax came in with Mabel Morton. I didn't know it until I came off the stand. I had just finished "King Porter." Alan brought her over and introduced me to her. She said the kindest thing "Your piano playing reminds me so of my husband." I can still hear her soft voice.

The first rehearsal for "Baby Dodds and his Jazz Babies" had been at Nola Studios, on Broadway. Sometime in 1950. Baby wasn't well then. He had had a stroke in Chicago. I was up in the studio waiting for the other. Baby came in, lugging his bass drum. He was upset. I think Janis or someone had promised to meet him downstairs and help him up with the stuff. No one had showed. So, he came in puffing and it was the first time I met him.

A little later he gave me the best and almost only piano lesson of my life. I was so impressed by playing with him that – it was during a slow blues - I was bouncing my hands off the keyboard, coming down from high on the keys and off them as if they were hot. At the end of the tune, he came over to the piano and said, "Do you mind if I show you something?" I said no, I'd be delighted, honored. "Don't work your hands like that, bouncing off the keys," he said. "Just raise your hands, feel the weight in your arms, and let the weight of your arms and your fingers press into the keys. That way you get a tone."

Immediately I followed his instruction, and could hear the difference. Baby had given me the secret. Baby had showed me how. I am still grateful to him. I learned from the best. And years later Bill Russell said to me, "Baby Dodds knows more about playing every instrument than anyone else!" That lesson gave me a rich tone and made up for all those years of technique had I been properly taught. I still can't hit as many notes as a lot of pianists, but Baby gave me a sound.

The De Paris recording is an interesting story. I got to know Frank Wolf and Al Lion of Blue Note records through my friend Paul Bacon. Paul had done jackets for their albums. Al and Frank heard me play, through Paul's introduction, and heard the resemblance to Jelly. I remember that Al drove me out to his Jersey home where he had a piano, and there I played for him and Lorraine and Frank. I thought of it as a party, but they were sizing me up. Evidently, they heard enough Jelly in my playing to think of duplicating Jelly's recording session with Sidney de Paris years earlier. Coming back with Al on the West Side highway a cop stopped him for speeding and I remember how annoyed he was, but a session was in the works.

I was excited about playing with Omer Simeon. I liked the way Jimmy Archy played, and Pops Foster was a help and told me to keep my nails short and it would help. But de Paris was a pill. He was plain nasty. He wanted me out of there, out of the studio, out of the band. I don't know what it was, maybe my color. Another drummer, well known but I forget who, had been hired for the date and didn't show. De Paris got someone to come down from Harlem, and he would have just as soon substituted another piano player.

Curiously enough, I was having the same experience as Jelly had with him, years earlier. In Jelly's letters to Roy Carew Jelly speaks of his recent Six's and Seven's recording with de Paris, and how hateful he was, and how he tried to destroy the session. And there I was sitting at the piano, trying my best, wearing my sneakers so I wouldn't be banging on the floor, undergoing the same thing. De Paris was taking all the fun out of it, snarling at me just to play bass parts and chords when I wanted to do Jelly backgrounds. I finally broke a little loose on "Please Don't Talk About Me" but I didn't really enjoy myself. Omer understood what was going on. He had been on Jelly's first session with de Paris, and he could see history repeating. The only salvation - and it is a moving one - is that Jelly whom I adored but never met sat at the same piano, in the same situation, with some of the same men, and shared the same experience.

You ask about the Ricardo session and the Nicholas session. I didn't travel from Paris to Copenhagen for the session with Nicholas. How it came about I don't remember, but I think it all happened in Copenhagen. From Paris I shared a car ride to Brussels, then went to Hamburg, and from Hamburg to Copenhagen.

I have some. Fragments. The month is August, 1970. I am in Copenhagen on August 7. I stay at Bahn's hotel. On August 12 I have lunch with Albert Nicholas at the Angleterre and we run into Earl Garner. I liked Garner. On the 12th I play with Ricardo at the Vinegarden. "I record with Ricardo on the 13th "and a very good Tiger Rag." I play again with him at the Vinegarden. So, the recording session with Ricardo is in August, and you are correct.

I then rehearse with Albert Nicholas and on August 20th a recording session for Storyville. Bass player is terrible. I feel I am locked up inside a washing machine! But a nice chap. On 21st I am on a radio broadcast on Radio Huset, Gyldenlovsgade, Studio 11. I believe this is also where we recorded with Nicholas.

So, above covers some of this long life. Certainly not all. Interestingly enough, I had lunch with the girl that started my Copenhagen adventures only last Sunday when she passed through New York. I rarely see her. She is now in her 70's. Her husband died last year and so square one is open again. There is only one difficulty. She is now in her 70's and I am in my mid- eighties. And she lives in Florida and I on Long Island. I told her what was going on and about the party. "Want to go?" She was both amused and thoughtful. "I haven't been to Copenhagen in a long time," she said. It would be interesting, wouldn't it, to appear with her after all this time? She who, quite unwittingly, started it all off. It would make a good party!

Who knows. Maybe I shall try. Meanwhile, I'll mail this off and send you, by separate e-mail, the graduation pictures of Willie Kapell and myself, in February, 1936.

Bob