

Extra Large

The Oversize Life of Gene Walker

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"It is my gift from God to soothe many people of their troubles. This was not given to everyone, and so, it is my purpose in life to carry out just what God appointed me to do. It is an honor to be able to spread a joyful noise that heals and brings comfort to others."

Gene Walker

Dedicated To

Civic leaders across the nation who attempt to bring life back into inner city neighborhoods through art, particularly the art form of jazz. And also, those few who were given the gift of music when they were young and give this gift back.

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1. Blackberry Patch

At the turn of the century, African Americans moved to Columbus, Ohio from the South looking for a better life. This migration accelerated after World War I to take advantage of the industrial boom that was occurring in many Midwestern cities. During World War I, the black population of Columbus doubled.

This new black population settled around an area east of downtown Columbus called The Blackberry Patch. Mt. Vernon Avenue was its northern boundary and Long Street its southern boundary with Ohio Avenue on the West and Mink Alley on the East.

The southern blacks brought unique customs and cultural patterns to Columbus. As local historian Ann Bishop recalls, "On warm days different people came through the streets selling different things. The watermelon man drove a flat bed truck with a hand made sign that said 'Georgia.' You could hear him coming, singing, 'Watermelon, watermelons! Georgia watermelons, red, ripe, red watermelons! One man rang a bright metal hand bell as he walked along the streets and all of the children ran out to

the musical sound. The scissors grinder carried a contraption on his back that was machinery for sharpening knives and scissors, screwdrivers for umbrella repairing and for fixing things. He was their science and mechanics teacher. When the ragman called out, 'Iron, rags, glass,' the people in the Blackberry Patch knew they could exchange the things that they had been collecting in buckets around the neighborhood for cash. The rag man had the original recycling business."

The shacks in the Blackberry Patch were eventually torn down to make way for a government development called Poindexter Village, the third development of the new metropolitan housing authority in the United States.

But the vibrant black community continued to grow. The well-known local artist and former resident of the area – Aminah Robinson – recalls that it was a self-sufficient street that knew how to survive. "People wove in and out with their horses and carts and trucks," she recalls. "You could hear the street cries. People bartered, bought and sold. People played and danced. Everything you could need you could find on Mount Vernon Avenue."

2. Teachers

Gene Walker was born in Columbus, Ohio, just a few blocks from Mt. Vernon Avenue and the Blackberry Patch on February 14, 1938. As he observes, his birthplace was in the "shadow" of the nearby Shiloh Baptist Church where his mother Lena May Walker was a well-known church leader. Life was not easy for Lena May and her husband Bill Walker. He recalls going shopping with food ration stamps at Carl Brown's Market with his grandmother.

While money was scarce the abundance life in the Blackberry Patch was only a few blocks away. Gene recalls, "People used to come down Long Street and Mt. Vernon Avenue wearing their Sunday best. They would have suits on. The ladies would be dressed. It was a thriving street. Loads of business there."

And one of the most abundant aspects of life was music. It was everywhere. At home, his mother had an extensive collection of 78 LP records like Billy Eckstine, Louis Jordan and Nellie Lutcher. Some of his mother's favorite songs were Jordan's "Saturday Night Fish Fry" and Lutcher's "My Mothers Eyes." It was the 1940s before television and everyone would sit around and listen to records.

Gene's father loved jazz. On Sundays he took Gene for a ride in his car and would sing Duke Ellington songs like "Do Nothing Till You Hear From Me." His father knew all the Ellington songs. Later Gene discovered he somehow knew all the Ellington songs and realizes it was from listening to his dad sing them in the car.

This musical interest was nurtured at Felton Elementary School and in the vocal classes of his music teacher Lotti McCoy. She would teach his class a song and then play it on the piano. As Gene recalls, "She would play with all these jazz and gospel licks in between. I would pick up on this. Something was making me feel good. She was able to inject the gospel and jazz and the blues in everything, in the midst of our singing."

They met in an interesting way. One day Gene decided against the hike that everyone was participating in. He remained behind to be with Ronnie. "We sat at his favorite spot by the fence," Gene recalls, "and he so desperately tried to play swing on the bugle. He expressed to me how he wished that the bugle was a trumpet so he could play more notes. His bugle had no valves or buttons for changing tones as a trumpet and therefore had to be modulated by the lips of the player."

After meeting at summer camp, the two became close friends. They would practice a lot together, usually at Gene's

grandmother's house. Gene's two uncles lived at his grandmother's house and they had a huge jazz collection with records by such luminaries as James Moody, Sonny Rollins, Sonny Stitt, Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. Gene recalls that his Uncle Emmett loved Louis Armstrong and had many of his records.

As Gene recalls, "Rahsaan was a very advanced guy. He was before his time." His world was music and he had an amazing knowledge of the music stores in Columbus at the time. "He could go to every music store in town," Gene recalls, "and never touch the side of the door. He knew them all."

One day Gene took him down to the Gaetz Music Store on the corner of Long and Front. Gene recalls that Mr. Gaetz had a wonderful window display featuring all of these beautiful brass instruments in the window. Mr. Gaetz told Ronnie that he had a horn he might be interested in. He went down into the basement and came up with this straight horn with no bends in it. Ronnie Kirk felt the horn and said, "I dreamed about this horn. This is the Moon Zeller horn in my dream the other night. I heard myself playing it and I even know how it sounds." Mr. Gaetz asked if he wanted it and Ronnie said of course he did. He didn't have any money at the time so Gene lent him fifty dollars to put as a down payment on it. Later, when he became world famous and known

as Roland Kirk, the horn was called Mon Zello. "But only Roland and I knew the real name of it."

Around 1955, Ronnie Kirk began to play his new Moon Zeller horn with another tenor horn at the same time. Then, he came up with another horn called the Stritch and began to play all three at a time. Gene recalls that Kirk's music was so advanced that it is only coming to be understood now. In fact, he observes, "I heard some hip-hop the other day that was using his harmony. Ronnie was the first rapper I ever heard. He loved to play with words and string them together."

In 1955 and 1956, Kirk and the trombonist Bobby Hunter had a blues band and would go into clubs playing half blues and half jazz. Experimenting with different music sounds at the time, Gene recalls hearing Kirk sitting in with Jimmy Smith at the Regal in 1956. He was using a tenor horn with a trombone mouthpiece in it.

Although blind, Ronnie Kirk never felt that blindness should hold someone back. One of Gene's old friends told Gene that she once saw the blind Ronnie Kirk in the schoolyard riding a bike. When walking around the streets with Gene, if he heard the sound of a beggar on the street (a pencil tapping a tin cup) Ronnie would go out of his mind and tell the blind person that "You gotta' get out of this." He always encouraged the people to

do more. Sometimes he would become belligerent. "I had to pull him off of a couple of beggars," Gene recalls.

One night he and Ronnie met at a recreation center in Poindexter Village where a square dance was being held for the teenagers. They were playing records and had a trap drummer to play along to project the rhythms for the square dancing. There was a piano sitting adjacent to the drummer. They sized up the situation, went out in the hall, got our horns and marched back through the door, their arms linked together, playing the popular instrumental "Blow Lynn Blow." The drummer had no choice but to join them. The crowd went wild and began to "round dance." Kirk was on tenor and Gene was on alto. Kirk also played piano on Gene's solos. Gene recalls that, "Our careers, in light of the audience reaction to our music, were given direction and set in motion on this occasion."

During these years, the growing friendship and musical education Gene was receiving from Ronnie Kirk was supplemented by another incredible music teacher. Her name was Katherine McGill, his teacher at Champion Middle School. If Lotti McCoy ignited his initial interest of music, Katherine McGill "fanned" the flames of this interest. Apart from musical techniques and skills, she also stressed the importance of social skills advising, "Band people will always be successful because they

know how to be sociable."

But for the young boy, there was always a battle between the education from school and the education from the streets. Often, on his way home from school, some of his friends would stop him and take him down to Local 589, the black musicians union right around the corner from the Lincoln Theatre, and play recordings for him. They would play people like Sonny Rollins, Charlie Rouse, Thelonius Monk, Sara Vaughn and Ella Fitzgerald. Gene recalls that they told him this was "Turning me onto the real jazz so that I wouldn't make any mistakes and go the other way."

3. Clubs

Yet in addition to these two great teachers and his friendship with Ronnie Kirk, Gene's other great music "teacher" was the incredible number of clubs that dotted the Mt. Vernon Avenue and Long Street area. Many of these clubs were not simply little hole-in-the-wall jazz clubs but rather historic clubs where many legendary musicians performed.

Jazz historian and activist Connie Boykin grew up in the area at the same time Gene did. He recalls that there was a real pride in club ownership and keeping them alive so that musicians could come and work at them on a regular basis. "I think this is part of the music business that young people don't understand," he says. "Clubs were places where musicians could display their art." The area was an activity center for musicians. Connie recalls, "Once you got into the lifestyle, you realized they all knew each other and enjoyed what they were doing."

And the community supported these musicians. Everyone would know what musicians were in town, if they had children. In effect, they became part of the community. As Connie recalls, "People just didn't run in here and run out." For example,

Connie recalls that The Cadillac Club used to have a residence behind it that was a nice house. Musicians like Ray Charles and Charlie Brown would stay in this house. "During the day," Connie observes, "the guys would eat at the same restaurants and go to the same barbershops. They were known as people and not just as musicians."

The nurturing and non-hostile environment of the Long Street and Mt. Vernon Avenue area made it a type of "oasis" for musicians. For the young boy who loved music like Gene, it was an oasis that was only a few blocks from his home. It is therefore not surprising that the clubs became a second "school" for him as he began to frequent them more and more. There was the Macon. The Flamingo. The Regal. The 502 Club. The Copa. The Empress and The Cameo Theaters. The Elks on Lexington. The Cabana. The Club Rumboogie. The Pythian Theater (now home of the King Arts Complex). The list goes on and on, the musicians performing at these clubs are legendary. For example, some of the musicians who performed at the 502 Club were Miles Davis, Max Roach, Horace Siler, Illinois Jacquet, Rusty Bryant, Bud Powell, Milt Buckner and Lester Young.

Still in his teens, Walker was precocious enough to jump onstage and start playing with famous touring greats when they came to Columbus. "I was always trying to get up there and play

with the big boys," he says. "But they thought enough of me to tell me to go home and practice."

For the young, budding musician, the most important venue of all was the legendary Lincoln Theatre on Long Street. The theatre had an interesting history. One of the early businessmen of the old Poindexter-Blackberry Patch area was James Albert Jackson, a successful feed merchant in the day when Columbus citizens kept small flocks of chickens in their backyards. He and his business partner, James Williams, opened the Empress Theater at 768 East Long Street in the 1920s. When a theater owner on Mt. Vernon Avenue insisted on keeping black customers out, Mr. Jackson vowed to fix them saying, "I'll build a theater better than any one in the United States."

Originally called The Ogden Theater Lodge, the Lincoln opened on Thanksgiving Day in 1929, only a month after the stock market crash on October 28th and "Black Monday." Yet in the midst of the economic depression the Ogden Theatre was an oasis of elegance. The interior of the theatre took one back to Egypt with marble pillars carved and painted to look like Egyptian antiques. The carpeting was plush and the Club Lincoln was where Sammy Stewart's Orchestra performed and little Sammy Davis, Jr. made

his first impromptu appearance onstage when he was only four years old.

Gene used to sneak into the Lincoln Theatre to hear the famous acts that performed there. The shows would usually consist of dancers, a comedian and a band with singers. He recalls, "I was fortunate at the time because the first doo-wop band called the Orioles came to the theater and I got to see them. Sonny Til, who later became my roommate in New York, was the lead singer with the Orioles." The Orioles had songs like "What Are You Doing New Years" and "You Saw My Crying in the Chapel." When the Orioles sang "You Saw Me Crying in the Chapel," they would turn on the blue lights in the theater. "It was the first time I saw them use blue lights," Gene recalls. "They were soft blue lights. Sonny would come out and he would start singing 'You saw me crying.' Then he would turn sideways singing 'in the chapel' and the girls would go wild.

As Gene recalls, "A bunch of us kids used to hang out at the side door of the Lincoln and we would knock on the door and when the guard came out and opened the door, we would run in. Some of us would get caught but some of us wouldn't. I never got caught. I was always in there watching the show."

It was at the Lincoln Theater where Gene was exposed to some of his original musical mentors. In 1951, when he was thirteen,

he snuck into the Lincoln to see the Jackie Brenston Show. At the time, they had a hit tune called "Rocket 88." Fronting the band was Jackie Brenston who had a large baritone saxophone with his name on it in gold letters. Gene recalls, "It was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen."

A few weeks later, he again snuck into the Lincoln where he heard Jimmy Forrest play his current hit "Night Train." The song originated with a piece that Duke Ellington had written about the New York subway called "Happy Go Lucky Local." It was one of the first times Gene heard some powerful, real jazz. As he remembers, "You could hear a pin drop in the Lincoln because everybody always came to hear R&B at the Lincoln and never jazz. He wailed with that horn and it was then that I started to understand what could be played on the saxophone."

Not long after these two important events of his life at the Lincoln Theater, the Duke Ellington Orchestra came to Columbus and played Memorial Hall on Broad Street, just west of the Lincoln Theater. Gene's uncle Emmett took him to Memorial Hall to hear Ellington. With Ellington was the legendary jazz saxophone player Illinois Jacquet. That evening, Ellington's band played the first half of the show. After intermission the curtains opened for the second half of the show featuring Illinois Jacquet. The Duke was onstage but there was no Illinois

Jacquet. Then, a big horn sound came from the back of the theater and Illinois Jacquet came strolling down the aisle playing "Flying Home." When he got to Gene, he stopped and played right at him for awhile, his horn no more than a few feet away. As he recalls, "I was nailed then."

The next day, when he went to school, he told his teacher Katherine McGill "I want to play the saxophone." But she told him "I've given out all the saxophones." However, she thought for a second and went into the backroom and came out with a C-melody saxophone and gave it to him. With a C-Melody he had to play music for the guitar or piano and Katherine McGill taught him the scales on these. During this period of time, Gene became a teacher himself teaching fellow student Rudy Johnson the scales on the saxophone. Rudy would later be with the great Ray Charles for over twenty years.

Gene continued to frequent the clubs of the area all through his school years. New clubs popped up all the time and club names continually changed as new owners came and went. The Copa Club became the Jamaica. The Yacht Club became the Question Mark. A lot of the clubs went through this continual evolution of names. He lived right around the corner from Skurdy's that featured a guitar player named Homer "Rockhouse" Williams and he would go down to Skurdy's and hear the blues guitar of Homer and

the honking saxophone of "Jumping" Jack Carson. Later, in the 60s when Gene heard Jimi Hendrix, he recalls Hendrix sounded like Williams.

The Regal frequently had organist Jimmy Smith playing there. Columbus jazz historian and activist Connie Boykin remembers, "Jimmy Smith stayed here so long I thought he was a resident. Standing on the sidewalk in front of the Regal. He was a part of the community." The Club Trocaveria, on the corner of Mt. Vernon and Monroe, brought in lots of acts from out-of-town. Gene and Ronnie Kirk – too young to gain admittance to the club – would stand outside the club and listen. The club was on the second floor and they could hear the music coming from the upstairs windows.

But it was mostly at the Lincoln that he received his real musical education. Besides Jimmy Forest and Jackie Brenston, the Lincoln Theater of the early 1950s hosted an amazing number of musicians such The Orioles, Billy Ward's Dominoes, Jackie Wilson, Clyde McPhatter, The Clovers, The Five Keys, Chris Powell and the Five Blue Flames, Clifford Brown and Vance Wilson, Earl Bostic with John Coltrane, The Griffin Brothers, Sarah McLawler, Joe Liggins, Richard Otto and Tab Smith, Caldonia, Lowell Fulson, Junior Parker, Charles Brown, Big Momma Thornton (of "You Ain't Nothin' But a Hound Dog" fame) Dinah

Washington, Erskine Hawkins, Savanaugh Churchill, Bullmoose Jackson, Jimmy Butts, Jimmy Ricks, The Drifters, Larry Darnell, The Hampton Family Band, The Ink Spots, Tiny Bradshaw, Little Milton, Memphis Slim and Lynn Hope.

While the Lincoln Theatre and the clubs of the neighborhood offered Gene's key musical education, his old high school – East High School – was undergoing a renaissance of musical activity. One of the major reasons for this was that a composer, arranger, soloist and educator named Ted Turner had become an East High School music teacher in the 1950s and introduced the school to an intensive musical curriculum. He organized and trained an orchestra with a string section and a championship dance band that recorded several albums. Former students such as Bobby Alston, Bobby Pierce, Nate Fitzgerald, Geoff Tyus, Craig McMullen, Richard and Dell Thompson and Freddie Thomas would later become well-known musicians.

Gene participated in the music program in high school and became President of the high school band and held First Chair in the saxophone section for two years. But his growing interest in jazz sometimes got him into trouble at school. As Gene notes, he was so wrapped up in jazz in high school that he had trouble staying in the school band. "Another guy in the band named Frank Pendergrass was a good jazz trombonist," he recalls. "He and I

used to work out bebop lines and when the band would hit a certain chord, we came out with these bebop lines and the instructor would send us to the office."

One day, the principal called them into his office and sat them down. "Not you guys again," he said. He then proceeded to tell them, "I'm a big Duke Ellington and a Louis Armstrong fan." He knew everybody in jazz. "You guys are just ahead of your time," he said. "You know, one day they are going to teach jazz in the schools." He was right, says Gene. "We were ahead of our times." The talking to from the school principal caused them to cool down a little after that. "But I always had trouble staying in the band," Gene recalls. "I didn't like staying in the marching band and was always trying to figure out ways to get thrown out. My horn was always freezing up on the football field. It was too cold and icy out there for a saxophone." However, he enjoyed the school orchestra and jazz band.

There was one person in the band whose seat Gene could never get. His name was Allen Tucker who would later become Gene's doctor. Perhaps the major thing that held Gene back in the band was his inability to read music very well at the time. There was not music reading being done in the clubs along Long Street and Mt.Vernon Avenue. Many years later, Allen confessed

to Gene that at the time he was taking lessons at the nearby Capital University.

During his last year of high school, a bass player named Fred Graham called him. Fred was putting together a band. They began to rehearse in his basement. Don Patterson was on piano. Later, Don would later become one of the most prominent organists of the jazz world. Fred Dansby was our trumpet player. He sounded like Miles Davis. Vi Clark was the vocalist. Fred got a guy from the university to come over and arrange music for the band. They got pretty good and Fred got them a job at a dance. As Gene recalls, "That was the first time Don Patterson and I got paid for an engagement. That felt really good."

During this time, Gene and a bunch of friends used to go around from club to club and jam. "We used to jam for days at a time, moving from club to club. Sometimes we didn't get to bed for three days." The Long Street-Mt.Vernon Avenue area was packed with music clubs like the Macon, the Copa, the Cabana and the Regal. There was a great blues house called the Yacht Club on the corner of 20th and Mt. Vernon. Directly across the street was Skurdy's.

The owner of the Macon let Gene come into the club even though he was under age. But he told Gene to make sure he didn't have a drink. Gene heard some of the biggest jam sessions ever

at the Macon. At the club was a drummer from Memphis named Charlie "Razz" Crosby with whom Gene worked with. When Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis came to town, he got up on the stage at the Macon with tenorist "Big" Jimmy Allen and they jammed for two days.

Sammy Hopkins used to run the jams at the Regal. He had played in the Lucky Millender Band with Lester Young and had played many of the places the famous big bands had played at. He would let Gene play a little at the club. After Gene played for a while, Sammy would stop him and tell him to go home and practice. This upset Gene because he wanted to continue playing. But Sammy would always tell him to come back next week. "He was a good mentor," Gene recalls.

Gene learned from a number of the guys he hung around with at the time. One was Lee Booker who used to let Gene listen to him practice. Another was the altoist Doc Payne. In his group was a big tenor player named Jimmy Allen. Gene recalls that Jimmy could "blow the bell off the horn." And there was talk that there never was a cutting session that he lost. "Jimmy was a good example for me," Gene recalls. "I used to go over to his house and just listen to him practice."

During this time, Gene and Ronnie Kirk played in the Junior Elks Marching Band under the direction of Pete France. The blind

Ronnie Kirk and him would link their arms together as they marched and played their saxophones. We used to travel up and down the streets and we would link our arms together because Rahsaan was blind. We would stop and Rahsaan would play a piece. He would just blow them out. We went to Cleveland and Chicago and we won all the competitions." Ronnie played tenor and Gene played alto. They would always win the competition because Ronnie was allowed to solo on "The St. Louis Blues" and no one else could come close to his playing. Gene recalls, "It was always exciting to hear and watch his showmanship as well as his outstanding talents. He knew how to win the crowd."

When Gene got a car in 1954, he was able to pick up Ronnie and give him rides places. The two went to down to Dayton together and sat in with James Moody. They also went to the Cotton Club in Cincinnati where they met the great saxophonists Frank Foster and Paul Renfro. They had a big band and let Ronnie Kirk sit in with them.

In Gene's last year of high school, Ronnie Kirk came home from being on the road with the great R & B musician Johnny Ace. He wanted Gene to go with him in Ace's band. But Gene said no, he needed to finish high school. The work with Johnny Ace came to an end anyway as he ended up killing himself with a pistol playing Russian roulette.

Gene graduated from East High School in 1955, the year that Charlie Parker died. In a letter of recommendation written June 17, 1955, his old teacher Katherine McGill wrote "He is very enthusiastic, hard working, sincere and dependable. I believe that his intrinsic love for music, innate ability, musical aptitude, sincere enthusiasm, great perfectiveness, mental and physical perseverance and dynamic personality will make him a great asset to any musical organization to which he belongs."

4. Outside World

He left Columbus not long after his graduation with Bruce Woody and The All Stars for a summer tour of what was known as the McConky Circuit. Their first gig was in Clarksville, Tennessee with the great blues guitar player Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown. Another stop on the McConky Circuit was the Little Brown Jug Club in Atlantic City. While playing at the Little Brown Jug in the summer of 1956, Gene would drive up to New York City between sets and catch the Chris Columbo Trio playing at Club Harlem.

The group had one other gig after Atlantic City at a club in Newark, New Jersey. When this gig ended the band broke up. Gene moved to New York City "ground zero" for jazz with people like Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, John Coltrane and Thelonious Monk living in New York City at the time. But the big city was a tough place for the young eighteen-year-old boy and he found it difficult to find gigs.

In September of 1956, he connected with another Columbus native, Archie "Stomp" Gordon. Gene was attempting to network with other musicians at Newark's Coleman Hotel when Stomp walked in and asked him, "What in the world are you doing here?" Gene told him he wasn't working. "Why don't you come and work with me and then I'll take you back to Columbus." Gene went to work with Stomp and part of this work was a recording session where Gene is heard on the song "Ride Superman Ride" which is probably the first time he is heard on record.

Stomp was very talented. He sang and could even play the piano with his feet. At the end of the week, Stomp drove Gene home to Columbus. A few weeks later, Stomp was found dead in the same car he drove Gene back to Columbus in. He had died from carbon monoxide poisoning.

Now back in Columbus, Gene played a house band engagement at the Copa Club in the winter and spring of 1957. The Copa Club was on Mt. Vernon and it had a ballroom and bar upstairs and a traditional club downstairs. His band would play downstairs and upstairs at the Copa. In the ballroom, legendary musicians like Ray Charles and BB King played. From time to time, his band at the Copa Club was called The Walker Brothers because it featured Gene and his brother Ted on organ. It also had Louis McCreary on guitar and Ed Littlejohn on drums. Gene recalls, "McCreary was

the fastest guitar player I'd ever heard in my life. He could play Charlie Parker on his guitar." They played the Copa each night from 9:00 pm to 2:30 am. They also backed up the new singer Dakota Staton before her famous recordings came out.

Down the street from the Copa was the Trocavera that was like a supper club. Gene was allowed in with his family and heard the great George Shearing Quintet there. Ronnie Kirk and Gene used to stand out in front of the Trocavera and listen to Tiny Bradshaw. He had a tune out called "Soft" that Gene especially liked. When Tiny Grimes and his Rocking Highlanders came to town to play they all wore kilts. They had Rusty Brant in the group and Rusty was also dressed in a kilt. "Seeing Rusty in a kilt," Gene laughs and shakes his head. "That was something."

Gene enrolled at OSU and attended the school in the winter and spring quarters of 1957. However, the excitement and pull of music was too large in his life and he informed the school that he was leaving.

He was taking off for Atlantic City, New Jersey for another gig at the Brown Jug. It was his second trip there. He tried to get Billy Brown to go with them and play drums but Billy declined at the last minute. Gene had been playing around Columbus with the great pianist Jack Wilson and Jack decided to

travel with Gene to the gig in Atlantic City.

Gene's Uncle Bob Walker drove the car. On the highway while going past Zanesville, Ohio, one of the tires blew out and they hit the median in the road. The car turned over and Gene's uncle was thrown out and ended up breaking his leg. Jack Wilson was riding in the passenger seat and his head hit the windshield. Both were taken to the hospital. Gene, who had been riding in the backseat, only seemed shaken up. It wasn't until a month later in Atlantic City that Gene discovered through a visit to a doctor that he had fractured his left shoulder.

When Gene got to the Brown Jug, he was able to hire enough local musicians to go ahead with the gig. The injured pianist Jack Wilson arrived later in the week. The Brown Jug gig in Atlantic City lasted for the rest of the summer. During this time Gene became a good friend of the legendary organ player Jack McDuff and his wife Dink. He spent much time in the bar of Club Harlem watching Jack practice his bass lines. Both Jack and Dink had dyed their hair gray even though they were young.

Returning to Columbus after the summer in Atlantic City, Gene began to commute between Cincinnati and Columbus for gigs. At this time, the clubs were all downtown. He met an excellent drummer Slim Jackson and an exciting vibe player named Donald Linda. He played a gig in a club with vibe player Syl Burch's

group. In the group was Myra Grandison on organ and Tombstone on drums. He began working with Cincinnati drummer, Sonny Brown. Sonny would also travel to Columbus to work with Gene. Sonny played several gigs with Gene including a dance at the Lincoln Ballroom in January 1958. Sonny later became the drummer with Gene's old childhood friend Rahsaan Roland Kirk in New York.

Cincinnati is on the Ohio River, the largest tributary to the Mississippi River. One of the things that it is known for is its "tall stack" riverboats. So, it is not surprising that Gene found a job playing music on the Avalon Riverboat out of Cincinnati with Jessie Wilkes and an eight-piece band. He was on the Avalon for six months. During this time it went to Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Lebanon, Kansas, St. Paul, Minnesota, Paduca, Kentucky and Louisville. It stopped and picked up passengers along the way for dinner cruises and then took them back to port. When they came into the towns, the big steam calliope on the top of the boat would be playing.

The riverboat job was not without a few incidents. For one, there was his constant worry of an explosion. Gene had a little cubbyhole of a bedroom right next to the boiler room of the ship. One of the crewmembers once told him, "If one drop of water hits the boiler, we all go up in smoke." One evening while performing the boat hit one of the locks and

the musicians were thrown forward. Some were even thrown off the stage. They went to the floor holding their instruments over their heads. As Gene notes, "When a musician goes down he always raises his instrument to protect it."

Another time on the riverboat a tornado hit and the chandelier fell. Once, they ran into a huge hurricane and Gene wasn't sure they were going to make it. He went out on deck and made a promise. "Lord," he said, "if you get me off this boat OK, I'll never go back on another boat." And, apart from a couple of short ferry crossings in Europe many years later, he never has gone back on a boat. For Gene, it is more than a fear of boats. Rather, it is about the promise he made. As he says, "I've always refused to play on a boat because I had made my promise to the Lord and that was it."

But the riverboat experience did provide Gene with an important music education for it was on the riverboat that he learned to play with a variety of musicians. Later in the year 1958, when Gene returned to Cincinnati to play with vibist Gene Redd, he found the clubs had all been moved to the Reading Road area. As Gene recalls, "The downtown had been victimized by urban renewal, or more precisely, urban removal."

Gene Redd hired him to play with his group on a gig at the Cabana Club. Redd was also the Artist & Repertoire man at the

popular King Records Company. Later, after Gene moved to New York City, he continued his friendship with Gene Redd's son, who lived in his same building. He was the manager and the founder of the famous group Kool and the Gang. The Cabana Club was located on Reading Road. It was down the hill from the famous Babe Baker's Club where the Jazz Disciples played. Drummer, Ron McCurdy, Popeye Maupin and Gene rented an apartment just a little further down the hill. Gene began to meet many Cincinnati musicians such as John Wright, Raymond Felder, Edison Gore, Billy Brown, Wobble Head, Normaphonist Hickey, Jim Anderson, Marianne, Charles Brown and Jimmy Witherspoon.

Later in 1958, Gene began playing gigs with Jon Thomas at the Copa Club in Newport, Kentucky. It was there that Gene backed up the biggest name he had played with in his life up to this time: Brook Benton. The singer was famous for many hits of the time such as "Midnight Train to Georgia" and "Baby You've Got What it Takes."

The Jon Thomas Trio, with Gene and Slim Jackson on saxophones, went on the road with Brook Benton. They traveled a few times to the Pine Grill in Buffalo, New York. At the Pine Grill Gene met and jammed with a number of Buffalo musicians: drummer Mel Brewer and the legendary drummer Shadow Wilson; organist Joe Madison and, as he recalls, an "outstanding"

altoist named Otis Sutton. Elvin Shepherd, a tenor and trumpet player he met at the Pine Grill, invited Gene to dinner at his home every time he was in Buffalo.

In Buffalo, Gene discovered an extended "family" of musicians whom he jammed with them in their homes. He even met a woman named Cynthia that the young twenty-year-old was anxious to see when he returned to Buffalo. Any black musicians who came to town would stay at Bea's house, a rooming house. Sometimes Bea fixed meals for the musicians. "It was like going back to the comfort of your own home," Gene recalls. At Bea's place, Gene ran into Columbus' Homer "Rockhouse" Williams who was on tour with another group. It was Homer Gene heard at Skurdy's right around the corner from his home in Columbus. When Gene wasn't working at the Pine Grill, he worked at another popular spot called the Bonton.

The Jon Thomas Group left Buffalo for a new gig in Wilmington, Delaware at the Baby Grand Club. They had one song called "Heartbreak" which everyone loved and they ended up playing it over and over at the club. While playing at the Baby Grand, Gil Askey, the arranger and trumpet player for the Chris Columbo Band, walked into the club one night and asked Gene if he would like to join the Chris Columbo Quintet. Gene was reluctant to leave Thomas. The two had developed some original

songs that were popular with the audience.

But Thomas knew the Columbo Quintet worked steadily and his band did not have any prospects once they returned to their home base in Cincinnati. Thomas encouraged Walker to go with Columbo and even insisted on driving him to Philadelphia to join the group. Thomas then returned to Cincinnati where he used his "down time" to go into King Studios and cut a tune he and Walker had been working on called "Heartbreak It's Killing Me." It was such a hit that the Jon Thomas Group suddenly had more than enough work.

* * *

Now, as a member of the Chris Columbo Quintet, a new world opened up to Gene. The group was a type of musical "incubator" for musicians who later went on to have a tremendous influence on music. The organist for the group was Earl Van Dyke who later became a leader of Motown. Floyd "Wonderful" Smith was on guitar. This guitarist covered much stylistic territory in his long and active career. He had once recorded a hit on steel guitar with Buddy Johnson's band entitled "Floyd's Guitar Blues." The trumpet player in the Chris Columbo Quintet was Gil Askey who later became one of the key arrangers for the Motown

label. Askey later conducted and arranged the music for the film *Lady Sings the Blues* and become a conductor for Diana Ross and the Temptations. On drums was Chris Columbo whose musical background had a solid foundation as a former drummer with Louis Jordan and the Tempani Five and The "Wild" Bill Davis Trio. He was also the father of Count Basie drummer Sonny Payne.

During his period with Chris Columbo, the Quintet backed such well-known entertainers as Jackie Wilson, Gary "U.S." Bonds, Arthur Prysock, Jimmy Reed, Jimmy Scott and the Isley Brothers, Butterbeans and Suzie, Elmore James, Buster Brown, Chuck Jackson, Milt Trenier, Laurez Alexandria, Roy Hamilton, Bobby "Blue" Bland and Buster Brown.

As a member of the Chris Columbo Quintet, Gene's work can be heard on the record *Rediscovering Old Favorites* (Strand Records). The group went on the road with Jackie Wilson who had a number of popular hit recordings such as "Lonely Tear Drops," "Higher and Higher," "A Woman, A Lover, A Friend," "Doggin' Around," "Night" and "Baby Work Out."

At one point, they put together 52 one-night stands in a row. In Birmingham, promoter said need to put the black people on one level and the whites on another level. Jackie said put them all on one level or "I'm not going to sing." The promoters eventually relented. Gene recalls, "That was one of the first

times that integration was practiced in the South."

In New Orleans, Jackie got in a fight with the cops and was thrown in jail. Chris Columbo went down to the police station where he was told by a police officer that they would prosecute Jackie the next day. Columbo asked the officer what they should do. The officer told Columbo that they couldn't do anything if they were out of state. So, in a few hours, they were all back in Atlanta.

During this period, Jackie Wilson lost one of his best friends and the world of music one of its most promising stars. Jesse Belvin, was one of the greatest voices in Doo-Wop, responsible for such Doo Wop classics as "Earth Angel," and "Goodnight My Love," and his wife were killed in a head-on auto collision on February 6, 1960, at the age of 27, shortly after finishing a performance in Little Rock on a bill with Jackie, Sam Cooke and Marv Johnson.

During the years last years of the 1950s and early years of the 1960s, when Gene was bouncing between Columbus, New York and New England, he became friends with two of the top professional wrestlers of the day: Sweet Daddy Siki and Bearcat Wright. Both were jazz fans and Gene was a fan of professional wrestling. They admired what Gene did on his horn and he admired what they did in the wrestling ring.

He ended up traveling with them on their road trips when he wasn't busy. One time, he went with them when all three had appearances in one town.

The last year of the 1950s saw the passing of two legends of jazz: Billie Holiday and Lester Young. Their deaths in 1959 had a large impact on the twenty-one-year-old Gene Walker. Yet 1959 was also a year of new beginnings. His old childhood friend Ronnie Kirk was starting to emerge as a major personage on the international jazz scene, a change marked in one way by his name change (based on a dream of his) from Ronnie Kirk to Rahsaan Roland Kirk.

In 1960, Gene went to New York to play at date at Small's Paradise Club with the Columbo Quintet. The club was owned by basketball legend Wilt Chamberlain. The first week of their engagement at the club, a woman came into the club and pointed at Gene. "I want him," she said. The two started seeing each other all the time. Gene recalls that things were a little tense for a time as the woman was already dating another musician, the saxophonist Syl Austin. However, once Gene talked to Syl about the whole thing, Syl understood and things were cool. In three weeks they were married and went to Miami the next day for their honeymoon.

The last years of the 50s were busy years for the budding

young saxophone player as he performed with a growing number of leading musicians like Rusty Bryant, Nancy Wilson, Sonny Stitt, Brook Benton, Don Patterson and Sonny Stinson. Although increasingly based in New York City, he continued to travel playing at diverse locations like the Rathbone Ranch in Delaware or the 502 Club in Columbus. Or, staying with his friend Charles Long in Peoria, Illinois.

5. The Road

Gene moved back to New York City in 1960 after getting married to Elaine who lived there. But the settled life in one place was not to be for Gene. After moving back to New York, he was hired by Ruth Brown who was known as the "Queen" of R&B. Their first gig was not in New York but St. Louis so he was on the road again.

The year 1960 was a busy year for Gene. He was becoming more and more in demand as sideman for a number of well-known entertainers who spent much of their time on the road. In just this year alone he performed with Eric Gale, Blue Mitchell, Jimmy Reed, the Isly Brothers, Neil Diamond, Melba Moore and Billy Daniels.

In 1961, he was in New York for more of a prolonged period of time. His wife Elaine was a good friend of the wife of the popular bandleader King Curtis as the two had gone to the same school. Through this contact, Gene met King Curtis and the two of them became good friends. Gene had first heard King Curtis when he was a soloist on records of The Coasters and on hits

such as "Charlie Brown." As Gene recalls, "He used to take me to recording sessions and he would wedge me into these sessions. So I would up making records with people like Eric Gale while we were both living in Brooklyn."

The famous guitar player Eric Gale and Gene had a deal where Gene would record free with Eric and Eric would reciprocate and it didn't cost either one of them anything.

Gene made two separate singles from the arrangement, "Empire City" and "Sophisticated Monkey" and Eric made his version of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame."

He began performing with King Curtis in this year. But he was also performing with many other people during this time as his strong, deep, powerful saxophone sound was becoming more and more in demand. In the first part of 1962 he performed with Jimmy McGriff. Then, during the summer, he went to Bermuda with drummer Sonny Brown and Ray on organ for a two-week gig at the Clayhouse Inn. Their primary job was to back up the popular group of the time called The Chantels who had a hit recording called "Look In My Eyes." The first two weeks were so successful that they were held over for two more weeks. The Chantels went home and the promoters brought in a recording artist called Jimmy Jones who also had several hit recordings. They were again held for another two weeks.

Besides playing at the Clayhouse Inn while in Bermuda, Gene found himself in the radio business as a popular DJ. The owner of the local radio station came to one of his performances one night and told him, "You've got a good voice. Come to the station." Gene went to the station and the station owner put him on the air and let him play what he wanted. He played all Ray Charles on the station and it was so popular that the stations started receiving lots of calls. As a result, rather than Gene would up being on the air for half an hour like originally planned, Gene's radio program was on the air for two hours. The popular recording artist Brook Benton was on the air with Gene one Saturday and they played a lot of his tunes. One day, Nino Simone came on the show. As Gene recalls, "I found myself in radio and I didn't know beans about this."

While he was in Bermuda, his first daughter Reena Diana was born in October of 1962. A month after the birth of his daughter, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Gene was living in Harlem and working at the Club Baron on Lennox. The night after the assassination he remembers looking out his window and watching couches go by on the street below. "The couches had four legs on them," he recalls. The whole area was on the verge of a major riot.

Around this time, Gene met George Treadwell who had been the manager and husband of Sarah Vaughn and who managed the Drifters. Treadwell took Gene to the William Morris Agency, the world's largest talent agency, where he told his contacts that Gene could back up the famous Sam Cooke.

Gene ended up working with Sam for a year. Once, at a gig in Washington DC, Sam announced Gene as his bandleader by throwing a party in Gene's honor. One time, when Gene didn't have enough cash to get to a gig with Sam in Virginia, Sam pulled out a wad of cash and handed it to Gene not even counting it. The two had become good friends and Sam trusted Gene. Unlike the showmanship of Jackie Wilson, Sam did not do any dancing or theatrics on stage. He just sang. But he really didn't have to do anything else. As Gene recalls, "When he sang, he would hypnotize you. Everyone had their mouths open." Gene traveled with Sam for about a year until his management decided to take him off the road and put him in big nightclub acts in places like Las Vegas, New York and Atlantic City.

The year 1963 brought more gigs with the Chris Columbo Quintet and other famous artists such as Stevie Wonder, Smokey Robinson, Laverne Baker, Laurez Alexandria, Milt Trenier and The Platters. The summer of 1963 was spent playing at Wildwood, New Jersey with The Platters, Clarence "Frogman" Henry, Johnny

Maestro (of "Sixteen Candles" fame) and Brenda Lee.

Gene spent a large part of 1964 doing "sock hops" up and down the east coast with people like Little Anthony and the Imperials, Chuck and the Limelights. Local radio disc jockeys would arrange the sock hops and advertise them on their radio stations. The djs would invite us and advertise on the radio. One of the people Gene did sock hops with was Dave "Baby" Cortez. Gene happened to be working with Cortez when he had his hit "Happy Organ" and can be heard on the record. He recalls going up to Toronto with The Drifters and really "taking over the place."

On December 11, 1964 Sam Cooke passed away. Gene lost a good friend but the music world lost another great light who gave the world songs like "Chain Gang," "Cupid," "Having A Party," "Twisting The Night Away" and "You Send Me."

During this period, Gene worked at New York's famous Minton's Playhouse on 116th Street and 7th Avenue. Minton's is considered one of the "cradles" of jazz with Parker, Monk and Gillespie all playing there. Gene held down the Wednesday night session at the club playing alto saxophone. As Gene recalls, "Eric Dolphy used to come in and sit in with me and we would have these lock down drag out alto battles." Lou Donaldson would sit at the bar and just laugh at them, enjoying it immensely.

One night down in the Village, Gene met Dolphy's close friend John Coltrane. The two hit it off immediately and Coltrane mentioned to Gene that the Basie Band was playing at Birdland and asked him if he wanted to go see them. Gene said of course he wanted to go and they arranged to meet at the front door and then sat in the bleachers of the club because neither of them drank.

They had a great time that night listening to the Basie band. Dizzy Gillespie walked in during the night and sat in playing first trumpet parts and solos on Thad Jones' horn. Gene recalls that it was an incredible performance. Coltrane did mention to Gene that night that his side was hurting him. He told Gene it was because he had blown so hard at a gig a few nights before. But the pain was really from the developing pancreatic cancer that Coltrane eventually died from in 1967.

A few days after his night with Coltrane at Birdland, Gene was at a restaurant called Beefsteak Charlies that served as a type of connection place for jazz musicians in Manhattan. At the place, musicians would socialize and drink together and discuss gigs. Gene recalls a woman named Alice coming into the place asking everybody in the bar "Have you seen John Coltrane." She didn't want to see anyone else but Coltrane. And eventually, Alice did find John Coltrane, becoming Coltrane's second wife.

The mid-60s were a period of social protest and this translated into a new type of jazz that was often difficult to listen to. Gene's new friend John Coltrane was one of the people at the center of this new avant-garde movement in jazz known under various names but generally called Free Jazz. It was a break-through of jazz into a new open space of a freedom in tonality where beat, meter and a formal symmetry all disappeared giving way to a range of World music from India, Africa and Arabia. All of this music melded into an intense, religious, ecstatic style of playing. The first major stirrings came in the 1950s, with the early work of Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman and in the 1960s with Sun Ra, Archie Shepp, Albert Ayler, Pharoah Sanders and Coltrane.

Gene's definition of Free Jazz was simply "playing outside." Not surprisingly, with his heavy roots in R&B, he was not too enamored with this new direction in jazz. "I wasn't inclined to do this. I always tried to play stuff that the people would understand." He recalls this new jazz would "clear the clubs" when he was always trying to fill the clubs.

His belief that the new Free Jazz type of music was not for him was reinforced by a visit to New York of his mother. He took her to hear Sonny Rollins one night and she told Gene she could always hear the melody when Sonny played and she loved his

music. As Gene recalls, "This always set the mark for me to play what people could understand and not to go too far outside."

Gene loved the music of Sonny Rollins and had become a friend of his in an unusual way. One day around the mid-60s, he was on 48th Street in New York and recognized Sonny Rollins. He said hello to Rollins and Rollins told him he had broken the strap for his sax. Gene knew about this problem and how to deal with it. He took Sonny to a hardware store and they fixed his strap. Sonny was very grateful for the help. As Gene relates, "From that time on, when I saw him he would reach up and grab his strap and I would grab mine and that was the way we recognized each other."

6. The Beatles Tour

Around 1964, Gene moved to Queens where he lived right across the street from Wilson Pickett. Both would wave at each other when they came out of their apartments. In the early part of 1965, Gene recorded *Listen Here* with Freddy McCoy (Prestige) and then performed with Wilson Pickett.

The two had a great time together, becoming good friends. Wilson tried to get Gene on future gigs. As Gene recalls, he was very social, a great guy and entertainer. One time he and Gene went out to a bar together and had some drinks.

He then found steady work in Atlantic City at the Club Harlem with the Chris Columbo Quintet. The club had two bandstands and both were behind the bar. Willis Jackson and his group played on the front bandstand and the Columbo Quintet on the back bandstand. Across the street from the Club Harlem was Grace's Little Belmont Club and one could hear the organs screaming out of both clubs.

While working with Columbo, his friend King Curtis called about going on a tour in August. They would be backing Brenda

Holloway and Cannibal and the Headhunters and the Disco Dancers. And, they would be opening for this group from England with the unlikely name The Beatles. A phenomenon known as "Beatlemania" was infecting America.

Gene found the great Jimmy Heath available to substitute for him in the Columbo Quintet and flew to New York for the first performance of the tour at Shea Stadium on August 15. It was the first rock concert to be held at a major outdoor stadium and set records for both attendance and revenue with over 55,000 in attendance and \$304,000 in revenue. At the time, it was the greatest gross in the history of show business.

The Beatles were transported to the roof of the World's Fair by a Boeing Vertol 107-II helicopter and then taken by armored truck to the stadium. At the stadium there were 2,000 security personnel for crowd control. Beatlemania was at its highest mark at the Shea Concert and many teenagers and women were crying, screaming, and even fainting.

After the opening acts of Cannibal and the Headhunters, Brenda Holloway and the Disco Dancers, the King Curtis Band with Curtis and Gene on saxophones, went on stage as the intensity and noise level of the crowd rose higher and higher. They played their popular song of the time "Soul Twist" and a number of other songs before the Beatles took the stage. When they left

the stage Gene watched the stage from the baseball dugout with another English group called The Rolling Stones. Like the Beatles, it was also their first trip to America. The crowd noise was so great that security guards covered their ears when the The Beatles entered the field. The sound was so deafening that even The Beatles could not hear much of anything.

The Vox Company that made the Beatles amplifiers had specially designed 100-watt amplifiers for this tour but they were not anywhere near loud enough and the Beatles had to use the house amplification system. John Lennon described the noise as "wild" and even more deafening when the Beatles performed. Not being able to hear each other or even themselves, the Beatles just played through a list of songs nervously, not knowing what kind of sound was being produced.

At the end of the show, during the number "I'm Down," John Lennon felt the whole show was so ridiculous he began playing the keyboard with his elbows while the rest of the group laughed hysterically. The Beatles section of the concert was extremely short by modern standards (just 30 minutes), but was the typical 1965 Beatles tour set list, with Ringo opting to sing "Act Naturally" instead of "I Want To Hold Your Hand."

After Shea, Gene and King Curtis toured with the Beatles to Toronto, Atlanta, Houston, Chicago, Bloomington, Portland, San

Diego, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Gene recalls that the girls were going crazy for the Beatles. In Toronto, Gene recalls that a number of girls were lying on the floor and the Red Cross was trying to revive them. In Los Angeles he recalls, "We had a couple girls swim through the water at the Hollywood Bowl. They got up onstage and each grabbed a Beatle." The sound at the Hollywood Bowl was literally deafening for Gene. "When all the girls would scream," Gene recalls, "it was a paralyzing sound and I got nailed by it in the Hollywood Bowl." Later, he went to an ear doctor and was told he lost some of his hearing at the same decimal of the crowd noise. After the show at the Hollywood Bowl, Gene went over to the Whiskey A-Go-Go on Sunset Strip with King Curtis and the two of them played while standing on top of the booths in the club.

On board the chartered tour jet, Gene became friends with Ringo Starr and Paul McCartney. He was impressed by McCartney's musical genius. As he recalls, Lennon and Harrison would be struggling with an arrangement and McCartney would walk up and say "Do it like this" suggesting a couple chord changes that would solve the problem. When they were on the tour jet, King Curtis and Beatles Manager Brian Epstein, shot craps at a gambling table installed on the plane. King Curtis won a lot of money from Epstein.

On their trip up to Portland, two good friends of the Beatles were on the jet: Billy Preston and Joan Baez. While flying into Portland, one engine caught fire and there was a real concern about whether they could clear the surrounding mountains. When they finally touched down amid fire trucks and emergency vehicles, Gene recalls Brian Epstein pleading with everyone to "Let the boys off first."

7. Final New York Years

The avant-garde direction of jazz in the middle 60s that was clearing the clubs out caused Gene to search around for other venues to play. This search led him into the club date business. He began work for Ross Carnegie Enterprises one of the leading companies of New York City in the club date business. He worked for Ross Carnegie for three years learning the business.

The years 1966 and 1967 were filled with recording dates and summers spent performing at the Granit Hotel and Country Club in the town of Kerhonksen in the New York Catskills. In 1966, he recorded *Love Potion #9* with Johnny Hammond Smith (Prestige) and also performed with The Drifters. He continued to perform with them off-and-on with them to 1974. He also performed with Alphonse Mouzon, Irene Reid and Sam Cooke.

In 1967, he teamed up with his old friend and Columbus native Hank Marr to record *Its About Time* (Double Time). Then, he recorded *Broom Switch* with Lloyd Price and King Curtis in a big band backing Lloyd Price and *The Golden Thrush* with Byrdie Green and Johnny "Hammond" Smith.

In the late 60s, Gene met the famous saxophonist Sonny Stitt. An amazingly talented musician and brilliant soloist, Stitt would play with the rhythm section a club would provide him with. One day, Gene asked him if he could sit in. He ended up showing Stitt that he was playing in his style and vernacular.

Later, Gene went to hear Stitt at the Club Baron one night. Sonny asked Gene "Where's your horn?" Gene told him he was tired and his horn was in the car. Sonny told him to get it and come in and play. As Gene recalls, "He had me play the rest of the night. He sat up behind me and critiqued me." At the end of the night Sonny said to him, "Gene you are the one tenor saxophonist in the country that plays in the style of Gene Ammons and myself." This was a great compliment and made Gene feel very good.

The last years of the 60s saw the formation of his first band as leader: Gene Walker's Band of Gold. The band featured Bo Didley, Jr., Billy Joe Thomas on organ, Preacher on bass and Bernadette on drums. Its home nightclub was The Showplace at 155th and St. Nicholas Place. They played at The Showplace on a regular basis when they were not booked elsewhere. Gene was the Music Director for the club. Band of Gold did very well in the middle of the incredible competition of New York City.

As Gene recalls, there were more than 7,000 social clubs having events in the New York City area at the time. Many of these clubs were also catering operations. He relates that, "I devised a way to go to the catering houses to get leads for future dances they were involved with." He would then call the people who were having the parties. They were usually surprised at how he knew they were having a party.

In the final years of the 1960s, Gene played at the popular Harvest Moon Ball in New York for a citywide dance contest where all of the winners came together. He also played at the Savoy Manor in the Bronx in Manhattan for a number of jitterbug contests.

8. Return to Columbus

The early years of the new 70s decade found Gene bouncing between New York and Columbus performing with Wilson Pickett in New York and "Wild" Bill Davis in Columbus at clubs like The Dell, Ivory's, The Taj Mahal and The Stardust.

In 1970, Gene's Band of Gold was playing at a club called the Showplace in New York. Upstairs at the club they were having a private party. Gene took his band upstairs and played for the private party. The person sponsoring the private party and his guests loved Gene and his band. Later, Gene found out the guy giving the party was the new owner of the club. He had gone from being the shoeshine guy on the corner of 155th and St. Nicklaus Place – and shining Sonny Rollins' shoes – to owning the club. That evening, Gene's band was working the club under the old owner. But when the new owner took over, he made Gene the musical director of the Showplace. Gene recalls, that it was a fabulous experience and that Hank Crawford used to come in and sit in with them.

He did catch up with his old friend Rahsaan Roland Kirk in 1971 when he had a gig at the famous Riverside Plaza in New York. As Gene recalls, "I called Rahsaan over in New Jersey to see if he could give me another tenor player from over there. And he said what's wrong with me?" Kirk came and played the gig with Gene that night and Gene paid him what he was paying his other sidemen. Kirk burned it up that night and the crowd went wild. It was a great night and Gene loved seeing his old friend again. Not long after the gig at the Riverside Plaza with Kirk, Gene called him when he had gotten a new flute. Kirk gave Gene a two-hour flute lesson over the phone.

In 1971, Gene met Billy Mitchell, the great tenor with the Count Basie Orchestra. Billy booked Gene into Sonny's Place on Long Island where loads of people came in. While Gene played, Billy would sit there and listen to him. This made Gene feel great, a real acknowledgement of his talent. As he recalls, "I was astounded that Billy Mitchell was listening to me."

These years were a mixture of triumph and tragedy for Gene. In the year 1972 he experienced great success performing at world famous music venues such as Carnegie Hall, Symphony Hall and Town Hall in New York City. But it was also a year that brought him back to Columbus with the death of his father Bill Walker (from emphysema) at the age of 57. A few years later, in

1974, Gene again returned to Columbus. This time, to attend to his terminally ill mother.

The return to Columbus would be his final return, ending his years of long-term touring for a while. During these years back in Columbus, Gene was introduced to an amazing woman named Rebecca Boyd. After his mother's death, Gene became an "adopted" son to Rebecca and she became a surrogate mother to him. He would always later refer to her as his "adopted mom."

In 1975, he began his work as Manager at Darryl Redmond's Taj Mahal Night Club in Columbus. He would manage the club for seven years until 1982. The same year also saw Gene perform with Charles Earland, the well-known Hammond B-3 organist, as well as establishment another band, the Cotton Club Orchestra.

But the good fortune of his new position at the Taj Mahal and his new band was met with the death of his mother, Lena May Harrington. She died in November of 1975 from cancer of the liver. Recognized as one of the city's most outstanding churchwomen, she was a key figure in establishing the Community Fellowship Luncheon Program at Shiloh Baptist Church as well as holding a leadership role in the Ohio Baptist General Association. In 1974, the Columbus newspaper *Citizen-Journal* had given her their award for Outstanding Church Worker of 1974.

Gene's return to Columbus was a boon to the local jazz

community. As the Manager of the Taj Mahal Night Club from 1975 to 1982, he used his contacts to book heavy weight jazz acts into the club. At the same time, he helped nurture the careers of a number of budding local jazz artists. The major vehicle for this were the popular Saturday jam sessions at the Taj Mahal. Some of the regulars at these sessions were Bobby Floyd, Terry Binns, Geoff Tyus, Tony Martucci, Vince Andrews, Tim Houpe, Ken Weaver, Lee Savory, Tom Carroll, Jeff DeAngelo and Bobby Austin.

Gene's success as a club manager and mentor for other musicians was tempered with the death of his close childhood friend Rahsaan Roland Kirk. In 1977, at just 42 years old, Kirk had become a jazz legend with his multi-instrumental talents recognized around the world. But a stroke had paralyzed half his body. Realizing that his time was short, he sent word around that he was coming back to Columbus and that he wanted to see his old friends. They all went over to his sister Connie's home and she fixed dinner for everyone. Gene. Billy Brown. Paul Cousar. Charlie Cook. The whole gang of his close, old friends.

The next day, Gene took Rahsaan to the airport. On the way, Rahsaan wanted to stop at the restaurant where they used to get pork chops on Mt. Vernon Avenue. They stopped at the restaurant but it was closed and Kirk ended up missing his flight. He got the next one and was able to make the benefit they were having

for him in New York. He died shortly after this. Appropriately for a life centered around music, he died on a gig.

The club work of Gene continued to develop. The late 70s saw the formation of a great band called The Seeds of Fulfillment. The band featured the great vocalist Jeanette Williams and had Lee Savory on trumpet and Randy Mather on tenor. In 1979, the Taj Mahal hired the Seeds of Fulfillment for work at the club.

In 1982, Gene left his management position at the Taj Mahal and formed another band, Gene Walker's Generations. The band took its name from the generation gap and their ability to entertain jazz listeners between these generation gaps, a gap represented by the age of the 44-year-old Gene and his young band member Kevin Turner.

9. Student Walker

After graduating from East High School in the middle 1950s, Gene considered attending the nearby Ohio State University. But the life of music was a stronger pull at the time.

In 1982 he substitute taught a class at OSU for Vince Andrews which he enjoyed very much. He was then exposed to a couple of sessions listening to the Ohio State Jazz Lab Orchestra and Gene noticed they were going to class every day. It was a big band class. "I thought that this was just fantastic," he recalls. "I had never heard of any such thing. All my life I'd been trying to play with some big band."

This rekindled his interest in music education and he became a lecturer at OSU in jazz saxophone. His lecturing at OSU got him more and more involved in music with the school. In 1983, he was "barstorming" with the OSU Jazz Lab Band. With Gene on saxophone, they were a formidable powerhouse lab band. But his growing involvement with OSU and student musicians was still mixed with him playing with leading professional jazz players. For example, the year 1983 found him performing with jazz legend Slide Hampton.

Apart from his growing exposure to OSU, a key factor in continuing his education was his "adopted mom" Rebecca Boyd. Over the years, he had been inspired by Rebecca's drive in the educational world watching her get her MBA and then a PhD. And, she was always encouraging and supportive of Gene's education and in fact paid for his first semester at OSU.

So, in 1983, Gene enrolled at the OSU School of Music. At the age of forty-five, Gene was a student once again. Dr. Ted McDaniel, Director of Jazz Studies at The Ohio State University, recalls Gene was "like a magnet during his days at OSU" with "students gravitating towards him." Gene was like a "walking museum" of music history to the students, a person who had actually played with legends they only heard on records or read about in books. But this "walking museum" was usually dressed in the OSU colors of scarlet and grey as Gene was an enthusiastic supporter of OSU. As Ted McDaniel recalls, Gene wore more OSU clothing than anyone he can remember at the time.

One of the main things that Ted McDaniel remembers about Gene was that he was such a positive force at OSU. Unlike many other well-known musicians who had become hardened from the business of music and the usual life of drugs and alcohol that went with it, Gene had always kept clear of drugs and alcohol and maintained a positive perspective on life. As Ted McDaniel

recalls, "Gene did not spend time on negative energy" always having something good to say about people. This perspective was demonstrated by his great popularity among the students.

The first part of this education was in Felton Elementary School, Champion Middle School and East High School and the bars of the Long Street area. Now, almost thirty years later, his education continued on the campus of The Ohio State University.

One of the major differences he found was that he was exposed to written music and the whole piece. "When I was growing up," he recalls, "we didn't know the whole tune. Some guy would know two bars of it, you might know two more bars, and some other guy would come to town and bring you two more bars." This is the way he learned songs. The OSU Lab Band offered a very different education than the streets. Now, all the band members actually had music to the whole song in front of them.

Gene was happy to have the actual written music in front of him. During all of his younger years, he didn't have this. He would love to look it over while playing in the OSU Lab Band. Some of the guys in the band criticized him telling him that he was a jazz musician and was not supposed to have any music in front of him. But Gene was happy and proud to have the written music in front of him and he eventually learned to read it.

On the weekends he worked with Alvin Valentine's group at the

Stardust that consisted of Joe Ong on the drums and Jimmy McGhee on guitar. He also attended the Jazz Educators Association Conference where he met and performed with the legendary Julian Priester.

His local involvement in the Columbus jazz scene continued to grow with his friendship with Ray Eubanks and his joining the Jazz Professors in 1985. This group was part of the Jazz Arts Group, the nonprofit organization founded by Ray Eubanks that teaches jazz and organizes performances and oversees the Columbus Jazz Orchestra which presents dozens of concerts annually at the Southern Theatre in downtown Columbus.

The year 1985 also saw Gene begin doing something that he felt passionate about. He began demonstrating the history of jazz in elementary schools. It offered a chance for him to give back to young children some of the amazing inspiration and education he had gained from his early teachers like Lotti McCoy and Katherine McGill.

He continued working at local clubs with his engagement at Joe Kelly's Restaurant & Oyster Dock in Columbus with Jim Rupp on drums, Kevin Turner on bass with Tom Carroll and Eric Gale on guitar. The restaurant had a nautical theme and Gene wore a captain's hat to highlight this theme. Eric Gale was one of the most recorded guitarists in jazz history and an old

friend from New York City he met while recording with King Curtis. The two had worked a number of weekend gigs together and become fast friends. One aspect of this friendship; was demonstrated by the fact that Gale commuted all the way from New York City each week for the engagement at Joe Kelly's. Gene particularly admired the way Gale eliminated the need for a keyboard player because his technique was so far beyond anyone else. His engagement at Joe Kelly's became a well-known Columbus jazz event as it was broadcast live on Wednesday nights over radio station WBBY-FM.

Gene's college years at OSU continued. Not surprisingly, the OSU Jazz Band with Gene on saxophone was difficult to beat in competition. In 1986, they were awarded the Silver Medal at the Downbeat Collegiate Competition in Vancouver, British Columbia. They flew out to Seattle and then drove up to Vancouver in a van. Ted McDaniel recalls Gene insisting on driving the van and the scary ride they had. "Gene had a habit of telling all these stories while he was driving and then turning around and listening to others as they responded." It was a very memorable drive to say the least.

But his student years continued to be mixed with his involvement in events outside the school. In 1986, the year he went to Vancouver with the OSU Jazz Band, he performed with

legendary jazz musician Charlie Persip. In 1987, a decade after the passing of Rahsaan Roland Kirk, he organized a tribute concert for his old friend and became leader of the "house band" for the King Arts Center in Columbus housed in the famous old Pythian Theater on Mt. Vernon Avenue.

Fellow Columbus musician and classmate of Gene at OSU Dave Powers recalls helping Gene through his years in college. Apart from helping Gene with his homework, he would drive Gene to the OSU Zanesville branch two nights a week for a sociology class taught by Dr. Garlena Bauer. The two would eat dinner after the course and Gene would nod on-and-off to sleep on their trip back to Columbus. But still, Gene ended up getting a B+ in the class.

Another fellow student with Gene at OSU was Milton Ruffin, now principal of Ft. Hayes High School in Columbus and cousin of David Ruffin of the Temptations. Like Gene, Milton was a performing professional musician when he was a student in the music school at OSU. He recalls their early morning music history class. Both he and Gene were already professional musicians who often were out playing all night. They would sit next to each other in the back of the class so that if one nodded off to sleep in the class the other could nudge him. Gene would usually fall forward when he dozed off and Milton would have to prop him up.

The thing that Milton Ruffin remembers most about Gene was that although Gene was an accomplished musician, he consciously decided to go back and start at zero in music. He wasn't going to separate himself from the other students and wanted to learn the same things they did. "I thought this was a tremendous thing, a tremendous accomplishment. Not the fact that he was a phenomenal, legendary musician. But the act that he never wanted to make any of us feel bad." Apart from this, Milton Ruffin recalls the amazing ability of Gene to continually "reinvent" himself and never get locked into a particular style. "He could play all styles. Blues. Jazz. R&B. Gospel."

The year 1988 saw Gene founding with Candy Watkins of the Olde Towne Association a popular jazz event in Columbus called Jazz & Eggs. It offered a Saturday breakfast with live jazz. They also started an engagement at the Marble Gang Restaurant. He also became a private instructor in jazz improvisation at the Ruffin Studio in Columbus.

Perhaps the biggest event for Gene in the late 80s was his graduation from the Ohio State University with a bachelor's degree in music. It is unlikely that there are many students who ever graduated from OSU with more real life experience than Gene. Ted McDaniel wrote a letter of recommendation for Gene upon his graduation that offers a good summary of his musical

style. "His playing represents the synthesis of several important modern saxophonists including Charlie Parker, Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane and King Curtis but it is deeply rooted in the vocabulary and vernacular of the blues. His sound can be ever so delicate and penetrating. He possesses much energy along with a rich soulful sound."

Ted McDaniel was a good person to evaluate the musical style of Gene for he had grown up in one of the great cities of American music, Memphis, Tennessee. As he pointed out in an interview, Memphis was at the intersection of different strains of American music such as blues, R&B, jazz and rock. In Memphis, jazz musicians mixed with blues and R&B musicians and there never was the division found in other parts of the nation. Gene's sound reminded Ted McDaniel of this mixture. "The big, old, fat tenor sound of a Gene Ammons or Ben Webster," Ted McDaniel noted, "played at the bottom of the horn's register." In many ways, he observes, blending the R&B sound of King Curtis with the jazz sound of Gene Ammons.

Gene continued to mix his studies at OSU with outside events. In 1988, the year of his graduation from OSU, he was busy organizing another tribute concert to friends like Ronnie Kirk. Over the years, he would also produce other tribute concerts at Columbus' Riverfront Amphitheater to honor mentors like Don

Patterson, Bernard Upshaw, Rusty Bryant, Raleigh Randolph and
Candy Watkins.

10. Professor Walker

In 1989, he accepted a teaching position at OSU as an instructor in jazz saxophone and in 1990 he taught Jazz Appreciation in the Creative Activities Program. In addition to being an exemplary student, Dr. McDaniel recalls that Gene was also a great teacher. With his incredible experience and knowledge of music, it would have been very easy for Gene to get impatient with students. But this was not his style.

Ted McDaniel recalls that Gene always took time with each student and was much more interested in inspiring and motivating the student than impressing the student with his talents on the saxophone. He had a very human quality not found that often in people of his talent and experience. One of the main things Ted McDaniel remembers about Gene was expressed in an interview he gave in March of 2009 at the Zanzibar Café, right across the street from the old Lincoln Theatre. "Gene is a great musician but be an even finer human being."

In the early 1990s, Gene had an office at The Ohio State University where he was a resident lecturer in the Jazz Studies Department. One day a man named Carl Conley came into Gene's

office seeking lessons on his saxophone. That encounter resulted in the two of them getting together for informative jam sessions and Gene welcoming Carl to gigs of his band. A decade later, this friendship resulted in Gene's involvement with The Island Arts Foundation in Ft. Myers, Florida that Carl founded.

In 1990, they performed at Euro-Disneyland in Paris. He performed at a theme party at the famous Greenbrier in West Virginia in 1990. In 1991 and 1992 Gene returned to touring with his old friend Jimmy McGriff and his quartet. He went to Europe twice with Jimmy's group and performed in Italy, France, England, the Netherlands and Sicily. They played at Ronnie Scotts Jazz Club in London. The lush club is recognized as one of the best jazz clubs in the world. In Italy, they performed at the Umbria Jazz Festival in 1991. Back in Columbus, Gene kept busy with his teaching and working with his Cotton Club Orchestra and performing around the Columbus area.

In 1993, Gene was involved with the formation of a non-profit corporation called "The 589 Musical Arts Society" with the purpose "To research the black music culture for the establishment and maintenance of a music library and to provide periodic programs based on research through performance groups" and "provide instruction, support and information of black music to young, up-coming musicians and to investigate and provide

available financial assistance to musicians." Gene would be one of the three trustees of the group. The other trustees would be Hank Marr and Raleigh Randolph. But the deaths of Hank and Raleigh constituted a severe blow to the future of the organization.

The year 1996 was a big recording year for Gene. The Jazz and Eggs event he started continued to grow in popularity and the Gene Walker Generations Band recorded the cd *A Great Big Helping of Jazz & Eggs* (Listen for the Jazz Records) and *More Jazz & Eggs* (Listen for the Jazz Records). Both were produced by Candy Watkins. His Generations band also recorded *Columbus Jazz is Community Music* (Listen for the Jazz Records). He also recorded with Columbus bluesmen Arnette Howard and Sean Carney, recording "Rocket '88" with Arnette Howard and "Provisions" (Main Street Records) with Sean Carney.

In 1997, he returned to Europe to perform with the Hank Marr Quartet at the North Sea Jazz Festival at The Hague in Holland. Back in the States in 1998, he appeared in Chicago at Prairie State College with the well-known actor Paul Winfield. The event was in affiliation with the Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra. In June of 1998, he was honored by induction into the Columbus Senior Musicians Hall of Fame. In 1999, he performed at the Palace Theater in Columbus with the legendary Aretha Franklin.

He continued to teach and gave a number of jazz lectures at the Ohio State University.

His teaching activities continued with events around Columbus and elsewhere. One of Gene's most interesting students was a lawyer named Carl Conley who met Gene in the late 90s. Carl was a lawyer from Akron, Ohio where he also taught jazz history at a university extension course as well as wrote a column on jazz for the *Cleveland-Akron Jazz Report*. Carl originally met Gene to take lessons when he hstopped taking lessons from Ernie Krivda. "I wanted to reconnect to jazz through a master," Carl recalls, "and Gene is indeed a master of tenor saxology."

While the two originally had a teacher-pupil relationship, their relationship became more than this when Carl asked Gene to sell his saxophone for him in order to get money to support a drug habit he had at the time. He told Gene to pawn the horn and then give him the money he got for it. Instead, Gene drove Carl down to the Veteran's hospital in Chillicothe, Ohio and checked him in.

It was a tough time for Carl and he had few visitors. Gene was one of these few visitors. Instead of giving Carl money he gave Carl a saxophone mouthpiece. "You'll need this for practice until you get out," he told Carl. Gene had never sold Carl's

horn. As Carl recounts, "It was the defining moment when we discovered each other's humanity. Mine because I became willing to face my problem and go on to once again achieve. And Gene's too because he had to go from paid teacher to loving friend." For Carl, this defining moment showed the "depth of his humanity."

Since that time in the late 90s, Carl changed his life and kicked his drug habit becoming a successful businessman and community leader. He left Ohio and moved to Florida where he founded the Island Arts Foundation and became Publisher and Editor of the award winning local community newspaper *The Island Sand Paper* in Ft. Myers Beach, Florida.

One of the major activities of Carl's Island Arts Foundation is presenting some of the top jazz events in Florida. Gene has been a featured artist at many of Carl's events and Carl has made Gene an icon in the Ft. Myers Beach area and given him the name "King Saxe." As Carl notes, "He is now extremely well-known and respected here," and has been "featured in several articles in the newspaper." One year when Gene came down, Carl arranged for him to teach in the local elementary school for Black History Month with Willie Pooch and Sean Carney.

And, the old teacher and pupil have played together a

number of times as Carl is still an active musician. As Carl notes, "Gene and I have played together many times and really sound good when the mood is right. His style has tempered mine and taken my playing from frenetic to smoother and he did it by example after the formal lessons ended and the deeper friendship began." Over the years, the friendship has continued to blossom. Carl says, "Today I feel Gene and I share love for each other that is unaffected by time or distance."

In 1998, Gene became an instructor on the faculty at the famous Jamey Aebersold Jazz Workshop held each summer on the University of Louisville campus just south of Louisville. In 1999, while teaching at the workshop, his wife Regina Jameson Walker passed away from a sudden heart attack. Jamey Aebersold allowed Gene to return to Columbus for her funeral. Upon his return to the workshop, the staff and faculty helped Gene get through this difficult period of his life.

11. Retirement & Recording

After the death of his wife in 1999, the year of 2000 brought more endings for Gene. He made his final retirement from the OSU School of Music in the earlier part of the year. And, the later part of the year saw the passing of his beloved Uncle Bob in December. It was his uncle Bob (and uncle Emmett) who took him to many music performances in his childhood such as the performance at Memorial Hall in Columbus where he heard Illinois Jacquet.

In 2001, he recorded *King Saxe Plays the Blues* with Count Basie vocalist Bill Caffee and guitarists Wilbert Longmire, Sean Carney and Earl Love. The year 2001 saw the passing of Gene's good friend Etta Jones, or "Queen" as she was affectionately known to friends. She was s friend of Gene since his NYC days. Gene would later create a tribute album to Etta recorded in 2005 called *Friends*.

The year 2002, marked the emergence of his own record label X'tra Large Records and its first release, *Last Night in Manhattan* (X'tra Large). He also recorded *Leaving This Old Town* with Bill Caffie and *Blusin' and Crusin* with Hank Marr, Jamey

Aebersold, Wilbert Longmire and Jim Rupp (Double Time Records).

The year 2002, saw the first attempt by the city of Columbus to restore the old vibrant Long Street and Mt. Vernon area of Gene's youth. In the 60s, it had began losing its music clubs and local businesses and it was now full of abandoned buildings with boarded up windows and vacant lots. The effort to restore the old neighborhood was spearheaded by Mayor Michael Coleman, the city of Columbus' first black major. In his introduction to the King-Lincoln District Plan, Major Coleman wrote that the joint effort between the city of Columbus and neighborhood residents and groups the goal to "promote and strengthen the economic well-being and quality of life in this area so rich with history, cultural significance, and civic pride." He noted that "The revitalization of older, central-city neighborhoods is one of the most important priorities of my Administration."

In 2003, Gene's good friend Carl Conley, asked Gene to come down to play at a jazz event in Ft. Myers Beach, Florida. It would be the first of many trips to Ft. Myers Beach for Gene.

The year 2004 saw the passing of his good friend and legendary B-3 organist Hank Marr. In 2005, he recorded *Friends* (X'tra Large Records) with Gloria Coleman, Art Gore, Wilbert Longmire and Everett Greene and *The Fiery Blues* with the Tony

Monoco Trio and Willie Pooch (Summit Records). Gene played with Willie and Sean Carney in Ft. Myers Beach in 2005 and there is a photo of Gene standing next to the famous bluesman, both dressed in bright red suits.

He returned to Europe in 2007 and 2008 with blues guitarist Sean Carney's band performing in Germany, France, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands. In 2007 he recorded "Blue Bop" with Columbus vocalist Linda Dactyl and guitarist Tom Carroll and was the headliner for the Columbus Home for the Holidays program. In 2008, he recorded "For Hep Cats Only" with Linda Dactyl and "Notes for My Friends" with pianist Bobby Floyd.

He continued his performing in 2009 at various clubs. He also continued his involvement in jazz education through his presentations at elementary schools through his involvement with the American Jazz Experience sponsored by the Jazz Arts Group of Columbus and Honda of America.

12. Return of Music

Gene has lived in the same modest apartment for twenty-two years, since his years as a student at OSU. It is only a mile or so from the Long Street area where he grew up. When he first moved into the apartment it was in a decent area of town. But over the last few decades, the area has declined into a tough, hardened neighborhood. The rough neighborhood is evidenced by the thick chain that Gene anchors his outdoor barbeque to the steel pole on his back porch.

Inside, the apartment is a disorganized museum of jazz and R&B history. Stacks of old photos and newspaper clippings burst out from shelves and onto the floor. Pictures of Gene's life hang in frames on the wall, squeezed next to each other so that there is no room for anything else on the walls. There is the picture of Gene sitting behind Ringo and Paul on the Beatles Tour of 1965. There is the picture of Gene wearing his Hawaiian shirt and straw hat playing at events in Ft. Myers Beach, Florida sponsored by his old friend Carl Conley. There is a photo from the front page of Carl's newspaper of Gene raising his saxophone superimposed over a photo showing the eye of a

hurricane with the headline reading, "King Saxe Will Blow Away the Hurricane Blues." There is his handwritten list on yellow legal pages of all the people he has known or played with through his life. Names like John Coltrane. Dizzy Gillespie. The Platters. The Drifters. Neil Diamond. Aretha Franklin. The Beatles. For anyone who might count, the list is contains over 350 names. But Gene keeps adding to it. It just might contain the most extensive list of musicians of any living jazz and R&B musician. It probably does.

"I've gotta organize all of this," Gene says waving his hand over the area. "Gotta get organized."

The area of Gene's apartment mirrors the decline of the Long Street and Mt. Vernon Avenue area of Columbus. The once vibrant area of Columbus, so full of music, culture and commerce, is now little more than abandoned buildings and vacant lots. The buildings have bars on their windows. The vacant lots are full of weeds and broken glass. The only signs of life congregate around corner liquor stores where tough looking kids hang out.

The original buildings of his old East High School and Champion Middle school have been closed down and both have new buildings today. The only music that comes from the Long Street area today is more likely to be hip-hop rather than jazz, R&B or blues. For the young children of Gene's old neighborhood today,

Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker and even the Beatles are becoming forgotten in the loud, flashy, materialistic culture of our modern world. Sports stars and rap stars and movie celebrities are the new mentors of the young. The new "cathedrals" of today, billion dollar sports complexes rather than the little jazz clubs like the Regal, Flamingo and Cabana along Long Street.

* * *

On a warm day in the early Spring of 2009, Gene visited his old neighborhood in the SUV of his good friend Bev Morris. His old home on Hamilton Avenue where he lived has some angry looking people on its front porch. Gene attributes much of the demise of the area to the freeway they built right through the area. In fact, the home where he was born in is now part of the freeway.

A few blocks from his home, the old Macon Hotel with its boarded up windows looked like some military building. However, the Macon Lounge is still open and sometimes features live bands. But the row of famous old music clubs along Long Street were now just dead buildings or vacant lots. Even though the afternoon was clear and warm, hardly anyone was on the streets. The quietness of the dead streets was often punctuated by the

sound of ambulances racing to the nearby OSU East Hospital on Long Street.

From the passenger seat of the SUV, Gene points out the old clubs of the 1940s and 1950s to Bev. Or more precisely, where the old clubs used to be. Most have now simply disappeared, replaced by vacant lots full of weeds and broken glass or made into parking lots.

They stop on one corner in front of a liquor store with thick bars on its windows and a group of tough-looking teens hanging out in front of it. An older man with a skullcap is at the center of the group of kids. It's not an area to be stopping in, the middle of an inner city hood. But then, all of a sudden, the older man comes over to the SUV and leans through the window of the SUV and hugs Gene. "Mr. Gene," he says with a smile on his face. They talk for a while and when they pull away Gene tells Bev that this old friend of his keeps order in the area, knows what's going on around the area.

A few blocks later, they stop at his cousin Bill Pepper's barbershop on Mt. Vernon where Gene used to go to when he was a kid. He walks in and talks to the barber and the patrons inside the place. Everyone is glad to see Gene, he is still known well amongst the older people of the old neighborhood.

Gene and Bev continue their trip around the old area. They

pass the Shiloh Baptist Church just a few blocks from his home where his mother was so involved. A group of young children dressed in bright uniforms pass by on the sidewalk heading for a tour of the church led by their teachers. The little children are the brightest things in the grey, dead area.

They then visit Frank Cole's barbershop that Gene refers to as one of the "social centers" of the community. One of Rahsaan Roland Kirk's nephews is one of the barbers at Cole's. Frank and Gene are such good friends that Gene would rehearse his bands at the barbershop. Frank has always encouraged Gene in life and has been one of his biggest supporters.

* * *

After awhile, they end up at the Zanzibar Café directly across Long Street from the old Lincoln Theatre. The Zanzibar is perhaps "ground zero" for the current jazz community of Columbus. Gene is warmly greeted by the patrons of the Zanzibar. A type of unofficial "major" of the jazz scene in the city. Professor emeritus of jazz. He wears his traditional pork pie hat and black trenchcoat and holds court at one of the tables by the large windows looking out on the old Lincoln Theatre across the street. Friends constantly come and go from the table

shaking his hand. It is good to see the unofficial "mayor" of the area out today.

There is much activity going on. The city of Columbus has put \$13.5 million into restoring the old theatre to the way it was when Gene was growing up. Columbus Mayor Coleman is the key person behind the restoration of the Lincoln Theatre which serves as the centerpiece of the King-Lincoln District Plan proposed in 2002 to revitalize the area. But if there is a heart and soul of the project it is really Gene.

* * *

In early February of 2009, Gene was guest of honor at a special media event to show the progress of the Lincoln Theatre restoration with it's opening scheduled only a few months away. Gene was given a tour through the theater by Bob Briethaupt, President of the Jazz Arts Group of Columbus. He exchanged his black pork pie hat for a hard hat as he walked around the "second" home of his childhood years. He even found the side door of the theater where he used to sneak into the theater for free, somehow never getting caught.

The seats were not in and there was much work still to be done. But Gene wore a smile on his face that day. He could see

that they were bringing the great old "lady" back to life amid the sound of pounding hammers and the buzz of saws and pounding of jackhammers. Her ceiling had already been restored to its original Egyptian motif and it was a magnificent sight. The restoration project had devoted 1,200 hours to re-creating the ceiling's vivid original design. The old stage is flanked by four columns decorated in Egyptian Revival styling. This theme was carried out in the theater's proscenium arch, which framed the stage. Both the arch and the four columns have been painstakingly reproduced to historical standards, each column representing 80 hours of painting work.

On his February tour, Gene was also shown the second and third floors of his old theatre. The second-floor ballroom has been updated with a brilliant, hardwood floor to serve dance groups that will use it. The large ballroom can also be used for meetings and social events.

The third floor offers a new addition to the old theatre. It is the site of the new Jazz Academy, which will include rehearsal and instructional rooms, a recording lab and education space for music technology. It will be run by the Jazz Arts Group, the nonprofit group Gene has been associated with for many years. "We want to expand jazz and American music in all its forms to a new generation," notes Carol Argiro, Director of

Education Programs for the Jazz Academy.

The Jazz Academy was the last stop on Gene's tour of his old theatre that day in February. With his long commitment to jazz education, one could see the eager anticipation of its opening on his face that day. After the tour of the new academy, he sat at a table next to the entrance to the academy appropriately like a "guard" one had to pass by to enter into the academy. He waited for the appearance of his old friend Mayor Coleman. The two have been good friends for a number of years and Gene even wrote a song for the Mayor called "Mike Coleman Blues." Those that know Gene's compositions consider it one of his best, a slow blues song featuring his big, fat, warm sound.

When Mayor Coleman appeared the two men warmly embraced and Gene told the mayor another one of his many stories about the old theatre. Then the mayor told the media assembled at the event that it was time for better things for the King-Lincoln District and the theater's opening will really set things in motion.

"Boarded-up and vacant buildings were the standard," the mayor said. "I said that was unacceptable. "For years, we've been hearing, 'You can't change this neighborhood.' "I said, 'Yes, we can.'"

* * *

Now, a few months after the tour of the Lincoln Theatre, after an afternoon driving around his old neighborhood, Gene sits in the Zanzibar Café on a warm afternoon in early spring with the opening of the historic theatre only a few months away.

The original Lincoln Theatre opened in 1929 at the beginning of the Great Depression. And now, eighty years later, the restored Lincoln Theatre reopens in similar rough economic times.

It is a bold venture by Mayor Coleman and the City of Columbus. To attempt to breathe life back into the once vibrant area where Gene grew up in based around jazz music (of all things) in a changed world and neighborhood with little memory or concern for its history.

Now in his early 70s, Gene tries to enjoy his so-called "golden years." But the years are not always as "golden" as they say they are. A little over a month ago, he had a pacemaker put into his weak heart and he is on all types of medications for his diabetes.

But still, he sneaks out (against the advice of his doctors) to give special performances at local schools sponsored

by the Jazz Arts Group. Recently, he gave a performance at Ft. Hayes Middle School in front of 300 hundred kids, many from his old neighborhood. His band is composed of many old friends and leading musicians in Columbus: Joe Ong is on drums, Dave Dewitt is on bass, Jim Masters on Trombone and Bobby Floyd is on piano. The presentation to the students mixes music with the history of jazz.

At one point in the performance, Gene disappeared from the stage and then reappeared at the top of the auditorium, walking down the aisle, blowing his saxophone, stopping every now and then on his way down, and blowing his saxophone at some of the young kids. Just like Illinois Jacquet once did to him when he was a student at Champion Middle School in the early 1950s and the same age as the kids in the audience today. Many of the kids giggle. In these days of rap and hip-hop and video games and celebrity sports stars, especially in the big sports town of Columbus, the jazz roots coming out of his horn seems like a funny novelty, something they have seldom heard before.

So Gene sits at the Zanzibar Café on this afternoon in early spring. Holding court at his table. Now and then gazing at the work on the Lincoln Theatre across the street. There is a look of hope and anticipation on his face mixed with a certain resignation at the great task at hand of breathing life back

into his old neighborhood through the music and art of jazz.

It is an immense task. Not just for Mayor Coleman and for Gene and the good people at the Jazz Arts Group but for the whole original American art form called jazz.

There is reason for hope, though, that something new might be at hand, fermenting slowly, growing silently but surely. There are people like Connie Boykin out there. Today, he sits at the Zanzibar a few tables away from Gene. Connie is a former Columbus schoolteacher who has "retired" to devote his life to making sure the young (and old) remember the incredible clubs that used to dot a once-vibrant Long Street. Clubs like the Flamingo. The Cabana. The Empress. The Regal. The 740. In fact the Zanzibar today is situated on the site of the old 740 Club.

Each month Connie organizes an event through his self-financed Urban Jazz Collective to honor legendary Columbus jazz people like Hank Marr. Nancy Wilson. Rahsaan Roland Kirk. And Gene. People who are legends on the international jazz scene but hardly remembered or known in their home town of Columbus, Ohio.

Connie makes CDs of their music and puts together biographies and discographies of their grand contributions to the world of jazz. He gives a little presentation at the Zanzibar after he has handed out the materials. He doesn't ask for one cent and pays for everything from his own pocket. This

is something far too important for something so meager and demeaning as money.

Sitting at his usual table at the Zanzibar Café Connie remembers growing up in Columbus in the 40s and 50s and the influence of jazz and the amazing clubs of Long Street and Mt. Vernon. He also remembers a father who opened up this world to him when he was growing up in Columbus in the late 40s and early 50s. "My father got me into this. He used to take me around with him to hear music. It was a fascinating world I didn't know anything about my father had opened up to me."

Connie recalls an event that "nailed" it for him. It was in 1951 or 1952 and his father took him to the Palace Theatre to see the Tommy Dorsey and Count Basie bands. They were dressed in their best suits that day. The Tommy Dorsey band played first and while they created some excitement, it was nothing compared to the Basie band that followed them. His father told Connie to watch how the Basie band came on. When the Dorsey band was finished there was the sound of the Basie band playing from somewhere in the theatre. Then, Connie saw them come in on a huge turntable coming up from below and revolving until the band was all on the big stage playing with full power. "The crowd was going crazy," Connie recalls. "This effected me a lot. After this I had the bug."

He reflects back on this event in his life and compares the old jazz scene of his youth to the music scene of today. "Young people today don't know where they stand," he says. "The main thing about the jazz scene is that they would tell you where you stood. It had people with character. When you see a lot of the misbehavior now, nobody is taking responsibility for the behavior of youth. I don't know where you get that now."

* * *

And somewhere out in Gene's old "hood," not far from the Lincoln and the Zanzibar, is Gene's schoolteacher from Felton Elementary School, Lotti McCoy, who first sparked his interest in jazz. She is now ninety years old but she still remembers the power that the music once had and talks about this power one day at the Zanzibar.

Besides Connie there are other people out there. Like Gene's old pianist friend Dave Powers who plays a regular gig at the old Top Steakhouse out on Main Street each Monday night. Or Bobby Floyd who plays at the Lobby each Saturday night out on Hamilton Avenue. Or visionary politicians like Mayor Michael Coleman who attempts the revitalization of a dead inner city neighborhood not through another housing development or shopping

mall. But rather through art. Through music. Through jazz.

And too, amongst all the giggling children at Ft. Hayes Middle School who watch Gene's performance, there are a few children in the audience who listen with a great intensity. They listen to something new. Something they have never heard before. Something that will change their lives. Like it once changed the life of Gene so many years ago.

Discography

"Ride Superman Ride" with Stomp Gordon (Chess Records) (1956)

Rediscovering Old Favorites with the Chris Columbo Quintet
(Strand Records) (1959)

Listen Here with Freddie McCoy (Prestige Records) (1965)

Love Potion #9 with Johnny "Hammond" Smith (Prestige Records)
(1966)

It's About Time with Hank Marr (1967)(Double Time Records)

"The Broom Switch" with Lloyd Price (1967)

The Golden Thrush with Byrdie Green (Prestige Records) (1996)

A Great Big Helping of Jazz and Eggs (Listen for the Jazz
Records) (1996)

More Jazz & Eggs (Listen for the Jazz Records) (1996)

Rocket '88s with Arnette Howard (1996)

Provisions with Sean Carney (Main Street Records) (1996)

Columbus Jazz is Community Music (Listen for the Jazz Records)
(1996)

Last Night in Manhattan (X'tra Large Records) (2002)

Leaving This Old Town with Bill Caffee (2002)

Blusin' and Crusin' with Hank Marr (Double Time Records) (2002)

King Saxe Plays the Blues (X'tra Large Records) (2004)

Friends (X'tra Large Records) (2005)

The Fiery Blues with Tony Monoco (Summit Records) (2005)

Blue Bop with Linda Dachtyl (Chicken Coop Records) (2007)

For Hep Cats Only with Linda Dachtyl (Chicken Coop Records)
(2008)

Notes for My Friends with Bobby Floyd (2008)

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Bishop, Anna

Boykin, Connie. 3/31/09 interview at the Zanzibar Café. In addition, numerous other interviews and discussions at the Zanzibar Café from February to May 2009.

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Floyd, Bobby. 3/31/09 interview at the Zanzibar Café.

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Meade, Donald. "Territory Bands" lecture 4/25/09 at the Columbus Urban League.

Nichols, Barbara. 3/31/09 interview at the Zanzibar Café.

Powers, Dave. 3/31/09 interview at the Zanzibar Café.

Robinson, Aminah.

Ruffin, Milton. 4/27/09 interview at Ft. Hayes School.

Walker, Gene. Numerous interviews.

Watkins, Candice.

Acknowledgments

Anderson, George. Commercial photographer.

Argiro, Carol. Director of the Jazz Academy, Jazz Arts Group, Columbus, Ohio.

Arter, Jim. Greater Columbus Arts Council.

Boykin, Connie. Founder, Urban Jazz Collective, Columbus, Ohio.

Breithaupt, Bob. Executive Director, Jazz Arts Group, Columbus, Ohio.

Conley, Carl. Editor and Publisher, Sand Paper, Ft. Myers Beach, Florida. Founder, Island Arts Foundation.

Fields, Mike. Jazz artist.

Floyd, Bobby. Musician.

Masters, Jim. Musician.

McCoy, Lotti. Retired teacher.

McDaniel, Ted. Director of Jazz Studies Department, The Ohio State University.

Meade, Donald. Music historian.

Morris, Beverly. Production Assistant, Midnight Oil Studios.

Nichols, Barbara. Executive Director, King Arts Complex.

Powers, Dave. Musician.

Ruffin, Milton. Principal, Ft. Hayes School, Columbus, Ohio.

Shafer, Judy. Director of Community Programs, Jazz Arts Group, Columbus, Ohio.

Watkins, Candice. Administrative Director, Arts Foundation of Old Town.

Appendix A
Musicians

Key

S = Sideman (Played a number of engagements)

P = Performed (Played a few times with)

A = Acquaintance (Met, studied with, knew)

Adams, Faye - S
Adderley, Julian "Cannonball" - A
Adderley, Nat - A
Aebersold, Jamey - P
Alexander, Eric - A,P
Alexandria, Laurez - S
Americans, Jay (and the) - P,S
Ammons, Gene - A
Anderson, Jimmy - P,S
Andrews, Vince - P,S
Ashby, Dorothy - A
Ashby, Harold - P,S
Askey, Gil - P,S
Bailey, Don - P
Baker, Laverne - A
Baptiste, Alvin - P
Barton, Willene - P
Bartz, Gary - P
Baskerville, Art - A,P,S
Bass, Lester - P
Bayard, Edwin - P,S
Beard, Eddie - P,S
Beatles - P,S
Bell, Archie - P,S
Bennett, Lou - P
Benson, George - P,S
Benton, Brook - S
Berry, Chuck - A
Blake, Eubie - P,A
Blake, Kenny - P
Blakey, Art - A
Bland, Bobby - P,S
Bloom, Ira Jane - P
Bobo, Willie - P,A
Bonds, Gary "U.S." - S

Boothe, Junior - P
Bowmaker, Denise - P,S
Brackeen, JoAnn - P
Brackeen, Charles - A
Braden, Don - P,A
Braith, George - P
Breithaupt, Bob - P
Brooks, C.B. - P
Brooks, Roy - P, S
Brooks, Tina - P
Brown, Billy - P,A
Brown, Buster - P,S
Brown, Charles - A
Brown, Gatemouth - S
Brown, Ruth - P,S
Brown, Sonny - P,A
Bryant, Rusty - S, P
Buchanon, Jimmy - P,A
Buckner, Milt - P,S
Burch, Syl - P,A
Burns, Dave - P
Burrell, Kenny - P,A
Burton, Rahn - P
Burton, Ron - P,A
Butterbeans & Susie - P,S
Byrd, Donald - A
Byrd, Jerry - P
Byrd, Wendell - P,A
Caldonia - P,S
Candido - P,S
Carney, Bill - P,S
Carney, Gary - P
Carroll, Joe "Bebop" - P,S
Carroll, Tom - P
Casey, Al - P
Chambers, Paul - P,S
Chantels - P,S
Checker, Chubby - P,S
Coasters - P,S
Coe, Jimmy - P,A
Cole, Freddie - S
Cole, Nat King - A
Coleman, George - P,S
Coleman, Gloria - P,S
Coles, Johnny - A,S
Coltrane, John - A

Columbo, Chris - P,S
Cooke, Sam - P,S
Cortez, Dave "Baby" - P,S
Cox, Ida - P
Curtis, King - P,S
D'Angelo, Jeff - P
Daniels, Billy - P,S
Darnell, Larry - P,S
Darr, Jerome - P
Davis, Eddie "Lockjaw" - A
Davis, James "Uncle Dave" - P,A
Davis, Miles - A
Davis, Sammy - A
Davis, Walter - P
Davis, Wild Bill - P,S
DeGreg, Phil - P,S
Diehl, Eddie - P,S
Dixon, Eric - P
Dotson, Hobart - P
Dowe, Al - P,A
Drifters - P,S
Dukes, Joe - P,S
Dunlop, Frankie - P,S
Dupree, Cornell - P,S
Dyke, Joe (and the Blazers) - P,S
Earland, Charles - P,S
Easley, Bill - P
Edison, Sweets - P,A
Ellington, Duke - A
Eubanks, Ray - P
Fifth Dimension - P,S
Flamingos - P,S
Ford, Dee Dee - P,S
Forrest, Jimmy - P,S
Foster, Frank - P
Foxx, Redd - A
Gale, Eric - P,S
Gardner, Don - P,S
Gillespie, Dizzy - A
Gilmore, John - P,S
Golson, Benny - P,A
Gonsales, Paul - A
Gonzalez, Babs - P,S
Gordon, Stump - P,S
Gore, Art - P,S
Green, Benny - P,S

Griffin, Della - P,S
Griffin, Johnny - A
Grimes, Tiny - P,S
Haley, Bill - P
Hamilton, Roy - P,S
Hampton, Slide - A
Hardiman, Bill - A
Hawkins, Wendell - P,A
Hawkins, Wyman - P,S
Headhunters, Cannibal (and the) - P,S
Heath, Jimmy - A
Hebb, Bobby - P,S
Henry, Clarence "Frogman" - P,S
Hill, Jimmy - P,S
Hodges, Johnny - A
Holloway, Brenda - P,S
Holmes, Groove - P,S
Hunt, Tommy - P,S
Imperials, Little Anthony (and the) - P,S
Isley Brothers - P,S
Jackson, Chuck - P,S
Jackson, Willis - A
Jax, Jolly - P,S
Jefferson, Eddie - P
Jo, Damita - P
John, Little Willie - A
Johnson, Bud - A
Johnson, Howard - P,S
Johnson, Rudy - P,A
Jones, Etta - P,S
Jones, Jimmy - P,S
Jones, Rufus - P,S
Jones, Virgil - P,S
Jonsen, Tommy (Dancers) - P,S
Jordan, Cliff - P,S
Kelly, Wynton - A
Kilgore, Theola - A
King, B.B. - A
Kirk, Rahsaan Roland - P
Kolax, King - P,S
Land, Harold - A
Landrum, Richie - S
Lateef, Yusef - P,A
Lee, Brenda - P,S
Leon, Emile - P,A
Lesure, Jacque - P,A

Limelites, Shep (and the) - P,S
Little, Booker - A
Longmire, Wilbert - P,S
Ludwig, Gene - P,S
Lynch, Johnny - P
Madison, Joe - P,S
Maestro, Johnny - P,S
Marr, Hank - P,S
Martino, Pat - P
Maupin, Popeye - P,A
Maybelle, Big - P,S
McCoy, Freddie - P,S
McCreary, Frankie - P
McCreary, Louis - P
McCreary, Roger - P
McDuff, Jack - P,S
McGriff, Jimmy - P,S
McLean, Jackie - A
Middleton, Tony - P,S
Mingus, Charles - A
Mitchell, Billy - P,S
Mitchell, Blue - P
Mitchell, Scoey - P,S
Mobley, Hank - A
Moncur, Grachan - P,S
Moody, James - P,S
Moonglows - A
Moore, Hank - P,A
Morgan, Lee - P,A
Morris, Ramon - P,A
Mouzon, Alphonse - P,S
Mulligan, Gerry - P,A
Nance, Ray - P,S
Nelson, Oliver - P,S
Newborn, Calvin - A
Newman, Joe - P
O'Jay, Eddie - A
O'Jays - A
Ousley, Harold - P,S
Parkettes - P,S
Patterson, Don - P,S
Payne, Sonny - P,S
Person, Houston - P,A
Pickett, Wilson - P,S
Pierce, Bobby - P,S
Pitts, Trudy - P,S

Platters - P,S
Powers, Dave - P,S
Preston, Billy - P,A
Price, Lloyd - P,S
Priester, Julian - P
Prysock, Arthur - P,S
Pullin, Don - P,A
Purdie, Bernard - P,S
Queen, Alvin - P,S
Rainey, Chuck - P,S
Redd, Freddie - A
Reed, Jimmy - P,S
Reed, Wayman - P,A
Reid, Rufus - A
Richardson, Wally - P,S
Riley, Ben - P,S
Roach, Max - P,S
Roberts, Pola - P,S
Robi, Paul - P,S
Robinson, Boots - P,S
Robinson, Smokey - P,S
Rodney, Red - P
Rogers, Timmy - P
Rollins, Sonny - A
Romantics, Ruby (and the) - P
Rondinelli, Spider - P,S
Rupp, Jim - P,S
Ryland, Floyd - P,S
Sabuka - P,S
Scott, Jimmy - P,S
Sears, Al - P,A
Selby, Dayton - P,S
Shew, Bobby - P,A
Shirelles - P,S
Siki, Sweet Daddy - A
Silver, Horace - A
Simone, Nina - P,S
Singer, Hal - P,S
Sissle, Noble - A
Smith, Floyd "Wonderful" - P,S
Smith, Jimmy - P
Smith, Johnny Hammond - P,S
Smith, Lonnie - P,A
Spann, Les - P,A
Staton, Dakota - P,S
Steele, Larry - A

Sterling, Arnold - P,S
Steve, Wild Man - P,S
Stewart, Billy - P,S
Stewart, Slam - P,S
Stitt, Sonny - P
Striesand, Barbara - A
Sun Ra - A
Taylor, Johnny - A
Tee, Richard - P
Terry, Clark - P,A
Thomas, Jon - P,S
Thomas, Leon - P,S
Thomas, Rufus - P,A
Thompson, Sir Charles - P,S
Til, Sonny - P,S
Trenier, Milt - P,S
Turner, Danny - P,S
Turner, Titus - P,S
Turney, Norris - P,S
Van Dyke, Earl - P,S
Vick, Harold - P,S
Walker, Ted - A,P,S
Wallace, Coley - A
Walters, Virgil - P
Warwick, Dionne - A
Weeden, Paul - P,S
Wess, Frank - A
Wilks, Jesse - P,S
Williams, Larry - P
Wilson, Jackie - P,S
Wilson, Nancy - P,S
Winchester, Lem - A
Witherspoon, Jimmy - A
Wonder, Stevie - P
Woods, Chris - P,S
Wright, Herman - P,S
Yancy, Joe - P,S
Young, Larry - P,S
Yuro, Timi - P,S

Appendix B
Lincoln Theatre (Early 1950s)
(Some of the musicians who performed)

Baker, Laverne
Blue Flames (Featuring Clifford Brown, Vance Wilson)
Bostic, Earl (Featuring John Coltrane)
Bradshaw, Tiny
Brenston, Jackie
Brown, Charles
Brown, Ruth (With Willis "Gatortail" Jackson)
Butts, Jimmy (and his band)
Caldonia
Churchill, Savannah
Clovers, The
Darnell, Larry
Dominoes (Featuring Jackie Wilson, Clyde McPhatter)
Drifters (Original)
Five Keys, The
Forrest, Jimmy
Fulson, Lowell (Featuring Ray Charles, Stanley Turrentine)
The Griffin Brothers Band
The Hampton Family Band
Hawkins, Erskine
Hope, Lynn
Ink Spots, The (Featuring Bill Kenny)
Jackson, "Bullmoose"
Markham, "Pigmeat"
McLawler, Sarah (With Richard Otto)
Orioles, The (Featuring Sonny Til)
Ravens, The
Ricks, Jimmy
Smith, Tab
Thornton, Big Mamma
Washington, Dinah
Wilson, Jackie
Witherspoon, Jimmy

Appendix C
Neighborhood Clubs
Mt. Vernon & Long Street Area of Columbus
(1940s & 1950s)

740 AC
Ball of Confusion
Bat Cave
Belmont Club
Blimpys
Bonfire Club
Bottoms Up
Bubbles LVA
Café Society
Cameo Theatre
Cherry Club
Club Ebony
Club Jamaica
Club Manhattan
Club Regal
Club Rumboogie
Club Trocavera
Colony
Coral Reef
Empress Theatre
Fonnies Lounge
Friendly Grill
Gem Bar
Griffin's Lounge
High Chaparral
IVL Club
Javan's Barbeque
Joe's Hole
Larry's
Lincoln Theatre
McCown's Lounge
Mr. G's
Mr. Larry's Camel Bell
Mr. P's
My Brother's Place
Novelty Bar & Restaurant
Oceans 11
Other Room
Palm Gardens

Preview Lounge
Pussycat Lounge
Pythian Theatre
Railroad Club
Red Flame
Skurdy's
Star Dust Lounge
The 502 Club
The Cabana Club
The Cadillac Club
The Copa Club
The Elks Club
The Flamingo
The Garson Club
The Litchford Hotel
The Macon Hotel & Lounge
The Masonic Temple
The Needle's Eye
The Question Mark
The Royal Grill
The Skyline
The Turf Club
The Yacht Club
Three Star Grill
Venice Club
Viaduct Inn

Appendix D
Favorite Musicians

Blues singers - Wynonie Harris, Ruth Brown, Larry Darnell, Earl Love, Etta James

Jazz singers - Etta Jones, Everette Green, Sarah Vaughn, Leon Thomas, Andy Bey, Jon Hendricks, Don Bullard

Saxophonists - David "fathead" Newman, James Moody, Stanley Turrentine, Gene Ammons, John Coltrane, Illinois Jacquet, Sonny Stitt

Appendix E
Favorite Music

First record - "Do Nothing 'till you Hear From Me," Duke Ellington

First blues record - "Saturday Night Fish Fry," Louis Jordan's Tympani Five

First jazz records - "My Foolish Heart," Gene Ammons; "Moody's Mood for Love," James Moody; "Now's the Time," Charlie Parker.

LPs - Miles Ahead Plus 19, Miles Davis; Kind of Blue, Miles Davis; What a Wonderful World, Louis Armstrong; Don't Go to Strangers, Etta Jones; If You Are But a Dream, Etta Jones; I Wish You Love, Gloria Lynn; Don't Misunderstand, Etta Jones and Houston Person; Lush Life, Billy Strahorn, Johnny Hartman and John Coltrane; In a Sentimental Mood, Duke Ellington.

John Fraim
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John was born and raised in Los Angeles and graduated with a BA from UCLA and a JD from Loyola Law School. Since 1998, he has been President of The GreatHouse Company, a marketing consulting firm. He has an avid interest in the arts and served as a Commissioner on the Upper Arlington Cultural Arts Commission in Columbus, Ohio. He has taught classes and seminars on symbolism and screenwriting to high school students and will teach the first course on John Coltrane at the new Jazz Academy at the Lincoln Theatre in Columbus, Ohio.

He is considered a leading expert on symbolism and has written extensively in this area. His book *Battle of Symbols* (2003) was published by Daimmon Verlag, Zurich. He served as a consultant on the film *The DaVinci Code* and continues research, writing and lecturing on symbolism.

His writing has been published in a wide range of publications such as *The Journal of Marketing*, *Psychological Perspectives*, *AdBusters*, *Business 2.0*, *The Industry Standard*, *First Monday* and *East West Journal*. His book *Spirit Catcher: The Life & Art of John Coltrane* (1995) received the 1997 Small Press Book Award for Best Biography. His book *Battle of Symbols: Global Dynamics of Advertising, Entertainment and Media* (2003, Daimon Verlag, Zurich) offers a symbolic perspective on world events today.

In 2008, he created The Midnight Oil Studios (MOS) an independent film company involved in the production of documentary films and short features about people, products and ideas making positive changes in the world. The first documentary project of MOS is a film on the Columbus jazz and R&B legend, Gene Walker. MOS also conducts research into symbolism and mythology and their relationship to storytelling. Research is applied to MOS film scripts, seminars and classes. Mos is currently working on a screenplay based around the life of John Coltrane and Gene Walker titled "Golden Years of the Prophet."