

RAG TIME

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The time is 1916 and my 15th year, still in my adolescence. The first world war was entering its 3rd year as our family, recent emigrant from Hungary, struggled collectively to survive and prepare its second generation for its place in the New world.

I was the 3rd of four children born of parents with a European background and culture. Despite our desperate poverty, all of us received some private education in Music. My sister, two years older than I had a little advantage in being the first to start studying the piano. At the age of 9 I was sent to a local piano teacher, a Mr. Greenwood, who for 50 cents an hour, introduced me to the art of piano playing. He was a gentle person and not given to strong discipline and unfortunately taught me very little of basic harmony. He recognized that I had a good ear for music and that I learned very quickly. Once having acquired a knowledge of the key Board, I was in the habit of filling in with my own harmony when the going was too tough.

I did not take to practice gracefully but had to be "reminded" each day to put in my hour of practice - or else! My mother was a very determined person and there was no escape from her vigilance. So, in spite of myself, I learned to play the piano. By the end of the 3rd year of study, I suddenly realized that I could read music quite readily and I developed more interest and enthusiasm in my music. I also found that I could play most of the then popular tunes without the benefit of the written music. I did not realize at that time that I had quite a high level of pitch recognition which in all probability was passed on to me from some gifted predecessor. My parents did not recognize this potential and I was not given the opportunity to take advantage of this gift. At best, my education in music was quite inadequate. On the other hand, my sister proved to be a better student than I and later was given advanced training by a well qualified teacher of music. There was some thought of a career as a concert pianist but in retrospect, I realized that this was not to be, for she lacked the natural talent which unfortunately was entirely bestowed on me and I am certain that, despite her acquiring an advanced technical skill, this was not enough to qualify her as a performing artist.

These were trying years for our family of six. We lived in a three bedroom flat in the western part of St. Louis, a little crowded for six but somehow or other we made it do. At the age of 10, I was selling newspapers. I recall the very cold winters when we had to get up before dawn on Sundays and deliver the papers and hawk our papers from street to street. At the age of 13, I got a job as delivery boy and flunkey in a drug store where I worked until late hours after school and returned home at night on roller skates. Later, I was given a bicycle which became my main form of travel for many years to come. During this period, I had very little time for practice on the piano, and had to discontinue my lessons.

When I was 15 and in the second grade of high school, my good neighbor, a Mr. Werner told me that a friend was about to open a nickelodeon in our neighborhood and was in need of a pianist. This came as a sort of a bomb shell for I was little prepared for it and furthermore I had to join the local musician's union (No.2) before I would be permitted to play in the movie theatre. I met the owner, a Mrs. Macarthy who seem quite willing to hire me at the magnificent salary of \$9.00 a week. (The prevailing salary of union musicians then was 18 per week and mandatory) This was quite an advance from the \$2.50 a week I was making at the drug store and the hours would be better. I then decided to go ahead.

At 15, I was still wearing knickers. This certainly would not do for a requirement for admission to the musician's union was a minimum age of 18 and a passage of an examination for proficiency by members of the board. Unable to afford the purchase of a pair of long pants, I managed to borrow one from a friend in the neighborhood. Although, a bit too long for me, it added two years to my appearance and bolstered my courage a bit.

The examination took place at the Union headquarters. I was given several pieces of music to read and apparently I did quite well for I passed the examination with flying colors. I paid my dues, returned the borrowed pants, and looked about for permanent pair of long pants to enhance the illusion of mature professional musician.

I had little help. I gathered up all the music I had, and some of Margaret's and obtained some free professional copies of the popular tunes of the time. These were distributed free of charge by music companies in an effort to popularize them. They had only the words and the melodic line. I had to fill in the harmony but this came easily for me. One thing I did not expect was the entry of a Italian tenor on the scene. He was a salvaged alcoholic and protegee of Mrs MacCarthy, (I suspected he served a more useful purpose) During intermission, he would entertain the audience by singing some operatic aria or some popular Italian popular medley such as Funiculi Funicula, Rosa Maria, and others which escape my memory. Despite his drinking, he had a magnificent tenor voice and good musical background. But a hell of a temper. At first it was hard to keep up with him and he would turn towards me with daggers flying from his eyes should I make a mistake or fail to follow him closely. It was a trying experience and I had to make it or else I would be dismissed. I learned quickly and my ear for music saved me for I could anticipate the harmony and follow him regardless of my ability to read. After a few weeks, this temperamental Italian and I became friends and got along well. I owe a lot to him for he gave me the experience I needed as an accompanist that came in so handy later in my career as a musician.

In those days, Nickelodeons sprang up all over town as the Movies became a popular entertainment media. Most of the pictures were

westerns and comedie one or two reels in lenght. They were projected on the screen by a hand driven projector with carbon light source. The operator had to judge the speed of the film or else they would flicker should the speed be reduced. This is perhaps the reason the British called the movies the flickers. After each reel, the action stopped as the operator changed the reels for a new one. During this period, I had to entertain the audience by playing some popular tune, or a rendition of an Italian song .

These Nickelodeons were usually converted small stores. They rarely seated more than a hundred and usually they were seldom filled to capacity. By the time they collected enough to pay me, the operator, the rent and charges for the films, there was little if any remaining for the owner. It was no wonder that most of the small ventures closed and were replaced by larger theaters seating 500 or more. I served my apprenticeship for almost a year, when Mrs. MacCarthy threw in the sponge and her Italian tenor retreated to the bottle. I saw very little of them after this although they lived close by.

The next two years were spent in similar establishments as a solo pianist where I expanded my collection of music and skill at the piano. The routine usually consisted on an overture before the screen lighted up. I would play an overture from the operas of Von Weber, Wagner, and many of the Italian operas. I assure you that they were not received with any show of appreciation. In fact, in one of the theaters located in the Italian district I was often greeted with a barrage of rotten tomatoes or other vegetables that were left over by the local vendors . To counteract this menace, I decided to turn the back of the piano to the audience. This helped a bit, but using a technic developed in the first world war by Mortars I continued to receive direct hits. This practice came to a rapid halt when the management decided to employ a bouncer, an ex-pugulist , punch drunk and mean who would not hesitate to grab a offender by the scuff of the neck and carry him up the isle to the exit. This would create a momentary crisis but peace would eventually return.

By now I had accumulated quite an assortment of music which I considerate appropriate for the silent movies although I had no yardstick to go by. I obtained some numbers that were especially written for the movies. A series of incidental music called "hurries" consisting of short passages to be used on sequences of action depicting extreme excitement, the chase, sadness, delight and so on. I soon discarded these for improvisations of my own and varied them a bit to avoid repetition. In time, I found myself improvising more and more. I emulated the Strauss waltzes to no end; "composed" light operettas modeled after Franz Lehar, Frimal, and others for the simple reason that I became interested in watching the action and did not have time to look at the music. Besides, it was a creative effort which I found I could do quite easily. I cannot say what the audience thought of it. But I doubt that they were very much aware of the music since the action on the screen occupied their entire attention.

By far, the most important contribution by the piano player of the silent movies was the ragtime music of Scott Joplin, James Scott, Joseph Lamb and others. The rags, so called, were very popular and fitted well in scenes of light comedy such as Harold Lloyd, the Mack Sennet cops, and later, Charles Chaplin. Ragtime is happy music. When properly played it has a lifting tilt seldom recognized or interpreted by modern pianist. One had to learn this trait by being exposed to it and gradually learning where to put the accents to give it the proper emphasis. I found this in time and even now when I play some of old rags, such as the Maple Leaf rag, the entertainer, the strenuous Life, Sensation and others, the old rhythm returns. I become aware of it when I am literally lifted from my seat with each measure. Without the ragtime, the piano player of the silent movies would have long been forgotten for it was through this media that ragtime reached the ears of so many people. Remember, that during the period of the silent movies, Radio had not yet developed, and not until near the end of the silent movie this media became popular. By this time ragtime was replaced my more sophisticated music of Gershwin, Romberg, George Cohen and others, and the era of the solo piano player was over.

But the silent movies did not stop with its short slap-stick comedies and western. Epic production such as Birth of a Nation, dramas starring Mary Pickford, Theda Bara, Douglas Fairbanks, the Barrymores, Hart and other heroes of westerns made their appearance. Frequently the pianist or orchestra received a full musical score which was synchronized with the mood and action of the movie. Some of the theme songs of these production still live in my memory. The love song of Birth of a Nation became the theme song of Amos and Andy in their radio broadcasts. A talented group of composers in Hollywood contributed a great deal to the music of the silent movies.

But I am getting ahead of my story and must retrace my steps a bit for the early days of the solitary piano players in the Nicolodian

were most important to me. This early phase in my career as a piano player lasted about 5 years. It was not continuous for there were intervals between my contracts. One summer, finding myself without a job, I played in the music department of a 5 and 10 cent store. I played almost continuously from morning till evening demonstrating popular tunes which sold at 10 cents a copy. At times I accompanied singers who worked until they were hoarse. To implement my very meager salary, I played in a dance hall until midnight. Pounding the piano for 12 hours a day was not easy. My thumb would not hold up and I had to bandage the open sore with adhesive tape to prevent further trauma. I was relieved that in the Fall I obtained another job in the theater and had only 3 hours or so of continuous playing. This job took me a long way from home and in order to save 5 cent street car fare, I rode to work on my bicycle. Cycling home at midnight was not exactly safe since I had no lights but fortunately the motor traffic those days was very light. However, it served me well for I had the advantage of good exercise which I needed badly.

On Saturday and Sunday I played both matinee and evening shows. The neighborhood about the theater was not the best since it was in the midst of houses of prostitution. Usually, the gals took off on Saturday and filled the first row or two. Since there was little ventilation in the theater, you can well imagine the odors which permeated the pit where I was the lone victim. However, they were a pleasant and jolly bunch and never caused my much trouble. I much preferred them to the rowdy Italian gangs that frequented the theater.

My salary continued to increase until I was getting near scale. One of my jobs took me to the Fairy theater, quite close to home. It was a large open air theater. I don't know how they got by with one musician. THE owner was a huge bulk of a man who was rough and sadistic. I was glad that this engagement did not last long for I did not enjoy working for him. The old broken down piano put me at a decided disadvantage for many of the keys were stuck. In order to carry on the melodic line, I had to play everything in the right hand with octaves since two notes were better than one. I might add that in most of these old movies we did not have Steinways to play on. On the whole they were old used pianos that constantly broke down. Often I had to come in early go over the action of the piano and lessen up some of the keys. More disconcerting was the fact that most of these pianos were seldom tuned. I find it very difficult to improvise on a piano which is off pitch for the response is far from what my ear anticipates. But we had to make the best of the situation.

In the early days of the silent movies, popular music was advertised in the movie theaters since it was before the time of the radio and phonographs were in the early stage of development. The various music houses sent teams to visit the movie theaters and entertained the audience by singing the tunes. This provided me with a little relief of the routine and also I was able to obtain professional copies of their music. This consisted of only

the melodic line and words. I had to fill in the rest. However, it added measurably to my supply of music which created some interest.

I drifted from theater to theater in the first few years, gaining a bit of experience and self-confidence. I felt that I was ready for larger theaters with three or more musicians in the pit. In 1919 I first began to play with others. I obtained a contract with a moderately large local neighborhood theater with a three piece ensemble of violin piano and cornet. The cornet player was Joe Fiorito, the brother of Ted Fiorito, then a well known band leader. THE violinist was a daughter of the owner, Mr Reichman whose son Joe Reichman studied under the same teacher that I did but who later became an outstanding orchestra band leader. I could not compare the two of them from the standpoint of talent for my violinist had a very poor ear for music. She extracted a sound from the violin which sounded more like a cat in heat. The cornetist blasted my ear drum for three hours every night. This was worse than working in a boiler factory, and it is no small wonder that later in life I developed a severe degree of nerve deafness. However, we managed to get by and continued to entertain the audience for the ensuing year.

By now I was contributing to the family coffers \$22.00 per week, a tidy sum in those days. This enabled Steven my older brother to enter college and study Pharmacology and my sister, Margaret to enter Washington University, although she continued to teach some of her pupils after school. This still did not allow many luxuries but for the first time we were able to stock-pile some savings and purchase a two story flat not far from the University. This gave us a bit more room, but we were still very crowded. Nevertheless, we now had establish a firm footing in our chosen land and looked forward a bit more confidently to the future.

By now, I was ready for college, having completed high school with barely a passing average. I debated long with my family as to my choice of a profession and finally concluded that Engineering would suit me best for I had a fair success in mathematics. I did not consider music as a permanent career since I recognized that the future in this profession was limited and that my training was also inadequate. So, I enrolled in Washington University and fortunately was accepted despite my grades in High School. However I could not give up my work in the theater for the income was needed. I did not realize at that time that the first year in the School of Engineering was very demanding on the student, requiring hours of homework and study. Since my evenings were taken up with my job, this left me very little time for study. I worked hard but I did not do well and fell behind in my studies. I managed to pass all the courses, but with very poor grades.

During this period, I played in small orchestras in neighborhood theaters. The days of the solo piano player was almost over for the little movies could no longer afford the cost of expanded rentals of movies or labor cost. The era of two reeler western and short Mack Sennett type of comedy was giving way to 5 reel films of serious drama and more realistic directing. Since sound had yet to appear on the scene, the captions still were printed but much was left to action alone. THE choice and quality of our music also improved. Since the orchestra could not improvise collectively we played music from scores and orchestration. There was little time to view the action on the screen since one was absorbed in reading the score. However, having been exposed to the orchestrations repeatedly, I knew many of them and could take the liberty of playing the piano and looking at the movie at the same time. I recall one incidence when I was so completely absorbed in the movie that I was unaware that the violinist, who led the small group intentionally shifted from one number to another without informing me. I played along with the changes quite automatically. Finally I looked over at the violinist and the third member of our small and found them bursting with suppressed laughter. However, in retrospect, I considered this quite an achievement for I realized that I could follow music almost automatically without conscious effort. I was grateful to the leader for overlooking my digression and tried to give my undivided attention to the musical score.

More attention was given to complete rendition of music rather than to follow closely the mood and action of the movie. In general, the music was chosen to roughly following the action. However, this had the advantage of offering complete scores without interruption and no doubt improved the performance of the orchestra. However, many of the movies came with orchestration which closely followed the action but musically lacking in quality.

My year in the University was over. I realized that I could not continue my studies in Engineering without freedom to study at home in the evening. I decided then that it would be wise to skip the next year of college and save all I could during this year so I could return to school the following year without the need of working every night. This was a difficult decision, but I felt that physically, I could not continue as I had in the first year and furthermore, I was not getting the full benefit of my education.

I was fortunate in obtaining a place in a theater which ran two matinees a week and commensurately a better salary than I had received previously. I had my days free to do what I pleased. I decided to take some advanced work in music. I consulted a teacher who had previously tutored Margaret and he agreed to give me an hour a week. Ottmar Mall was a middle aged pianist and teacher of music with quite a reputation among the musicians in St. Louis. I had to unlearn many of my bad habits and master the Etudes of Chopin, the music of Beethoven and Mozart. This led to a marked improvement in my technic and interpretation of music. In addition

to playing three hours a day in the theater, I practiced as much at home on our newly acquired Steinway piano. My interest in music increased as I acquired new knowledge of the masters and improved my ability to perform. I felt that this year of training prepared me for better orchestras and if necessary, for solo performances.

Time approached for continuing my education. I had little interest in Engineering since I did so poorly in the first year and felt that I had little aptitude for it. Another alternative came up which attracted my attention. I recalled that I had a course in biology during my first year and did well in it. I thought that I could do well in Medicine- an idea which received considerable support from family. I found it difficult to come to a decision since during my year devoted to the study of music with Mr Mall I had developed a new interest in music both in performance and in a deeper understanding of the masters. This left me with a dilemma since I realized that I could not have both and that I must give my full attention to one or the other. I sought advice from Mr Mall who insisted that I continue my career in music and put all my energy towards becoming a concert pianist. THIS meant giving up my theater work and teach for a living and in the meanwhile continue my studies in music.

At first this appeared attractive but on further consideration I instinctively felt that it would never work for I realized that I had missed this opportunity early in life when I failed to continue my studies in music. I knew that it is in this period that one must develop his full potential in his technical ability otherwise this would be impossible to achieve in later life. I also realized that I had developed bad habits in the preceding years which I felt were difficult to slough. Furthermore, I had a severe handicap of a congenital immobility of both first thumb joint which would limit my ability to execute difficult passages.

After prolonged consideration, I felt that I was not cut out for a career as a concert pianist and I certainly did not want to continue playing in theaters and dance halls for the future held very little for advancement. I decided then to enroll in a course at Washington University that would prepare me for entrance in the School of Medicine. I left behind me many mixed feelings for I loved music and I realized that I will have to give it up in a few years. For years, I had episodes of deep depression as a result of my decision to give up my musical career. I had frequent recurrent dreams later in life of rejoining my musician friends and playing with them. One of these dreams took me to a theater located in Webster Groves, where I had played with a 5 piece orchestra for a short season. It consisted of a violinist, a cellist, violist and clarinet. We enjoyed our work for all of them were excellent musician. Our repertoire consisted of classical music including quintets of the great masters, operas, one of which I loved and still remember so well- Massenet's Manon, many of Russian composers, Wagner and others. We were more interested in the music than in following the action of the movie and I am sure all of us enjoyed each session. In my dreams I would join this

orchestra and vividly recall playing some of our favorite pieces. However, I had a frightening experience every time for fear that I would be rejected since I no longer belonged to the musician's union. Even to this day, I have occasional dreams of playing as a substitute pianist in a movie house with the fear that I would be discovered. One of my more ambitious dreams was that of a conductor of a symphony orchestra. On one occasion, I conducted one of my own compositions. The theme of the composition stayed with me and the following morning I recalled it on the piano. I still remember it to this day.

My studies in preparation for Medical schools progressed fairly well despite the fact that I continued to work in the theater. The subjects were more interesting and did not require a great deal of home study. However, my grades were not good, averaging about a C and I began to worry about being accepted at Washington U. After two years I thought I had sufficient credits and in the summer of 1923, I applied for admission. The registrar informed me that my grades were not competitive, and the best he could do was to put me on the alternative list and hope that a vacancy would occur, I did not hear from him for some time, and nearly lost hope of entering when I received a call to come in for an interview. This time I was admitted to the office of Dean Marriott, a kindly elderly man who was then also head of the department of Pediatrics. He asked many questions and also informed me that my grades were not up to standard and I also lacked some credit in English literature. However, despite this, and for reasons that I could not comprehend, he decided to admit me but warned me that I must do well in the first year or I could be dropped.

I was elated and so were my family and friends. I registered a week before the School opened its doors to the class of 1923, paid my yearly tuition fee of \$225.00, and became a full fledged member of the class of 70 students. I had full confidence that I could do well in my work for I was deeply interested in it and for the first time, I knew that I would succeed. However, because of the cost of tuition, books and need to add my support to the family coffer, I had to continue my work at the theater despite the heavy demands for homework in my studies.

In my first year I signed a contract with a 4 piece orchestra in a theater located near the central southern part of St. Louis. Since I could not afford a car, I used the street car. This gave me about 20 minutes of study each way. From 5:00 to 6:00 PM, I studied in the library and after grabbing a bite in the cafeteria, I went to work. Usually we were through by 11:00 and home in bed by 12:00. I managed to get up at six and after a hasty breakfast I would walk to school through Forest Park. This walk took about 45 min. since the distance was about two and one half miles. I carried my notes with me and reviewed the lectures of the preceding day. By this routine, I managed to get about two and a half hours of study which proved quite adequate for at the end of my first year, I was nominated for the prize in anatomy which was awarded to the student with the best grades. You can

well how important this was to me, since it helped greatly to restore my confidence and of course, it enabled me to continue me to continue my studies.

The early twenties witnessed the development of the spectacular movie houses - the grand ornate theaters - some of them still used for movies and stage production in the large cities. To accompany the silent movies, large orchestras consisting of 25 or more musicians were employed. In St. Louis, among the popular orchestra leaders were Jean Rodamick, Ben Rader and Dave Silverman. The orchestral scores were carefully selected and synchronized with the action. There is no doubt that many of the theater enthusiasts were attracted more by the music than the movies. This was particularly true of Dave Silverman, who led a small group of musicians at the Delmar theater. He was a brilliant pianist, very dynamic and a great showman. His elaborate improvisation at intervals when the rest of the orchestra remained silent was remarkable. During my Junior year at the medical school, I was asked to substitute for Silverman for 2 weeks while he was convalescing from a operation on his hemorrhoids. I accepted with great misgivings, for I realized that I could not fill his shoes as a soloist in the orchestra. However, I needed the dough, and I thought, what the hell, I'll give it a try for I had nothing to lose except by pride.

Well, I succeeded in doing that for in retrospect, I was a miserable failure. I did well enough while the orchestra was with me but during the solo periods, I was awful to say the least. One particular number still remains a thorn in my memory. Perhaps you remember the tune called Nola. There is a passage giving the piano a little finger calisthenics. For the life of me, I could not master this passage and each time it occurred I stumbled. I practiced this at home and run it through without difficulty but with the orchestra, I developed a mental block - and bingo! I feel flat on my face. I survived the two weeks. The audience and the orchestra must have be relieved to get Dave back, and I also was happy to get this episode behind me. This experience vindicated my decision to drop music for medicine, for now I realized more than ever, that I would have never made it.

Although I suffered a set-back in my ego, I comforted myself in the fact that music was only a means to an end and that my interest in Medicine came first. This enabled me to endure four years of work in the theater and concert work which at times demanded a great deal more than I could produce. One such episode which lasted almost a year was with Ben Rader, who conducted a 12 piece orchestra then playing at the swank Missouri athletic club in St. Louis. The members of the orchestra were mostly musicians moonlighting from the symphony orchestra led by Gunn. The former pianist, an outstanding musician found greener fields elsewhere, and Rader was forced to take me for lack of better talent.

I was always uncomfortable in the ensemble for like Silverman's orchestra, the demands on the pianist was quite great. I was frequently given solo improvisations during the playing of popular tunes, and again, I lacked the sophistication of the modern school to enable me to perform satisfactorily. I believe that now after 50 years I could do better, for I have become more

proficient in the use of modern harmony and have had more experience in improvising. What concerned me most, was the Sunday evening concert given to the diners of the club. A soloist usually took part and often, without any preliminary rehearsal, I was handed a piece of music, often hand written, and, deserted by the orchestra, I had to accompany the singer. What, I could not read, my ear saved me, for I managed to keep up with the singers and reached the last note at the same time they did. However, I would hardly call it a brilliant performance. I had much to be thankful to my old alcohol-soaked Italian tenor, who taught me to become an accompanist the hard way.

Regardless of the difficulty and frustration of this job, it had its advantages. Since the orchestra played only two hours a night, except for Sunday and radio broadcasts, this enabled me to put more hours into my studies and my grades in all subjects that year were very satisfactory. So again, I put my pride aside and worried through a year of demanding work. My main regret to this day was the terrible suffering I inflicted on the Buss violinist. He was the Buss concert-master of the St. Louis Symphony and a dyed in the wool musician. Too often for comfort, my interpretation of the bass notes on the piano conflicted with his and the dissonance almost killed the poor guy. How he managed to survive without psychiatric help is beyond me. He died shortly afterwards, leaving me with a feeling that I may have had something to do with his premature demise.

So much for my rubbing elbows with the famous, a venture I am sure was not a wise one, but it served its purpose, for I was better able to evaluate my potential as performing pianist and thankful that I chose another profession. However, it did not lessen my love for music but rather enhanced it. This much I am thankful for- that I managed to survive it without too much trauma.

One experience I enjoyed very much was a year in a vaudeville theater on Grand Ave- the Rialto. The demand on musicianship was not great. One had to read fast for at the end of each week, a new show was launched. The orchestra of eight pieces was led by Pyrer, a former band leader and violinist. The next and last two years of my career as a musician was spent under his direction.

Vaudeville, in those days was still very popular. Its death throes came in 1927 with the introduction of sound movies. In 1925, it played to full houses. We played 9 performances a week, with matinees on Saturday and Sunday. It took up too much of my time, but since I had entered the Junior year in Medical School, there was less demand for home study since the courses were clinical I managed pretty well. A typical show consisted of an opening number by the orchestra and a series of short act followed in rapid succession and announced by bill boards placed just outside of the stage. There is no doubt that this type of entertainment developed from the London Music halls but with an American twist. A

bit of burlesque added a touch of humor. Phonographic acts were rarely seen and the humor was fairly clean. Acrobats, singers and magicians were usually billed and were quite popular. The orchestra leader had to be on his toes at all times for the incidental music had to synchronize with the action on the stage. Despite the fact that we had only one short rehearsal, there was seldom a hitch in the performance of the orchestra. The work was comparatively easy without much tension and I enjoyed the action on the stage as well.

In my senior year in Medicine, I had a stroke of luck. In St. Louis at that time there was only one theater-the Majestic, that was taken over by a drama group of professionals very much like the ACT in San Francisco. The union required them to have an orchestra of six who played an opening number and during intermission. This was bonanza for me, since I had ample time to study between acts and the demands of our skills were minimal. The director was my friend, Mr Payor and we got along famously except for one unfortunate incident.

I was well along in my Senior year when I was asked to have a portrait taken for my class book. On one Saturday afternoon matinee, I thought I would sneak out and have this done and be back in time for the intermission. I did not give enough time for the street car transportation, and when I returned, the orchestra was already in the pit without me. I slid into my seat at the piano, and was greeted with arrows and daggers by Payor. I suspected that he thought that I was up to no good. My action could have resulted in a stiff fine by the musician's Union, however, when I explained what had happened, I managed to still his anger but I felt a deep sense of guilt and always remembered this incident as something I should have avoided.

The theater was located very close to the Skin and Cancer Hospital. A Dr. Montrose Burrows was conducting some research in Cancer. He was famous for his original work of growing cancer cells of human origin in tissue culture, although Alexis Caell of the National Cancer Institute tried to steal the credit by placing his name on the published report. Dr. Burrows was a kind, affable person and gave me all the facilities I needed. I did most of the work in the laboratory after theater hours leaving me few hours for sleep. However, I enjoyed the work immensely since it involved creative effort and I felt that a career in Medical research would be a interesting one. But this is not the purpose of my little thesis so I will not dwell on it.

My four year course in Washington Unverity was drawing to an end. I obtained a fellowship in Pathology at the University of Minnesota which commenced shortly after graduation paying me the meager sum of \$62.50 a month for the first of three years. I decided that this will have to do, and to avoid any further work as a professional musician, I rendered my resignation to the local no. 2 of the musician's union. I did not want to be tempted to work any longer as a musician, for I wanted to spend all of my

times preparing for my chosen profession. What a great relief it was to have my evenings free to do as I wished in my work and not divide my interests.

About six months after I had resigned from the Union, I received a letter from the secretary of the Union, informing me that a former employer in my first few years as a solo pianist in the Movies had testified that I had played for him under union scale. They accordingly fined me \$1,000.00 retroactively, which was 995.00 more than I had in my bank account. I sent back the letter with a note to the effect that since I was one of many who worked under scale at that time for the nickelodeons could not afford more and that since I was no longer a member of the Union, I suggested that they use the buck of this notice and letter and wipe their friggen arse with it.

That officially ended my career as a professional musician, but I did not much care at the time, for 90 percent of the Musicians were deprived of their career. In 1927, Al Jolson ushered in the Era of sound movies with the Jazz Singer and this was the end for the majority of musicians who depended on the theater for work. At the conclusion of their contract, only a handful of musicians were able to survive. I felt sorry for them, but grateful that I could give it up now for I had succeeded in a new and interesting life in the Medical field. However, I owe a great deal to those with whom I worked in music, the joy of participating in an era never to be repeated again and the many happy memories I retain of my twelve years as a professional piano player.

I have never lost my love for music. Despite my desperate financial obligations in the early years in the medical profession I always managed to rent or own a piano. The art of improvisation never left me and seemed to improve as my knowledge of music increased. I could sit for hours at the piano and let my subconscious mind take over with an easy flow of music some of the thematic sequences were quite interesting. At the age of 52, I decided to fill in my knowledge of music with a study of harmony and counterpoint. I consulted the professor of Music at the Sacramento State College. James Adair, the head of this department reluctantly accepted me after I had completed a year in basic harmony with one of his assistants. This I did, and for the next 12 years I took private lessons with Adair. He proved to be an excellent teacher and taught me the basic principles of counterpoint and composition. A student of Hindemuth, he leaned towards modern dissonance in his writing but unlike some of the more radical deviationist the basic structure of his music was traceable to the traditional harmony particularly the linear harmonic pattern of Bach.

After two years, I was writing two part fugues with rigid regard for contrapuntal harmonic structure. On one occasion, after having completed a short composition, he looked quite pleased and asked me if I ever thought that I could write like this. I told him that I had never had any doubts of this since writing came

spontaneously and without much effort to me. Encouraged by my progress I took a sabbatical leave hoping to put all of my energy into the study of musical composition. In London, I did some work but made little progress. I had little success in Paris and Vienna because of language barriers. After a couple of months I returned to New York and enlisted in the Juilliard School of Music. There I was placed in a class with youngsters in elementary harmony. Since I had gone through this phase of my education, I left after a couple of months and returned to Sacramento. I rejoined my medical group but continued to receive some instruction at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

I tried to enlist as a student of the great French composer, Milhaud. He was kind enough to give me an interview but was not very encouraging since he felt that I was too old. He suggested that I sit in with one of his classes composed of a small group of talented students. I accepted his offer and after an morning session, I realized that Milhaud was right- that I was much too old, and that I could no longer hope to reach any degree of perfection in musical composition.

At this time, I was rescued from my dilemma by an offer of a full time position in research at the University of Calif. School of Medicine- a position which I accepted gratefully, for I was very tired of my practice as a clinical Pathologist. My work took me into the field of Radiation Biology. The work was quite creative and demanding. I had little time for creative work in music or additional programmed studies so I drifted away from this project and lost continuity with it. However, I did derive great pleasure in improvising at the piano which now had greater meaning for me since I had acquired some knowledge of composition and counterpoint and even now, I can relax at the piano, play Bach, Chopin, Beethoven with a greater appreciation and better interpretation than when I was young although I must admit that my technique is begining to suffer for my finger joint continue to stiffen - a natural complication for a man in his middle eighties. However, despite these handicaps, I can still pick up the music of the old ragtime era and play it with a deep feeling of joy as it transports me back to my youth and the wonderful era of the silent movies, the lovely ballads which still haunt me, and above all the happy music-ragtime.