



Remembering Paul Brodie

PAUL BRODIE
"THE AMBASSADOR OF THE SAXOPHONE"
 April 11, 1934 - November 19, 2007

Bala, Ontario, August 1986



Eugene Rousseau

My professional association with Paul encompassed nearly four decades. During that period I had many opportunities to hear his presentations, as well as numerous occasions to engage in conversations with him. No one had a greater passion for the saxophone than Paul, and he approached every appearance with enthusiasm – an exuberance that was contagious. The most memorable time I spent with Paul was our December, 1968 meeting in Chicago. It was during this meeting that he articulated his vision of the establishment of a world saxophone congress. It came to fruition in conjunction with the Midwest Band Clinic during the following year. The World Saxophone Congress, thanks to the dream of Paul Brodie, had become established. §

While it was the saxophone that brought us together, Paul Brodie and I quickly transcended that defining limitation and launched a life long friendship on many levels. I'll leave it to someone else to chronicle Paul's remarkable professional accomplishments. I greatly prefer to celebrate the ebullient optimism that he brought to all of his life. Larger than life,



James Houlik

full of life, and a lover of life, Paul Brodie was confident and comfortable in his skin. During over forty years of friendship, Paul and I enjoyed fabulous times together in each other's countries and in Europe. We pursued great food together, conducted animated conversations and, above all, we laughed. Paul had a wonderful sense of humor and over time he and I developed a repertoire of shared experiences and stories, some zanier than others, that would bring on tears of hearty laughter when revisited.

Generosity was truly the hallmark of Paul Brodie. He was supportive of anyone who was making an effort to get something done. Over the years he offered me great advice, he was instrumental in arranging for my very first recording, and he introduced me to individuals around the world many of whom have played vital roles in the unfolding of my professional life. And there was no quid pro quo intended, sharing alone seemed to bring Paul the greatest pleasure. In a business where pettiness and jealousy are not uncommon, Paul preferred to be a positive force and a supporter of the efforts and accomplishments of other. I never sensed a brief moment of

pettiness or jealousy on his part, and I relished the purity of his enthusiasm for all that I've undertaken as a musician. I visited with him in Toronto shortly before his death, and true to form he went out of his way to provide some useful information relative to a recording project that I currently have under way. As I think about it, Paul Brodie was probably the most completely positive soul that I've met on my personal journey.

Paul and his wife Rima had something better than a textbook marriage. What a team! They accomplished so much in their life together, and the level of their mutual respect and support was inspiring and rare to be sure. To spend time with Rima and Paul was to experience what a partnership might be.

And so, I mourn the loss of my good friend, while being so grateful for the times that we had together. I'll miss his burly hugs of greeting and parting, and I'll miss the warmth and richness that he brought to my life. §



Daniel Rubinoff

When I first met Paul Brodie in Toronto, I was at a crossroads in my career. I had just returned from France after studying with Jean-Marie Londeix and had a strong desire to continue concentrating on the classical saxophone. A composer friend of mine invited me to composer Srul Irving Glick's 60th birthday concert which took place in

February, 1995. Paul Brodie gave a wonderful performance of Glick's *Suite Hebraique No. 3*. After his performance, I met him and gave him my business card. The next day I received a friendly call from him inviting me to come to his studio to perform for him.

The next week I was playing for Paul and his wife Rima in their Eglinton Avenue apartment, which would be the site of weekly visits for the following year. He praised my performance but said he thought he could help me with some aspects of my playing and also teach me about the "career." I immediately agreed and began taking lessons.

My impressions of Paul are vivid to this day. The warmth of his personality has always been an inspiration to me and I felt renewed in his presence. He made an extra spot for me in his already crowded weekly lesson schedule and those lessons from 8:00-9:00 p.m. on Tuesday evenings were one of the reasons why I have a successful career in music. Since I was an advanced student, Paul dispensed with the usual methodology and repertoire of technical work, and began to prepare me for a debut Toronto recital. Along the way, however, he incorporated his fundamentals based teaching style while we tackled some of the standard repertoire. Specifically, Paul worked with me

on achieving a greater sense of rhythmical subdivision: indeed, every note can be subdivided to provide the musician with the utmost rhythmic control. No teacher had ever instilled this in me, and it is something I pass on to my students at every lesson. With regard to tone quality, he encouraged experimentation with reeds, mouthpieces, ligature placement and other improvements to the sound. I remember Paul's adage, "If you can improve your tone by one percentile with this, and one percentile with that, you have made a big difference."

Paul was the first teacher who really insisted on tonal purity. He always lauded Marcel the sound of Marcel Mule, with whom he studied in the 1950s. He compelled me to become extra fussy about sound. This careful attention raised my musical standard. In the area of expression, he wanted me to increase my range of emotions and exaggerate my musical gestures. This exaggeration, he claimed, would help make the music come alive. Our work in this area helped build my confidence and my love of performing. Paul enabled me to make the transition from a primarily chamber music performer to a soloist.

Paul had an extensive knowledge of saxophone repertoire, and, he always knew what audiences loved to hear. He, like his friend Daniel Deffayet, didn't like most abstract contemporary works, which he referred to as "bird droppings." He gave his students much advice in terms of repertoire, and I know that his advice helped certain audiences accept the saxophone as a serious classical instrument. He introduced me to many wonderful pieces by Charles Koechlin and Rudy Wiedoeft, and the important transcriptions of Bach, Handel and Schumann. It was Paul who suggested that I obtain my ARCT Performer's Diploma at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto. This recital was so successful that I was awarded the Gold Medal in Orchestral Performance. After winning the medal, Paul helped me make the most of it. He impressed upon me the importance of taking anything special in one's career, and making sure everyone knows. In his words, "If you are hunting elephants in the jungle, you better have an elephant gun, not a fly swatter." Consequently, I mailed out as many notices of my award as I possibly could. Like always, he told me, "don't worry, anything you do will come back to you many times over." How true those words were!

Paul was a godsend to me as a young artist struggling to launch a career. He, more than anyone else I have known, understood instinctively how to be a self-promoting artist. He coached me on how to make a telephone call, write a letter, create a press release, give a concert, respond to criticism, run a recording session, produce a CD, and many other things too numerous to mention here. In short, Paul gave me all the tools to have a successful career in music.

In addition to being generous, he was open-minded. When I decided I wanted to go out on my own, Paul supported me and agreed that I shouldn't be a carbon copy of him. We had

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different ideas about interpretation, tone, vibrato, etc., and he welcomed these differences and never criticized my career direction. He applauded my work as a composer and freelancer, because, in his words, “today’s musician must be like an octopus, with eight different things on the go at any one time.” As the founder of the World Saxophone Congress, Paul put me in touch with many people in the saxophone and musical world, thereby enlarging my network of connections.

He even encouraged his entire saxophone class to take lessons from me when he retired from teaching privately in 1998.

Paul was always there for me personally. I have lost count of how many times he took me to lunch to talk about life as well as my career. My wife Heidi and I always looked forward to socializing with Paul and his wife Rima in Toronto, or at their beautiful summer home in Bala, Ontario.

He was like a father to me, offering me support, guidance, and a kick in the pants! He was a true pioneer who promoted the concert saxophone without the help of the conventional music industry. Where would many of us saxophonists be without his amazing efforts on behalf of our instrument? It was an honor to know someone like him and I consider myself incredibly fortunate to be a recipient of his experience. If I can accomplish a fraction of what he has done, I will consider myself successful.

Paul was physically tired during my last few visits with him, but he never once complained. In late September of last year, he acted as Master of Ceremonies at a meeting of the Toronto Saxophone Society. He told me afterward that he felt like a grandfather to all of us who performed that evening. After the concert, we dined together and there was a wistfulness and tranquility about him that was beautiful to behold. I sensed he knew that his time on earth was coming to an end. He will always be close to my heart, and will continue to be an inspiration to me for the rest of my life. §



David Gibson

I became a serious student of saxophone at a young age, growing up on the prairies of Nebraska in a small town called Gilead, Nebraska. While there were plenty of jazz and early rock ‘n roll saxophonists around to stimulate one’s interest, there were very few “classical” saxophonists. At the time Marcel Mule transcriptions for alto saxophone were about the only things available for practicing, which I purchased at the Mosher Music company in Lincoln, Nebraska. Indeed there was precious little published music for saxophone of any kind, whether method books, or pieces to play. And in terms of “classical” saxophonists there were very few recordings. I recall purchasing one of Eugene Rousseau’s early LPs, and a Marcel Mule LP, and that was it. A short time later I became aware of a new talent in Canada who specialized in playing “classical,” and his name was Paul Brodie. Like most young saxophone

players, I quickly gravitated toward jazz, and playing in a local dance band at the time run by Charlene Bambauer.

Moving the clock ahead twenty years or so I became reacquainted with Paul Brodie through my work with *Saxophone Journal*. In the mid 1980s Paul came to Boston, Massachusetts to present a masterclass at New England Conservatory of Music. He came to our home west of Boston to visit and stay a couple days and that was our first actual face to face meeting. My family loved Paul immediately and enjoyed having him in our home. The photo above is Paul giving my our son Scott Gibson (age 2) his very first saxophone lesson. He invited us (my wife and 2 year-old son Scott), to visit them at their lakeside home in Bala, Ontario north of Toronto on Moon river. A year or so later, on a fine summer’s day, we drove up to Bala from Massachusetts. The little guest house we stayed in next to Paul’s home, Paul proudly announced, “Was the same one that Jean-Marie Londeix stayed in when visiting a couple years earlier.”

Paul was a fan of *Saxophone Journal* and would call me at home on occasion to ask if the magazine had been mailed yet. He got nervous because he needed his *Saxophone Journal* fix. But in our conversations Paul would also talk about a new young artist who he liked, and would recommend that we interview them for *Saxophone Journal*. As far as I understand these artists never knew that Paul called me on their behalf and he didn’t want any credit. He believed in helping young people with their career, and what better way to gain more notoriety than appearing in *Saxophone Journal*. Paul promoted young people without expecting any thanks. That was Paul’s way.

A couple years later Paul returned again to Massachusetts to do another masterclass in Boston and stayed with us at our home again. This time he brought an original Adolph Sax made saxophone he had recently picked up in France, and a brand new silver plated Selmer alto saxophone. He was crazy about both instruments and played them in our kitchen to show me, and my son Scott, how they sounded. I was impressed by the quality workmanship of the old Adolph Sax saxophone, and the new Selmer was a stunningly beautiful instrument.

The next day I drove Paul into Boston to meet Joseph Viola and Emilio Lyons, something he had always wanted to do. I remember vividly walking down the sidewalk in Boston on the way to Berklee College of Music to meet Joe with Paul carrying his Adolphe Sax saxophone in a gig bag. Suddenly Paul stumbled on a piece of sidewalk sticking up and fell down, sort of. Paul managed to hold on to the Adolphe Sax saxophone, falling head first, and jumping in the air, where he flipped completely head over heels, landing neatly on his feet. He saved his Adolphe Sax from being damaged, or worse yet, destroyed. It was a scary moment for both of us. Off we went to see Joe.

I’ve met a lot of interesting people in my work with *Saxophone Journal*. Paul Brodie was unique and special with a demeanor that typified pure class and dignity. He was humble, gracious, caring, and thoughtful. I never once heard him be critical of anyone or anything. He also had a delightful sense of humor.

Judging from his stories told to me I think Paul’s proudest achievement was traveling to France in 1958 and studying saxophone with Marcel Mule in Paris. He arrived in January of 1958 to be exact. It was a trip to remember because Paul went by ocean liner (the Queen Elizabeth), and had very little money in his pocket. But it was a lifetime memory for him that he treasured.

My friend Paul Brodie “The Ambassador Of The Saxophone” will be best remembered for co-founding The World Saxophone Congress (with Eugene Rousseau) in 1968. The first World Saxophone Congress actually took place December 17, 1960 at the Sherman House hotel in Chicago, Illinois.

Paul Brodie did it all in his lifetime of saxophone playing and teaching. He helped open up China to classical saxophone playing of the “West.” Perhaps the culmination of his achievements came in October 1994 when the Prime Minister of Canada conveyed upon Paul Brodie Canada’s highest honor given to a private citizen, the “Order of Canada.”

Before closing I’ll share a little side story. I recall eating supper at Marcel Mule’s home a few years ago in Sanary, France. During my visit the only thing Marcel had in his house that related to his glory days of saxophone playing and teaching, was the tribute given to him at the 4th World Saxophone Congress in 1974 held in Bordeaux, France (where Marcel Mule was the guest of honor). There were a lot of signatures on the presentation, which Marcel had framed and hanging on a parlor wall. He was so proud of this award. I have no doubt that Paul Brodie, and Eugene Rousseau, played a role in making that happen for the “Matre.”

And so, my friend Paul Brodie, we who knew you well are thankful for having known and discovering in you a kind and gentle man who just happened to play saxophone. As stated in the Order of Canada, “Only a small number of individuals succeed in leaving a permanent mark in their field of endeavor, and hence, on their country. By your unstinting pursuit of excellence, you raised the sights and standards of contemporaries and inspired others to follow in your footsteps.” §



Ted Hegvik

Who could possibly describe Paul Brodie as a person? The place to start would be; not his amazing saxophone career, but his marriage to Rima, the beautiful, nurturing relationship that traveled the world. Always together, always having the time of their lives, always greeted and surrounded by love, she was with him every step of the way. And he, in turn, supported and promoted her own unique, artistic genius arranging art shows for her miraculous fibre sculptures, often in cities where he performed.

Their daughter, Claire, shared the mutual adoration, and time with them was forever memorable filled with laughter, lively conversation, and always good food. Paul loved life and he faced it exuberantly. You could see it in his warm and universal friendships, and of course, it poured from his saxophone.

He was generous without reservation. Everything he knew, everything he had learned from life’s problems to music and saxophones, he shared at a moment’s notice. He truly listened to others, and I’ve never heard him give advice that, in the end, wasn’t right on.

What a good friend he was — the best. We both studied with Larry Teal at the University of Michigan in the 1950’s and remained close over the next fifty years. He was best man at

my wedding, we did clinics at each other’s festivals, and we got together in cities where our paths crossed; always good times, and always good food. I guess that’s our legacy.

Paul had a wonderful presence; warm, magnanimous, unforgettable, and audiences of all ages responded to that presence. He would stand there, direct and honest, charming without histrionics, and talk and play. And we all listened. We just liked being in the room with him, every one of us.

How I miss that expansive soul, that big heart, that mellifluous voice over the phone when he had heard a new saxophonist or a new piece of music. And yet, somehow, that miraculous presence still remains, as strong as ever — a gift to all of us who ever knew him. §

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