

Saxophone Spotlight

Arnold Ross Brillhart Celebrates 90th Birthday



SELMER ALTO (CIGAR CUTTER)



GRAFTON WHITE PLASTIC ALTO



BRILHART ALTO SAXOPHONE

My close associates at Rico International suggested that I make some new photos of me and some of the saxophones that I still have as of September 30th, 1994 (my 90th birthday). These three instruments are a Selmer alto (Cigar Cutter) serial #15111, a Grafton Plastic alto (ivory color) serial # 10758, and a "Brilhart" alto (that I made in the 1940s) serial # 10500. Each of these saxophones has its own interesting history which I have summarized.

SELMER ALTO (CIGAR CUTTER)

In 1930, I purchased this Selmer alto at the Selmer-Conn retail music store, located in New York City on 47th street. The store was managed by William Shine. Mr. George Bundy, then President of the American Selmer Company, was a good friend of mine and, when he first showed me this horn, I said to him, "This octave mechanism looks like a "cigar cutter." It had a small, brass,

flat plate with a round hole in the center, and to me it looked just like an old-fashioned cigar cutter. Today, many years later, this model is still known as a Selmer Cigar Cutter.

GRAFTON WHITE PLASTIC ALTO

This Grafton white plastic alto, serial # 10758, was made in England. Because I was one of the leading saxophone players in the radio and recording field, they wanted my opinion as to its playability. Also, Charlie Parker became involved and we both had many meetings comparing my Grafton with his. He told me that he liked the way mine played better than his. So we experimented with Brillhart mouthpieces and, after playing these on both horns, I gave him a Brillhart Tonalin ivory colored alto mouthpiece, which he placed for many years in the 1940s. He also borrowed my Grafton and played it during this period. Later on he signed with King.

BRILHART ALTO SAXOPHONE

The Brillhart line of mouthpieces became so popular in the 1940s that I decided to make a line of Brillhart saxophones. I contacted a French saxophone manufacturer to tool up for an alto made to my specifications under the registered trademark of Brillhart. The Brillhart alto shown in the photo is the only saxophone ever manufactured under the trademark of Brillhart. Using the Rico-Royal M5 mouthpiece shown in the photo, it is a fine playing combination.

In 1967 I sold the Brillhart Mouthpiece Company and all trademarks to the Selmer Company and decided not to make saxophones. Selmer still owns all of the Brillhart trademarks and I have been an exclusive employee of Rico International for the past twelve years. Oh, yes, I decided to keep these three instruments until I get "old." §