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David J. Gibson

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Ed Calle
by Bob Lasky
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I first met Joe Viola in the summer of 1969 at Berklee School of Music, after my discharge from the U.S. Navy, where I played saxophone for four years. It's been awhile since I studied with Joe but I remember those four years well. Joe was a welcome island of warmth in a big city. I liked Joe immediately, and I quickly learned that his technical capability on the saxophone was, to put it as plain as I can, amazing. I'd done a lot of playing before studying with Joe but he impressed me from day one.

After Joe retired from Berklee College of Music we renewed our friendship and frequently went to jazz clubs in Boston. Joe was great fun to go clubbing with. Many times we'd walk into a club and young people would come up to us and say hello to Joe. Most were former students, but that always seemed to be the way with Joe, young people loved him and he was very popular in Boston.

In January 1990 I called Joe and asked if he'd like to go to France and visit Marcel Mule in Sanary, France. We also made plans to attend a gathering of saxophonists in Angers, France. In April of 1990 we were off to France. We landed in an airport north of Paris, rented a car, and headed into the city. We both got the brilliant idea of using a compos as our guide to make sure we headed the direction we intended. We checked into a Holiday Inn hotel for two days while exploring Paris. Joe wanted to visit the Paris Conservatory of Music, and the Opera House, which we did. Being Easter week Paris was very quiet and enjoyable. We also visited the Eiffel tower enjoying the spring flowers.

Three days later we headed west out of Paris for the saxophone gathering in Angers, France. On the way out of town, someplace in Paris, Joe and I entered a Parisian rotary and drove madly around in a circle chasing other cars. Joe watched the compos and said, "Take that road!" Off we went, arriving about 5 hours later in Angers.

Two days later we took the train back to Paris, where we sat with John Sampen and enjoyed his company. After a one-day layover sat in Gar Lyon to catch the famous fast train out of Paris to the south of France.

We arrived in the south of France and rented a car for our short drive to Sanary. Funny, there were reed cane plants everywhere growing along side the road. Like some kind of magic we arrived at Marcel's home. Marcel was working outside in his front yard and he greeted us with a very big smile. It was around noon. We spent the day visiting with Marcel. Joe was so thrilled to be with Marcel and I enjoyed watching the both of them reminisce. He was in heaven. Interesting; the only thing in Marcel's home that indicated he had ever played saxophone was the nice presentation, given to him at the first World Sax Congress in Chicago. I also video taped an interview with Marcel Mule.

That evening Joe, myself, Marcel, and his wife, ate supper in Marcel's dining room. We had lot's of bread, and 5 bottles of wine from which we all drank and laughed. It seemed so very special to be sitting at the table of Marcel Mule, with Joe, and celebrating the moment. It was one of those times where you savored every moment but struggle to recall the details. I'm sure it was a thrill that Joe never forgot, and I still remember well. At supper Joe asked Marcel if he ever played his saxophone. Marcel, in his fairly decent English and as he shook his head strongly, said, "No, it is under my bed. I haven't played it since I retired."

I'd like to thank Jane Ira Bloom for playing soprano saxophone at Joe's funeral. Thank you George Garzone for playing tenor sax at the reception afterward and dedicating "the sound" to Joe. Thank you Dr. Harry Drabkin for creating an energy force for a possible portrait of Joe to be hung at Berklee College of Music for future generations to see who Joe was. In his words, spoken to me in my 1984 *Saxophone Journal* interview, which were also spoken at Joe's funeral, "I really enjoy teaching and I take a sincere interest in my students. To me that's my job. I'm very concerned with what they do as a player, I really am!" Never in my wildest dreams did I think those words would be Joe's final epitaph. Thank-you Alice Viola for sharing with us such a supreme human being of undescrivable love and respect. We will never forget you Joe! §