

# Eulogy to a Gentleman of Jazz

One of the painful aspects of reporting the Jazz Life is writing about those whose deaths leave permanent scars on the jazz community. Fats Waller, Charlie Parker, Sidney Bechet, Lester Young and Billie Holiday are still missed. And it will be a long time before I, for one, will be able to adjust to the absence of clarinetist Frank "Big Boy" Goudie, who died here last week.

Goudie was not one of the great jazzmen. He never pretended to be. But I think most of us who knew him felt we had a great deal to learn from his example. Unlike some of the most celebrated musicians, who can become so involved in jazz that outside reality ceases to exist for them, Goudie was a true man of the world.

It is as a man, rather than as a musician, that I think of him now. Six and a half feet of serenity and home-grown wisdom. A born gentleman, one of the last of the old school. The kind of gentle man who apologized for using the word "damn," mixed company or not, although he could say the word in half a dozen languages.

Goudie lived alone but

was never lonely. He knew people all over the globe, from the bottom to the top rung of the status ladder, and he accepted them all on even terms.

He was a student to the last. Though he seldom found an opportunity in San Francisco to use his excellent command of languages, he went on reading books in Spanish, Portuguese, French and German, just to stay in shape.

On the job, or even in jam sessions, other musicians soon learned to listen to Goudie's quiet suggestions. They were based on a long lifetime of playing music, from New Orleans to Paris, from Rio de Janeiro to Prague.

And when he played, the clarinetist gave it everything he had, no matter how many fumbling amateurs might be blowing alongside him. In the New Orleans tradition, he tried to make every phrase and every note count. He had done just the same in Europe, where he recorded with Django Reinhardt, and in South America, where he learned to play the real samba.

Jazz was a vital force in Goudie's life. Few musicians his age (he was 64)

were ever more eager to play. Yet, I think the greatest lesson he bequeathed to those who go on living the Jazz Life was simply that people are more important than music.

Had he lost the ability to create any music at all, Frank Goudie still would have left us with the image of a man who possessed far more important qualities — dignity, integrity, compassion, gentleness, a thirst for knowledge and a love of life as it really is.

He'll be missed.

—R. H.

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