

Richard Hadlock, Obituary (1927-2022)

Richard Hadlock of Berkeley, California was born in Schenectady, NY and spent his childhood in rural New England. He attended high school in Rio de Janeiro, 1945-49 AND played in an Army band in Arkansas, 1946-47. Dick studied soprano sax with Sidney Bechet, 1947-48; clarinet with Garvin Bushell in 1952-56; and had further studies with Lee Konitz.

His mentoring by Sidney Bechet is significant, yet less than you might expect. He received nominal instruction but didn't care for being treated as a personal assistant. Yet flashes of the master's tone and technique were undeniable in Dick's soprano saxophone sound.

He performed with the [Red Onion Jazz Band](https://syncopatedtimes.com/the-red-onion-jazz-band-a-hot-time-in-new-york-city)

<https://syncopatedtimes.com/the-red-onion-jazz-band-a-hot-time-in-new-york-city>. And after 1958 in the San Francisco Bay Area he played with Pops Foster, Elmer Snowden,



Kid Ory, Joe Sullivan, Muggsy Spanier, Ralph Sutton, Burt Bales, Amos White, [Frank Goudie](https://syncopatedtimes.com/frank-big-boy-goudie-pt-3-of-3-san-francisco-1956-64)

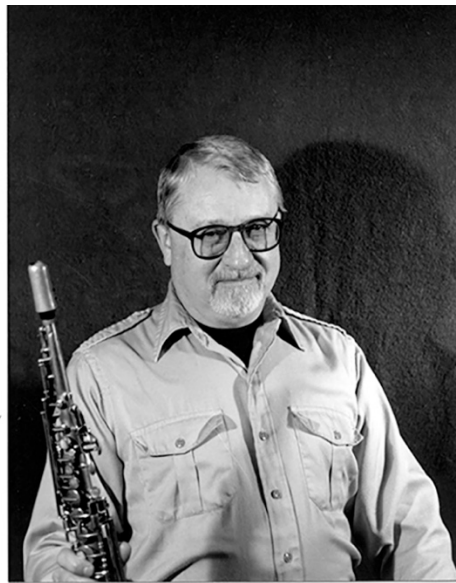
<https://syncopatedtimes.com/frank-big-boy-goudie-pt-3-of-3-san-francisco-1956-64>, Roger Bell, Dave Dallwitz, Ade Monsborough, Bob Helm, Bob Mielke and many others.

If you read Hadlock's landmark book, *Jazz Master of the 20s* (Da Capo Pres, 1988) or his well-considered liner notes, you might have thought of him primarily as a brilliant jazz journalist. He wrote for *Down Beat* and *Metronome* magazines. But he also owned and edited *The Record Changer* magazine (1956-58).

Richard worked for RCA and Fantasy Records (1956-60) and was jazz editor for the *San Francisco Examiner* (1961-65).

You might easily think of him as primarily a jazz musician. Hadlock played most of the saxophone family and clarinet exquisitely. First graduating to professional musician in 1957, he

was hired by Turk Murphy to replace the departing Bill Napier and handed a book of some 300 tunes to learn in a week.



In the 1980s and '90s, Hadlock's interpretive *20th Century Masters* performance series educated and entertained Bay Area audiences. Informative and tuneful, the concerts celebrated great American songwriters Jerome Kern, Cole Porter, Fats Waller, George Gershwin and Duke Ellington.



Those who listened to his *Annals of Jazz* radio programs broadcast on various San Francisco radio stations since 1959 think of Hadlock as a broadcast oracle.

Yet others may have mistaken Mr. Hadlock for a primary school teacher. He taught kindergarten much of his adult life in the

Berkeley City schools. On hiatus from music in the late 1960s, he took a job at a one-room school on an Indian reservation in rural Northern California. There he and common-law wife, Ruth, were the sole teachers and support system for the Native American pupils.

In the San Francisco Bay Area during the 1970 and '80s Richard (he preferred that to Dick in later years) performed frequently with cornet player Leon Oakley, pianist Ray Skjelbred, trombonist [Bob Mielke](https://syncopatedtimes.com/farewell-to-bob-mielke-photo-essay-and-rare-audio) and in [Dick Oxtot's bands](https://syncopatedtimes.com/vintage-music-with-style-dick-oxtot-golden-age-jazz-band-1974-94). Singers Barbara Dane and [Barbara Lashley](https://syncopatedtimes.com/barbara-lashley-a-love-affair-with-song) were friends and colleagues.

Hadlock developed an uncanny ability to emulate Lester Young's distinctive tenor saxophone tone, cadence and rhythm. Yet he always brought a fresh musical perspective to the Jazz idiom.

Broadcasting to a specialized listening niche, he and I were technically competitors. But we respected each other as colleagues.

I regarded Hadlock as an accomplished Jazz master, inspiring elder and deep well of wisdom. Many times, he supplied key insights helpful to a project. Or gifted me an unexpected but astounding audio artifact.

This only hints at the gentle humanity, humility, generosity, skill, dedication and exquisite music making of Richard Hadlock.

