

REMEMBERING MERTON AND NEW YORK

Robert Lax

N.Y. places
I went to
with Merton:

Childs,
103rd
St.

Gold Rail.

West End
Cafeteria
Bar.

A drugstore
(Tilson's)
on the corner
of 116th &
B'way

"the girl
place".

The drug
store
on 113th
where we'd
ofteneat
lunch,
ice-cream
& chocolate

Robert Lax

sauce on
toasted
pound
cake,
milk
shakes,
"burn
one".

Down
town:

The Hickory
House.

Nick's.

The Famous
Door.

Jimmy
Ryan's
(52nd St.).
Low-
ceilinged
place
Count
Basie
played in.

Who played
at Jimmy Ryan's?

Teddy
Wilson,
Wingy
Manone,
The Higgin-
bottom
Brothers,
Pee Wee
Russell

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(Sunday
afternoon
Jam
Sessions)

good
clarinet
&
bass
with
Teddy
Wilson.

At
Hickory
House:
Joe
Marsala,
Woody
Herman,
Adele
Girard.

Place near
the Taft,
49th St.
West?
Where
Hot Lips
Page,
Zutty
Singleton,
Joe Blanton
played &
Billie
Holliday
sang.

Cafe Society
Downtown:
Billie Holliday,
Lena Horne,
Zero Mostel,

Robert Lax

comedian & M.C.
Edmund Hall,
clarinet
(played at
Famous Door,
too).

After school
when I was
living at the
Taft:

The Barberry
Room,
Rum drinks.

Sardines
for lunch.

Sardi's, once or
twice, for a
drink.

World's fair.

Cuban village,
Dutch pavillion,
French pavillion,
Brazillian, too, at
least once.
The Chicken
Dock.

Sometimes
to the zoo:

Eat at zoo's
terrace
restaurant.

Harlem:
The Savoy,

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The Apollo,
(Renaissance
Ball Room?
Maybe just
once).

Don Tilman's
Bar:

drinks
& conversation;

a Gibney dis
covery.

Savoy:
Chick
Webb.
Louis
Armstrong.

We'd go
to the Theater
Palace (downtown)
too:

Duke
Ellington,

Judy
Garland.

We'd go up
to Nyack
on the
Hudson

& drink
beer.

Robert Lax

Down to
the
GAC,
German
American
Athletic
Club.

And
to eat &
drink
beer
at Luchow's.

Did M ever
go to Spivy's
Roof?

Maybe once.

He'd come up
to the Taft
but we wouldn't
stay there for
long.
We went up
to New Haven
one Sunday
to drink on
the Yale
campus.

Books
Merton
gave me:

*The
Mooks
& The Gripes.*
James Joyce.

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Brighton Rock,
Graham Greene.
*The Dark Night
of the Soul*
& *The Ascent of
Mt. Carmel,*
St. John of
the Cross.

Once he told
me about:

*The Allegory
of Love,*
C.S. Lewis.

*The World's
Body,*
John Crowe
Ransom.
*Poems of
Dylan Thomas.*
*Perennial
Philosophy
& Ends & Means*
Aldous
Huxley.

Later:
Jorge de Lima
(Peruvian Poet).
Fernando Pessoa,
South American.
Ernesto Cardenal &
Cesar Vallejo
(the one
who said
he'd die
on Thursday).

Robert Lax

Painter he
knew:
Reginald Marsh.

one he
liked:
Dali.

Juan Gris
too,
Joan Miro,
Picasso.

Big enthusiasm:
Blake.

Other:
Gerard Manley
Hopkins.

Other:
Crashaw.

Other:
Southey.

Also:
John Skelton.

Spenser?
I guess
so.

Milton?
I think
so.

Dante?
Yes.

Piers
Plowman?
Yes.

Chaucer?
Yep.

Rabelais?
Yep,
plenty.

I think
Rice, Merton,
Slate, Gibney,
& I liked
Rabelais.

M was glad
when someone
compared
"Cables to the
Ace" to
Rabelais
later.

Liked Auden's
*Christmas
Oratorio*.

He came to
like
Gilson
&
Richard
McKeon
& Maritain.

Liked
Dan Walsh.

St. John Perse.
Leon Bloy.

 Who did
 he like
 in the
 movies?

Joan Bennett.
 Hedy Lamarr.
 Lucille Ball.

H. Bogart.
 J. Carroll Naish.
 Paul Guilfoyle.
 J. Edgar Kennedy.

Charlie Chaplin.
 (Sydney Chaplin).

Wheeler & Woolsey.

Laurel & Hardy.
 Edw. G. Robinson.

The Marx Brothers.

The "Cold in the
 Mountains" guy.

I don't think he
 liked "El Brendel".
 Mischa Auer? Yes.

Eng
 lish
 traits

French
 &
 Medi

ter
 ran
 ean
 traits,

New
 Zeal
 and
 ones.

English:
 Liked
 beer,
 kippers,
 sardines.

Could
 talk
 limey
 to
 English
 sailors.

Liked
 Evelyn
 Waugh,
 Cyril
 Con
 nel
 y,
 C.
 Day
 Lewis.

Shakes
 pear,
 lots
 of
 English
 authors.

Robert Lax

Sophis
ti
cation.

May
be
Cam
bridge
brand.
Liked English
films.

Lit
tle
mous
tache.

Tweed
or
worst
ed
busi
ness
suit.
shirt?
short
tab
collar
strip
'd
shirt.
Con
ser
vative
neck
tie
(by
our
stan
dards).

Remembering Merton & New York

He had
a reined-
in
or
con
ser
va
tive
style.

He
was
man-
like,
boy-
like,
but
not
child
like.

Not
"rug
ged
ly
in
di
vid
u
al
ist
ic"

but
not
a
de
pend
ent
type
either.

(you'd
charac
ter
ize
him
as)

in
de
pen
dent
(in
his
style).

Bright?
Quick?
Sensitive?
Yep.

Funny?
Yep.

Sur
viv
or
traits:

Always
trying
to
give
up
cigarettes.
Talked
of
bland,
mild,
nour
ish
ing
foods.

Had
only
a
com
ic
in
ter
est
in
giv
ing
up
al
co
hol.

Did he
"like
life"?
Yeh.

Was
he
a
spir
i
tu
al
ly

in
tel
lec
tual
ly
hard
y
type
?
Yes.

Was
he
anything
like
a
wide-
eyed
eas
i
ly
in
flu
enced
hari
krish
na
kid
?
No.

Maj
or
char
ac
ter
is
tic:

(gen
u
ine)
live
li
ness.

French:
did things
he could
afford to
do
(not run into
debt
not end the
evening
too broke
to get
home).

Maybe
approached
novel writing,
poetry &
drawing
(as much
or more)
like French
man than
English man.

Moral
concerns:
English.

Aesthetic
approach:
French.

Loved
Picasso.

Robert Lax

Liked
Dali's
*Dream of
Venus.*

Liked
Waugh.

Forgot to
mention
he liked
Kierkegaard
& Rilke
(poems &
the journal)
&
the
*Duino
Elegies.*

Kafka
?
Yes.

Trial
?
Yes.

Don't
remember
much he
said about
K.

*Great Wall
of China.*

Liked
Bajan
Calypso

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music.

Wilmoth
Houdini.

Lord High
Executioner.

Childlike
voices.

Childlike
vocabulary.

Ch-like
ingenuity.

Liked
(sort
of)
South
African
Trans
vaal
songs
like
"brandy
leave
me
alone".

Ellington.
Basie.
Arm
strong.

Ellington's
band,
fat,
well-
fed,
contented.

Gave
 music
 special
 (happy
 sound)
 feeling
 of
 a group
 like
 "heaven
 ly
 city"
 feeling
 in
 Havana.

(These
 dis
 coveries)
 seemed
 (French)

Med
 i
 ter
 ran
 ean

sur
 viv
 al
 ist
 tem
 per
 a
 ment.

Poetic
 side,
 prose
 side,
 never
 great
 ly
 at
 odds.

A feeling
 everyone
 sensed
 with
 Merton
 was
 his
 okay-
 ness.

Not a
 type
 to come
 to your
 door
 at 3
 in the
 morn
 ing
 &
 fall
 in a
 heap
 on the
 living
 room
 floor.

Much of
 what he
 did
 (if relaxed

Robert Lax

in company)
 he'd do as
 though it
 were a
 parody
 of what
 he was
 doing,

as though
 he were
 imitating
 (someone
 in the
 comic
 strips)
 or Mack
 Sennett
 film,

the way
 you
 might
 open
 a
 bottle
 of
 champ
 a g n e
 as a
 parody
 of some
 o n e
 doing
 it
 &
 (take
 the
 wham
 my
 off
 any

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even
 slight
 ly
 pre
 ten
 tious
 activities).

Prais
 ing was
 done
 by
 parody
 too;

he'd
 say
 some
 thing
 (any
 lit
 tle
 sad
 thing)
 was
 "Capital!"
 (&
 laugh).