

# THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY CHAPTER #90

P.O. BOX 29587 • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20017-0787

---

Terrell A. Allen, President  
(202) 529-5972

Jack Towers, Treasurer  
(301) 559-4126

September 18, 1992

Hail and farewell, O beloved Ellingtonians:

The reason for this quite treacly salutation is two-fold. The "hail" is to welcome you to the beginning of our '92 and '93 season starting Saturday, October 3rd, 8:30 p.m. at Omega House, 13th and Harvard Streets, N.W. The meeting will be hosted by Jack Towers who spent the greater part of his summer looking for Ellingtonia that is new, to us at least, and he found a treasure trove of various items - unreleased, unissued recordings, second and third takes of material that we know so well in its original state, concerts, etc, and Jack assures us that we'll be royally entertained.

Now the "farewell" signifies that after thirty-plus years I am retiring as president of Chapter #90. As Clinton and Gore have said (also President Bush) it's time for a change. The acting president for the new season is our vice president, Ted Shell and he will serve until the election of officers this fall or next spring or whenever the constituency decides.

For those of you with better and more important things to do than read this twaddle, I'll sign off and you can get your ears in tune for Duke's music on the Third. For the rest of you I crave (beg) your indulgence while I Reminisce, in and out of Tempo, for a short space.

These thirty years have been a "gas" for me. I've enjoyed every minute, day, week and year of serving the Chapter. I've met so many wonderful supportive people who have become my very good friends. I was introduced to the society by some buddies who dropped me off at Ted Shell's house on Otis Place, N.E. I haven't seen them since! The first two people I met were Charlie Cooley and Grant Wright who welcomed me into Ted's house, introduced me to the host, poured me a libation and left me to wallow in those glorious Hi-Fi sounds. Maurice Lawrence was president then and later on Juanita Jackson who married Toby Hardwick not too long after she became president. I decided then that this was my type of organization and laid plans for a bloodless coup to take over the presidency, which I did a few months later. And so it has remained, up until this day,

There are so many pleasant memories and I don't have the time or space to mention them all. Maybe one day I'll write a monograph for my family's archives detailing in depth all the wonderful experiences I've had in dealing with you. But in the meantime I'll jot down a few things that stick out in my mind.

**ELLINGTON IS FOREVER.**

Before we acquired the frat house as a meeting place we used to gather at different members' homes: Helen Frazier, Ann Sacre, Don McCathran, Grant and Cooley, Maurice Lawrence, Ted Shell, of course and others too numerous to catalog, and a few whose names I can't recall were all very hospitable. Thanks to all of them. Helen and Sacre served ably as secretaries for so many years as did Grant Wright as treasurer until his passing and Jack Towers since then. I've always been especially fond of Don McCathran for many reasons - not the least of them being his affection for the great Lunceford Band. Everybody loves the Duke and rightly so, but so few people remember the Lunceford classics like Margie, For Dancers Only, Uptown Blues, Walking Thru' Heaven, et al. Sonny Greer said in an interview that Jimmy's band was the only one that gave Duke any real competition. So true, so true. I remember the battle of swing they had in Philadelphia in 1938.

Ellington Conference '93 has a registration fee of \$150 - which sum I've put aside for the August '93 confab, but do you remember what the registration for Ellington '83 (the first one) was? Twenty - count 'em - dollars!!! Up until that time I didn't know or realize there were so many Ellington enthusiasts from all over the world. And each year the conference got bigger and bigger. Thanks to Don Miller, Jerry Valburn, Jack Towers and others, the meeting took wings and the momentum will carry over into the 21st century, at least.

I'll always have fond memories of certain special people (and I can't name you all here, but you will be in my memories for sure) like our resident intellectual, Teddy Hudson, who writes weighty tomes on things musical and philosophical, our archivist Dick Spottswood, the Earl Hines specialist Jan Rossen, my soul brother Bill Flemmons who remembers the good ol' days, Patricia W. who is special to all of us and all the thanks in the world to my typist, editor and copyist sweet Genie who's had the unenviable task of interpreting this scribbling and putting it in readable form for you to ponder.

Then there is the Contingent - fine upstanding, musically hip young men from Baltimore who joined our chapter some years ago with the idea of starting a chapter in their home town, but it never materialized. However, they've continued to support Chapter #90 regularly and punctually. Thank you - G. Romeo, Levi, Smitty and Stanley for your dedication.

We still miss John and Ann Callanan with whom I spent hours listening to Mozart, Fats Navarro and the Duke (not necessarily in that order) and Ray Knight who remained enamored of the Glenn Miller orchestra no matter how much I teased him about it. I do admit to liking a couple of Miller things like Ida and Rhapsody in Blue that Ray gave me tapes of from his personal collection.

Ellington Letter - Page 3

I remember two big parties that we threw for the Band in which everybody had a fantastic time and nobody wanted to go home. One was at Jack Fauntleroy's house where the good judge donned his chef's hat and grilled T-Bone and Porterhouse steaks for his guests.

The other big "do" was at Ted Shell's in the early 70's when Ellington's band played at the Shoreham. All the Ellingtonians were there and Duke showed up with Stanley Dance about 3 a.m. and stayed 'til it was over. We had a time getting Don Byas and Paul Gonzalves poured into a cab to take them to their hotel! And that was about noon the next day. Duke was always gracious about attending our little affairs when he was in the area and one Saturday night he sat at the piano in Omega House and played solo piano for "days" with Dick Spottswood egging him on. And not a tape recorder in the house!!

Mustn't forget to thank the DJ's in our area for their support of the music and the Chapter. Felix "the Cat" Grant has contributed so much that we just can't thank him enough. Then there is Yale "the Voice" Lewis and Willis Conover from Voice of America, my friend Rusty Hassan and Faunee, Bill McLaurin and Gwen Redding from WDCU, Rob Bamberger from WAMU, Lillian Green, Sigidi, Denise Oliver from WPFW - they all played the music and encouraged Chapter #90 so much. Thanks, thanks, thanks to all of you beautiful people.

Mustn't forget the Smithsonian's Dr. John Hasse and his staff, especially the beauteous Marquette for their contributions to Ellington '89 and more importantly the live jazz they've been promoting, featuring music by all the great Big bands of the 30's - 40's.

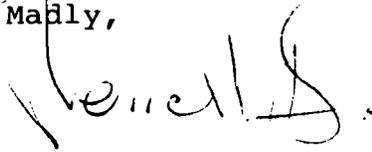
I also mustn't forget the '89 Conference and the Doug Richards Orchestra, Herb Jeffries, June Norton, Jimmy Hamilton, et al. Fabulous, fabulous, fabulous. Thanks to all the folks who helped make it a huge success.

Thanks to all of you, who on learning of my recent illness sent cards, visited and prayed for me. Helen Frazier is my candidate for sainthood in this dispensation. She went out of her way to fix delicious dishes to titillate my reluctant appetite and she succeeded - all too well. My appetite came back with a vengeance and my doctor had to put me on a diet. God bless you, sweet Helen. I'm not 100% yet, but I'm getting there and I thank you all for the different expressions of your concern.

Ellington Letter - Page 4

I'll stop here - right now - till next time. You've been gracious and patient and loving and tolerant and I'll always love you

Madly,



Terrell A. Allen

P.S. Sundry facts and metaphors - apropos of nothing.  
Controversial but indisputable.

- Sonny Greer was the greatest drummer the Duke ever had. Nobody before or since was his equal.
- Duke's favorite girl-singer (and mine) was Ivie Anderson. Beautiful voice, beautiful person both inside and out. reminded me so much of my sweet Mama, Mabel Tussy Allen, same height, same general petite build and same luscious shade of brown.
- Ellington's most satisfying extended work - the Latin American (Mexican) suite.
- His best pop-song, Satin Doll. I never tire of it.
- Chapter #90's most exotic culinary artiste - Betty Dennis.
- The Chapter's most empathetic couple - Mac and Angela Grimmer.
- D.C's most gracious and svelte hostess - Marian Shell.
- The Chapter's most prestigious name - Roland Hayes.
- Ted Shell is a darn good dentist. No ifs, ands or buts.
- When are the Bradleys and the Sinkfields going to grace us with their presence again? They pay their dues years in advance, but we never see them!!
- The most precious infant on the Eastern Seaboard? My newest grandbaby - "tooch-nik" which is Russian (I think) for pretty girl or did I make that up? Anyway, her proper name is Taylor Ashleigh Allen and she was born Jan. 1st, 1992. Dig them initials!!
- Last item - I have the gut feeling that after all these years Imogene is not an Ellington fan and thinks Basie is the greatest. What heresy!!!