

Extended Chronological Bio:

Zan Stewart was born the only child of Elizabeth Wilbur Stewart (1903-1992) – a stage, film and radio actress in the 1930s and 1940s and a fine chef – and Cassius Lynford Stewart (1907-1997), an amateur pianist, guitarist and pen and ink artist who made his living as an accountant, including stints in such Hollywood studios as Universal and RKO. Zan's maternal grandmother was Helen Clifford Wilbur (1878-1937), a playwright and radio host who wrote under the name Elene Wilbur.

Stewart was raised in an artistic environment in which he was exposed to the finest examples of classical and jazz music. "Some of my earliest musical memories are of listening to Dizzy Gillespie's 'Dynamo' (also known as 'Dizzy Atmosphere'), Nat 'King' Cole's 'Ke Mo Ki Mo' and 'Old McDonald Had a Farm' and Prokofiev's 'Love Theme for Three Oranges,' all on 78 rpm," he recalls.

Stewart's parents' aesthetic interests also included modern art, stage drama, film, dance, and top level journalism; as a child, he was exposed to all these expressions. There were pieces by Matisse and Kandinsky on the walls; his parents read progressive magazines such as *Harper's*, *The Atlantic* and *The New Yorker*; films such as Howard Hawks' "Red River," were shown at home; and he attended performances by the great mime Marcel Marceau and fabled actors Alfred Lunt and Lynne Fontaine.

Stewart first expressed the inclinations stimulated by this rich environment as a musician, briefly studying piano at age five before five years of clarinet studies, some with the noted teacher Ola Ebinger, who also taught Eric Dolphy, and some with Joe Vitale, who introduced him to marches, like "The Washington Post" by John Philip Sousa. "I particularly enjoyed playing marches because of their vibrant rhythm," he states.

Discovering jazz as a mid-teen via recordings by Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins and Thelonious Monk, and a thrilling live performance by Count Basie, Stewart ended a five-year hiatus from musical studies at age 15 and returned to clarinet, followed by alto saxophone at age 16. He picked up tenor saxophone, his primary instrument, at age 22, when he was living in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury from 1966-1967 in a jazz household where such stellar musicians as saxophonist Mike Morris, trumpeter Tom Harrell, bassist

Henry Grimes, pianist Garon Richey, and pianist/bassist Don Thompson played.

“That was an exciting time as many fine musicians came to the house and there were two seven-night-a-week jazz clubs on Haight Street: The Jukebox and the Haight Levels,” relates Stewart.

In 1967, while living in Gibsons, B.C., he was briefly in a group called the Powerhouse Soul Band, which featured the fine bebop-based tenor saxophonist Steve Wolfe and which, on one occasion, played for a dance held by the local Sechelt Indian tribe.

“Steve and I walked into the crowd playing our horns on Booker T’s ‘Green Onions’,” Stewart recalls. “That was my first experience of the electrifying effect music can have when you play close to the listeners.”

In 1968, Stewart returned to Southern California, and played in a jazz/fusion band led by guitarist Bob Walker while studying music at Ventura College from 1969-1970. Then after a year in the Bay Area, he came south once again, acquiring a BA in Film Studies in 1974 from the University of California Santa Barbara. He subsequently performed with a band named Crescent that played at Baudelaire’s, a club on the seaside city’s main drag, State Street. On one special night, the great piano player Albert Dailey, then touring with Stan Getz, sat in with the band.

“That was my first experience playing with a world class jazz musician, and it changed how I viewed myself as a musician,” says Stewart. “Albert solidified the rhythm section and the band really swung hard for the first time, so I got to find out what the music was supposed to feel like.”

Later, around 1976-1977, the saxophonist also played in the band “Steamroller,” which included the ace drummer Gary Frommer, who had recorded with Art Pepper and Terry Gibbs, and played with Getz, among many others. “We worked four nights a week,” Stewart says. “It was a great time.”

During this period, he was also a jazz dj on KCSB-FM and KTMS-FM.

Also in the mid-1970s, Stewart started to write jazz profiles and other informative pieces on jazz for the *Santa Barbara News & Review*, a free weekly. “A friend was approached to do a story on pianist Hampton Hawes, but he didn’t know who Hamp was, but I did, so I did the interview and wrote the story,” he remembers. “That started my association with the *News & Review*.”

Stewart's interest in writing, story, and language no doubt began as a child when he was read to by his mother. She had a ringing, musical voice and superb diction, polished in part by her years of stage work, first at Stanford University (from which she graduated in 1927 and where photos of her stage exploits appeared several times on the cover of *The Stanford Daily*) and subsequently as a working professional.

As a writer, Stewart first entered the public sphere around 1958, after he and his family moved from Los Angeles to the small Ventura County hamlet of Ojai, whose police blotter was occasionally humorously offered in squibs in *The New Yorker*. Around age 14, he put together three or four editions of a small weekly newspaper after he had been given a toy printing press as a gift. Later, at Nordhoff High School, he was sports editor of the school's *Ranger Record* newspaper and *Topa Topa* school yearbook for two years. He wrote his first jazz review in 1960, after traveling with his parents to Monterey for the Monterey Jazz Festival. The review appeared in Paul Affeldt's Ventura, Ca.-based *Jazz Review*.

Among the artists Stewart wrote about for the *News & Review* were pianists Dailey, Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea, saxophonist Wayne Shorter, and trumpeter Chuck Mangione. He sold his first piece, a reworking of the Mangione article, to *Musical America* (later to be known as *Musician Magazine*, for whom he also wrote) around 1976. "Making that first sale demonstrated to me that there was a possible future in music journalism," he states.

In December, 1977, Stewart moved to Los Angeles, and worked at KBCA-FM (105.1), then the city's lone commercial jazz station. Toward the end of his KBCA stint, in 1979, he began to compile listings for the burgeoning *L.A. Weekly*, for which he wrote through the mid-1990s. It was through the *Weekly's* listings that the jazz critic Leonard Feather brought him onto the *Los Angeles Times*, for which he wrote profiles, reviews and listings through 2000.

"Writing for the *Times* was often an intoxicating experience," he relates. "Now so many people were reading what I wrote and I soon found out the effect of a positive review in such a major newspaper: it brought people out to the clubs, or helped with album sales. In my heart, I was always a jazz advocate, not a jazz critic."

In 2002, Stewart moved to West Orange, N.J., and wrote for the *Newark Star-Ledger*. He left the paper and daily journalism in June,

2010, to return to the West Coast and focus on playing and teaching music.

During his writing years, he also wrote for the magazines *Down Beat*, *Swing Journal*, *Jazz Life*, *Musica Jazz*, *Jazziz*, and *Stereophile*.

The major jazz artists he profiled for these publications included Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins, Art Blakey, Freddie Hubbard, Ray Brown, Elvin Jones, Quincy Jones, Jimmy Cobb, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Lew Tabackin, Ornette Coleman, Shorter, Hancock, Tony Williams, John Scofield, Joe Lovano, Joshua Redman, Christian McBride, and scores of others.

He also wrote numerous album liner annotations, including the major box sets *The Complete Sonny Stitt Roost Recordings* (Mosaic, 2001); *Sonny Rollins: The Freelance Years* (Milestone, 2000); *Horace Silver: The Blue Note Years* (1999); *Joe Henderson: The Blue Note Years* (1996); and *Eric Dolphy: The Complete Prestige Recordings* (1995). Single album annotations appear on recordings by Cedar Walton, Bobby Hutcherson, Joe Magnarelli, Jim Snidero, Tabackin, Bob Mintzer, and many others.

For the Dolphy box, Stewart received the ASCAP–Deems Taylor Award for journalistic excellence in 1996. He was also awarded the Los Angeles Jazz Society’s Leonard Feather Jazz Communicator Award in 1994, which included a Certificate of Commendation from the City of Los Angeles.

“I am extremely grateful for the recognition my work has received,” he says.

One offshoot of Stewart’s writing life in Los Angeles was teaching an introduction to jazz class for the Learning Annex. The class gave students an insight into what jazz was, and how it worked. Years later, students would tell him how much the class had helped their enjoyment of the music.

In 1997, he also had the opportunity to host a presentation at the Monterey Jazz Festival spotlighting jazz music in the films of Clint Eastwood, and those with scores by Dave Grusin. Both artists were on hand, and offered interesting commentary after clips from their films were shown. At the same festival, Stewart also interviewed the noted arranger-composer Gerald Wilson, whose orchestra he first heard at age 15.

For some years, during his time as a writer, Stewart also was a photographer. His pictures appeared in the *Times* and the *L.A. Weekly*. The Gallery page of his web site features some of his work.

Throughout his writing career, Stewart continued to play music. He led groups in Los Angeles in the 1990s, playing at Le Café, Pedrini's Music, and Jax. He also sat in scores of times with saxophonists Pat Britt and Wilbur Brown during their long run at The Cat and the Fiddle in Hollywood, performing with those aces plus drum master Clarence Johnston; pianists Art Hillery, Dwight Dickerson, Jane Getz, and Freddie Redd; bassists Jim Gannon, Louie Spears and Kim Gardner; and drummers Gene Stone and, on one occasion, Mitch Mitchell, of Jimi Hendrix fame.

"Those experiences at the Cat with Pat, Wilbur, and Clarence and the others were, pardon the pun, instrumental in my learning how to play, and how to swing," he notes.

The musician also played in New Jersey and New York City from 2006-2011, appearing at Smalls Jazz Club, Shanghai Jazz, Cecil's Jazz Club, and Trumpets. "Leading a group with jazz notables to a full house in New York on a Saturday night feels quite special," he puts it.

The top-drawer jazz musicians that have played with Zan as leader include pianists Tardo Hammer, Keith Saunders, Rob Schneiderman, Ben Stolorow, and Terry Trotter; trumpeters Magnarelli and Jerry Rusch; guitarists Bob DeVos and Joshua Breakstone; bassists Paul Gill, Bill Moring, Dave Carpenter, Mike Karn, and Darek Oles; and drummers Gary Frommer, Clarence Johnston, Carl Burnett, Andy Watson, Paul Kreibich, Tim Horner, Roy McCurdy, Tony Reedus, and Steve Johns.

Stewart has also shared bandstands in spontaneous situations with saxophonists Frank Morgan, Joe Lovano, Dewey Redman, Lew Tabackin, Andrew Speight, and Lanny Morgan; guitarists Dave Stryker and Peter Bernstein; pianists Grant Levin, Eric Reed, and Mike LeDonne; and drummers Jimmy Cobb, Brian Blade, and Billy Drummond.

The saxophonist has studied with formally with Jim Snidero, Charles Oreña, Dan Willis, Jim Canter, and Victor Morosco, and informally with Joe Magnarelli, Grant Stewart, Charlie Shoemake, Noel Jewkes, and Lew Tabackin.

Stewart plans to make his recording debut soon. Samples of his music can be on the Music page of his web site. For a vintage performance, visit www.smallsjazzclub.com. Click on artists+audio archive, click on tenor saxophone, scroll down to stewart, zan, click to choose which set from a August, 2009 performance you wish to hear.

Of his life in jazz, Stewart says, "I feel so fortunate to have made my living in and around this music I love."