

JOHNNY SIMMEN MATINEE, 26.1.2014

MESSAGE FROM GUNNAR JACOBSEN (USA)

Jazz-Spezialist ehemals bei IAJRC

Dear Mr. Naegeli:

Your e-mail brought back many memories. I met Johnny through IAJRC - International Association of Jazz Record Collectors - when I saw him listed in the directory with the same taste in Jazz we both had. I wrote him first with a typewritten letter. Shortly thereafter I received a handwritten letter from him which surprised me. I thought he would have written me with a typewritten letter. He had a most distinct style of writing, easily readable, outstanding penmanship. The correspondence flourished. Johnny worked for Swiss Air, if I remember correctly, as a baggage handler. Swiss Air had wanted to promote him, but he turned it down. He wanted to have the freedom he had to pursue his interest in Jazz, the music and the musicians.

Johnny wrote about jazz for Swiss Air and he would send me a copy when they came out, which I believe was once a month. He programmed all the segments for the inflight jazz programs. He wrote articles for virtually every magazine in the World. I don't recall the number of articles, but it must be remembered everything was written in longhand!

I visited him in 1994 in Zurich and learned then that he kept a daily diary of everything he heard in music that day! And he continually listened. He lived with his wife in a modest apartment in Zurich. While in Zurich, Johnny introduced me Jorg Koran.

He had come to the United States on a vacation and spent his time with musicians in Harlem. He got to know many musicians and they all respected and loved him.

His writing style was, to say the least, unique and another jazz writer said that anybody who would want to write about jazz should study Johnny's writings. They were masterpieces of prose,

Johnny wrote many reviews of recordings, all of which were gems. I never saw a bad review and asked him why. His reply was to the effect that a bad review would financially hurt the musician and his family and "I don't want to take food away them!"

After several years of corresponding I received a letter from Johnny saying he had to cut back on his correspondence because of his age. In the final years of his life he only corresponded with a few people.

I can truly say knowing Johnnie enriched my life.

Gunnar A. Jacobsen

PS

Much as I would want to attend the Swissjazzorama, but ill health prevents this.