

Brubeck's legacy includes a summer on the South Shore

By Lee Vestal

Dave Brubeck, one of America's great jazz legends passed away this week. Did you know he and his band spent a summer playing at Globin's Al Tahoe Hotel in 1941?

While researching my walking tour of the Al Tahoe neighborhood of South Lake Tahoe I came across Fred Hall's 1996 biography of Brubeck, "It's About Time: The Dave Brubeck Story." According to Hall, they performed at the lake that summer and it makes for an interesting story.

According to Hall, Brubeck, while a student at the University of the Pacific in Stockton he had put together a large band and was playing at many locations around Stockton and San Francisco. In the summer of 1941, during Brubeck's senior year, Frank Globin (Globini according to Hall) hired Brubeck and his band to be the house band for the summer. Brubeck was to play at the hotel (now Rojo's) and at Globin's Chalet on the Al Tahoe pier.



Dave Brubeck circa 1965

Brubeck's brother, who played in the Del Courtney band, had played at Al Tahoe a couple of years before and warned Brubeck of what to expect. Globin would fire the band after the first night and offer them low paying jobs around the hotel; they would play their music for free. Sure enough, Globin fired the band after the first night's performance. Brubeck though, having been warned by his brother, negotiated a better deal. The band would be given sleeping quarters above the dance pavilion at the Chalet and would be paid the door receipts from Saturday night performances. They'd get meals in return for playing in the hotel dining room.

The large band didn't last long in the dining room. Globin complained that the horns were too loud and told Brubeck to "put sand in the horns." Brubeck muted the horns, but Globin wasn't satisfied and told Brubeck to "get rid of the horns!" Brubeck complied; the large band played only on the weekends at the Chalet, while a piano trio played in the dining room. The trio playing the dining room earned meals for the entire large band, which according to Hall was, "rice and green curried lamb, twice a day, for the rest of the summer."

I don't know if Frank Globin and his Al Tahoe Hotel can take credit for busting Brubeck out of the big band and into the small jazz ensemble that made him famous or not, but just like Brubeck's music, the idea sounds good to me.

I think I'll "Take 5" and listen to some music.

"It's About Time: The Dave Brubeck Story" by Fred M. Hall is available at online retailers.

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