

Lifestyles

Pianist enjoys new life in Frederick



Courtesy photo

Bill Jacques, 71, plays piano in his Frederick home recently.

By Jen Reeder
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FREDERICK – On April 3, 1966, a very relieved 29-year-old conductor shook hands with Ed Sullivan in front of a live audience. The young man's 110-person chorus had just pulled off a flawless performance on the country's favorite show.

Over 40 years later, that man – Bill Jacques – recalls the day as if it were yesterday from his home in Frederick.

"The kids were so nervous, and I didn't want them to faint because it was a live show," Jacques says. "It took two to three years to negotiate this four to five minute segment."

The segment was a hit – Jacques has a letter from Sullivan thanking him and commenting on the outpouring of calls praising the chorus's performance. The Archdiocesan Chorus of New York, the best singers culled from 50 schools, performed at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center and the Ed Sullivan Theater. The religious song they sang was so uplifting that Sullivan broadcast it again after Robert Kennedy Jr. was shot a year later because it was more appropriate than humor.

"Music was a big part of my life," Jacques says.

Even now at 71, it still is. Jacques spent 45 years in Cape Cod, Mass., teaching music to K-12 during the day – and gigging as one of the region's most renowned pianists at night and during the summer tourist season.

"He had quite a following on the Cape," says his wife, Marleigh. "He just has to play."

The couple moved to Frederick last year to be closer to their first grandchild, Lisa, and her parents, who live in Louisville.

"We're on a new adventure," Bill says. "There are endless possibilities here."

After a lifetime of walking the beaches of Cape Cod and eating "a

lot of fresh fish and lobster," it is an interesting transition to life in Colorado.

"Growing up, Colorado to me was John Wayne and cowboy movies and mountains and lots of horses and dust and plains. Then we came here during a major snowstorm two Decembers ago. I remember my first experience driving down the main street of Frederick – it looked like a Hollywood set. I was expecting to see a couple of cowboys come out and shoot," he says. "Then, of course, you get to the end of the street and that marvelous rec center, which has become a big part of our life."

He has wasted no time getting involved in the community. Jacques is playing piano in a trio called Natalie and Friends with singer Natalie Ottobriano and bass player Tim Carmichael, as well as in a six-piece jazz combo, the Longmont Jazz Combo. Playing gigs on the Front Range, where even seasoned veterans must compete with students and other green musicians, has been a stark contrast from his experience on the East Coast – his first gig at the now-defunct Jazzy Bean paid only \$12.50. Another time, he was offered to join a group in Boulder for a gig that didn't pay anything, but he was told, "We can get all liquored up" – an offer he declined.

"I'm not making any money but I'm having fun," says the man who has two CDs of his music on the market.

His love for music runs deep – he started playing the piano in third grade. His father promised to pay for the lessons as long as Bill practiced. He didn't, and the lessons stopped.

"He said, 'When you're ready to practice, let me know and we'll continue.' That's the old kind of discipline," Jacques says.

He started practicing, and played in bands in high school

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Reeder's Digest

By Jen Reeder
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I've been a fan of the Tattered Cover, Denver's independent bookstore chain, even before the Manager of Operations, Neil Strandberg, gave me a huge bag of free books to review for my column. Now my love runs even deeper. I am so grateful for the donation that starting next week, I'm going to list one of the reasons why I love the Tattered Cover at the end of each column. If you haven't fallen in love with the store yet, I hope you'll check out one of their locations the next time you're in LoDo, Highlands Ranch or on Colfax Avenue. Don't forget: books make great Christmas gifts!

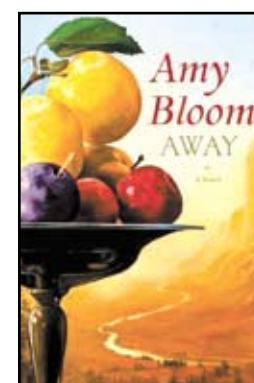
With that shameless plug out of the way, here are three novels that shed light on the Jewish experience in America in very different ways. L'chayim!

intrigue and a host of vividly imagined characters, like his partner Berko Shemets, a half-Tlingit raised as a Jew.

The book is exciting and filled with wonderful passages, such as: "The basement exhales its breath of camphor, heating oil, and cold dust."

"Bina accepts the compliment as if it's a can of soda that she suspects him of having shaken."

"The lady has been in and out of the hospital lately, dying in chapters, a cliffhanger at the end of every one."



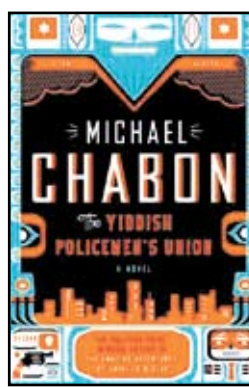
"Away," by Amy Bloom

The editor of Publisher's Weekly wrote that Amy Bloom's "Away" was her favorite book of 2007, so I had to read it. It's a beautiful book that is so well-researched that the characters and situations ring with authenticity.

Lillian, the heroine, is a recent immigrant to America whose Jewish family was slaughtered during the Russian pogroms. The young woman faces a hard life in the U.S. in the 1920s, using her chutzpah – and feminine wiles – to survive by cozying up to powerful Yiddish men in theater.

When her gold-digger cousin arrives in the U.S. and tells Lillian that her 3-year-old daughter is alive, taken by neighbors to Siberia, she starts the long trek home, walking from New York across America and up into the Canadian wilderness. She meets all sorts of colorful characters along the way: a prostitute named Gumdrops in Seattle's Skid Row and a Chinese grifter in a woman's prison were two of my favorites ... these folks leap off the page. And as Lillian parts ways with each of them, Bloom considerably tells how each of their lives pan out afterward – a device I wish more

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"The Yiddish Policemen's Union," by Michael Chabon

Michael Chabon won the Hugo Award for "The Yiddish Policemen's Union," an alternative historical fiction that hinges on the concept: what if Israel collapsed in 1948? He's envisioned a world in which the homeless Jews flocked to a "temporary" safe haven created in Sitka, Alaska. The book takes place 60 years later and two months before Reversion. As the characters lament, "Strange times to be a Jew."

The protagonist, Meyer Landsman, is a shrewd but awesomely flawed homicide detective – he's an alcoholic who lives in a flop house where a child chess prodigy cum heroin addict has been fatally shot. His investigation leads to major plot

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authors would employ.

I love the first sentence: "It is always like this: the best parties are made by people in trouble."

EXIT GHOST PHILIP ROTH

"Exit Ghost," by Philip Roth

Philip Roth's books have won the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize, so it's fitting that his ongoing character Nathan Zuckerman is a renowned writer. In "Exit Ghost," there's a good deal of rumination on writing; it reminds me of the way Ian McEwan did so in "Atonement" – he and Roth are two masters of the craft who can't help but fixate on

the written word.

In "Exit Ghost," Zuckerman has lived in isolation in rural New England for the last 11 years because he started getting death threats in New York City. A prostate cancer survivor, he returns to the city in his 70s for treatment for his resulting incontinence. Zuckerman is swept back into modern life when he sees a woman he knew and admired as a young adult, the mistress of a deceased writer. He impulsively decides to swap homes with a young couple with literary aspirations, and his attraction to the young lady leads him to write a play called "He and She," based on imagined conversations between them.

When he gets the phone number for the mistress of the late writer from an ambitious biographer, he writes, "I dialed her number as though it were a code to restoring the fullness that once encompassed us all; I dialed as though spinning a lifetime counterclockwise were an act as natural and ordinary as resetting the timer on the kitchen stove."

The piano man plays on



Courtesy photo

Bill Jacques, 29, is congratulated by Ed Sullivan on April 3, 1966.

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and college. He wrote the senior class musical at College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass., "which I can happily say we're going to do a mini-version of at our 50th reunion in June. I've gathered together some of the players who are now in their 70s, and we'll see if they can still kick," he laughs.

For the last 11 years in Cape Cod, he had a steady gig at a piano bar.

"Playing in a piano bar is a unique experience," he says. "You're at a grand piano where people eat and sing – you get some good singers, some bad. I probably know 'Danny Boy' in every key it was ever written in – including dissonant keys."

His playing brought in enough income that after he and Marleigh, who taught English as a Second Language, decided to retire, they were able to travel. The couple has been married for 14 years, having found each other after the death of their spouses.

"That's our great love story," Marleigh says.

Since they taught at the same school, they faced an unusual challenge.

"Our courtship took place under the eyes of two faculties (ESL and Music) – not easy at our age," she

laughs.

Bill's talents have made for spontaneous friendships on the road. In Nairobi, Kenya, he played piano with a local Kenyan. Despite a language barrier, they could play music together because they both knew jazz, particularly Count Basie tunes.

"Jazz is a worldwide, international language," Bill says.

Another time in Italy, Jacques was playing piano in a hotel and a crowd of villagers gathered. An opera singer happened by and began to accompany him. When Bill ran out of opera tunes, he just hit chords dramatically and let the singer do his thing.

"It brought down the house," Marleigh says.

Music is also integral to their life in Frederick. Among other projects, Bill is planning a second jazz service at First Congregational UCC in Longmont, which will feature Christian hymns performed in an improvisational manner. He'll also play Christmas music at the hospital during the holiday season.

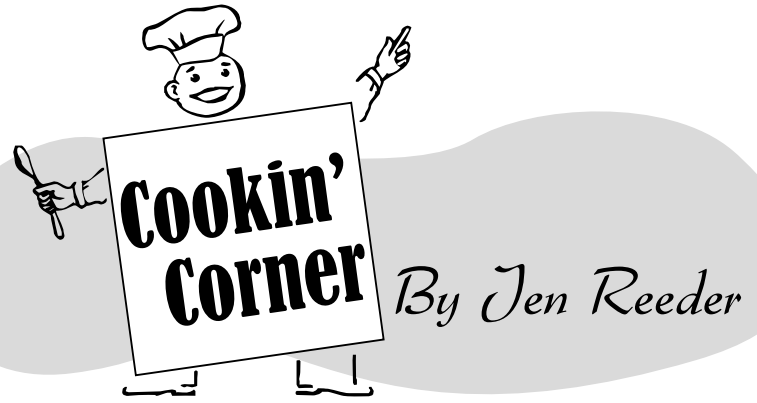
In the meantime, he and Marleigh are enjoying everyday life in Frederick, particularly all of the festivals in the Tri-Town area and meeting new friends.

"I find the people very friendly and supportive," he says. "People are willing to help and welcoming."

He also enjoys the dry weather, the central location and the area's beauty.

"Every time you walk out in your neighborhood, you see the mountains, and they always look different," he says. "Beautiful."

To book Bill Jacques or one of his bands for a performance, e-mail wmjacques@msn.com.



Our production manager, Robin Dadisman, was born in Kentucky, and his mother Betty was born and raised in Anderson County – the home of Wild Turkey. Though she's now a resident of Aurora, she still reads the county's weekly newspaper, and is proud of her roots. This week, she was kind enough to share some dessert recipes using Kentucky's famous product, bourbon. She even sent along this background information:

"Bourbon is made with corn. It was named after the county of Bourbon (which was named after the royal French family). On May 4, 1964, the U.S. Congress recognized Bourbon Whiskey as a 'distinctive product of the United States,' creating the Federal Standards of Identity for Bourbon. Federal regulations now stipulate that bourbon must meet certain requirements. It cannot be imported into the United States from a foreign country. The really good stuff is Wild Turkey, made in Lawrenceburg, Ky."

I'm also including a recipe for bourbon punch that is so good you'll never drink eggnog again.

Kentucky Colonels

1/2 cup chopped pecans
5 tbsp. bourbon
1 lb. confectioners' sugar
1/4 lb. butter

Coating

6 oz. dipping chocolate
1 finger of paraffin

Soak pecans in bourbon for several hours or overnight. Blend sugar into softened butter. Add nuts and bourbon. Refrigerate until firm enough to shape into balls. Chill balls overnight. Melt chocolate and paraffin in the top of a double boiler. Dip balls in chocolate and place on waxed paper to dry.

Bourbon Balls

1 cup vanilla wafer crumbs
1 cup pecans, chopped
1 cup confectioners' sugar
2 tbsp. cocoa
2 jiggers bourbon
1 1/2 tbsp. light corn syrup

Mix crumbs, pecans, confectioners' sugar and cocoa. In a separate dish, mix bourbon and corn syrup; add to crumb mixture. Form into small balls and roll in confectioners' sugar. Store in an airtight container in a cool place until ready to serve.

Southern Milk Punch

3 cups good quality vanilla ice cream
1/2 cup bourbon
1 tablespoon vanilla
Freshly grated nutmeg

Blend the first three ingredients and pour into cups. Sprinkle with nutmeg.

Do you have a great recipe you'd like to share with your neighbors?

Send it to the Carbon Valley Herald and we'll print it with your name and any other info you'd like to share about how to make it. E-mail

Jen Reeder at jenr@carbonvalleyherald.com or call 303-833-2730.