

Whitfield, Edward J., "Remembrances and Recollections of Arnold M Jacobs", T.U.B.A. JOURNAL, Fall 1985

The year is 1933; I was graduated from Northeast High School the previous June 1932. There being no jobs available, many of us went back to school, and I was in attendance at the Jules Mastbaum Vocational School in the music department where Arnold Jacobs (Jake) had already left his mark on the low brass section. The above mentioned schools were and are in Philadelphia, Pa. and had as their principal instructors Meyer Levin and Ross Wyre, both of whom had graduated from the Curtis Institute of Music and both were eminently qualified for their duties.

The Annual contests for the All-Philadelphia High School Orchestra and Band were already out of the way and all the finalists were in their places in the ensemble including Fred Whitley from Overbrook High and myself from the Mastbaum Vocational, both of us on tuba. I had only played the instrument about four months, Fred had considerably more "experience", that of about seven years, so I knew I wasn't "first" tuba. We were both awaiting the arrival of the third man, Arnold Jacobs. Neither Fred nor I knew him personally, only by reputation, and that was considerable! In order to play on a larger tuba he had taken the only one available at Mastbaum - a small E Flat upright model, pulled all the slides out to their maximum, held the fourth valve down and fingered it as a B-Flat!! When he appeared for the first rehearsal of the All-Phila group, he was carrying a large BB-Flat sousaphone, the weight of which curved him down a bit. At the time, he was 5' 10" and all of 135 pounds. Like many of us, he has gained a little over the years!

In proceeding to "warm-up" Arnold showed considerable virtuosity in that among other work-outs he played the solo horn part from Till Eulenspiegel an octave lower than written for the horn. Fred and I never had heard anything like it, and we had our "First" tuba.

Later that year, there were tuba auditions at Curtis Institute and Arnold and I tried out. There was just two of us, and Arnold played the Arban's Carnival of Venice complete with all variations, and won the scholarship with no difficulty. I immediately started lessons with him to prepare myself for whenever there was another opening. I was Arnold's first student, and his students of today may be interested in the fact that the going rate of tuba lessons from Arnold in those days was exactly \$1.00, and some of those sessions lasted all day!!

The Jacobs family was very close and supportive of each other in some very hard economic times. Albert Jacobs, the father, had been a drummer in a theater orchestra and fell in love with the lady later to become Mrs. Jacobs and the mother of Agnes, William, Charlotte and Arnold. Arnold and Charlotte survive. There were all sorts of musical people at the Jacobs' home. One I remember in particular was Arthur Statter, a trumpet artist and student at Curtis under the great Saul Caston. Many times Arnold, Arthur and I played trios together. At one time or another, the entire family was musically inclined to performing, but Arnold has been the sole survivor in the performing field. Another pupil of those years, Abe Torchin (whose brother Jake played solo clarinet in our school band) has achieved prominence both in the performing and teaching fields. In the three years I studied tuba with Arnold, he early on showed the keen analysis of brass problems which has been almost as much his forte as his artistic performances on his favorite York Jumbo CC Tuba. I used this instrument for a week in the John Wanamaker Band while mine was being overhauled. In those years I needed plenty of "straightening out" embouchure-wise and he prescribed the dosage that set me straight. In his own experience, he started on a Boy Scout bugle (as he says) when quite young, and proceeding through the brass instruments until he landed on

tuba, and what a landing! I used to tell him that with his set of lips ( "chops" did not enter the language 'til later) that tuba couldn't do anything else but play!! He, in those years did not accept this idea, but years later after much advanced study both musical and pre-med he acknowledged that I was right, it does take a certain amount of physique to perform as he does on that instrument. Many of our prominent members of T.U.B.A. are of the large, generous mold. Of course, the musical know-how and talent must be there as well, because we have all known physical giants who were not exactly professional in ability. (I tried to teach some.)

After three years of preparation with "Jake" as we came to call him, I tried again for the scholarship and found that no one was accepted that year, however, the instructor, Phillip Donatelli, of the Philadelphia Orchestra told me I was too small for the instrument. Having made my living for some time on it, it was rather a disappointment to find that I was not considered "symphonic material" so I can identify with failure, as well as with a modicum of success as you will shortly read.

After the 1935 auditions at Curtis, I joined the U.S. Army in Panama, the 14th Infantry Band as their eighth tuba player, carrying my double CC York all the way there on the troop ship Chateau Thierry. The baritone player was due to retire after 30 years and I taught myself to play the baritone and trombone working (in the two years that I was in Panama) as much as twelve hours a day, between our band duties and personal practice. Since we lived in an open bay barracks, this required some adjustment, like going out on the shores of the lagoon to practice and competing with the Atlantic Ocean's roar! There was a famous Greek orator, Demosthenes by name, who did this to increase his oratorical ability, voice projection and you can bet that it works! Of course, this was in the time before all the fancy amplifications and electronic miracles, and we had to make our own volume and carrying power. It was a very good school!!

In returning from Panama and spending the next two years in the 16th Infantry Band Under CWO Wm. C. White, Arnold thought me ready for an audition on trombone at the Institute. At the time, he was very disappointed in me for giving up tuba. I was his experiment in teaching, but then I had to make a living also! I had purchased my discharge from the 16th Infantry Band in March of 1939, and in April, Jack Satterfield and I passed our Curtis auditions for a scholarship on trombone with Mr. C.E. Gerhard, the famous and long-serving bass-trombonist with the Philadelphia Symphony. Mr. Gerhard had played first trombone there in 1898 two years before the orchestra was incorporated in 1900 at which time he shifted to bass-trombone and with the exception of a season or two with the New York Philharmonic, was there until he retired in the spring of 1946!!! Quite a career! He was considered by all to be "the best in the business." He was a huge man physically, perfectly coordinated, noble in appearance, and exceptionally particular in his performance with the Orchestra; so we, indeed, had one of the best to guide whatever would become of our performing destinies. As you might guess, we all learned more than our instrument from these fabulous musicians. From Marcel Tabateau, how to phrase properly, to be temperate with wine, from Wm. Kincaid, who helped me and others new in the Orchestra to overcome our awe at playing with Leopold Stokowski's orchestra, although Dr. Eugene Ormandy proved a more than worthy successor at that time (circa 1937). But, I digress, now back to our main topic here, the redoubtable Jacobs.

Contrary to what you might have read in an earlier article in the Journal, Arnold did not have his scholarship to Curtis when he originally left California. The article, by the way is a very good one, but as

you can see, I am slightly more aged than the writer of it, in fact, I'm exactly six months older than Arnold.

There was a musical love affair between Dr. Fritz Reiner late conductor of the Curtis, Pittsburgh and Chicago Symphonies, which produced some beautiful results, especially in the Wagnerian concerts. Many of you may not know, Dr. Reiner's auditions for his conducting students had ,a prerequisite of sight reading a symphonic score at the piano before mounting the podium for the piece de resistance. Not very many could pass that. The two most prominent that come to mind are Dr. Leonard Bernstein and Lucas Foss. There may be others, and it is only because I am far removed from the conducting field that I do not mention them. Arnold continued being my mentor on trombone, because in the off season (when there was one!) from his regular stint he could, and often did play a very fine symphonic trombone. He is one of the very few brass men that I know of who could do a creditable job on all the brass. Now this ability was present in his earlier years, and although Arnold and I are still very much friends, more like brothers, our careers have taken divergent paths, and I do not know whether he still doubles. The Chicago season being what it is, I rather think not!!

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