

INTERVIEW WITH NANCY KING -- JULY 1995

Nancy was born into a musical family in June, 1940 in Eugene, Oregon. As a teenager she serendipitously discovered her vocation while attending an Ella Fitzgerald concert. Nancy developed her craft working with the likes of Ralph Towner, Pony Poindexter and Sonny King and later would sing with jazz greats Dizzy Gillespie and Bill Evans. Her musical association with Dave began in 1990 when Dave accompanied her set at the Cascade Head Festival. Nancy has recorded three CD's with bassist Glen Moore for Justice Records, and has recently released her first CD for Germany's Mons Records.

When Ella came to Eugene with Louis Armstrong in 1954 and they played at MacArthur Court, I went to hear them. I already knew who Ella Fitzgerald was, and the whole family went to hear. I remember her scatting *A Train* for about twenty minutes and never repeating herself that I could tell, and I made up my mind at that point that that's what I wanted to do. I said, "I want to sing like that. I want to be able to improvise on the music like that. I've got to learn to do that." That concert was *it*.

Over the years I always fell into the most appropriate situation with the most appropriate person that I needed. It's always been that way for me. I was always just there and found somebody to work with because I was supposed to be there, because I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing. When you're just going right along with it and you're not being an asshole and you're not in it for the money and you have all the right reasons for being where you are with your music, I think things work out for you. The thing is going to come to you if you're doing the right things. That's how Davey came to me, or how we came to each other; because it was time.

It just happened that we were both playing this festival for Sergiu Luca. Glen (Moore) and I had been playing this Cascade Head Festival for two years. This was like 1990 now, and Sergiu called me and said, "Nancy, Glen has just informed us that he's unable to do the festival this year, but we want you to come." And I said, "Oh. Well then I'll bring my piano player Steve Christofferson." Sergiu said, "Well before you do that I'd like to make a suggestion. I know this young piano player from Houston, and he's just played for the DeCamera Society, and I think you'll love his playing."

I wasn't interested. Not right then. I went, "Well, I don't want to come and play for your thing and not do *my* thing! I don't even know this person. He doesn't even know me. I'm sure he's a great player, Sergiu. You wouldn't even be talking to me about him if he wasn't because you don't even listen to players who can't play, and consider them for your festival. I'm honored but truly, Steve's been with me for fifteen years. Let him come and we'll make a good showing for you." But he wouldn't give it up. He said, "Then maybe you shouldn't play at this year Nancy." I thought, "Uh oh, I'm pissing him off..." So I go, "No, no, now we don't have to be that *drastic*... Tell you what Sergiu. He must be able to play. OK. I'll do the gig. How do we get in touch with each other?" So he said, "Here's his phone number. I've already hired him to do the festival. Why not do your set with him? You'll love playing with him. He's wonderful." So I said, "Alright. OK." He said, "I'll tell you what. I'll send you the tape of our concert in Houston, so you can hear that." And I said, "OK. Cool."

So I had resigned myself to waiting until I had heard this person, and in fact had reserved the right to decide if I'd play with him until after I heard him play. Sergiu shot me the tape. It was absolutely divine. I'd learned that he also sang so I knew that it would be perfect, that he'd know how to accompany because he was a singer himself. After the first eight bars I

knew that all my apprehension was for nothing. I called Davey up and got his answering machine so I left this really offbeat message that made him totally crack up when he heard it, apparently. "Oh dude, this is the weird jazz singer from Portland who didn't think that she wanted to play with you ..."

I didn't know anything about him at the time, but it broke the ice real good because when he called me back later he was laughing when I picked up the phone. So we just hit it off. I knew I loved him after I'd talked with him on the phone and I hadn't even played with him yet. It was one of those things.

So when Davey came up here he didn't know me. He didn't know what I looked like. I went over to the festival a day early just to hear him. I sat in the audience and saw and listened to him, because he was playing alone the night before we were going to play.

When I saw him I just fell in love with him. He had his tuxedo on. He was so nervous at first during the gig. The first tune he played was one of his tunes and it was kind of up, and he played it pretty fast and he made all the notes and it was just splendid. He just flew over the keys and he got out his nervousness, because the second one was a ballad. We were just screaming from the first one, and then he hit us with this ballad. I almost ran up and grabbed him while he was playing but I controlled myself and got through his set.

When he came back to the back room I went in there and I walked up to him and I said, "Oh baby, oh baby, oh baby ..." And he goes, "Oh God, Nancy, is it you?" And I go, "Yes. It's a good thing there's a lot of people here, or I'd drag you out into the grass behind here and we'd have at it!" And he goes, "Ooh baby!!" We got away and stole outside and we're hugging and kissing and laughing and everything and he was going, "Well, actually you're barking up the wrong tree," and he told me about himself. So we laughed, because I'd totally invited him back to my room for a little fun after the gig. We did go over to my place and then went out and had something to eat and hung out with some other kids from the festival and had a wonderful time. We had a wonderful meeting that first meeting and we were tight ever since.

Our gig went fabulously. Davey was telling me how he'd just signed with this record company and he said, "I was wondering Nancy if you would mind if I gave my producer ... his name is Randall Jamail and he's the owner of this company, and it's just starting out and they're really a good company ... " And he told me all the great things; how much money they paid him to sign and all this stuff, and I went, "No shit?" He said, "Yeah. And they're looking for people like you--different people-- people who are really good but nobody knows who they are. Because he's going to have this exclusive label, and we have medical and dental insurance; he's got a million dollar policy on all of us." I was going, "Holy shit! I've waited all my life for this guy! Are you kidding?" And he said, "No, and I think he'll love you. Do you mind if I play him your tape?" I said, "Shit Davey, that would be great!"

And the next thing I knew they called me on the phone, so I have Davey to thank for my being signed to Justice Records. You can credit him with that. Glen came along for the ride; that was the tape that they heard and they liked it, so they signed us both.

It was wonderful from the time Dave and I met until the last time that I saw him and worked that last New Year's Eve with him in Houston at Cezanne. We have that video, and I've asked my son Joel to please make us a copy of that video, even

though Davey looks bad and he's got that dark makeup on he used to wear to make him not look so pale, and his eyes are very sunken in. It's not pleasant seeing him like that, but he's just playing brilliantly, like he did right up to the last moment I'm sure. It had nothing to do with his playing ability, at that point anyway.

When I first met him he was just absolutely drop-dead gorgeous. There's no doubt about it. He was just one of the handsomest men I'd ever seen in my life. And the fact that he was so sweet and so wonderful and so funny ... His personality was such that I just instantly loved him, because he was so witty and so funny and so endearing and so sweet. Totally musical and totally divine. One of the nicest people I've ever met; he would give you the shirt off his back. Whenever I went down to Houston to play he'd always take care of me, just completely. Meet me at the plane, right through to taking me to the airport himself. Picking me up. Making sure I had a nice place to stay. It was wonderful, and I just regret that I wasn't able to spend more time with him.

After the Cascade Head gig I told Sergiu no less than three or four times, "Thank you for not letting me bring Steve. Thank you for insisting that I listen to this person and do this gig with him. Thank you for introducing us!" It was just supposed to be. Sergiu was supposed to meet him in Houston, because Davey was supposed to come up here and meet me; because we were definitely supposed to hook up.

It wasn't long after the Cascade Head festival that I went down to Houston to do that promotional video and to do the studio date with Davey. That was our next encounter, and he'd gotten me signed to the record company. That was our first meeting after that happened. It was like a reunion of sorts. It was great fun doing the video date, knowing that when I stepped out there on the stage Davey was going to be backing me up to the hilt. So my three tunes went off like clockwork. We did *Man in the Oven*, *Cheek to Cheek*, and a ballad, maybe *Some Other Time*. I did *Winter Wonderland* and *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas* too. I was totally relaxed. Only *Cheek to Cheek* ended up on the tape, but that was the best tune we did so that was just as well. The Christmas tunes prompted Randall to get us in the studio that night, because he wanted to make a little Christmas tape for the office and also to utilize me--and Davey--while I was going to be there. So he bought us three hours of time at Sugar Hill Studios that night.

The Tower video date must have cost a whole lot of money. He had no less than three movie cameras and lights and all these people. I've never seen so many technicians and people running around who had nothing to do with the music. Big old trucks and vans and long trailers outside everywhere... You'd have thought he was making a full-length motion picture; he must have paid a fortune just to get that one videotape.

After we finished that video gig we went out and had a really nice dinner and hung out with everybody and partied pretty good. Everybody got like a hundred dollars for doing the video date at the Tower Theater. And then Davey and I went into the studio like around 11:00 and we were there until about two in the morning, just kicking back with Andy Bradley, the engineer. Randall popped in at some point and just--"Hey, what's happening? Are you guys having fun? OK. Good. Well, I'm just checking on you. Goodbye,"--and left. We were right in the middle of our session and we'd already laid down the Christmas tunes right off the bat. And then we said, "OK, we've got three fairly decent versions of those tunes. So now we've got two and a half hours left. What are we going to do with that?" We just started calling tunes, and that's how we got the session. He'd pick one and then I'd pick one. We just went back and forth and used up our three hours and got all those things down. Then I was feeling tired and so was he and so we quit. I'm sorry we quit now because we would have

definitely had an album if we'd kept going. We only needed about four more tunes. But we have what we have and it will last forever. It's some of my best singing ever. That little tape we made is one of the best things I've ever done and ever will do. And if nobody ever hears it, we still have it. We were there. It should be released. Davey just sounds so sweet on there. It isn't that he shows his great prowess on the piano like he does on some of his other things. This is his accompaniment and his love/soft/ballad/burning little duo thing that he did only with a few singers who could keep up with him. Davey was light years away, although he'd touch down every now and then. He was already out there but certainly not lost in the stars!

On the video date we just stepped out there and did it. He and I had played most of those tunes before ourselves. *Cheek to Cheek* became almost a signature tune for us, or *Bun to Bun* as he used to call it. He'd say, "Let's play *Bun to Bun* baby..." We used to back our butts up to each other and do the bump: boomp de boomp. I'd say, "Yeah, you know which cheek I'd like to be cheek to cheek with you on." I still talked very sexual to him even though I knew he didn't care. He'd just laugh and say, "Oh baby, baby. Now you're flattering me again." We had a lot of fun, and he'd humor me. He never made me feel weird that I was teasing him about being straight and being with me. He said, "Nancy, let me tell you something. If I was ever going to be straight it would be with you. If I was ever going to bone a woman it would be with you!" And I'd say, "Oh God, Davey. That's so cool for you to say that. Oh goody! Oh goody!" I'd still dream about him.

He used to come up and just spread-eagle flop on my bed after a gig. We'd get back to my hotel, and he'd just jump on my bed and lay there on his back all spread-eagled out, and I'd look over there and think, "Oh my God..." But I was thrilled that he used to be very affectionate with me. He was always hugging and kissing us, his friends. He didn't have any qualms about hugging and kissing me in public and holding my arm and stuff like that. Davey was not at all a distant person. He was very affectionate and loved that.

He felt very badly that there people who withdrew from him--when he came out and said he had AIDS--who had been affectionate before and suddenly they didn't want to touch him. That bothered him a lot, and it bothered me too. How could people think that because you'd kiss or touch him that you're going to get it? That bothered him a lot. I know it did. It hurt him a lot. It's hard to find that out about some people, how they react to you about that. That's one of the hardest things for people; to not treat somebody weird because of that, because there's no reason to.

On that first trip to Houston I also met Scott. He and Davey were definitely in the relationship by then. It wasn't like they were just dating or had just met. They were definitely with each other at that point. Davey was very happy, and I was very happy and I thought Scott was very cute. I was jealous, of course.

The second time in Houston I was without Glen again and I believe that weekend I did play at Cezanne. Davey had said, "Since you're going to be in town for the Justice party, I'm going to get you on the next night with me at Cezanne." Davey came over and picked me up, and we went over to the Black Labrador and had lunch and met Peter Foley, who managed the place. So we went upstairs and he told me how they had changed the place over from a wine attic and turned it into a club. I loved the place. Peter went on and on about Davey and how glad he was that he was playing there and everything. Then after this great lunch Davey and I went upstairs and rehearsed a little bit, just ran over some tunes and hung out. I thought, "God, this is a great place. How cool..."

Later on that evening when I arrived late at the Justice party Davey was just leaving. Everyone was eating key lime pie. Dinner was over, that's how late I was. Davey had to go play at Cezanne.

He opened the door at the party slightly and he looked out and said, "And who are you?" I didn't know it was him. I couldn't see who it was, and he was disguising his voice. I thought he was the doorman and I go, "I'm Nancy King. I'm a Justice artist. I'm a new person, so you probably don't recognize me." He said, "You sure are a funny looking wench!", and I go, "*What?* What the fuck?!" And he goes, "And you can just tell Randall because he won't even care!" And I'm going, "Who *IS* this fuck?" And he opens the door and sticks his head around and goes, "Hi baby ...", and I go, "Fucking Davey! God, I thought it was some rude doorman." He said, "That's what I wanted you to think. Now get in here because I have to leave!" So he took me around and showed me to everybody and I met two or three people I probably wouldn't have met otherwise.

After the party I had the limousine drop me off at Cezanne on the way home. Davey had one more set. I caught the last set and got up and sang a couple of tunes, and the people really liked it. He said, "Yes, well Nancy's going to be appearing with me here tomorrow night, so this is just a little taste of what you're going to get tomorrow night." The audience was just totally there. They were just real quiet and listened, just dotting on every note. I thought, "God, how cool..."

So he had really primed them as only he can do. It was the way that he did it. He could pull in a country and western person to that place and totally enthrall them. Someone who didn't even know or like or even listen to jazz, and they'd be in there listening to Davey and loving every note. He had that way about him. You just had to love him. He was just that loveable because he was real. We have to deal with so much phony crap, that it's really refreshing to run into someone who's funny and witty and wonderful and deep and strong and free and nice and sweet. He was all those things. I'm sure he had a wicked side. I'm sure he had a frustrating side. I'm sure he had a childish or infantile side. We all do, and it comes out at various times. I can be the most ridiculously childish still about some things. I just amaze myself that I'm a fifty year old person--an adult, getting ready to be a senior citizen--and I'm still just like a kid about some things. So I know he wasn't perfect, but I never saw anything that wasn't perfect.

The first night singing with Davey at Cezanne was rough because of this substitute drummer who showed up at the last minute. The person who was supposed to play didn't show up until almost the last set. The substitute was not Davey's choice for a fill-in, and he'd shown up unannounced. So we had a rough couple sets because this guy was not on our wavelength. Davey and I are pretty out and David Craig on bass was really hot, so we were just hotter than a firecracker, and this drummer was really dragging. It was just frustrating, and Davey was like, "I can't believe this is happening Nancy on your night. I'm so sorry. I'm playing like shit too ... " He just kept apologizing for his playing because he was so mad at this guy. Finally the regular drummer showed up and he and Davey went outside and I guess Davey chewed him out and then said, "But it's cool man because you're here now, and this last set's going to kick ass!" And it did.

Davey could play virtually any gig and I could sing most any type of gig because I've done all the different things too, so we connected up on the performance level even though he was so much younger than myself. He was definitely on the path of what he was doing. He knew exactly what he was doing and where he was going.

He was very stimulating to work with. It was magic from the very first time we played. From the first tune we did to the last time we played together, as soon as he touched the keys it was like magic. It was wonderful. Just totally relaxed, always.

Even if he was looking at music it would be very relaxed. He was totally easy to work with. Totally. And he never made you feel like you were stupid, because I couldn't read; he would have to play things for me rather than give me a piece of paper with it written on. And he took a lot of time with me when I was learning a new tune, like one of his tunes. He would play the melody very distinctly if he was playing it for me. He'd just play it kind of square the first time through. Then the second time through he would play with it, so I'd have two versions to work with. He was teaching me as well as helping me learn the tune.

After we'd first met we used to talk on the phone a lot. As he got more involved with Scott though he didn't need the talking that he used to do with me when we first met. Davey was like my phone buddy. He'd call me late at night. We'd talk when he'd get home from work; it would be midnight here and like 2:00 there. I'd just be watching TV and the phone would ring and we'd talk for two hours, just bullshitting and laughing. He'd tell me a bunch of jokes and he'd play me some shit on the piano. He'd say, "Oh, I was writing this tune today. What do you think about this?" When he was writing *I've Got a Secret* he played the first part of it for me--he hadn't written the lyrics yet--and said, "what do you think of this? Kind of an old-time style tune ... " "What are you going to call it?" "I don't know. Oh, I saw this really cute guy at work tonight. He was so cute Nancy, oooooh!" I mean it was just great. We were like best buddies, only long distance because we couldn't see each other, but we sure could talk. And we did. He called me a lot. Then when Scott moved in he very rarely called me after that, and I understood. They were happening, and he had Scott to talk to. So I was very happy for him because he didn't really have anybody until then. He was tired of unreliable guys and the games and the hassles. He wanted a lover, someone he could settle down with.

He had so many people who wanted to be with him and who loved him. He could have had anybody. Davey was just so desirable. Everywhere he went men and women and old ladies and old men and dogs ... Everybody wanted to be with Davey. He was like a big magnet. You just wanted to be around him because his energy was just incredible. He was really quite charismatic. He would just glow, and it would draw people to him. And he was so nice to everybody and so sweet and he was always nice to the old ladies, the blue hairs.

He told me that he had AIDS during New Years of '93 when I was down there. He didn't look any different at that time. I was saddened by the news of course, but to look at him I couldn't see any change at all. And I didn't anticipate it happening practically overnight like it did because I have friends that are still alive who contracted it in the '80's. So I was thinking Davey would be one of those. "Look at him. He looks great. He's in such great shape."

Davey had great legs. Oh baby, he had the most fabulous body. I saw him with nothing on but swim trunks and he was *buff* for days. And strong. Not a bodybuilder physique but a Nautilus body--strength and endurance and beautiful detail--and he was so handsome; he looked like a young Greek god type person. Maybe he was. He just got trapped in this era for some strange reason. He was really from somewhere else. Davey was much too beautiful and talented, like a dream person. Like a god would be, in appearance and behavior, truly talented to the bone and truly beautiful, inside and out. That's godlike if you ask me.

He was interested in what I ate. We started talking about health food and I got him to start drinking a lot of juice. I thought that would help him, and it did. It used to help him a lot. He got a couple of books on it and found out what medicinal mixtures of juices were good for this and that, and relieved a bunch of his discomforture with juice. So that was really cool.

I was always making sexual remarks to him. "Don't bend over Davey. Oh my God, you bent over!" I'd say things like that. I'd say, "You've got the most beautiful ass, I swear to God. I don't know what I'm going to do, Davey. What do you expect me to do? I mean I have to say something so I say the only thing I can say, that I can't wait to get you home, you wild thing!" Anyway, we sure did have a good time when we were together and we had a good time on the phone. He told me some of the best jokes I'd ever heard.

I played three New Years Eve's with Davey at Cezanne and one other weekend when I was down for one of the Justice parties. When I went to Houston for New Years of '94 I was shocked when I first saw him. I hadn't seen him since the New Years before. I'd taken a cab to Cezanne to meet him for rehearsal, and when he walked in I literally gasped. He was way across the room and I was over by the piano when I looked up and saw him, so I don't think he heard me. But I jumped up and said, "Oh Davey", and ran over and hugged him, and it was just like any other time. But I was blown away by his appearance. He was at least thirty pounds lighter, and here was this little gaunt skinny neck and this gaunt face with these big broad shoulders sticking out of this suit that he had worn the year before, and it had fit. Now it was like it was two sizes too big for him. And he had this dark makeup on, like pancake. At one point in the car he said, "I know I don't look very good, do I?" I said, "Honey, you just look really thin." He said, "I've lost a lot of weight. This thing is trying to get me, you know." I said, "I know. What are you doing? Are you taking all the stuff and doing all the stuff you can do?" He said, "Yeah. I don't feel good most of the time because I'm taking so much stuff." He apologized for looking so bad. Davey was always apologizing for something. So silly. I'd go, "Yeah, you're just such a drag Davey..." And then we'd laugh, but you're on the verge of crying every second because you know he's dying right in front of you and every moment that you spend is precious.

The last time I saw him was after that last gig we did. My son Joel and I were staying at the hotel. Joel had videotaped our Cezanne New Years gig and the year before also; it was like a thing we did. But there was something important that I needed to see Davey about as well as saying goodbye. I just felt a real need to see him once more before we left. We were leaving real early the next morning, and I knew that he wasn't going to get up at 7 A.M.. and come over and drive me to the airport and I wasn't going to ask him to. So I knew I'd have to say goodbye to him the night before. Davey called me at the hotel from somewhere and he said, "I have to come by there on the way home and I could stop in but I wouldn't be able to stay very long. I'm really tired and I need to go home and get some sleep." I said, "I know you do but I'd really appreciate it if you'd come and see me. I won't keep you, I promise." He said, "OK, I'll be there." I knew that it might be the last time I'd ever see him. I knew that he was really sick.

I answered the door and Davey came in. He looked so tired and so sweet and so old, I didn't even want him to sit down. But he did, and I gave him some water and he started to talk about the next time I might be down and ... I said, "I said it to Scott and I don't feel bad about saying it to you, but I wish you would let me know when you're feeling really bad and you're thinking that you might be going to have to go away that you would let me know so I could come here and be with you. I would like that very much." He said, "I'd like that. Yes, we'll be in touch with you but we're going to be in touch with you anyway. I'm not planning on getting out of here for a while."

Then he started talking about the illness and about AIDS in general and how he felt personally about it. He'd resigned himself to it. He wasn't mad anymore. He wasn't glad that he was going to die but he wasn't mad anymore. He said that it took him a long time to get to that place. He talked about his feelings about having come out to people about AIDS. The

whole thing was the most important and special thing I'd ever heard him say. About his music he hoped that his music would go on. I promised him that I would do all I could to get our duo recording released, but that if it never did I'd have this tape and have turned so many people on to it that he will live always.

I started to get maudlin and started to cry, and then he started to cry, and Joel started to cry, and we were all hugging and crying and we did a group hug, and then Davey just sort of disappeared. He just got up and we moved toward the door and he said, "Oh, talk to you soon Nance. I've got to go home." And he left, and Joel and I were just stunned. We hugged each other for quite a while. He had given us this splendid oratory on his personal feelings about everything, about his life. It was very wonderful to hear but hard to listen to, because I knew I was listening to something that I wasn't going to hear anymore; Davey's heartfelt feelings about himself and the disease and his friends and his music and his life, and it was oh so deep and poignant and beautiful and sad. And that thing kept coming up in me like, "Why him? Why Davey? Why anyone? Why any of the people who have died? Why? Why is this thing so unstoppable and why does it pick some of the greatest people?"

I was at the Stanford Jazz Workshop when he died. I found out when I got home from camp. There was a message from Hope from Justice. I couldn't think. I called Scott and left a message and called Linda and left a message. She called me back, so I talked to her. It wasn't a very nice homecoming, I recall. I didn't want to hear that. It was very distressing to me. The fact that Davey was also a vocalist helped his great accompanist skills. But it was his sensitivity to whomever it was that he was playing with. He would lock into you and be able to produce the accompaniment that you needed. He was perfect. I never heard him play with anybody that he wasn't this exactly right for. Like ESP, he had some kind of ability to tell right from the get-go what you needed, and he could do it. He would provide whatever it was you needed to help you. If he found you to be going off-key he would suddenly be playing the melody in there quite convincingly, but not so the people would notice. He would be giving you your note like a big dog, but in a very subtle, unobtrusive way.

That was a gift. I've worked with piano players all night who never did hear me, who never did help me, who never could help me or even wanted to play with me obviously. They just couldn't wait for the gig to be over. There are people like that who could care less about you or about what you're doing or anything else. But that wasn't Davey.

Talent-wise he was on the top of my list. I thought he was the answer to Bill Evans; I think he filled the shoes quite admirably. For me he did, and I was a friend of Bill Evans and knew him and played with him, and was honored to have him come and play the very last gig in this area with me just weeks before he died in 1980. So I don't say that loosely.

Davey would get up off the piano and come over and the light would follow him. I'd be in the corner hiding and he'd come over there and make me stand up and say hi and wave at everybody when I wasn't working, like those couple nights I went in to hear him and wasn't playing until the next night. He'd always make me come up and do a couple tunes. He would always make a fuss over me whether I was playing or whether I'd just come in to say hi or whatever. He was very gracious to me and to everybody actually. He loved everybody and everybody loved him. We couldn't go anywhere that he didn't know *someone*. It was incredible. He was totally involved with the community.

We were writing these filthy songs, I remember that. We were writing filthy songs to recognizable melodies, and Davey was really good at it. We had this one song almost completed. I think he did finish it and then he sang it to me one night on the phone, and I almost lost it, it was so funny. It all rhymed. It was just the funniest thing. It was just thinking of all the

funkiest words we could think of that would rhyme and that we could construct a little story with. It was word play, and he was really good at word play, in any particular setting.

Davey was always having a good time. He always made light of most things, but about the music he was very serious. Davey was like a total sponge for music. He had listened to everything and it came out there, at his fingertips, and it was total and complete. It covered everything. I mean he could play any style, any way he wanted. It just flowed out of him; it was the most natural thing in the world for him to play. Oh it was wonderful. And that's why I felt that he would have been heir apparent to Bill Evans and was one of the greatest accompanists I'd ever played with. *Ever*. And that is an art and a joy in itself, just being a great accompanist. There are many great piano players, but you can count--for my money--on your ten fingers the people in this world still alive who can accompany you who are also great players; who can play with you and bring out the very best in you, as you inspire them. He was one of them, and one of the main ones. It was always inspirational to play with him, always different, always fresh.

It's a great loss. But we have what's recorded and we have our own personal encounters with him that can't be replaced. His friends have it all. Davey gave me a gift every time we played together, every time he touched the piano. He'll be in my heart and my musical mind forever.