

Press Kit

Chet Baker: Always
Looking for the Light
A Memoir

By

Artt Frank

Vol. 2



BooksEndeependent

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Excerpt from:
The Touch of Your Lips Upon My Life (For Chet)
By Anthony Mattiaccio - May 13, 1988

“I watched you and Artt build bridges
That you improvised and crossed together
All those endless, dark Manhattan nights on 86th Street.
Artt’s brushes creating dark, rolling images and rhythms of light
With strokes so bold, and often so romantically subtle
In companionship with the breathy stardust from your golden horn.”

The much-anticipated second volume of Artt Frank’s chronicle of his musical association with jazz icon, Chet Baker is an insightful retelling of the resurgence of Chet’s career that began in the early 1970’s. It is also a memoir of Artt’s steady pursuit of his own career, becoming a Jazz Hall of Fame bop drummer. *Chet Baker: Always Looking for the Light* vividly details their sporadic yet intense collaborations and committed brotherly bond.

Praise for Artt Frank’s memoir...

“Chet Baker was one of the greatest jazz musicians of all time and a legend. We are blessed today to have with us on this earth a living member of his group. Artt tells it like it was, what it was like being a friend and a drummer for this great legend Chet Baker ... Artt Frank takes you from the dark back alleys of drugs and despair to the shining genius of Chet’s playing smoke filled clubs and the streets. This book is truth, and you know it is coming from a Godly man like drumming great Artt Frank.”

Michael Armando, *President & Musician*
MJA Records, a master jazz artist label

“Artt Frank writes about Chet Baker the way one speaks of a brother: intimate, assured, supportive and real. He has captured the essence not only of Chet’s struggles, but also his extraordinary talent. Music fans will glean invaluable tips, as well as inspiration in this story; biography fans will enjoy the quality of the storytelling and the details of a bygone era; and those looking for a demonstration of faith will find it in abundance.”

Scott Barker, *Executive Editor –*
Tucson Lifestyle Magazine

“Stack some of your favorite LPs on the hi-fi and settle in to get to know Chet Baker the man as well as you know the musician. Artt Frank takes us along on the rocky road of Baker’s comeback from drug abuse and crippling injuries. Artt’s writing style is like his drumming—improvisational and very much in the moment, so you’ll feel as though you are there as Chet takes his tentative first steps toward playing again, and for his triumphant return to nightclub gigs.”

Pat Callaghan, *news anchor and reporter*
for WCSH6 in Portland, ME



BooksIndependent

Chet Baker: Always Looking for the Light

Artt Frank



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A Memoir By

Artt Frank



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Chet Baker: Always Looking for the Light, A Memoir by Artt Frank

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Praise for *Chet Baker: Always Looking for the Light, A Memoir by Artt Frank*

[5 Star Review on Amazon](#), **L. Hunt**, *Musician*, March 11, 2021

Praise for *Chet Baker: The Missing Years, A Memoir by Artt Frank*

In August of 2012, jazz great Dave Brubeck gave the following review of Artt's memoir:

“Artt Frank, the author of **Chet Baker: The Missing Years** is a devout Christian who practices what he preaches. His personal memoir of his meeting and subsequent friendship with the jazz genius of the trumpet is an unvarnished, honest portrayal of ChetBaker. In depicting Chet's struggle to recovery, Artt reveals great compassion for a sensitive soul fighting for a life, and puts to rest the rumors and gossip that circulated about Chet's ‘missing years.’”

– **Dave Brubeck**, Legendary Jazz Pianist and Composer

“I recommend this book for all. If you are a musician, you will cherish it after reading it. Non-musicians will learn how great Chet Baker was and how great a friend drumming great ArttFrank was to Chet. The truth will set you free and Artt Frank has done this with hismemoir. Amen... I give this book 10 stars...”

Michael Armando, *President & Musician*
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Chapter 1 Starting Over

It was an earthquake that finally got me to leave Los Angeles and move back to my home state of Maine. By 1970, work for jazz musicians had pretty much dried up in LA as rock music took over. I still found odd jobs painting houses, while trying to build an acting career. For Chet Baker, even after his successful gig at The Melody Room, the dwindling jazz scene in L.A. was discouraging. As always with Chet, he went where the music was happening. And so, he decided it was best to move with his family closer to San Francisco, into his mother's home in nearby Milpitas, California. That was a kind of emotional earthquake for me, but I stayed in LA, resumed my acting career and continued to give acting lessons out of my home.

In the early morning of February 9, 1971 everything changed. The previous day, actor/producer Robert Conrad had given me a part in his upcoming western. I had been up all night on the living room couch studying the script. Just after 5:00 a.m. I finally put the script down and tried to get some sleep.

The next thing I knew there was an extremely loud banging sound, followed by the violent shaking of the whole house. I was thrown onto the floor in total darkness and could hear the furniture and refrigerator being tossed about like mere toys. My wife, Earla, and our three kids were crawling on their hands and knees in the dark to reach me in the living room while the earth outside was making a terrible cracking sound, like the sound of breaking ice on a big river during a cold winter day, only multiplied a hundred times. There was also a very low-pitched, yet loud humming sound emanating from the wires along the telephone poles, like thousands of violins playing in total discord. I later learned this was caused by the unusual amount of electricity surging through the wires. I was terrified but

tried to remain cool for my children's sake.

My first thought was that it was the end of the world, or that we had been attacked by the Soviet Union. Earla started to say the Lord's Prayer and we all joined in, asking almighty God to forgive us for our sins and to protect us. The shaking house, cracking earth and loud humming electrical wires seemed to go on indefinitely, and then, as suddenly as it had started, it stopped.

We got up, opened the door and saw the sun beginning to rise in the east, the sure promise of a nice day. Without warning, the whole thing started over again and we were having a series of powerful aftershocks registering 5.5 on the Richter scale. The aftershocks continued to come in waves, and I wasn't in the least sure what results they would bring in their wake. I made the decision right then to get my family out of there as fast as I could. Earla was against moving, and gave several reasons why we should stay, and I pointed out the five most important reasons on earth why we shouldn't stay -- our children and the two of us.

At that precise moment, the walls started to quaver, which made them appear like they were breathing in and out – eerie to say the least - followed by another very strong aftershock. I told my wife, 'that is it!' and was on my way to rent a U-Haul trailer.

When I got back, I told her we were packing, and for her to take whatever she felt was important, and that we were leaving the state.

"Where the hell are we going to go?" Earla asked. "How far do you think we're going to get on four or five hundred dollars? We've got to buy gas for the car, food, whatever motels we stay in on the way. How're we going to do that, Artt?"

I reminded her that Robert Conrad had given me a part in his upcoming Western movie, which was going to be shot in Tucson. It was an all-star cast, featuring Burl Ives, Nina Foch, Chris Mitchum, Red West, Robert Conrad, and renowned make-up artist, William Tuttle. I told her I'd call the producer and tell him we were leaving because of the earthquake and find out what hotel the cast and crew would be staying in, and if it would be alright for us to stay there until he arrived. Earla thought about it for a minute, and while she was thinking, I went into the bedroom and called the producer to explain what was going on. I figured he was going to laugh at me because I admitted I was scared. But he didn't. Instead, he was very

understanding and told me to go to the Desert Inn Hotel in Tucson and inform the manager that I was with his production company and would be given a room. I thanked him, came out into the kitchen and told Earla that it would be all right for us to stay at the hotel until shooting had been completed, and after that, we could go back to Maine.

Unfortunately, after about two and a half months and financial difficulties, the movie in Tucson was scrapped. Without the salary from the planned movie, I think I'd still be in that hotel if not for the generosity of Robert Conrad, who covered the tab for our entire stay.

For me, it was time to start over again... in good old Maine.

Once back home in Westbrook, in early July of 1971 the five of us stayed at my sister Barbara's apartment. After some time, I found a house to rent in North Windham and was back painting houses and making good money. I also began the process of buying my own home under the GI Bill and spent the next year building up my credit rating, ready to move in as soon as the bank approved the loan. In the spring of 1974, we moved into our own little home.

I called Chet, who was in NYC, and told him all about the place and he really wanted to see it. He asked what the music scene around the Portland area was like, and if I thought I might be able to get us a good paying gig. I told him I'd check out the various clubs and hotels and get back to him.

Hoping to see Chet and work with him again I checked out the Portland music scene and learned that there were only three maybe four little clubs and one hotel that featured live jazz played by local musicians. At times they would have to play 'Pop' music, which they didn't like, but would in order to keep their jobs. I had the chance to talk to a couple of the musicians to get their feel about one of the club owners booking Chet Baker for a gig. Chet Baker!! Chet Baker??? Each one of them told me that there was 'No way' any club owner in this town could afford to have a major name like Chet brought in. They just didn't have that kind of money. I thanked them and left. I called Chet and let him know that there was not a lot happening, or enough bread. He understood, thanked me and said he'd be in touch with me soon.

The rest of the year was spent painting houses as well as painting the interior and exterior of our own house. Earla was busy with her line drawings, paintings, and sculpture.

In the early summer of 1974, I ran into my former brother-in-law in a Portland drug store. We got to talking about the various happenings and goings on around town. At one point, I asked him if he knew of any new places around Portland where I could hear some jazz. He mentioned that an old friend of mine, Don Doane, was playing jazz at the Bridgeway Restaurant in South Portland a couple nights a week, and also had a jam session there every Saturday afternoon.

The following Saturday, I made it over to the Bridgeway and walked in to check the scene out. The first person I laid eyes on was Don, playing with four other musicians. I recognized two of the four - Joe LaFlamme on tenor sax, and Don's younger brother, Al on bass. I didn't know the drummer or the piano player, but they played quite well. I stood behind a lattice work partition where they couldn't see me and listened for a minute or so.

It was a warm and cozy restaurant where patrons and lovers of jazz music could eat dinner and enjoy watching and listening to their favorite local jazz artists, like the leader of this jam, trombonist, Don Doane. Don was a former member of the Woody Herman and Maynard Ferguson big bands, as well as his own big band leader and various other groups. I admired Don because he was one of the first musicians from Maine to play with internationally known bands. Cliffie Leeman, a drummer, was another. But since Don had made it with cats like Woody and Maynard, that gave me the inspiration years ago to get off my ass and out of Westbrook and do something with my own God-gifted talents. Joe LaFlamme, tenor and alto saxophonist with Don's group, had also played with the Buddy Morrow big band. I'd known Don, Al and Joe for many years and had always made it a point to go to whatever club they'd happened to be playing in and lend my support.

Now, watching Don, I reflected on the many times I had asked him for his help and opinion on matters pertaining to music, and how gracious he'd always been to answer my questions. Don was not just a great jazz musician, he was also a great educator, teacher and director, admired by every student and adult fortunate enough to have studied under him.

I stepped out from behind the partition and made my way across the room to the one remaining open table located a few feet from the stand. Don, Al and Joe immediately recognized me and smiled excitedly. The three of them were major Chet Baker fans, and knew I had been working with him, and were happy to see me, just as I was to see them. They finished the tune, took

a break and came over to say hello.

They pulled up some chairs and sat down and asked how long I was in town for. I explained, briefly, what had been happening and that I had bought a house in East Windham and planned on sticking around for a while. I mentioned that Chet would be coming to visit me and asked Don what he thought of the possibility of finding a club owner or hotel manager who'd be interested and willing to pay the bread to bring Chet in for a weekend. He said a friend of his, who worked as one of the city editors for the Portland Press Herald News, would be coming into the club later that afternoon, and would know better than anyone else who to approach. Don said the man was a longtime fan of Chet's, and also was a real good trumpet player who would be absolutely thrilled to see Chet come to Maine to play. Don glanced at his watch and told me they had to get back to start their second set. He asked if I wanted to sit in and play a little, and I told no, that I'd just come to listen and enjoy.

They excused themselves and went back to the stand and played a standard. They played another, after which Don called out the first musician to come up and jam with the group, a young trumpet player named Graham Bruce, curly headed and in his early thirties. Graham walked up to the stand and told Don what tune he wanted to play and counted off the time to a medium up-tempo Miles Davis tune called *Half Nelson*. I was surprised and impressed by Graham's time, ideas and phrasing, and when he finished playing, I called him over to my table and introduced myself. He was excited and impressed that I'd worked with Chet, and started asking me lots of different questions, and how much he had always loved Chet's playing and how happy he'd be to meet him in person one day.

"If I can get him a good paying gig at one of the clubs or hotels in town, I'll personally guarantee that you'll meet him."

He told me that on the following Monday, he was going to start checking out the clubs and hotels to see what interest he could generate. From out of nowhere, we were joined by another man in his late 30s, who knew Graham and asked if he could join us. I nodded, and he sat down. Graham introduced me as Chet Baker's drummer, and the man's eyes lit up like a Christmas tree. He reached across the table and shook my hand warmly and introduced himself as Dave Langzatell, a part time trumpet player and Portland Press editor.

“You must be the same guy Don was telling me about,” I said. “I’d really like to bring Chet here, but I’d have to get at least four grand for a weekend.” Dave didn’t bat an eye, and like Graham, said that he would also make a few calls. The three of us sat around talking about Chet until the set ended and Don came back to the table to join us. Don wanted me and Graham to go up and play a couple tunes with him during the last set, and so we did, much to the delight of the audience.

After the set ended, I thanked Don, Al and Joe and told them I’d probably see them again the following Saturday. I gave Graham and Dave my telephone number and asked them to give me a call sometime, so we could stay in touch.

During the next couple of weeks Graham and I would get together and play a few tunes with some of his friends. They were good musicians, so I formed a quintet. We played all the clubs around greater Portland. Columnist, jazz musician, fan and friend, Dave Langzatell was a regular at any and all clubs we played, and would, whenever he could, write a little piece about me and the group in his column. Both Dave and Graham were absolute Chet Baker fans and were really looking forward to meeting him. Dave suggested I try some of the bigger clubs in Boston, feeling I’d have a much better chance there than I did in Portland. Graham agreed.

A few days later, Earla and I took the kids for a long drive down to Cambridge, Massachusetts to visit with her family. I liked the idea because Boston was just six miles away from where her mother lived, and it was also a jazz town with a lot of great clubs. I’d be able to leave Earla and the kids with her mother and run into town and check out some of the best clubs, talk to the club owners or managers, and hopefully, arouse their interest in having Chet brought in for a week or weekend.

We arrived in Cambridge in the early evening, had a late supper, after which I left to drive over into Boston. I made the rounds to five of the most prominent clubs (which I will not name) and talked to the managers of each one about having Chet Baker brought in for a week. All of them were quite skeptical. While acknowledging Chet’s musical genius, each had a quiet fear of his reputation for not showing up to his gigs half the time. No matter how much I defended Chet or tried to assure them how much he had changed and how great he had been playing of late, they remained steadfast in their mutual negativity. I told each one of them that they didn’t know shit

about Chet, and they should all go ‘screw their ignorant selves’ and stormed out.

I couldn’t believe these people. They were all so adamant and know-it-all-ish it made me sick. I called Chet and told him I wasn’t having any luck in my attempts to get him a gig in the New England area. I also told him that Earla had been fishing through some of our unpacked papers and had found the screenplay I’d started writing about him back in late 1968. Though only half finished, she thought it was great, and how important she felt it would be for me to complete the script and send it out to Nicky Blair to shop it around to his producer friends. Nicky Blair was manager and part owner Stefanino’s Trattoria, one of the finest Italian cuisine restaurants in Beverly Hills. He was also a character actor who knew, and was known by, every major actor, producer, director, and studio head in the business. So, I asked Chet what he thought about the idea.

“Well, I know how hard you tried to get movie producers and actors interested in my life’s story, but...” He stopped, exhaled a long sigh. “Well, I suppose you should go ahead and finish it because it isn’t worth anything half finished, you know?” He then went on to say that if I happened to find anyone who was really interested in making the movie, that he’d want an iron-clad contract, and twenty-five thousand bucks up-front before he’d sign. And he was very emphatic on that point!

I asked if he remembered the time Robert Wagner was interested in a movie about his life, and how Bob had sent his limo to the front gate at Universal to pick us up and escort us to his private trailer.

“Yeah...yeah, I remember. You wrote that seven- or eight-page treatment and set up an appointment for me to meet him at the studio. He seemed very interested, but...” another long sigh, “Nothing ever came of it.”

“Well, that was then, man. As soon as Earla and I get back home I’m going to try to finish writing it. Maybe this time we’ll get lucky and find some young star just dying to get his hands on a true story, especially one like yours.”

“Well... good luck, Artt. Stay in touch, man.” Then he quickly added, “I may be doing a gig in New York soon. Maybe you can do it with me if you’re up for it?”

“Sure, just let me know when.”

As soon as we arrived back in Maine, we stopped by to see my dear

mother, who was anxious to know if I had been successful in getting Chet a gig at any of the clubs in Boston. I told her I hadn't. She was so disappointed.

“What’s wrong with those dizzy bastards, anyway? Don’t they realize who Chet is?” she asked. “Your father, when he could afford it, would take me to see all the great players whenever they’d come to Maine and play at the pier in Old Orchard Beach. I saw Louie Armstrong, Sabby Lewis, Tommy Dorsey, Vaughn Monroe, and a lot of others and not one of them could come close to Chet. He always made me cry whenever he sang, *I Fall in Love Too Easily*. That day I left you and Chet at the LA airport and got on the plane, I wound up crying all the way back to Maine.”

I put my arms around her and assured her that I wasn't about to give up. That made her happy. She kissed the kids and we left.

On the drive home it started to rain just hard enough for me to put on the windshield wipers. I watched the constant back and forth clicking of the wipers and found myself thinking about all the different conversations I had with Chet, all the important notes I had taken, both taped and written.

The very next day I decided to start writing.

Chapter 2

Music & Movie Dreams

The first challenge was... I didn't own a typewriter. I decided to drive to the Portland Salvation Army store to see if I could buy something second hand. The only one they had was one of those heavy black Royal models. They only wanted eight bucks for it, so I grabbed it. When I went to lift the thing up, it felt like I was carrying a Mack truck out to the car.

Once home I carried it into the house and set it on the kitchen table, because that was the best area in the house for natural lighting during the day, and electric light during the night hours. The ribbon was shot so I bought a half dozen new ones, rounded up all the notebooks and tapes of information I had about Chet over the last few years, and began to write exactly where I'd left off. Except for doing occasional paint jobs and club gigs around the New England area, the next several months were spent trying to complete the script. I say 'trying' because, the second challenge was: I had too damn many pressing financial difficulties bearing down on me.

It was around the middle of 1974 and though I was painting houses and playing an occasional gig, I was still falling behind in my house payments. This weighed heavily on my mind, and Earla's too. On the one hand she encouraged me to keep writing about Chet, and on the other, she'd keep laying it on me that I had to do more about making a steady income to make ends meet, to put food on the table, pay the electric bills, buy gas for the car and clothes for the kids. The combination of these things made me even more nervous. As a consequence, I started smoking more; two, and even three packs a day, plus cup after cup of instant coffee which in turn took money away from buying the more important above-mentioned things. So, there were days when I had no drive or desire to sit at the kitchen table and

write nine or ten hours a day. It had nothing to do with any kind of mental block. It was everything combined. Like the walls becoming a pressure chamber closing in all around me.

It was not an easy time. I could also sense Earla becoming less supportive, because of my constant smoking, and upset because the kitchen would always be filled with smoke. She firmly let me know the smoke was not only bad for my lungs, but for our children's lungs also! I was coughing more, and she insisted that I see her doctor soon.

Finally, I made an appointment and went to see him. He listened to my lungs and I was given a general examination. I was sent to get a chest X-ray and to come back a week later. This turned out to be the third challenge. The doctor informed me that the results of my chest X-ray showed I had 'stage one' emphysema, plus asthma and was advised to quit smoking immediately or I could die of congestive heart failure by the time I reached age 52.

I was skeptical and told him that only almighty God knew when, how and where I was going to die. Surprisingly, he agreed with me and said he'd also heard that, 'God helped those who cared enough to help themselves.' I hadn't heard it said that way before, but it made perfect sense, and I had no comeback for that.

When I arrived home Earla wanted to know what the doctor had to say. I laughed and told her what he said, but she didn't think it was funny. She told me then and there that if I didn't stop smoking soon, she would make plans to file for a divorce. I laughed to myself, not really taking it to heart – not what the doctor had said, or her warning, and instead, kept on smoking.

In the weeks and months ahead, I continued to paint houses. And whenever I wasn't too tired from painting all day, I'd sit down and write a little more of the script. I really wanted to finish the screenplay about Chet, but I also wanted to be playing drums. I really needed to be around live jazz - to be actively involved in and with it. I was going through a mental battle, spending hours a night and sometimes days, writing lines of dialogue, business and camera angles while the world outside was passing me by. I loved to play and really wanted to continue with my own quintet.

But the truth of the matter was there were just not that many jazz clubs in Portland, Maine. And it seemed... no, it was a fact... that every time I'd sit down to write I'd start smoking more because I'd feel a sense of guilt, telling myself that I should be out earning money painting houses instead

of sitting on my ass typing and adding more and more pressure on myself.

In the end, I put the thing in the closet and shut the door on it. I felt angry and discouraged. So many days, weeks and months spent, so much writing left to do. How, when, and where was I ever going to find the time to finish it? I was physically worn out and mentally exhausted from all the pressure I had unduly placed on myself and family and went straight to bed and slept for almost thirteen hours.

A few days later I had been offered a job painting houses on the Indian Reservation up near Perry, Maine and would be making pretty good money. Earla was relieved and wanted to know how long I thought the job was going to last. I told her for a least two or three weeks and this seemed to make her happy. The following day I called Chet and told him what was going on and of my plans to shelve the script. He told me that it was cool, and for me not to worry about it. He then mentioned again about his coming to New York City and would call me once there. He didn't mention when, but I told him I was really looking forward to seeing him again.

A few days later, on a Sunday morning, I left home with painting contractor, Chick Vokey and drove the two hundred miles along the Maine coastline to the Indian Reservation, arriving there that evening. The following morning, we were up at dawn to get ready to paint the white trim on the first of nineteen two story, two-bedroom brick houses as well light carpentry work on some of the homes. We were able to knock off three homes a day. By the following Tuesday, we were finished, paid and on our way back home with dough in our pockets.

Earla and the kids were very happy to see me. Before I had the chance to sit down and have a cup of coffee, my younger sister Barbara called and asked if Earla and I could come down to my mother's place a little later on because she was having some kind of party. I told her we would but would have to get some sleep first.

That evening, Earla and I went to my mother's apartment to attend what we learned was a Tupperware party being held there by Barbara. My three brothers and their wives were there, along with my older sister, Pauline, and several of their female friends.

My brothers, Bernard "Buck", Donald, and Teddy had moved into another room away from their wives and the other chattering women. I quickly joined my brothers. When I entered the room, Teddy was seated

reading a newspaper with my brothers bent over his shoulder looking on with interest. As soon as they saw me, Teddy nervously closed the paper and rolled it up.

“What’s going on? Why’d you stop reading the paper?” I asked curiously.

They looked at each other with sad faces trying to decide which one of them would speak first. My oldest brother Buck did, and there was hurt and anger in his tone.

“Teddy picked up a New York Post in Portland and we were reading an article about your friend, Chet Baker.”

“Oh, yeah? What’d it have to say?” I asked.

“So,” Buck continued, “when the reporter asked your friend Chet who some of the people were that helped him make it back to the top, WHY didn’t he mention your name?!” he asked. “The only ones he mentioned were Steve Allen and Dizzy Gillespie. He didn’t say a damn thing about you, Arthur! And you’re telling us that this guy is your close friend? I don’t get it.”

“I don’t either!” Donald shot back. “If he really was your friend... then why the hell didn’t he tell the guy about you? You play his friggin’ records all day long and tell us how great he is. We know he’s a great trumpet player, but he didn’t even think enough of you to even mention your name in the article.”

I asked Teddy to let me see the paper. As I read the article, and didn’t see my name, I couldn’t help but feel emptiness in my stomach. I folded the paper and looked each one of them in the eye. I felt bad because I had no real comeback, except to tell them that I had no doubt that Chet had mentioned my name but that the reporter probably figured I wasn’t well known enough to mention. I didn’t know. Knowing Chet, I believed he told the writer about me.

Teddy leaned to the way I felt about the whole idea.

“Maybe Arthur’s right. Maybe Chet did tell the guy about him. Maybe he felt Arthur’s name wasn’t famous enough for his readers to recognize and decided to leave it out. I think that’s what happened if you ask me.”

Buck waved his hand in mild disgust. “Maybe... maybe not.”

“Yeah, well at least Arthur can say he got the chance to meet and play with the world’s greatest trumpet player,” Teddy replied. “That’s more than

a lot of people ever get the chance to do. It's also something that nobody can ever take away from you either! You've got a great quartet here, and in Boston. So, you really don't need him anyway."

My sister Barbara entered the room just then, and having overheard what my brothers had said, added her own two cents.

"Buck's right, Arthur. You worship that guy. You think there's no one else on earth like him."

"Well, there really isn't!" I shot back. "And I don't, as you so mistakenly put it, worship him either! None of you understand." I tried to explain to them how Chet had always been my main inspiration in jazz, and he always would be.

It was difficult to explain what it had been like for me to dream about wanting to become a 'somebody' in life, to reach up and touch the stars; to meet a special jazz musician like Chet Baker, and not only to meet him, but be blessed enough to become his friend. And on top of all that, for him to ask me, a kid from Westbrook, Maine, to become a member of his group. It was an answer to many prayers and a dream come true.

"Well, I hope you're right, Arthur," Barbara said, with a hint of skepticism.

I felt myself beginning to get real pissed off and told them that I'd be sure to ask him the next time I saw him.

My older sister, Pauline came into the room, and sensing I was about to explode immediately diffused the situation.

"You should all know how reporters are. If they don't know who you are, they figure nobody else will either, so why bother. That's probably what happened," she said firmly. She then clapped her hands together quickly. "C'mon. Momma's got sandwiches and hot coffee all ready for us in the kitchen. So, let's go before she comes in here and slaps the shit out of all of us."

We all broke into laughter and went into the kitchen to eat. When we got there, I asked my mother how she felt about Chet. She couldn't say enough about how much she loved him and how wonderful he had treated her, and how Chet had referred to her as his second mom. I looked around at my brothers and sisters and flashed a big proud smile.

"See?!" I said. "And we all know that you can't fool Momma."

While driving home later that day, both Earla and I were still a bit curious

about the article.

“It does seem a little weird that my name wasn’t brought up, don’t you think?” I asked.

“I wouldn’t lose any sleep over it. He probably meant to but forgot. You know Chet,” she said matter-of-factly. She was probably right. He probably meant to, but it slipped his mind. After all, the guy was very busy now, I reasoned to myself, and let the thought die.

Chet had cut a new album for the CTI label (Creed Taylor) in New York, but I wasn’t sure if he was still in the city or back in California. At that time, I had formed my own quintet which featured Graham Bruce on trumpet & flugelhorn, Charlie Jennison on tenor, alto & flute, Tommy McDermott on piano, and Richard Ross on electric bass. It really was a swinging group, and we were featured on statewide television shows. We also played several jazz clubs around the New England area. On some of the club dates, Earla was featured as guest vocalist.

Our marriage was running relatively smooth and the children were very happy. Our son, Arthur was going to high school and was on the chess team. He was an excellent player, sometimes playing six to eight different players at once, and winning. By the time he was sixteen he had a world class rating, and once, in Boston, he drew with a grand master. He probably could have gone on to be a master, but he had too much rhythm in his soul and became a drummer instead. But he still plays a great game of chess. Our daughter, Rhonda, became a professional model and jazz vocalist, and our younger daughter, Kathy also became a real fine drummer and is actively playing today.

December came in with a bang bringing with it snow, wind and sleet. A few days before Christmas, Earla and I were at my younger brother Donald’s house along with the rest of the family. We were having the usual before-Christmas Day party and had just run out of beer. Donald wanted to drive to the store to pick up a couple six packs of beer and cigarettes, but I told him I’d go because he’d been drinking steadily all evening and wasn’t in any shape to drive. Also, the weather outside was brutally cold, snowy, windy, and treacherous. My kid brother Teddy needed to get a few items at the store too, so he went along with me.

It was snowing pretty hard and the wind gusts had to have been in the 30 mile-per-hour bracket because it was blowing us back two steps for each

one forward on the way to my car. It had been snowing on and off for the past week, and had snowed the day before, which made the road and driving conditions worse. The snow was heaped up eight feet high on either side of the street. The driving wind caused the snow to blow straight into the windshield making it difficult to see more than ten feet ahead. Blizzard driving conditions really didn't bother me all that much because we were used to getting heavy snowstorms - plus I had been a cab driver for seven years and knew how to handle a car in these kinds of conditions.

Teddy lit up a cigarette, turned the radio on and looked for a jazz station. As he passed over a certain station, I happened to hear a very familiar voice and shouted for him to go back until we heard the singing again. Teddy fine-tuned the station and we both heard the singing, and it was Chet. The truth is, I was so excited that I didn't realize we were at the top of a long sloping hill. Before I could slow down, the car was rapidly on its way down. I hit the brakes and they locked, and the car started to slide and swerve like crazy.

"Hang on, Teddy. I'm going try to bring the car over to the side and ride the snowdrift down to the bottom." Which is exactly what I did, ending up at the bottom of the hill, safe and sound. We thanked God and finished listening to the recording of Chet singing. The announcer came on and mentioned the name of the tune, *She Was Too Good to Me*, from an album of the same name released on the CTI label.

"Let's get to the store and get back to the house where it's nice and warm," I said. Teddy shivered, rubbed his hands together briskly, and said he was all for that. As I started to drive away, the wheels started spinning and I couldn't get any traction. Nervous, I looked in the rear-view mirror and could see a big snowplow coming directly at me on the same side of the road. Teddy looked at me, then back at the truck and back to me again, his eyes wide open.

"If we don't get out of here before he reaches us, we're going to get ourselves plowed in!" he said anxiously.

I opened the door, jumped out and ran toward the oncoming snowplow, and gestured for the driver to lift the plow as he drove by my car. He saw me, blinked his headlights and raised the huge plow as he drove by my car, then lowered it and continued down the road, leaving a wide spray of sand on the road behind. Teddy and I scooped up a few handfuls of sand and placed them under the rear tires and got back into the car. I put the car in

low gear and inched ahead until I had traction and drove off, following the plow up over the long steep incline to safety.



About the Author

Artt Frank, bop drummer/composer, and author, is one of the few authentic bop musicians on the scene today. Born in the small paper mill town of Westbrook, Maine on March 9, 1933, Artt is best known for his long-term association with Chet Baker, with whom he collaborated for over 20 years. Artt has also been worked with an impressive list of jazz luminaries over the past sixty years including the great Charlie Parker, Tadd Dameron, Dexter Gordon, Sonny Stitt, Miles Davis, Bud Powell, Jimmy Heath, Al Cohn, Ted Curson, and many others, including one memorable night with the great singer, Billie Holiday

In 2014, the first book in Artt's series on Chet Baker, "Chet Baker: The Missing Years" was published by BooksEndeependent.

In 2004, Artt completed his book "Essentials for the Be Bop Drummer" with Pete Swan and published by Tim Schaffner, publisher (and drummer!) of Schaffner Press, Inc.

Artt Frank was inducted into the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame in November, 2010.

He currently lives in Green Valley, Arizona with his wife, Lisa Frank.

To learn more about the author, visit: www.ArttFrank.com