

= Max Geldray =

Max van Gelder ( 12 February 1916 ? 2 October 2004 ) , professionally known as Max Geldray , was a jazz harmonica player . Best known for providing the musical interludes for The Goon Show , he was also credited as being the first harmonica player to embrace the jazz style .

Geldray was born in the Netherlands and played jazz in England , Belgium , France and his home country , before settling in Britain at the outbreak of the Second World War ; he was wounded during the Invasion of Normandy . He appeared in nearly every episode of The Goon Show , providing one of the musical interludes and the closing music for each programme . After The Goon Show series finished in 1960 , he settled in the US , where he worked as an entertainer in the Reno casinos alongside the likes of Sarah Vaughan and Billy Daniels . Moving to Palm Springs , he eventually became a part @-@ time counsellor at the Betty Ford Center . He was married twice and has one son . Geldray died in 2004 at the age of 88 .

= = Early life ( 1916 ? 46 ) = =

Geldray was born Max Leon van Gelder , on 12 February 1916 in Amsterdam , Netherlands to Jewish parents . His father , Leon van Gelder , was a commercial traveller , and his mother was Margarite , née Baillosterky . By 1922 Leon was the European Manager for Maja perfume and the family moved out of Amsterdam to Bilthoven . Both parents could play the piano ? Leon was self @-@ taught and played by ear , while Margarite was classically trained ? and it was Leon who started to teach Geldray how to play . He developed love of jazz music after hearing Louis Armstrong on the radio in 1928 ; Geldray later wrote " how could anyone not love its energy , its vitality and the freedom of its form ? And Louis Armstrong among all the players , became something special to me " .

In February 1930 Geldray heard a mouth organ player on BBC Radio and mentioned the performance to a friend , Hans Mossel , owner of a music shop in Amsterdam ; Mossel had ordered a chromatic harmonica the previous week and gave it to Geldray , who practised assiduously . By 1934 Geldray had made some appearances on Dutch radio and formed a band with eight others ; an agent named Franklin billed the group as " Mac [ sic ] Geldray and his Mouth Accordion Band " , changing the surname of the principal to the name he retained for the rest of his life . With his performances , Geldray became the first person to play the harmonica in the jazz style . A change in the format of the band to a quartet and the introduction of a new manager led to a six @-@ week tour of English theatres in 1937 , accompanying the comedian Tom Moss ; the band changed its name to " The Hollander Boys " . During the tour Moss introduced Geldray to Jack Hylton , who invited him to play in his orchestra for the evening .

On his return to the Netherlands , the harmonica band broke up and Geldray travelled alone to Brussels , where he found work playing with the dance orchestra at the club Le Boeuf sur le Toit , where he remained for a year . He then worked with a dance band in The Hague , before joining the house band at the Ostend Casino , the Johnny Fresno Band . He would meet a number of influential acts who were booked to play the casino on occasion , including saxophonist Coleman Hawkins , the English bandleader Ambrose and French bandleader Ray Ventura . Ventura soon offered Geldray a job and in 1937 Geldray moved to Paris . While in Paris , he went to the Hot Club de France and played with jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt , a musician about whom Geldray asserts , " I can honestly say that I have never heard anyone better " . The two became close friends and played together often . With the invasion of France by German forces in early 1940 , Geldray travelled to England , where he realised he would be safer . On 20 September 1940 he joined the Royal Netherlands Motorized Infantry Brigade , part of the Dutch army exiled in England . During the war he continued to play and appeared on BBC Radio ; in 1942 he was part of the entertainment laid on for Princess Elizabeth 's sixteenth birthday at Windsor Castle . During the course of 1942 Geldray also met Sarah Prentice , a 26 @-@ year @-@ old Scottish variety artiste , whose professional name was Zaza Peters ; the couple married on 18 January 1943 .

Geldray took part in the Normandy landings with the Prinses Irene Brigade , but was injured by a

bomb blast and spent time in a military hospital . Although he did not incur long @-@ term injuries , he suffered from recurring nightmares in the following years . After the liberation of Amsterdam , Geldray travelled to the city to find his parents who had been resident when the Germans invaded . He found that both parents and his sister Xaviere had been killed in a concentration camp by the Nazis . At the end of the war , Geldray returned to Paris and once again found work with Ray Ventura 's orchestra for two years , before returning to London in 1947 .

= = BBC years ( 1947 ? 61 ) = =

Settling in London , Geldray took up British citizenship , and worked on a number of BBC radio programmes , such as Workers ' Playtime , Melody Magazine and Forces ' All @-@ Star Bill . In 1951 he provided the musical interludes for a new BBC series Crazy People , a comedy show that starred Harry Secombe , Peter Sellers , Spike Milligan and Michael Bentine . Crazy People changed its name for subsequent series to The Goon Show and Geldray was a regular performer in the remaining nine series . The show followed a successful format of a vague plot interspersed by two musical performances ; the BBC were using the same structure for a number of radio series , including It 's That Man Again ( ITMA ) . In The Goon Show , the musical segments were taken up by Geldray and The Ray Ellington Quartet , with Geldray also playing " Crazy Rhythm " for the play @-@ out music . On occasions Geldray was given lines to perform , although he felt uncomfortable doing so , and his lack of acting ability became a long @-@ running joke within the programme . Geldray was also the butt of some of the Goons jokes and humour : he was referred to throughout the programmes as " Conk " , on account of his nose , and his performances were often humorously dismissed by the announcer Wallace Greenslade , with such comments as : " That was Mr Max Geldray playing a harmonica . We thought you ought to know what it was , anyhow . "

In the early 1950s Geldray 's marriage ended with divorce , after the relationship had " burned itself out " , and he began a relationship with a dancer , Barbara . In 1956 Geldray appeared in three television comedy shows produced by ITV and starring the Goons : The Idiot Weekly , Price 2d ( broadcast 24 February ? 23 April 1956 ) , A Show Called Fred ( broadcast 2 ? 30 May 1956 ) and Son of Fred ( broadcast 17 September ? 5 November 1956 ) . In 1957 he released an album , Goon with the Wind , which was produced by George Martin and released on the Parlophone label . Later that year , Geldray also appeared in Hancock 's 43 Minutes , the Christmas edition of Hancock 's Half Hour , broadcast on 23 December 1957 . In 1958 the BBC proposed dropping Geldray from The Goon Show in a cost @-@ cutting measure ; Peter Sellers threatened to leave the series , and Geldray remained .

The Goon Show finished its ten @-@ series run on 28 January 1960 . In 1961 , with his six @-@ year relationship with Barbara at an end , Geldray worked as an entertainer on four trips on the RMS Queen Elizabeth . On visiting Los Angeles he was impressed by the city and decided to emigrate to the US .

= = Moving to the US ( 1961 ? 2004 ) = =

Geldray worked in the casinos of Reno , appearing with Sarah Vaughan and Billy Daniels ; he did not like the city , so returned to Los Angeles . In 1962 he met a divorcee with three children , Susan Deforio ; the couple married that year , and in 1964 they had a son , Philip . Geldray worked for a period as a sales assistant in a clothes shop before becoming the regional sales supervisor for The Christian Science Monitor .

In 1972 Geldray returned to the UK to appear in The Last Goon Show of All , a special programme recorded on 30 April and broadcast on 30 April 1972 to mark the 50th anniversary of the BBC . When the BBC refused to pay to fly Geldray from the US , two of the show 's cast ? Spike Milligan and Peter Sellers ? contributed to his expenses . After the performance , at the Camden Theatre , Princess Margaret came backstage and asked if she could be introduced to Geldray as she was an admirer of his playing .

In 1973 Geldray and his family moved to Palm Springs to look after his ailing stepfather ; he also

played harmonica in the local Trinidad Bar . A local doctor approached him after one set and asked if Geldray would put on a show at his stroke centre , which led to Geldray undertaking voluntary work teaching stroke victims to play the harmonica . Following the death of Geldray 's youngest step @-@ son , Timmy , Susan Geldray began drinking to excess , and she underwent treatment at the Betty Ford Center . Geldray subsequently volunteered to help at the clinic and qualified as a counsellor and technician . To raise funds for the clinic he started " Jazz without Booze " , a series of concerts , which included prominent local musicians , including Stan Getz . In 1989 Geldray published his autobiography , *Goon With the Wind* , using the same title as he had for his 1957 album .

Geldray died in Palm Springs of natural causes on 2 October 2004 at the age of 88 .