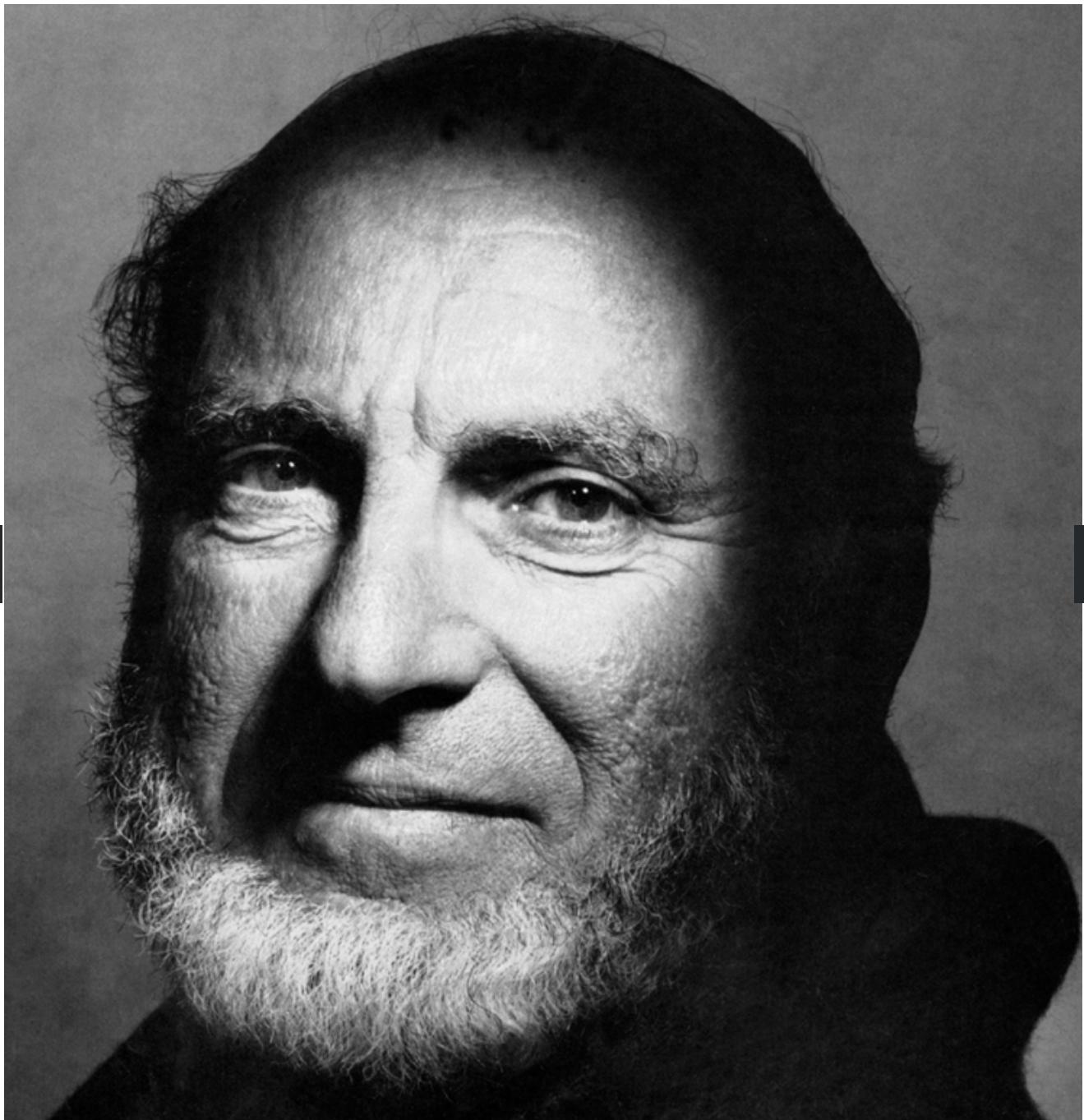


MAX L. RAAB

FOUNDER OF THE PREP LOOK OF THE 1960S
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER OF
A CLOCKWORK ORANGE, WALKABOUT, AND MORE
HUSBAND, FRIEND, FATHER, MENTOR
MY GREAT UNCLE



A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY
WRITTEN & DESIGNED BY MOLLY MINTZ

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MANY THANKS TO

Merle Raab
Nathaniel Clark

AN OVERVIEW OF MAX L. RAAB: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH by Irving Penn,
scanned from one of Merle Raab's archival copies of Max's 1984 Dan River Apparel Fabrics advertisement that appeared in
Women's Wear Daily, Daily News Record, and California Apparel News.

Introduction

FROM ME TO YOU

Max L. Raab was, and still is, many things to many people. Some might not even know his name. But women of a certain age remember him as the mastermind behind the preppy fashion brands The Villager and J.G. Hook of the 1950s through 1980s. To cinephiles, Max is the executive producer of *Li-ons Love (... and Lies)* starring Agnès Varda (1970); *End of the Road* (1970), which debuted Stacy Keach and James Earl Jones; the award-winning *Walkabout* (1971); *A Clockwork Orange* (1971); one of Gary Busey's first films, *Hex* (1973); and the Philadelphia-focused documentaries *STRUT!* (2001) and *Rittenhouse Square* (2005). To friends, he was a quirky and quixotic lover of sailing, automobiles, and jazz music. He was a brother and initial business partner to Norman, a father to his children, Claudia, Paul, and Adam, and a husband to his third wife, Merle, who considers him to be her greatest love. Max L. Raab was Uncle Max to me.

As a young child, I bragged to my grade school friends about my great uncle's achievements, even though I had obviously never seen a Stanley Kubrick film nor could fully comprehend what "the Eighties" actually were. Nevertheless, Uncle Max and I shared an extraordinary bond. This

I know for sure. Aunt Merle has repeatedly said that even though Max didn't always enjoy being around young children, he had a true spark with me. My mother recalls Max telling her on multiple occasions that I was going to be someone someday. He'd once put it: "She's going places! Her name up in lights!" My grandmother told me to write about what happened when we went for dinner.

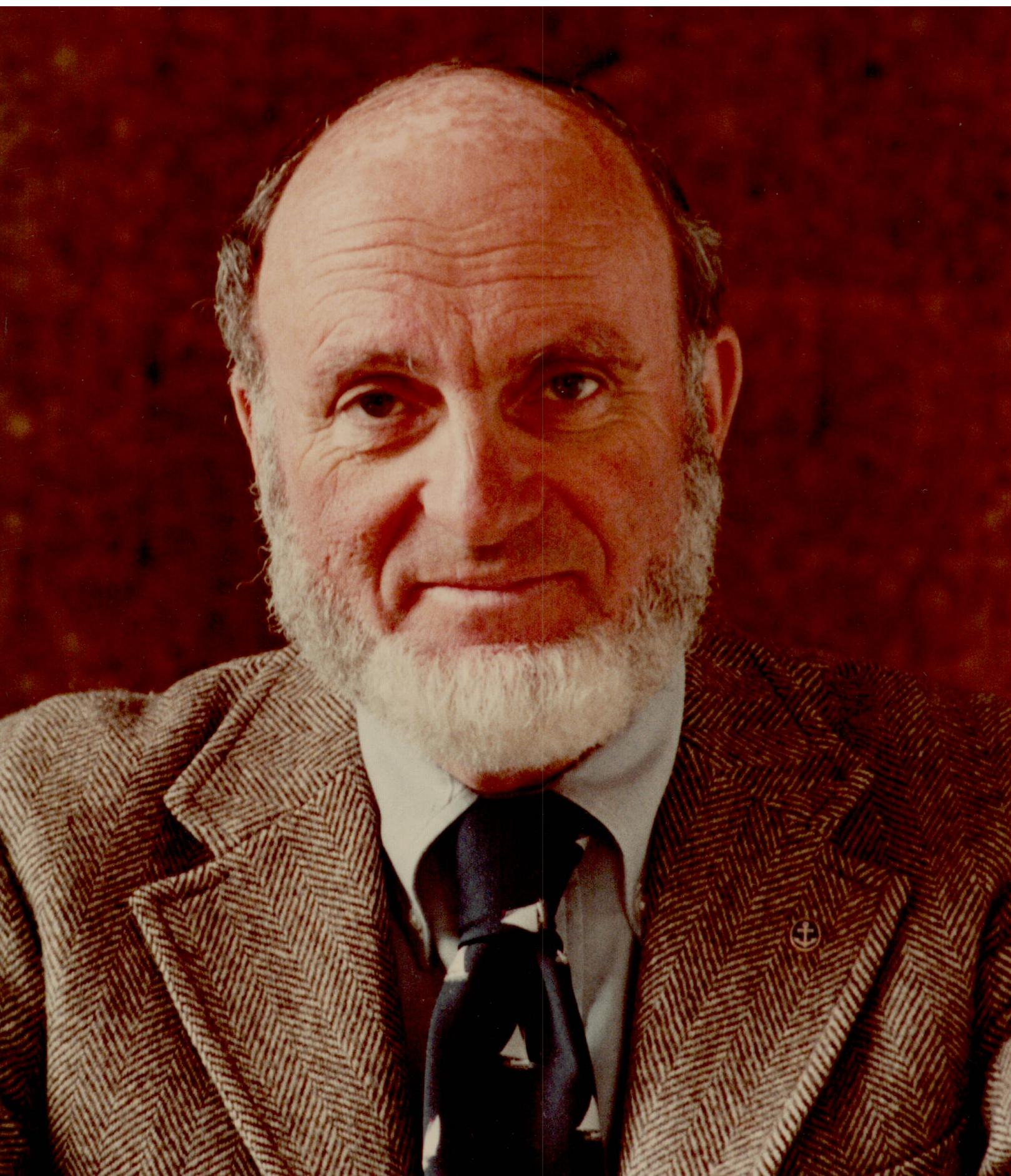
On a chilly evening in Philadelphia, my mom and I were visiting Aunt Merle and Uncle Max at their Rittenhouse Square apartment. I was eleven years old. When we arrived, I marched right to Max and sat with him, my face very close to his, and talked, talked, talked, talked, talked. At that time, Max was entirely consumed with Parkinson's disease; he was confined to a wheelchair, had constant care from nurses, did not speak much, and rarely went outside. I told him we were going out for dinner. Everyone was shocked when he said he'd like to join us, his eyes sparkling. I remember walking beside his wheelchair as we went to the restaurant.

That was the last time Uncle Max ever left the house. He passed away on February 21, 2008 at age 82 of complications related to Parkinson's disease .

Many articles were written about Max in the New York Times, Philadelphia Inquirer, Women's Wear Daily, and other outlets over his expansive and multifaceted career. Upon his death, and a plethora of obituaries documented his life. Now that I am both of age and intellect to fully understand the full breadth of endeavors Uncle Max explored. To my knowledge, no expansive biography has ever been written about Max L. Raab. So I set out to write one.

Delving into Merle's file cabinets, interviewing Max's trusted friends, business partners, and children, and scouring libraries and web-pages has gifted me with a beautiful understanding of the man who left the house to join us for dinner. His contributions to fashion, cinema, and, most important, the experiences and lives of those who knew him are immeasurable. He trusted people to bring to fruition the loftiest parts of his ideas that he could not himself actualize. He gave people incredible chances, invested in their talents, and left the world treasures we can cherish at any age.

From me to you, here is the story Max L. Raab.



MAX L. RAAB, YEAR UNKNOWN, SCANNED FROM MERLE'S ARCHIVE.

CO. "C" 386th INF.
THANKSGIVING 1945



1st PLATOON
TOKIWA, JAPAN



1st PLAT. CO. "C" 386th INF.

HENRY & MACHKO



XMAS TREE PLAT.C.P.



BASHEFUL KID



BENDER & ME



REG'T'L CAR-INSIDE



& OUT



BIG THREE



HOME FROM REG'T'L
SCHOOL

REG'T'L SCHOOLBOYS

1st C.P.

386th CAR

Childhood and Early Life

TRAGEDY, BOARDING SCHOOL, AND DEPLOYMENT

Max Louis Raab was born in the Tioga section of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on June 9, 1926 to Herman and Fanny Kessler Raab. His father operated Morgan Raab, a blouse manufacturing company. His mother died when he was twelve after two mastectomies and lengthy illnesses. His brother, Norman, was ten years older and because his father worked in New York City every day, Max's early

years were spent being moved from house to house from family member to family member, until he was sent to boarding school. He went to Rutgers Preparatory School, in New Jersey, and entered the wonderous world of jazz through a professor whose affinity for the music rubbed off on adolescent Max. Inspired, he would sign himself out of school and go into Manhattan, where he'd stay at the YMCA

and sneak into jazz clubs downtown. He looked older. He'd buy a beer in one bar, listen to a set, and slip the beverage into his pocket as he snuck out to another bar. At the next place, he'd put the beer on the table, as if he'd been there—and of drinking age—all along. However, when things didn't work out at Rutgers Prep, he was sent to Wooster Academy. He learned that school was perhaps not his forte, and never graduated from high school. "He was on his own at a time where most children and teenagers aren't alone, so it gave Max the space to beat to his own drum, from then until the rest of his life," Merle said. He was drafted into the army during World War II, serving in Germany and as part of the occupation army in Japan. He was stationed in Germany as part of the infantry unit at the end of the war. Decades later, he'd told Merle that he was most terrified on night patrol. "There were Germans who they'd call werewolves, and they'd come

and slit your throat!" Merle recalled. But when peace was declared, Max came back to States briefly, only to be sent to flamethrower school. The U.S. Army sent him on ship to invade Japan. Mid-journey, peace was declared; the naval ship was still in the middle of the ocean. For the next year, Max was part of the occupation army, but was bored by the menial shoveling and building assigned to him. He applied to be editor of the base's newspaper. Once he was awarded the position, he started having fun. Each week, he had to drive to Tokyo for two to three days to print the paper; he was allowed to have his own Jeep. But although he knew how to shift gears, he lacked both driving experience and a driver's license. Clever and quick in wit, Max told his supervisors that he had simply lost his his license in Germany. They issued him a "new" license immediately.

MAX'S PHOTOS FROM HIS DEPLOYMENT, SCANNED FROM MERLE'S ARCHIVE.

The Villager

CREATING THE WOMEN'S
DRESS SHIRT AND SHIRT
DRESS

After returning from Japan, Max began his career in the apparel business working at his father's business. Herman Raab's technique revolved around making inexpensive yet fashionable versions of more expensive blouses, cementing him as an early "knock-off" manufacturer. Max helped his father adapt the company to changing consumer preferences, adding higher-class apparel lines and spearheading the opening of a store in the Elkins Park suburb of the city. Slowly and then all at once, Max and Norman began noticing women evidently wearing their fathers', boyfriends', brothers', or husbands' button-down shirts. As the early 20th century showed a dramatic increase in women's labor force participation, particularly after World War II, the brothers decided to create a women's version of the Brooks Brothers-style button-down shirt. Max's prescient knack for identifying trends and his awareness of the emergence and importance of Ivy League clothing led him and Norman to create their own clothing company in 1959. The Villager's first garment, a pink menswear-inspired shirt designed for women, sold out to teenage shoppers within days. Over time, the duo expanded their brand to include additional shirts, crewneck sweaters, skirts, and even kilts. Made of cutesy floral printed fabrics that initially were purchased from Liberty of London, Max hired artist Marielle Bancou Segal to design signature prints for the line. Marielle became a close personal friend of Max's as Villager expanded. The company took off and Max first made his name, creating the uniform for a generation of women that lead the New York Times to label him the "dean of the prep look." "My father thought I was crazy, my wife left me, but Villager exploded," Max reminisced to People Magazine in 1983. "WASPy women love the classic suburban look, and Jewish women want to look like WASPs. I knew I had a winner." Villager boutiques opened across the country, with Max eventually franchising 140 shops that saturated the nation with prep. Though Villager quickly grew to be one of the preeminent brands in American sportswear, its success diminished in popularity with the advent of the late 1960's counterculture and attendant styles in fashion. During this time Max also launched the Rooster Tie Company and became known for his unconventional approach to neckwear in his use of unusual, non-traditional fabrics.

Classic Trilogy

All three versions of this popular classic are prized as "first editions" to Villager collectors. Any similarity to your favorite shirtdress is purely intentional—only the fabrics have been changed to give each a fresh new outlook. Glen plaids, district checks and fine-line plaids of wool-acrilan in olive shadowed with shades of blue.

Sizes 8 to 16.

About thirty dollars at good stores or your favorite college shop.

The Villager
T.M. REG.

VILLAGER ADVERTISEMENT, COURTESY OF MERLE RAAB.



J.G. HOOK ADVERTISEMENT IN VOGUE, 1993.

J.G. Hook

BECOMING
AND BEING
THE DEAN OF
PREP

In 1974, Max returned to said “shows strength and the apparel business full stability, everything I’m time and founded J.G. not.”

Hook. His instincts told him that the time was right for the reemergence of the classic prep style over \$50 million.

and once again he redefined the look of America. Always ready for the can women’s sportswear. next adventure, Max started Mickey & Co.

Half-page ads depicting in 1984, selling Mickey gorgeous fashion drawings of glamourous wear. Three million units women wearing the nautical J.G. Hook clothing,

accompanied by poetic prose, adorned the pages of almost every magazine. Then, with a nod towards menswear, Max saw an opening in the field and created a new necktie company, Tango, and

The new brand’s logo another success again was a hook and an anchor, using unconventional materials for his ties.



ACTOR STACY KEACH, DIRECTOR ARAM AVAKIAN, AND EXECUTIVE PRODUCER MAX L. RAAB ON SET FOR WALKABOUT.



MAX AT CANNES.

Movies

PRODUCING NICOLAS ROEG'S FIRST FILM AND MORE

While Max enjoyed many successes in his apparel business career, he always nurtured a love of movies. Initially invited to supply the wardrobe, gratis, for a small, low budget film shooting in Philadelphia in the early 60's entitled *David & Lisa*, Max agreed with the caveat that he be allowed to hang around and watch the film being made.

After three months observing firsthand, Max was intrigued by the process.

In the first of a series of smart hunches, he acquired the film rights to John Barth's novel *End of the Road*. With the help of director Aram Avakian and writer Terry Southern, Max adapted the novel into a film which featured the screen debuts of Stacy Keach and James Earl Jones.

Max then purchased the film rights to Anthony Burgess' controversial novel *A Clockwork Orange*. Initially, it was not only turned down by all of the major studios because of its touchy subject matter but also by the Beatles, Max's original casting choice. Finally, when Stanley Kubrick showed interest in the story, Warner Brothers called Max and he was made an executive producer on the groundbreaking film.

He followed with *Walkabout*, the critically acclaimed Cannes Golden Palm nominated directorial debut of Nicolas Roeg, and the film that Max was most proud of. A visionary who years ago recognized an essential need for something other than Hollywood studio fare, Max produced several other films including *Lion's Love* with writer and director Agnes Varda, Mother of the New Wave.

Max saw similarities in his two seemingly disparate careers of clotherier and filmmaker. "A film's director is a designer," he said. "Just



MAX WITH ACTORS DAVID CARREDINE, GLENN BUSEY, AND OTHERS.

as the film director works with a story; the designer, with a theme. The producer sits in on the editing and works with all of the elements of the finished project, as I do in both worlds."

At age 73, with co-producer, photographer and long-time friend Seymour Mednick, Raab made his directorial debut with the documentary, *STRUT!*. Having watched Philadelphia's annual New Year's Day Mummers parade religiously since he was a child, Max set out to capture the world of the Mummers. *STRUT!* featured music heavily, from turn-of-the-century rags and Dixieland hymns to Broadway show tunes and pop chart hits. A longtime and devoted jazz fan, Max relished producing the film's soundtrack which reflected his deep love for all types of music.

When the confetti settled on *STRUT!*, Max invited his old friend and filmmaker Robert Downey to Philadelphia and had him sit in Rittenhouse Square, one of the city's original park squares. Max had something in mind besides catching up with an old chum and asked Downey what he thought about doing a documentary on a year in the life of the Square, quoting the motto of the old radio show Grand Central Station, the "crossroads of a million private lives." Downey saw Max's vision and the result, Rittenhouse Square, was an impressionistic and, again, music-filled documentary. "Max Raab is the most inspired producer I've ever worked with and the funniest. His music choices were always impeccable", says Downey.

In the last two years, even while resisting the advancing stages of Parkinson's which he had kept at bay for over ten years, Max recruited Downey again. The two began producing a musical documentary on composer Kurt Weill and his colorful wife and muse, singer and actress Lotte Lenya – a film Downey and Max's wife Merle are determined see completed as the final chapter in Max's film career.



MAX AND AL NEFF IN CUBA.

Nathaniel Clark: Working with Max “was a Maxterclass in Filmamking”

MEMORIES FROM MAX L. RAAB PRODUCTIONS' MENTEE

I was working as a school photographer when I first graduated from Antioch College. At Antioch, I'd worked on 16mm film, but didn't want to major in one thing or be put into a box. But I worked on this film, and that's when I really got the filmmaking bug. Through a friend's connection we edited this 16mm film in the back offices at Universal Studios, and we cut it old school. Literally cutting it and slicing it. I've since learned all the Final Cut and Avid and all the technology software, but when you're literally cutting, you really think twice about those edits.

I'd grown up in New Jersey and came back after college. I was taking pictures of young kids in schools. At the end of the year, they laid everyone off, and I was collecting unemployment and working with a landscaper a few days a week. I saw a posting on Film.org, the Philadelphia Film Office website, that Max L. Raab Productions was looking for an unpaid intern to come in a few days a week. That's how I started. The production manager, Eric Chung, hired me.

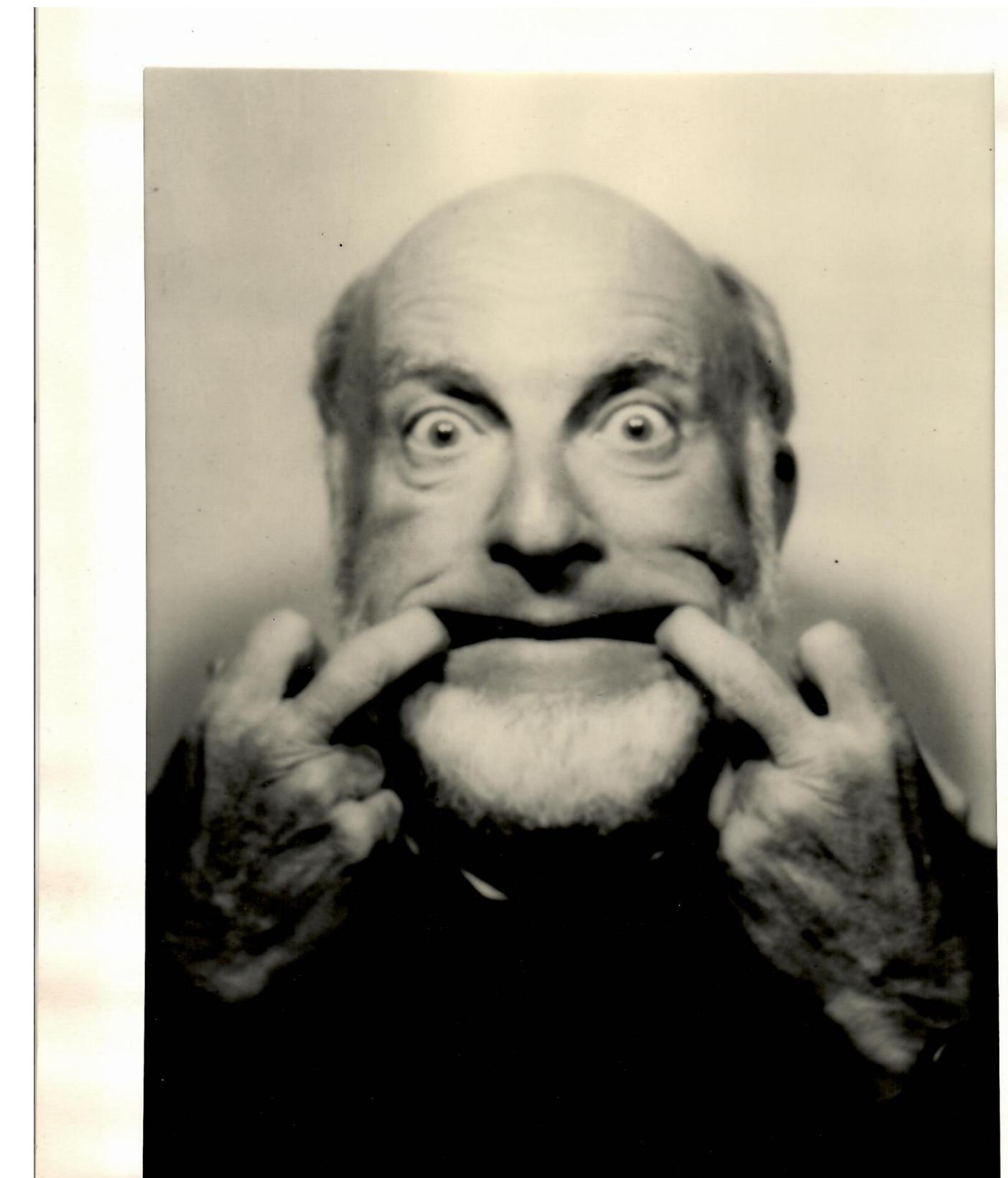
The first time I met Max, I introduced myself to him, and I think he asked me who my favorite directors were. I was put on the spot, and I thought, I should know this! So I said, 'Well, Stanley Kubrick. I understand you worked with him. What was he like?'

And Max said, "I don't know. We never met." They'd talked on the phone a few times because Kubrick just wanted a few copies of the book, since he was shooting

straight out of 'A Clockwork Orange.' Max said that he'd never met him because Kubrick would have closed sets. He didn't want producers or accountants or anyone from the studio checking up on him. Kubrick was very particular about that. And Max said that at one point, the studio got nervous about how much money was being spent, so they sent over some representatives to the shoot in England. Kubrick found out and shut down production. Nothing's getting shot, they're not making any progress, but they still have to pay everyone. That's when the studio knew he was serious and they left him alone. Max wanted to respect Kubrick's wishes. He said he seemed like a nice guy.

So I was an unpaid intern a few days a week for a few months, until my unemployment ran out. I asked to start getting paid. Well, first I pitched it Eric, and he said he'd talk to Max and they'd let me know. When I came in on the next day that I was working, Eric said, 'I talked to Max and he wants to bring you on full-time and pay you. He likes you.' That was the beginning of eight years, ten years together.

I went from being an unpaid intern to a paid production assistant, and eventually evolved into production manager, office manager, producer. I had many titles. I was an account executive for a little while, because when I started at Max L. Raab Productions, they'd just finished STRUT! and it was the beginning days of distribution for that documentary. It was totally completed and it had premiered at



"OUR FEARLESS LEADER"

POSTER PROVIDED BY NATHANIEL CLARK.

the Philly Film Festival. Max was selling DVDs, soundtracks, and CDs of the movie. We were doing it old-school: calling stores, talking to managers, and talking ourselves in and on the show, so to speak. I had a list of accounts and Max gave me guidance. Kind of the old way of doing this, you know? We were using his same approach that he'd used selling his ties and shirts and clothes to sell DVDs and CDs.

That was happening, and that's why I was there, but I was also hired because they had just gotten started on Rittenhouse Square. Robert Downey, Sr. was the advisor on STRUT!, as they'd had something like 100 hours of footage. They'd said to him, 'Help us make sense of this.' They'd thought about getting a narrator, someone like Sylvester Stallone or someone crazy to narrate it. So Bob had come down from New York to help figure everything out. He and Mad had been friends since the '60s. They were friends from way back in the day. Max might've financed one of Bob's films—they were old, old friends. I think Bob was introduced to Max by someone who was telling him, 'He's rich, he's making good films, and he makes great decisions.'

They continued their friendship for Rittenhouse Square. Max was an idea guy, and so many of his ideas were so far ahead of their time. Max would hear something on the radio or read something in the paper and a light would go off. So Max, as he did, had an idea: 'Wouldn't the Square be an interesting subject?'

We spent a year hanging out in Rittenhouse Square. I was introduced to Bob just as 'Bob.' It took a few weeks to make the connection. I was just hanging out in Rittenhouse Square with Bob! He's great. He and Max were the founding fathers of independent film before it existed. Both were independent filmmakers before that term was really used.

Bob would always make him laugh. They enjoyed each other's company. Bob was out in the park and Max leaned over to him and said, 'Bob, I think somebody put a fart in my pants!' We'd go to the Prime Rib and people-watch and make fun of people as they went by.

The interview subjects and ideas for Rittenhouse

were Max's ideas, and Max's ideas were the guiding force. Sometimes we would just go out in the Square and shoot whatever was happening. Me, Bob, Max, and Seymour Melnick, who was another old, old friend of Max's, a pretty well known photographer. A couple times a month, we'd all get together and shoot. We would digitize the footage, and then I'd go in and log the footage. We were doing it on a VCR, and the only VCR in the office was in Max's office, so I would just sit in there with him and go through all of the footage and log it and talk with him.

I'd log everything with detail, like, 'Woman in a red dress, walking with dog, from whatever time to whatever time.' They were working with an editor in New York, who'd send everything to Bob. Bob would go through the logs, and he'd sometimes call and ask for something specific: 'Next rainy day, You and Seymour go out and shoot people with umbrellas for a montage of umbrellas!' I would go meet Seymour and we'd go shoot that. We shot fall leaves, and we'd go out with a rake and throw 'em in front of camera from off camera, to make it look like the leaves were blowing around in the wind. This was all B-roll for Max.

On the first day, we found this little violin girl playing in the Square. We filmed her, talked to her mom, and she came back and she was this thread through the film throughout the seasons.

For a hot minute, Max L. Raab Productions managed Time For Three, a classically-trained string trio from the Curtis Institute, which is tuition-free and really hard to get into. They're an interesting electric trio: two violins and a double bass. Max heard them on the radio and reached out and said, 'I love the music you're making. Do you have any representation? Is anyone managing you?' They said they had a booking agent but no one was managing their careers. Next thing we know, Max L. Raab Productions is managing a string trio!

We were making documentaries, distributing documentaries, and managing a classically-trained string trio. We were in the music biz! Max was a music lover of all types. He basically picked out all the music in Rittenhouse.

Cars were among Max's many loves, too. We'd go up to New York for meetings and I got to drive the Audi 88. I took Max and Merle up to meet with Bob or do whatever we were up to.

Max would say, 'You can go a little faster, if you want...'

Max and Merle would be playing games: 'Play that song! Name that tune!' Merle blew me away. She knew her stuff. She was right there keeping up with Max. The first bar would come on and one of them would name that song. We'd drive up and back and listen to jazz and play "Name that tune!" That's when I was able to listen to a lot of Max's stories.

Years ago, when he was a young man, pre-Villager, he'd started the North American Car Club. He had this little car lot. I think Seymour worked with him. He had a couple of classic cars he was selling, so he opened up this club so that people would bring their cars and store them in his lot. That way, it looked like he had this massive lot of cars to sell and show, when really he only had a few for sale.

All of his loves—the planes and the boats and the cars—that all came full circle with the Shop-OnEleven. It was at 1616 Walnut Street, in Philadelphia, in our office. We had sort of two smaller offices; that's where the production office was. The tenants down the hall had a bigger office with big glass doors and windows, and they were moving out. We were still working on Rittenhouse and this bigger space opened up, so Max said we should move down there. His lawyer and his accountants asked, 'Are you sure, Max?'

Yes, he was sure. We move into this space, it's huge, and so Max was all, 'Nathaniel, let's open a shop.' I said, 'Okay, what do you want to sell?' And he said it right back! Max said, 'What do you want to sell?'

He'd been getting these catalogs, some German catalogs, with these high-end, \$300 or \$400 model cars and boats and stuff. Why don't we sell all this stuff you like from these catalogs? I'll find out how to get this all wholesale. I'll contact these manufacturers. We've got a business license, so I'll get their catalogs and their wholesale prices and we can pick out what we like and we'll sell it on our shop,' I told him. That was ShopOnEleven.

We were located on the 11th floor of an office building. Nobody knew it was up there. It had no foot traffic. The shop on the 11th floor that nobody knew was there. We'd advertise in local papers, and every once in a while, we'd get some-

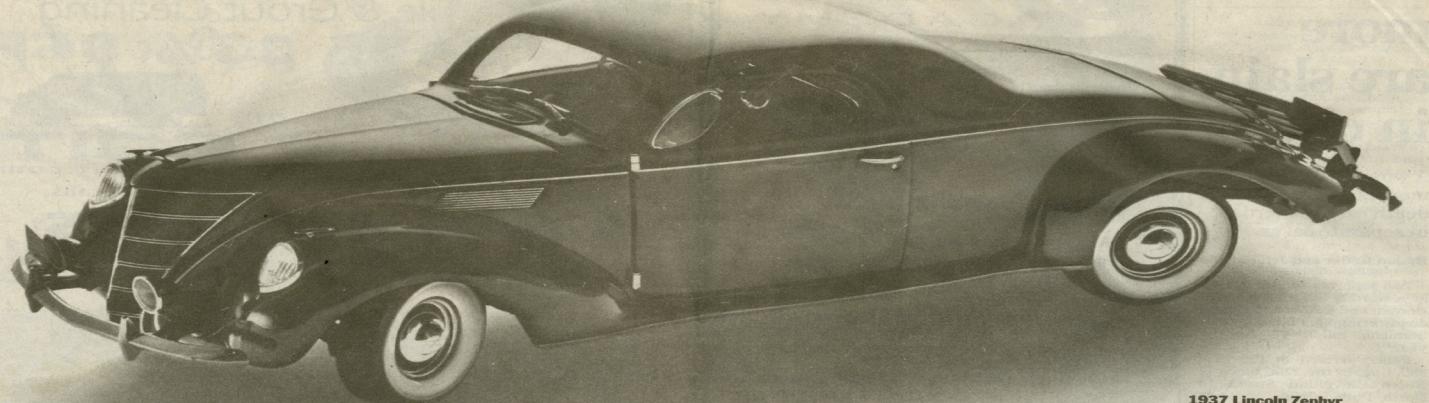
one. I bought all these display cases and models; we had cars and boats and planes. It looked like a really nice, high-end shop that no one knew was up there on the 11th floor! It was great, it really was. And it was still the production office, too. The attorney moved in, and we rented some space to other people. It was quite the hodge-podge of offices and people and planes.

I'd gone to school and studied film, but working with Max was a master class—a maxter class—in filmmaking, production, everything. It was great because it was a boutique film production studio. I was involved in everything: pre-production, how to make films, the whole gamut. We were doing documentaries but with a small, skeleton production crew. I'd go through all of his old files, check out his narrative films from the '70s, was dealing with the rights to those.

I learned the filmmaking side, but also the personal side. What you do when you're a producer and when you're in charge, and how you treat people who are working for you. I learned a lot from Max about how to be a good person and a good boss through him and Bob, hanging out in the Square.

After he finished Rittenhouse, the next documentary with Bob was about the Barnes Foundation. He must've read something about Barnes, somewhere. I was tasked with ordering every biography about the inventor and art curator Alfred Barnes. We were talking to folks at the Barnes foundation, and then the museum moved from Lower Merion, a Philly suburb, to the Parkway downtown. Barnes in his will specified that nothing was supposed to be moved, not even a painting from the wall, so the move was super controversial and seen to be against his wishes. There were lots of politics going on and didn't want any more attention. Two years later, after we stopped developing it, this film called *The Art of the Steal* came out about the Foundation. It was a different tactic compared to what we would've taken; this doc was about the move and the politics. We just wanted to do a biography about this guy Barnes.

So we moved onto Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya. Weill was a German Jew, she was Austrian, and they met in pre-war Weimar Republic Germany



Models for the model dad

Fine model cars. Aeroplanes.

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CMC
1931 Mercedes Benz SSKL, Mille Miglia 269.
1937 Horch 853 199.
1952 Mercedes 300SL 198.
1954/5 Mercedes Benz W196R 249.
1957 Maserati 250F 255.
1961 Maserati Birdcage Tipo 269.

SCHUCO
Mercedes Benz 170V Fuel Truck 69.99
Mercedes Benz 170V Truck with Cloth Tarp 149.99
BMW 327 Coupe 149.99
Mercedes Benz 170V Saloon 159.99
USA Midget Micro-Racers 39.99
VW Bug Micro-Racers 39.99
VW Bully Van 59.99

SCHYLLING
Bugatti T-35 Ducati Race Car 11.99
Man on Bicycle Tin Wind Up 11.99
Curtiss Bi-Plane 13.99
Pullman Tin Train 27.99
Streamline Race Cars 5.99
Speedster Silver Race Car 79.99



1931 Mercedes-Benz SSKL Mille Miglia



1957 Maserati 250F



1954/5 Mercedes-Benz W196R



VINTAGE TIN TOYS

AEROPLANES
Fokker Red Baron Triplane 159.99
Sopwith Camel 109.99
Flying Circus Jenny 172.99

SAILING SHIPS
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Skipjack 199.99
Catboat Cabin Cruiser 109.99
1930's Classic Yacht 74.99
Sunset Sailors 14.99
Mini Pond Yachts 25.99

TIN TOYS
Airport Tower 11.99
Carousel 9.99
Steam Train 19.99
Blue Boat 9.99
Fire Truck 11.99
Fish Eating Fish 7.99
Motorcycle with Sidecar 14.99
Motorcycle 11.99
Police Motorcycle 11.99
Monkey Performer 23.99
Space Bus 8.99

VINTAGE TIN TOYS
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Japan Toy Convoi Tin Litho Friction Plane 9.99
Tin Toy Panda Yo Yo 2.99
Tin Litho Pied Piper Horn 5.99
Midgetoy Diecast Corvette 3.99
Midgetoy Diecast Jeep 3.99



AEROPLANES

in the early 1900s or 1920s. Weill wrote the Threepenny Opera. When Nazis come into power, they escape to Paris and move to the U.S. He had this revolutionary career in Germany, comes here, reinvents himself, and never speaks German again. He had a whole second life on Broadway. Weill and Lenya have this interesting relationship. She is his muse and they have breakups, lovers on the side. She was a singer with a distinct singing style one octave above laryngitis. She was in one of the Bond movies, as a villain with knives in her shoes. After Barnes, that's what we were focusing on.

All of Kurt's songs became jazz inspiration. Every night on the radio, I'll hear a Kurt Weill standard. That was probably Max's connection.

So I order every book written on them, order every CD, everything I can on these two. I go through that and deep dive. Then we find a foundation in New York City and we contact them, make arrangements, and Max gives them lots of money to have Bob come in to work out of the foundation, because a lot of the material couldn't leave the place. One joke is that there should be a Max Wing. But one of his famous lines was, 'That's just the cost of doing business.'

Bob spends a year in there, watching everything they have. I'd drive the Audi up—Bob's such a New Yorker that he doesn't have a driver's license—and I would take the notes and transcribe them. That's how I learned how to read Bob's handwriting.

In pre-production, we were still working on this Weill-Lenya film towards the end, when Max wasn't able to work on that anymore because of the Parkinson's. But Bob and I did. We created a script outline, wrote grants, created lots of materials about it. Bob and I even took it to some independent film week market a few years ago, after we put to-

gether teaser trailer, and tried to shop it around.

I went to The New School for my graduate degree, and while I was there doing my grad work, everything I did was focused on a narrative script I was writing or this Lenya story. We'd shifted the script to focus on her, seeing everything through her eyes with his music playing as the soundtrack to the film. We saw it as, 'Lotte Lenya: Widow Weill.'

We did a full budget, submitted it to the Tribeca Film Festival for a grant, and did the whole production package and funding, but we didn't get the grant. What I realized later is that Tribeca probably thought that Robert Downey, Jr. should've pitched in! But it's all sort of sitting here on a shelf. I think about this movie, and at some point, I'll start doing the grant research again. Max's lifetime was full of these inspired ideas. You can see that through the content of the films he was doing, and even though the clothing biz.

He was air-dope, eclectic, inspired, kind. He just kind of loved ideas and life and people. His laugh was that head back, full laugh, and if something struck him as funny, you'd want to be there. If I was the one who caused that laugh, then yeah, that was great.

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