



# Ellingtonia

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*In loving memory of . . .*

*Theodore A. Shell*

*October 26, 1916 -*

*December 27, 2015*

The visitation and prayer service for **"The Celebration of the Life of Dr. Theodore A. Shell"** were held at Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church on Tuesday, 6 January.

His full, distinctive life included the titles of Army First Lieutenant in World War II,

Doctor of Dental Surgery, Clinical Professor of Dentistry, active member of the Omega Psi Phi National Fraternity, and (the last surviving) Founding Member of The Duke Ellington Society, Inc.

Ted Shell's passion for life was highly reflected in his range of interests: photography, world travel, appreciation of the arts, and his Duke Ellington avocation—permanently represented by the [Dr. Theodore Shell Collection of Duke Ellington Ephemera, 1933-1990](#) ([hyperlink](#)) at the Smithsonian Institution Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

Dr. Shell's involvement and leadership for our Society is remembered by **Ted Hudson**: "The founders of the Duke Ellington Society were a small group of young men who gathered in one of their homes to listen to and enjoy Ellington's music. As with Ted Shell, each of them went on to esteem in other fields. For example, Grant Wright became Chief of the US Park Police, John Fauntroy became a judge, and of course Ted became a renowned oral surgeon and valued professor at the Howard University School of Dentistry. One of their first members, Juanita Jackson, soon became president. She was married to Otto Hardwick the star Ellington Orchestra soloist.

"His Society presidency was served with distinction from 1991 through 1999—just in time for him to head the 'Ellington '99' Centennial Anniversary Conference. Ted was a walking authority on the history of our Duke Ellington Society, and the many similarly purposed organizations all over the world. He wrote

*(Continued on Page 3.)*

***This Saturday Night . . .***

***An Evening With 'Good Old Bob'***

Who else but our Society's resident discographer and raconteur, good old **Bob Reny**? His annual presentations are always a source of excellent, sometimes obscure Ellington/Strayhorn selections combined with his unique perspectives and commentary. At our February meeting, Bob will feature Ducal interpretations by Washington's **Charlie Byrd Trio**, **Kurt Elling**'s rendition of "Lush Life," two selections of **Ellington piano solos** from the great *Piano Reflections* LP, some tunes from the **Duke Ellington Legacy** band's CD, *Single Petal of a Rose*, a rare opportunity to hear **The Soft Winds** (Johnny Frigo, violin; Lou Carter, piano; Herb Ellis, guitar; Keter Betts, bass), and three choices from *Duke Ellington's My People*, plus more!

Bob's listening party will get going in our regular digs at **Grace Lutheran Church, 4300—16th Street (at Varum St.), NW, Washington, DC 20011** on:

**Saturday, 6 February 2016—7:00 PM.**

Whether sweet or substantive, pot luck is how we share the edibles, so don't forget to bring something good. Even if you do forget, come anyway because we do love to see you—madly, that is. Management brings beverages and ice.

**Next Meeting:**

**Saturday, 5 March 2016—7:00 PM**

**Davey and Esther in Concert at 2016 Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival**

The [2016 Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival](#) (click for full schedule) in Rockville takes place February 12-14. On Sunday, the 14th—Valentine's Day—at 1:00 PM our own, the First Couple of DC Jazz, [Esther Williams and the Davey Yarborough Quartet](#) will appear in concert on the Ronnie Wells Main Stage.

As usual, the Festival line-up will present "real jazz" from artists such as Terence Blanchard, Kurt Elling, Billy Hart, Dave Stryker, Don Braden, Eric Byrd, Poncho Sanchez, Joey Calderazzo, and Terrell Stafford.

## ***The Duke Ellington Society, Inc. Remembers Dr. Theodore A. Shell***

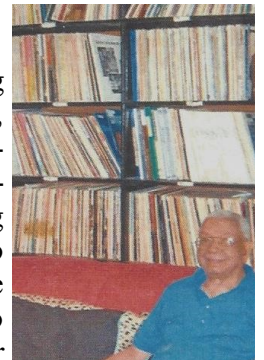
“Dr. Theodore Shell is remembered affectionately and with great respect by members of the Duke Ellington Society, Inc. of Washington, DC for his long participation and contributions, his enthusiasm for, and impressive knowledge of ‘Ellingtonia’ and the unique artists who created and sustained the music. Here in Washington we have had the great privilege of enjoying Ted’s vast collection of rare recordings, impressive photography and the incomparable hospitality of him and his gracious wife, Dr. Marion Shell, who hosted our group both at their DC home and at their lakeside vacation home on many memorable occasions.”

### ◆ *Patricia Willard*

“Ted Shell was the personification of a true Ellington devotee. His Ellington music, film, video, book, and photo collection demonstrated the passion he held for the importance of preserving the contribution of Duke Ellington as an historic icon. Ted Shell was a sharing person who let others enjoy what he had gathered over the years. This founding member will always be remembered for generations to come and his collection will assist researchers in continuing to define the genius of Duke Ellington.”

### ◆ *Bill Hasson*

“I first saw Dr. Shell every Saturday afternoon in the mid-1990s in April at a month-long celebration of Ellington’s music held at the New Carrollton Library in Prince Georges County, Maryland. I attended most of the four weekend concerts, and noticed a distinguished gentleman at each event, thoroughly enjoying the performances. I found out later that this distinguished gentleman was Dr. Theodore ‘Ted’ Shell. I also found out that he was the one putting out *Ellingtonia* newsletters for people like me to pick up during the concerts inviting us to monthly Duke Ellington Society meetings. In October of that year, at my first meeting of the Ellington Society held at the Omega House on Harvard Road, NW, the first person who warmly greeted me was Marion Shell, the lovely wife of the distinguished gentleman. I later had the pleasure of attending several Society meetings and/or Ellington ‘99 Conference planning sessions at Dr. Shell’s home. I loved visiting his basement den that held floor-to-ceiling bookcases full to the brim with albums, books, photographs, tapes, and videos, most of which were probably related to Ellington. He would pull out some of the hard-to-find items for a listen, or show photos from Ellington’s visits to Washington. He was very dedicated to the Society, and very interested in expanding the Society’s membership. I will miss his robust voice and presence at our monthly meetings. He was a true treasure and I am so glad to have known him.”



### ◆ *Patricia Braxton*

“Ted was a very gentle and kind person to me when our paths first crossed around 1995, when I first met him during a local Ellington meeting. I think Ted Hudson was the one who introduced him to me, and he mentioned to Dr. Shell my work as a photographer, as well as the Archives Center’s interest in preserving the photographic legacy of Ellington and the many other great jazz musicians that are now part of the Center’s American music collections. Ted Shell was a wonderful photographer who had a wonderful collection of images documenting his photographic work and love of music. I remember how wonderful these images were and I was absolutely delighted to be able to add Ted’s collection of photographs to the Center’s music collections in 1996. The first time Ted showed me his collection at his house, I fondly remember the many stories he told me about each image. When I gushed about the quality of his work, he smiled and said the subjects of his photographs were what made the images beautiful, and not his photographic technique. This quiet humility that he expressed was a hallmark of Ted whenever he had something especially important to say about his experiences with jazz and especially the music of Ellington. This is what I will remember most about Ted Shell. He will be missed, but we can be assured that a part of his legacy is preserved right along with the music of Ellington. I can’t think of a nicer way to pay tribute to Dr. Ted Shell.”



◆ *Scott W. Schwartz* (Director and Archivist for Music and Fine Arts for the Sousa Archives and Center for American Music at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Former archivist for the American music collections at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of American History.)

**Ted Shell** *(Continued from front page.)*

an article titled, 'Whence We Came . . .' in which he chronicled three 'eras' of various Ellington organizations and societies, the so-called Chapters, the International Study Group, and so on.

"He remained a devoted, faithful member of our Society. Over all those years, he always arrived a little ahead of time and very rarely missed a meeting. Same with the International Conferences.

"When you talk about Ted the Ellington authority, you must take into account his collections. His personal one was among the few most complete in the world—7,000 records, tapes, CD's, movies, video—the documents and ephemera. And all the things that didn't get formally curated."

**Dick Spottswood**, the now-retired WAMU-FM host of what he termed, "obsolete music" recalls Dr. Shell the Ellington evangelist: "I met Ted at a record shop on H St. We got into a conversation and he stirred my interest in Duke's music, and invited me to join the Duke Ellington Society. Later did I join, and my interest grew such that Ellington's music became such an important part of my very life."

In the words of Ted Hudson, "Ted Shell did have encyclopedic knowledge of Ellington and his art. But more importantly, he admired Ellington's music not only in *technical* ways, but he *understood* Ellington's music in a non-verbal, intuitive sense."

A life well-lived, long and interesting as Ted Shell's cannot help but leave its mark. Indeed, he will be dearly missed. Yet through his unmatched devotion to the world of Duke Ellington and all Dr. Shell accomplished on its behalf, his legacy—indelibly linked with Ellington's—is forever!



## The 24th International Duke Ellington Study Group Conference

[May 19-23, 2016 ♦ New York City](#)

[Sponsored by The Duke Ellington Center for the Arts \(DECFA\)](#)


*Click the hyperlink in the logo at top to go to the Conference home page. The above listing in blue contains a hyperlink to a Conference update received by email on February 2.*

### New Website for Peoples Jazz Society

The Peoples Jazz Society (PJS) at Peoples Congregational Church, 4704—13th St., NW is pleased to announce that its [new website](#) has been launched. It's a dazzler, and a comprehensive digital source for Peoples, covering every aspect of the organization: calendar of events, ticket sales, Society mission and history, membership, and structure. (There are even two embedded videos starring some gentlemen well-known to our own Society; click the above hyperlink to find out who.)

The hyperlink now can also be found at the top of Page 2., in the Peoples Jazz Society logo.

### Rusty Hassan's Ellington Course Begins

A new, four-week course "The Music and Life of Duke Ellington With Rusty Hassan" begins  **HILL CENTER** at the OLD NAVAL HOSPITAL **Tuesday, 16 February from 6:30 to 8:00 PM** each week through 8 March at the **Hill Center at the Old Naval Hospital—921 Pennsylvania Ave., SE.**

The class will examine Ellington's music from his earliest recordings through his masterpieces of the 1940s,

his extended compositions and the sacred concerts of his last years. The music of his long time collaborator, Billy Strayhorn, will also be examined. The course will include film clips of the band's performances over the decades. A special treat will be taped interviews with Ellington that were used in a special radio tribute broadcast by Rusty Hassan shortly after Duke passed in 1974.

Do not miss this extraordinary opportunity for a comprehensive Ellington educational experience! Click on the Hill Center logo for further details.

### Sophisticated Ladies



At a late-2015 arts event in New York City, **Olu Yemisi** encountered **Mercedes Ellington**, and a photo ensued.

Presumably, the topic of discussion was "The Dance." Just guessing . . .



**"Dramatis Felidae"** (To Use Our Man's Term in *MIMM*)  
**About Our Members . . .**

Some very kind words and good wishes for 2016 were received from **Claire Gordon**, **John Edward Hasse**, **Luvenia George**, and **Barbara Young**. So lovely to hear from them, and as The Maestro would say, "Don't stop now, baby!"

In addition, we heard from **Josie Childs**—all the way from Chicago—who writes, "Hi to those who remember me!" Enclosed was a clipping of a commentary published last June in *The Chicago Tribune* by its jazz expert (and fine writer) Howard Reich entitled, "[Will Obama ever convene a White House jazz summit?](#)" The piece is as provocative as its title, and reminisces about celebratory jazz gatherings hosted by Presidents Carter and Clinton, respectively. Reich also reminds us of the music's and musicians' enduring contributions to American culture both here and around the world.

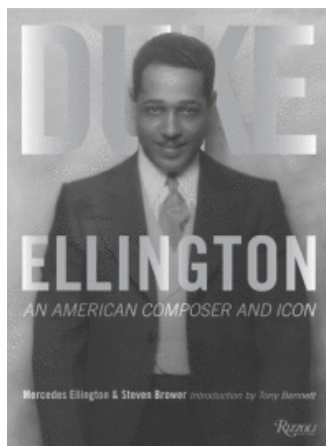
Among the gathered at the Holiday Party were a delightful first-time visitor, **Eniola Olowofoyeku** (much easier to pronounce than spell) who happens to be **Olu Yemisi's** sister, our resident author **Patsy Fletcher**, and the Dean of DC Jazz, **Rusty Hassan**.



## New Duke Ellington Book This Spring

**Mercedes Ellington**, along with Stephen Brower, has written a book about her grandfather to be published in late March, [\*Duke Ellington: An American Composer and Icon\*](#) (Rizzoli USA).

The hardcover book features more than 200 images, plus contributions from peers and acolytes such as Quincy Jones, Dave Brubeck, Dr. Cornel West, and an introduction by Tony Bennett.



According to a press release, the book draws on archives from the Smithsonian collections, the New York Public Library, photographer William Gottlieb and the Ellington family. Says the release, "Every stage of Ellington's career is brought to life with unseen images and artifacts, from his early days in Washington, D.C., to his beginnings on the New York jazz circuit and the Harlem

Renaissance in the 1920s, his triumph through the Depression and tours of Europe in the 1930s, and his pioneering explosion of form and genre in the 1940s and beyond."

## Holiday Homecoming Party We 'Take It Easy' To Begin 2016 by Art Luby, Secretary and Mr. Saturday Dance

In keeping with the title of Duke's 1928 composition, it was preferable to 'take it easy' at our Holiday Party, which abruptly arrived on January 2. The Society's meeting room was pre-set with a long banquet table, which made conditions ideal for those present to relax, chat and eat—family style—with a background of Ellington music emanating from the presidential digital files which were pumped through our venerable, analog A-V tower. Any semblance of Yuletide hectic anxiety from 2015 was gratefully left at the door.

Laid-back though our festivities were, we had a terrific, fun time with plenty of warmth. There were present ample separate voices—in order that no one had to sing more than one 'day' for the traditional choral rendition of 'The Twelve Days of Christmas,' led once again by the intrepid **Geneva Hudson**.

Thanks mainly to the largess of Geneva's husband, **Ted**, nobody left without a door prize, although this year's testing requirements were a bit more stringent than the usual Ellington quiz (which by now has become more of an 'open book' challenge); Ted sprung a 'Holiday Quotient (HQ) Test for the first time. The results were curious, and had many of us digging deep in our memory banks. As a reward, however, each of us received a Duke Ellington Washington, DC quarters, a supply of which was generously donated by **Ben** and **Lilian Pubols**. Onward, 2016!



## Renew Your Dues Now for 2016 To Join or to Continue Membership

Please Send Your Payment to:

**The Duke Ellington Society, Inc.**  
**PO Box 29470, Washington, DC 20017, USA**

Our dues remain a bargain:

Member, \$30; Couple, \$50; Students FREE (limited time)  
 First-Time-Ever Member, Just \$20

**We meet on the first Saturday, October—June at  
 7:00 PM. Guests are always welcomed!**

### THE DUKE ELLINGTON SOCIETY, INC.

*In Memoriam Theodore A. Shell (1915-2015)*

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