



“GOOD, BAD OR OTHERWISE,

KEEP WRITING AND PEDDLING”

RTHRIDGE MUSIC and M. WITMARK and Sons
wish to thank the following artists for recording
“DEAR HEART”
and making it number one on the nation's charts

- Andy Williams
- Teresa Brewer
- Joanie Sommers
- Al Martino
- Billy Starn
- Ray Charles Singers
- Billy Strange
- Dan Costa
- Sammy Kaye
- Kitty Wells
- Jack Jones
- Harry Simons
- Russ Morgan
- Lenny Dee



Lyrics by
JAY LIVINGSTON - RAY EVANS

Persistence paid off for the songwriting duo of Ray Evans W'36 and Jay Livingston C'37, whose compositions include multiple Oscar winners, a much-loved Christmas song, and the themes from *Bonanza* and *Mr. Ed*. Their creative and personal journey—and the lost world of popular music pre-rock-and-roll—is documented in fascinating detail in a collection of materials recently donated to Penn. **BY BEN YAGODA**



It was the spring of 1939, and Ray Evans W'36 and his fellow Penn alumnus Jay Livingston C'37 had gotten pretty much nowhere in their careers as songwriters. (Evans wrote the words and Livingston, who had recently changed his name from Jacob Levison, the music.) They'd started their partnership at Penn, as fellow members of Beta Sigma Rho and as musicians in a shipboard dance band that hit the high seas during vacations: one summer to South America, another to Russia and Scandinavia. They moved to New York after graduation and waited for success to knock on their door.

And waited. By 1939, there had been just—barely—enough intermittent positive reinforcement to keep them going. The year before, one of their songs, the cleverly titled “Monday Mourning on Saturday Night,” had been recorded by a singer named Virginia Merrill. But the record had gone nowhere. Evans—always the more assertive of the pair—had tried to follow up by contacting a top publisher, Jack Yellen (also the lyricist of “Ain’t She Sweet,” “Happy Days Are Here Again,” “My Yiddishe Mamma,” and dozens of other hits). Yellen’s reply was encouraging, but, of course, encouragement and a nickel could get you a subway ride:

“I read your lyric on “MONDAY MOURNING ON SATURDAY NIGHT” with a great deal of interest and satisfaction. It’s certainly a novel idea and shows that your thoughts do not run in hackneyed grooves. You will find a demand for lyric writers who have a flair for new ideas.

You’re tackling a tough racket—one which isn’t as fruitful financially as it used to be—but if that’s your chosen field, go to it. Don’t get discouraged if success doesn’t come easy. You never know when your lucky break will come. Get acquainted with the boys who write the tunes and the people who make them hits—and keep writing lots of songs. Good, bad or otherwise, keep writing and peddling.

You’ve overcome the toughest obstacle—getting your first song published. The rest is up to you—and Lady Luck.”

Ray continued to commute every day from his Manhattan apartment to a dull clerical job in the accounting department of Edo Aircraft on Long Island. Back home at night, he worked on songs. Or at least he did if he could rouse his partner/roommate—who put a few coins together by writing arrangements for others and working as a rehearsal pianist—to action. One day he confided in his diary, “Came home late and Jay griped me by his indifference and apathy. I make suggestions, he rejects them, and that is as far as they get.”

Ray’s mother, Helen, who was back home in Salamanca, New York, was not the most stable person in the world, and her nagging letters only added to his anxiety. At one point she complained, “I visualized myself in expensive clothes, cars, money and everything else through you but I guess not.” Her idea of advice was misguided, to say the least: “From now on, do not let any one know if you can help it that you are Jewish as I feel from the bottom of my heart that has been the greatest handicap you have had and if any one asks what church you go to tell them Christian Science.”

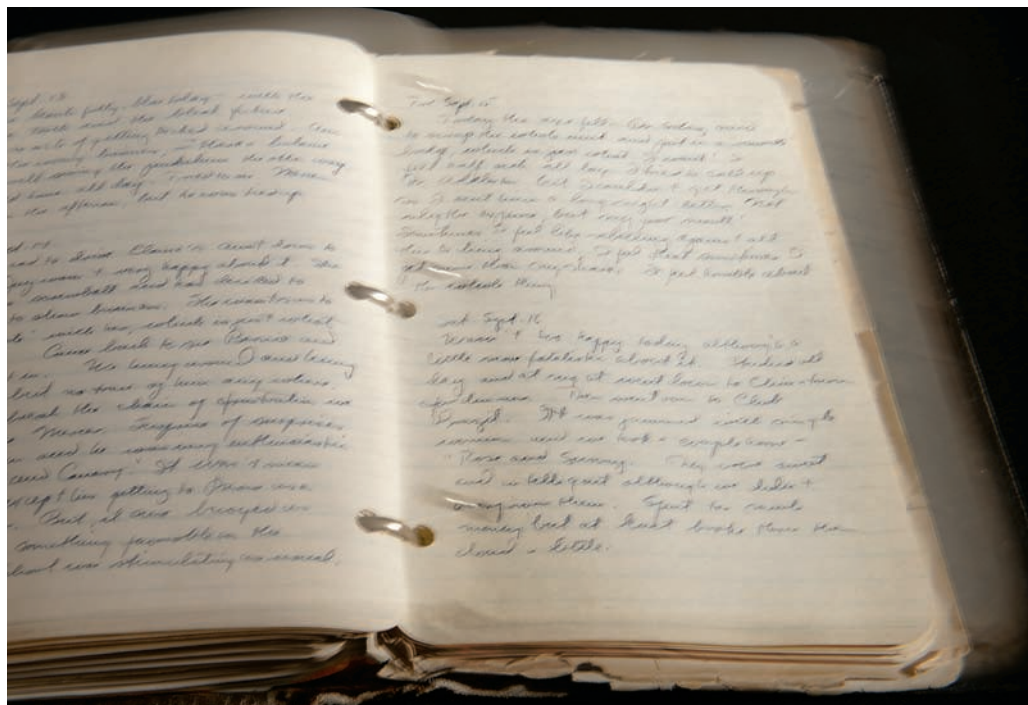
In 1939 as in 2012, however, contacts were priceless, and Mrs. Evans was indeed helpful in this regard. She got in touch with a former mayor of Salamanca, George Abbott, whose son, George Abbott Jr., was the biggest musical comedy director on

Broadway. The elder Abbott replied to her that normally he didn’t get involved in these matters, but, “My son George Abbott of New York was a Salamanca boy; and, I make an exception by enclosing herewith the introduction you request.” It seemed Ray and Jay’s big break had finally come.

Evans’ diary tells what happened next:

23 APRIL: ... Saw George Abbott Saturday afternoon. He was very friendly and courteous, and he had a pleasant laugh that made me feel entirely at ease. He said that no place of the theater has such a shortage as the music end. So he promised to call me for an audition.

1 MAY: Had our audition. He made no comment whatsoever, laughed at the risqué song and asked Love Resistance to be repeated ... After the audition was over George Abbott merely said “goodbye.”



Included in the collection is a handwritten diary that Evans kept from 1939 to 1945, as he and Livingston struggled to establish themselves as songwriters.

Four days later came a letter from Abbott. Ray ripped it open hopefully, then sighed when he read its brief contents. (Evans’ yearning for success is so palpably present in his letters and diary entries that it’s impossible to avoid imagining his feelings and actions.) There would be no big break; even the praise the director could muster was profoundly faint. “I thought both the lyrics and the music were good, though not brilliant,” he wrote. “I think you will both do better work as you mature, and I shan’t forget you. There is nothing I have to suggest for the present.”

With rather remarkable persistence, Ray and Jay kept at writing and peddling, as Jack Yellen had suggested, and within the year they started to see more of their songs published, performed, and recorded. There were still struggles, however, and their period of professional uncertainty didn’t definitively end till the night in March 1949 when they sat in

Evans (left) and Livingston examine art for the film *Tammy and the Bachelor*, for which they wrote the title song "Tammy." It was nominated for an Oscar in 1957 and became a No. 1 hit for star Debbie Reynolds.



a Hollywood theater and heard their tune "Buttons and Bows" announced as the winner of the Academy Award for Best Song. Livingston and Evans went on to win two more best-song Oscars, for "Mona Lisa" and "Que Sera, Sera." They would also write two Broadway shows; one of the top-selling Christmas songs of all time, "Silver Bells"; such hits as "Tammy," "Never Let Me Go," "Dear Heart" and "To Each His Own"; and, not least, two of the most memorable theme songs in television history, "Bonanza" and "Mr. Ed." By the time they were done, Ray calculated that 26 of their songs had sold a million records or more, and that total record sales had exceeded 500 million.

As a Wharton grad, Ray was always doing such ciphering. His accountant background and inclinations may also have contributed to the fact that, of all American songwriters, he was without question the biggest magpie and packrat. Ray held on to everything, from his mother's nutty correspondence, to the Dear John letter he received in 1939 from the former Helen Ecker ("I know that you will understand while I pen this rather difficult note"), to the smallest *Billboard* clipping indicating that Tony Martin happened to perform one of his and Jay's songs in a nightclub act in Toledo. Then there was his diary, to which he contributed longhand entries from 1939 to 1945.

Ray Evans died in 2007 ["Obituaries," July/Aug 2007]; his wife, Wyn Ritchie Evans, had passed away four years earlier. Last year, the Ray & Wyn Ritchie Evans Foundation donated the couple's papers and memorabilia to the University of Pennsylvania libraries, and also provided a \$200,000 grant to cover the costs of cataloguing, digitizing, and promoting the materials on campus and on the web. (An exhibition focusing on seven Oscar-nominated songs, "Silver Bells and Oscar Gold: Ray Evans in Hollywood," opens April 11 and runs through October 29 at Van Pelt Library's Eugene Ormandy Gallery.)

THE Evans collection provides an unprecedented window into what, precisely, it was like to seek and attain a career as an American songwriter in the middle third of the 20th century.

It wasn't easy—certainly not for two boys from the hinterlands (Jay hailed from a small town in Western Pennsylvania) who were not inclined to aggressively push their prospects and who, frankly, didn't have the prodigious and immediately apparent talent of a Gershwin, Berlin, Porter, or Rodgers. What they did have was persistence.

One day in August 1939, months after the disappointing interview with George Abbott, Ray saw a short news item saying that Olsen and Johnson, the vaudeville comedy team, were looking for new songs for their wacky revue *Hellzapoppin*, which had been playing on Broadway for nearly a year. Reflexively, Ray put a sheet of paper in his typewriter and pecked out a letter saying that Livingston and Evans were their boys. Of all unlikely things, Ole Olsen wrote back:

"Appreciate your frank and breezy letter and wanted to answer it personally to assure you that even though we have nothing immediate to offer, will be delighted to hear some of your material after some matinee (Wednesday or Saturday).

"Because even tho we have songs and material shot to us from forty different directions, I'm always glad to hear the other fellow's contributions. Sometimes you may find that 'needle in a haystack'!"

Jay and Ray worked on their material and their presentation for a month. Then, on Saturday, September 16, they went to the Winter Garden Theater and were brought backstage. Ray described in his diary what happened next:

"... Mr. Olsen saw us right away. He listened to everything, and it went over swell. There were a lot of people listening also, show people and others, and the songs brought laughs, the rhymes

approval and the melodies, whistling. Olsen said we had the toughest thing to offer as everyone writes songs, but he had us to see the show and then come back to talk with him.”

Ray kept on coming to the Winter Garden; in one diary entry, he refers to his “nightly trip.” On one night he met the cowboy actor Tom Mix; Wendell Willkie and Elliott Roosevelt were backstage another time. (“The latter looked like a wise guy,” Ray observed.) Exasperatingly, Olsen and Johnson didn’t buy any songs, but didn’t kick the boys out, either. Once, Ray noted, “Oncle Oley put me immediately at ease by saying ‘Hello Genius.’”

Eventually, Livingston and Evans were hired to score an ice show Olsen and Johnson were planning to produce. They wrote a full complement of numbers, but, in yet another case of good news-bad news, the show fell through.

This time, for once, it was good news-bad news-good news. The reason is a strange episode in the history of American popular music. On January 1, 1941, because of a dispute over licensing fees, the vast majority of American radio networks stopped playing recordings of songs written by members of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (universally known as ASCAP), which included the vast majority of American songwriters. Filling the vacuum in part was a licensing organization started not long before by the broadcasters themselves, Broadcast Music, Incorporated (BMI). Starting from zero, BMI desperately signed up tunesmiths. It sought out the “hillbilly” and African-American writers who had traditionally been shunned by ASCAP (and whose compositions, heard by impressionable ears all over the country, would eventually spawn rock and roll). And it snapped up Livingston and Evans’ ice show score.

One of the songs was “G’bye Now,” a charming number about the perennial awkwardness of saying good night. It showed Ray’s knack for the vernacular and Jay’s for melodic bounce; Horace Heidt, Jan Garber, Russ Morgan, and several other popular bandleaders saw its quality and picked it up. Heidt’s record eventually reached No. 1 on the charts, and the title became a nationwide catch phrase. One night in March, Ray wrote in his diary, “Every announcer I heard ended his program ‘G’Bye Now.’”

In May, the song was performed by none other than the King of Swing, Benny Goodman. Ray confided in his diary:

“Got a big kick out of hearing Goodman did ‘G’Bye Now’ last night and hearing Heidt say that it ‘stands a good chance of being song of the year.’ Everything going along very well. Must there be a bad interruption or is this only delayed dividends on 3 years of struggle.”

It turned out to be a little of each. In late October 1941, ASCAP ended its radio boycott, and the BMIers went to the back of the breadline. Ray noted ruefully in his diary, “I suppose that kills whatever chance we had to get established.”

World War II came soon afterwards, of course. Jay was inducted, but Ray was kept out of the service because of an old football injury. In 1943, from his post at Ft. Ontario, New York, Jay was sufficiently surprised at hearing a Syracuse radio station

play their song “Hello There”—a followup to “G’bye Now” that hadn’t come close to matching its success—that he was inspired to put pen to paper. “These small stations play a lot of BMI music all day, and that explains where our performance royalties are coming from,” Livingston wrote his partner. “The last check wasn’t bad.” (He added, “You better drown your troubles in sex as long as you have that place to yourself.”)

Jay was out of the service by 1944. Songwriting prospects were sufficiently thin for the team that they took Ole Olsen up on an offer: if they would drive his car from Chicago to Los Angeles, they could stay at his house on the Coast for a while. At first, amazingly and depressingly enough, LA felt like a reprise of their worst New York days, albeit with sunnier skies and some positive interactions with top Hollywood songwriters. Ray wrote in his diary about meeting *Finian’s Rainbow* composer Burton Lane (“He was very nice”) and Al Dubin (lyricist for *42nd Street* and the *Gold Diggers* movies), who “told us many anecdotes of old timers and lore of Hollywood. When he first heard Larry Hart’s lyrics and it was the only time he felt discouraged—then Hart asks Mr. Dubin if they were okay.”

Not so encouraging was their interview with Nat Finston, the head of music at the most prestigious studio of all, MGM. First, he kept them waiting for an hour. “Almost went crazy sitting there,” Ray wrote that night in his diary. “But, finally he came and turned out to be good-natured but eccentric. He seemed to be surprised that we weren’t members of Ascap, if we were ‘amateurs,’ what were we looking for etc.” Whatever they were looking for, they didn’t get it at MGM.

Ultimately, however, a chain of events led inexorably (or so it seems in retrospect) to the night when they heard their names called out as Oscar winners. The medley went something like this:

After months of scrounging and living in a five-dollars-a-week room in the Hollywood Hills, Ray and Jay were hired by a low-rent movie studio, PRC, to write songs for some low-rent pictures: *Secrets of a Co-Ed*; *I Accuse My Parents*; *Crime, Inc.*; *Swing Hostess*; and *Why Girls Leave Home*. (“The violent, unvarnished truth about the scores of thousands of young girls who recklessly toss away home ties for a life of dangerous thrills!”) The star of a couple of the movies was the former Benny Goodman singer Martha Tilton, who ...

Recorded for Capitol Records. One of the heads and founders of Capitol was the great songwriter Johnny Mercer and through Tilton (as Ray wrote in his diary), “We went to see Mercer. Surprise of surprises, we saw him and he was very enthusiastic about ‘Cat and Canary.’ It won’t mean anything except his getting to know us a little better. But, it sure buoyed us up to have something favorable on the horizon.” Mercer did in fact like their song “The Cat and the Canary” ...

And ended up singing it, as well as some other Livingston and Evans tunes, on his radio show, *The Johnny Mercer Chesterfield Music Shop*—mentioning their names each time. A few months later...

Capitol called Jay and Ray asking if they had any songs for a new Betty Hutton record. The label took one, a swinging tune called “Stuff Like That There.” *Billboard* said of the disk in characteristic lingo, “Here’s a cinch for jukes. It’s lady Hutton at her best ... It’s definitely big-time. Once it catches on, it

should go like a house-a-fire." The song reached No. 4 on the charts, and shortly afterwards...

Hutton was making a movie for Paramount called *The Stork Club*, and Johnny Mercer recommended Ray and Jay as songwriters. In August 1946, they auditioned for producers Louis Lipstone and Buddy de Sylva, who took one of their songs, "A Square in the Social Circle." About two weeks later...

And here Ray Evans picks up the story (he's quoted in Gene Lees' biography of Mercer, *Portrait of Johnny*): "We got a call from Louis Lipstone. He said, 'I'd like to see you in my office. We need someone to write songs for the shorts and things like that. We can't pay you very much, two hundred a week. But if you like it, it's a nine-to-five job.' We said, 'Of course!' He said, 'Okay, we'll give you a contract.' On our way out of his office, Jay said, 'Is it two hundred each or two hundred for both of us?' It was two hundred each."

The boys placed songs in a couple of Paramount films, notably Bob Hope's *Monsieur Beaucaire*. But they were not setting the world on fire, and were painfully aware that their contract had an option, which Paramount could renew at its pleasure. Not long before the telltale date, the studio's publicity department had the bright idea to create a song called "To Each His Own," the title of one its forthcoming movies.

The song wouldn't be *in* the film, which was already in the can. The hope was that it would get recorded, receive airplay, and thus provide free advertising for the picture. The flacks started at the top of the songwriting pecking order and went down the line. Everybody turned them down. Evans later recalled that "Victor Young, who had written the movie's score, said, 'I won't write a song with that dumb title.'" But he and Jay, at the very bottom, couldn't afford to say no.

Frankly, 65 years after its creation, "To Each His Own" does not impress. Its melody is singsongy (though admittedly not uncatchy), its lyrics sentimental and just this side of banal: "Two lips must insist on two more to be kissed/Or they'll never know what love can do./To each his own, I've found my own/One and only you." But it appeared at a sentimental and in some ways simple time, and for whatever reason it struck a nerve. Close to a dozen orchestras and singers recorded the song; the most successful, Eddy Howard's, topped the Billboard charts for eight straight weeks. Needless to say, Paramount renewed Livingston and Evans' contract. By the following March—according to a *Los Angeles Daily News* article in the scrapbook—"To Each His Own" had sold 4 million records and 1 million pieces of sheet music, and had earned its writers \$30,000. The article did not specify if that was \$30,000 each or \$30,000 for both of them.

Two of the team's best-known songs were introduced in Bob Hope vehicles—"Buttons and Bows" in *The Paleface* and "Silver Bells" in *The Lemon Drop Kid*.



SILVER BELLS

WORDS AND MUSIC BY JAY LIVINGSTON AND RAY EVANS

SCORE

Silver Bells
I Really Want Me To Sing
It's Got A Dime To Dream



From the Paramount Picture
"THE LEMON DROP KID"
starring Bob Hope and Marilyn Maxwell
Based on a story by Damon Runyon



Evans and Livingston photographed at the Oscars with *Paleface* co-star Jane Russell—and their Oscar statuettes for “Buttons and Bows.”

More so than its financial success, “To Each His Own” would have a profound effect on Livingston and Evans’ career, and on Hollywood music more generally. In the words of a 1946 *Billboard* headline, “TO EACH’ CLICK MAY CUE MORE TITLE TUNES. Translation: all the studios started taking a page from Paramount’s book and commissioning songs to play under the credits of their films; if it had the same title as the picture, so much the better, but there was definitely no need for it to have anything to *do* with the picture. Ray and Jay became the go-to guys for this subgenre. Over the next five years, they wrote title songs for the films *Golden Earrings*; *Easy Come, Easy Go*; *The Big Clock*; *Beyond Glory*; *Copper Canyon*; *Song of Surrender*; and *When Worlds Collide* (“When worlds collide and mountains tumble, I’ll stop loving you”). Ray later said that the only title-song assignment they ever turned down was *Desert Fury*. One wonders why.

In contrast to their early days in Manhattan, when they created whatever came into their heads, this was a pure work-for hire situation, for good or ill. The good was the paycheck. The ill was having to write songs like “When Worlds Collide” or the 1956 “The Mole People.” (“The mole people./They live in a hole, people.”) That is an oversimplification. Livingston and Evans had sufficient talent, experience, and drive that, as often as not, they could take an assignment on a Friday—the title often non-negotiable—and by Monday have crafted an honorable piece of work.

One day at Paramount, a producer on a forthcoming Bob Hope film came to their office, ordered up a song ... and left the title up to them! In an interview years later, Ray remembered that the producer said, “Why don’t you write a song about Bob being a tenderfoot in the Wild West, way out of his element? And he wishes he were back East where life is civilized.” Out of that came “Buttons and Bows,” a small gem of a character song. (It, as well as every other Livingston and Evans song that exists in recorded form, can be heard at the superb website devoted to their work, www.rayevans.org).

Dinah Shore got hold of the sheet music and made a record; it shot to the top of the charts in September 1948 and stayed there for 10 weeks. Sensing a potential waste of good publicity, Paramount speeded up release of the Hope picture, *The Paleface*, and featured “Buttons and Bows” in every bit of advertising. Reviewing the movie in *The New York Times*, Bosley Crowther wrote:

The historic thing about “The Paleface” is that in it is tucked away, as though it were a thing of no consequence, the sensational “Buttons and Bows.” This song, which, our seasoned sources tell us, is now the *all-time* all-time hit, is brushed off in one casual chorus by—of all people!—Mr. Hope. Twiddling a concertina and comically mouthing the words, Mr. Hope tosses off the number and indifferently leaves it lie. Nobody picks it up later. That’s all they originally thought of it when “The Paleface” was put together more than a year ago.

The great things in human progress—and in art—usually happen this way. “The Paleface” deserves primarily a marker as the birthplace of “Buttons and Bows.”

Three months later, the boys picked up their Oscar.

In the Ray Evans Collection are three typed documents called “Act Number One,” “Act Number Two,” and (you guessed it), “Act Number Three.” They consist of the notes and script to a dog-and-pony show he and Jay performed in their later years, for example on a Princess/Rotterdam cruise. It has shorthand cues for a collection of anecdotes that they had pulled out of their pockets so many times, the sheen was almost blinding. Here’s one:

“JAY: Writing the song for O.S.S. Title changed to AFTER MIDNIGHT. Wanted title song, had to do it. Title changed to CAPTAIN CAREY, U.S.A. Got MONA LISA back. If title not changed, MONA LISA would never have existed.” (That is, in 1950, they wrote song called “After Midnight,” for a movie of

the same name. But then the movie title got changed to *Captain Carey, U.S.A.*, and not even the thickest studio executive would demand a song named that. “After Midnight” became “Mona Lisa,” Nat King Cole scored one of the top-selling records of all time, and Livingston and Evans copped their second Oscar.)

The story that got the biggest laugh was about their own biggest seller, a song that has been recorded by John Denver, Destiny’s Child, Neil Diamond, Fats Domino, Mike Douglas, The Duke Ellington Orchestra, Dulcimer Dan and The Blue Skies Band, and Bob Dylan—that’s just *some* of the *Ds*—and that Ray once called their “annuity.” In 1951, their bosses at Paramount directed them to write a Christmas song for a Bob Hope picture called *The Lemon Drop Kid*. Jay picked up the tale more or less like this (with kibitzing from Ray):

We knew we couldn’t write a Christmas song because they sing the same ones every year. We went up front to the suits and ties, and we said, “Let us write something that could be popular.” They were very adamant that they wanted a Christmas song. So we went back to the office very unhappy about the whole idea, and we wrote “Tinkle Bell” about the tinkle bells you hear at Christmas from the Santa Clauses and the Salvation Army.

Ray: There was a little bell on our desk and that gave us the idea.

Jay: So we went with “Tinkle Bell.” I went home that night and my wife said, “What’d you do at school?” as she usually said, and I said, “I wrote a song called “Tinkle Bell.” She said, “Do you know what ‘tinkle’ means to most people? You can’t have a song called ‘Tinkle Bell.’”

And that’s how “Silver Bells” got written.

In the ship’s cozy theater, they talked about how, in 1956, Alfred Hitchcock came to them and asked for a song for his upcoming film *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, one that a mother would sing to her child in a crucial moment of the plot. The tune they came up with, “Que Sera, Sera (Whatever Will Be, Will Be)” not only won them their third Oscar, but was a big pop hit for the star of the movie, Doris Day. (And don’t ask about the title song they wrote for one of Hitchcock’s follow-up films, *Vertigo*).

Nineteen fifty-six was also the year that the popular music world—and the world in general—were shaken by Elvis Presley and rock and roll. Ray saved a letter written to the boys that year by Harry Ruby, the old-school songwriter of “Three Little Words,” “Everyone Says I Love You,” and other standards:

Last Saturday when I heard “THE STREET WHERE YOU LIVE” on the Hit Parade—and another little ditty, entitled: “WHATEVER WILL BE, WILL BE,” I wanted to shout. When such songs can be on top, it proves that, as I have always said, the public does not get mad when someone writes a real song—the kind of song that’s here to-day and will be here tomorrow. Which reminds me that I have not heard “CEMENT MIXER” lately.

But that was whistling in the dark. Rock wouldn’t go away, and prospects started to look bleak for Ray and Jay’s kind of song. In a joint 1958 interview, Jay said, “The kids are being shortchanged, cheated out of a part of culture. They won’t have anything to be nostalgic about. How are they going to be able to look into each other’s eyes and sigh, ‘They’re playing our tune,’ when the radio’s blaring ‘Raunchy.’”

Ray chimed in: “And 10 years from now, who’s going to remember a 1958 top hit—‘Short Shorts?’”

Jay: “Professional writers can’t and won’t write rock and roll, so it’s being done by the amateurs. In rock and roll, it’s the noise on the record that counts, not the music.”

Rock wasn’t the only culprit. In the late Fifties, the men who composed film scores collectively flexed their muscles and decided that they wanted to write movie songs, too. That squeezed out old-school tunesmiths like Jay. From that point on, he doubled up with Ray to write lyrics for Henry Mancini (“Dear Heart,” “Wait Until Dark”), Neal Hefti (the theme from *Harlow*), David Rose (“Never Too Late”), Percy Faith (“Love Me Now,” from *The Third Day*), and Maurice Jarre (“Paris Smiles,” from *Is Paris Burning?*). With the exception of “Dear Heart,” all of the songs sank with barely a ripple.

In the 1950s and 1960s, such Hollywood songwriters as Frank Loesser, Jule Styne, E.Y. “Yip” Harburg, and their old friend Burton Lane found a comfortable home on Broadway. Livingston and Evans did write the score for two Broadway shows in the late Fifties and early Sixties, *Oh Captain!* and *Let It Ride*. But both closed after relatively short runs.

The two great successes of the later years of their career, at least as far as numbers of eardrums reached, were the themes for the TV shows *Bonanza* and *Mr. Ed*. Fun facts: the person singing “A horse is a horse, of course, of course” is none other than Jay Livingston. And Ray originally penned a set of lyrics to the “Bonanza” song. They start off: “We chased lady luck, ‘til we finally struck Bonanza./With a gun and a rope and a hat full of hope, planted a family tree. /We got hold of a pot of gold, Bonanza./With a horse and a saddle, and a range full of cattle, how rich can a fellow be?” Wisely, producer David Tortort decided to scuttle them.

By the late Sixties, it was clear that their musical world had come to an end. A 1968 *Billboard* article, headlined LIVINGSTON AND EVANS LEAVE COAST CLEAR FOR ‘MODS’, announced that the team would “leave the contemporary-oriented record area.” A quote attributed to both men summed up the dismal state of affairs: “There are no rules in writing songs today. All the rules used by traditional songwriters are being broken.”

Even so, they would keep on writing songs until Livingston’s death in 2001; a few of them even got recorded. There were some abortive theater pieces, and periodic personal appearances like the and-then-we-wrote act on the Rotterdam/Princess cruise line. But mostly it was a long and pleasant retirement for both men. It was a remunerative one, too, as they were reminded each December, when at every point in every day, “Silver Bells” was playing on a radio somewhere. ♦

Ben Yagoda G’91 teaches journalism at the University of Delaware and is working on a book about post-World War II popular music. His website is www.benyagoda.com.