

John N. Scott (February 25, 1939—February 20, 2020)



From Lexington, IL, John was with our class our first three years (1957-60). The following three years (1960-63) he studied jazz music at the Berklee College of Music in Boston and was a professional jazz trumpeter in combos in that city.

Our sophomore year, John and I lived in separate rooms in the Gates basement, and Herbie Hancock '60 frequently came over from Clark Hall to John's room to listen to jazz LPs on his HiFi set. When Miles Davis LPs were played, John jammed along on his own trumpet while Herbie sans piano listened and hummed. (How amazing that only a few years later Herbie was a member of the Miles Davis Quintet, 1963-68.)

In the spring of our junior year, John played the trumpet in the Herbie Hancock Quintet on campus with Herbie, piano; Bob Taylor '63, trombone; Phil Balick '63, bass; and Steve Hecht '62, drums. According to the S&B (the student newspaper), the group's music included three pieces written by John plus three others by John and Herbie together with "the bulk of the credit" for the latter belonging to Hancock. Two of the Hancock-Scott tunes—"Portrait of Miles" [Davis] and "Griffin"—had been well received in "the Chicago jazz world" by 1960 with "Portrait of Miles" being played on the road by a group led by the well-known drummer, Philly Joe Jones. The S&B article also said, "Scott aspires to writing as well as playing jazz," as he "is a serious student of jazz, and his one ambition is to play it" with those skills to be enhanced by his attending Berklee (*'Cool' Five Play Oldies, Moderns*, S&B, April 22, 1960).

Although Hancock had played in or led several jazz group throughout his four years at the College, the S&B article reports Herbie saying, this group was the best of all of them. "There's something happening with this group. Most of the guys are seriously interested in jazz and are trying to say something of their own. It makes playing a gig more than just another dance job." Moreover, with the previously mentioned originals, said Herbie, "We play a lot of tunes no one else plays."

Moreover, Herbie, in his 2014 memoir *Possibilities*, recalled that John could "play pretty well" on the trumpet and became "a close friend; we even wrote a song together that I would later record for my second album," *My Point of View* with trumpet by Donald Byrd (Blue Note 1963). That song was "A Tribute to Someone," which was written and played at Grinnell as the previously mentioned "Portrait of Miles."

Another Hancock-Scott song, "The Maze," also was written and played at Grinnell and was recorded on Herbie's first album, *Takin' Off* (Blue Note 1962) with trumpet by Freddie Hubbard and is listed as a Hancock-Scott composition in *The Real Jazz Solos Book* (MP1630.28.R44 (2014) on the Berklee College of Music website.

Somehow, John found time, presumably 1963-64, to attend Southern Illinois University to obtain a B.A. degree before going to the University of Illinois Medical Center in Chicago to obtain

D.D.S. (Doctor of Dental Surgery) and M.S. degrees in 1966. Thereafter he was a successful endodontist performing root canal surgeries in the Champaign-Urbana area.

While he was practicing endodontistry during the days, at night and on the weekends, John played trumpet in jazz combos he formed while mentoring many young jazz musicians, composing many jazz tunes and recording jazz CDs. Later he created a more durable set of 10 CDs of his ensembles and compositions from Chicago and Central Illinois along with a list of his compositions. (Planet of Fools: A Tribute to John “Dok” Scott, <https://sites.google.com/view/dokscott/compositions>.) Now we can understand why his email “handle” was “jazzdok.”

On August 30, 1967, John married Nancy H. Pogel '62, but they were divorced around 1973. A second marriage to Linda Gavelek also ended in divorce.

John retired from his medical practice in 2003 and moved to Las Cruces, NM, for the next six years before returning to Central Illinois. After living in a memory care facility, John died on February 20, 2020 in Mahomet, IL. He was survived by his sisters Jeanie Scott and Ruth Scott Robben.



*Duane W. Krohnke*