

August 18, 1987

Mr. Gary Blond
47 Viscount Street, Bray Park
Queensland, Australia 4500

Dear Gary:

I was surprised and pleased to receive your letter dated July 10, 1987, with inquiries concerning Duke Ellington. I must say I am not familiar with Wire Magazine, and am curious as to how they got some of the Ellington information

I have been in broadcasting in this city for more than forty years, and of all the jazz people I have heard and met over the years - Duke Ellington left the greatest impression.

On a program some years ago I had mentioned that Duke Ellington said that although he was born in Washington, D.C., he wasn't precisely certain of the exact location. Fortunately, a listener knew some of the details of the Ellington family and had a friend of hers do some research at the Peabody library here in Washington, D.C. She sent me a note on this and a Xerox of that letter dated 21 September 1972 is enclosed.

I had often felt that a marker should be placed on the birth site. I personally pursued this to the extent that I was able to get a copy of Duke Ellington's birth certificate verifying the fact he was born at 2129 Ward Place, ^{April} August 29, 1899. The original home was demolished some years ago, and as of this writing there is nothing more than an empty lot surrounded by a fence.

The station I worked for last year, WRC-980, thought it would be a good idea as a promotional venture to place a marker on the birth site. As a follow-up, in speaking with a number of luminaries here in the Wash. D.C. area, the placing of a plaque grew into a month's-long celebration of Duke Ellington. The work on this venture began a year ago with the formation of a committee which led eventually to a whole series of events highlighting the career of Duke Ellington. The enclosed yellow sheet will give you an idea of the work that went into this venture.

I personally contacted Duke's sister, Ruth Ellington Boatwright, and Duke's son, Mercer, so they would know what we had in mind. Mercer's commitments in Europe made it impossible for

ROYAL PACIFIC CULTURAL EXCHANGE



*Gail
Weber*

ROYAL PACIFIC CULTURAL EXCHANGE

TO: Bangkok, Thailand

November 29 (from Dulles International Airport)

Lv. Dulles UAL #53 to San Francisco	9:20 a.m.
Ar. San Francisco	11:52 a.m.
Lv. San Francisco UAL #835 to Bangkok	1:45 p.m.
Ar. Bangkok (November 30)	11:20 p.m.

December 6

Lv. Bangkok UAL #838 to San Francisco	7:50 a.m.
Ar. San Francisco	8:00 a.m.
Lv. San Francisco UAL #126 to Chicago	10:05 a.m.
Ar. Chicago	3:58 p.m.
Lv. Chicago UAL #846 to Dulles	4:44 p.m.
Ar. Dulles International	7:20 p.m.

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him to participate; however, Ruth's husband, McHenry Boatwright, agreed to sing the lead for the Ellington Sacred Concert on Sunday, April 26, at the Washington Cathedral. Copy of program is attached.

The months of planning for this, inasmuch as I was co-chair of the events, were often tedious and at times I felt I was thinking of Duke Ellington 24 hours a day. We wanted to make sure that as many radio stations as possible would schedule a considerable amount of Ellington music, plus TV, when available and, of course, notices in the press. One of the enclosures in this envelope is a piece which appeared in the March 27, 1987 Washington Times, which you may find of interest.

Also enclosed is a copy of the official Proclamation from the Office of the Mayor, proclaiming April 1987 Duke Ellington month.

As I have mentioned, the original birth site at the moment is a vacant lot; therefore, there is no place to mount the plaque. The ceremonies were held on August 29, Western Plaza, Pennsylvania Avenue - in attendance were Mayor Marion Barry and his wife, Rffi Barry, and a group of others interested in the broad area of Ellingtonia. It was decided that until a building is built on the Ward Place site, the plaque will be displayed at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Washington, D.C. The principal of the school, Maurice Eldridge, was most pleased with the turn of events. I have no way of knowing when a building will be built on Ward Place, but we feel certain that when such a structure is completed, the owner will be pleased to mount the plaque. Enclosed is the wording on the plaque.

I hope this letter gives you some of the information you requested or inquired about concerning last April's Ellington event. There is some talk at the present time that honoring Duke may become an annual event. This is in the talking stage and I have no further information at this time.

A final word about myself. On August 15 I moved to WDCU-FM-90.1, which is the radio station of the University of the District of Columbia. My program is heard every Saturday from 3-7:00 pm. Inasmuch as I have been involved with jazz on the air in this city for a long time, I am most pleased to be able to continue with the Saturday presentations.

Again, I was delighted to hear from you and wish you well in your work. If I can be of any further assistance please write to me at the address on the first page.

Sincerely,

FG:jd
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