

Larry Jackstien

August 17, 1942 ~ January 27, 2026

Larry was a towering figure in the Northern Utah music scene. He was well connected and respected by everyone. I first met him when he hired me to play a lunchtime concert, the first of many, in the Student Union building at the U of U. That turned out to be my lucky day, as he began hiring me as his drummer from then on. We played probably a thousand gigs at venues up and down the Wasatch front, the Shakespeare festival sponsor concert in Cedar City, and at least once in St. George at a car dealership's grand opening. Whether at his annual ambitious Winter Solstice concert spanning over two decades, at Snowbird's Aerie lounge (which also featured his fabulous daughter Jill), or during several Daynes Music Hall performances, Larry always played with aplomb and a seasoned command of the Jazz idiom. He was a great blessing to me (Jay Lawrence). Larry generously hired me to back up numerous celebrities at his Jazz at the Hilton concert series and at the Snowbird Jazz Festival, and to record his innovative combo version CD of "Cuban Fire," among many other opportunities. He particularly enjoyed explaining and demonstrating improvisation, and teaching the historical development of Jazz in many different settings. Three more interesting facts: If I understand correctly, Larry put together the first High School Superband so that his talented son, Jim, could play with better musicians. Also, Larry was a popular guest on radio shows and even kept a fascinating and esteemed list of the 500 best Jazz records in his expert view. Additionally, it was at the DB Cooper's Jazz Club that I first witnessed Larry executing the tune "Back Home Again in Indiana" with his left hand, and the bop tune "Donna Lee" with his right hand simultaneously, in an almost superhuman fashion! My one regret is that he contemplated recording some Country songs he had written, but unfortunately, that never materialized. Mr. Jackstien's stature as a seasoned concert presenter was well known before I even moved to Utah. As a pianist he had ferocious technique, a strong rhythmic swing feel, a penchant for unique and interesting repertoire, and a flair for creating clever musical arrangements. He even wrote an entire Christmas show once, featuring his own arrangements with me on the Vibraphone. As I got to know and become friends with Larry, I discovered that his prodigious musicianship was frosting on a multi-layered cake that included a wonderfully happy marriage with Bette, a beautiful family, a strong faith as a Latter-Day Saint, and a vibrant, flourishing business career! Truly, Heaven recently gained a remarkable addition in our dear friend Larry.

- Jay Lawrence

I spent a great deal of time working making music with Larry over many many years. He was a very good friend and I will miss him. At this time my thoughts are with Larry and condolences to his fine family.

- Jan Hyde

Larry and I were always good friends throughout grade school, junior high school, and high school. We did a lot of fun things together in our lifetime. Larry and I both loved music. I was more of a connoisseur, even though I played violin, trumpet, piano, and trombone. I did not play these instruments well. However, Larry was a magnificent pianist even as a boy. In the latter 1950s, his sister Joanne operated a dance studio out of the Jackstien home, and Larry played the piano for his sister during her dance classes. That was good practice for Larry. Larry asked me to speak at his mother's funeral when she passed away in 2001. She had lived in a nursing home on Creek Rd., not far from Larry's and Bette's current residence. I spoke about my early experiences with Larry's mother when I was a boy and a friend of Larry's. She always made me feel so much at home and like a valued friend of Larry's. When my mother passed away in 2002, I asked Larry to play a piano solo and accompany my daughter's solo, and another solo sung by a friend of our family at her funeral. He was so gracious in accepting my request. Larry did a magnificent job, and I was so very grateful to him as his contribution to my mother's services made a difference. I've known Larry for 73 years. He has been a friend of mine longer than any other friend that I can remember. Larry has always been a class act. Always so kind, considerate, and compassionate. I loved Larry Jackstien as a true friend. Larry, I will miss you, but it will only be a short while before we see each other again on the other side.

- George Ramjoué

My sincere condolences to all that had the pleasure to know Larry and share experiences with him. As a Sigma Chi fraternity pledge and active brother, Larry and I shared a common interest in jazz piano and the study of the greatest jazz pianist of all-time. Larry. Has made a profound impact on the jazz music world in SLC. He will be surely missed by me and by others. God bless his family and dear friends at this difficult time. Let Larry's music influence on others live on and never end. Those that had the listening pleasure of hearing Larry play the piano know what I mean. Rest in peace.dear Sig brother. "In Hoc"...All Honor to his name.

- Don Armstrong...

On Tuesday 27 January Merrill Smith was playing piano ambience music for Dr. Dennis Russell's memorial. As we talked while he played, the name Larry Jackstien came up. Merrell, an incredible performer in his own right, was effusive with praise and gratitude for things learned from Larry. We had always called him Rabbi—teacher—not so much for that but because of his Jewish-sounding name. Yet he was a remarkable teacher, and we were glad he was still with us. The very next day Bion Wilcox, the glue who keeps Sigma Chi's of long ago together, called to inform me with much sadness that Rabbi was no longer with us. I first became aware of Larry's astonishing jazz musicianship at Evergreen Jr. High where he played far beyond 9th grader ability. We went to separate high schools, but his reputation spread across Salt Lake Valley. The good fortune came my way to meet up again as Sigma Chi fraternity brothers. Sigma Chi's really enjoyed singing, and Larry's adroit keyboard work made it possible. Larry was always in demand. He was on my missionary farewell program. I was looking forward to his playing "I'll Be Seeing You " at my life's farewell, when I thought he'd be seeing me again. Didn't turn out. Larry, you have had such an uplifting impact on this band of brothers. "We'll be seeing you in all the old familiar places—and when the moon is new, we'll be looking at the moon, but we'll be hearing you."

- Louis Moench

I first met Larry in 1972 while I was working at the Hotel Utah and Larry was our advertising representative at Evan's Advertising. He later joined me at Hotel Utah as the V.P of Marketing. So began our hospitality journey that

saw us working together at Hotel Utah, Preferred Hotels, Kahler Hotels and Snowbird Ski and Summer Resort. Over forty years we were sometimes co-workers, sometimes competitors but always great friends. We traveled the country, stayed in the best hotels, ate the best food and he played music wherever we went. I always got a kick out of going into hotel bars with Larry. He only ordered soft drinks, but never made any of us " drinkers" feel uncomfortable. He was always the life of the party. My two lasting memories of Larry will always be when he played the piano at my wedding in a little old church in Park City. The piano was missing several keys, but Larry made beautiful music and when Larry and I attended a Chubby Checker concert in Boston. It was a magic night. Rest in peace my friend.

- Jerry Mika

Dearest Bette and Jackstien Clan: Emotions weigh heavy at Larry's passing. There's no calming condolence adequate for such profound loss. But, through the mist of tears and torn hearts, please receive our tender attentions and intimate invocations solely focused on your well-being and ultimate happiness. Guided by The Grace, may you find solace in priceless memories and music that stir your senses and inspire cheerful flashbacks; remembering life is good; there's light ahead; your gentle Larry is beside you always and forever. When someone touches us in such a genuine, unique way, we're never quite the same. That was Larry—generous, caring, crafty, slightly crazy, exceptionally talented and dragging a Steinway. As fair-minded as fair-haired, his soft spoken manner and easy nature made for a 60-year trusted bond. Larry savored life with curiosity, precision, passion and a quest for perfection. His inimitable gifts will be fondly shared with generations through music, media and memory. I visualize young Larry, seated at the baby grand piano in the Sigma Chi house, irresistibly pounding out a rhythmic, beguiling melody. I see and hear our Sig brothers gathered 'round Larry—wailing the lyrics to our Sigma Chi Anthem, Del Shannon's "Run, Run, Runaway." Pure magic. Indelibly preserved. Oh, that we could rally once more to re-sing that catchy chorus. During those heady days, we mostly majored in mischief. Yet, we survived and thrived. Sleep well, sweet Larry. Eternities of miracles, music and mystery lie before us in worlds without number. Kindly hold the gate, old friend. We're likely not far behind. With much reflection, love and affection, Paul & Nancy Engman Aka "Fledney"

- Paul & Nancy Engman

Mrs. Jackstien and family, My sympathies on the passing of your husband, father and grandfather. May his memory be a blessing. Linda Volmer Auwerda Mother to Nathan and Emily Auwerda

- Linda Volmer Auwerda

I started playing music with Larry in my early 20's as an electric bass guitarist recently relocated from Los Angeles. I was quite puzzled that he didn't seem to know any music by Led Zeppelin, Jimi Hendrix or the Rolling Stones. I quickly divined that his music needed an upright bass and began teaching myself. Over literally 100's of gigs together over nearly 3 decades I came to appreciate his very complete knowledge of the keyboard and his unique musical vision. He had a habit of not announcing any song nor its key...he simply started playing. He also played standard songs in unusual keys. Initially frustrating, this later turned out an extremely useful skill later in my career as I accompanied many professional vocalists. Larry also gave me quite a bit of space to develop as a soloist, generous indeed and another career lesson. I put myself thru medical school playing nights with Larry and I greatly appreciated that opportunity. Larry also had an odd habit of carrying an overloaded satchel crammed with music to every gig. It must have weighed 300 pounds and could have been a boat anchor for the Queen Mary. I can count on one hand the times he ever opened it. Where he went musically, I just followed. Larry never did learn any tunes by Jimi Hendrix, my idol, but to quote Jimi: "If I don't see you no more in this life, I'll see you in the next...Don't be late". Let us all look for the good in others and value the example they set and Larry gave us plenty of that.

- Linke Hebrew

Performances at restaurant, clubs, schools, concerts, tours, are the wonderful experiences I had with Larry. Such a great player and friend. Couldn't have asked for anything better. The association lasted a long time, from 1962 to almost the present. He taught me a lot, and I hope I gave him some meaningful musical moments in return. Thank you, Larry, for your contributions to my life.

- Lars Yorgason