

**Rommel Charles Wilson, Jr., Saxophonist Extraordinaire, January 25, 1953 - June 11, 2015**, was born in Little Rock, Arkansas. He grew up there, finishing high school before embarking on a truly impressive career in show business. Our hearts are bleeding dry because of such a great loss, as Rommel's passing is still too surreal as I write his bio exactly three months later on this September 11, 2015.

A graduate of North Texas State University, he received a Bachelor of Music degree with a major in Jazz Education. His golden tones, reminiscent of his idol Paul Desmond, made his name stand out very early in his career. Other influences were Stan Getz and Duke Ellington, as well as smooth jazz artists such as Grover Washington, Jr., Spyro Gyra and Richard Elliott.

His skills were second to none, accomplished on alto, soprano, tenor and baritone saxophones. He was an educator; he was a showman. He taught in schools: he taught privately. No matter the venue, no matter the number of people, Rommel was at home in his true element, engaging his audience or students with every note birthed from the air he breathed through his instrument. The tones resonating with beautiful, colorful sound waves, striking every imaginable delivery and styling that was his own, molding every imaginable twist and turn of the notes into glorious melodies, culminated into the known sounds of Baron Von Rommel.

In Arkansas, garnering attention from Governor Bill Clinton, he played the Governor's Ball, parties at the Governor's Mansion, and when Bill Clinton was elected President of the United States, he was invited to the White House on numerous occasions.

In his early thirties, Rommel decided to go west, and headed to Los Angeles, California, where many of his friends were encouraging him to live to further his career in the recording industry and television. As he made his journey through the northern route, he said he "made the mistake" of traveling through the High Sierras, taking in the fresh air and the huge crater lake hollowed out in the top of the mountains, known as Lake Tahoe. He always said that he had found God's Country, and he wasn't about to leave it, trading it for city smog and bumper to bumper traffic.

Settling in Lake Tahoe City, California, Rommel worked the Nevada circuit, as well as traveling to various venues in surrounding states. He played Las Vegas, Reno and Tahoe showrooms, lounges, and night clubs. He not only worked as a musician, he was also a musical director and show producer. He's performed with Abbe Lane, Billy Preston, Cornell Gunter's COASTERS featuring Edwin Cook, Larry Collins, The Drifters, The Temptations, Little Anthony & the Imperials, BJ Thomas, Harry Blackstone, Wayne Newton, the Atlanta Rhythm Section, and opened for Bill Cosby and The Yellowjackets.

In 1996, he performed with the orchestra in Las Vegas for the Miss Universe Pageant, the 1983 Bob Hope desert Classic in Palm Springs, and his theater experience included "Smokey Joe's Cafe" at the Reno Eldorado casino and the Reno Hilton's musical swing revue production of "Work That Skirt" and "Escape" and was Producer / Director and co-star in the most recent original musical comedy, "Nevada's Story."

Rommel was a serious adventure seeker. He was an expert snow skier, teaching at resorts, as well as on mountain patrol. He was a glider pilot. He loved his BMW touring bike and loved taking scenic trips. He was up for hiking and climbing and seeking out great photo opts in

nature. He was always surrounded by an impressive group of friends, some of them astronauts, and he had the honor of being the first instrumentalist recording artist to be broadcast from the International Space Station. He loved his country and was a true patriot.

"GRANNY'S GOT A TRAMP STAMP!" was the last project that Rimmel worked on, and we were so privileged that it was with us, Edwin Cook & The Company B Orchestra. When I called Rimmel to ask him to be a part of this production, he kept thanking me for including him. I responded, 'COME on, Rimmel...WHO else do you think I'd call?! I can't even THINK of doing this project without you!' ~ Brenda Bouschard.

It's the truth. Rimmel Wilson worked with us, "Cornell Gunter's COASTERS featuring Edwin Cook," for the first time on September 20, 2007, and we were so very fortunate to have that "one more time." Rimmel's perpetual creativity was silenced forever on June 11, 2015, leaving us all that he created up to this date. This is when you find out that "one more time" is never good enough. Good things really do eventually end.

When Rimmel and I (Brenda) sat in a restaurant after our session on the night of June 4, 2015, he said that he's never been happier, loved his family so very much, and was so very happy with his beautiful wife of four years. We traded musical composition and arranging ideas for at least two hours. He was excited about this last project, and he was full of hugs and smiles, saying how much he loved us all and appreciated working with us, the feelings certainly mutual.

He talked about going on tour in September and October to Europe and Russia and was looking forward to dazzling his audiences with his jazz skills. Having retired from his regular job in January, 2015, he was looking forward to completing his "Tunes For Tonto" album, traveling, and inviting his friends to come visit him and his wife in Lake Tahoe. He would name different ones of us and say, "YOU'RE my FAMILY! Understand? My FAMILY!"

The next day, September 5, I picked Rimmel up to go meet Edwin for lunch before his flight back to Reno. Edwin and I experienced our one last hug with Rimmel. Truly not enough. I gave him time to reach his destination and sent a text to make sure he had gotten home safely. Rimmel text back, "I did, & right now I'm thinking about how much love I have for you, Edwin & Mark for believing in me & giving this poor Arkansas boy a chance to hang with real musicians." I will forever keep this one.

I really don't think Rimmel realized just how good he was and how well he was known in the show biz circle. He was always striving to be better, "practicing his skills," as he would say. For someone so gifted, so full of life, absorbing the shock of never seeing him again in this life has been one of the hardest things our musical family has faced. And his family...God bless them! Rimmel was like a brother to us, and the hardest part will come when I have to hire someone to stand in his place. There are some pretty big shoes to fill!

R.I.P., Rimmel Charles Wilson, Jr.  
We love you and miss you eternally!  
Brenda Bouschard, Edwin Cook and all the guys.

<http://www.arkansasonline.com/obituaries/2015/jul/08/remmel-wilson-jr-2015-07-08/>