

Music

Continued from page A1

times would ask if they could sing a song with him. He would accompany them in a way that would make them feel like a million dollars. And they walked out feeling that way," Miles said. "He was so generous and kind with every body."

"Maybe a part of that was he wanted to be loved. Boy he succeeded in that," Miles said.

Miles said he has known Mesterhazy since 1974 or '75. Even then he thought Mesterhazy was particularly talented, and asked to keep in touch. They used to see each other while playing in Atlantic City in the 80s and would get together. Miles said at one point he and his wife were walking down Decatur Street in Cape May, and when they passed the Merion Inn he noticed a sign reading "George Mesterhazy on Piano." He said they went to hear Mesterhazy, and since that time were very, very close.

"But he was close with so many people. I think what did him in was he had an overdose of life...he lived it the way he wanted to, lived it to the fullest at any moment, and it was always positive and it...and it wasn't intentional. It's not like he was going out



Special to the Cape May Star and Wave Images from George Mesterhazy's facebook page show him above left, playing guitar, above center, playing accordion, and right, playing the Melodica. Mesterhazy is reported to have said he could play any instrument he could arrange for except trombone...and he was taking lessons.

to do something good, he just did it," Miles said. "He was very giving and would spend as much time working with amateurs as he would with professional musicians.

MQ Murphy met George Mesterhazy through a local group that holds what they irreverently call their "Hoot 'n' nanny." Murphy said he had been playing guitar for many years, but not professionally, and he was asked to come join the group, which included J.M. Kearns, Debra

Donahue, Barry Tischler, Glenn McBrearty and others. "I met George because I knew Vicky and Glenn and Deb and Barry, and they asked me to join informal get together, sometimes at Merion after closing," Murphy said.

Murphy said the first time Mesterhazy took part in the hoot 'n' nanny, he was extremely nervous, because he knew Mesterhazy by reputation as a very talented musician.

"He was just so supportive," Murphy said. "He could go right to you wherever you were and make you feel that you were at the right place and you were doing fine."

"He had a way, if you knew him 10 years, or 35 years, or a week, he made you feel special. I read the hundreds and hundreds of reminiscences on facebook and every one of them was like that. He just made you feel completely special, and you felt completely special to know someone like George," Murphy said.

Holly Birch Knapp wrote precisely how Mesterhazy could make a person feel special.

"If Cape May were a face, George was the twinkle in its eye. Ever joyful, ever mischievous, and positively contagious. You couldn't be sad in his presence - it just wasn't possible. He always knew your song, and always had the time to play it, then find you at the bar and ask about your life and your family, tell you how great you look, share a belly laugh and leave you ultimately better then you were when you walked in the door. Somehow he managed to make the good things in your life better, I guess that was his magic. I remember Will and I telling him we were engaged, it was like we had given him a winning lottery ticket. The same could be said the evening we told him Violet was on the way. I was early on in my pregnancy, hungry, moody and mad that I wasn't able to enjoy a cocktail with his

beautiful music. But George managed to make it a party. He had us on our feet for big hugs, and smiles, and then more big hugs, and suddenly I didn't feel bad any more, I felt awesome. I felt like the most special person in the whole world, he could just do that. Speaking of his musical talent would be redundant, I mean come on, we all know it was unparalleled. I can only say it was a privilege and a lasting treasured memory that I got to sing with him, mostly after hours behind closed doors, when we all just wanted one more drink and the night not to end. There was always time for one more song. Now every time I make a night last a little longer, I'll think of him, and if there is a twinkle in my eye, well you'll know where it came from."

Vicky Rector said she was known as George's "other Vicky." She and Holly Birch Knapp used to stop by the Merion Inn many nights before closing and Cody the bartender and Mesterhazy would lock up and they would sit around and talk about the events of the day.

"I was a fan of his, and then I actually had the chance to perform with him," Rector said. "The reason I remember it is I should have been feeling nervous, most unworthy, and more scared than I ever was. But once we started he was so supportive it was great. It was such a joy to perform with him. He was

so welcoming - that was his magic."

"He brought out the best in people, and that is what he saw. I think he looked at people differently. He saw all the good," she said.

Rector said Mesterhazy was a really big deal, but he never acted like it.

Geno White is probably the only musician who rivaled Mesterhazy as the most recognizable musician in Cape May; yet he felt overshadowed by Mesterhazy.

"We had a little run where we were sitting in with Alexandra Day. It was a four or five week run and me and George were sitting in and we were killing the place. One night I got the best of George, but most nights he got me," White said.

White said he knew Mesterhazy from his Somers Point days, where he hung around with Peter Erskin, a world-class jazz drummer, and other musicians. He said Mesterhazy was so smart and gifted as a musician he transcribed drum beats for Erskin. Eventually they recorded a CD with half the rhythms based on what Mesterhazy did.

White also remembers Mesterhazy as a human being. One of the musicians in this group was a Chickie Ragan.

"Chickie had a drinking problem even back in high school. George was always a helpful kind of guy, and he would reach out and kick your ass if you needed it," White said.

White said Mesterhazy got Ragan turned around, and later Mesterhazy accompanied Ragan to play gigs in Cape May.

"The first time he came here was because of Chickie. He had a band that played at Sid's (now Carney's)...he brought George into town," White said.

White said Mesterhazy liked you if you showed an appreciation for the arts, but he loved his music. He said Mesterhazy wanted others to appreciate music as much as he did.

"He was hardcore about people being dedicated. You needed that before he would take you on as a student," White said.

Derrick McQueen said he and Rev. Stoner-Lasalla presided over the religious portion of the memorial service. McQueen said he sang an arrangement of "Amazing Grace" that he and Mesterhazy recorded on a CD in 2001.

"It's an arrangement that, without him being there, I hear him playing in my mind," McQueen said. "That's why I chose to sing that song a capella."

McQueen said he and Mesterhazy had what he described as an incredibly symbiotic musical relationship. The pair recorded together and rarely rehearsed for more than a short time.

"We got a general outline of a chart and when we recorded

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Please see Music, page A3

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	High A.M.	Low P.M.	High A.M.	Low P.M.
18	6:56	7:21	12:37	12:50
19	7:37	7:57	1:22	1:27
20	8:16	8:32	2:03	2:03
21	8:53	9:07	2:42	2:37
22	9:30	9:41	3:20	3:10
23	10:07	10:15	3:58	3:44
24	10:44	10:51	4:35	4:18
25	11:22	11:28	5:14	4:54

Moon Phases Full Moon, April 6 Last Quarter, April 13 New Moon, April 21 First Quarter, April 29 Perigee, April 7