

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE



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Abstract: **Billy Stritch**

Mr. Stritch (born William Alfred Streich III), started his musical career at a very early age taking piano lessons in Sugar Land. By age 13, he was earning money playing the piano at clubs and special events. He, Sharon Montgomery, & Rebecca Plant formed a jazz vocal group and for 9 years they traveled around the US and Europe performing at concerts and nightclubs.

Billy moved to New York City to get discovered. He befriended and began to create vocal arrangements for Liza Minnelli. They performed together over the next 25 years including for Prince Charles & Princess Diana. Today, Billy is a Grammy Award-winning composer, Broadway performer, and versatile jazz musician. He still resides in New York City and plays regularly at jazz venues around the country including working with Tony Bennett, Linda Lavin, Christine Ebersole and many others. The Lakeview Auditorium stage was named after Billy to honor his talents, fame, and contribution to the City of Sugar Land.

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Interview Summary

People (in alphabetical order)

Tony Bennett – popular musician
 Billy Blair – cousin
 Nancy Bowlin – choir teacher
 Mary Alice Blair – grandmother
 Michael Buble – popular musician
 Jim Caruso – owns Birdland night club
 Harry Connick Jr – popular musician
 Christine Ebersole – popular musician
 Michael Feinstein – popular musician
 Mayme Rachuig Bass Hause
 Sally Rachuig Kelly
 Sandy Knox – song writer
 Linda Lavin – popular musician
 Marilyn Maye – popular jazz musician
 Sally Mayes- popular jazz musician
 Liza Minnelli – popular musician
 Sharon Montgomery – popular jazz musician

Rebecca Plant – popular jazz musician
 Jane Toffelmire Streich – mother
 William Alfred Streich, Sr. – grandfather
 William Alfred Streich, Jr. – father
 Peter Schwalbe – piano teacher
 Frank Sinatra – popular musician /actor
 Mel Torme – popular musician
 Alonzo Welch – Houston philanthropist
 Melanie Wooley – classmate

Places / Businesses

Dulles Junior & High School
 Houston
 Lakeview Elementary
 Merry Moppets Kindergarten
 New York City
 Quail Valley Country Club
 Sugar Land

Events

Born William Alfred Streich, in Houston. He changed the spelling of his last name as he began playing music and touring.

Billy attended school in Sugar Land from 1st through 12th grade. He was earning money playing the piano by age 13.

Billy moved to New York City in hopes of getting a record contract. Instead, he became a composer, and song writer as well as performed with some of the biggest stars of the 80s and 90s around the country and Europe.

Today, he is a popular, Grammy Award-winning composer, performer, and jazz musician. Follow his story as he describes the people he met and the places he traveled in the US and Europe. Billy still resides in New York City composing music and traveling around the country playing in various venues.