

The music world hasn't only just lost Ray Topping. He left it some time ago when his illness stopped him being Ray and his death must be looked at as a release from his terrible suffering.

I first met him in the early 60's when he and Dave Sax paid a Friday lunchtime visit to The Marquis Of Granby pub in Charing Cross Road. They had heard that a group of record collectors could be found there. We were all learning in those days, getting records in from The States, largely gambling on what they might be and letting one another know what was really hot.

In those days Ray and Dave were out and out Blues fans and weren't too interested in our Rockabilly finds but over the years their tastes broadened and Ray became a sponge for information about Hillbilly, Rockabilly, R&B, Blues and Doo-wop. This could be frustrating at times. You wanted him to hear your latest rare acquisition, but he didn't seem to listen, he just wanted to copy down every scrap of information on the record label.

It is a great shame that he didn't get around to publishing his research but he never regarded it as complete enough. There was always something that he was going to find out tomorrow that just had to be included.

We won't start missing Ray now, we've missed him for a long time. The familiar figure with the cigarette and the bag of records, wanting to look in your bag to see what you'd bought. And I wonder how many collector record shops in far flung corners of the USA still have bags of records with Ray's name on them.

Farewell Ray and thanks for all that you contributed to our musical knowledge.

Ian saddler