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White, Nat and Bernard Drayton

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Interviewers: Mark Naison and Maxine Gordon

Interviewees: Nat White and Bernard Drayton

Date: June 20, 2006

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Transcriber: Laura Kelly

Mark Naison (MN): Hello, this is the 177th interview of the Bronx African American History Project. We are here in Manhattan at Three Trees Production Company and its June 20, 2006. And we're here with Bernard Drayton and Nat White who are responsible for producing a jazz series at the Blue Morocco for WLIB radio. Today our lead interviewer is our lead interviewer Maxine Gordon. The station was WLIB FM and what years was the program.

Nat White (NW): We probably started in the 60's. I figure we probably ran from maybe '64 through '67.

MN: And was Sylvia Robinson the owner of the club at that time?

Maxine Gordon (MG): Wait, wait.

[Interruption in tape]

[Talking]

MN: This is the 177th interview of the Bronx African American History Project. We are here at Three Trees Production Company in Manhattan on June 20, 2006 with Bernard Drayton and Nat White. Our lead interviewer is Maxine Gordon. Mr. Drayton and Mr. White recorded jazz concerts for WLIB FM at the Blue Morocco in the Bronx. Maxine.

Maxine Gordon (MG): Thank you. Okay, ready. Thank you so much for agreeing to do this little interview for us because when you sent an e-mail, Bernard, to Professor Naison to the website saying that you might be interested in music from these Monday nights at the Blue Morocco, I was astounded. I never heard of it, you know. Because I think I asked Jim Harrison who worked with Nat about it and he was like - - well at the same

time there were things downtown, so, you know, we missed it. When I saw the list of the artists that performed up there I almost fainted. And I never heard anything about Monday nights at the Blue Morocco. So this is what we're here to talk about and I'm very grateful to you for talking about it, you know, for sharing this information with our history project.

Nat White (NW): It was really - - I mean it was - -

Bernard Drayton (BD): Even in its time it was kind of hidden [laughs].

NW: I know [laughs].

BD: We had a hard time really getting people to come to the Bronx.

MG: Well what started the idea?

BD: Well, Del Shields, who was on WLIB FM, was all jazz 12 hours a day. Went off at midnight. Del had the seven to midnight slot. Music for beautiful people was his thing. And he knew Joe Robinson and Sylvia, he met them. And Sylvia was an artist and she always promoted artists in her club, this club on Boston Road and 167th street in the Bronx. And so he talked her into doing a Monday night jam session and they agreed and they sponsored us and let us come and set up. I heard I heard Lee put together my recording [inaudible] because we were talking about doing this stuff and then it just all started to happen. Certain things in life - - when people - - you work for something forever it seems and nobody's buying it and then the day when you're not ready to do it everybody says yes.

MG: Um, hmm. You have to be ready.

[laughter]

BD: [laughs] And that's what happened. And we put this together. And I wasn't ready to record the first couple of weeks because I had - - one of my heroes of the time, Lee Morgan, he was one of the openers. We opened up that place with Horace [inaudible].

MG: Oh my goodness.

BD: Lee Morgan.

NW: Lee Morgan one time.

MG: Who did the booking of the groups? Because it wasn't a jam session - -

[crosstalk]

NW: It might have come, it might have come out of - - him and I got the artists once we got started. But I think - - you gotta understand that they were doing jazz up at the club before we got there. Because we had, at that particular time, we had Freddie's, which was on the corner of 168th street. We had Goodson's which was on the corner of 169th street. You had the McKinley Ballroom, because that's what we had Bird up there.

MG: You did?

NW: Yeah. No, no, no, no. This goes back early. But just to give you an idea. Then we had the 845. Dances, of course, were the McKinley. And also at Hunts Point Palace which nobody knows anything about because it had turned Latin to some. But a large amount of the jazz things were there. But no one would know anything about it because it wasn't highlighted. But by the time we got started, we used to have printed a little card which used to be no bigger than this. It might have been four by four and it had four slots and it would say - - you see two guys and one guy would say, "Hey man, what are you doing tonight?" And he said, "No, sorry, I can't right now because I've got to get up to the Blue Morocco. We've got so and so and Oh man, this is where you should come."

And if I can remember, we were charging two dollars, no more than five. But probably two dollars or something like that. But that's what we charged. But you had a problem. They couldn't come to the Bronx, to Boston Road, because it was too hard. I don't know what this was all about. But we, [inaudible] and I will tell you, we had everybody who was somebody so I'll go along with the situation that they're only gonna feed people that dig art anyway. So - -

MG: What do you mean too hard? Too hard to get there?

NW: That's what they said.

MG: Because of the subway, or was it not stopping - -

NW: Well you see, that particular thing was up on the rise. You see the subway was down on Third Avenue. You had to go up the hill maybe three or four blocks to get the bus. Now you got the criers there. The other thing was you had a bus. The bus would directly on Boston Road. But who's gonna deal with that, see? Now once we left there - - I go because I definitely left there - - when we left, I went down to La Boheme on Broadway. And this was the unusual thing- La Boheme didn't have a liquor license so we served wine and beer. They couldn't come there because there was no liquor. So see, there's no way you can win this thing. You only had the diehards anyway.

MG: So was it Del Shield presents or was it Nat White?

NW: No, no, no. See I used to write the lead sheet for the airplay on Del's show. And the musicians I knew, you see? And the record companies - -

BD: - - I knew.

NW: And that's where we were getting artists.

BD: Yeah, with the record companies - -

NW: Yeah with the record, see - - the record companies were backing their artists you see? So that kind of [inaudible]. The only problem that we had was that everyone would not allow us to record. So we had to get there earlier and do what we had to do by the time they came to play, so. But he didn't hide, he didn't hide that much.

BD: My father was a musician, and he came in with Dex and all those cats. He was a part of the Brooklyn crew from about when he left school - - when he left Brooklyn tech high school at 14, early, he graduated, and he wanted to be an architect, but in 1935 a black man couldn't think about sweeping an architect's office. So his next gift was music. So he picked up the bass fiddle and - -

MG: What's his name, your father?

BD: Charles Drayton.

NW: Charles Drayton.

MG: Charles Drayton! Yeah, yeah.

BD: He went and played with tympani 5 on his first gig and - - so I'm coming from this whole[laughs] - - you know, I'm a young activist cat and I'm talking about the brothers taking care of - - taking advantage of, and all that, so doing this with a purpose. So we put this together. So I've never like really heard from them like, "We're doing this." Here's an opportunity for you to take your tape and go to a record company rather than go beg to be recorded. You're already recorded, here it is. Now what do you need. What's your excuse? Never thinking we could release this ourselves one day, you know, the record industry was a different thing then. So for the most part - -

MG: Was it ever live broadcast. On the radio?

BD: No.

MG: They didn't do live broadcast on - -

NW: No

BD: And I had - - and so I told all the cats. And they trusted us, you know, so. Who's that bass player that used to play with Freddie? He said I know one day this is gonna show up on the radio. And I said not from me.

NW: That's the dude I been trying to remember - -

BD: It's uhh - - Louis - -

MG: Gasket?

BD: Louis.

NW: Was it Victor Gasket?

BD: No, Louis. Herbie Louis.

All: Herbie Louis.

[crosstalk]

BD: And Larry Ridley. And I remember Larry, he was playing with Horace. And Larry said, "Nah, that's cool."

MG: Oh I figured in that period, '66, Woody Shaw and Joe Henderson were playing with Horace weren't they?

NW: I don't know how but Horace picked up everybody who played. And everybody who played, played Horace. There's no question about that.

MG: I want to ask you about the clubs. So, you knew Sylvia, you knew - -

NW: Oh yeah, I knew Sylvia well.

MG: Did you go to the club before you started doing - -

NW: Oh yeah.

MG: So you would travel up there?

NW: Oh yeah.

MG: So it wasn't a problem for you to go up to the Blue Morocco?

NW: No, no, no, no, but see, I'm from Harlem. He's from Brooklyn, that's a whole other story.

MG: That's a - -

[crosstalk]

MG: Who would go to the clubs in the Bronx? Living in Harlem, it wasn't unusual for you to go to the Bronx.

NW: Not for me. Not for me. But you know, for people who are jazz buffs - -

MG: They'll go anywhere?

NW: - - they'll go anywhere. Unfortunately, you don't really have them. You have people who talk it, but they don't live it. And that was one of the problems we had. The club had a rap. It had a rap.

MG: Who did you hear there before you started doing - -

NW: Just about everybody Stanley Torentine, everybody you could think of. Because remember now, Sylvia had a couple of hit tunes. So it wasn't like it was an unknown. It wasn't unknown. You had, you had the - - she had the [inaudible] situation and you know. It was a good spot, a really nice club.

MG: Do you remember it before she took it over, she and Joe?

NW: No, I don't. Remember now, at that time the most popular jazz club in the Bronx at that time was 845. And 845 was a jazz club. Sylvia's wasn't a jazz club.

MG: Did you go out to 845 on Sunday for the matinee?

NW: Probably, probably. I can't say I even remember because I went there even if they didn't. Not only there. There's another club that you won't hear anybody talk about because they don't know anything about it. They had a club that sat on top of the Cross Bronx Expressway.

MG: What's that?

NW: And the club was called, "Cross Bronx Expressway."

MG: Have you ever heard of that?

NW: Hove you ever heard of Bobby - - used to play org - - Bobby Forrester?

MG: Yeah.

NW: I met Bobby Forrester when he was a little boy playing at this club.

MG: On top of the Cross Bronx.

NW: Playing - - it was on top of the Cross Bronx Expressway.

MG: You've heard of it?

NW: [inaudible] Most people, they're not gonna know this. And it was in the time when Al Green had just got started because there was a little dude up there, they called him little dudey, who copied Al Green to the T. And I wasn't interested in him, I was interested in that little, fat organ player there. And that turned out to be Bobby Forrester. And I've known him since he was a little kid. Passed on now recently but - -

MG: Let me ask you something about [inaudible]. Was - - Joe backed Sylvia in the club, right?

NW: Yeah.

MG: So did you know him from before?

NW: I knew him, but I knew him from a different story, a different entity.

MG: When he was downtown - - in Harlem, or - -

NW: No, no, no I knew him from a different - -

MG: Uh, huh. We're not talking about where you got his money and everything - -

NW: - - a whole different situation.

MG: No, we're not gonna talk about that. But he did have some money - -

BD: He was a Negro investment banker.

[laughter]

NW: Yes.

MG: And he invested to back her in the club. So we don't - - you know the site is gone -
- you know - -

NW: No it's still there but it's not a what you call it - - it's not a club.

MG: Right, right.

[crosstalk]

BD: It was a club. And then they took it over and they made improvements. Because
before there was people like Nancy Wilson came through there. A lot of singers - - it
wasn't, like Nat said, it wasn't a jazz club, it was just like a part of the chitlin circuit
where you could see an R&B act, where you could see - -

MG: Arthur Jenkins worked there steady.

MN: Jimmy Castor worked there.

NW: Well Jimmy Castor was a kid from my block.

MN: Really?

MG: Oh, you're kidding!

NW: I've known him all his life.

MG: No kidding.

NW: Yeah, he was a kid from my block. But we used to call him Butch because his grand uncle or grand father owned a candy store, technically, that sold hot dogs and malted milks on my block. I've known him all his life. And when he got into the pot whirl, they called him Jimmy Castor. I didn't even know who he was. I've known him as Butch, until I saw him. The same thing happened with Jackie McGlee. I knew Jackie all his life. His stepfather opened the store on my corner. And I used to spin the records while they went in the back and practiced. And when I got back I was going - - I had a hiatus about five years - - and when I got back Jackie had already recorded with Miles, the one with Walker. And I'm talking about Jackie McGlee but I didn't know who he was. And I went down to Café Bohemia - - at this time George Wallington had a group - - and I said hey there's Jackie. And that's when I found out who Jackie McGlee was. I didn't know [inaudible]. But I never stayed away from the music. I've always had, I have always had a large volume of music. But, it, you know, again, we - - those of us who really enjoyed the music, who frequented everything that happened - - the Bronx, the Bronx, I would say outside of 845, that was basically the jazz spot. You had other spots but the McKin - - the reason why McKinley had it, was because it was a ballroom. With a ballroom overtop of a movie. Goodson's was a spot off the corner of 169th street and Boston Road and you might have put an act in there if the act wasn't too die hard. So we got a couple of things in there. You might have gotten something like what the Young Hope Limited was doing at that time, or somebody else that might have been playing. Not hard core but jazz per se.

MG: What about Freddy?

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NW: Freddie's - - every now and then Freddy had [inaudible]. Because - -

MG: [inaudible] - -

NW: - - but Lou is from the Bronx. You see, again, you see what I'm saying. Like, it's Harlem turf.

Unknown: But what happened, two things, every black community had its entertainment centers - -

[interruption]

Unknown: - - and they had their own entertainment centers. Brooklyn - - Brooklyn had like - -

NW: Ten of them.

Unknown: Ten jazz clubs.

MG: Would you say that there was more jazz happening in Brooklyn than in the Bronx?

BD: Probably.

NW: Yes, by all means.

MG: Would you go - - would you go - -

NW: I was at all of them.

MG: You went?

NW: I was at all of them.

MG: You could go hear more [inaudible] in Brooklyn than - -

NW: I went to all of them.

MG: Okay.

BD: But I think that that was pre-television impact of entertainment on - - black entertainment on television because it was [inaudible] for us on TV to think about to even

see jazz. You might see Yankee Duke or Bassie on Ed Sullivan occasionally or something like that. So those were the only entertainment centers we had and I think TV and integration killed them because then everybody went downtown to see music and the places uptown died and the places in all the outlying communities died. Except maybe the chitlin circuit thing lasted a little longer because it was more diverse but then the Motown happened and they started to break into the main media and whatnot, everything was downtown again and it killed all that. Now to find a jazz club is rare. Like Up Over was like a glimmer of hope.

MG: Yeah.

BD: I thought that it moved - -

MG: I was so - - a great idea.

BD: - - but it's a labor of love and a sacrifice - - the reason he was able to do that even to the level that he did was because his brother owned the building.

MG: Right exactly.

BD: And he had a restaurant downstairs and all that. So it's like a loss leader and you could do it out of just love. I used to go there and get depressed. Because I'd go hear these young groups playing this music and its like, "Damn." It reminded me of listening to like the Miles Davis quintets of the early '60's and stuff like that. That level of playing - - and I'd look at these young cats and - - the reason that - - the music was really invigorating and all that but I'd look at it and I said man, if they had to pay their rent playing this music, they couldn't do that.

NW: No, would not work out, would not work out.

MG: So, I want to go back to the Blue Morocco. So since the site is not there and we don't have any photos yet, hopefully we're gonna find people who still have some photos taken inside. You might find something, you know anybody?

BD: Have you checked with Joe's or Sylvia's family?

MG: Umm, mmm.

BD: Because they're still in the - - the son I know is still in Englewood.

NW: In Jersey.

MG: Oh, no kidding? Do you know the son's name?

BD: No, maybe Joe Junior or something like that.

NW: No, I don't know, I really don't.

BD: I'll try to find out but they're still around so maybe - -

MG: They might have photos.

BD: - - maybe some photos, you know.

MG: So he's in Englewood. They lived in Englewood?

BD: Yeah, right across the street from the Isley Brothers.

MG: Oh, okay. Yeah maybe we could find the son and it shouldn't be too hard right?

BD: No cuz - -

MN: You can find them through the city government. They're big shots in Englewood.

MG: Oh, good. The son is or the Isley Brothers you mean?

MN: Sylvia's still alive.

MG: Oh Sylvia. So she's living there.

BD: Yeah

NW: Yeah.

MG: So she might have photos.

BD: Yeah.

MN: Yeah.

NW: Hopefully they do.

MG: Have you ever met her or talked to her?

MN: No. Your job. She's not that easy to get through to if you don't know her.

NW: Hopefully they will.

MG: Well, you still have a - - she still would remember you right?

NW: No because - - how long has it been?

MG: Forty years.

NW: It's been forty years, you know. But you see there was a difference - - see there was a difference with Sylvia and me. Her older sister was a friend of mine. But I haven't seen the older sister in sixty years, so I really don't - - I don't have any idea. Her brother used to belong to my gang so that was another in but Sylvia was the baby. So you know, it's just one of those things.

BD: Yeah, the son still tries to keep that Sugar Hill Gang thing alive.

NW: Okay, okay.

MG: Oh, okay. Well maybe there are people with pictures. Well since so far we haven't seen anything about the interior could you describe how you walked in? Was it narrow?

Where was the ballroom?

NW: No I can't even remember because it was not narrow.

BD: Okay, I'll tell you.

MG: Okay.

BD: You go in, and than the bar entrance, the door for the bar, you walk in, it's a narrow bar. It's a bar with about - -

MG: On the right or the left?

BD: On the left.

MG: Okay.

BD: With four feet of space between the wall there.

MG: Right, right, right, okay.

BD: But, beyond that wall now was another big room. When you go in the big room - - as you came in the bar and the first door that you enter this big room. And nice tables, nice - -

MG: Table cloth?

NW: Did they have a table cloth?

BD: I don't think so.

[crosstalk]

BD: They had table cloths and a stage, a stage area. They had a decent sound system and they let me upgrade the sound. I used to bring a piano tuner every - - ooo [laughs]. They had a - - what was that - - one of these Spinets, upright piano. And it didn't sound bad because you could hear on the recording.

MG: Oh.

BD: But it had to be tuned, I mean the first - - [laughs] you know, one of the first weeks was, what's his name?

NW: Kenny Barron?

BD: No. Who did the - - no, these are the ones we recorded. These are pre-recordings - -

uh, Ray, Ray, Ray...Ray Brian.

NW: Ray Brian.

MG: Oh.

BD: Ray Brian says, "The only reason I'm doing this gig is because I love you guys and you support the music on the radio. If it wasn't for Del I wouldn't be [inaudible]. This is an insult. And then so I had a guy weekly then who came and upgraded the piano and then weekly tuned it. Five o'clock Monday night, the guy was there tuning the piano. And it was - - you know, we tried to do that kind of thing. And they let us upgrade the sound system.

MG: Where'd you record from?

BD: I recorded from the office upstairs.

MG: Uh, huh.

BD: I had a little video camera.

MG: Really?

BD: I was like - -

NW: [laughs]

MG: That's very high tech!

BD: Yeah, you know. But the first night the video camera blew out so then from then on it was just like I would go down and tell Ed Williams, I said give me thirty seconds to get upstairs, I'll go and push the record button and I'll beep you. And I had this little beeper and I would beep and then Ed would do the emceeing.

NW: He was emceeing. Everybody remembers. I mean he was one of the three jocks on,
on - -

MG: On LIB FM?

NW: On LIB FM, at the time.

BD: Captain Ed.

[crosstalk]

MN: Was the crowd a pretty well dressed crowd?

NW: Yeah, they were better than average people.

BD: Yeah.

NW: Jazz people are basically in that vernacular anyway.

MG: Did it have a dance floor?

BD & NW: No.

BD: and then, and then - - cuz I remember in the midst of that, that's how I recorded
Jimmy Smith cuz Sylvia and them booked him for a weekend.

MG: Oh.

BD: And Jimmy let me come and record. That's how I learned how to record the organ.

And Jimmy with his crazy [inaudible]. He was still married to Joy, from Philadelphia.

NW & MG: Uh, huh.

BD: and he was still kind of half- sane at that time.

MG: Mmm, hmm. God bless him.

BD: And he was interested in electronics and hand radio and stuff like that so we had
like a little thing in common and - -

MG: He carried the organ himself in a Uhaul.

BD: Yeah, he had - - he had a Uhaul. Or at that point he had like a camper. You know, he would put in the back of his camper and drive it around. Cuz I remember going up to him and we were listening - - we were taking the organ up to set it up and we were listening to Wayne Shorter.

[crosstalk]

BD: But, just really good time - - I mean, it was some of the best time in my life I think. I always say I lost my youth doing those things cuz I remember I could get up - - I could be up late at night, get up, pop up at eight o'clock in the morning. After doing that for a year, [laughs] I couldn't get up. I said that's when my youth went. I was twenty five and after that I couldn't - -

MG: Yeah I was gonna ask you how old were when you were doing that?

BD: I was like twenty five when I was - -

MG: Uh huh, and what was your day job? Were you doing - -

BD: My day job, I was an engineer doing film sound at a place, Magnosound on Broadway, Seventh Avenue and forty Ninth Street. And that was my day gig and it was in the recording studio. And I couldn't get a gig in the music recording - - see that's why I built my own rig and schlepped that to the Bronx. And then from there, I remember one Saturday afternoon I get a phone call. My mother, who was still alive at the time says, [whispers] "There's a Mr. John Coltrane on the phone."

MG: Ohhh.

BD: I said, "Who?!?"

[laughter]

BD: So I'm on the phone he's like, "Bernard?" I said, "Yeah?" He said, "This is John Coltrane." I said "Yeah, right."

[laughter]

MG: Who is this really?

BD: And he said, "Milfred Grapes told me to call you. You recorded the record for him and Don [inaudible]?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "I wanna do one. Could you record a concept from [inaudible]?" I was, "I'd love to." I said, "When?" He said, "Tomorrow."

And it was in Manhattan at [inaudible]. And I didn't have a car. So I think I took - - I never took the train to the Blue Morocco. I wouldn't even know how to do that. So I got a gypsy cab, went to the Bronx, picked up my equipment and brought it down to [inaudible] and recorded that set which turned out to be his last live recording.

MG: - - last live recording, yeah.

BD: And then from there - -

MG: So the release of that, they got it from you?

BD: Yeah.

MG: Oh.

BD: I mean it's been - - I gave someone a five minute excerpt once. That thing has been around the world. Seventy two times on the Santana album.

MG: Right, right.

BD: I was really pissed because I gave a copy to a guy, Porter.

MG: Bob Porter?

BD: Bob Porter. Of, not the radio Bob Porter. Porter who does the Coltrane histories.

MG: Oh, oh, Louis Porter.

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BD: Louis Porter. And you know, he didn't even give me credit, you know, when he put it in the book. And he's talking about the second set that was missing. I said, "What second set?" I packed up after the first set and went home because they had to ride home [laughs].

MG: Ohhh.

BD: I said you know, there was no second set recording, that I know of, you know.

MG: Well, hey, let me ask you about the Blue Morocco again. Was there a regular crowd in the Blue Morocco, like the week and the weekend? And did you get the same crowd on Monday? Or did you - -

NW: No, no, no.

MG: - - you pulled your own on the radio?

NW: Because it was advertised from the radio and these little cards. I swear if my son ever moved, if my grandson ever moved, I'd find them. Because I kept them. You had to see it because you wouldn't believe it otherwise. But they were done in caricature. There was only about four pictures on the card. But it was very interesting because we thought it was a hip way to advertise. And we'd pass out these cards on 125th street because that's where the station was. So, you know, word got by.

MG: Did you do anything before you did the jazz for beautiful people at the Blue Morocco? Did you have - -

NW: No, no ,no. We did that from - -

MG: that was the first?

NW: - - We did that from the radio. So it started at the radio - -

MG: Because that was the name of his show?

NW: Yeah, then we - -

MG: And so then the first live shows that you did were at the Blue Morocco?

BD: Mmm, hmm.

NW: The Blue Morocco, yeah.

MG: This is like a historical jazz moment, Nat White. You've been working a long time.

Because you know, I'm going to say this for the tape, the whole world knows it. Nat

White, of course, is the one who kept jazz in Harlem when everybody said there's no jazz

in Harlem. I said, well I guess you're not paying attention because the uptown jazz

[inaudible] were presenting jazz in Harlem all along.

NW: We did it for a long time.

BD: Even when Jim stopped in Long Island, the [inaudible] can going.

MG: Exactly, exactly.

BD: Because the only thing in New York City that really hung and clung to - - the only

place you could go see Johnny Griffin until the whole so-called resurgence of the '70's

when Bruce Lumbald rediscovered jazz. It was like - - cats like Johnny Griffin were like

"Who?" You know. I remember going to Birdland at 16 seeing them. But all that - - Dex

- - there was no Blue Notes and places.

[crosstalk]

MG: Because I know Sunday at the Schaumberg, the man announced that it's so unusual to have jazz uptown.

NW: Yeah.

MG: did you here him say that?

NW: Yeah, I heard him.

MG: I was like, well - -

NW: I let this cat - - I left him alone when he set out to lunch [inaudible]. I said well I better leave them alone.

[crosstalk]

MG: But anyway he stood up in the Schaumberg and said something completely wrong because he doesn't know - -

BD: Because he hasn't been in Harlem.

NW: Exactly, exactly.

MG: Or the Bronx. When Professor Naison first asked me to come - - because I'm doing my doctorate in history at NYU. Part of what we do in African Diaspora is oral history.

And so - - because you're always looking to learn how to do it. Of course, there are complaints that when I do interviews it's just a conversation. But anyway, aside from that, Professor Naison - - there start - - people were mentioning jazz and he said I think I need somebody who knows something about jazz and when I started saying I think we still have to work on jazz in the Bronx, people were like, "There's no jazz in the Bronx!"

And when I started looking at the ads from club 845 and Charlie Parker and Miles - -

NW: Oh yeah - -

MG: Dexter played there - -

NW: Yes he did. Yes he did.

MG: He played there in '49 and you know, I was like, wait a minute, you are wrong.

People don't know.

BD: This could be, this could be a doctorate program for the next 50 years around the country because like I said, every community, wherever you went - - like, in Baltimore they had the Left Bank Jazz Society and they recorded everything.

MN: Yeah, Atlantic City had a jazz scene.

NW: They had a scene to.

MG: I went to Idaho, to Masco [inaudible] to give a talk about jazz in the Bronx which becomes a talk about Arthur Jenkins and actually becomes a talk about the Hugo Dickens orchestra and - - African Americans claim Latin music. Pete LaRocca - - and so it becomes this thing about African American and Latino identity. Who plays what and who's what and you know, who plays jazz. Can you be Latino and play jazz? Can you be black and play Latin? Well, of course, you know. But I was in Idaho and I met the woman who said - - in Boise, Idaho - - who said, "you know in the '40's there was a jazz scene, black jazz scene, in Pocatela Idaho. Because it was a train place. And the porter, some of them opened businesses there, sleeping car porters. And they opened clubs because it was a place where people had to stay over. And they had jazz. Duke Ellington played in Pocatela, Idaho.

NW: Oh, sure.

MG: So I say if they had a black, jazz scene in Pocatela Idaho, they have one everywhere.

BD: Because I remember when my dad, in later years, he would play gigs with the *Triniators*? And they would do Wildwood, New Jersey. And so when they would finish the white clubs over on the beach corner, and whatnot, over on the main thing and

finished the last show, they would come back over on the other side of town, on the other side of the tracks, literally [laughs] - -

MG: Literally, uh huh.

BD: - - to the club Esquire owned by Izzy *Bushgall*? From Philadelphia. And yeah, you could - - they had the typical set up. They had a shape dancer, the organ trio, the jazz quartet, and a singer, that kind of thing. And that was that whole circuit and that went everywhere.

MN: Now I know 845 had exotic dances.

NW: Oh yeah.

MN: What about the Blue Morocco?

NW: No, no. At least it didn't happen during the jazz end. I'm not gonna say what happened on the other side. Because if I were to talk about shape dancers, we had a celebrity club on 125th street. They had a girl that - - what her name called? - - *Tondaleo* or something like that - -

MG: Oh, I remember - -

BD: That's one of Eddie's girlfriends.

MG: Oh, no!

NW: It's possible. Did that for years and she was there for years. But, you know - -

MG: she might still be living by the way.

NW: Well, she had a little age on her.

MG: Yes she did [laughs].

BD: she's about 90.

MG: She might be alive.

NW: One of the things that a lot of people never paid any attention to, we had a club on 110th street off 5th avenue called the Park Palace.

MN: Right.

NW: That's where Tito used to play.

MG: Uh, huh, right.

NW: The star at the time was Nora Morales, you see. And Nora had a couple of brothers, Umberto and a couple of others. And they all, while they played Latin, they also played jazz, see?

MG: Right.

NW: And then on 144th and 7th avenue we had a dance hall called the Mayfair. And the orchestra leader was Arsenio Rodriguez. And that was for years, you see. But we had a circuit - - I lived one block from the Savoy, three blocks from the Remy. Rockland Palace was up at the other end. And see, this was why I would always get in trouble because when they started talking about you can't dance to the music, when I put the [inaudible] together, that's the first thing that I put in there. It was a jazz dance. And Ray, you remember Ray used to take the pictures?

MG: Yeah, oh yeah, Ray umm - -

NW: I forget his name. He passed not - - very recent.

MG: Yeah, yeah.

NW: But what used to happen - - I wanted to show people. I don't know who ever gave the idea that you can't dance to the music. The kids can dance to any of the crap that they here today. What made them think that we couldn't dance?

[laughter]

NW: So that was the reason for being a jazz dance. If you look at any of our flyers, there was always a jazz dance, a concert dance, or something like that and the reason was because they had really kicked us out of the listening area and forgot all about dance. And Charlie Parker playing at Rockland Palace was not a listening session. You see, and that was the whole idea.

BD: Certain people wouldn't play gigs unless there was a dance floor.

NW: Believe me.

MG: Oh yeah?

BD: Johnny Pacheco was one guy who never played concerts. And if there wasn't a dance floor - -

NW: Hey, hey. In a lot of years he does. But the thing about it is that if you hear music, somewhere in your psyche, you can move something.

[laughter]

BD: I was a late bloomer as a dancer. I never danced as a teenager or anything. I was too cool.

MG: Oh, too cool? Right. [laughs]

BD: I was a cheerleader, you know, played trumpet out there. I still wanted to be Miles Davis. So at 32, I think it was, to the Houston express, the dance lightbulb went off in my head.

NW: Okay.

BD: And that was it. I mean, then just the whole thing for everything, for every kind of dance, I could dance to any kind of music. But it's just gotta go off. And it finally like,

bang! And it went. And it just - - but you need that. I wonder how I could get by without dance.

MG: Right?

NW: Well I give you a personal acknowledgement for Houston in general. Houston is the last of the players that has a perfect pitch for the lindy if you do the dance. Now if you were to ask Maxine Gordon who - - I'm sorry - - Lorraine Gordon. If you were to ask Lorraine Gordon who was the biggest seller in the Vanguard you would be surprised who it was. It was Illinois _____. Until he passed, Illinois did the open door thing at Lincoln center for dances, for dances. Prior - - you see if you go back in my era, Louie Jordon.

MN: Oh, man.

NW: You see what I'm saying? I followed all of that stuff. I got put out of the Savoy more than the average dude got put in.

MG: Talk about the Savoy even though it's in Manhattan.

NW: Well, the Savoy - - the Savoy was a dance hall, we went upstairs - - band on this side, band on that side. Now, at 14 or 15, I was probably about the same height but I was so thin that if I turned sideways I didn't even cast a shadow.

MG: [laughs]

NW: What I used to do - - the era of mascara - - I used to paint a mustache and a little beard and I'd always get to the door and get in. Now they used to feature a situation which was called the Snow White night. Now Snow White used to be [inaudible] that used to come in and attend. On Wednesday or Thursday if you presented the ten, you got into the Savoy for 14 cents.

MG: Did you know that?

NW: No, he didn't know that because it was way ahead of his time.

MG: No, I know it's a head of his time but - -

NW: But you gotta meet some of those people from that old thing - - and I was bad. Now you gotta understand that Wednesday and Thursday were the days when the kitchen mechanics were on the scene. And I would come in and stand there and wait until I found the one I wanted to dance with. And the minute I hit the floor [inaudible]. See because they would not allow young people anywhere where there was liquor served. And they used to have was fighters as bouncers and what they used to practice on [inaudible]. So there was no argument. So one of the reasons why the Savoy was so successful - - remember that they had a 7 day clientele because everybody came down there and they were relatively safe. There were no problems. And the change came, the change came once you start moving things around and you can't secure this thing. Now what used to happen - - another thing that people don't know, a block away from the Savoy was a ballroom called the Golden Gate. Now the Golden Gate had a feature that used to bring big bands in during the summer. And a lot of these bands were sponsored by the ice cream company which would be down on the corner of 5th avenue, a block away. And Stan Kenton came. Woody Herman came. I can remember them very well because they played dance music. We used to get out on the floor and get our [inaudible]. And win a little prize, whatever the prize was, it wasn't much, but it was a prize. And it was all about the dance. And the only problem with the Gate, the Gate was in competition with the Savoy. And that would never work because the Savoy had a 7 day clientele. So the gate moved and it became what is now [inaudible] Town house. But, oh no, Harlem was

loaded. We used to have a ballroom on 7th avenue. If you come up 7th avenue between 139th and 140th, used to be something called the Don Casino. Now that was a smaller dance hall because the Remy was a block away on 138th street. But everyone had their group. When the Don closed we tried to bring the Don Back. Open a little spot on the corner of 140, 7th avenue. And it didn't last. But so help me god when I tell you what we did. We had Billy Paul singing jazz. But it didn't last. You know, like I said - - I don't know - - if you listen to the radio now, the only time you hear jazz as we know it is after midnight. Because they're promoting all that other stuff- smooth jazz, contemporary jazz. Everything other than - -

BD: They don't do too bad.

NW: But you've got to listen after midnight. That's when you'll enjoy it. Because I don't listen to it otherwise.

MG: But this - - what happened with Del Shields, with LIB and Ed Williams - - because that was 12 hours, and that was something, and then - -

[END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A] [BEGINNING OF TAPE 1 SIDE B]

MN: Okay, we're back on.

MG: Okay. I wanted to say something about radio because LIB FM having the 12 hours, and then you picking up the jazz from beautiful people and doing the live thing - - because you could listen to jazz on the radio [inaudible] which built fans. Because when we were kids we listened to that all night and so you'd have it under your pillow. And so when you got up to go out and be there you'd heard all that music and all those people.

Now you wouldn't - -

NW: [inaudible]

MG: Mmm, mmm.

NW: See, and again - -

MG: You thought I had?

NW: One of the best cats out there. He kept me in the streets. I used to drive a cab.

_____ came on at midnight and stayed on until 5:30 in the morning and I wouldn't go in as long as he was on it.

BD: Which years - -

NW: Oh this would probably go back to maybe '55 or something like that.

MG: That's before my time you know.

NW: Well, like I say - -

MG: [laughs]

NW: He used to call himself the cool cat on the Shay's lounge. But [inaudible] had a pretty good play at that time. What was the other dude, what was the other dude that left?

I can't remember because I used to take Ed Beech - -

BD: And the guy who had the club and he did some TV things, not [inaudible] there was another - -

NW: Art Ford.

BD: Art Ford.

MG: But that made a big difference - -

NW: Yeah.

MG: And on it they would say where to go and - -

NW: Very, very, very hip. Very hip.

MG: And that's really heard, I think.

NW: You know what else we had? We had a dude named Sonny Mann. Now Sonny Mann used to work at a station called WFAS. WFAS was up in the mountains right opposite a graveyard up in - -

BD: New Rochelle.

NW: Outside and I'll try to think of the name of the little place. And I used to go up there every year and do a Charlie Parker festival. You knew I had already, didn't you? Charlie Parker fanatic. And every year I used to do it.

MG: When did you move from being a fan to like doing the promoting.

NW: Now I never lost the fan ship.

MG: No, no. We know you're the number one fan. But when did you like move in to - -

NW: Well the [inaudible] started technically from '74-'86 - -

MG: Yeah, but you were doing this in '67 - -

NW: But I was doing that - - that was in the '60's. That was in the '60's.

MN: When did the clubs of Boston Road close? Sylvia's, Goodson's, Freddie's - -

NW: They didn't necessarily close. They might have left out the jazz venue.

MG: They kind of fade right?

NW: They faded, they didn't close. They left out the jazz venues. Because I know we did a lot of parties at Goodson's. Freddie's was very small to begin with.

MN: So this was in the '70's you were doing - -

NW: This would have been in the '70's when they faded out.

MN: Did you do anything at the Boston Road ballroom a little further up?

NW: The Boston Road Ballroom was known as - - that was a soul club.

MN: A soul club.

NW: That was where they went to dance hard. And there was no jazz.

BD: You'd get Junior Walker.

NW: You'd get Junior Walker type stuff. And the groups, the groups had the Boston Road Club. But that was not a jazz venue at all.

MG: Did a lot of people drive to the clubs on Boston Road? People like - -

NW: Well I would assume that by that time there were a number of us that had cars.

BD: Yeah, at that time. That was the only way I got there. I'd either drive or put it in the cab or - -

NW: Yeah, there were a number of us that had cabs.

MG: Because I think the thing about club 845 is everybody talks about all you have to do is take the 2 and you're right there - -

NW: You got off the train, you see, you got off the train - -

MG: Musicians said, everybody you talk to they said you took the train. With the bass, with the drums, with everything, come down the stairs.

NW: Right there. You see, but that was rare. Sylvia's wasn't like that. That was a little different, a little different.

BD: That's how I got into Birdland free. Because on my block was a drummer, a guy named Willie Jones.

MG: Oh yeah.

BD: Willie used to be [inaudible]. He played on Friday the 13th. And he played for [inaudible] on Monday nights at Birdland. So I would hang outside and wait because Willie lived on my block and he would show up in the taxi with his drum kit. I'd grab the

bass drum and then Peewee would be going, "Boy!" [laughs] you know, with my little peach fuzz that I put mascara on.

[laughter]

NW: Alright so I wasn't the only one.

BD: Oh no. and then I borrowed somebody's draft card. Because you had to be 18 to have a draft card. They would look at me and look at the draft card you know and go, ahead.

NW: Now do you remember Freddie the freeloader?

MG: Sure I do.

NW: That's where Freddie got his stick from. And Freddie used to jump around and say, "I don't know why you look at me funny, I'm famous."

[crosstalk]

NW: But he had a way. He'd slide through a door better than anybody I knew. And he did it for a long time. But it's funny because Birdland - - I opened Birdland. It was 99 cents. I tell people [inaudible]. I said no, no, I opened Birdland, I opened Bop city, I opened the other one, the chicken joint. Because I was there when Harry Belafonte was trying to sing jazz [inaudible]. You have no idea, because you see most people thought it was liquor that people were dealing with. In those days malted milks and egg creams and things like that were - -

BD: In the club.

NW: - - were in the club. Not in the later days, but in those days, yes, it was very big.

Interviewers: Mark Naison and Maxine Gordon

Interviewees: Nat White and Bernard Drayton

Date: June 20, 2006

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BD: You see that's how the Blue Morocco could survive after music because that sliver -
- that room - - because they owned the building everything was profit. And a bar is like
real profit.

MG: Right. They owned the building.

NW & BD: Yeah.

BD: And it's like no - -

NW: Lot of difference.

MG: That's a big building.

NW: Absolutely.

BD: And it's a low - -

MG: What did they charge - - what did you charge on Monday nights?

BD: Oh a stupid \$5.

NW: I think we did too. I swear to god I think we were charging \$2.

MG: Can you recall now how much you paid the musicians?

BD: \$25.

NW: Yeah.

MG: Would the leader get double?

BD: \$25.

MG: Oh ev - -

BD: Everybody got \$25. I paid George Benson, Horace Silver - - see cuz the record
company - -

MG: [inaudible]

NW: Yeah, yeah.

BD: The record company - -

NW: The record company would sponsor us.

BD: I remember - -

MG: Did you cover - - if you had 5 piece band would there be a prophet for them from the \$2 - -

NW: I don't know - -

MG: Or would it go in your pocket?

NW: I don't know, I don't know, we didn't - -

BD: The Robinson's, Silvia and Joe, sponsored that.

MG: Oh they paid the band?

BD: They paid.

NW: Yeah.

MG: That \$25?

BD: Whatever we didn't make in the door - -

NW: Yeah, they covered it.

BD: They covered it. But the bar would - -

NW: The bar - -

MG: They made the bar.

BD: Yeah, but the bar would cover the cost so they didn't lose any money. Because what was that guy, named Pete - - Pete Rodriguez was the manager.

MG: That was the manager of the Blue Morocco?

BD: I think.

NW: Well - -

BD: His name was Pete.

NW: Pete but I don't know.

BD: They really subsidized our venture up there and - -

MG: And since - - what I was always wondering, since the club is called Blue Morocco, does the décor relate somehow to Morocco?

NW: I don't know. I haven't a clue as to how that came about. Because I don't even remember what it was before Sylvia and them took it over. It could have very logically have been that before they took it over. You see I don't know - -

MG: I think it was called the Morocco early - -

NW: It might have been called the Morocco or something before.

MG: But was there anything in there that made it - -

BD: no, nothing.

MN: It was called the Blue Morocco before they took it over.

NW: That's what I thought, that's what I thought.

MG: I just always wondered was there some kind of thing on the walls or you know, sometimes how they have like some idea of what Morocco looks like.

MN: Now, when you were going to do things at Goodson's in the '70's, could you see a big difference between what Boston Road was like in the '70's and what it was like in the '60's?

NW: Well the change was in at that time but they - - but it was a soul movement, it was not a jazz movement. See what I'm saying, the clientele that we used didn't necessarily frequent Goodson's or whatever. Cuz Goodson's was a funny kind of bar. It was a bar that rounded the corner from Boston Road round into 169th street. Now what they used to

do - - you have a group - - I tell you what, I tell you, they probably made their money off those fashion shows. You had the fashion shows and with the fashion shows you had these little dances and whatever the group was, if there was a group - -

MN: So like social clubs - -

NW: Social clubs and stuff like that. But it wasn't a jazz thing. We had a few of those moments when they hired out to jazz people but we didn't get to - -

MG: you remember when people stopped going up to the Bronx? When things stopped?

NW: No, no, no. I don't think they ever stopped going but I would say that the jazz end of it was a little weak. But it's been weak as long as I can recall.

MG: But you don't recall like talk about drugs and - -

NW: No, no. Remember now, that period, drugs were hot.

BD: We had mainly a black audience anyway because people from wherever they came from - -

NW: Might have been indigenous, you never know. You know, but they were there.

BD: It was like when people would come to Harlem because it was a straighter shot, they wouldn't venture to the Bronx.

NW: Necessarily - -

BD: We even tried - - we even considered - - because I remember me and Dion calling up campus coached to figure - -

MG: Oh you were gonna bus - -

BD: We were gonna do a bus from Queens, a bus from Brooklyn, and a bus from maybe Manhattan to schlep people. But we didn't get any response. On the radio it said call up if

you're interested and there wasn't enough of a response to do it and - - cuz I think I still have the papers on it. It was like a \$45 deposit. Shit, you can't get on the bus for \$45.

NW: No question about it. But [inaudible] gas was 15 cents a gallon. In those days you could get away with things like that. You can't do that today.

MG: I wanted to ask you about - - did you see this list?

NW: Yeah, I saw.

MG: Does it remind you of - -

NW: Oh no, I know the people.

MG: And what they - - this is so great that you were recording because we have - - not only do we know what people were playing - - Bernard gave me some very short clips, two minutes, three minutes [laughs] - -

BD: [inaudible] is the sample.

MG: - - sample. But the quality is just great and these - - this band, like we met Joe Jr. because Cedar Walton called Chamber [inaudible] would never be his [inaudible] ever again. Luckily Cedar Walton is still living. But of these bands - - you wanna - - are their certain ones here that were your favorites that you recall?

NW: Well I'm a fathead person.

BD: Yeah he was always the fathead - -

NW: I'm a fathead person.

BD: That was the only tape copy he ever requested from me.

NW: Yeah, I'm a fathead person, I've always been.

MG: and did he play there more than once?

NW: No, but the point is he was - -

MG: And I notice there's no repeats, that's the other thing. Isn't that a little unusual for something - -

NW: Well, no, it might be because we took what was [inaudible]. That might be the answer to that.

MG: You know this - - I saw on the list Gresella [inaudible]. You know he playing in Jersey at - -

NW: Oh yeah, well Grass was one - - he had a couple of - - and then he had a couple of records on Atlantic at that time.

BD: Yeah that was at [inaudible].

MG: So what do you mean it was a house rhythm section? You had a house rhythm section?

BD: Yeah, to start of he - -

NW: You had people who were local - -

MG: Was it he local?

NW: I'm sure he was.

BD: Yeah.

NW: I'm sure he was.

BD: Billy Higgins and Paul then and them, once we got rollin, they became the house musicians.

MG: Oh my.

BD: Billy Higgins, Paul, and Cedar.

MG: That was the house in the center of the Blue Morocco? These are like the top top top. At that period and into like now.

BD: My favorite session was Freddie Hubber. Well Freddie was my - - you know, I'm a drummer, so. And man when he played he still, he can't - - he listens to that now and goes [inaudible].

MN: Does he still have all these tapes?

MG: Yes, yes.

MN: Oh my god.

BD: He said man that's some of the best recording that I've ever played.

MG: you know I feel very strongly that this is the time for you to have a gift set with his collection.

BD: From your mouth to god's ears.

MG: Guys, put a little time in it now because this is now - - all these people - - this is like classic. And I told Professor Naison I could see Monday nights at the Blue Morocco, jazz in the Bronx.

MN: Because now everybody - - that Times article - - people are - -

BD: Well that's how - - you know I'm down in Atlanta from the 30th. A friend went to the Atlantic Jazz Festival and everything. And a friend of mine's brother comes up from Carolina and we're talking because he grew up in the Bronx. He said, "I just read this article. There's this Professor doing a thing about jazz in the Bronx."

MN & MG: [laugh]

BD: Oh yeah? I said "You know because I did some recording at the Blue Morocco." "Yeah man, you check it out." I said, "Well send me the link." And he sent me the link for the article and that's how - -

MN: Yeah, I mean I've gotten e-mail's from all over the world. But I think an album, Jazz at the Blue Morocco would be amazing.

MG: It would be very interesting and with the booklet talking about it and you know our mutual help.

BD: But then the same thing with that same rhythm section was when Bill Hardman stepped front. Now that was classic - -

MG: and you know one of the things about this list, is that a lot of these people live are so far superior to what they did in the recording studio. Many people don't know, but we know - -

NW: But we had [inaudible].

MG: Junior Cook never was comfortable in the recording studio and there's so little of him live.

BD: Jazz is, you know the thing is jazz is such a live, it's a live art form. After the mid '60's, in the studio became a very self-conscious thing. The days of Blue Note and Prestige and all that, they captured the spirit of whatever it was the night before. And that same kind of thing prevailed in the studio. That's the thing, I credit Alfred Lions and Frank Wolf with - - they would take those cats and - - I forget that rehearsal room up there on 97th street. And they would go up there and rehearse, run the heads down then run the music, then practice. Just so that everybody knew the heads. And you go in and record and it had the spontaneity and what really used to piss me off is when [inaudible] would put the outtakes on. I said, "What's the matter? The reason those outtakes are outtakes is because had takes." And when I'm listening to Art Blakey's moaning, I wanna hear Along Comes Betty five seconds after.

MG: right, right, right.

BD: Not a bad take of moaning [laughs].

MG: But you know the audio files, this whole other audience, that's how they recycled the music. You know, it's not about producing a record, because you know a record - -an LP was a perfect length actually, for this music. But now with the Cd's and everything and the reissue thing they note that - -

BD: People don't have the attention span to do more than that. And the live - - I mean, Joes's daughter and myself did a label called night records.

MG: Oh no kidding!

BD: And it was based on all live recordings. And we - - I mean we uncovered some 15,000 of like all kinds of live music, every where in the world. We've got live from Seattle broadcast, cannonball. We found Horace - - We gave it to Horace. And generally what we would do, we would give it to people. You know, because it's their stuff. I remember we found a whole bunch of things from the Keystone corners. Because we had the whole Keystone collection for a while. And we called - -

MG: Well we put out the Dexter [inaudible].

BD: Yeah and I, you know - -

MG: People got angry because they were live recordings at first. But I was like you know, you have to remember that if you didn't record Live at the Blue Morocco on those Mondays, all this would have been lost. And this is like, in jazz history, you know, this is an extremely valuable collection you have here.

MN: Oh man.

BD: But the thing is, it belongs - -

MG: This says Quartet Tre Bien.

BD: Yes it - -

NW: Well that was a group we got from St. Louis. [inaudible] but it really was something. Those were four dudes that played, you'd have thought there was 8. They must have been Muslims or something because everybody had a bald head. And they came in in black suits and shirts and ties and what you call it. And oh god they played! I should let you hear them.

MG: From St. Louis?

NW: I'll say - -

MG: Did they ever go on to have - -

NW: They made a couple of things on Atlantic, they made one on Deka, I believe - -

BD: What kind of a crossover is jazz [inaudible] - -

NW: That was - - that's what they were. That's the nearest that I can put it to. Because they weren't die hard - - you'd find a lot of Amad Jamal in them and then you found what I was telling you about, the Ramsey Louis thing with young [inaudible] unlimited, that fund thing, that's what they did.

BD: Yeah, it was a combination of that.

NW: But they really played now. Oh brother! Yes they did!

BD: But you know, talking about Amad, you know, and walking into places and finding a motif, I remember sometime back in the '70's I'm in Chicago with one of my clients and we said let's go down to one of those new blues clubs the cats opened up down there. And there's a whole building down on North Michigan. So we go to this joint in this building. I'd say there was a bar or something in there before. But then I started to look at

the details. It's like, I thought I was in Tangier because all this fine plaster work. You know, that kind of filigrade that you find in North Africa. I mean that - - that's amazing, this is incredible. The guy says, "yeah some guy, some jazz guy, had a club in here [inaudible]. But I mean, Amad, he had that as a juice bar - -

MG: Right, he was a Muslim who opened a jazz club. No alcohol. I said, did you lose your money? He said, I lost all my money.

[laughter]

BD: But the people who were listening to [inaudible] were not drinking orange juice.

[laughter]

MG: That was a very brave move.

BD: Oh yeah. He was a visionary kind of guy.

MG: He is a visionary. So when you - - after '67 when you left the Blue Morocco then you went downtown to - -

NW: La Boheme.

MG: La Boheme.

NW: La Boheme.

MG: Was there - - did they do jazz at the Blue Morocco after that, without you?

NW: I don't know but I don't think that the jazz thing flourished after we left, because, as I said before, it was Sylvia's thing and Sylvia was out of the soul movement. You see, so the jazz thing was an offer to use to present it, you see. So I don't think it did too much after that.

MG: Yeah, that was - - that was why I was so surprised. Because from what Arthur Jenkins said, you know, background music, people drinking. You know, it wasn't like we

played a little Latin, we played the hits, we played pop stuff. Did you ever hear this Sir

Harwell? He played - -

NW: Yeah, yeah, yes. Sir Harvel.

MG: Harvel.

NW: Yeah.

MG: That sang like Nat King Cole.

NW: Yes, indeed.

MG: do you remember him in there?

NW: No well, he was from Brooklyn.

MG: Oh, he's from Brooklyn.

NW: He's from Brooklyn.

MG: Sir Harvel, yeah.

NW: but you know you would laugh because you see, you have a guy who's singing and not only, just recently made an album. But he left us and went into the movies. Bill Henderson.

MG: Oh yeah.

NW: Now Bill Henderson only had about 3 albums out. The major one was with Oscar Peterson. But he recently came back. And this year, or something like that. And it's very interesting, very interesting, believe me. And like for Harry Belafonte, that was really a joke. Because Harry was trying.

MG: He worked in the Vanguard,

NW: No, he - -

BD: Yeah.

MG: - - he's one of the early. I think it's Rex Gordon who told him not to - -

NW: Well you know - -

BD: [laughs] Probably.

NW: When I met him he was at the Royal Roost. Because you see the Roost, the Roost in essence was a chicken joint.

MG: Right, that's why it's called The Roost

NW: You see, not hard - - none of this hard liquor stuff, that only came later. Because in those days, the greatest thing in the world was an egg cream. That was the [inaudible].

MG: [laughs]

NW: But when they opened Box city it didn't last too long cuz - - got a couple of good things out of it but it was waning at that particular point. The thing about the dance had begun to disappear and the idea that you can't do this to that and that to this. But all at the same time you're losing audience. If you wanted to go to the Blue Note today, you would have to have an expensive [inaudible] because it's a joke other wise.

MG: Oh yeah.

NW: It's a joke. Iridium. Amad Jamal always comes in town, he goes to Iridium. I went to Iridium. I took a friend. I'm out of about \$120 and I got to the set and then putting it out after the first one. I don't need this because I got almost everything they had recorded. But this is the way - - and see now most people - - I never tell people what they can do, I only know what I can do. I've heard the best. And I don't care what they come up with now I will be gone if I ever find anybody to take me back to the route that I traveled.

MN: Wow.

NW: Never happen again. I wish it would, but - -

BD: You know what I have a real problem with is Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola, as a club.

Why would a venue like that put a club in?

NW: I don't know.

BD: Because, number one, that's a business that's struggling to survive.

MG: Yeah, but the club is doing better than the concert hall.

BD: Yeah, but you know, but they're taking away from the business that supported the music that they can present, you know the [inaudible] and I hate to say it but the Blue Notes, and other places like that, that really made that happen for them. And they're just not promoting the concert hall. It's easy to promote a club, you know, you don't have to be a rocket scientist to do that. But I felt - - I just felt offended by that, you know. That's like here's the people that are supporting the industry that you're supposedly representing and now you're gonna step on them.

MG: Well, they pack them in there. Was the audience in the Bronx any different than the audience in Manhattan?

NW: Oh, well, this was the time when people really [inaudible]. You know - -

MG: Because I was always wondering is there something different about the Bronx?

NW: I'll give you an idea of the difference. Not necessarily the Bronx. It's relative to the music per se.

MG: Okay.

NW: You here people talk about doo wop. Now all the public broadcast stations are finding all these old doo woopers and stuff like that.

MG: Who'd we have up at Fordham?

MN: We have a lot of big doo wop concert up there.

NW: Okay but the reason why I'm saying this was because doo wop was something that was founded by young people getting together and doing it. Did you know that we did the same thing for jazz. Everyone took a part. Now I don't think they do it today. But in my day I could have run the Chase. I could have run Set the Pace. I could have run anything that Miles did. But if you said that to somebody today, they'd think you're nuts.

MG: Yeah.

BD: It's like, you listen to a record and you sing every line. I remember not hearing something for 30 years and it just comes.

NW: Comes right back.

BD: Yeah, you know - -

MG: It's the same to people that listen to other - -

BD: And that's the same for people that are not musically inclined and were not - - we're at least seeing musicians and part of the scene. But just average Joe blow people out of that era could do that. And then everybody knew when [inaudible] and you had the groove going and you heightened. That was on - - the push line came from the audience. I remember because sometimes you go up to smoke and they have a funky organ thing going and the clap comes.

NW: Yeah [laughs].

BD: Yeah, you know, still [laughs].

MG: But the peop - - audience in the Bronx would be the same.

NW: Be the same, because - -

MG: He wouldn't say oh the Bronx - -

NW: They were different? No.

MG: - - there was something about them.

MN: Maxine, it's the same as the jazz mobile. The people who follow the jazz mobile all around the city.

MG: I know, I know. But see the reason I ask that question, I know there's no difference.

But sometimes people from the Bronx, they say well you know we got that thing. It's something - - you know, the Bronx got a thing. They don't have it in Manhattan.

NW: The difference - -

MG: But in Manhattan they say oh, well, they're from the Bronx.

[crosstalk]

NW: Brooklyn, I tell you, Brooklyn was different. I'm gonna give you something that's very - -

MG: I went to - - you know, we'd go to Brooklyn, nobody knows you're not from Brooklyn.

NW: Well let me tell you something, if you danced, I used to tell my boys when you went to Brooklyn, don't Lindy, because the Lindy from Harlem was different form the Lindy from Brooklyn.

MG: Oh, and they'll know?

NW: And they would know immediately. But worse than that, you were going to get into a big fight if you didn't know what you were doing.

MG: Over the way you Lindy?

NW: Oh, there was a difference!

MG: But you're gonna get in a fight over it?

NW: Well I was in the time when they had gangs.

MG: What gang were you in?

NW: Never mind. I ain't gonna get into that - -

MG: Who did - - who was the - - do you remember Joe Batan?

NW: Yes I do, yes I do. Well you know - -

MG: He was the - - he told us he - -

NW: Was in with the Latin - -

MN: The Dragons.

NW: the Dragons, whatever. Jose Felic - - what was his name? Luciano - -

MN: Luciano, right.

NW: - - of the Young Lords. But that was part of the time. But what was so different was that if you were from Harlem, you danced all together differently then you did somewhere else. Now particularly Brooklyn. Well my girl lived in Brooklyn. So I virtually paid for the A train.

MG: Uh, huh [laughs].

NW: The only problem was that she lived at the corner of Putnam and Flute. And if you go from Putman and Flute to Fulton and Flute where you caught the train, that was a loooooong hike. And once you had that gang problem, it didn't work.

MN: Let me ask you about a Brooklyn spot, the Town Hill restaurant, do you remember that?

NW: Yes I do.

BD: Brooklyn had - -

NW: Town Hill was on East [inaudible]. Wasn't that where - -

BD: Yeah, Town - -

MN: I grew up in that neighborhood.

NW: Yeah, okay.

BD: Town Hill was like top show.

NW: Yeah.

BD: Town Hill had like the Dinah Washingtons - -

NW: The major stuff.

BD: The major stuff.

NW: The major stuff.

BD: And there was about - - and this was before [inaudible], off the top of my head I came with 10 places. Brooklyn had like in the - -

MG: Ten places for jazz?

BD: Yeah.

MG: Wow.

BD: From the '50's - - from like the mid '50's through up until maybe '60 or something like that, they had about [inaudible]. Yeah that was part of that whole club.

MN: See somebody needs to do this project for Brooklyn too.

MG: Well now they have the jazz consortium in Brooklyn. They have the Brooklyn jazz -

-

BD: I don't know what that's about.

MG: - - something or other.

BD: But the - -

MN: Didn't you over there when they did an honor of Kenny Dorman - -

NW: Yes, but I don't remember who the group was. I know somebody did it - -

MG: There's somebody trying to do something.

NW: somebody's trying to do it.

BD: The key to - - like I remember one night at the Turbo Village, it was KD, it was a Monday night jam, it was KD and it was a guy, young brother named Oscar Brown on two saxophones. Bad cat, it was like an emerging guy. And they did Tanizia. And they kicked off Tanizia and it's coming to the break and nobody knew who would talk the break. So it was one of those things. And then Oscar finally took the break. But the time was like - - you couldn't have written it. It was one of those nights like shit this should have been [inaudible].

MG: right, right.

[laughter]

BD: And he, he was - - this was like 1960. So he - - jet aircrafts were just emerging and he was a jet aircraft mechanic. So he was either gonna be a tenor sax player or a jet aircraft mechanic. He chose the jet aircraft - -

MG: Wow.

BD: Particularly in those times. Because I mean here's Kenny Durham working for 425 a weekend. I mean guys are - - when he came to New York, because he was star in Japan he figured he's coming to Slugs and he was gonna be making all this money.

NW: No, no ,no.

BD: He couldn't believe how much the legends were working for. You know, like KD, like I said. Wayne was the only guy that refused us because Wayne was saying, you

know, you know how Wayne [laughs], you know Wayne. Wayne's like, "you know, I'm working with Miles now."

NW: [laughs]

BD: So I said what's that got to do with it. "Well, you know, I get double scale."

Because jazz is proactive. They would pay 37.50 I believe.

MG: That was the scale.

BD: That was the leader scale for them - -

MG: You knew scales.

BD: - - they get like scale and a half or something like that.

MG: and is this where you got the contacts for the musicians you called?

BD: That was one of the lists that we got - -

MG: Were you affiliated with jazz interactions?

BD: No, Alan Pepper. Because Del, Del was like - -

MG: [inaudible] Jim Harrison on [inaudible].

BD: Yeah.

NW: Because Jim was a promotion man, [inaudible].

BD: Yeah, because - -

MG: And what's her name - - what's her name? Lewin. You know Jo - -

[crosstalk]

BD: Jo was like a vice president. Cuz all the guys used to get on Jo because Alan

Temper and them took that money and opened up the bottom line.

MG: right, right.

BD: but that wasn't any part of jazz interactive after that.

MG: This is a list, [inaudible], this is a fabulous list of the musicians and their phone numbers - -

MN: Wow.

MG: - - from 1967. Clifford Jordan, Mill Jackson, oh this is great. This is just great.

MN: Yeah. Could you make a copy of this so we can post it on our bulletin board?

MG: The phone numbers?

MN: No. The phone numbers can't be the same.

MG: No [laughs], the people are not - - there's only like two people living on the list.

MN: Just the list of who was there.

MG: No, this is great, yeah. Yeah, I have - - this is mine. This I know you're not giving me - -

NW: No, no.

MG: - - but I would like to copy it.

NW: Take it and copy it.

MG: I'll take it and scan it. This is Jazz for Beautiful. This is really great. And this, I'll copy this and give it back?

BD: Keep that, no.

MG: I can keep this?

BD: Yeah.

MN: Well, listen - -

[crosstalk]

MN: Do you guys have - -

[crosstalk].

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MN: Okay, well listen, thank you. This is a priceless session.

BD: We didn't tell you what our rate was?

[laughs]

[crosstalk]

MG: did you ever hear, I know we're through, but Moraine?

NW: Yeah, Moraine's was another spot up there off of 169th street. Moraine at that point

- - Moraine used to be a bar that was noted at one point before this for sandwiches but

that didn't last.

[END OF TAPE 1 SIDE B]

[END OF INTERVIEW]