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BILLY TAYLOR
NEA Jazz Master (1988)

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Brown: We will start. Today is Friday, November 19, 1993. We are in the home of Dr. Billy Taylor, pianist, composer, recording artist, arranger, conductor, actor, author, teacher, lecturer, radio and television personality, Dr. William Taylor. If there ever was a renaissance man I feel that I am in his presence right now.
Good morning Dr. Taylor. I would hope that the next couple of days, we will be able to capture your over 50 plus years of your professional career, as all these various professions, as I have already enumerated.
I would like to start the oral history by having you state your full name, date of birth, place and birth and talk about your family background.

Taylor: Well my name is William Edward Taylor Junior. I am named after my father. When someone said William in my family in Washington D.C. or in North Carolina almost everybody head in the room turned. We had more Williams…it was the favorite family name I guess. So I am a junior.
I was born in Greenville, North Carolina on July 24, 1921. And I lived…I thought I had lived in Greenville only a short time but my mother informed me that we actually lived in Greenville for about two or three years, then we moved to Raleigh. And my father and mother met when he was a dental student at Howard University. So when he graduated and married her, he started his dental practice in Greenville with his best

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friend who was a medical doctor, whose name was James Battle.
So we lived there but my mother being a city girl didn't like Greenville, which was a tiny tobacco town. You had to go through cornfield and tobacco field to get anywhere you were going. And she didn't like that so much so she prevailed on him to move to…she said I want to go back to Washington. So he told her he would move her to a bigger town, so he moved her to Raleigh.

We stayed there for about a year or so but she said no that's not Washington D.C. so we moved back to Washington D.C. which was her home. He started his practice there and I grew up… I started school in Washington D.C. Actually I was in kindergarten in Raleigh I am told. I don't remember that but…I just have vague members of both Raleigh and Greenville because I had many relatives on the Taylor side who still lived, in those days in North Carolina. And we would visit almost yearly. We would go back almost every year to visit someone.
So most of the memories I have are confused with the visits as opposed to the time that I actually spent there because I was much to young.

Brown: What was your mother's maiden name and could you talk a little bit more about your extended family?

Taylor: My mother's name was Bacon. And she was…her family basically lived in Washington D.C. It was the Grayson family I believe…was the early family name, from her mother. Her father, Nathaniel Bacon was…I guess he was Pullman porter. I don't know very much about my family on that side because my mother was very old when I had the presence of mind to ask her some questions about the family. I was asking her basically about her childhood in Washington D.C.
So she had two brothers and a sister, there were four to them. And they all lived in Washington for a time then her older brother moved to New York. He was a dentist also and he moved to New York and established a family here. That part of my family was almost like…we were like brothers and sisters. Her sisters' and brothers' children were as close to me as my own brother. We are still very close, those who are left. A couple of them have passed away.
So I have vague memories of growing up in Washington D.C. I have a younger brother whose name is Rudolph Antoine Taylor. My mother had lost a male child in between the two of us, so there is a five years difference in my age and my brother's. I am the older. He, when we were young, we both took the mandatory piano lessons. My music teacher, Elmira Streets told my father in confidence that the younger son was probably going to do okay as a musician but the older one didn't have a chance because he is not serious about his music and he keeps fooling around with everything that she gives him to work on, so he should find something else to do.

Brown: What did she have you do? Was it traditional piano lessons?

Taylor: Sure. We studied the, you know the Hannon and Bach and Mozart and the usual European piano tradition. And she was a very good teacher. I remember her explaining things very clearly and understanding what she said. But she was right, I really wasn't interested. I wanted to be hip. I wanted to play some other kinds of music.

The reason I asked for piano lessons, and the only reason my brother took it was because I was taking it, but the reason I asked for piano lessons was because I wanted to sound like one of my uncles on my father's side.

Everybody… many of the males in my family, even on my mother's side played the piano. Everybody on my father's side, played and sang. But my mother's two brothers both played a little piano. Her brother in law, the man that her sister married, played a little piano by ear so I heard a lot of piano and different kinds of piano. It was mostly European classical music but… and church music because my grandfather on my father's side was a Baptist minister and we spent a lot of time in the Baptist church. My father was choir director in his father's church. His sisters and brothers all played the organ and the piano and so forth. Except for this one, actually two uncles. One was my Uncle Clint and my Uncle Bob both played jazz.

Uncle Clint was a visual artist. He later became, after he finished art school and became a professional… he became the head of the art department at ANT College in Greensboro, North Carolina and was there for many years up until his death as the head of their art department. But he was… I didn't hear him. He wasn't as close… he lived with us a short time in Washington but then he moved away to go to art school and I would only see him periodically.

On the other hand Uncle Bob, Robert Lee Taylor was like for me the hippest guy in the family. I mean he was a street guy. He knew everybody in Washington D.C. And he later became a newsman and became the assistant to one of the mayors of Washington on a political level. But he worked at the Y and he knew all the street people, all the nightclubs and all the folks that were doing things in the community, mover and shakers in the community on the grassroots level.

So I just liked him, period. He played the piano so I wanted to do that. So I asked him to teach me. And he said, "No I am self taught. I just taught myself." He has a record and he gave me my first Fats Waller record. So I fooled around with that and tried to take the stuff off of the record and it was hard. I didn't have enough technical facility to do that. SO I began to try and practice a little on the piano and try to develop something.

And I kept asking my dad if there wasn't some jazz player that I could study with. Well he didn't know anybody that was a jazz player, so I had to keep going back to Elmira Streets and a couple of other teachers that taught European classical music.

I finally many years ago, many years after, after I had really learned to play a little jazz, discovered an old rag time piano player, named Louie Brown who was teaching but by the time I got… discovered him I was already… my ear had developed pretty well and I

was taking stuff off in a more contemporary fashion. He was playing Stride piano and playing the old rag time things and did teach me a lot about rag time but I never really studied for very long. We became friends and he kind of gave me some informal lessons and a couple of formal lessons but mostly informal stuff.

Brown: Do you remember how old you were when you started formal lessons?

Taylor: Seven.

Brown: And that continued for…

Taylor: That continued off and on for the rest of my life. I am still trying to do that. But the…I had a couple of good teachers. As I got older I realized that in order to do what I wanted to do I had to… my uncle Robert gave me my first Art Tatum record also. So he really kind of guided me in my listening because jazz was the popular music when I was a kid. And some of my early recollections are of hearing a small jazz band… this is in North Carolina, hearing a jazz band play for dances.
And I was fascinated by the drummer. I went over and watched this guy play. And he was doing all this funny stuff and making all this noise and people were dancing all over the place. And that was fascinating, you know, I was watching. I couldn't understand how he could do all that at once. You know sticks were going in all directions. And I looked over and he was doing something else with his feet.
And I just remember that as an early impression of the drums. Later when I picked up the drums, I remember this guy and I said gee I would like to do that. So I got a little drum set and fooled around with it for a while. That was when I was looking for something easier than the piano to play. I figured that the piano was hard. Let me find something easier, like the guitar or the saxophone or the drums or something, something that was easier then this monster of 88 keys. I didn't find it so I went back to the piano.

Brown: Was there music in school, in your school?

Taylor: Very much so. From the earliest, in elementary school we had people who came in and performed for us. We had… in elementary school we sang both in assembly hall… we had a music teacher who we had classes with who would come either into our homeroom class or some particular place and lead us in some kind of musical instruction.
I am a little vague on what that was in elementary school because as I said I was really into jazz and that wasn't something that really appealed to me. It was too much like the music I was hearing in church and around the house. And I wanted to hear this music I was hearing in the street, and in the theatre and in the movies and on the radio. Jazz was all around me.
I mean I was hearing great bands on the radio. I mean I could turn on the family radio

in the summertime, maybe when I wasn't in school and in the morning, you know 10:00 or 11:00 in the morning I would hear some jazz band play. Then in the afternoon somebody would say, "Now ladies and gentleman from the Savoy ballroom in Harlem New York City here is Chick Webb and his big band." So I was hearing all of this stuff. And there were radio shows that everybody listened to, like Amos & Andy and shows like that.
At one point, the Mills Brothers had their own show and Don Redman was the bandleader and they were playing all this great music. I didn't identify it as jazz per say, it was just the popular music of the day and it sounded good and people danced to it and partied to it.

Brown: Do you remember your first performance as a pianist in jazz… as oppose to if you did in fact give recitals of standard repertoire earlier?

Taylor: Well my first performance was actually playing whatever little lessons we had had as piano students. And we played them primarily in the house of the music teacher. You know family and other people would come and then we might go to a small hall, nearby hall in the community and everybody would get up on stage and play. I liked that. That was cool. So I learned very quickly what I was supposed to play. And this infuriated my teachers. She said, "If you can do that why don't you do that every week?" I said, "Well I don't have a concert every week."
I was playing… I liked to play baseball and football so I was dividing my time between those things. I must confess that my mother was the reason that I practiced. She would make me practice. She was not a musician as my father was but she had a good ear. And she knew when I wasn't doing what I was supposed to be doing. She would say, "That doesn't sound that it's supposed to sound." And I knew that she didn't know what the notes were so I would play something else and then she would say, "And that doesn't sound the right way." [Laughter] So I couldn't get away with anything with her.
I had to practice. And she would make me sit there, and she said, "Listen, I don't know what the difference is as far as music is concerned…" she used to teach. She was a schoolteacher. So she said, "I know one thing, that if you are going to learn how to do that, it's about repetition. You have to do that same thing until you get it right. So you will do whatever it is. When you get it right, call me."

Brown: What about your first paying gig or your first performance as a "jazz musician" or playing something other than the standard concert repertoire

TAYLOR: She used to teach. She was a schoolteacher and so she said, "I know one thing, that if you're going to learn how to do that, it's about repetition. You have to do that same thing until you get it right so you will do whatever it is and when you get right call me" [laughter].

BROWN: What about your first paying gig or your first performance as a "jazz musician" or playing something other then the standard concert repertoire?

TAYLOR: Well I remember that very well. It paid 75 cents and it was for a dance. It was for… somebody who was just a little older then I had put together a little band and we played a school dance. So we played I guess from 8:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. or something like that and I got 75 cents. It was a big deal [laugh].

BROWN: So you continue to pursue music, you've gone through high school. Is there anything about the high school experience you'd like to share with us before talking about your college experience?

TAYLOR: Well basically, yeah. In junior high school was where I really focused on the piano. When I first went from elementary to junior high school I came in contact with two guys my age who… actually they were both a little older because they were already in junior high school when I got there. A guy named Horace Preston and another guy named Francis Madison.
They both played by ear and they both played jazz, and they both attracted a lot of attention from some very pretty girls and that got my attention. So I said I really want to play like that and have lots of ladies around.
So I began to practice what I heard them doing and we became friends. There was a kind of friendly competition. Horace Preston would come over to my house. He had a nice touch on the piano. My mother would always say, "Now Horace has a nice touch on the piano. Why can't you make the piano sound like that"? She got on my case for playing too percussively and I should make the piano sound like a musical instrument.
So all of these things kind of came together, and in junior high school I began to study with Henry Grant. He was a neighbor of mine. He lived across the street on Fairmont Street where we lived, where the family lived, and he took an interest in me.
He was the kind of person who went to great lengths to make sure that any students that came under his tutelage really had an understanding of what music was about, and if they looked like they had any talent he really would kind of nurture, and kind of point them in a direction that was usually pretty fruitful.
I was playing saxophone and I played because I wanted to play in the orchestra. I didn't do well. I was in the same band with Frank Wess who even as a teenager, we were barely into our teens at that point, but even as a very young player, it was good. For his age he was really playing the instrument.
So I looked at that and I said well hey, if that's what I'm supposed to sound like I'd better go back and look at the guitar or look at some other instrument. So I went back to the piano because as I said the social life had a great deal to do with it. I found that if you played the piano pretty girls came and sat on the piano stool so I said okay. So that was motivation.

BROWN: Do you want to go back, and perhaps if you remember the names of the schools that you attended and perhaps your neighborhoods, if you in fact lived in a variety of neighborhoods?

TAYLOR: Yeah. When we first moved from North Carolina, we moved to Flagga Place, which is in N.W. Washington D.C. It's not far up from Howard University and as a matter of fact, Howard University is about three blocks or four blocks from where I lived.
I went to the Lecrecia B. Mott School, which was an elementary school just a block or so from where I lived. I went there until I was in about the fifth or sixth grade and then we moved to Fairmont Street. I went to I think it was Madison, James Madison School. I'm not sure of the name because I only went there for about a year. My brother went to Danaka Junior High School and I went on to Shore Junior High School. It was at Shore Junior High School that I met Henry Grant.
Shore was a very interesting school. It was right in the middle of the commercial area of Washington D.C. There was no playground. You had to do… there was a tiny little space that was supposed to be the playground but other junior high schools like Vanaker and Garnett Paterson had really nice places for you to play [laugh], a little space where you could go. You had to walk a little distance for Garnett but there was a place for you to do athletic things.
So that kind of curtailed my athletic activities until I got to junior high school and that was really when I began to focus on music because it was more fun to play the piano and to hang out with my friends who were doing that then it was to play soccer or whatever out in a street with traffic and you were always being yelled at or something, even with the street blocked off because there wasn't enough room.

BROWN: Were you starting to work professionally at this time?

TAYLOR: Just barely. Yeah, just… there were several young students or young men who had orchestras. Johnny Malachi had a band and a lot of young guys were… it was like a little rehearsal band but it was training for a hoped for gig with Bill Baldwin's big band or Tommy Miles big band, which was fortunately for most us, filled with journeymen musicians who quickly left.
I mean someone would come and play for a while then they'd go to New York, or go to Jersey, or go somewhere, so there was always a big state of flux in these bands in one or two places and so you got to sit in for a gig or two with these guys at the most unexpected times. So you'd get a call, come down right now and play, somebody didn't show. So young guys got an opportunity to play a lot.

BROWN: Was your style starting to be influenced by other pianists, and who were they, if that was the case?

TAYLOR: My style basically by this time, by the time I was really beginning to do something, was first influenced by Fats Waller. I wanted to play that style of piano.
I had heard Fats Waller once in the Lincoln Theater, which was not the place where they usually had performers but the Lincoln Theater had an organ and Waller like to play the organ so he took a gig playing solo there and man, he was… because of where the organ was in the theater, I could look at what he was doing. I sat right up under it and I could see what he was doing and I watched his feet and I watched his hands and it was just remarkable.
He played the piano but the piano was up on stage so I couldn't see what he was doing, I could just hear it and I never heard him [unintelligible] do anything. This guy was just phenomenal. He was a wonderful musician.
And because of the nature of that particular job, he played more then he actually sang and so even though he was well known as a player who sang, in those days he had recorded a lot and done a lot of stuff, he just played and it was exciting to hear as someone who wanted to emulate him, the things that he was doing. I went and got every record I could find and listened to it and tried to take this stuff off the record. I was very much into trying to do that.
We had a player piano that you work with your feet on pedals and I had tried to put my fingers where the keys went down but even when I slowed it down it wasn't slow enough. So I found that my ear was better. I could hear some things that I could emulate better and I could try to figure out which keys were going up and down.
So that whole period was one of… when I was growing up, I'd say from about… between the age of 10 and 13 was really a period where I decided that I was not going to play the guitar, not going to play the saxophone, I was going to play the piano. I really began to focus and began to study seriously because by this time I was studying with Henry Grant and I really began to… I didn't need my mother's guidance in terms of practice. I wanted to practice.

BROWN: Were you composing at all in the early years, in say pre high school or high school years?

TAYLOR: The first thing I did in junior high school was try to write a piece. It was a very simple piece based on some of the harmonies that I was just then learning. As a matter of fact, the melody was just running those chords.
So I wanted to write. I wanted to compose something and didn't have enough skill to do that of course so I had to wait until much later before I could have the facility to even play what I was hearing.

BROWN: Can you recount your experience seeing Jellyroll Morton in Washington?

TAYLOR: Jellroll Morton in I guess it was the late '30s, bought an interest in a club called the Jungle Inn. The Jungle Inn was right down the street from the Lincoln Theater. There were three… Washington was the capital of the United States but it was a very segregated town so anybody, Duke Ellington, Teddy Wilson, any person of color that came and performed in D.C., they may have been world famous as Ellington was, but they were relegated to staying with someone or in the black community in some way.

So everybody there had access to the Ellington band, and the Basie band, and the Lunsford band and their members. And Lester Young and all of the… Coleman Hawkins, all the famous people.

So when Jellyroll Morton moved to D.C., it wasn't a big deal. There was nowhere else for him to go so he bought an interest in this club and he was just there. I knew who he was. I had heard his name and seen records by him in record shops.

There was a place called Waxie Maxie's that was right down the street from my father's dental office and the guy that owned the shop was very nice to me. He was a friend of my father's and he would let me come in, and now that I think about it, I must have ruined some records that he wanted to sell but he'd let me play Nat Cole records and Teddy Wilson records. I never bought them. I didn't have any money but I'd play them and I listen to them. I got to listen to a lot of great music.

But Jellyroll Morton is someone who was playing even in those days… was someone who in those days was playing a style that I thought was corny. It was an old style and as a young teenager I figured, I want to be as hip and as modern as I can so let me try to play like Teddy Wilson and Art Tatum, that's what's happening for me. I mean even Earl Hines as much as I admired him, was not quite up to… in my view in those days, up to what Teddy Wilson and those guys were doing because I didn't know enough about music to realize what a pioneer Earl was and how much he had gotten from Jellyroll Morton.

So I ran into Johnny Malachi one day on U Street and he said, "What are you doing this evening"? I said, "Well nothing really". He said, "Well we're all going over to the hear Jellyroll Morton. He's right over here at the Jungle Inn". I said, "Nah, Jellyroll Morton, man, you know, why don't I come over to your house and we'll try to take some stuff off records, man. That's a lot hipper than that". He said, "No, this guy is… the style is old fashioned but he's supposed to be one of the greats".

So reluctantly I said, "Yeah, okay", because Johnny was a guy… as I said he's a couple years older then I am and I really respected him and he was already doing some of the things that I wanted to do. He had his own little band and he was doing a lot of professional playing at that time. So I said, "Well, yeah, okay".

So I decided that I would go to… I'm trying to think of the other pianists. There was about three or four of us. One of them was his brother-in-law Rob Harley, and I can't remember who the other two guys were. Yeah, about four or five of us.

Anyway, we went in and we took a table close to the piano and Jellyroll… one of his partners pointed out to him… the place wasn't crowded, it was just a few people there.

He pointed out… he said, "You've got a whole table full of piano players". It was this tiny room. You could hear what people were saying. So he told him, he said, "You've got a whole table full of piano players there". Jellyroll Morton kind of sneered over at us, nothing but kids, you're kidding, piano players.
So he kind of sauntered over to the piano when he got ready to play and sneered at us and said in so many words… well said, right out, "You can't play this. You're supposed to be piano players, you can't play this". He sat down… and we couldn't.
I mean this guy, he was playing… the first thing I noticed was that he sounded like the whole New Orleans band. I could hear the clarinet line and the trombone line in the left hand, and all of this… wait a minute. I mean physically I could not do this.
Plus he was playing in some keys like E and A. For me to play jazz in those keys was difficult. I had mastered the 12 keys and so I could play in E flat or maybe D flat, some hard keys but not all of them.
So this guy is just all over the keyboard, playing all of these things and just tossing it away. He'd play a little of this and he'd play that. He could see the consternation on my face if no one else's. I'm looking at this guy saying what? So he kind of played, he really showed off then. He'd be dizzy playing these octaves and playing everything.
Man, I went home and practiced like… I really was… I had such mixed emotions about this. Here's a style that I knew was old, a style that I knew was dated, and here's something that I can't even do that on the piano. I'm trying to do what Tatum and these folks are doing. I've really got a lot of work to do.
So I really began to practice very seriously. I didn't go back… I must confess I didn't go back and try to learn the Jellyroll Morton things at that point but it made me work harder on the things that were coming, the things… Teddy Wilson and the things that I was sort of trying to master at that point… because he was really an inspiration. He didn't mean to be but he really was an inspiration.

BROWN: Did you have a chance to see any of your other influences, idols, Art Tatum or Teddy Wilson in Washington?

TAYLOR: No. Teddy Wilson came to Washington and he played up on 14th Street. He was working downtown with Benny Goodman. This was when he was with the Benny Goodman quartet. He came up and there was a jam session at… I can't even remember the nightclub now. I just remember it was on 14th between… up near U Street. I can't remember exactly what it was. At any rate it was not the Bally, it was an earlier club then that. Bally was across the street from whatever this club was.
Teddy came. I didn't hear the jam session but he went over to another club afterwards and somebody got him to sit in and I heard him play like just one tune at this Republic Gardens it was called, right next to the Republic Theater on U Street.
That was actually one of the first places that I actually played a professional job, the Republic Gardens. So it was one of the few places I could go in. I was very much underage. I was big for my age but I was about what, 14 I guess, 15, something like

that. But they weren't too careful about that as long as I didn't make a scene or didn't get in any trouble.
So I heard Teddy play and I was astounded. This guy… I had never heard anyone play tenths and do… have the kind of pearly sound that he got. I had played that piano and I didn't know how he could get… how can he get that sound out of that instrument, man [laughter]. It was just wonderful.
So actually I heard Waller, I heard Wilson. Then I heard him again. He came to Washington with Willie Bryant's band and I can't remember… I'm confused as to whether that was before or after his Benny Goodman thing because I remember hearing him just play there so I'm not sure about the timeline there but I did hear him in both places.

BROWN: You said you started playing professionally. Do you remember the clientele that you were playing for and the functions that you were playing for?

TAYLOR: Basically I played kid stuff. I played for dances. Somebody would hire a band cheaply, just to entertain folks and go through that. But as I said, it was easy for me to work on U Street. My uncle knew all of the folks so he had taken me to hear some of these people and so they knew I was Bob Taylor's nephew and so that helped. Besides my family lived in that area. My grandfather lived around the corner from the Lincoln Theater. He was a minister and he lived… so the extended family was… everybody knew who I was, they looked out for me, and it was not likely that I was going to get in any trouble.
They served beer and whiskey in those clubs. Nobody let me drink. Even though they let me come in, they would… coca cola, ginger ale or something like that was all that I was allowed to drink. They were very nice about that. As long as I didn't try to get drunk or try to do anything like that, I could play for singers and do the kinds of things that I did.
I'd play for singers. Singers would walk around the tables and get tips and they'd split the tips, so even though I only got a dollar a night I'd come home sometimes with five dollars a night. That would be nice. Singers made a lot of tips.

BROWN: Do you remember the tunes that you were playing, any of the tunes?

TAYLOR: Yeah, the pop tunes of the day, things like *Don't Blame Me*. I remember that because it was the first thing I ever heard Teddy Wilson play as a solo and I loved the way he played that. I had heard him play other things. But we were playing things like *China Boy*, *Nagasaki*.
Matter of fact, the tune *Nagasaki* had the same changes as *I Got Rhythm* except for the bridge, and that was where I learned rhythm changes, not from *I Got Rhythm*. I learned how to play the first eight bars of *I Got Rhythm* from *Nagasaki*. It was an earlier tune. The bridge for that is the same as the bridge for *Honeysuckle Rose* so it's one of those

all purpose bridges.
But I can't remember what the… there was… *Lizer* was a tune that we played. We played some Gershwin tunes. We played a lot of Ellington tunes because everybody… Ellington was from Washington. Everybody knew Ellington and loved him.
There was a young player when I was in junior high school, his name was Billy White. He was a alto saxophone player and clarinetist, and when I got serious about playing music he was the guy that helped me really focus on songs like *In A Sentimental Mood* and he pointed out the really great melodies of Ellington.
When I studied with Henry Grant he actually explained to me what those harmonies were, but White had already sort of pointed me toward them in say… of the Ellington things, let me check this one out, *Mood Indigo* is all right but check out the changes to *Sophisticated Lady.* So he took me from the simple Ellington things that I was able to play to some things that I had to really work on to…

BROWN: So you're basically saying that you were getting training, some education in theory as well as just piano technique, that they went hand in hand.

TAYLOR: Oh, yeah, very much so, from everybody. From guys who were my age and from… there was a good sharing of information between Johnny Malachi, and Billy White, and Frank Wess, and a whole bunch of other guys that were doing things.
Billy Exstine was living in Washington D.C. In those days he was singing with the Tommy Miles band and so he was effecting as a teenager, all of the singers in that area. He had such a popular style that all the singers wanted to sing like him, so what was he singing… that was what a lot of the singers wanted to sing so you learned those tunes [laugh], and then *Flamingo* and tunes like that that Ellington was doing with Herb Jeffries.
They would come to the Howard Theater… Don Redman would come to the Howard Theater and play some of the things that we had heard him play on the radio because he had this radio show. So you were hearing all these… I heard Don and his theme song just wiped me out. I could not figure what those chords were.
It wasn't until many years later that I realized that they were actually based on a whole tone and that was just beyond my musical experience in those days. But he was a well-trained musician and even though it was very melodic, it was harmonically very involved.

BROWN: So the same time that you were learning how to play jazz/popular music from the practitioners, were you also learning traditional theory and harmony practices in school?

TAYLOR: Yes. I was… with Henry Grant and with other music teachers… Mary Riece Europe was one our teachers, this is Jim Europe's sister… taught at Dunbar High School. She and Henry Grant were personally responsible for many of the great artists

that came to our schools and for really directing our attention… she was kind of the vocal person in the music instruction there.
She was the vocal music teacher, he was the instrumental music teacher so we had both in our high school. So you could sing in her choir and/or you could play in his orchestra.
They were very big on harmony and theory. You had to know what you were singing or playing. Your note in this… the reason I want you to bring it out is because it's this note in the chord and you're supposed to hear these things. You can't slough over that in other words. You're playing this phrase and I'm not hearing this part of the phrase therefore I'm not hearing these chords, which I realize now is…

BROWN: That's pretty advanced, yeah.

TAYLOR: Henry Grant was one of the few people that Duke Ellington looked to for that kind of information. In *Music Is My Mistress*, he's one of the few people that has a full-page picture. The Duke had great respect for him.

BROWN: Any other students, such as yourself and Ellington that went on to fame, that had studied with him?

TAYLOR: I honestly don't remember. I do know that… yeah, as a matter of fact there is, yeah. One in particular, one of the great black composers, George Walker was one of the students at Dunbar High School. He was a little ahead of me. He was a wonderful pianist in those days. He was already concentrating on the classical repertoire and playing it in assembly.
I remember thinking… we had a pianist who came and I'll never forget his name because he was the first concert pianist that I had ever heard where I could sit and look at what he was doing when he was playing lites. I mean he was really playing and I'm right here just looking at what he's doing. It was a wonderful master class for me to see someone play that repertoire.
But I remember thinking, gee, George plays that well because George could play [laughter]… I mean, this guy's a professional and it gave me a perspective. I said, "My, George is… you know, he's good [laugh].
But I never had any desire to play classical music as classical music. I wanted to have that technical facility and I wanted to be able to do those things but I wanted to do it in jazz, and so though I admired George Walker, you know, his direction wasn't the direction that I was interested in following.

BROWN: Were you also a good student in the other subjects in high school?

TAYLOR: Fair. When I applied myself I did well but I was so… I realize now that I was so enamored with music and I was so wrapped up in all kinds of music that… and

I read a lot in those days. So not only did I practice but I was reading novels.
I found out in those days that the Library of Congress was my library so I could go to the library and get these wonderful books, fantasy books, all kinds of stuff. I was into reading things about… what would you call it, mythology. They myths of who are the gods of Norway and Sweden, and who are the… how did they relate to the Greek myths and so forth.
That was fascinating to me because my mother had brought me up on fairy tales and so I read a lot of fairy tales and then I graduated to this mythology and stuff like that.
So I had a lot of distractions, and so when it came to learning mathematics and Spanish… I must have taken Spanish for three years and man I barely scraped through, I could barely get through those courses and it wasn't… wonderful teachers but I just wasn't applying myself.

BROWN: The Howard Theater looms large in the musical culture of Washington D.C. Can you share some of your recollections about the Howard Theater?

TAYLOR: My grandfather's church was the Florida Avenue Baptist Church and if you came out the front door and went slightly to the left you walked right into the front door of the Howard Theater. If you went a little further, then a left you went around to the stage door. And my father's office was on S Street. Howard is on T Street and on S Street… 7th Street and S Street was my father's office so I had an entrée.
The guy that was the… Shep Allen who was the manager of the theater was a good friend of my family and sort of looked out for me. He would allow me to come… he knew I was interested in music and would allow me to come backstage and sort of sit.
It was very cheap to go to the theater. If I got there early enough I could get in for 15 cents and so if I got there for the twelve o'clock show on Saturday, I could stay all day for 15 cents and I often did because they wouldn't run you out. I mean, they didn't clear the house and put the lights on and run everybody out. They put the lights on so people could see their way out, then I kind of slumped down in the seat and then [laughter]… I mean I didn't fool anybody but they didn't do anything about that.
So I got to hear everybody. The Howard Theater presented very… they presented Vaudeville show. They had a comedian, they had tap dancers, they had just people who did dramatic… actors who did dramatic things depending on what the show was.
I remember seeing all kinds of people, seeing Lena Horne for the first time with Noble Sisal and his orchestra, seeing Cab Calloway. This is a guy who was a legend in those days like Ellington. He played the Cotton Club and his band like the Ellington band were sartorially splendid. They had not just tuxedos like some of the other bands, they had tails in varying colors, gray tails and white tails, very dramatic looking people.
That's something that has stayed with me 'til today. I think of going on stage and being dressed in a certain way when I go on stage because that was the way I was brought up.
When I looked at Ellington, he looked immaculate. Billy Exstine even as a young man was sartorially a guy that I wanted to emulate.

The Jimmy Lunsford band came to Washington D.C. the first time and I remember a whole bunch of us had heard about this band of young people. All the girls went nuts because these were a bunch of handsome fellows, immaculately dressed, sang and played better then most of the older guys.

The visual aspects of the music were at that time as exciting to me as the oral aspects because you saw… even as a young guy I realized that you react to what you see before you react to what you hear because the lights go up and you see something. You say, oh, yeah, okay and you react to that. Then you hear them.

So the Howard Theater was the place where many of us were introduced to bands that were not household names. The first time I ever heard Mary Lou Williams, she was billed as the lady who swings the band and she was just that. She was one of the swingiest pianists I had ever heard play in any kind of band.

The Andy Kirk band had some hits. They had Fay Terrell who was singing, *'Til The Real Thing Comes Along* and this lady was playing this Kansas City kind of stuff. She was playing boogie-woogie, she was playing stride, and man she was… and she was making the arrangements and she was gorgeous. She looked good. As a young lady, man, she was just… I'm saying wow, she's really something.

So she was kind of a model for one of our local pianist, a woman named Norma Shepherd. Norma also was a very attractive woman who at one time was the best jazz pianist in town. She played all the best gigs and played all those kind of things. But because she was a woman she didn't get the kind of attention that Mary Lou Williams and some of the luckier women had got.

One of the things that affected me in terms of my own development was the social climate of Washington D.C. Washington was a very interesting town for an African American because Howard University was in the center of the community and the Howard Theater was in the center of the community. Churches were in the center of the community. Schools on the lower… elementary, and junior high schools, and high schools were the center.

So that center was quite diverse. It wasn't just one particular thing. In my case because I was the grandson of a Baptist minister I spent a lot of time in the church. My whole family was involved in the Florida Avenue Baptist Church. My dad was the choir conductor. My uncles and aunts played piano and sang in the choir. So my brother and I spent a lot of time in church.

My grandfather, William Andrew Taylor, was one of the founders of the church, of the Florida Avenue Baptist Church, and was a much more forward thinking person then I realized at the time.

He, knowing my interest in jazz, thought it was not a bad idea for me to come and play jazz in the back of the church. He said, "I would rather have him do that then be over in the pool hall and be doing some other things that maybe would be less productive. I know that if he's sitting there at the piano with his young friends that they're not into any mischief. They're doing things which interest them and they seem to be creating some music that people enjoy listening to even on the level that they're playing".

So I realize now that was… he was way out in front in terms of his thinking and he undoubtedly had some flack from the older brothers and sisters who didn't think the church was the place where you did that kind of thing in the Baptist community.
But to go right up the hill to Howard University… Howard University had this wonderful… they presented concerts, they presented… because black people could not go to the concert halls in Washington D.C. in those days. So we could not go to the National Theater and see plays so the plays came to churches, or to Howard University, or came to some other school auditorium where they had a good stage and could put it on.

BROWN: You're saying that there wasn't even a segregated section in the National Theater?

TAYLOR: No, no. We could not go generally speaking. Because we were between Virginia and Maryland we were beset with the prejudices of both places at that time. There were some wonderful people who lived in Washington D.C. from those places who fought the system… who were not black, who fought the system tooth and nail but in those days they weren't winning.
So we had people in… for instance right behind the church, the Florida Avenue Baptist Church, was Griffith Stadium where all the baseball games, and football games, and so forth took place. The Washington Senators were my father's favorite team. He was a big baseball fan. You could go in Griffith Stadium, sit anywhere you want, buy a hot dog, sit down, sit next to a white guy, eat it, whatever.
You could not go to the Woolworth's Store four or five blocks away and do that, which didn't make any kind of sense to me but that was… I don't think was law, it was just custom. I'm not sure that legally they could do this but it was a custom. You just didn't do… you didn't go to stores. Black people didn't go to… you could go to Goldenberg's, you could go to Hecht's, but you couldn't go to Julius Garfinkel's. They wouldn't serve you. Now this is even closer to the White House, physically, this store. Anyway that was something that I found strange but that was the way it was. So having been born in the south and growing up, segregation was a fact of life and didn't seem… I couldn't see any solution at that age so we lived with that.
Because of that there were many defenses thrown up by the educated people in D.C. Education was a weapon. They saw it as such. I've been trying to get people today to realize that fact. Just as a gun, or knife, or a weapon of destruction is indeed a weapon, this is a different kind of weapon but in many cases much more effective.
When I was just a student at Dunbar High School, there were five people with doctorates on the faculty.

BROWN: In high school.

TAYLOR: In high school, and the only reason they were there is because prejudice

prevented them from getting the jobs that… the racial prejudice prevented them from getting the jobs that they deserved, that they had earned.
So they were very adamant about… anybody that went through Dunbar High School was definitely going to college. That was a given. You went to Dunbar, you're going to college because we're going to make… you're going to make something out of yourself. That was the education is a weapon concept.
And so in terms of the social climate of D.C., the cultural climate, we got to see plays. We got to see black people doing Shakespeare. We got to see people doing things, which made us proud. I got to hear Paul Robson sing, Marion Anderson sing, Dorothy Manier sing, Roland Hayes.
Miss Europe, our music teacher pointed out to us, she
said, "All you guys run up and down the football field. Let me tell you about a real man". She said, "Roland Hayes is what I consider a man of integrity and a man of great strength. In 1921, the year I was born, he went to Germany and he was to give a recital singing *German Leader*.
The German people said how dare this man of African descent come and try to sing our music and they hooted and stamped and made a lot of noise. He refused to… it was just Roland Hayes and his pianist standing in the middle of a concert stage and he stared them down". She said, "He stood there until they quieted down. They realized he was not going to walk off the stage and when they finally quieted down he sang and he sang so beautifully that he won them over". She said, "Now that's strength" [laugh], and I agree.
She was very… she knew Hayes and she knew many other people in that generation, that was her generation, and she told us many stories like that of people like Paul Robson and Hayes, and earlier people, Will Marion Cook and people who had done things.
She was proud of the fact… I don't remember her saying this but I read it later and I know it's the kind of thing that she would have said to us in trying to give her students a feeling of confidence and a feeling of historical perspective.
Many of the comedians that played the Howard Theater worked in black face. Now this is art. These are black guys working for a black audience. Why would you put on black face? But that's the way they worked and that was a part of something that was a part of the Vaudeville tradition where black people had gone the route of the people who had originally made fun of them and taken that to another level and done… Because all of the guys that did black face… the guy who was in the black face was the slickest guy. He was the street guy, he was the slicker. He always came out ahead. There was always some kind of thing where the guy who was very well dressed, and had straight hair, and was light, who was the foil of this guy in black face, he was the straight man and he did all these things and the black guy won.
So what they did was to turn the situation around in Vaudeville so that the black guy won the money and ended up… walked off the stage with the girl. Whatever the prize was, he came up with it and so it was… Miss Europe said, "That withstanding, there

were people who don't feel that's necessary, like Huby Blake and Noble Sisal". She said, "They never worked in black face".
That didn't mean anything to me at that time. I didn't realize that they were the first people to work on Broadway who were of color, who didn't do that. Now when you're working on Broadway, you're working in the main circuit, for the main people, with the main money, you do what they say, and Sisal and Blake didn't do that. Even Bert Williams as great as he was had to work in black face and he was the greatest comedian we ever produced.
So we were given a sense of continuum, a sense of value. Howard University, the Lincoln Theater, the schools, all of these things being so compact, I could walk from one to the other. So it was like a huge college campus if you will.
I mean U Mass is bigger then that. I mean the distance in the University of Massachusetts is bigger than Berkley, it's bigger then the distance that I was covering to get this cultural input, and yet it was shared, it was fully… the sense of extended family was there, the sense of speaking the English language properly, of being able to communicate on a verbal as well as an artistic level, the appreciation for visual art as well as music and other manifestations of art, the tracing of the tradition in terms of our African antecedents, why we do certain things in certain ways, why in the church… now I must confess in this regard, many of the music teachers didn't think this was right. They said now one of the differences between the way this soprano sings in church and the way she sings when she is on the concert hall or concert stage, is that she uses her voice in this way. Now of course that does things to the voice that are… not what we approve but this is a part of what is proper in church. And they were talking about the manner in which the African American approach to bending a note, singing… going up or down to that note instead of hitting it right on it, on the nose as you do with Mozart or with other European music.
The whole feeling of place and who you were in the context of this was carefully orchestrated. I mean you were made to feel, you have a part to play and it's up to you to develop your individual approach to whatever that is. I mean you have to make your mark because we are proud of you as one of our young people and we expect you to go out and do the best you can. Whatever you are going to do, I don't care what it is… the way they put it, I don't care if you are sweeping the streets, it's got to be the cleanest street around. And they were serious about that. They said this over and over and it impacted all of us.

Brown: I would like to now turn the interview over to my colleague Eugene Holly who would like to continue discussing your life.

Taylor: Great.

HOLLY: This is Eugene Holly and I am here interviewing Dr. Taylor. First let me say, as a person who always studied from you, thank you for doing this and me having

the opportunity to be here in your apartment/house to do this, so let me just say thank you.
Picking up where we left off we were talking about your high school experiences. I asked you off mike about your acquaintance with Charlie Rouse and you did know him.

Taylor: Oh yeah, Charlie Rouse and many others, Leo Parker and Tommy Potter, OC Johnson, a lot of wonderful musicians were in my generation. There were many more… there was a musician, Little Mattie Harries who was one of the first musicians along with us to come out and really make it in the big time if you will. He went to… he joined the Earl Hines Band and came back and told us about these two musicians that we should be aware of because he said, "These are the hippest guys around."
One of them was a trumpet player and the other is a saxophone player, Dizzy Gelipse and Charlie Parker. And the names didn't mean anything because we had heard at that time, we were listening to Coleman Hawkins and we were listening to Johnny Harchers and Benny Carter was the guy that a lot of people really loved. Benny Carter and Harchers were the two main alto men. Tab Smith was another guy that everybody listened too. And there were people… Earl Warren with Count Basie so there were a lot of role models. But they all had a style that we liked. People would argue about whether Bud Johnson played better then Prez or how similar their styles were even though Bud had this harder approach rhythmically.
So you know we had a perspective and for this guy who was our age to come and say well that's all good but wait till you hear these other guys. They have got some other stuff that they are doing. I mean it's really something that is going to be exciting. It really keyed us in to listen. So Rouse and many others… there was a young guitarist there who was a legendary figure who has never gotten his just praise and recognition he should, his name was Benny Fleet.
And Benny Fleet was a guitarist who was highly influenced by {Unintelligible] Reinhart. And in those days before Charlie Christian, he was playing solos that were really interesting and comparable to Horns, you know. Without amplification you couldn't always hear them unless you were in a room with just you, him and a piano. But in many of the small clubs in Washington D.C. you could hear that unamplified guitar. Everyone would play softly in a club like the Republican Gardens or the Ben Gazzy or one of those kinds of clubs like that, even in this room [Unintelligible] had bought, which later became another room. I forget what they called it later but we played there together one time. He was playing unamplified guitar. It was really very audible and very good. It was excellent.
So there were many young musicians… there were some female musicians. There was a woman named [Unintelligible] who was one of the best tenor players in town. I mean she played with Bill Ballwin's Band. She would challenge any male that came through to a jam session. If you could play, fine she could hold her own with the best players.
So that whole period, we listened to many examples of people in my generation and the generation just before who could give us classic examples of what we were shooting

for.
There was a man whose name I never remember, Frank Wess has told me a couple of times because he remembers his name, but I only knew him as Georgetown. That's where he lived, in Georgetown so that is what they called him. He sold peanuts and popcorn and stuff in the ballpark but he was the best trumpet player in town. He didn't want to travel and so though he had been offered jobs by Ellington and everybody, he never accepted them so he was never… he never got that kind of attention.
He and a guy named Washington, I can't think of Washington's first name now, at the moment… I should because he is a cousin of mine. They both were very good trumpet players and whenever Roy Eldridge would come to town he would look for them. He would go to the Crystal Caverns… it was one of the places where they worked.
There was a man named Eugene Berell who was called Streamline, that was his nickname, because of the shape of his head. The… he was one of the best drummers. So they played, they were part of the house band at the Crystal Caverns.
One story is that one night, and it depends on who tells the story as to whose horn got broken but Roy Eldridge came and had a session with Georgetown. And they were blowing so hard that one of them, as I said it depends on who you talking about or who is telling the story, blew the bore, that you put the trumpet mouthpiece in… it split. It was that much power, whichever the player it was. And it could have been either one because they both were that powerful.
I rather think it was Georgetown simply because his horn probably wasn't as good as Roy's. Roy had already played with Fletcher Henderson and was playing with major bands so I am sure he had a very good horn. So it probably was Georgetown, the one that blew apart. But that's the kind of player he was, the kind of player that did those kinds of things.
And there was a bassist, whose name escapes me at the moment but who later played on the jazz [unintelligible].

HOLLY: Ketter Bets?

Taylor: No way before Ketter. I can't think of his name now but he is mentioned in Buck Clayton's autobiography. Both of those guys, Streamline and… because I think they were in the army together and they were around the same age. But they were… these were musicians who were natives of Washington and/or getting… some other people I ought to mention as the good players of that period, I mentioned Norma Shepherd but also Hal Francis who later became fairly well known as the accompanist for the Ink spots. He never got his… he too at one time was the best player in town. And he would have jam sessions with a guy named Toby Walker. Norma, Toby and Harold would vie for the position as "The Best Piano Player in Town" because each had his or her own strength and they each did something, which the other didn't do. Each could really play the piano in jazz.

HOLLY: Let me ask you about another trumpet player that came from Washington, his name was Webster Young and they called him Little Diz. Did you know him?

Taylor: I didn't know him. I only knew him by reputation. The kinds of things that he did were, I think reflective of his whole generation because everybody by that time was highly influenced by Dizzy Gelipse and Charlie Parker.

HOLLY: In addition to playing with you know, other musicians and in other clubs in Washington, what influences did you get from motion pictures, radio, personalities and things like that?

Taylor: Radio was very big and it was free. I mean you just flipped a dial and you got all of these wonderful things. Because there were not a lot of commercials, this was in the days they called sustaining broadcast, broadcasts which were paid for by the network. People would go to the Savoy ballroom or the Grand Terrace in Chicago or the Apollo theater and just put up a mike and do a live broadcast from there, you know because they could do it and the people who ran the place realized the publicity was good and they didn't object to them doing it. Musicians never got paid for it, they were playing anyway, that was the theory. They were getting this free publicity.
But the good thing was that we got to hear all of these great bands. I mean I heard Fletcher Henderson. I heard Floyd Hopkins. Floyd Hopkins was a local pianist who made good and had a big band from Washington so to hear him coming from the Apollo Theatre was big deal for us. Hey that is something to shoot for. Jimmy Monday was the principle arranger for the Tommy Miles Band. He later wrote for Benny Goodman and became a famous producer and arranger on his own here in New York.
Many of the musicians… I mentioned Johnny Malachi. He was in that first bebop band that Billy Estein put together, that had Rouse and many of the guys from the D.C. group that I was talking about. They were all on that age level and all kind of really turned on by the music.
You mentioned Webster Young. Freddy Webster was a trumpet player who came through with the Jimmy Lunsford Band and wiped everybody out. I mean this is… he played so beautifully that when Dizzy had his first band he was still having a tremendous influence on Dizzy and on many others. *"I Should Care"*, Dizzy played that because that was one of Freddy's solos. It later became one of Dizzy's solos but it was Freddy's solo and he really owned that tune for most trumpet players. I mean he had a great version of it. It was mostly melodic. The closest to him now, that I hear in that tradition, is Snuky Young. I mean that is the quality that he had in those days.

HOLLY: Now at this time you are about to graduate high school. What colleges were you thinking about at that particular point? At this point were you thinking about becoming a professional musician or were you thinking about other vocations going

into college?

Taylor: I wanted to become a professional musician. I wanted to go to Julliard because this friend of mine Billy White, a saxophone player had gone to Julliard. And I knew… he was really a fine musician. I thought gee if Julliard is that fine of school, I would like to go there.
So I talked to my father about it and he didn't think that was a good idea. He said, "I am not sure, Billy White notwithstanding, that you can earn a living as a musician. I will send you to college but I would rather you go to Howard or some other school that… where you can get a broader education then a musical conservatory. I want you to have… go to a liberal arts school where you can have music and something else. Your choice, whatever school you want to go to."
So I looked around at several schools and decided that I would go to his Alma matter, which was Virginia State. I had visited the campus and it was away from home so I would get a chance to be on my own and do some things that I wanted to do. If I went to Howard it would have been like going to high school again. It was a good school but then I wasn't that crazy about the music department at Howard because they were so much in to European tradition and they looked down on anything that came from the jazz… or even anything that seemed to, in my mind be reflective of what I saw as the contemporary black community of those days.

HOLLY: That is not an isolated incident. If I can say most African American Colleges at that time had that kind of value system. Why do you think that was?

Taylor: And still do, too many of them, have the same thing. It is ongoing. It has never changed in most schools. It never changed because, I think, they felt, many of the people who had studied, if they lived in Mississippi or any of the southern schools, they had been sent to white schools because they couldn't go to [Unintelligible] or the University of Arkansas or to North Carolina, the white schools in North Carolina or wherever.
So what they learned from this was that to be competitive you had to beat the white man at his own game. So you had to be better, if you were going to get the job you had to be… they felt, you had to be twice as good as he was. And so they didn't want you to waste time with something they thought you could already do. They said you can play jazz. I mean that's cool, that's a given. Now you have got to really learn how to do this other stuff because that's the only way you are going to get over.
And it was a very logical thing from their perspective in terms of what they were shooting for. The only thing they discounted and what they didn't realize was that racial prejudice was such that even if you became as good a violinist as Eddie South, you were not going to get a job with the Chicago Symphony at that time. So they had their Clarence Cameron whites and they had all of these people that had excelled in the European tradition but only as soloists, only in their all black groups like the ones that

were organized here in New York by Wilmarian Cook and James [Unintelligible] and people like that.

HOLLY: Now Norfolk's…sorry Virginia State, tell us about that. Give us like a visual thing, where it was, you know what was the campus like, what was it like coming there as a freshman?

Taylor: Virginia State was located in Ectricks, Virginia that is just outside of the city of Petersburg. It is between Petersburg and Colonial Heights. It is a very tiny slip of land I guess because this is a land grant college and so I guess that's why it is called Ectricks as opposed to Colonial Heights or something else.
It is about 20 or 30 miles from Richmond, Virginia. The school itself sits up on a hill overlooking the city of Petersburg. It is a lovely campus. It is very nice and small, relatively small. It is small enough that when I was a student in my freshman year, I knew everybody on the campus literally. I mean I knew all the students, I knew all of the people who worked there. I knew all of the people who were on the faculty. It was that small of school.
We were close to Camp Lee, which is a military base so a lot of… now they have a working relationship with the military. They have cadets on campus and soldiers on campus. But in those days the military was totally separate but a lot of the guys from the army would come up because the girls at Virginia State were very pretty so they would always… we would always have a lot of competition from the soldiers in those days.
This was… when I was there the World War II was going on. I went in 1938. I was there from 1938 to 1942. By that time, I was a hotshot pianist. I mean I could play the piano. I had won amateur contests at the Howard Theatre. I had played… led little dance groups and done all kinds of stuff in D.C.
So when I went to Virginia State the first thing I looked for… I had heard that they had a band called The Virginia State Collegians… The Virginia State Rhythm Boys it was called. They had two bands. One was called the Collegians and one was called the Rhythm Boys. So a fellow that was then on the faculty whose name was Duke [Unintelligible] who was a pianist who played for them… but that no longer existed by the time I got there. It was a student group. It was not sanctioned by the music department.
So I began to look around for some band that I could play with I mean because I wanted to play. Just playing in the school or in the practice just wasn't enough. So I heard about this band over in Richmond and they played a dance in Petersburg and I went and it was the band called the Benny Latten Band. There were two bands, Johnson's Happy Pals and Benny Latten. Johnson's Happy Pals was the established territory band there. Benny Latten was an upstart who decided he was going to have his own band.
So we had a nice band but mostly young guys and rejects from the Johnson's Happy Pals band. So they didn't have a piano player. Their piano player had gotten drafted.

So I got a chance to play with them. That was fun. They had… that played stocks, stock arrangements.
Now stock arrangements cost a dollar and we had stock for *"Take the A Train"*, we had stock for "*Tuxedo Junction"* we had stock for many of the popular jazz pieces, "*The One o'clock Jump"*. Now when I say we had an arrangement, the stock had just… it was literally taken off the record. So Lester Young's solo was there in "*One o'clock Jump"* Basie's solo was there. All the solos were there, all you had to do was read it. Of course we read it and then we added our own thing to it but they had great… they had some Mary Lou Charts. They had a lot of… anybody who had recorded for national labels like Decker or Brunswick or RCA usually had that stuff taken off of the record because there was some tie in between the publishing company and the record company. So the stocks were available. Some of my best information came from looking at those stocks, thinking that is what he is doing. I couldn't hear that when he was doing that. That's what it is. Okay that's the way that sounds and that's the way it looks.
So I began to learn how to… I did some of my first arranging… most of my first arrangements were head arrangements because I couldn't write them down. I mean I heard things and it was just too difficult to score for me in those days. I had some faculty help a little later but in those days when I was working with Benny Latten, I would just say you play this, you play this and I would dictate the notes and then we would have a head arrangement.
But it was good training. I had never worked with a big band before. The small ensembles that I had played with in Washington D.C. with the exception of Bill Baldwin and Tommy Miles on very spares occasions, they were all combos, they were not big bands. Johnny Malachi and the older guys got those jobs before I got… you know they were better qualified to play those jobs. So when I got to college I got a chance to play with a big band.

HOLLY: Now what was your major going in, were you decided as to what you were going to major going into college?

Taylor: No I was a sociology major. I had acquiesced to my father's desires and said okay, I will go to school and I will be a sociology major and I will take music on the side. So he said okay. He paid for my first two years in college. In my junior year, one of music teachers, Dean Smith Moore, convinced me to change my major to music and I did, much to his chagrin. He didn't pay for the rest of my college. I paid for the last two years myself playing in bands and so forth.

HOLLY: I heard that name before on a solo recording you did. She was a very inspirational person. Tell us a little bit more about her and about the direction she led you into musically.

Taylor: Well the first, when I first went to Virginia State she was the harmony and theory teacher, Jay Harold Montay was the head of the department and he was a pianist and piano teacher and the choral director. So she was a much more open and much more… I say this out of sheer prejudice, a much better pianist then he was. It was my biased toward her in retrospect. I can't really remember but I just remember her as being a better pianist because I really loved what she did and I was just so respectful of her. I was not of him.

He was one of the typical head of a music department like the ones at Howard who thought that the European tradition was the only thing that was worth spending any time with. We had many clashes. She stepped in between the two of us as teacher and student and kept me in school. I am sure I would have been thrown out had it not been for her intervention.

So I am indebted to her in many ways. But she saw something in me, which she liked, as a teacher. She encouraged me to practice. She said, "I know he won't allow you to practice jazz in the practice room but there is a piano down in the rehearsal room and you can practice on that. You can play all the jazz you want. You can rehearse your little groups and everything. I'll give you a key to that." So I got the key to it and I could go in there and practice. And later over his violent objections I would do that in the practice room too but by then I was a big time junior and I figured hey throw me out of school already.

She was a wonderful, a very inspirational person. [Unintelligible] Moore was one of those dedicated musicians who first of all, it was well trained. She was trained as a composer, trained as a pianist. She went to Oberlin, she was a student at Oberlin and she later… she postponed her career as a writer because she wanted to be a wife and a mother and teacher.

And she did all of those three things so then later when she was considering retiring, many years later and she had students who were…one of her students is Camilla Williams, the opera singer and another is Phil Melody who is a guy who wrote music for the Beatles. He was on one of the Beatles first hits. He has his own publishing company and has produced hits for Diana Washington and all kinds of folks like that, very successful publisher.

Another was a conductor who was the… Leon Thompson who was at Lincoln Center as the head of their educational department and many others. She had years of students who had gone out and done any number of things, which have… of which she was very proud. I mean she encouraged as [unintelligible] had done in high school, she encouraged her students to find their own voice and to do what they did. You know if you were someone who could write popular songs then hey write the best popular songs or the most catchier popular songs around and do it with good form and do it with musicality.

She really was very good at that. She got me interested… further my interest, which had been started by Henry Grant in the impressionistic composers, Revel and Dabuci as a means of really solidifying some of the harmonic devices I was trying to use. She

would say well here is the way European composers use those things. Here is the way that Duke Ellington uses those things. They both drew parallels between what I knew and what I was trying to learn. As teachers they were both so very effective. I mean I have been told on many occasions that I am a good teacher. If I am, it's because I am imitating an emulating two of the best teachers I ever had.

HOLLY: Now at that particular time, you mentioned before that you came in as a sociology major and Ms. Moore-Smith changed your major to music. Now you said your father said okay I am not going to support this, but didn't he on the side kind of make some kind of arrangement for you?

Taylor: Yes he did. When I was… we had a confrontation one day. He said, "I hear you have changed your major to music." I said, "Yeah." He said, "Well I am not going to pay for your school." And so that was the end of that conversation. And so cool, who asked you anyway. I was really feeling my masculinity now.
So I went back, and by that time I had been working with Johnson's Happy Pals and with Benny Lattin who was about to be drafted. So Benny was drafted and that band broke up and I started a band on the campus of Virginia State, the Virginia State Rhythm Boys. I resurrected that title and began to work in that context. So I was working with both bands, which meant that I was working almost every night in the week. I mean I am trying to carry a double load of college courses and play at night. So I was getting maybe two hours of sleep at night on a good night.
Unknown to me my father had told the treasurer of the school if he defaults on his payments, I will pay. So don't put him out of school. He doesn't have to know that I am paying. You can mask it in anyway that you want. But I don't want him to drop out of school. But nobody told me this and so I didn't find this out until after I had graduated.
And it came up quite accidentally in conversation. One of my frat brothers who was in the treasurer's office, my father belonged to the same frat, and so we were talking about different things that had to do with the frat. And so he was saying, "Yeah you know your father put the sign on me one time. I mean he told me not to tell you that he was paying for your schooling." I said, "You dirty son of… I mean you are supposed to be my brother too. [Laughter]. He said, "Well he had first dibs on it." That was the only way I found out because he never told me.
But the family support that I had, family arguments notwithstanding was always… I always had the feeling especially after I came to New York that if worse came to worse, I could go home. I mean if I was in Kalamazoo you know I could call my mother or write my mother or find somebody who was a mutual friend of the family or something, because they had friends all over the country. In those days there was a very discernable network of extended family.
I don't recall my family ever staying in a hotel because we had friends and it was always reciprocal. When you go to New York, you see Mr. Smith and stay with him.

When you go to Philadelphia, you call Ms. Jones and stay with her. This network was there for all of us. And being in a minister's family, I mean it was even more extended for me then it was for many people.
So that whole feeling of belonging had a great deal to do with me being as arrogant as I was in terms of, hey man I can make it. You know whatever happens I got it covered. I felt that. I mean hey, I have got an education, I can play piano, you know, I have my suits made [Laugh].
That is something that is funny. There is a place in Washington D.C. called Willmuth Tailors. I don't know if it still exists but when I was a kid you could have a suit made for $25. I mean this is a tailored made suit. Now you have got to understand that I am impressed by Ellington and all these folks, so that is a big deal to me. So I figured what they hay. You have got to spend almost that to get a suit anyway. So for a few extra bucks… I am playing these little gigs and I can earn my own money so my parents can't tell me don't do that.
So I would save and whatever length of time it would take, and put my hard earned money down and get my suit. So by the time I got to Virginia State I was sharp. I had a trunk of stuff. I was the best dressed man on campus kind of stuff. I thought.
So there were a whole lot of things along these lines that were a part as I talk about it, I realize that they were a part of my psyche. And [Unintelligible] Moore more than anyone helped me clarify where being egotistical about the fact that you can do some things well, wasn't enough. I mean it was all right too have self confidence but that self confidence should be rooted in the fact that you can indeed do what you are so confident you can do. Never mind the excuses or what went wrong or anything. You have got to be able to do that.
And by example she showed me. I mean she could play and she played all this repertoire and she played it so beautifully. So okay into the wood shed. That was the time when I really got to work on Bach and got to work on some of the things that are now important to my… to the way I play.

HOLLY: Like your use of counterpoint and things like that?

Taylor: Absolutely.

HOLLY: Now let me ask you this about the war. If I have my chronology correct, the war kind of got underway while you were still in college. How did you avoid being drafted?

Taylor: Because I was in school. If you were in school they didn't draft you. When I got out of school, you know I was vulnerable. So consequently as soon as I got out of school I didn't some to New York because I didn't want to come to New York and have to leave.
So I said I will wait until I am drafted and then after I do my time in the Army…

because I had no reason to think that I wasn't going to be drafted. I will do my time in the Army like everybody else and then I will come back and then I will go to New York because I want to really be ready and focus.
And I had hoped that if I was drafted that I would get into one of the Army bands because a lot of the guys that I had heard about Si Olivan and all those other guys… the Jimmy Lunfield Orchestra. I didn't realize what a hard time those guys were getting. But I did not want to go to Fort Lee and those placed because a friend of mine from… that I had met on a visit to New York came to school when I was there. I had met him when I first came to New York and he was really very close to Art Tatum in terms, well physically knew Art. I had not met Art at that time because I was still a student. This had to be about my junior year I guess.
He came to Fort Lee and had one of those classic horror stories of the Army was going to make him shape up, you this musician that thinks he is so hot or something. We will put him out on the rifle range and we will march him full pack all over the neighborhood and all that kind of stuff.
And so I didn't realize how easy it would have been for me to get in there. I just assumed that well I will try and get into a unit. I didn't. What happened when I got of school was that, I had worn myself down with this schedule, no sleep for two years. The only reason I survived was because I was young and I had really run myself… I was about to have a nervous breakdown.
I went up for my draft. I was called up and the Army doctor said, "Look, you are 4F and not only are you 4F but you need to go see your family doctor now [laughter]. So I went to my doctor. He said I was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. I had just really run myself down to a terrible extent. I had a spot on my lung. It was a whole mess of things.
So I didn't get drafted. I stayed, in those days it wasn't bad, that kind of thing just meant rest. I mean all you needed to do was what he prescribed, which was rest. Just cool it for a minute. That was when I began to put on weight. Up until that time I was… I could never gain weight. I mean I would do all these things. I wanted to be heavier because I wanted to play football but I could never put on enough weight. Well from that point on I was putting on too much weight in the wrong places.
Anyway not going into the Army, I came back to D.C. I worked in what was then called the War Department, it's the Department of Defense now. I have to use the right word, and the right word is arrogance. I was arrogant. I mean I am a college graduate. I deserve better than this. And I got it because there weren't too many… all the guys who could do that kind of job were in the Army or doing something else. So I got a chance to work in the government and I got boosted upstairs and I got to be in charge of a little section, you know just whole bunch of stuff.
I didn't realize that without the attended pay… what I should have gotten for it but I was happy to be in charge. It meant that I could kind of call my own terms. I could leave early and go home and practice. There were a lot of good sides to it.
Anyway after almost a year, as a matter of fact, let's see '44 actually a little more than a

year. No wait a minutes what was it?

HOLLY: You graduated in ‘42.

Taylor: No actually it was ‘44 that I came to New York. I was just trying to think, I came out in ‘42, I went to school ‘38 to ‘42. So I spent just about a year around D.C., you know trying to get myself together. Then I came to New York and began to pursue my career as a professional.

HOLLY: I just want to ask you, since you had your degree in music what type of recital… did you have to graduate with a recital or a thesis or anything like that? Do you remember that?

Taylor: Yeah. In my senior year I was the conductor of the concert band, actually the assistant conductor because the conductor was a faculty member. But I was the student conductor. I was the leader of the jazz band, which by then was the Virginia State Rhythm Boys. I was practicing teaching because my degree was in… was a Bachelor’s of Science. I was a music teacher. I graduated with a degree and “qualified” to teach music.
So I basically had to practice teach before my… during my senior year and conduct several pieces for the symphonic or symphonet they called it because it wasn’t a complete symphony orchestra in concert which I did in Virginia Hall. And then I had to play on a recital; I didn’t do a senior recital. I played on a recital. That’s all I remember.

HOLLY: Do you remember what you played on that?

Taylor: No.

HOLLY: Let me ask you this, what effect did the war have on the music community that you were involved with?

Taylor: Which music community?

HOLLY: The jazz music community.

Taylor: The overall community or the… I am in school now or are we talking about after school?

HOLLY: After school, when you are working in D.C. for that intermediate time. You know what did…

Taylor: Almost everybody who was a good musician was drafted so the music scene was filled with women and people who were itinerate. I remember guys like Fats Wright a very fine pianist from Philadelphia who influenced Bud Pal and a lot of other folks, came down. Fats Wright was there for a while. Ernie, what was his name, a guy named Ernie Washington who was a young guy. I think he got drafted though but he was there for a short time. He played trumpet and piano.
And a bunch of musicians came through D.C. from various places and stayed as long as they could and then went on to other places where they could better earn a living. Washington at that time was going through what many places were going through, it was expanding rapidly. So even though it was still very prejudice the lines were fuzzy and there were little places you could work and things you could do that when I was a student you couldn't do. You could play some of the hotels. You couldn't do that before to that extent.
So the music community was both winning and losing. It was developing… black musicians were able to go and play and play in places they hadn't played before but there were less jobs. It was all with what was happening with Washington growing, there were less jobs for black people because the black community wasn't growing in the same way. It was bursting at the seams. It was going out to the outskirts of town. Where you used to have Dike's Stockade and a couple of clubs out there, that wasn't growing to the same extent.
Dike's was doing pretty well as a place, considered way out, now it would be right in the city. But it was considered on the outskirts of town. I can't think of any of the other places. Everything else was right up by U Street up in that Northwest area. Southwest, there was nothing happening. I mean there were a few… Southwest in those days was a bad neighborhood. It was a place, which was very, very run down. Whenever newspapers wanted to make… to embarrass Congress, they would shoot the Capital from… through the Capital to Southwest. And they would show all these run down houses and people living in abject poverty and everything. It really was an eye sore. And there were a couple of really gutbucket clubs down there that black piano players used to play. So I got to play in a couple of those. Not a lot was happening. So the music scene, at that time had been taken over by the people with better connections who were playing the society dances and clubs and country clubs and stuff like that. Most of them were not black.

HOLLY: What about the mood with the African American community at that time because you are hearing people like Billy Epstein on those V discs, you know you talk about the patriotism of African Americans throughout our history here and can you comment on that?

Taylor: Well everyone in Washington, and I can only speak for Washington and the communities that I grew up in, in Petersburg and in Washington we were, America was our country. You were as patriotic as anyone perhaps more patriotic because you

felt that if you proved how much you loved the country and were willing to die for it and so forth, that you get a better shake on… in this racial thing. You know I will go out and stand beside you and die with you if I have to because this is my country too and that kind of thing.
I am amazed at what… to what extent most of us believed that in those days because people did indeed stand by others and die and give up their lives and make all the kinds of sacrifices that we're talking about. And then we ship back with their buddies, in the same unit, we ship back to places like Kentucky where they were guarding German prisoners and the German prisoners could go in the Officer's Club and they could… you know it was really strange.

HOLLY: Okay let's move now to, you are moving to New York and you said the year was 1944. Talk about that, moving from Washington to New York. Where did you live when you first came here?

Taylor: Well let me tell you what made me decide to do that. I am working for the government and this is during the war. Tommy Dorsey has a contest, it is a big promotional contest in which… it's a nationwide contest in which if you win you get to go on the radio with the Tommy Dorsey band and you get to play and you get to play in some location, unspecified location with the band and you get whatever the prize money was, whatever that was.
So I thought great opportunity. I won amateur contests and everything. I will go. I didn't even get past the audition. I was so hurt by that. I thought I played very well. I mean why didn't they like that? I am a kind… I react to things like that. Now that someone has rejected me and said you are not as good as whoever, I have got to prove to myself that I am.
So I quit my job. I gave my notice and announced to my family, I am going to New York. My father said, "With what?" I said, "I have saved a few bucks." He said, "How much?" I said some small amount, I don't remember what it was. So he actually… whatever it was, he actually gave me a $100. e said whatever it was, wasn't enough. He said, "You take this $100 because you are going to need more. Now I am giving you $100 now because I don't want you to call me and tell me you need money. What you have got, is what you are going to get. So if you don't make it, come on back home but you are not going to get anymore money from me."
So another challenge. If I don't make it on this I have got to go ask him again. No. So these two things… I come to New York and I am prepared to spend whatever time, do whatever was necessary. I don't know about unions. I don't know what I am into. So it had occurred to me that to protect some people who were then still alive, I used to lie about the fact about easily I got into the union. I'll explain that in a minute.
What happened was I came to New York on a Friday night and the reason I remember it was a Friday night was because… it was a weekend and I came in and I figured, you know what's going to happen… dances at the Savoy and the nightclubs, whatever was

going on would certainly be happening over the weekend. So let me get there in the middle and see what's going on. I don't want to waste any time.
So I go up on a Friday and drop my bag where I was staying which was my uncle's house. I go to Mittens. In those days you could sit in and it was really considered impolite first of all if you didn't allow someone who really asked you, I would really like to sit in. Could I sit in with your band? That was impolite and… if you were in the kind of place that allowed sitting in. And it was an indication that you feared this guy. You were afraid he was going to take your job. So those two things made it easy for… come on guy, shoot your best shot [laughter].
So it made it easier for you to sit in. I knew this because I had experienced it in other places as well as in New York. I had been to New York as a student. I had come up earlier and met both Monk and [Unintelligible] in another situation.

MALE SPEAKER: We are going to have to stop to change the tape.

Brown: This is tape two of the oral history interview with Dr. Bill Taylor at his residence, on November 19, 1993, conducted by Anthony Brown and Eugene Holly. Dr. Taylor, you were recounting your first trip to New York. We backtracked a little bit and you were talking about a trip that you had made while you were still in college.

TAYLOR: Actually it was before. In retrospect it was before I was in college because I realize it was during the New York World's Fair so that had to be back in the '30s at some point.
But I came to New York for the Fair. I came because I knew Teddy Wilson was working with a wonderful 10 or 12 piece band at a place, which was a dancehall. I think it was called the Golden Gate. I'm not sure. But it was up the street from the Savoy.
So I got to go to hear Teddy Wilson and this wonderful band with J.C. Hurd, Ben Webster, who was my all time favorite tenor player, Shorty Baker on trumpet, and of course Teddy on piano. Arrangements by Buster Harding. I remember everything about the band. It was just a wonderful band and it played great music, wonderful arrangements. People were dancing all over the place.
And then I went down to the Savoy and heard two bands, I can't recall what bands were there at that point, I think the Savoy Sultans was one of them but I'm not sure.
At any rate, two good bands playing opposite one another. And, you know, just to be in these places that I'd heard about on records and heard on the radio, was wonderful.
So I went… after having done the things that I wanted to do, which was seeing Benny Goodman with Fletcher Henderson and Charlie Christian on guitar, and a wonderful group at the World's Fair, I came to Harlem to see Teddy Wilson and the other guys.
While I was in Harlem… I was living in Harlem, staying in Harlem with a friend of my father's. He had told me, when you get to Harlem, I know you want to go around and listen to all this music.

Before you do, and I had already disobeyed him, but before you do, go by and say hello to a friend of mine, who is the manager of a club called the Yeah Man. His name is Bill Garrett and you tell him you're my son and he'll make sure you're well taken care of, that somebody will look out for you. I said, "I don't need nobody to look out for me. You know, thanks a lot, you know".
So after I had gone to see Teddy and the other bands and so forth, I said, "Well I'd better make this perfunctory appearance at Mr. Garrett's place or my father will hear about it and I'll have a problem.
So I go to this club and I just go in. I see a little sign out there that says somebody's playing there. I don't really pay attention to it. So I go in and introduce myself to Mr. Garrett and say, "I'm Bill Taylor's son". He said, "Oh, yeah, your dad tells me you play the piano. Come on back here and play something for me". I said, "Okay".
So now the club is going. I mean people are eating and drinking. It's a tiny little club. This is the club that was… it was called the Yeah Man. It existed up until a few years ago. Right across from the… it's about 138th and 7th avenue. This was on the west side of the street and I can't think of the name of the club when it went out of business. Anyway it was called the Yeah Man then.
I go in. I go in the back. People are there and I sit down with my usual confidence and play. I played my favorite song of that period, which was a song called *Lullaby In Rhythm.* You know, I felt hey man, I really… this is a good night. You know, I'd been listening to Teddy Wilson and everybody. I'm feeling good and it sounded good. You know, all right.
So I played my little thing, took my bow. People applauded and everything. I didn't want to wear out my welcome so I just played the one tune and went on back as to say to Mr. Garrett, well, you know, there you are.
When I left the bandstand… the pianist that I had replaced… because it was a trio, it was guitar and bass, and I had gone up and asked the guys, do you know the *Lullaby In Rhythm* and they looked at me funny. They said of course. So I sat down and played it. So when I got off the pianist said, "That was very good, son". I said, "Well, thank you" and I went back to see Mr. Garrett. He said, "Oh, when you get through talking to Mr. Garrett come on back. I'd like to talk to you". I said, "Okay".
So I talked to him for a while and then I went back to
see this pianist. We sat there and talked. We didn't exchange names or anything. We just started right into the conversation. He said, "You know, for a young guy, you play very nicely. I've got some fellows right around the corner who would really admire hearing you play". I said, "Oh, really"? He said, "Yeah, you want to go around with me and I'll have you play for them"? I said, "Sure".
So I don't know what this is all about. So I go around the corner with this guy and he knocks on a brownstone, the door of a brownstone, and a guy comes to the door and says, "Oh, hey, how you doing. Come on in".
We go in and there are four or five guys sitting around. I find out later that the four or five guys are Willie Lyon Smith, James P. Johnson, Marlo Morris, Thelonious Monk,

and a guy named Gippy, who's a wonderful stride piano player. Everybody in the room could play stride piano, especially the two young guys, Marlo and Monk. Okay.
So I sit down and I figure well I'm going to really… I just killed them at the club, I'm going to really… now. So I sit down and I play *China Boy*, which was a tune that I liked to play. It had some Teddy Wilson kind of tenths and stuff in it.
So I'm kind of playing it, doing what I do on that, and I'm about a chorus into it when one of the guys comes over and says, "That's nice, let me try a little of that". So I get up and man this guy's got a left hand like I have never heard since Fats Waller and I'm saying wait a minute [laughter].
So everybody in the room decides that yeah, that is a nice tune, let me… so everybody played *China* Boy like mad. I was properly spanked. These guys… I mean even Monk in those days was playing more like Tatum. He had some
Tatum-isk kind of things he was doing. It was not the kind of thing that I later associated with him because he was using much more technical facility in that context then he was using… and Marlo was just all over the piano. He was really into this Tatum thing. I'm saying, yeah, okay. So I really went home and woodshedded behind that.
That was first real piano jam session, because I had been in local stuff in Washington where I played against whoever was there. Because we're all local the older guys tend to take it a little easier on us then they might under other circumstances. But these guys took no prisoners, man. They said forget it [laughter].

Brown: So this is while you're in high school, right?

Taylor: Yeah.

BROWN: Who was the gentleman that you actually sat in for?

TAYLOR: The guy who led this lamb to the slaughter was… oh, the guy that I didn't mention was the Beetle, a guy named Steven Henderson, a wonderful stride pianist.
But the guy who led me into all this was the guy who wrote the tune that I decided to play in the club. His name was Clarence Profit, and he wrote the tune, *Lullaby In Rhythm*. So lots of luck, I come in and slap him in the face in his own group on his gig [laughter].

BROWN: As a high school kid.

TAYLOR: Talk about throwing the gauntlet down. When you don't know, you don't know [laughter].

BROWN: Right, right. So then can we jump ahead to when you actually now are

making your move to New York in 1944?
What I really want to be able to focus on now if it's at all possible, is to look at that milieu of Harlem. Where were you staying? You said you were staying with your uncle. What was the feeling of the community at that time?

TAYLOR: Well actually I stayed with two people. I stayed with a gentleman who lived around the corner from this brownstone where I got so decidedly cut. This was many years later.
He lived on about 141st Street but that was very crowded and I didn't want to stay there because it was a family thing and I had indicated it was just going to be temporary, just until I could find a place.

BROWN: So again we'll pick up where you're just arriving for your stay in New York.

TAYLOR: Well I stayed with a friend. I stayed with an uncle. My mother's older brother, Nathaniel Bacon, was a dentist and his office was right about 137th, 138th and 7th Avenue. He lived in the Dunbar apartments but those apartments were very small and he had a wife and a son, my cousin, and there wasn't a lot of room there so even though I was welcome to stay there, I only stayed briefly and moved in with this friend of my father's who had a little more room, not a lot.
All of this was temporary because I was looking for a place and a fellow that I had worked with in Washington, D.C., at Ike's Stockade, was a comic. His name was Buddy Bowser. Buddy worked in Washington, D.C. a lot and he was playing on the theater circuit. He was with a group… I guess by that time he was with Howell and Bowser, the two of them had an act that played… Burt Howell and Buddy Bowser. They played the Vaudeville circuit.
So he was a guy who was knowledgeable and who knew what the ropes were. He arranged for me to sublet a room in a very wonderful place on 116th and 7th Avenue, right around the corner from Minton's, a place called the Grand Court.
So that's really where my first apartment was there, actually it was upstairs and then later I got a place down on the ground floor. But the Grand Court was where I first had my own apartment.
It was convenient to everything that I wanted. It was convenient to the subway, I mean 166th Street. It was right around the corner from Minton's. I could walk to the Apollo, and there was a theater, actually two theaters right across the street from me so if I wanted to go to the movies it was right there.
If I wanted to go to the center of the nightlife of Harlem, it was just six or seven blocks away. So 125th Street was on either… in going in either direction, it was expanded down from that. So it was very convenient.
If I wanted to go downtown, then we'd just hop on the subway and I was right downtown.

BROWN: Since you lived right next door to Minton's, could you describe Minton's, with the interior of Minton's and also on a given night, what was the clientele like, what was a night at Minton's like?

TAYLOR: Minton's was a place where a lot of pimps, and hustlers, and people who lived the fast life partied. They met there. They hung around the bar in the daytime and played the numbers and bet on the horses and so forth.
Henry Minton was a former delegate to the musicians union and he bought the place. The physical place that Minton's occupied was what would have normally been the dining room of a hotel and the hotel was right… it was a part of that hotel.
But it was run as a separate operation. The hotel didn't run… the hotel was like just a cheap hotel in Harlem where lots of folks did all kinds of stuff. The fast life folks were very busy. Anything you wanted you could get there if you needed it and could pay for it.
So it wasn't a great neighborhood. There were people who lived in that neighborhood as they do in many neighborhoods like this, who were very hard working, upstanding people who resented all of the pimps, and hustlers, and all that, that were hanging out in their neighborhood. There was nothing they felt they could do about it so they lived their lives, and live and let live. You don't bother me I won't bother you.
And New York was a very safe city in those days. I mean a woman could come unescorted into Minton's and not be bothered if she chose not to be bothered. She might indicate to the bartender, I just want a drink. Please, I don't care to be annoyed and the bartender would protect her. If guys would hit on her, whatever, no way, leave her alone. She's minding her business, you mind yours.
So that was the way it was in all of Harlem because a lot of women for a variety of reasons, I mean they might work late or do something, they might just want a drink, they might want to rest their feet, just might want to cool it for a minute. They really are not here to hustle or to be hustled or anything and all the bars respected that. I mean, they said, okay, fine, that's cool.
That really spilled over into most of the jazz rooms at that time. I mean a lot of unescorted women and women in groups of twos and threes were fans. They came and hung out and listened to the music.
Now true some of them were there and they're going to hit on guys, but in many cases, more cases then not, they came, listened to the music and went home. They didn't come to hit on anybody, them came because they liked the music. Many of them said to me after I got to perform at the clubs… I said, "Well, you know, if you're not here really… you've indicated and I respect what you're saying that you don't want to be hit on by any of the musicians or anything like that, but what prompted you to come without an escort"? They said, "Because the guys won't let us listen. If I have a date, the guy wants to talk and he wants to… and I want to hear the music".
These were real fans. They knew the players, they had the records, they liked it, and so

a lot of times they would come with two or three or their girlfriends and just listen to music and then go about their business.

BROWN: Was it a mixed audience?

TAYLOR: It most cases in those days when I came to New York, yes. People from downtown were in the habit of coming to specific clubs uptown and during the war the bars were being broken down on 52nd Street in particular, to a lesser extent in the Village. Although one thought that the Village was more open, it was just opposite at that particular moment in time.
There were many places you could go and many places… actually there were a couple of clubs on 52nd Street you couldn't go into. One was Sherman Billingsley's Twenty-One Club. Right in the middle of the heart of jazz and they didn't have jazz in there, but they didn't want African American people there either.

BROWN: So going back to Minton's, can you describe maybe where the stand was, the bandstand?

TAYLOR: Oh, yeah. To go into the club… as you went in there was a bar on your left. There were tables as you went in. There was a couple of tables right there, then the bar. The room was set up in tables, almost like a restaurant because I guess that was the way it was designed, to be a restaurant.
So you had all these tables and a long bench like something on one of the walls where you could sit and several people… they could put several tables in front of that and you could sit and eat.
That was the front room. Then there was a back room. You continued past the bar into what was kind of the back of this one room with some minor separation there. I guess the reason was that they wanted to charge a little more for the drinks back there and then wanted to have from time to time entertainment. If they had entertainment they could charge… instead of 35 cents for a drink they charged 75 cents for a drink in the back. So there was some separation between the two rooms.
So as I remember you would have to come forward. Later they tore down that… if I remember, they tore down the partition but at one point there was a slight partition or something back there so that you would have to go into that part of the room.
Then I guess after they tore it down they still maintained the price policy, there was just no partition there. So if you're at the bar it was one thing, if you were back here, it cost a little bit more or something like that.
They always had a house band. They had Teddy Hill. The former bandleader that Dizzy worked with, had a band… brought guys in to play. They always had some kind of musical director. I remember at one point Ike Quebeck was the musical director and a wonderful tenor player. This is somebody just to keep it from getting to be an all out jazz jam session where nothing gets done and the customers leave. So at some point the

guy's going to say, "Okay, we're going to take intermission and get some of those guys off the bandstand" [laughter].

BROWN: It was not an after hours club, is that correct?

TAYLOR: No, this was the regular club. They had liquor license and they would start about nine o'clock at night and go until four in the morning, so it was a long night.

BROWN: So the actual after hours joint was Monroe's, is that correct?

TAYLOR: Yeah. Oh, there were several. There were many. Monroe's was one. There was the Log Cabin Inn, there was a whole bunch of them. I can't even remember all the names now. Ruben's was one I think.

BROWN: This new music that was now starting to gain some popularity, bebop or modern jazz, was it featured at all these different after hour joints or was it certain joints that catered to it?

TAYLOR: No, basically it was played at Minton's and wherever specific musicians would play, where Dizzy would play, where some of the others… where Kenny Clark and some of the other musicians who were very much into the exploration of the music. So they would come together at Monroe's, they would come together at odd places, at the Savoy. They would come together at the Savoy. If you have say Cootie Williams band and Bud Powell playing piano, and you'd have some guys that couldn't wait to sit in with… they'd say, well Cootie, let me sit in, and they'd be there.
Then Bud would play some things and the trumpet player, whoever, they would play say a tune like *How High The Moon*, which they had an arrangement of for dancing, or they'd play a tune like *Perdido*, one of these tunes, and the hip… the guys that are sitting in with Bud would play the bebop line while they're playing the regular dance line [musical sounds]. Instead of doing that the guy would [musical sounds]. I can't remember the line now but it's one that Ellington actually played, based on the same harmonic structure.

BROWN: These clubs, were they just sit down audiences or was dancing also --

TAYLOR: In Minton's there was always dancing. There was a big dance floor so no matter who was playing, whether it was Diz or somebody else, there was always dancing. Even in the jam sessions, I mean the guys would dance until they got tired and they'd sit down. Two of them would keep on going but people would… that was a big thing at the club.
As a matter of fact, in Minton's not only did they do social dancing but they had some jam sessions between some of the tap dancers and the drummers. There was a place

called the Rhythm Club in Harlem where tap dancers would have their own jam sessions, just the dancers going at it with their own steps.
But because Baby Lawrence and several other dancers related to Kenny Clark, and Max Roach, and some of the bebop drummers, they would come there and challenge them. So you'd have a drummer taken fours with a dancer and it was very exciting. I mean even as a non-drummer or a non-dancer, these guys really… it was exciting to watch because they got into some very different things from what they would get into otherwise.

BROWN: Okay, well you've talked about Minton's now. You haven't talked about what you did when you came to New York. You told me where you stayed but what did you do when you came to New York?

TAYLOR: Well as I said earlier, I came to New York on a Friday night and I went right to Minton's. I literally dropped my bag and said, "I'll see you folks in the morning", because I think it was late evening when I finally arrived from what I had left in… you know, it's a train trip so it took whatever… six hours or whatever it was. So by the time I got here it was late evening, late afternoon, early evening.
So I said, "I'm so glad you're going to let me stay here, thank you very much and I'll see you tomorrow", and I dropped my bag. They said, "Where are you going"? I said, "Well I had promised to meet someone and I'm running a little late so I want to go". So that made sense to them. They said, okay, he's a young guy, he's looking for a job. That will be fine, okay.
So it wasn't true… but I went to Minton's and I introduced myself to the piano player and said "I'd like to sit in". The guy said yeah, "A lot of guys want to sit in tonight, it's Friday night". So sure enough there were… I thought he was just putting me on but sure enough there were several guys that he said, "Okay, come on and play", and they would come on and play, several guys.
So the night wore on and on and I'm sitting there all the time nursing these cokes and things. It wasn't that I didn't drink at that time but I really wanted to just check everything out so I wasn't drinking. In those days I thought I could handle… I was a frat man, I thought I could handle my whiskey. So drinking didn't bother me. But I was just drinking these cokes and everything.
So finally the very last set… you know, as it got later I started bugging this guy. I said, "Well hey man, are you going to let me play"? He said, "Yeah, yeah, yeah", and he kept fluffing me off. So finally he said, "Okay, come on and play the last set".
I mean all night long you've had maybe five or six guys on the stand, now you've got 10, 15 guys on the stand and he's never going to get to the piano player [laughter]. So all of these guys are on and we're playing. Well by this time the reason there's so many guys on is that there are people from downtown, from the downtown clubs, one of whom is Ben Webster and I am thrilled.
Man, here I am sitting in and one of my heroes walks in. These are all good, but this is

Ben Webster [laughter] and so man, I don't care if I get a solo now. I mean, hey right? So I'm sitting there playing, and he plays and I got a couple of solos on the blues, a little bit, not very much. Anyway I'm playing a lot of comp, I'm playing for everybody. So Ben comes over and he says, "What's your name", and he introduced himself. I said, "Yeah, I know who you are". He said, "What are you doing"? I said, "Well I just got in town". So he said, "I'm looking for a piano player". He said, "Are you available"? So I said, "Yeah". He said, "Do you belong to the union"? I said "No". So he said, "Well come on down"… he said, "Oh, damn, tonight's Friday night. Why don't you come on down Sunday night because Saturday it's going to be too crowded and I can't have you sit in with my group. On Sunday night it will be okay".

So his theory was that it would so crowded and they have a quick turnover and the guys… I found all this out later, that the sets were shorter. It was Saturday night and they're trying to turn over as much money in the small club, the Three Deuces, as they could.

So I'm really excited. I mean Saturday took forever… it took forever to get through Saturday. So finally Sunday I go down to the Three Deuces, which is on 52nd Street. If you're coming from 6th Avenue, this is the first club that you come to on the south side of that street.

So I go in and once again I make this deadly mistake of not reading who's playing in the club. All I see is Ben Webster. You know, it's Ben Webster, yeah, right, okay. So the bigger sign, the one that's up on the thing, I totally walked by. It said Art Tatum [laugh].

So I go into the club and it's dark, it's a tiny… the clubs on 52nd Street were the basement of brownstones and in those days before they tore them all down and built skyscrapers, these were three, four story brownstones and in the basement they had formally… these clubs had formerly been speakeasy's back in the '20s and '30s, during Prohibition.

The whole idea of these clubs is to crowd as many people as you can, so you would have a table for three or four and the tables were just big enough to put some drinks on. It was really like a coffee table or something. But they could get a lot of folks in there. So they got… I guess the maximum was maybe 75 or 100 people. You're sitting on each other's laps at that point. Anyway the place was jammed. I went in and as I start toward… as you come in from the street because you're going into the basement of this building or the ground floor of this building, you walk -- three sets of tables, one against the wall, a middle section, and another against the other wall.

So I'm walking between… in one of these aisles and somebody grabs me by the arm and says, "Billy, what are you doing in New York"? Well it's Norma Shepherd, one of the pianists that I knew from Washington who was wonderful pianist and had moved to New York a few years before.

She was then doing her own television show. She was doing quite well. She was a cabaret singer and player and so forth, and once again, had she not been a black woman she probably would have been a star but at this point they already had Dorothy Donigan

and Hazel Scott as the black piano singers and they didn't see… people on television and clubs didn't see the need for another one at that point. So she was kind of… she was doing okay but she wasn't doing as well as she should have been doing.
Anyway she stopped me and she said, "What are you doing"? I said, "Well I'm going to audition for Ben Webster, I'll be right back". She said, "Oh, no, no, before you go on", she said, "I'm going to leave and go back to the play but let me introduce you to some friends of mine".
I didn't realize that because she was between sets, was why she… otherwise she probably would have waited until I came off. But she was between sets so she had to go back to her gig and so she said, "Now I want you to meet these folks. This is so and so, and so and so. Ms. So and So, Ms. So and So, Mr. Tatum".
So I said okay. So I think Tatum, yeah, okay. Tatum? I'm really… I'm not sure but I've never seen Art Tatum so I don't know what he looks like and so… and it's dark in this club anyway.
So I go up. I said, "Well I hope it's not him". Anyway I sit down and play and man I played everything I knew in the first eight bars. I'm playing, I'm doing everything I can to try to get this job. I played all of it, all my Tatum, everything I could think of, and Ben is kind of smirking when he's listening to me because Ben used to play piano and he's been in enough of these so, you know, okay, all right, settle down, it's cool.
Now I'm replacing Johnny Gwenirey who is a well-known player. I mean this I know. I've heard his records and everything and I'm saying, wow, I really want to be impressive.
But the thing that saved me and I think that got me the job was the fact that Sid Catlett and Charlie Drayton, two of the best rhythm players in the business were the rhythm section.
I mean Sid Catlett is just…if you can't play…if you can't swing with him you should give up. Charlie Drayton was the kind of bass player similar to Freddie Green as guitarist. Impeccable time, all the right notes, and I mean you're just in the cradle, man. I mean just don't worry, I got it [laugh]. So with those two guys I could have… you know, whatever I did it made sense. I mean they made sense out of it. So I got the job.
Now I come off the bandstand. I don't know I've got the job yet so I come off the bandstand hoping that everything is all right, and go back and Norma has now gone so she's out of the club and back to her gig.
Whoever was making the announcements, Ben or whoever it was, said… no, I think it was an off stage… the guy probably from the bar or something said, "Now ladies and gentlemen, the Three Deuces are proud to present the Art Tatum Trio". I said, what [laughter], and sure enough it was Slam Stewart, Tiny [Unintelligible], and Art Tatum.
So I spent the rest of the night in there just listening. Then I went back and talked to Art and that was the first time I actually sat and talked with him. I found him to be just a warm, sensitive human being who didn't even mention how lousy I sounded [laugh] when I was trying to do my audition.

BROWN: When did Ben tell you, you had the job?

TAYLOR: He had to go talk with Sammy Kay who was one of the owners of the place. Sammy Kay and Irving Alexander were the two guys that ran the place and they had an arrangement with the union.
They said listen, every day they're drafting all these musicians. We've got a club to run. You guys have to cooperate with us. When we find somebody, union or not, we're going to hire them and we'll straighten you out. So they worked out a little monetary arrangement with the guys at the union, with the delegate.
So literally I was there for three days and I had a job and it was set. There was no… the guy says, "You'll go down tomorrow, Monday… and the club was closed but he said… at least it wasn't closed but the group was off. He said, "You go down to the union and they'll give you your union card". So I got my union card.
Now you have to understand that if you came to New York, under legit circumstances, if I had not gotten this job, I would have had to wait without playing on a steady job for six months before I could get my union card. I'd have to wash dishes and do whatever, drive a cab or do whatever I could do to earn enough money to survive.
That was deliberate because everybody came to New York looking for the jobs and they figured that's the only way they could protect the local guys. But with the Army taking everybody there were no local guys. Everybody's in the Army so they arranged for me to get this card and I did.
While I was working there they came up with this idea of a… periodically New York would go on a binge of cleaning up the city. So they wanted to rid the city of all of the undesirable characters and one way the police department felt they could that was to register everybody, to give you a card with your picture on it, and say you're Billy Taylor and you work at the Three Deuces and we know where you live so if you screw up we know where to come and get you, and if you've got anything on your record, you can't work, we'll take the card back.
So it was a way of control. They wanted to put pressure on people who lived in the nightclub circuit who did those things. It worked to the disadvantage of Billie Holiday and many others who lost their cards for one reason or another, for dope offenses or for arrests, or whatever, and it really was about paying off.
I mean I don't know who was paying off or how it was worked out but a lot of money changed hands and people got their cards and other people didn't. And it was very arbitrary because people like Sinatra and other people for one reason or another were denied at one point, getting cards. Very famous people who were not necessarily drunks or junkies or anything like that, for other reasons were deemed undesirable and quite arbitrarily disallowed their opportunity to work.

BROWN: Was this pretty widespread, this dependency on drugs and alcohol at the time that you came to New York?

TAYLOR: It was growing. When I first came to New York, whiskey… and during most of the '30s, whiskey was the drug of choice because it was so easy to get drunk. I mean you could… around the corner from the Deuces, just off 52nd Street on 6th Avenue, was a bar called the White Rose Bar and in the White Rose Bar you could get a drink in the daytime if you had 15 cents. At night the prices went up to a quarter for a scotch. A double was 35 cents.

So it was easy as you can imagine to get drunk if that's what you chose to do. Many musicians did. I mean guys would get blind with it being so cheap, and they liked to drink and it was social. You'd go around and bend your elbow and hang out. There was another place up the street in the middle of 52nd Street, which was a bar where musicians hung out. Not entertainment, just a bar and the drinks were cheap in there too.

So I wanted to ingratiate myself with Coleman Hawkins and Don Bias, some of the older musicians who… Sid Catlett and people like that that I respected, and I wanted to buy them a drink and be one of the guys.

Jo Jones as soon as he found out I was in town, which was like a few days later, told all these guys, "Billy shouldn't drink". Now he didn't say why I shouldn't drink or what the problem was, he only said, "Billy shouldn't drink". So all the guys said okay.

So anytime I offered to buy Coleman Hawkins a drink or John Simmons, or any [unintelligible] any of the guys I was recognizing as these legendary figures that I only knew by reputation, I'd say, "Oh, hey, I'm Billy Taylor, can I buy you a drink"? They said, "Yeah, I'll have one", and Hawk would say… if we drank a lot, Hawk would say, "Yeah, I'll have one". So he drank and he'd offer me… I'm paying. He'd say, "I'll have a scotch and he'll have a coco-cola".

Well I'm not going to argue with one of these guys. He has decreed that I'm going a soda. I drank my cocoa-cola, we stood there and talked and I had a nice visit with a legendary figure.

I didn't find out until much later that Jo Jones had done this to me. I knew that he didn't want me to drink. This much I knew, but I didn't know he'd told everybody else. I had met Jo Jones when he was with the Count Basie and he had come to Virginia State. They played in Petersburg, played a job in Petersburg, and our whole band naturally went down to hear the Basie band.

Now we're standing around and all the guys… Joe is a very accessible guy to young musicians and all the guys in my band were talking to him and everything, and I was with everybody and so the guys were saying, "Our piano player is dynamite. He's really… do you think you can get Count Basie to let him sit in"? I said hey man, [laughter] come on.

So surprisingly to me he said, "Yeah". He said, "Yeah, you can play, come on kid". So he told Basie and Basie let me sit in with this rhythm section of all rhythm sections, Walter Paige, Jo Jones, and Freddie Green. So man I'm… this is wonderful.

But that was when I met him. So he knew me as a college kid and so he liked that. For some reason or other he decided that he was my guardian, he was going to look out for

me. He was not going to let me get into the problems that all these other guys get into. And he did.
He said, "You're not to drink and you don't need to hang out with this". He'd see me in the after hour places and literally take me… "Come on, I want you to go with me", and so I'd go with him wherever.
He would take me out of that situation and I would find out later that it was a big number guy or it was a big somebody that I shouldn't have been in there with in the first place. I'm just hanging because I want soak up all this atmosphere and find out… besides Tatum comes in here sometimes, whatever. So I want to see what the New York life is about. So he was very protective and spread the word that I shouldn't drink.
It really wasn't until years later, this was in '44… it wasn't until years later when I came back from Europe that he really made this stick because I fought that all the way. I'm a frat man, I can handle my whiskey. So I would have a double scotch or I'd have whatever it was. I wanted to drink. I didn't drink a lot but I drank socially and I drank often.
But later he really made it stick because many years later when I was sitting doing a single at Wells… I had come back from Europe and I'm now doing solo work because I can't support a trio. I can't get a trio gig but I can get solo.
So I'm sitting there playing in this Harlem bar. The guy who was the bartender is my main man. He's a neighbor of mine and every time somebody offered, he'd give me a double man. So my gig is from about 9:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m., and so my three o'clock… and the place ran 24 hours.
So people would come there to eat chicken and waffles. So all kinds of folks were coming in at all times. So by twelve o'clock man I'm saying, "Oh, yeah, I'm feeling real good".
Jo Jones came in and saw me do that one night. He came in the next night and I'm in the same kind of shape. I look out from the piano and I look up and here sits Jo, arms folded, looking me dead in the eye, with Art Tatum and Teddy Wilson, one on either side. I couldn't play. I really had had too much to drink.
From that point on he had made his point. If he had done that earlier I would have stopped drinking earlier [laugh]. But he really made the point because if there was anyone that I wanted to impress it was those two guys and I just simply physically and mentally couldn't do it. And that was his point, that was exactly his point [laugh].

BROWN: That's great. That's great. Before we continue on with your career, I'd like to maybe… now that you've arrived in New York, maybe look at this opportunity to compare and contrast the scene in D.C. versus New York as far as jamming, to maybe compare the two music scenes initially, and then maybe the broader context of maybe now looking at now being in New York, and what's the social climate like, what the political climate… compared to your previously expounding on Washington D.C.

TAYLOR: Well New York was everything that I had read. As I said earlier, I was just an avid reader. I read everything I could get my hands on about jazz and about what was going on in New York, and all the famous people like the stars that came to D.C., and the people whose records I bought and so forth.

For me it was all true. I came to New York. The Apollo had just the great shows that they talked about. The Paramount had the great shows with the big bands and in those days you had at least four or five theaters downtown that had stage shows, so you would have the Paramount and the Strand with two different jazz bands the same week.

You had Duke Ellington and Billy Exstine headlining a show at one place, then you'd have Woody Herman and somebody else at the Strand. Duke would be at the Paramount say that particular week, and then you'd have say Woody and somebody else at the Strand. Then at the Capitol Theater you might have Tommy Dorsey and his band, or somebody like Ethel Waters at the Capitol Theater.

Then you had a block or so away, a huge theater that was built very much like the size of and show like Radio City. It was called the Roxy Theater. They had dancing girls, and a big production number, and a movie and all that sort. And you had the Rockefeller Center. So you had all of that going on within ten blocks of Broadway.

And you had all these nightclubs on Broadway that featured the big bands, the Charlie Barnett's and all of the great bands, the hotels where they broadcast from and so forth. Vincent Lopez played at one of the hotels. It was the funniest thing to go in and see Vincent Lopez as a piano player with a piano accompanist. He had somebody playing the bass while he was doing all this other stuff [laughter] in his band.

Many of the places, the Zanzibar and places like that, Ellington played… the Zanzibar was right on the corner, I guess it was called… I think it was called the Zanzibar… was on the corner of… this is while 52nd Street is going on and while I'm working with Ben Webster.

Duke Ellington is playing in this club on 49th and Broadway, this upstairs club. Later became Bop City, but in these days it was a show. It was the Duke Ellington show and Duke had his band and some singer and some dancers, and he put on a show just as they would put on in the Paramount, or in the Apollo, or whatever theaters they played, except it was done with tables.

They really were recreating… trying to recreate the ambiance of the old Cotton Club. Now the Cotton Club by the time I got here had closed. I mean all those clubs no longer existed. But the ambiance they had left behind was still there and it was carrying out in Broadway.

But as far as jazz is concerned what you were hearing was jazz in the theaters. You asked me earlier about jazz in the movies. They had short subjects. Every band that played Hollywood and played California ended up doing what they call short subjects, which lasted 10 or 15 minutes.

Essentially it was somebody putting a camera up in front of the band or putting the band on a set and having them do what they did in the club. So it really was the band… what they would normally do on stage with a background of some sort. So you got to hear a

great band like Cab Calloway, or Redman, or Woody Herman, or Benny Goodman, or somebody like that just playing.
This was in between movies. The movie, a comedy like a *Our Gang* comedy, or the *Three Stooges*, or something like that in a newsreel with current events. You'd see all this in the theater.
So a theater experience was a very long experience. If you went to the Paramount you saw a show, which lasted… a stage show, which lasted about an hour or more. You saw a movie, which lasted about an hour or more. You saw selected short subjects they called them, which lasted maybe a half hour or so. So you spent two or three hours for your quarter [laugh], or whether it was 75 cents another time of day. The theaters were built to accommodate that.
New York had several entertainment districts. Harlem was one. There were several dancehalls in Harlem. There was the Savoy, which was the most famous. Several small ones, a place called the Renaissance, which featured a lot of ethnic groups like West Indian dancers and Spanish, Hispanic dancers with the accompany bands.
There were a couple of places, smaller, up and down 7th Avenue that had dancers. They were large rooms but smaller by comparison to the Savoy and the Renny. Many nightclubs. There were nightclubs lined up. The Elks Rendezvous, to name a few… let's see the Elks Rendezvous… if I can think of any, Wells Restaurant. The names won't come now. The Okay Club as I mentioned, the Murains… I can't think. One of these days I'll look them up and find them.
But there had to be at least 15 or 20 nightclubs actively supporting live music in those days. So you had small combos for the most part playing Louie Jordan type things. Wells and several other clubs like that introduced the B-Three Hammond organ to nightclubs in Harlem and that was very popular. These guys would play… a fellow that I worked with named Charlie Stewart, another guy named Bob Wyatt, were early pioneers, but the guys that really made the thing work were guys like Bill Davis, and Bill Dockett, and people like that that had the kind of danceable thing, because Small's Paradise, which was one of the biggest of the clubs in that area, 135th and 7th Avenue also had dancing.
They had a big floor. They had Earl Bostick and bands like that and they also had an organ out in the bar part. So the show would go on and they would have dancing girls, and a chorus, and a comic, and tap dancers, and so forth, and a musician or whatever. The six or eight piece band would play that, then the band would play for dancing. The band would take intermission, everybody would come out of the bar and the guy would play the organ. So it was an interesting way to do things.
In the Village you had the Camp Café Society, you had the Village Vanguard, several Dixieland clubs, and a lot of clubs that featured a variety of cabaret type, people that did the Broadway show tunes, and clubs that appealed to people with different lifestyles were there.
So there were at least 10 or 15 of those down around where… the Village Vanguard was the northern end of… from where the Vanguard was down to Houston Street, you

had a variety of clubs all in those little streets and everything, just off 7th Avenue and going out in either direction.

BROWN: What was the sense of the musical community? You've given us a few examples with Jo Jones, and others of you idols, and other established artists. Did you feel like you were accepted right away, and what was the general feeling of the musical community in New York?

TAYLOR: I was accepted right away, as were most people who first came. When I first came to New York, I came around the same time as Errol Garner, and Pipe Jones, and we all were just welcomed with open arms to 52nd Street.
There were a lot of musicians who lived here, who were not for a variety of reasons given those opportunities. Ram Ramirez comes to mind. Ram was a very fine pianist. He wrote *Lover Man* and several other pieces, but *Lover Man* is the most popular thing he ever wrote.
Ram always had a nice job playing solo piano or something while working with a combo but he never really got the opportunity that I think he was ready for at that particular moment in time.
Having had a major song recorded by Billie Holiday you would think hey, he would be leading a group as Eddie Hayward was doing at Cafe Society. Well you figure, well Ram ought to be doing that at Cafe Society uptown or somewhere, which was on 58th Street on the east side. He played a lot of the east side clubs. He played clubs that featured Broadway show tunes, similar to… like an uptown version of what was going on in the Village.
Woody Allen worked as a standup comic in those kinds of clubs. Benny Comdon was a comedian… who is a writer now, worked with Billie Mandall, which she was married to Jerry Mulligan at one time, a very fine… Judy Holiday. Judy Holiday was a comedian who became very big in motion pictures and on Broadway but in those days she was playing the Vanguard as a part of an act.
So there was a lot of interplay and the people on Broadway, the people in nightclubs, the people in the Hispanic community, the people in several other groups that are now separate, were all a part of the same framework. They knew each other, they respected each other, they performed together.
The first time I played with Machito's band… I was actually the pianist playing in the relief band in a club called Lagonger, just down on Broadway, and the Machito band was headlining and playing the show. We were playing relief and it was an all American band headed by Walter Fitzthomas who used to play tenor with Cab Calloway.
We were just playing straight ahead dance music, basically jazz for dancing if you will, but with pseudo Latin rhythms as Americans would play them. But because I was on the scene… Joe Loco who was the pianist at that time with the Machito band was drafted, and Mario Bowser who was their musical director just drafted me.

He said, “Look I need a piano player, you, you’re elected” [laughter]. I said, I” don’t play Latin, come on” [laughter]. So I got a chance to learn a lot about Latin music from one of the greatest teachers there, actually the guy that taught Dizzy Gillespie about that.

BROWN: Well since you brought up learning a new musical vocabulary, in this case Afro-Cuban jazz, now that you’re in New York and bebop is really starting to crystallize as a musical genre or idiom, did you ever feel, and if so, when did you feel that you were in a musical context that was maybe beyond, not so much your abilities but your concept?

TAYLOR: Immediately because I’m now in a place where when I’m working with Ben Webster, Dizzy Gillespie starts with the Opens, with the first bebop band even to be on 52nd Street. Now I’m playing with Ben, and he opens without a piano player because Bud Powell is supposed to be the piano player. The groups is supposed to be Dizzy, Charlie Parker, Max Roach, Oscar Pediford, and Bud Powell, which would have been just an unbelievable group.
Charlie Parker was not available for whatever reason so they got Don Bias. Bud Powell was not available and they couldn’t find anybody. They didn’t know he wasn’t… they thought right up to the last minute he was going to open so they start without a piano player.
So I’m running back and forth because I know… by this time I’ve met Dizzy so I go over and I know… as a matter of fact, I know Oscar. I had met him when he was with Charlie Barnett and he came to Washington and played the Howard with Chubby Jackson playing the other base.
So he didn’t know too many guys in Washington. I don’t know if it was his first trip or what. Anyway I got to meet him at that time and we exchanged hellos and I’ll get in touch with you sometime, and I never saw him again until we got the New York. But I knew him and so we were friendly.
So he said, “Well come on over man, we need a piano player”. So I said, “Okay”, and I went over and I sat in and Dizzy taught me some of the tunes. I’ve often laughingly said that I got fired because I kept being late for… Ben said… but actually that’s an exaggeration.
The gig… Ben’s time actually ended but it didn’t end quick enough for me because before I finished with Ben, they had already hired George Wallington to play piano so I was out of a gig. But I sure wanted to play with that band man, because they were really special.
But the whole idea… it’s funny how you think of things in context. Some things that I’ve said in interviews, when I say them again in another context, I realize that your memory plays tricks on you. My memory plays tricks on me sometimes.
In thinking about that period I think of all of the great musicians who were working there and my… and once again my spirits were buoyed by the attitude of people. You

asked if I was accepted. They were so supportive. Stef Smith, Eddie South, Hot Lip Paige, guys that played very… they knew about swinging… that the kind of music that led into bebop… Prez and Don Bias, and people like that, and they were very like Dizzy, they were very quick to show us, all of us, not just me what they thought was correct.

Don Bias for instance fell in love with… went to see the picture *Laura* and fell in love with the melody. Taught it to Errol Garner on the piano because Errol didn't read music and Don only had the sheet music to go by.

So he bought the sheet music, sat down and played it through on the piano and Errol said, "Oh, yeah, okay". After he heard it he could play it, and added his own harmony and his own dimension to it and got his first hit with that. I'm saying… this is several years later. This is not in '44, this is around '46 or something like that, but by that… '45, I guess late '45.

By that time Errol had already been hailed as a comer. Everybody said, this guy is really something and so already people are emulating him and he's like one of the young lions of that period. He's playing with Charlie Parker and playing with Dizzy Gillespie and showing how those… he's not changing his style and he's showing how that works with bebop. Sid Catlett and Clyde Hard are playing with Dizzy and showing how their aspect of the music works.

And what I was able to see is that you can do this without losing your identify. Then Hank Jones comes along and he and I were into Art Tatum, Teddy Wilson, and Nat Cole in a very similar fashion and he really gets into bebop. Man, he gets a thing going on bebop that incorporates all of that stuff. It's oh, yeah.

Hank was so quick to make that rhythmic change because what I didn't understand in those days… because I really wanted to play stride piano and that was an obsession with me. I wanted to do what Tatum did and I wanted to do that kind of stride and all that stuff, so it got in my way of really concentrating on bebop as a style.

I wanted to use elements from bebop but I didn't want to… Bud Powell and I used to argue about this all the time because he'd say, "Man, you've got to make the piano sound like Charlie Parker". I said, "No, I want to make the piano sound like Art Tatum", [laughter] but he made the piano sound like Charlie Parker. He had the articulation, he had the rhythmic concept, and once again he added his own dimension to that concept. But it was firmly rooted in the rhythmic things that Bird and Dizzy were concentrating on.

I on the other hand was concentrating more eclectically on Latin jazz, and on stride piano playing, and European classical music, and trying to get a whole bunch of stuff… this stuff is whirling around my head.

I know from listening to some of my old records that sometimes I can hear like two bars of stride, some impressionistic harmony, a little Teddy Wilson, and some Bud Powell all in the first eight bars of something that I'm playing [laughter].

BROWN: Well the musical influences notwithstanding, I want to come back to the

concept of the community of musicians. Jazz Scholarship now looks at the bebop so-called revolution as happening, or portraying it as happening in more or less a vacuum, a social cultural vacuum.
No one talks about what were the ideas that were circulating among the musicians other then musical, the extra musical, what books are being read if that was the case? Were musicians reading say the *Amsterdam News*, were they keeping abreast of current events and if so how, movies… you mentioned the newsreel.
Another conduit for information outside the community might have been the returning vets from the war. Just trying to get a feel for how the information is moving and what are those ideas and attitudes that are circulating that may have formed this new music that is considered revolutionary.

TAYLOR: But one of the things that was going on was the fact that the musicians basically who were conceptualizing bebop were not in the Army. Dizzy and Bird didn't go in the Army. Bud was not in the Army. Kenny Clark did so he relinquished his part of that at that moment to Max Roach, until a later period when he came back and began to reassert himself in terms of the person who was one of the founders of that particular concept.
Jo Jones, though he never actually played the style was a good indication to people like Max and others of how this concept was evolving because the people could hear in Jo's work, and you didn't have to be a drummer, you could hear in Jo's work and in Sid Catlett's work, and in the work of other drummers, J.C. Hurd and others where this thing was going.
You know, say well here I can see, this guy's doing something else with a sock symbol, there's much more of rhythmic impulse on the ride symbol rather then this combination of sock symbol and bass drum that we're accustomed to. So this required a different kind of approach to rhythm.
When I came to New York I had been highly influenced by one record that Duke made. It was the introduction to *In A Mellow Tone*, where he does something up in the treble part of the piano, some voicing, and I loved that voicing so I began to do things like that and that became my style of accompaniment.
Well when I got to New York guys didn't like that. I mean they said, "Man, you're in the way. Why don't you play in the lower part of the piano like Basie and the real guys, man? I mean never mind all that stuff up in the top of the piano".
But I liked that. I liked the fact that it gave me a chance to sound orchestral and to do things that worked. I was given an opportunity by Ben Webster first and then the next real job I had was with Eddie South and since that was with a trio, Eddie started -- I started working with him with a 12 piece band and we just did one gig and then he disbanded the band because the show fell apart.
We were playing a show at the Famous Door and he went on the road but he only took a trio on the road and the trio was piano, bass, and violin. Well that gave me a lot of room to play harmonically because he had a single line instrument so I could play all

the harmony I wanted, anywhere I wanted on the piano.
So I really developed the style of accompaniment that I was attracted to and I flushed out some of the harmonic things that I had heard Ellington do, and added to them some things that worked for me.
I had started doing this on my first record. I mean I did a piece called the *Mad* Monk and in the *Mad Monk* you'll hear the same thing that Ellington did, the same kind of voicing just in a blues context. I mean I made a little melody out of it.
And the *Mad Monk* that I'm referring to is Thelonious Monk because what this has got is it's a stride, it's basically after I do this Ellington type thing, I play some stride and I play the release of the piece. Its got a little pseudo bebop line and so once again, I'm mixing everything I've got all in this 32 bar piece [laughter], because in those days I had no reason to believe it wouldn't work. I mean I'd say well, you know, a dab of this and a dab of that will work. And sometimes it did, and sometimes it did a lot better.
For instance, that concept was much better defined by Monk himself when he wrote *52nd Street Theme*. He used a riff and then he used a very complicated bebop release, then he went back to the riff, which Dizzy and many other guys had used as a device. I wasn't that well grounded in the New York style of playing to be able to do that at that point.

BROWN: So at the time you made this recording was Monk's style influential?

TAYLOR: No. No, as a matter of fact he was being steadily put down by all the writers and I remember a few years… even later then that when he did some recording with Norman Grant, he was referred to in the notes as an iterant piano player.
I mean people were very disrespectful of what he was doing because they didn't understand it. They just thought that he was a guy that played a lot of clunkers, that he missed a lot and everything, not understanding that his sense of rhythm was as special as it was and that he was always a stride piano player in the midst of the most contemporary thing. Like Ellington, he was playing stride piano and it worked.
I guess that's what really threw me because I knew it was possible, certain ways, but what I didn't realize was that you had to either be florid in the Ellington way or you had to be spare in the way that Monk and Randy Western had chose to do, so that you left a lot of space for people to absorb the harmonic things that you were outlining.

BROWN: And this relationship between Monk and Bud, were you also a part of this then? Did you get to experience some of their interchanges or did you get to see, interact with them?

TAYLOR: Well we hung out together a little bit but Bud was really a loner in many respects and though he related to other people, he tended to wander off by himself.
He and Monk had great respect for each other and he wandered away from Monk a little less then he wandered away from other folks, and they would sit and… so Bud and

Monk had a good relationship. They respected one another. They would visit one another, and they checked one another's playing out on the gig or whatever.
In those days there was a lot more of that. Bud came to hear me. A lot of people would come to hear each other because you were curious. You were working when the other guy is working so you're curious, you know, what is he doing, let me check him out to see whether it's something I want to use or is there anything there that's of value to me and quite often there was.

BROWN: What about Mary Lou Williams and her role? I'm referring to her because I know that drummers coming to New York had to go to Papa Jo's house.

TAYLOR: Yeah.

BROWN: Could you talk about Mary Lou Williams?

TAYLOR: Mary Lou Williams spent a lot of time in the period that we've just been talking about… she was in Europe and she had gotten frustrated. When I first came to New York she was working at Café Society and she would work there with a lot of regularity because Bonnie Josephson liked what she did and would hire her.
Ultimately she decided that she was going to Europe for whatever reason, to tour or whatever. She lived over there for a while and while she was over there was when she was converted to Catholicism and she stopped playing. She said, "I'm going to put that life behind me. I mean it's not a viable life. I've just accepted religion, this religion, and I don't think the two can coexist".
Well she was fortunate to meet a couple of priests that dissuaded her from giving up music and said that, "You're wrong. You can use your music as a God given gift, use the music. I mean you don't have to play in nightclubs, you can play in church, you can do whatever, but use the music, use your gift".
So she came around to that way of thinking. So she had come back to New York and was beginning to do things with that in mind, and in her quest for evangelism, she came in contact with Bud and Monk again, because they were friends of hers and they looked up to her as someone who could do many of the things in terms of her writing, her composition, and so forth that they were aspiring at that time to do.
So in the guise of mentor, she said, "Listen, both of you guys are phenomenal musicians. You're wonderful, but the sound you get on the instrument really is terrible and we have to work on that". So she invited them over to her house on Hamilton Place and would cook up some soul food for them and everything, and kind of sit around and they'd talk about music and talk about things that they were aware of in terms of new directions and so forth.
Then she worked on them literally as a colleague more so then as a teacher to improve their touch. So if you listen to their later records you hear a vastly improved touch in terms of just the sound they evoke from the instrument, both of them, and that's totally

due to their respect for work with Mary Lou Williams.

BROWN: In New York did you hook back up with Teddy Wilson soon after your arrival?

TAYLOR: Very much so. I had only met him on those two occasions that I mentioned. You know, it was just like a star meeting a young aspiring musician in any circumstances, hi, and I didn't expect him to remember me from anybody else and he didn't, but when I reminded him of the fact that we had met, he was very nice and actually arranged for me to study with his teacher, Richard McClanahan.
I was working at the Onyx Club with Stuff Smith and I was hurting my hands. I mean I still have a really rough corn on this finger from those days. It's never gone away, from just playing incorrectly and really messing up my hands.
Teddy arranged for me to study with McClanahan who taught the Mantay system of touch tone control and it changed the way I sound at the piano.

BROWN: How long did you study with him?

TAYLOR: I studied with him for several years… for about four or five years. Richard was a classical teacher. He taught European classical music but he taught people who studied other things. He taught Hazel Scott, he taught several jazz players, male and female, who were well known, so his theories of touch tone control, which he had learned from Tobias Mantay are very much evidence today.

BROWN: You mentioned earlier the recording of the *Mad Monk*. Was this your first recording?

TAYLOR: Yes, that was the recording date that I did for Savoy Records.

BROWN: This is your first recording and it's under your name?

TAYLOR: It was my first recording under my name. I had actually recorded with Foots Thomas and some other people on records with them.

BROWN: Do you remember anything that's memorable about that first recording experience or perhaps the one that you did under your name?

TAYLOR: In the earlier records with Foots Thomas I was always awed by the fact that the musicians that he chose were the musicians that I had seen work with the big bands. They came from Cab Calloway's band, Fletcher Henderson's band and so forth, and these were guys who I had always looked up to as guys that I would like to emulate, to be like these guys, and here I am on my first series of record dates with them… and

Emmett Barry and Bill Coleman and guys like that who were just wonderful players. So it was very exciting.
Coleman Hawkins and Charlie Shavers, you know, you've got all these very, very fine musicians who have much to say and who were very helpful, didn't let me get nervous and just relaxed me and helped me get through the job.

BROWN: Could you recount your meeting with Charlie Parker?

TAYLOR: I guess really the first time I actually met him, I was introduced to him when he was with Earl Hines, but though I had been told about him I didn't really get to hear him do what Little Benny had said he could so I really wasn't that interested to be honest with you.
I mean my head was somewhere else and I was interested in Dizzy because I had heard Dizzy but I hadn't really heard Charlie. I think Charlie was playing tenor or something in those days in the band and it was nice but it didn't impress me the way Dizzy did. In hindsight I understand it's because he's playing the wrong instrument and it wasn't the kind of thing that he was most comfortable with so it sounded uncomfortable to me.
So the first time I actually met him was when I replaced Al Haig and this is many years later in the Charlie Parker and Friends group down at Birdland.

BROWN: I wanted to talk a little bit about Charlie Parker because everyone has mentioned that he's such a complex man and he could talk about any subject. Again, this is going back to the question that I asked you a little while ago about what ideas were circulating in the musical community.
You said earlier that you were well read, that you were an avid reader. Were some of these books and things that you were reading, were they shared among the jazz community with say people like Charlie Parker or Dizzy Gillespie, and what were some of those things that were being read or discussed?

TAYLOR: Well I was always teased. The guys called me Professor a lot because I always had a book and I'd always be reading something, a newspaper or something. I was always reading and Bird commented on that at one time. He said, "What are you reading"? I don't know what it was, it was some book I was interested in at the time. He discussed it, he said, "I couldn't get through that". He said, "I read to about the middle of the book and I decided, no".
And we discussed it. He had indeed read much of it. He talked about some things he did like, some things he was reading, some things he was thinking about in those days. He had a great sense of humor and he said things with a lot of humor even though he might have been talking about something serious. We talked about different things. He heard me rehearsing one day. I was coming from a music lesson, again this is much later when I was working at Birdland and it was at Birdland that I finally met him because this is back in the early '40s. Our paths just never crossed to that extent. We

worked on similar… opposite one another. I went to hear him play. On many occasions we would exchange words or something.
I didn't really get to know him until Birdland and then once I got to play at Birdland then I could talk to him, I was working with him. I got to talk to him about some of the things about his playing that I was interested in and he was very forthright and very open and it was terrific. I always treasured the things that he said because it's something that really would make you realize to what extent this man analyzed the music that he was interested in writing and playing.

BROWN: Did you yourself read the *Amsterdam News* regularly or read any newspapers on a regular basis?

TAYLOR: I read all the black newspapers, Amsterdam, Pittsburgh Courier, basically because they were the two that were the easiest to get here in New York. I used to read the Afro American in Washington, D.C.

BROWN: Were you unique in this way in and among the jazz musical community?

TAYLOR: No. Anybody that was interested in…

BROWN: Asking about some of the things you might have been reading. You said you were reading the black periodicals, newspapers regularly. How about some of the literature that was coming out at this time? Richard Wright would have already published some of his major works, *Native Son*, and in the late '40s with Ralph Ellison, were these things that you read at the time that they were released?

TAYLOR: Oh, yeah, of course, sure. Well having come from Washington, D.C., I was aware of these people and others and it really… Richard Wright was doing things. There was a theater company, I'm trying to think of the name of the theater company, but they were putting on plays in Harlem that had to do with racial relationships. There were people like Frederick O'Neil, Freddy Washington, some wonderful actors who had been in movies, who had been on Broadway and who had done all kinds of plays. Things were going on at the Y, going on at other places in Harlem because oddly enough though there was the Lafayette Theater and there were other places where people were presenting plays, it wasn't during that period.
Most people were going to Broadway. I mean many people, people who were interested in plays were going to Broadway and there wasn't a lot on Broadway that reflected the African American tradition or family values or whatever. So you still had to come back uptown to get that.
What's his name, Lexion Hughes was writing some interesting things in the various papers. Adam Clayton Powell was writing a column, a weekly column for one of the local… not for the *Amsterdam News*, for another paper, which was much further left of

the *Amsterdam News* and really was trying to stir up people into speaking up for themselves.
In this time that I'm talking about though, 125th Street was the Broadway of Harlem. Not only could black people not own businesses on 125th Street, none of them owned any business.
All of these businesses that were surviving because of the money of people in the community, would not hire them to work there, nor could they own stores on that street, and that was unacceptable to many people in the community, especially Adam and some of the people who realized that this was economically strangling part of the community.
So they made a big deal out of it and made some changes. I mean Blumstein's had to hire people. They picketed them. There were other people who in a variety of ways were prevailed upon to do a better job of…

BROWN: The musicians… anything that would reinforce or validate the concept of this music being revolutionary, that's not reflected in any of the things that are available as far as lyric tradition.

TAYLOR: Well the reason for that is because the musicians… do you want the continuum or do you want to get right to this? I want to get right to this.

BROWN: Yeah, let's get to this, sure.

TAYLOR: You can go back and check that out if there's something I left unsaid.

BROWN: Do you remember?

TAYLOR: Can you roll it back?

BROWN: So would you say that Adam Clayton Powell represented a new consciousness in the black community or was he in fact the vanguard or spearheading this?

TAYLOR: He was at the vanguard. Adam was a brilliant man and a real social activist. As a Baptist minister he knew that he could move people. He knew that he could use his eloquence as a minister to articulate things, which were of concern to the community.
He did that in the spirit of his father. His father had done much to move the Harlem community forward in a social sense, in an educational sense, as well as a religious sense in terms of the extended family, helping one another and so forth.
He was well aware… Adam Junior was well aware of Garvey and the kind of feeling that Garvey had in terms of we, as a group of people should not allow ourselves to be

exploited and he articulated that actually on the streets. He would get on… he was not above at one point taking on one of the guys standing on the corner on a soapbox arguing the point. Adam couldn't always pass that guy up. He would sometimes argue with him, especially when he started writing columns.
Adam wrote for the *Amsterdam News* for a while and I think he just felt that this was just too social and too centered for him. He wanted to be in the vanguard of waking people up. He said, "You can't just on your hands and not do anything when someone is preventing you as an entrepreneur from opening some shop that you're capable of running on… why can you have a place on 135th Street and you can't have one on 125th Street? What's the magic about 125th Street"? You know, come on.
For one thing 125th Street runs from river to river. You've got the whole community to work with, 135th Street you're confined, and he said, "I just don't accept this kind of confining of one's spirit and we need to do something about it".
So he actually left the *Amsterdam* and began to write on another… I think the *People's Voice* was the name of the newspaper. He was accused of being a Communist and all kinds of stuff because he was advocating really abrupt and special change. I mean change now and irrevocably and a lot of folks in and outside of the community weren't ready for that.

BROWN: Do you see a direct tie between this growing consciousness, this self assertion that Adam Clayton Powell seems to be leading the community at, do you see this reflected in the music that's now considered modern jazz, and reflected in the titles that… *Now's The Time* by Charlie Parker, the sense of urgency of claiming our own. Do you subscribe to the idea that modern jazz was a revolution?

TAYLOR: Not in that sense. It was evolution and it was firmly… it was a revolution in the sense that what was necessary was to discard certain things out of the past in order to make the present work on the highest level. So that meant you had to change what the drummer did, that meant you had to change what the bass player did, you had to change the role of the pianist and so forth in the rhythm as well as changing the type of melodies that kind of rhythmic support was suggesting.
I don't think though I think of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie and as revolutionaries. I don't think they've thought of themselves as revolutionaries until later. Where they began to see that they were indeed revolutionary in terms of their action was when they saw the effect that their music, their style of dress, their attitudes, all the things that they were doing.
When they saw the effect of that, and the fact that it was indeed making people think clearer about what the music on a higher level could be, then I think they began to think of themselves as revolutionary and people participating in a revolution.
I still believe that in my personal opinion… is that it was evolutionary because of their respect for their elders, the fact that they built what they created on very solid ground, which had been laid by specific people, Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins, Art Tatum,

Duke Ellington and others.
What they did was to take… Duke Ellington was a revolutionary. I mean when he started talking about black beauty back in '29, when he was talking about in the '40s, the kind of parallel to the history of his entire race, he was doing the kind of thing that was giving the foundation for their next step.
So though it was… as I said, I thought it was evolutionary instead of revolutionary simply because it was much more solidly grounded or based in the foundation laid by their elders.
However, when one looks at a revolution, no matter what the foundation may be, when someone says I'm going to make 180 degree turn in one way or another and it's going to cause people to do something which is entirely… perceived as entirely different, then one has to immediately consider the revolutionary aspects of that and in that sense I think it was revolutionary.
I think one reason it's difficult to find literary references to the revolution except by people who didn't participate in it is because the people who did participate in it thought of themselves as taking… as being a part of a family and they as children were taking the next positive step in the development of that family's journey to wherever it's going, and everything that Dizzy did, everything that Charlie Parker did always came back to that foundation.
I mean they always swung and no matter how complicated the figure might be, it had some relationship to something Roy Eldridge had done in the past and so forth. No matter where Max went, in the back of his mind he could hear Sid Catlett playing the form of a tune. In the back of his mind he could hear some of the remarkable things that he had heard Jo Jones do or Kenny Clark do. In the back of Oscar Petiford's mind was Jimmy Blanton. So there is a link on every instrument between the music that went on before and the music that we have now.
I read in some of the current magazines people who are really putting down young musicians and educators for going back to the roots and saying [unintelligible] Hollis is doing a disservice for so much… people have already done that, why is he so interested in doing this?
There are many educators who say well it can't be… why are you focusing on what has been done instead of what's coming? Forever the writers seem to be trying to dictate which of the musicians should be anointed as the leaders, and just as we resist that in the social sense, we have resisted that in music.
Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker were chosen by leaders. I mean they were out there leading and were followed because their concepts were so strong that people wanted to emulate them. Other people have been anointed by people and said this is your new leader and it didn't work out. I mean there have been people who have made tremendous contributions to the music without being leaders in a new… necessarily a new direction.
Arnett Coleman and Cecil Taylor are certainly people who have made tremendous contributions but they have not affected the entire fabric of the music in the sense that

an Ellington or one of the people who is in more direct a part of the line have done.
I admire Arnett and Cecil because of their contribution, which has been much broader in its effectiveness and its influence then most people are prepared to admit, but it is not the… those directions as they stand are not fully assimilated into the vocabulary and the repertoire in the way that Ellington is, in the way that Gillespie is, and the way that Tatum is, in the way that other people are.
This does not negate or in any way dilute the importance of these great artists but it does in my view put them in their place so that you can say, here is a person who did something really significant and did change everybody's approach. It didn't envelop that approach but it did change… it changed my way of playing.
I can say from a personal point of view, listening to Cecil Taylor, and Arnett, and people like that, there are things that I do that I would not do had they not done what they did, and I'm sure that whether people admit it or not, they have done this to others because I hear it in other people's work. So it's just a matter of degree.
I don't want anyone saying I should play like Cecil Taylor or I should do what Arnett does. I may choose to do that at some point but that's my decision or someone else's decision as an artist.
The confusing thing for me is how do you articulate the fact that something can be a revolutionary concept, which is in total agreement with the times. You are a product of your times. You are thinking maybe subconsciously that now is the time for me to recapture my music.
Instead of having Glenn Miller define what *Tuxedo Junction* is, it's defined by Erskine Hawkins for me. This isn't to say that one is better than the other or not. When *In The Mood* was written by Joe Garland for the Lucky Milliner [Unintelligible] Rhythm band that was a hit then. People danced to it, everybody loved it.
Okay, it comes many years later into the main community and the credit all goes to someone else. This affects a Dizzy Gillespie or a Charlie Parker who says, that's not fair, and I want to create something and I want you to make something out of this Mr. Miller or Mr. whoever.
So in a sense that was deliberate. That was, this is mine and this is the way I'm going to shape it. I'm going to use all of these elements that I know and I'm going to put them together in a way that's unique to me and those who think like I think, and that is my revolution. It is evolutionary but it's my revolution because I'm not going to let you take it.

BROWN: Wow, that was so eloquently put. I guess now I can wrap up my dissertation.
Before we return to the chronology of your career I'd like to revisit one more time your arrival in New York at that time the SyQuest of Harlem. We're still in the war and we just went over the fact that there's so many… there's a dearth of literary documentation of the so-called musical revolution, this musical evolution/revolution that we call modern jazz, bebop.

What about the more traditional oral sources in the black community? We're looking at a war, and if we go back to the previous World War we saw that Pullman porters and returning vets were the conduits to the outside world that brought in new concepts, new ideas from outside of the Harlem community.
Was this something that was still going on? Were they still the sources of more information, of extra community information and ideas, Pullman porters, returning vets? Did you see an impact of their contribution to this network of information?

TAYLOR: Yes, but a lesser contribution then it was after the First World War. After the Second World War you had another element. You had the GI Bill of Rights. The GI Bill of Rights made it possible for any returning vet to go to school.
When you offered education to that group of people, so many people took advantage of that, not just in Harlem in the jazz music, but it changed our culture. It created a middle class that didn't exist to that extent before because people were educated, they had traveled, they had been to Europe, they had been to places that normally many of those people would have never gone to in their lifetime.
They had seen Palermo. They had seen Great Britain. They had seen what the ocean was like, to be out in the middle of that vast body of water with no land at all around you so you must have had a concept of what Columbus felt like. Are we going to fall off the edge or what?
The period was so exciting because remember you've still got the racial prejudice, that never went anywhere, in the Army, or the Navy, or anywhere else.
So these guys are coming back sharing their stories about how qualified, educated people were denied the right to fly fighter planes simply because they were black, put in their own unit. How they had gone to fight in many places and then come back and been put on guard duty over German soldiers and presumably the enemy, who could do things that they couldn't do.
I mean, you're in Kentucky, or you're in somewhere south of the Mason Dixon Line and you simply can't go into a department store or can't do this, and here's a guy that is your enemy, the enemy of your country that you have just finished fighting for and he can walk in without any bother, he can go into the club.
This really was a wake up call to a lot of folks and they said I've got to get an education; I've got to get some economics stability that does not depend on somebody outside of my community. There are a lot of things that I've got to do to put myself in a position where I control my destiny instead of someone dictating that to me.
When you look at someone like a John Lewis that went to Manhattan School of Music on the GI Bill, and other people that used the GI Bill as an aid to getting the kind of education that they might not have been able to afford or might not have thought about had not this possibility existed.
John Lewis is one of the people who has created a lot of our repertoire, who has done an enormous service in terms of devising a unit, the Modern Jazz Quartet. He devised the unit, the Modern Jazz Quartet, which has stood as an example of how people can

combine the European tradition with jazz, and as long as Mill Jackson is there you know it's going to swing.
So it could be the most conservative phrase of all but Jackson's going to do what jazz musicians always do and make that into the kind of jazz that we all know, love and respect.
So it's a wonderful example of how… the Modern Jazz Quartet is a wonderful example of how education can totally change a man's lifestyle from being a fine pianist who wrote things for Dizzy Gillespie, who was capable of doing things before he was educated because he had been educated in music prior to going to the Conservatory, but who with that added knowledge and experience could then apply a greater world vision and musical vision to what he's going to do.
Now this is not to comment on how his compositions and his concepts have impacted as opposed or in contrast to Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker and some other people who didn't do that. Suffice to say in his way, he has certainly influenced Dizzy and Bird. He certainly influenced other people that he worked with because his quiet eloquent presentations are of such value to them that they say, "Hey, write me another one of those. That's beautiful, I want to do that".
So the context of musicians, how they look at themselves as people inside the music feel about what's going on as we move from this point to that point was vastly changed by the second World War and the conduit was school. It was more aware social agencies; it was the support that was pooled together in the traditional way with churches and social agencies after the war to "help our boys readjust to the world they're coming back to".
The fact that other jobs were… what many people were afraid of was that all these guys would come back and not be the first in line for the job. I mean because of their race they might be hampered. This was the case in many cases. Those people went to school… some of them. Okay, my job is not open, it's been taken, fine, I'll go to school and see if I can't get a better job.
And this was preached by Adam Clayton Powell, it was preached by any number of people of that period. Paul Robson was a person who was very outspoken in that regard.
I have to admit that part of my interest in sociology is one of the reasons that perhaps I was more cognizant of this than some of the other guys. I mean you're talking about a lot of good musicians who in a one to one discussion would have a discussion about that but then would go on with life as it is. They said, "Well yeah, that's a drag but let me get back to the piano and do what I do".
And I respect that because if you look at Hank and you look at Derrick Sampson, and you look at a whole lot of other guys, you see musicians who as a basis because of their dedication have given us an enormous amount of material to work with musically and hey, that's so valuable.

BROWN: Another conduit that I haven't discussed is the media, radio. As part of

this war you've got this influx of all these European composers that would not have had any kind of currency in the America, say Shurberg being played on radio, and Bartalk is now in residence, and Stravinsky is now living in America.
This is something that Albert Murray was saying may have influenced the music too because all of a sudden you start to hear Stravinsky quotes in some Bird solos and you start to hear perhaps this expanded harmonic vocabulary influencing jazz. Would you agree with this?

TAYLOR: Oh, very definitely. I think that the availability of musicians who were run out of… who defected from various countries in Europe who we were at war with, coming here and being able to teach in colleges, and being able to work with the symphony orchestras, the fact that Stravinsky was hired by Billy Rose to write a special ballet for a Broadway show, *Seven Lively Arts*, and many of these things just made the music much more available.
It was also made available, and I haven't dealt with this to the extent that perhaps I should… I've talked about radio as far as I was concerned but it is impossible for someone in this age of television who has only come up with television and radio as it is today and as it's been since the '60s, to realize the impact of radio.
Radio and motion pictures had everybody, black, white, green, red, yellow, anything, wanting to dance like Fred Astaire and hold a pretty lady like Ginger Rogers as you did it. Wanted to lead a band like whoever your hero was, Benny Goodman, Paul Whiteman, Stakowsky, whoever.
You saw that in the movies and you wanted to do that. You wanted to play the piano like Jose Eturbe, who was not for me a great pianist but who looked like a concert pianist is supposed to look. You wanted to have Deanna Durbin or somebody like that sing your music because she's gorgeous when she sang it.
All of these things were part of what… if you were in the pop area, Judy Garland was just the girl next door, man. You said wow a beautiful lady, what a nice young gorgeous singer, dancer, actress, whatever. And so many others along those lines… and race didn't enter into it.
I mean, I was Buck Jones and Hoop Gibson and some of the cowboys' way in front of John Wayne. I rode over the hill, rescued the girl from the Indians and the whole thing. I mean that was a part of the mythology that folks grew up in so that gets in our subconscious.
So now you are going to the movies and you're seeing Duke Ellington playing in a fancy nightclub, you're seeing Jimmy Lunsford playing in some kind of context where's he's playing a club or a dance, or whatever. Benny Goodman, all these people. You're seeing people that you've seen on the stage doing things in the movies. Fats Waller, Bill Bo Jangles Robinson, Lena Horne, all these folks.
So there's a context. Not only are you seeing people… if you are from the African American community, not only are you seeing people as maids and butlers and this… actually most white people don't realize how black people related to this because since

there was nothing we could do about it and since there was nothing the NAACP notwithstanding… since there was nothing that… this was a gig and a good one for Step and Fetch It and some of those folks, and we knew what they did when they were off camera.
It was kind of a replay of the old minstrel thing where the minstrel was saying one thing and it was very obvious what the words meant in the general sense but those very words meant something totally different to the black community and hence when you hear in today's jargon someone talking about something being bad, meaning it's very good, when you hear some of the colloquialisms that refer to inside concepts, then you realize that this was something that was fostered by radio, fostered by movies.
You saw how other people did things and you say well I can turn that around and if I decide that instead of being called a Negro I'm going to be called black, then that makes it cool because now you can't insult me by calling me black because I have told you that I'm black. Now dig that, now get by that. I'm black, what are you going to do about that [laughter]. So I've just taken that weapon away from you.
It really was very interesting to me to look back at things like this and see how they work and see what the collective wisdom dictated. At one point we say we don't want to called colored, we want to be called Negro with a capital N, all right.
That wasn't satisfactory after a time. I don't want to be called that. I want to be called black. I have just in the '60s… I have just discovered my African roots and regardless of my complexion, I am relating to Mother Africa and so forth. You will call me black because I say so, because that's what I'm calling you.
A lot of these things were coming about after the Second World War. I mean it didn't start in the '60s. That just kind was an undercurrent for almost 20 years before it really began to explode in the '60s.

BROWN: Today is November 20, 1993, day two of Jazz Oral History Programs, Life History Interview with Dr. Billy Taylor in his home in Riverdale, New York. If I did [unintelligible] this is tape three, that's fine. This is Anthony Brown. I'm going to turn the interview over to Eugene Holly.

HOLLY: Eugene Holly interviewing Dr. Billy Taylor. Dr. Taylor, I want to ask you some questions about your career as a musician, with your trio, some of your compositions, influences, things like that.
Yesterday you talked about your first recording under your name for Savoy. I would like you to talk about your work in the trio, the piano, bass and drums, why was that important to you, who were your influences in that genre?

TAYLOR: When I was developing a style, trying to decided in which direction I wanted to go, one of the things that was important to me was the models that I used and Nat Cole was a model, Fats Waller was a model, Teddy Wilson, and they all worked with many difference combinations, maybe three or four pieces or six pieces with horns,

without horns, but what I could hear best and what I liked best was when the piano was in the lead.
So it didn't matter to me whether he was leading a big bag or a small combo or whatever, if he was playing melodies, if he was the front line, the pianist… and so I began to look at combinations like that.
My first opportunity to record under my own name, I was fortunate enough to have two very sensitive and very experienced veterans, Jimmy Crawford, who was the drummer with the Jimmy Lunsford band I had been working with, with Ben Webster. We had done some gigs together on 52nd Street. He had replaced Sid Catlett in that band for a short time and Al Hall was one of my favorite players because I had heard him in so many groups, with Teddy Wilson particularly and with other organizations.
Well the addition of someone like Al Hall was a great comfort to me because these are two musicians with experience that transcended anything I'd ever done and I could just lean on them because I was absolutely comfortable.
It saved me on the date because Herman Lebinski who was the producer, who owned the company and was producing his own dates in those days, after I made the first take or two came out and asked me if I couldn't play a little more like Errol Garner, which really threw me a curve. I'm saying oh, wait a minute, you know.
So it just made me more nervous and those two guys really settled me down. So whatever I was doing on that date was kind of my best shot all things considered.
But it's funny to me to go back and listen to that and realize that here I am with the first date and I'm playing a little stride, I'm playing a little bebop, I'm playing a little pre-bop, I'm playing some swing. I'm playing everything I know in the short… these were like three or four minute records that we were making because they were originally not on an album. They were originally single dates. These were originally within the three-minute format so that's why they're so short.

HOLLY: I believe there was an earlier recording you made with Charles Mingus, talk about that.

TAYLOR: That was much later. In the records that we were looking through a moment ago, there was something… Walter Foots Thomas… those were the first records that I ever made in a professional sense. Those were the very first records I made and after that point I actually made some recordings… I tried to get a group together.
I made some recordings with the Slam Stewart Quartet with John Collins on guitar, with Harold Doc West on bass, and Slam Stewart and myself. This was the group in which I had replaced Errol Garner. Errol Garner was the original pianist. It was a trio then. When I came in, shortly after I arrived, Slam made it a quartet because John Collins got out of the Army and was available. So John worked with him for quite a while, even after I left.
But that period that I was recording in, I was working on 52nd Street and Walter Foots

Thomas and all those guys were people that I worked with. Walter Foots Thomas had a studio on West 48th Street with Cozy Cole and they taught music. Cozy taught drum students and so forth.
Cozy actually had originally had this arrangement with Gene Cruppa so at the time I was working with Walter, they were sharing an office space together, and so he introduced me to Cozy and he hired me, and Don Bias… Billy Taylor on bass, Billy Taylor who used to work with Duke Ellington, myself on piano, Tiny Grimes on guitar, Don Bias on tenor, and Cozy Cole on drums.
We played a Broadway show, which was produced by Billy Rose and it was called the *Seven Lively Arts*. We replaced the Benny Goodman sextet in that show. It was a wonderful chance. We played seven minutes. All we had to do in the whole time was play seven minutes but it was at the end of the first half of the show and we were surrounded by six foot gorgeous ladies with no clothes on hardly and so it was very difficult to look at anything other then the six ladies that were surrounding the piano, but it was very exciting part of the show.
The show starred Bea Lilly and Bert Lahr and starred also the ballet dancers, Alicia Macover and Anton Dolon. I didn't know at that time because I never met him but Maurica Bravanell was the conductor in the pit. I never met him during that period but he was there. So it was a very special show.
The reason I mention that is we recorded that material that we played with Cozy Cole with that group. I don't remember what the label was but during this period we actually made… the records are around somewhere. They were single records. They were not an album or anything like that. So we did this recording. I did the recordings with Slam, the recordings with Cozy Cole.
Also around this… a little earlier then that I had done some Standard transcriptions. The Standard was a company… this was the name of the company that made recordings to be only broadcast… they were not to be sold in stores so they were called transcriptions and Standard was one of the company's that did this.
I did some trio recordings with Eddie South, the only recordings I ever made with him so that was all during this particular period.
This experience really led me into wanting to have the kind of trio that I had started off with, with Jimmy Crawford and Al Hall, but having worked with John Collins in the interim I said well gee, the whole rhythm section… you know, to have a guitar there gives me an option to do other things.
So I actually recorded with something called the Billy Taylor Trio. This was a little later… I mean the Billy Taylor Quartet. One of the records was made for Carl Records, a subsidiary of Decca. Another was for a much smaller label. Chronologically I may not have this in order but it was around… in terms of concept it was what I was thinking about.
The record that I did was with a quartet. It was with piano, bass, drums, and guitar. That basic unit was the unit that I added two horns to when I did a tour of Haiti, and the two horns were Bud Johnson who was my co-leader on this group and Kenny Dorum.

Kenny Dorum, a wonderful trumpet player.
That was a fascinating group because it was Charlie Smith, Lloyd Trotman on bass, John Collins on guitar, myself on piano and the horns I mentioned.
We spent a month in Haiti. We went down to play at a festival and after the festival was over we played in Patientville, which is up on the mountain several miles up from Port-A-Prince and we played in sort of a dancehall kind of place, mostly kind of concert things but in a dancehall setting.
It was a wonderful experience because it was the first time I had been to that part of the world in the Caribbean and I heard… the first night I was there I was up… our hotel was just adjacent to this dancehall where we were playing. It was a big thatched roof, kind of open-air place and I heard this band playing that was playing for dancing.
They were playing nice Haitian music and I kept hearing something [sounds]. It sounded like a horn or a voice or something so when I went down to look at the band, I'm looking for this horn. So I keep looking and I can't find it. So I literally had to be shown what it was because I looked and I'm going nuts because I'm hearing this sound and I can't find it in the band.
So it never occurred to me to look at the drums because I had no idea that the guy was making this sound on the conga drum. Finally the man who was the leader of the group, a man named Eli Saad, showed me, he said, "Yeah, that's the drummer". He said, "As a matter of fact the drummer who was doing that is one of the greatest of our drummers in the country. His name is Ti Rurale". So Ti Rurale and I became quite friendly and he was just a remarkable artist and was into all of the religious aspects of that music.

HOLLY: What year was this tour when you went to Haiti?

TAYLOR: I don't remember to be honest with you. I think… I would have to look it up. I can tell you because I can look it up but I honestly don't remember off the top of my head. It was in the '40s, in the mid '40s, that I remember.

HOLLY: And as far as the *Seven Lively Arts*, did you make that… was that the date with Stravinsky?

TAYLOR: Yes. That's when he had written this special thing for the ballet. I didn't do a date with him but the music that he had written for the ballet was for that show.

HOLLY: You mentioned working with Eddie South. What about working with Stuff Smith?

TAYLOR: I worked with Stuff Smith later. I worked with Eddie for about a year, a little more, and I met Stuff Smith while I was working with Eddie.
When I first worked with Eddie he had a ten-piece band and they tried to reopen the

Famous Door on 52nd Street. Actually the location was just off of 52nd Street. It was on 7th Avenue right across from what's now the Sheridan Hotel. It's a big office building or something now but in those days, in the basement there was a huge room, which they called this Famous Door.
The Famous Door had actually been on 52nd Street but they called this one the Famous Door and the show included Pearl Bailey as a headliner, and Eddie South and the big band, a guy named Jimmy Smith who tapped dance on a vibraphone.
Now this sounds funny when I tell people this today but this man actually played melodies on the vibraphone and he was very good. I don't know if he was ever recorded but he sounded like somebody… when I say vibraphone I'm wrong. It was the xylophone because it was wood but he literally… as you know when you play the xylophone you have to hit the note more then once to make it to sustain itself and so he did that with taps and he played things like *Stardust*, *Body And Soul*. He played good tunes [laugh] and the guy was unbelievable. Jimmy Smith was his name.
On the same show they had a guy named Iron Jaw somebody and he would balance… he tapped dance too and he would balance things with his… he would hold a table in his mouth, I mean a regular kitchen table. He'd hold it and he would be doing these things, holding the thing in his mouth while he did this. It was a wild show, man, and they had the perfunctory dancing girls and all that kind of stuff.
It was an interesting show but that was when I met Eddie South. The show didn't last. Unfortunately it only lasted for about two weeks or something like that and then it closed and Eddie decided that he would take a small group on the road. He decided the group would be a trio and so it was Eddie South, a man named Eddie Brown who played bass, and myself.
The first place we went was Chicago. We played a little club in the Loop called Elmer's and right around the corner were many of the traditional jazz clubs because we were kind of off… Elmer's was a little off from the regular clubs and it was right next door to the State Lake Theater.
Around the corner… well the first… we were playing… we were in the middle of this bar and we're playing. All of a sudden… we had rehearsed a lot of things because Eddie had a big repertoire and we'd rehearsed a lot of gypsy music and a lot of the stuff that was a part of his regular repertoire, classical music everything.
So all of a sudden instead of playing *Esercoti* or something by *Fitzchrysler* or something like that, or a pop tune like *Yesterdays* or something like that, Eddie started… play the blues in B-Flat. So we played the blues. He said play, *I Got Rhythm*. We played *I Got Rhythm*.
I'm saying well we hadn't rehearsed any of this stuff, we're just… and that was cool because I knew the tunes and I loved to play them so that was fine, but it was just a surprise because that wasn't what we did as a trio.
So then we came off the bandstand and he said, "Billy I'd like for you to meet a friend a mine, this is Stuff Smith". I said, "Oh, that's what that was about" [laugh] because when I was a kid I used to listen to Stuff Smith coming from 52nd Street on the radio

and so I knew how he played, but he always had like a six piece group with Jonah Jones or somebody like that and funny… they did a lot of comedy but they played good music.
One thing that people don't understand with those groups like Stuff Smith, and Louie Jordan, and the Three Flames and some of those other groups, Nat Cole even in those days, they did a lot of humorous material. They played some funny things, things that made you laugh but they played great.
It was always in the context of very good jazz. I mean whatever it was, it was swinging and the chords were hip and the melodies were catchy. So it was not the thing that came into being later where the chords were simplified, and the melodies were forgettable, and the rhythm left a lot to be desired.
In those days Eddie was playing really authentic gypsy music. It was so authentic that the King of the Gypsies would come in to hear us. I had never seen the King of the Gypsies or heard of him until looking up one night and this entourage sweeps into this very… just a street bar. So I'm wondering what are these… wow, who are these folks. They're obviously all together and they're all deferring to this one person and so he must be somebody important.
Turned out he was the King of the Gypsies and he came to hear Eddie and he made all these requests of these gypsy pieces, gypsy airs, some of which Eddie had to play alone simply because I didn't know them. But he played them and the King of the Gypsies cried. I mean [laugh] it was very exciting to watch Eddie as an artist really work the audience.
He took pride in moving people. He'd play things and people would cry or really get into a very romantic mood, whatever it was he was trying to project to them. So in this case he made the King of the Gypsies cry.
Stuff Smith would come around from… at a later point to pay his respects to Eddie, and we in turn went over to Stuff's place and [laugh] we wanted to hear Stuff. He played *Claire Delune* and he played all of the stuff that he didn't normally play, for Eddie [laugh].
But Chicago was really terrific. I was staying at a place called… I can't remember. It was some real dive. Man, it was a horrible roach ranch, man. It was just a terrible place to have to stay.
It was my first time on the road so I kept asking Eddie, I said, "Isn't there some better place we could stay"? I'm not making much money but I'd rather spend the money and get a clean place.
But Chicago was very prejudiced in those days. We could stay in the Loop, we could not stay down where we were working. We were staying out in the south side and unfortunately for us this hotel where we were staying was just a dump and it was like some of the dumps here in New York where musicians stayed a lot.
So I suffered through two weeks of that but I met some wonderful people while I was there. I met… a couple of the big bands came into town and played the… actually I guess we were there longer. We must have been there almost a month because I

remember two different big bands coming in where we got a chance to go and talk to some of the musicians and they came around the corner to hear us in the bar because we were close to the theater. So it was really neat to meet them and kind of form some friendships and stuff like that.
We went out on the south side and heard some of the great bands that were playing the shows both at the Regal and whatever the club was. I can't think of the name of the club now but Red Saunders was the leader of the band. Had a good show, a lot of very pretty dance girls, dancing girls.
I don't know, it seems to me that they hired dancing girls a lot for their looks as well as… because some of them didn't dance all that well but they looked fine [laugh]. They looked great and so they came out with very little on and kicked high and everybody enjoyed it. Always had a shake dancer or something like that.
So we would go out… Eddie like to hang out so I would go with him wherever he wanted to go and since he was from Chicago he knew everybody, everybody knew him, and they knew him as an international star.
So the fact that he was working at Elmer's was the least of it. This was our Eddie South who studied in Budapest and who is a great artist. So he was always given that deferential treatment while we were there and a lot of folks had us out to dinner and all that, which just made me that much more uncomfortable for me to be staying in this roach ranch, man. I mean, that was, ugh.
Anyway while I was there Bud Powell came in town. Bud and I were good friends. I had met him when he was with Goody Williams. I had gone up to the Savoy to hear Goody's band. I didn't know Bud Powell and he had this young piano player and he was playing bebop. I'm saying hey, wow, this kid is playing bebop in a dance band. That's cool.
So I introduced myself to him and we talked and I got to know him pretty well. So while I was working in Chicago he came out there and he was staying at the same hotel so we would go around and hear folks together and talk to one another.
But he was on his way somewhere. I don't know, he didn't stay in Chicago very long. I guess he came in to play a gig and the gig lasted for a few days and then after a week or so he left. But that was how I remember Bud.
No matter… when I think of seeing him years later in the Blue Note or working with him in New York, that is the Bud Powell… because he was about… Bud was about 21 then, 20, 21, something like that, maybe 19 or 20 and he was lucid and he was funny, and he was just a hip young musician who could play real good. I liked him and that's my memory of him. I try to block out some more… I guess unconsciously try to block out some other memories of him that are not as pleasant as that.

HOLLY: Before we get back to your career as a pianist or leading a trio, I want to ask you about your stay or residency if you can call it that with Dizzy Gillespie at Birdland. Was it Birdland?

TAYLOR: Well no, it wasn't with Dizzy --

HOLLY: You were the house pianist. I'm sorry, you were the house pianist.

TAYLOR: Birdland, that was later. Let's do that a little later.

HOLLY: Okay, sure.

TAYLOR: Because I can talk about that in other contexts. But I had met Dizzy as I told you earlier when I was on 52nd Street so our paths crossed but not as much as I would have liked because I went to hear him with the various combos that he was working with.

When I was working with Slam Stewart we did this quartet record for Music Craft and that was at the same time… at the same time as we were making the record, they played a dub of this new record that they had just made with Dizzy and Charlie Parker, which was *Sure Enough* and I mean it just wiped me… wow.

That was really what… I had been hearing Dizzy play but I had not heard him do it… at that time I had not heard him play with Bird because whenever I heard him it was with Don Bias or with another saxophone player. And I heard Bird play but I never heard him play with Dizzy. This was the first time I heard them do something together. It was really exciting.

At the same time, Walter Gross, who was the A&R person for Music Craft at that time, played another one. He said, "You're a piano player, man. You'll like this. I just wrote this waltz". He played it for me on the piano and he said, "And I got a woman to sing it that you will not believe. I said, "Oh, yeah"? He said, "Yeah, let me play it for you".

He played *Tenderly* by Sarah Vaughn, which he had just recorded. Man, it wiped me out because I had heard Sarah but I didn't remember her as a singer. I remembered her as a piano player. She was playing for Billy Exstine in Earl Hines' band and as I thought about it I said I guess she did sing but for some reason or other she didn't impress me in that context. I just remembered being in the band.

So to hear her in this context man, this was like five or six years later when she was really mature and singing the Sarah Vaughn kind of approach that made her famous, just unbelievable. But that had to be about '44 or '45, in that period that I did that.

Then while I was working… well before I worked with Walter Foots Thomas I got an opportunity… I was working with Slam Stewart in the quartet. With Slam I played my first major theater. I played the RKO in Boston and I got to hear Sammy Lewis' band with a tenor player.

I wrote my wife-to-be a letter. At that time I was just dating the woman I later married and I wrote her a letter and I said, "I heard this band, Sammy Lewis, and they've got a tenor player that is just the most amazing tenor player I have heard and you know what I think about Ben Webster and Coleman Hawkins". I said, "This guy's different". I

said, “He is really something”. I tried to explain and I was at a loss for words as to how to tell her, she’s not a musician… but to tell her how different he was.
But as I remember, the thing that impressed me was the way he played changes. He played changes like nobody I’d ever… he and Kenny Dorum were the musicians I knew that got inside the change. Man, they just made all of these in the same way that an Art Tatum or someone can play the inner voices of the harmony. I got the feeling that their melodies were sort of inside the harmony like that. They’re really the only two that I heard do that concept to that extent to my ear.
But anyway I worked with Slam and we had some interesting experiences, one of which… we went down to San Antonio, Texas. First time I’d ever been there. This was during the war, the Second World War so we’re down in San Antonio playing for a guy named Don… he’s a bandleader, Don something.
Anyway he had a nightclub and he booked Slam for some unknown reason down there and this is right in the middle of the black community and all they liked was blues so I don’t know why he would book Slam because we weren’t playing… we’re playing what Slam played. You know, *Got To Be This Or That* and all the Slam [Unintelligible], all those things that he liked to play.
So we go down and we play our very sophisticated stuff and the people are saying, “Ho-hum, oh, boy, when is the good music coming on”. So in desperation this guy went out on the street and got a blues singer who came in and played like all the stuff on the jukebox.
So we’re the stars, you know, so we go on and we do our show and then they bring him on to fill in. Well he was so good and so well received we couldn’t get on. The guy would say, “No, play another one, man” [laugh]. So that was a very interesting experience. The guy turned out to Amos Bilburn and he of course later became very well known but at that time he was just a guy trying to make a gig.
We had one of the classic experiences that black musicians had in the south at that time. As I said it was during the war and we’re on our way back. We were in a hurry to get back because we had to play the Apollo Theater so we needed to get back and we’re bumped off our airplane… military.
In those days the military had the priorities and if you were on a plane they could put you off the plane at some stop and put the military on and you had to catch another plane. So they did that to us and they put us down somewhere in Texas. I don’t where it was.
The town was so small that they didn’t have the traditional white and colored signs that they had in the railroad stations and in other places. So we came in and we sat is a small waiting room and they sent the cook or some guy, a handyman, or somebody into town. This was slightly out of town. Sent him into town to get a sign that said colored. So we were sitting kind of lounging around in one corner of the room and this guy said… kind of came over to us and said, “Pardon me fellows”, and put the sign right in the middle on a table near where we were. It said colored.
So we got and moved to the other side of the room. So the guys that I guess sent him

for the sign in the first place told him to move the sign. So wherever we were was the colored section. Wherever we went they put the sign there [laugh]. So this charade went on for at least an hour because every time he put it down we'd move [laugh]. Finally we got tired and we went outside and the plane came, we got on the plane and went on back to return to New York. But some of the things that would happen in that context were just so stupid and they're ludicrous.

But we came back and began to play on the theater circuit. We did the Apollo; we did a lot of things with Billy's show in Baltimore with Billie Holiday. That was my first… I had played for Billie on 52nd Street and I was really I guess upset by the deterioration that had happened to her between the time that I played for her at the Downbeat and the time that we played opposite her at the Royal Theater. We played the Royal Theater and we played a club opposite her.

We were all staying in the same hotel. She was making in the club I think about $1,000 a week, which was a lot of money and she didn't have a nightgown to sleep in. All of her money was going up her nose or in her arm, or whatever. It was such a tragedy because she's such a wonderful… she was warm loving human being. I really liked her as a person.

She was funny, and hip, and just nice and your heart goes out to somebody who I felt was really being taken advantage of and used by some very unscrupulous people at that particular moment because I had never seen anybody be hustled like that. They just came in and just… hey, this isn't yours and took her money. It was a very uncomfortable situation for me.

Anyway we came back to New York and began to play on 52nd Street. Now by this time I'm really very enamored with this lady I'm dating so I decided to get married. This is in June of I guess 1946 we're talking. So I proposed to her, she accepted, we got married.

We're playing at the Three Deuces. I'm playing at the Three Deuces with Slam and so I said look I'd really like to have a week off. We had like three weeks in the club and I think we had played one week, and so I said, "I'd like to take next week off because I'm getting married and I'll be back the following week". He said, "Okay, I'll get somebody". So he got Berel Booker and so I went on a honeymoon.

When I came back I didn't have a job because Berel sounded just Errol Garner, he loved it, and besides they had a personal thing going by the time I got back [laugh] and so I had a wife and no job [laugh].

So Teddy supported me for two or three months while I'm doing just whatever I could find because I hadn't expected to be out of a job so I hadn't been looking. Had I known that my job was in that jeopardy I would have had the antenna out.

But it was summer and summer in those days was bad in New York because there was no air conditioning in most of the clubs and so they cut back, or they didn't have shows or whatever so working was rough. I couldn't find very much to do. So she had a job and she was working so she continued to work.

In the meantime a man that I had met when I first worked with Ben Webster on the

street and I used to hang out at his office with Errol Garner, and with Stuff Smith, and a lot of the people that I knew who he knew, when I was looking for a job, he was one of the people that I kind of looked up because he always knew what was going on.
He wrote for *Esquire Magazine*, he was freelance writer. His name was Timmy Rosencrantz and he was Danish Baron. He was the black sheep of that family. They had paid him to stay out of Denmark. They said, "You like nothing but black women and you like to hang out with jazz musicians so why don't you stay in America or somewhere". Just don't disgrace the family.
So he had a very comfortable life here in the states. He had a very nice apartment and he used to record… if you'd go to his house he used to record on wax. He had one of those things that literally cut the record in wax so there would be wax all over the floor by the time you had played for a while.
But everybody liked to go up there because you could hear yourself play. I mean, you'd play something, he'd play it back for you and so you'd say, oh, man, wow.
So Errol Garner did a lot of his rehearsing there and got to hear and kind of correct things that he wanted to alter and change and everything. So he pulled my coat to that. He said, "Man, let's go down Tim's. We can find a place and make a record or something". I said, "Okay". So we did that.
So Timmy was the guy that at that point had decided that he was going to… the war was now over, the Second World War was over, and there were still troops in Europe but he figured this is a good time to have a tour of Europe, the first American band to tour.
So he had Don Redman put together a band. The band was a great band, some wonderful players in it but we were playing Don Redman's old book, things from the swing era and several of the musicians were… the band was kind of half and half. You had several young musicians who wanted to play bebop and you had several older musicians who were very much more comfortable playing in the swing style or the pre bop style.
So among them, among the older musicians was Don Bias and Quinton Jackson on trombone, Tyree Glenn or trombone and vibraphone. Buford Oliver was a young drummer who had replaced Kenny Clark in this area, and Buford though he didn't play like Kenny was more into the more contemporary feeling. He had heard Max, he'd heard some of the other guys. He wasn't quite there yet but he was listening to those kinds of things and developing his own approach to playing in the contemporary style.
So Buford was the drummer, Ted, oh, what was Ted's name? Oh, my, oh, my, oh, my. Wonderful bassist, Sturgis, Ted Sturgis was the bassist. Ted says and I have no reason to doubt him that he wrote that line that Ellington and some of the other guys play Perdido, [musical sounds].
So he was one of the persons that took credit for that because those kinds of things became common property quick. Most guys didn't copyright their thing so you might come up with an idea, I say that's great and then I go on a record date two weeks later and say hey, this is my tune [laugh]. That happened a lot.

Anyway we went on this tour. We rehearsed for several weeks. Kenny came to the first rehearsal and decided that that really wasn't what he was interested in, left, we got Buford and made a few other changes in the band. The band left in August, the last couple of days in August to go first to Denmark.
We were going to play Denmark, Norway, Sweden in the Scandinavian countries. Then we were going down to play Switzerland and other places, Belgium… other places, Holland, other places on the continent.
So the band left. Something happened with my passport. So my wife had a passport and mine had gotten lost in transit or something had happened so we couldn't leave with the band. So the band left, got there. They were welcomed with big fanfare. They were on the newsreel getting off the plane and all that kind of stuff. It was big deal. The first American band to come to Europe after the war.
So my wife, Teddy and two other players, I can't remember who the other two guys were but they had had problems with their passports also, so we came after… like two or three days later. So we got a royal welcome so everybody… we got our special welcome when we got there.
They were very knowledgeable. I mean I hadn't done very much in those days but they knew everything I'd done. They knew who I played with, Eddie South. They knew all… Slam Stewart. They knew all the stuff that I had done up until that period and I was quite flattered. I said, hey that's very nice.
So we played in these concert… the first concert hall we played was one of the largest halls I had ever played in at that time. It was called KB Hall in Copenhagen and it was almost like music in the round because it was a huge arena and we were close to one side of that arena but there were literally people all around us.
It was a huge crowd that had come to see us and we played our normal show and they just screamed and whistled. It was like what you hear for rock acts now, today. That was the way we were treated and people followed us down the street and invited us to their homes.
The one thing that impressed me about Denmark of all the Scandinavian countries, and this is not to cast aspersions on the other two countries, but Denmark was the first place we went so my memories were more vivid there because we spent a little more time and we were not traveling… once we started the concert tour we would hit a town, then we'd move, then we'd hit another town.
Often we were doing two concerts in the same day, in different towns. We'd do an afternoon concert, get on the bus, drive to the next… and we were late for the second concert. So that was going on.
But in Demark we were just there. We were listening to all these Peter Rasmussen and Swen Aspersin and all these wonderful musicians whose records I had heard because Timmy had a lot of their records. But they were wonderful in person and you realized that there were musicians even at that period who had assimilated the jazz language and were speaking it without accent.
Swen Aspersin could play violin as well as any American violinist in those days, this is

in the ‘40s, and there were other pianists and other saxophonist and trumpet players who really had mastered the jazz of that period. They had not heard enough bebop to know what was going on. They were very curious about that.
But they had heard a lot of Coleman Hawkins, and a whole lot of Benny Carter, and a lot of Ellington and folks like that, and the Basie band and so forth. So it was exciting to have this kind of knowledgeable audience to follow you around, and to be interviewing you, and take you to radio stations, and to be filmed by the newsreels and all this stuff.
The tour was quite a success. We were very successful in all the places we went. When the tour was over some of the musicians… before the tour was over we went to Germany and the last thing that we did as a big band was to play for the troops, the Army troops in some of the Army facilities and there we discovered champagne. I discovered champagne, and when I say we, I speak of my wife and me as opposed to the band.
Most of those musicians had been on the road quite a bit. We traveled a lot by bus so we got to know one another very well and Teddy was a newly married young lady and the youngest person on the bus and boy she really caught it because I mean they put her on unbelievably, but she had several protectors when I was not around.
Don Bias was very chivalrous and several other guys just kind of looked out for her when I wasn’t around. But Tyree Glenn and some of the other guys really put her on. Several of the guys had made some good connections while they were… when we first arrived and they had marijuana and so forth.
She smoked in those days. She didn’t smoke any dope or anything but she smoked cigarettes and so they kept saying, “Well have one of these cigarettes, this is a foreign brand”. They kept… She said, “No thank you”, because she knew what it was [laugh]. She said, “No thank you, I don’t like the way that smells” [laugh]. So they would be in the front of us where we were seated in the bus and they would be pushing the smoke back. I said, “Come on man, don’t do that”.
So anyway we had a very nice tour of the Army camps and we met a lot of folks. I met several people that I later worked with when I came back to the states who were in the Army in those days and were living in Europe.
But to make a long story short what we did, we finished the tour. Don sent part of the band back home and retained a small combo of about seven pieces, which he took into a nightclub called Le Bouleur. It was a very fancy eating club and we had something like a two month engagement there and we played I think from whatever period that was past the New Year… through the New Year. So we celebrated New Year’s Eve in that little club.
A very interesting club. People came and danced to what we were playing, some of which was bebop, but they danced a lot to what we did and Don had… I think the band at that point was Don Redman, who was playing alto, Don Bias who was playing tenor, Tyree Glenn and Quinton Jackson were playing trombones, and there was another trombonist… Nat Peck I think was playing with us at that time. Who else was there?

John Bouchette was then playing bass with us, Buford Oliver was still playing drums, and we had a guitarist whose name escapes me at the moment.
But it was a nice band. Don Redmand rearranged some of the material that we had been playing and wrote some new material for that instrumentation and so we had quite a successful engagement.
Then Don Redman decided that he was going to continue to write, and got an offer to write some for movies and to do some other kind of writing. Don Bias and Tyree Glenn then took the band to Holland and we played in Rotterdam at a club there and we recorded several things in Hillverson with Don Bias and Tyree leading the group. We recorded some bebop things and some other things that the musicians had written.
I did a couple of piano solos when we got… when we recorded in Paris with the small group, as soon as we got off the train from Germany, instead of going to the hotel we went to the record studio. We didn't even say good evening. I mean bon soir.
We were in the record studio so I got to record something I call *Striding on Champs Elysees* and a couple of other things that I had written at that particular time. But I don't know whatever happened to it. I never heard those records. I've seen them. A couple of collectors have them but I've never heard them so I don't know what they sound like. Probably sound like that first date I did for Savoy because that's the way I was playing in those days.

HOLLY: With regards to your picking up from your first record date and going to working in the trio format in your early years, can you talk about your compositions in that context, what kind of style were you evolving at that point, and who were your band members, and some of the recordings you made from… was ABC Paramount one of your early…

TAYLOR: No. The first things that I was doing in that context were the HRS things, and then Coral Records… I recorded some quartet things for. The Coral Records were an interesting… they're interesting records. I may have an EP with a couple of those things on it. Some funny stuff.
I had heard a pianist whose name was Kenny… what was Kenny's name. Yeah, I was very impressed… years ago when Mary Lou Williams left Andy Kirk she was replaced by Kenny Kirzy and Kenny Kirzy had one special piece that he played called *Boogie Woogie Cocktail* and what he did, he played *Boogie Woogie* with his left hand and he played all of this… it was like pre bop. It was Tatum-isk and Hines, and he mixed everybody up, and *Boogie Woogie's* happening in the left hand.
So I said wow, that's hip and I used to love to do that. I was asked at one time to play with Andy Kirk and unfortunately for me I never got that opportunity. It was one of those things that the time was wrong for me and I never… but I got to see what was a partial transcription of the solo that he played because evidently it was something in Kirk's book so I said hey man, that's a tremendous device.
So when I made my first records for Coral, one of the things that I did was to play

Boogie Woogie in the left hand and bebop in the right hand, so that's what the… one thing was called *Taylor Made,* and I don't remember the titles now. I'll find them for you and let you know what the titles are.
But there were four… *Down That Dream* was one of the ballads that I played and it was a quartet. It was piano, bass, and drums, and guitar. I don't remember who I used on the date because John Collins wasn't available to me and I don't remember who the trio was at that time but I'll find out.
I went through trios at that period. I keep saying trio because it's… I went through several quartets because I really wanted a quartet. I mean I had been listening to Nat Cole and at that time Nat Cole was doing a radio show and it was a very good show. Nat Cole was very nice to me. I introduced myself to him at one point and like most of the older musicians, for someone who played his instrument, he was just a nice man and I said, "I've always admired your work and you've influenced my work" and so on, so on, and so on. He was kind of flattered. He said, "Well that's nice. Come on and have a cup of coffee", and we sat down and had a sandwich and so forth. From that point on every time I would see him he would be very nice to me and later he would come to see me play and so forth.
At this time I went to hear him broadcast and I heard the things that he was doing with the guitarist, Oscar Moore and I said oh, man wow… because I had all of these records. I mean I had all of those *Scotching With Soda* and *Hit That Jive Jack* and all those things that he did and I loved them. But *Honeysuckle Rose*, of all of those things in those early things, *Honeysuckle Rose*, the instrumental, was the one that I liked.
I liked the singing, and I loved the piano solos and guitar solos, but when he just got into his instrumental things, I said hey, great, that's what I want to do. So when I heard him on his radio show I said gee, I've got to have a guitar. I've just got to have guitar in my group. So even though I had a drum, I worked a lot with the full rhythm section, with all four instruments.
But I found out that economically they would not pay me anymore for four then they would for three, and so since economics got to be a real serious problem, ultimately I had to cut to three because if I split it three ways then I could hold guys better.
In those days I kept making, building trios for people. My first quartet… not my first quartet but one of my early quartets had John Levy on bass, Denzel Best on drums, and John Collins on guitar. John Collins left the group to go with Art Tatum, which I could really understand. We were laying off pretty good as a quartet. These guys… around this time George Shearing formed a quintet so John Levy and Denzel Best left to go with him.
So I had to start all over again and I got a series of other guitarist and bass players and drummers. Before John Collins left the group I had… no, I think John left last because the bass player and drummer left to go with George Shearing earlier, and just before John left, Artie Shaw took over my quartet and made it one of his Gramacy Five's.
We worked at a place called… it was right next door to Birdland called Iceland. Iceland was one of those places that you buy a ticket and it says for the same tour ticket

you will be taken to a New York nightclub. This was one of the New York nightclubs. So we'd be right in the middle of the show and the door would come open and 20 or 30 people would walk in. You know, they're walking around, aw, New York nightclub, wow, and they're talking and everything. So Artie Shaw went nuts with all this kind of… he didn't like that at all.

But it was good quintet. We rehearsed over at his house. He was an excellent musician… because we were playing bebop by that time so I had written some things in the bebop style and we were playing some of those things and he sight-read it. He looked at it and said, "Oh, yeah, that's nice".

We never played any on the gig but he enjoyed rehearsing them. It just wasn't his style and it wasn't what he was comfortable with it but he played it very well as though that was his style.

Anyway the quartet disintegrated after a while. I just couldn't hold it together. I played a lot of different… we played at Café Society. We were the rhythm section for… my different quartets would be the rhythm section for Coleman Hawkins, or for Lester Young, or for several other people who liked the idea of having kind of four guys who had worked together and who were comfortable. They said, "Well hey, you guys get your little thing together and I'll go on top of that. So that worked, that got us a few jobs.

But we mostly got jobs playing for somebody and this was frustrating me because I wanted to get out there and make some records on my own. That wasn't happening. I wasn't able to get anyone interested in that yet.

So we were going along for quite a while before I actually began to do my next series of records, which was for Royal Roast and the Roast sessions, came about when I was working at Birdland and the first session that I did was a little jukebox hit. I was really happy about that.

Teddy Reid came to me and said, "There is this… I hear things in what you're doing that's kind of got a dance beat to it". He said, "Maybe you could do something like that on a record". I said, "Yes".

So I did a thing called *Cue Blue*, which had a two beat bass line [musical sounds]. It said that kind of thing and I used a conga drum and once again, this was in my quartet days so I had Mondell Lowe on guitar by that time, I had Jo Jones on drums, and… I'm trying to think of the conga player's name now. His name eludes me at the moment. I'll think of it in a minute.

Anyway it was a very nice. It was just a blues in F and it actually gave rise to another piece of music. In my solo on that record, I played a riff that said [musical sounds]. So I played that and Oscar Petiford who I was working with at Birdland at the time… I did it a lot. I liked that little riff. So Oscar made a record, which he called *Blues In The* Closet, which said [musical sounds].

So I said, "Oscar, what are you doing? Hey, that's my tune". He said, "Well you weren't doing anything with it" [laugh]. So he changed it slightly but it was very nice, and I didn't mind because it was just a riff. Oscar by that time was one of the guys that

I really loved to play with in Birdland.
While we were working in Birdland, Quincy Jones made a record… had this concept and this is very early on in the days of layering or multi-taping or whatever the…

HOLLY: Multi tracking.

TALYOR: Multi tracking, yeah. What happened was that he had a violinist, Harry Decosky, who was a very fine player and Quincy had written a little thing for a guy named Linc Hammond, who was a disc jockey, called *Little Bandmaster,* and Oscar had written a piece called *Swinging 'Til The Girls Come Home.*
So we did about four tunes for them. I was playing piano, Petiford was playing bass, Charlie Smith, a wonderful left handed drummer had been the mainstay of my trio for many years, was playing drums, and Harry Decosky was playing violin and viola.
He overdubbed the viola parts and when it was multi tracking it was more then one violin, he overdubbed all of that. Oscar overdubbed the cello part so what you have is what amounts to string section and a trio and this is really the… was the point of reference when I decided to write something for the Julliard String Quartet just a couple of years ago and having done that record, I knew it could work. I knew the sound was in my mind and I just took the idea of [Unintelligible] and Eddie South and others… Oscar [Unintelligible] as my point of reference.
So we did a record which has been re-released I guess on Columbia or CBS or something, in one of those collections, where you hear Quincy's arrangements. It was very nice. I was very delighted with the way it came off. During the same time, we provided the rhythm section… well I guess it was a little later, probably in the early 50's, we provided the… this was after because now when we were doing this kind of thing I was house pianist at Birdland. Now I am playing with Dizzy Gelepsy and Charlie Parker and all these people.
The way I got to be house pianist at Birdland was kind of interesting. I was doing a lot of freelancing around, I was trying to make a quartet work and unsuccessfully. I was having a lot of guys hear musicians that were working for me and offer them more money and a job so I was losing musicians as fast as I could get them.
So Birdland was a terrific… the timing of that was perfect for me. I was doing a lot of dubbing. I was doing a lot of recording, making records with country and western groups because they were doing that in New York and doing stuff with singers like Decca Records with Si Oliver and many people like that. So I was getting a chance to… at least I was trying to earn a living. I got a chance to play with a lot of different people simply because I was out there hustling, trying to get some gigs.
Billy Kyle one of the pianist who did influence my work in many ways was very helpful in that regard. He was then doing… this was before he became the pianist with Louis Armstrong. He was then doing some Broadway shows and doing a lot of work with Si Oliver and he just had more work then he could handle. So I got the overflow. And one year in the overflow kept me going the whole year. I mean it was a lot of work.

So I got to record with Bing Crosby and a lot of other people. Bing Crosby… I never will forget that day. It was a very funny day. I had never seen him in person before. I had seen him in the movies and heard him on the radio but here I am you know just a few feet away from this legendary movie and radio star. So we're making a tape. Si Oliver was the arranger and conductor of the day. We were making this tape and I don't remember what the tune was, but I had to sneeze. And in this time everybody was in… there was no booth for the singer. We were all in the same room in Decker Studio. So here I am looking at Bing Crosby and I am sitting at the piano because there were a couple of things where I had to just kind of play something that he wanted to hear for his ear. So I was facing him. So now we're in the middle… or the beginning of this take and the red light is on and everything and I got to sneeze. I mean my face is getting red, the tears are rolling and my face is all contorted. I am trying to stifle the sneeze.

And he just cracks… he said, "What is he doing?" So he stopped it. Then I sneezed [laughter]. It was so funny. That was the most embarrassing, the most… the weirdest moment I ever spent in a record studio because you know here I am with my best foot forward trying to do this and I got to sneeze and mess up this good take that Crosby is doing.

So anyway I was doing a lot of this recording. I did many things that stood me in good standing. I did some recording with Neil Hefty. I did recording with a lot of very fine musicians over that period of time. And working in Birdland as I said… and the way I got the job was that I got a call from Al Haig who I had met when he was working on 52nd Street with Charlie Parker. And he said, "Billy I need somebody to sub for me. I got something to do and if you could cover the rehearsal and the opening night for me down at Birdland I would appreciate it." I said, "Yeah fine. Who is it with?" He said, "Charlie Parker and strings." I said okay.

So I go down and Charlie is rehearsing the strings and I went up and told him I am subbing for Al today. He said okay. So we rehearsed all the stuff and everything. I played opening night. So the next night I didn't show and I get this call from Monty Kay. He said, "Man where are you? The Bird is supposed to be on already." So I said, "Nobody told me. I thought I was just playing the one night." So he said, "No come on down."

So I went down and I finished the week. The week was very successful. We played the next week at the Apollo Theatre and I played with the rhythm section of Roy Haines and Tommy Potter. So it was a very exciting two weeks for me. So in working with Charlie Parker and strings and Bird loved to conduct that group. I mean he was really enjoying those two weeks. It was something he wanted to do. A lot of people have said that he was talked into it by Norman Grants or by A&R man. No he wanted to do that. He loved it.

I think the way… the reason he liked the strings was because he had walked in on a Neil Hefty date when they were doing repetition. And he wasn't supposed to play on it but he was over in the corner just kind of noodling over what they were doing and Neil said,

"Hey no, come over here and do that." And so the famous record featuring him on repetition was supposed to be something that had no saxophone on it at all. But it opened his ears to how he sounded with strings and he liked that. So that was what he was trying to do with the small combo.

So I enjoyed those two weeks and I was, you know, prepared to go back to my usual scuffling and trying to find something else to do when I got a call from Monty Alexander who was booking Birdland and who I had known from his Royal Roost days and so forth. As a matter of fact I had known him from 52nd Street. I didn't know him very well but he had booked us concerts and I had met him there.

So Monty said, "Look, Bud Pal didn't show and I need you to fill in for him. This is getting to be kind of traumatic. What I would like for you to do is to just show up. If I don't need you I will let you know but you show up, then I won't have to keep… because one of these days I am going to call you and you're going to be out." He said, "I just need somebody that I can plug into the things that I need." I said, "Okay."

That was the beginning of my two year stint as house pianist at Birdland. And while I was there I played with Miles, I played with JJ, I played with Kye Windin, Bill Harris, Lee Conitz, Zoot Simms, you name them. I mean everybody that couldn't support a group in those days or who was between gigs or something got to be in the all star group like Terry Gibbs and a lot of other guys. And it was really just a wonderful experience playing with some of the legendary figures of the music, which was developing at that time.

At that moment in time there was a big… well it wasn't a conflict but jazz musicians always at best are trying to do their own thing. And Lenny Trestano in those days was trying to do something different from what Dizzy and Bird were doing. So he had two saxophone players. He had Juan Marshan and Lee Conitz. And they had a lot of things that they had… original material some of which was built on original harmonic structure but much of which was built on the structure well known songs.

And so they were doing some very intuitive improvisations and they were sort of collectively improvising and doing all kinds of things that weren't really done in contemporary jazz to that extent in those days. So it was a very interesting sound and a very well thought out concept of the music. So they would play Birdland. And Bird would play Birdland and Stan Kenton would play Birdland and Duke Ellington would play Birdland, and Count Basie would play Birdland. So it was just a thrill for me to be opposite of these guys and to hear every week something different going on and a different approach, all these guys bringing in their personal dimension.

I got a chance to play Roy Eldridge. He blew in from Chicago. He was little jazz. He had all these things that he was doing and that was exciting to me. And so I was getting a chanced not only to play bee bop but to sit in and to play with for a week or so, with Prez, or Hawk or any of the legendary figures. John Coltrain in those days would play as much alto as he played tenor, so he was playing quite differently. Art Blakey was trying to get a large band started, which he called the Jazz Messengers. And it was I think about a 15 or 16 piece band.

He, because he wasn't working, would take a lot of gigs at Birdland. So my choice in drummers or who was hired to work in the context was always a good choice because it was Joe Jones or Art Blakey or someone of that caliber, you know who was right there on top of what was going on in the rhythm section. And the bass player was always Oscar Pediford or Clyde Lombardi or Tommy Potter or Percy Heath or somebody who was really laying down a solid foundation.

So it was a just a very exciting and pleasant two years. The only reason I left Birdland was because Monty Kay opened another nightclub on West 54th Street called [Unintelligible]. And he had the brother of Morris Levy who owned Birdland… was his partner. And so Irvine Levy and Monty had this small room, which was a great jazz room. It was a tiny little 52nd Street tight room but it had a little balcony. It was a very cute and a very cozy room. Having worked with people like Slim Gaylord and others at Birdland, Monty brought some of those people over to [Unintelligible].

[Unintelligible] was just off the corner of 8th Avenue and 54th Street so the Palladium was right down at the other corner on Broadway. So a lot of the musicians from the Palladium would come over, Tito [Unintelligible] and all of the guys that played the Palladium would come over between sets and hear jazz because they were all into jazz and they liked to play and listen to it and so forth. And we in turn, even when I was at Birdland, would go up to the Palladium… I would go up to the Palladium with Dizzy… when I was working with Dizzy he would say, "Come on B let's go up to… come go with me. I am going up to the Palladium." I thought maybe he was going to sit in. He would go up and dance. He would be grabbing the ladies and doing his dance with them.

The Palladium, the interaction between the Latin players and the jazz players was a very close one and a very fruitful one. We were using them on record dates and they were using us on record dates. So it was a very… it was a time when each was accessible or more accessible to the other.

So this club, because it was a smaller club then the Birdland was a place where a lot of people hung out. And so you had people who weren't working and who could sit at the bar and they were coming to hear Oscar Pediford or coming to hear Charlie Smith who was this drummer who worked with me.

Charlie Smith was a drummer who doesn't get nearly the credit that he should. He was one of the best drummers ever in jazz. He was one of the most creative and most original drummers. He was left-handed. He played the drums backwards. So one time I had a backward trio. Earl May was playing with me and he played the bass backwards. So if you looked at the bandstand it looked like you should be looking in a mirror because it was totally backwards from what you should see.

But when I started at [Unintelligible] Charlie Mengis was my bass player. And the way I met Charlie Mengis was kind of interesting. I was working at Birdland and Joe Jones said, "Monty tells me that you have next week off." He said, "I have got a job for you." I said, "That's nice where?" He said, "Boston." I said, "Well what kind of club is it?" He said, "Well there is a guy up there named George Wein who has a nightclub called

Storyville. I was just there and I told him he should hire you so he is going to hire you next week." I said, "Okay that's fine. Thank you. I'll have to get a couple of guys. I will make a couple of calls." He said, "No, I have got your trio."
So I said, "Well okay. Who have you got?" He said, "It's a bass player. You will like him but I don't know if you have heard of him. He used to work with Red Norvo." I said, "Yeah I have heard of him. He is very good but he plays a different style." He said, "Yeah." So I was looking forward to that.
I had heard Charlie Mengis with Tal Forlow and Red Norvo and they were playing nothing but counterpoint man. I mean they had all this stuff going on. I thought what a wonderful group. But I didn't know he had played with Hamp and some of the other bands. You know I wasn't that familiar with his work. I had only heard him with Norvo. So I didn't know he could swing or play good bass lines or whatever so I was in for a treat.
So any way, I said, "Who is the drummer? Are you going to play?" He said, "No. I am busy next week so I got a guy named Marcus Foster for you. You will like him." And I did. He was a very, very fine drummer who unfortunately never got out of Boston often enough to make the kind of name that his talent deserved. He was sort of like, what's the other guy who is still up there?

HOLLY: Allen Dawson?

Taylor: Allen Dawson who is a wonderful drummer and because he spent so much time in Boston people don't realize what a great artist he is personally and how many wonderful… how many students he has trained in his own image.
So anyway, we went up to Boston, played this week. There was a man who did a radio show in the hotel upstairs from where the club Storyville was. His name was Nat Henthoff and he was doing… he later became a very well known critic and political writer and so forth and has written a great deal and has also done a lot of jazz in terms of starting the Candy Label and doing things with many musicians.
Anyway in those days he was a disk jockey, a writer. So he was doing a classical show and a jazz show on the same station and I was very taken with the fact that he gave the same kind of comments on his jazz show that he gave on his classical show. And he gave a lot of information. I said this guy knows the music, likes it and knows what to say.
And so he would come downstairs and we would do a live broadcast from the Storyville. So the second night we were playing together, Charles Mengis and I and we had never rehearsed. We only went on the bandstand and just played. The second night we worked together, we did a broadcast. The broadcast… from the broadcast is the music, which is on the record, on Roast in which Charlie is a part of the trio. That was the occasion of which we made that record. It was just a live performance. It is only a part of a live performance. It was about a half of an hour or a little more show. So there are other things that have never been released from that date. Some of it is on

tape. I have some of it in my old collection but they have never been released.

HOLLY: I just want to ask you… I want to go back to your playing with Dizzy at Birdland. Tell me that funny story about the tune you named for Dizzy.

Taylor: Well Dizzy was always a ladies man. I mean Dizzy had a good eye for the ladies, you know because he was always making jokes and everything he could get away with it. I mean he would be talking to whatever lady that happened to come in… a lot of pretty ladies came into Birdland.
He came in one time from being on the road and he had this tune that he and Milt Jackson were playing. Milt… whenever the band played at Birdland, Milt greeted me like a long lost brother because at last he could get up from the piano. In Dizzy's band he was playing both piano and vibes because Dizzy couldn't afford both a pianist and a vibraphone player in his group.
So what would happen, would be when Dizzy was playing Milt would have to play comp piano. When Milt was playing, either Dizzy or Bill Graham, the saxophone player would play comp for Milt. And so you know it was just uncomfortable for Milt to have to keep at that point, to keep switching around because he really wanted to concentrate on the vibes.
So they get to Birdland and they are playing this tune. I said, "What's the tune called?" He said, "It doesn't have a name." And so we're going to do a broadcast that night from Birdland and he said, "Yeah I am going to have to call it something. What am I going to call it?" And so having just noticed him hit on a young lady, I said, "Why don't you call it *Berks Works*." [laugh] And he said, "Okay." And he did.

HOLLY: From that period, you had mentioned that was a formative period for your development working in those clubs. I believe that's 1951 to 1953?

Taylor: When I was at Birdland?

HOLLY: Yeah.

Taylor: From '49 to '51.

HOLLY: Okay. Your career at that point, you picked up recording in the trio fashion again or are you still working…

Taylor: Just prior to that what had happened, is I had… when I came back from Europe for instance I had started a piano [unintelligible] with Bob Wyatt and I worked at Wells. And the concept in Harlem in those days was to introduce the B3 organ and have people playing on this. And Wells was in the forefront of that.
So I worked with a guy named Charlie Stewart first and then I worked with this

wonderful musician who was very well classically trained named Bob Wyatt. We played a whole bunch of stuff. And this was the group that I actually took to the Roost. I mean that was who I was working with at the Roost when I was working there prior to going to Birdland.
So what happened, I was doing a solo, he was doing a solo and then as kind of a show we would come together and we would play together and then there would usually be a soloist or singer or somebody who might sing with the two is us accompanying that person. Then we would go back to doing solo work for the rest of the evening.
So we actually did a record for what was then Columbia's records. And it's on nobody's list because I don't think it was ever actually released. We did it but it was only four sides and for whatever reason Columbia never… Mike Leavin who was the editor of Downbeat took a liking to us and booked us in St. Louis as a matter of fact. He booked… Wyatt and Taylor was the name of the group. And he booked us in the Chase Hotel in St. Louis.
I remember we had to move the organ from the room we were in upstairs to another room and do Saturday or Sunday at the Chase whatever it was, broadcast that they did from there. So we did this broadcast from there and then… and it was weird because we were working in this hotel but we couldn't stay in that hotel. We had to stay over in the ghetto side of St. Louis in the black neighborhood.
So we stayed there and played… that was the first time I got to hear… that was the first time I had ever gone to East St. Louis and I got to hear… first time I ever heard Jug play tenor. Boy what a wonderful sound he had and just a fantastic player. It was with one of those, there was a band that Clark Terry and Miles and all those guys played in at one point. I think there was two guys that had… that ran the band.

HOLLY: Was he with Jimmy Forest?

Taylor: No Jimmy Forest was in the band I think at the same time because I remember there being two really outstanding tenor players when we heard them. But this was at one of those points but I can't think of the man's name. It was a famous territory band that was playing in the club there. [Unintelligible] I think it was.
We went to hear them because Bob and I were down there for about two or three weeks. It was really weird man. We had this huge… the B3 organ is a big monster of an organ. I mean it is heavy and just the two of us were trying to lift this thing. And we go to this hotel and you have got all these bellman and everybody is looking at us and say well you all got it [laugh]. So we're struggling with this thing trying to get it on dollies and everything. So ultimately we got it but every time we would have to move it, it would be just a traumatic…
Coming back, after this thing was… after the gig was over, we drove back to New York and that was when we opened for Billy Holiday in *Holiday on Broadway*. And we had the same nonsense with the stagehands. We were playing at this Broadway theatre and Billy Holiday has just been released from prison and has made a very successful

Carnegie Hall return concert and everything and she can't work a nightclub because she doesn't have a card. She doesn't a Cabaret card. So this was a way of, you know, really punishing her for whatever reason. Maybe she was paying off enough or something.

Anyway there seemed to be a lot of people out to get her all throughout her life in so many ways. Anyway at this period, she had some very fine support from people who put up the money and got a Broadway theatre, starred her, and it was a smash. I mean people loved it. I mean there were several opening acts and everything and then she came out and sang a long program of maybe an hour or so of just Billy Holiday singing with Tony Scott and other people playing behind her and so forth. So we opened… we were one of the opening acts and we came out and we did our little thing in front.

So when we got to the theatre, once again you have got all these burly stagehands and everything and we wrestle this organ up onto the dolly and up a ramp and onto to the stage and get off the dolly and place it where it has got to be and on a mobile platform or something that they are going to move us on and off with and everything. Then my partner Bob Wyatt unravels his wire and everything and looks around for a plug. Then the union comes in and says hold it. We need an electrician to plug… [Laugh] I was like man come on. What about the union for the stagehands that is supposed to move things once we get it on the stage?

So anyway it was a very successful show. It really… that period… that was one of the records… I made a lot of records that were never… either released in a very small context or never released at all. That was one. However we did a lot of radio shows. There must be hundreds of illegal tapes on me in various times of my career. From Birdland we did almost nightly broadcasts. We did on 52nd Street when I was there, once or twice a week whether it was in the Onyx Club or in the Deuces or the Downbeat, there was somebody being broadcast from one of those clubs. And a lot of them I was on and I have never heard anything.

I know some of them… Timmy Rosengrantz actually recorded some of them so I know that there were collectors out there who were listening to the radio and turning on their wire recorder or they were taking it off on the wax recorder or whatever the mechanics of that day.

So Dizzy from that period on, especially… my association with him was an ongoing one because I had such great love and affection for him in addition to the respect I had for him as a musician. I remember one time he brought in… they hired all of the best musicians who were just kind of laying off at that period. So he had a band that was literally an all star band which was Lee Conitz and Kye Winin and JJ Johnson, Miles Davis, Kenny Dorum, just think of the great musicians of that period and they were in that band, in Dizzy's band at that moment.

It was put together… they were hired individually by Monty Kay. So we came together at Birdland one afternoon before the band opened… the day we were going to open. That afternoon we came together for the first rehearsal. Dizzy brought his book. So everybody pulled out their parts and everything.

And Dizzy's book was hard, there was hard stuff in that book. So guys are scuffling. Some of them had not done a lot of big band playing and others just didn't care to do a lot of big band playing. It was ragged. It sounded horrible, the ensemble. As soon as anyone took a solo, it was magic but the ensemble was out to lunch.
So after the first rehearsal, it was so ragged that Dizzy went to Monty and said, "Monty instead of calling this the Dizzy Gelipse Dream Band, why don't you call it the Symphony Sid Dream Band since Sid and you put this thing together." He said, "Yeah okay." So the sign was changed to Symphony Sid Dream Band. This is between rehearsal and the evening.
So we come in that evening and the band plays the first set and you know it's ragged but the solos are great. The second set the same. By this time, Symphony Sid who does a nightly show from Birdland is in. And he hears the band. They are supposed to broadcast and everything. So he says, "Monty why don't you call this the Birdland Dream Band." And he gets him to change the name. So it ended up with Birdland Dream Band.
But some of the most remarkable solos that I have ever heard in bebop were played during that week because you have got guys sitting beside somebody that they either want to impress or who has influenced them. So they want to say hey here is what I have done with your influence, check this out. This is what I am into. The solos were just unbelievable. I can't recall a big band that I had so much fun playing in once we got past the head of the tune.

HOLLY: You had mentioned earlier about the commingling if you will of the jazz and Latin musicians. And from my mind one of your composition, *Move from Mendez* how did you adopt… how did you adapt your bebop influences to the Afro-Cuban rhythms?

Taylor: Well actually Mendez wasn't Latin. He had a Latin name but he was a disk jockey. That's one of my favorite ballads. It is one of the things of my own compositions that I like because he was a good friend. He had a jazz radio show in Providence, Rhode Island and he asked me to write a theme for him. And that was the theme I wrote for him.
But in answer to your question, I worked at La Congo as I told you earlier with Walter Footsthomas. And we had an American band. And most of the other guys in that band had played with bands like Macheto and other bands like that. Walter Footsthomas had done some playing in that Latin context and other guys had done that which is why they were comfortable playing in a Latin club. But especially the Cuban and Puerto Rican guys had worked in the big bands.
They had worked with some of the bands in Harlem. They lived in East Harlem and there was a club on 110th Street just North of the park. I don't remember the name of it but it was a Latin dance club. I mean it was a place where a lot of the Latin bands played. And man you are talking about heavy jazz in there. This was uptown Latin.

This was serious stuff. They played… Secarous was one guy, Essie and Nora Morales, I can't think… I am thinking the name Adino for one reason or another. I think he was a bass player. I am not sure.
Anyway, there were so many wonderful musicians. And the thing that attracted me, first of all you are just seduced by the rhythms. I mean the way they played their rhythms were just so organic and so wonderful that they just made you… like most musicians I don't dance that well. I like to dance but I don't dance that well. But I mean I would get out there thinking I could dance to all this stuff. I mean it was just so rhythmic and so wonderful. The bands like that played at clubs in… dance places in Harlem like the… I am trying to think. There are a couple of places right in Harlem that featured Latin and West Indian and stuff like… you know different types of music other than jazz.
The Renaissance was one that I mentioned but there were two others where they had smaller combos of more authentic, you know I am thinking of something where you would have maybe brass and Latin and no saxophones but different combinations from what we were accustomed too. But great dance music and great listening music from my perspective. Always a good singer and doing the kinds of things that they did.
So quite often the Latin musicians wanted to hire a jazz musician because they wanted to learn more about what he did and he in turn wanted to learn more about what they did because you know it was catchy. It was infectious to play this music.

HOLLY: When you are making your early records at this point, could you describe the method of how, you know how long did it take you to make a record? How did the record companies approach you or did you approach them? How it was marketed or promoted?

Taylor: Well it was… first of all it was marketed or promoted. I mean they just put the records out there. If it sold, it sold. I mean it sounds strange but… well they still do that, for jazz. They don't… there is no marketing plan. They say this guy plays well, let's go and record him. What do you want to do? He says well I have got this original and maybe the guy who is A&R might say well why don't you play something the people know. So you would play *Night and Day* or something.
This has been one of the most confusing aspects of jazz for people who are not in the field. Jazz coexisted with excellent pop music in the 20's and 30's and 40's. I mean music, which was well written, well structured and rhythmically well organized, this is not jazz that I am talking about, this is pop music, harmonically interesting and so forth. The jazz of the period was rhythmically very interesting. Melodies were pretty good in many cases, very infectious in most cases. When you think… people say there have never been… there have been many jazz hits. I mean when you think of the *One o'clock Jump* when you think of *C Jam Blues,* when you think of *Take the A Train,* you know you can rattle off various hits for various people. I mean *Four Brothers* was hit. It wasn't danceable for most people but it was a hit. *Early Autumn* was danceable and

that was a hit.
So you can look at a lot of things that were real jazz tunes. They were not adaptations of anything. They were out of the jazz experience and they were hits. One of the reasons Woody Herman's things were hits was because he had a radio show. One of the reasons why Duke Ellington and Basie's hits was because they were on the radio a lot and people heard these things, related to them and went out and bought the record. Benny Goodman the same.
So Benny Goodman, and Glenn Miller and others had sustaining radio shows so they were… Eldgin Watch was the sponsor or Campbell cigarettes or shaving cream whatever the shaving cream was, different sponsors sponsored these people. Cab Calloway had a show. Don Redmond had a show. So these were people who were heard on a very regular basis during prime time.
Right after dinner one of the shows came on the radio. I remember the Campbell caravan came on with the Castloma Orchestra. It used to come on at 7:30 at night. Well I was a kid. I am still up, you know so I get to hear this. And the same with some of the other shows. They were on early in the evening and they were great shows. I remember hearing Louis Premer and people from 52nd Street. That was the first time I ever heard of 52nd Street. Here is Stuff Smith and here is Fats Waller from the Yacht Club on 52nd Street.
So that was a means of merchandising, the only means of merchandising and exploiting jazz that was used by record companies. They didn't put out ads generally speaking unless you were a star. If you were Benny Goodman or you were a Duke Ellington or somebody like that, then you got that. But for people like Marilyn Williams or Andy Kirk, unless they had a hit record you didn't… you know and usually the hit record was something that the guy was saying. *Jelly/Jelly* was a big hit for Earl Hines. But I don't recall ever seeing any picture or cut out of Earl Hines standing you know in the record shop where I went to buy my records. You know you might find his records in the bin if you look hard enough but you had to know what you were asking for usually.
So they did not promote jazz records in the way that they promoted singers and the way that they promoted movies and the way that they promoted other things, which dealt with things that were from a different point of view then jazz. So you would kind of have to sell yourself.
The way you made records was to go in… everybody was in the same studio. Usually you would have one mike in some cases for the whole band and it was strategically… we are talking the big bands now, strategically placed. And many of the records are very well… I mean they are good records. What they got was the ambiance of that room and the sound. So the band itself played a little softer when somebody was playing a solo. The band did that and you heard everything in context you know when a man stood up and took a solo. So it required musicianship more then it required technical knowledge.
I remember when I was recording doing freelance recording for Decker records, at one point I saw a piece of tape on the floor. I caught my foot… my shoe caught it and

pulled it up a little bit so I was going to pull it off. I thought somebody would stumble over that. I was going to pull it off. They said, "Hey don't do that." I said, "What's the matter? I was just pulling up this piece of tape?" He said, "No, put it down again." I said, "Okay." So he got a little glue or something and made sure that it stayed there.
I said, "What was that all about?" He said, "This is where… this end of the… this is where Guy Lombardo sits. That's the first saxophone and we put the band around him. This is where Guy Lombardo stands." [laugh]. Now they had… when he told me that I laughed but I realized that the Guy Lombardo band was one of the bands… was one of Louis Armstrong's favorite bands.
And the reason it was one of Louis Armstrong's favorite bands was because he liked the precision. He liked the arrangements. He liked the structure of what they did. It was musical and it made sense. He didn't care about style. I mean obviously that is not his style of playing but he liked those other musical elements of it. And when Louis Armstrong was asked about a favorite band and he said Guy Lombardo, people thought he was putting them on. He was serious.

HOLLY: Before we get to your trio with Earl May and…

Taylor: Charlie Smith. Percy Smith…

HOLLY: Yeah give me the current… because we left it…

Taylor: My first, really when I began to support a trio and began to get out there with a trio, the trio was Earl May and Charlie Smith. And we worked together for a long time. But Charlie Smith unfortunately had a drinking habit and so he had the dubious distinction of having been hired and fired by every major pianist in jazz, literally. I mean there was hardly a pianist that you couldn't mention, Earl Garner, Oscar Peterson, Art Tatum, Duke Ellington I mean there was no one you could mention that he hadn't played with because he was such a wonderful drummer that everyone would overlook… they would say he is going to get drunk. You would say yeah I know but hire him anyway. And they would put up with him as long as they could.
He ultimately kicked the habit of drinking and in the later part of his life demonstrated what all the fuss was about because he was a remarkable musician, all of his career but unfortunately his drinking got in the way. So he didn't achieve the attention or work steadily with the people… he would have been the original drummer in Earl Garner's trio had he remained sober. He would have been the original drummer in Oscar Peterson's trio had he remained sober. He was a wonderful player.
I probably had more patience with him then some of the other musicians did but when he was with me I told you about a tune that I played called *Cue Blue.* When I would play that with the trio he… I wouldn't play it with the trio for a while and it was still being played on jukeboxes and people would ask me for it. He would say, "Why don't you play that tune. That is a nice tune." I said, "Well I hear the Congo drum in there

and I don't… it doesn't sound right with me." He said, "I can do that." I said, "Well you don't have a Congo drum." He said, "Yeah but I can do that."
So he took the mallet and began [music sounds] and he invented that in that context. Nobody had done that before Charlie Smith. And the reason he did it because he wanted me to play this tune. And ultimately he got a Congo drum and put that in between… he would move his snare over and play the Congo and work both feet and use his hands on the Congo and do like that. It was a very creative and a very musical player.
So when Percy first came with me, he had to do that because that was what I was doing. Then we got [unintelligible] who came with the group so you know Percy could relax and play what he normally played.
But Charlie Smith is the drummer, if people are interested in what he looks like, he is the drummer on the only piece of film that Charlie Parker… that we have on Charlie Parker. And you can hear him playing bebop on that. He could play all kinds of styles but he was a good bebop player.

HOLLY: That's the film where they are playing hothouse with Dizzy Gillespie?

Taylor: That's correct.

HOLLY: Right. And the piano player I believe is Dick Heiman.

Taylor: That's correct. And the bass player is Sandy… what is Sandy's last name? It is Sandy Block. He was a studio musician in those days.

Brown: Okay this is tape four of the oral history interview with Dr. Billy Taylor on November 20, 1993.

HOLLY: I believe you were talking about members of your first trios. You talked about your left handed drummer, Charlie Smith and right now we're talking about Earl May and Percy Brice. And you were talking about how you got together with them, and some of the recordings.

Taylor: Well the first sessions that I did were actually with Charlie Smith and we did a whole series of things on Prestes records. And Charlie was such an inspirational player. I mean he just… the trio just swung the way I wanted it. That was really my favorite trio because having played with Charlie and Mengis; it was a different kind of trio.
I mean when I played with those two, Mengis was such a virtuoso and he had such a quick mind as well as fast fingers. He would play a duet with me very quickly as you can hear on some earlier records and that was fun. I mean that was challenging and it was different from anything that I did. It made me play differently. But when Earl May

returned to the trio it was like an old shoe. I mean everything was such comfortable. Earl just came to play.
He never in all the years, he worked with me for about 12 years and in all that time he never gave less than 200 percent. He was just always the perfect accompanist. He was a good soloist but he was always the perfect accompanist.
And during the time he worked for me, he made that Prestes record with just him and Coltrane. I don't know who is playing drums on that but just the three of them. No piano. It's *I Love you*. It's the *I Love You* track with Earl May on bass. When he worked with me at the [Unintelligible] all these musicians heard him and loved the way that… I mean he just had that same quality that I described earlier with Charlie Drayton and some of the earlier bass players.
But he was a modern player. I mean he was not playing old bass lines. He was playing modern lines like… he loved Oscar Pediford and they hung out together and so he didn't play like Oscar but he swung like Oscar. So it was exciting.
Oh before Mengis left the group, Oscar Pediford… we recorded as a trio that famous date when he played *Sonny Boy* and he played some of the other things on cello.
Oscar… the first time, when we were working at Birdland he called me at home one night on the phone. And he said, "Hey Billy listen to this." He played something for me. I said, "When did Charlie Christian make that?" He said, "You son of… that's me." I said, "What do you mean that's you?" He said, "Yeah I am playing the cello." And I had never heard him play cello.
So I said, "When are you going to bring that on the gig man?" And he said, "Well as soon as I find a bass player." So he would… when we were at Birdland he would have the cello in the back and he would coerce somebody into playing bass and he would run and get a cello and come out and play some.
What had happened was that Oscar was one of the greatest virtuoso soul bass players I ever heard. I mean he was so special. He loved… but he was an athlete too. He liked to play baseball. And he broke his arm playing in Central Park playing ball with one of the all star… you know one band was playing another band or something like that. So he broke his arm and it never… when it healed it never gave him the strength that he had had prior to breaking that arm. I don't know why.
I remember when he worked with Dizzy the first time when he was working on 52nd Street they would play the tune bebop. And I remember one occasion when he got annoyed and put his bass down and said, "Hey man you didn't give me a solo." And Dizzy said, "Well hey [unintelligible]." He said, "You play the solo on it." And he meant that. Tempo didn't bother him and he not only played the accompanist but after guys had taken four or five solos then he would play one of those outstanding bass solos.
So he was really such an awesome player and when we played… When Mengis played with him, and you will hear it if you ever listen to this record, Mengis didn't take a solo on that date. Not one solo. And it wasn't for fear or anything he just had that much respect for Oscar. I mean Mengis had technique to burn so he didn't bar anybody. So

when he went on that date within his mind, I am going to swing Oscar like he swings these other guys. And that was all he wanted to do. He wanted to play. And he did. So those kinds of trios and quartets were what I grew up and what I… would help shape me. And so when it came around to the trio that I made my first Town Hall Concert with which was Earl May and Percy Brice, you know I really had an important reference. I knew what I wanted to do and I knew what I wanted to hear.

There is a tune on the Town Hall record, which… this is not the first time I had played in Town Hall but it was the first time I played in Town Hall with my group. The first time I played in the Town Hall was with Stu Smith, which is many years… back when I was working on 52nd Street. But the first time I played with my own group, there was this wonderful period where I took the bass of Earl May and the drums of Percy Brice and if you look at the cover you will see that it is a 9 foot piano. I mean it is a huge instrument.

Now in those days I had a different trio set up. SO Earl is down at the other end of the piano with Percy. So the day of… we had come in from Pittsburgh. We had played a gig in Pittsburgh and I had programmed… we had been asked well what are you going to play? So I had sent in a program. And on this program was a piece that I had written for my wife. It said it was *Theodora.* The only problem was I hadn't written the piece. So it was on the program. So the afternoon of the concert I actually ran her out of the house and my son and said, "You know take him for a walk or something and leave me. I have got something to do." So she went out and took him to a park or something and I wrote *Theodora.* And we premiered that night. I introduced the piece. The only thing is, we didn't have time to rehearse it. So what you hear on the record is Earl hearing what I am playing.

Now *Theodora* has some strange changes in it. Earl's… his ear and his knowledge of having worked with me so long and everything is just so phenomenal. You would not know that that part wasn't written for him. I mean he is a wonderful musician. As you can see from the picture he couldn't see… you know a bass player can't look over your shoulder and see what bass notes you're playing. He couldn't see that. He could only hear it.

So for me that's one of the most exciting aspects of that. And I like that record so well that I use it as a theme when I was a disc jockey. It used to be my inside theme. I had a theme called *It's a Grand Night for Swinging* as an opening theme, *Theodora* as the inside theme and [*Unintelligible]* as my closing theme. So you know these are compositions which… the records for which I like because they are meaningful to me as a player and a writer.

So Earl just brought such musicality to the trio. In that same record when you listen to Percy Brice, the solo he takes on *How High the Moon* and some of the things he does in accompaniment, I mean this guy was so musical. I mean he really was the next step from Charlie for me. He did… he is still around and he still plays very well but he hasn't had the opportunity to play in that context to the extent that he should. He worked a long time with Harry Bellefonte and he has done a lot of very outstanding

things but in those days he was able to concentrate on the kind of jazz that we played on that particular record.
We influenced a lot of trios. I mean almost all of the trios that were in and around New York was in some ways influenced by my trios simply because I was the most visible… I had the most visible trio. I mean I was on the air playing on these broadcasts. I was playing in the Birdland and playing in the Downbeat, which was the clubs to play. So you know a lot of folks were influenced by that. They would say well I want to do that. One of the things that I used to do because I had the guitar… I was playing the guitar was to play very high treble on the piano. And I used to do a lot… it wasn't like Basie, it was in my own style but it was way up because I was trying to get out of the way of the guitarist. I wanted to hear those chords and I was trying to stay in another range. When I began to play with the trio I still used that for a long time so you hear a lot of that in my early work as opposed to what you hear now which is using the piano in a little different way.
It's always interesting to me to go back and see how much… how many of those things and how much of those concepts I still retain in my work. It kind of validates it for me to say well here is something I thought of, some time, some years ago and not a lot of people were doing it when I first did it but now not only do I do it but a lot of other folks seem to find those devices useful.

HOLLY: Did you find working with Prestege any better than the other previous record labels or was it pretty much business as usual?

Taylor: No, Prestege was the first label that I worked with where I was allowed to play what I wanted to. As a matter of fact the first record that I made for Prestege I talked with the engineer and Bob Weinstein who was the guy who owned the company had only recorded Lenny Testrano prior to that. And I didn't like the sound that he got on Lenny. I had heard Lenny play and I said, "You know when I listen to Lenny he gets a deeper… it's another sound that he gets that I like better."
I said, "Where are we going to record?" And so he said, "There is this guy who is an optometrist over in Jersey and he has got this studio and that's where I do all my stuff because it's… I think it's the best studio around and I get the best cooperation from him." So I said, "Well what's his name?" He said, "Rudy Vangelder."
So I go over to Rudy's studio prior to recording and I took some [unintelligible] and some Tatum records. And we sat and talked about piano, Rudy and I. And I said, "You know I can hear from just the one record that I have heard that you have good ears but I hear the piano perhaps a little different because I play the instrument.
And he had a small [Unintelligible] one of the small [Unintelligible] in his studio so you couldn't really get the depth that you can on a B or on a D. But it was a lovely, beautiful sound, better than most of the records that you were hearing in those days because they were making them on pianos sometimes that were out of tune. Even the one that I had recorded on first over in the studios of WR which is where we did the

Savoy thing, it was a B but it wasn't… it hadn't been well kept and it didn't sound as good as Rudy Vangelder made those pianos sound.
So we went over… we listened to these things and with his engineer's ear he heard certain things and that became the Rudy Vangelder sound. So the piano sound that I get on… that he got on me, on these first records was his point of reference for all of the sound. And what is interesting to me when other pianist who sounded quite different from me in person, would go and record for him and they would get the sound that I got because that was the sound that was in his ear.
But what that did was to really make him hear the instrument especially in the context of his studio, his piano in his studio. He really had that very well defined.

HOLLY: So Prestege… reiterating Prestege gave you more of an opportunity…

Taylor: More of a creative… they gave me the creative impulse to do some of those earlier things, which I think, are among my best records, the early records.

HOLLY: So I think if I understand the chronology, Billy Taylor's volumes one and two were your first two records?

Taylor: Yes. And they were originally made as singles. They were not made as albums. They were put out as, you know, just three or four minute records. If it was a long record it was two sides of a record as oppose to… they were not done for LP.

HOLLY: One of the records that was reissued in the 1980's was the fantasy corporation, was *Billy Taylor with Candito.* Did you work with him when you were working with Dizzy, because I know the Candito was kind of brought out there by Dizzy or did you bring him out and introduce him to Dizzy? How did that work?

Taylor: No. When I was working at Downbeat I was playing a lot of Latin music because I loved it and I had a lot of it in my repertoire. And you know these are the things that Charlie Smith was playing and later Percy Brice was playing on the Congo drum and on the regular drums.
Dizzy Gillespie came in one night and said, "Billy I have got a drummer for you." And I said, "I got a drummer." He said, "No not like this." And so he introduced me to Candito. And Candito sat in and played with the two of us. I had put Charlie Smith through this back in the years when we went to Haiti. He was in that group that went to Haiti with me. I had programmed on our concert there a drum duel if you will between Charlie Smith and Titoro. I didn't realize what I was getting Charlie into because that was a serious challenge to the major drummer of Haiti, for a foreign drummer to come and play. So he threw the book at Charlie.
So Charlie having survived that, I mean was ready for Candito or anybody else. I mean he had his thing together. So when Candito came in he was just comfortable. He just

said go ahead and shoot your best shot. So as a result it was one of the most… we got a lot of the Latin guys to come in. I mean everybody… San Kentin came in and he ultimately hired Candito to you know play with his group. And a lot of other people came in to listen because it was very exciting to hear.
Candito was the first one that I ever heard to play three Congo drums at the same time. And sometimes he would play the three Congo drums and bongos in between and then he would be playing all of this stuff. I mean he was just remarkable virtuoso of the hand drum concepts.
So during this period we worked together for at least six months. And after… I decided to leave the… as a matter of fact Monty Kay booked me in the Cop cabaña which was a very prestigious job even though we were just working in the lounge. It paid two times the money I was making at Monty's place. So I am getting twice the money, twice the exposure and meeting a lot of other people in a very swanky hotel type place. But there was no room for the Congo.
So he stayed on and headed his own group and did other things at the Downbeat. We stayed in the Copa about three months then I went on the road. My first job on the road, I went out to Detroit. And this was funny. At that time though he had been here quite a while he still didn't speak English very well. And my Spanish is terrible. I mean I understand it a little bit but I don't speak it well at all.
So we were driving everywhere. So he was riding with me. And we drove from New York to Detroit. We laughed all the way from… my stomach hurt. I have never had so much fun on a long drive as I did with Candito. He was not only a wonderful human being. He is a funny guy. He was seeing this part of America for the first time and he was commenting on every thing. I didn't understand him and he would try to make me understand… it was just a really terrific trip.
We got out there and the people loved it. It was very good. So when we came back, we made a record. It was really a very exciting… I came back and told Bob, I said, "Look I have got to record with this guy. It is special." And it was. It was one of the best records I ever made.

HOLLY: Before we get to ABC Paramount I want to kind of talk about something that I think was very pivotal because I think we are near the year 1955.
What did the death of Charlie Parker do to kind of change the whole scene and how did it affect you personally?

Taylor: It wasn't apparent that his death was going to have the impact that it did. I mean obviously you miss someone who is important to everybody's developed, who is the major figure, only musician with the nightclub named after him and all that sort of stuff.
Charlie Parker, his passing left… gave more of a feeling of urgency to defining what his music was about and what… because there was a big conflict between bebop and cool. And right around that time, Stan Kentin was coming forth and Dave Bluebeck was

coming forth with what was called progressive jazz. So there was a lot of confusion in what was being printed about the music.
So those of us who were looking at the family lineage of jazz were thinking we really have to cautify this music and put it into perspective for ourselves you know before you know we can put it into perspective for anybody else. Art [Unintelligible] and a lot of people were very, very conscious of this.
Dizzy felt the loss perhaps more than anyone, having been that close to Charlie and you know just feeling that he would be there and then all of a sudden he is not there. What do you do? That really made Dizzy begin to focus both on his compositions and his structure of his groups in a way. I noticed it when I would encounter him in the places where we worked opposite of one another with one another on a concert or whatever. I noticed another kind of seriousness if you will.
Dizzy had always been a clown. At his most serious moments he would do something funny. But at this one moment he seemed to be trying to get all of this in hand and make sure that he was clear. And he was. Clifford Brown was on the scene. And Clifford Brown was making a whole lot of folks stand up, Dizzy included stand up and take notice because he had taken that to another level. He had taken that bebop concept another level. And he and Max were doing some things.
So you now have [Unintelligible] who is… left a big impact on folks. You have Kenny Dorum who is still around. You have the [Unintelligible] who has never given the kind of credit that he should give for the things that he did with Bird. So Dizzy and Howard and some other people, Kenny who had been close to Bird, Red Rodney who had been close to Bird and other people seemed to be saying well, okay we don't have that anchor so we better kind of get all of this together.
People began to rally around Monk a little more then at that point and began to look at what he was doing in a different way then they had prior to Bird's passing. I am not sure that that was related, it was just that for whatever reason people began to say oh yeah Monk is doing his thing. Because Monk had already recorded… remember he had recorded for [Unintelligible] already. He had done a lot of stuff. But it hadn't… he wasn't The Monk yet. It was coming.
So it was beginning to… some things were beginning to happen, his town hall concert and some other things were still forth coming.

HOLLY: What led you to ABC Paramount at this time?

Taylor: Actually I left Prestege and went with Riverside records. I was in… I was impressed by [Unintelligible] because I thought that they had a better merchandising… they had run a magazine and they seemed to have… they had gotten the stamp, the theolonious Monk stamp had come about. So I thought these guys know how to promote jazz. I mean they have got Time Magazine. Let me check on them. They were right around the corner from Prestege records, their office.
So I went around and I had met Oron because I was interested in the magazine that they

had which talked about the traditional jazz and a lot of stuff, he and Bill Grower. So we struck up a relationship. I just made a decision. I think I will go over and try these guys for a while. So when I went over, he asked me what I wanted to do. And I said, "Well one of the things I would like to do is, I said I love the flute." One of my favorite musicians is Frank Wess. But I don't want to… Frank had already recorded with Hank and somebody out at Savoy and don4e some really wonderful records. And so I didn't want to emulate that record.
I said, "Why don't we do four flutes. I will write some arrangements." I could hear the sound. I love the woodwind sound of flutes. Let's do something. So used the Latin rhythm section. I used a bass player that not too many people knew in those days, a young man named Tommy Williams. He is actually the one that I wrote, *One for the Willfa Four*. I wrote it for him to play.
We had worked together at Tommy and oh my…

HOLLY: Shadow Wilson?

Taylor: The pianist who played the wonderful introduction to *"Body and Soul"* with Coleman Hawkins. This was a huge guy and I am going to think of everybody's name as soon as I get off mike. I can't think of his name either. But he brought a trio into the composer when I worked there. So I am looking at this… listening to this guy. He has got Tommy Williams and this other gentleman who is a wonderful drummer. I still can't think of the piano player's name though.
So the drummer's… thank you very much… the drummer's name is Ben Reilly. I will think of the pianist's name shortly. Very fine pianist in the Tatum mold. A fine facility and a huge guy but played with a very delicate and a very swinging style. He played boogie woogie. He played all the old styles and it was really one of the best of the pre bop players. I mean his style… he never really became a bebop player. But he always was a two handed excellent Tatumisk pianist.
So he had Ben Reilly and Tommy Williams. And I liked Tommy's work so I hired him for this record date because of his facility. I knew he could play this style. I used several flutes to get the four flute sound I had to go through Jerome Richardson and Herby Man and Frank Wess and several other guys to complete the dates. We did two or three dates something like that.
It was very exciting for me because my concept was to use the flutes and to have this Latin rhythm going while we did it. It just kind of set up everything whether I wrote for them in unison or whether I wrote them in harmony and they would play a little tooty passage here and there, it just worked. So the material that I picked was especially tailored for this combination.
About I would say two months later, two months after the record came out, I got a call from Quincy Jones to make a commercial with him. And the commercial was for some chocolate. I can't remember what the chocolate was, Hershey's chocolate or something like that. So he had me on the record date and there were eight flutes. There were eight

flutes going all the way from piccolo down to the bass flute. And it was a wonderful sound. I said, "Now you tell me. Why didn't you tell me this before I made my record?" He laughed. He said, "That's why I wanted you on the record because I knew you liked to play in this context.
But man he had scored something… I wish… one of these days maybe I will go back and do that material with that combination because it was just a beautiful… it was a wonderful commercial. Whatever the syrup was or whatever the chocolate was, it sold a whole lot of chocolate you can believe that.

HOLLY: One of my favorite tracks on this Billy Taylor with Four Flutes record was a composition that I have never heard from Mary Lou Williams Cubano. Has she ever recorded that or…

Taylor: I don't know if she recorded it but she used to play… Mary Lou and I worked opposite of one another on many occasions, at Downbeat, at the Composer and at several… at Café Society and even earlier then that. So every opportunity I got to be around her or to work opposite of her was a welcomed opportunity. And you know we were friends from early days right up until she passed away. So I knew that tune. I had heard her do that a lot. And actually it is nothing but a base line. There is no melody. It is just a bass line. So I got her to write out the bass line for me. So that's what we did with it.
Because every chance I got to play her things I tried to include one of them. I had and still have great respect for her.

HOLLY: When you were recording with Riverside I think this is a significant point; the whole concept of stereo came into being. What was that like? How did it change recording?

Taylor: Well on this particular record it hurt me because the engineer was not… he was just learning. He was getting on the job training. The thing was so hot that sometimes it would pop right off… the needle would pop up. I mean because they cut the record so hot. So it didn't do what I had hoped to do as popular record. We did other records for them but that record for technical reasons didn't do what I had hoped it would do.
I hope they reissue it because there is a lot of good stuff on the album.

HOLLY: Definitely. The next record you recorded for Riverside was *Billy Taylor Uptown.*

Taylor: Yeah, that was… there was a man who used to come down to the Composer and hear my group all the time. And he… it was a black guy who wanted to bring to Harlem the same ambiance that he found at the Composer. He said, "You

know it's ridiculous that we don't have a club like this in Harlem." I said, "Well yeah it is." He said, "Well I am going to open one."
So he opened one but unfortunately his choice of places… he thought it was a good idea because he opened it right under the subway at Broadway and 125th Street. Right now there is a Kentucky Fried Chicken on the corner. This is like the next… there was something else on the corner and then the club, the Prelude, was just the next door down. Then there was a Chinese restaurant. It was a very nice little neighborhood there. And it was a very nice club. The club was well appointed.
It lasted for about two years. He was right. It was a good location and he got people from Columbia University and he got a different kind of crowd from what one would expect at a Harlem club. But it was at a time when people were really going to the center of Harlem and those people rarely came over to the… they came in a cab as opposed to the subway in most cases. So they may not have even known the club was there. They didn't advertise to a big extent.

HOLLY: You made another and probably your last recoding for Riverside, *Warming Up.*

Taylor: Actually two… what happened was I made that for C-SAC and Riverside put it out. C-SAC was an interesting group. They recorded Duke Ellington, they recorded Woody Herman and a whole lot of… Si Olivan and a lot of us… Kye Windin recorded for them. And they are a publishing company as well as… they are similar… C-SAC is similar to AS-CAP, which does the same thing… that AS-CAP and VMI do on another level.
They started off doing it in Europe and then they became… they started here also. So it was in direct competition with AS-CAP. So if you notice most of the songs that are written there are written by someone name Teddy Casteon. That's my wife.

HOLLY: Going to your work with ABC Paramount, you were talking off mike about your satisfaction with an album called *Evergreens.* Tell us about that.

Taylor: The first record I ever made for ABC Paramount when I started talking to Creed Taylor who I had known from his work at smaller labels earlier. And he had done some really significant things. I thought he was a bright guy and I said boy it's going to be interesting to work with this guy in a major company because… and he was just starting with ABC Paramount so you know he was looking to make a name for himself.
So he said, "Well let's do something different." I said, "Like what?" He said, "I would like to take some familiar tunes, some really good music and do a jazz impression of it." I said, "Sounds good to me. That's what I do anyway." So he said, "Fine. Pick some tunes." I said, "What do you want to call it?" He said, "We'll call it something that has to do with perennial. Why don't we call it Evergreens?" So it was his title.

So in that context I came up with the pieces that I am delighted to say are still with us. People are still recording *Then I'll be Tired of You* or *Cheek to Cheek* and some of the other… *All the Things You Are*, you know some pieces that are written by some of the best composers of popular music in the American history. And they are really well structured pieces of music.

HOLLY: Now working… at this point you have worked with a number of producers. You have worked with people… Oren Keith News and other people. What was it like working with Creed Taylor as opposed to Oren as oppose to the other people you worked with?

Taylor: Creed Taylor was more… he had more definite ideas. He was the kind of guy that would in those days that I think… I would like to see him and others like him do more of that now. He would get an idea from what he heard me do and say, "Gee I think Billy doing this would be a novel way to present him." And he would try to do it so that it would be inspirational to me rather than a handicap. I mean if it was going to turn out to be a drag he didn't want to do it.

For instance on this… he didn't tell me what he wanted… how many ballads or how many up tempo or how to play or whether to give any solos. He just said pick these tunes and do your thing on it. And that's what I did. It gave me all of the leeway to pick these tunes and say this is the Billy Taylor version of these things. So that was very helpful.

When we did a live album, which was one of the next albums we did, it was because he had heard me speak so often about what a joy it was to play at the London House and how this was a great piano room. The guys had taken the idea of the Ambers, which was the premier piano room in those days for jazz and they had taken it a step further. I said this is a better room then the Ambers because people listen and they come and the food is good and they really pay attention to what you are doing.

The record, there, we tried to capture some of that ambience but unfortunately for me the people that he hired to do this were not as experienced doing live recordings as I would have hoped. One is a piece on there called *Midnight Piano.* And the first take of that piece was so electric and so exciting that I stopped the set in the middle of the set and said, "Hey let me hear that." I was going to play that for all the people in the room. I want to repeat that for you. I really liked that.

What had happened and he didn't stop me, was that the waiter had kicked or somebody had kicked the plug and so they had recorded right up to the middle of the piano solo. They didn't get the bass solo, they didn't get anything. So it was that kind of… and they we had a couple of other takes which were really excellent takes but somebody dropped a whole bunch of dishes. I mean everything that could go wrong in a live performance seemed to have gone wrong on that date. But even so, it's a record that I like. It came off very well. I especially like the ballads on it.

HOLLY: This leads me to proudly, if I remember correctly, it's a very big album for you with Quincy Jones.

Taylor: Well this was an idea. The show, *My Fair Lady* had been opened for about a year, or maybe six or right months. Then they… Creed got wind of the fact that they were going to celebrate their… if it ran a year. They were going to have a big celebration with Rex Harrison and all the people… Julie Andrews, the people that starred in it.
He said, "How would you like to record something from the score? Do your thing on that?" I said, "Man, Andre [Unintelligible] has already done that as you know." He was aware of that record. I said… he has got Shelly Mann and Leroy [Unintelligible]. I said, "That's a hell of a record. I don't want to be compared with that. The music is good. I like the music. Let's do something else with it." He said, "What do you want to do?" I said, "A good friend of mine is… we have been doing some other work together. He is someone I would like to record with. His name is Quincy Jones."
So I introduced him to Quincy Jones and he… Quincy did his number… he had been writing stuff for Mercury Records and he is trying to get out from the hole that his European trip had put him in. So he is doing a lot of freelance stuff. So his… he was delighted. I mean this was going to be fun instead of a chore. So he put together… he asked me, "What kind of band do you want?" So I said, "Well I would like something that is sort of like the Miles Davis birth of the cool band because you know you have got enough there that it is sparse and you have got some room for the piano to kind of get in and out.
It is a big band, a relatively big band. It's a large ensemble but it's not a big band is what I am trying to say. It is a large ensemble. So you can do things, which use nice chords and everything without being bombastic. It just seems to me that would fit this. So he put together… he selected all the musicians on there. He put together all of those wonderful charts on there and purposely left some of them kind of loose so that we could just fool around with them and do them in the studio.
One of the things… I am trying to think of the name of it. Oh *The Rain in Spain*, was just a minimal arrangement. I mean most of that was done right in the studio. The things that were arranged very carefully are obvious on there. One in particular which I like is the *Street Where you Live* and the other is the ballad, *I Have Grown Accustomed to Your Face.* The piano thing that I play in the beginning, he wrote that. So that is Quincy. He heard that in my playing. I said okay. So I like that.
And he did little things, you know, he wouldn't write the whole solo but he would write a little thing and say this sounds like you and it would be a kickoff for me to go somewhere else. That was nice. Working with Quincy was one of the great experiences for me because not only is he extremely creative jazz artist but he applies that same creativity in his writing. So he leaves a space or he wants you to change that around. If this is something that you feel well that is nice by why don't I, just do it and let's see what happens.

So there was a lot of that going on, on the record. So the record, the people on the date contributed a lot. And Gerry Mulligan was just hanging around. I mean he came because he liked… you know as a friend of ours and you know we were buddies so he just came to hang out with us. And so he sat in the record studio and I think the baritone player had to leave or something. So he said, "Yeah I'll play the part." So as a result he is on the record. He doesn't even take a solo but he is just there playing a part.

HOLLY: At that point, we are in the mid 50's, after the death of Charlie Parker and although you have been recording for other labels, did you ever wonder why you had to go from label to label? You know at that point Miles was starting his long association with Columbia. Some artists had long associations with other labels. Why would a person with your talent and your knowledge of music at that point, you also had the respect of musicians, why was it that way for you to go from label to label to label even from the mid 50's?

Taylor: It was difficult in those days for people to conceive of a piano leader in the context of making a lot of money. If you were Dave Ruebeck and you broke through with a hot record okay. If you were Earl Garner and you broke through with a hot record, okay. But you have to realize that those were two out of hundreds of musicians who were making records in those days, playing piano, piano leaders. Hank Jones, Eddie Haywood who had had hits, Mary Lou Williams, [Unintelligible], Art Tatum who never had a hit, in his whole career. Teddy Wilson never had a hit.
Many great artists never had a hit in the record sense and they were penalized for that. Their recording history shows that they recorded things, if they were lucky as Art Tatum was to find a Norman Grantz or as Teddy was earlier in his career to find a John Hammond or to be found by John Hammond. If they were that lucky then they had some representative stuff out.
But look what happened when Teddy Wilson with his name, with his talent, with his influence, was no longer under the guidance and/or shepherding of John Hammond. Those opportunities didn't seem to be available to him. At one point he was playing with Joe Jones and doing all these European things playing beautifully, probably as well as he ever played in his life as the leader of a trio. He just couldn't; hold onto those gigs.
So I didn't find it strange that I had to go around, shop around from record to record. Record companies just didn't know what to do with people. I envied two musicians in my entire life and I have said this on many occasions but the only two musicians I have ever envied and I envied them both for the same reason, were Earl Garner and Bill Evans. And both of those guys had managers who saw to it that they never in the length of their career, their entire career, had nothing to worry about but is the piano in tune or do I feel like playing. None of the other stuff was of their concern because someone else was taking care of that and taking care of it well.
That is something that didn't happen for Dizzy. It didn't happen for many people to

that extent.

HOLLY: Do you think it happened for a [Unintelligible] Jamal?

Taylor: No. It did not. [Unintelligible] Jamal should be one of the people who is recognized according to his influence. I mean he is one of the most influential pianist of the 50's or that particular period in his life. And the only reason his influence has not continued on the same level is because he hasn't been heard on the same level. [Unintelligible] Jamal was manufactured. I don't say this in a derogatory sense. I say this with respect because what the… man that owned [Unintelligible] Cadet records, the brothers, what was his name? It was a Chicago group. Anyway, they recorded the great blues and gospel people. They were on the Southside… the Chess Brothers, they were on the Southside.

They, with their rhythm and blues connections and all of the connections they had with the network of African American disk jockeys with [Unintelligible] and whole bunch of other stuff that was going on in those days, they could guarantee play. They could guarantee a certain amount of play all over the country.

When they decided to go into jazz, they recognized the fact that here was a musician who had a wonderful ability to communicate something very special without words. I mean he could sit at the piano… they were among the only people I know that recognized the pianist as a leader and promoted and merchandized him as such.

They took those in person records, got them on all of the radio shows and made him a name. I mean [Unintelligible] Jamal came to New York playing very much like Earl Garner. He played at the Ambers and played in other places and went back to Chicago having heard what was going on in New York and regrouped and reorganized his ideas and said no I have got to get Garner… I mean he had to get Garner out of his system in that regard and do my thing as a unique individual.

And he did. He formed the basis of you… he presented that he had formed it earlier but he presented those ideas in Chicago at the Persian and other clubs. And he was so popular that he filled those rooms all the time and the Chess Brothers as a Chicago operation, recognized this, captured it on record, merchandized it and he has been a major figure in the music ever since.

Understand that the reason Miles was influenced by him was because he heard him. He didn't hear a lot of people that he could have been influence by. I mean he possibly could have been influenced by say Carl Perkins who was playing a very interesting kind of funky playing on the West Coast. He didn't hear it at that time. By the time he probably heard him, he was into other things.

But he did hear Ahmed and he had been… with the beautiful sound that he gets on the instrument, with the use of space and all the creativity and originality that he had, it was a natural. But he had to be heard. It had to be presented. It had to be presented consistently and all over the place, as you promote anything else in this country. The Chess brothers did that.

[Unintelligible] Jamal moved on from Chess and Ramsey Lewis was playing very much a cross between what I was doing with my trio and John Lewis was doing with the Modern jazz Quartet. His first record was the *Gentleman of Jazz* and it was very much in the spirit of what John Lewis and I were doing.
They promoted him through the same network. Ramsey being smart enough to realize that these are the clubs he is playing now, developed his own thing in the context of the places where he was playing. So the in crowd and all these things were the natural result of his playing to the audience that was hiring him. Given his generation, dancing to Motown and doing these other things, he brought his classically oriented style into that kind of focus.
But once again these are… this is the one company that I know of that merchandized the pianist as a leader in that regard, in today's context.
Everybody else threw all the piano players up against the wall and whoever stuck was the guy they ran with. You know, who ever made it on his own or her own were the guys that they did. And it really was frustrating. You would come up with a gimmick as Concord has where you do all these things at [Unintelligible].
There were some wonderful players, good players and everything but it doesn't mean very much to those individual artists to be presented in that context. The only thing it means to them is that here is an opportunity to be heard because someone who might not look twice at pianist A, will hear pianist A in the context of the [Unintelligible] concerts and say he must be good because he is on here. That was a good way of merchandizing. But those things don't come around very often.

HOLLY: Do you think also your knowledge of the business may have prevented you… made other people gun shy in dealing with you?

Taylor: Yeah. It became very apparent, very early in my career that you couldn't do, and I don't say this to put anybody down at Bluenote but Bluenote had a way of handling musicians, which I didn't see eye to eye with. I mean I love what they did. I love what they did with Hart Silver and Herbie Hancock and many other pianists who played for them. But they didn't do very much for Walter Bishop or for some of the other pianists that they could have done with at that time.

HOLLY: Walter Davis?

Taylor: Walter Davis I mean, thank you. Walter Davis and who else? There was another pianist that they recorded as… Harsh Pollen, you know. These were guys who with merchandizing, given the strength of the label at that time could have gone much further and could have done much more then they were able to do. But Bluenote just put the records out.
Symphony Sid and the other good jazz disc jockeys around the country played them because they were Bluenote records and they were good. Duke Pierson coming along

with the big band. I mean a lot of stuff should have happened with that big band. It was a great big band.
Many things that they could have done in terms of promotion and merchandizing were not done because that wasn't the way they did business at the Prestege or the Bluenote or the Roost or any of those labels.
So that wasn't… you put the record out if it gets to a disc jockey or gets on a juke box you might put a single out from the record if it looks like it is getting a lot of play or can get a lot of play. But it wasn't the merchandising plan to say here is Billy Taylor. He plays all these kind of clubs. This is his audience. How do we reach that audience? How do we present him?
I mean I got a lot of publicity from that. I was on the cover of Downbeat. I was the first person that won the critics award. None of this was exploited by any record company that I worked with. None. I mean that was the secret. Half of the critics that vote on the… critics now don't even know that I won… you know it is not important to them nor should it be necessarily.
And to back up to my own feeling of that period, I really didn't care. I mean naturally I want to be as popular as the next guy. I want people to like my work. I want to get as much exposure as the next guy but I was interested in doing what I did well.
In those days once I was able to sustain a trio, I could fill a few seats in the house. I mean I could get a job at Baker's Keyboard Lounge and get booked back because I did well for them. I could play the Bluenote in Philly. I could do… I had a little circuit that I was on. I mean I could play those clubs. I could spend three or four months in the Hickory House. I could do these things. So I said I really can't depend on a record company or somebody else's whim to do. Let me get out there and hustle my own gigs and do my own thing.
So it worked for me. Since I was really an outsider, I mean I have always been… even when I was house pianist in Birdland I was not an insider.

HOLLY: Why were you an outside?

Taylor: By choice. I wasn't a junkie. I didn't hang out to the extent that most of the guys did. I had just had my first child, my son was born while I was at Birdland and I had another agenda. I mean I wanted to spend some time with my family. I wanted to enjoy that aspect of my life as well as concentrate on playing. And it was hard because I had to spend a lot of time away from my family.
My wife tells… she is always telling my daughter and other people about reminding them of when they were small, some of my nieces and nephews. I was working at Birdland and we had… her sisters had children before we did. She is the youngest of two sisters. So they had children before we did. My nieces and nephews are a little older than my children. So we would all go to the beach on Sunday. Well Sunday I am working, well Sunday night. So we would go to the beach at 10:00 or 11:00 a.m. in the morning and hang out all day on the beach and then around 4:00 or 5:00 p.m. I have to

start packing up and getting back and get something to eat and clean up and go to work at 9:00 p.m.
Everybody else is out. Everybody else is like I am going to relax. I'm having a good day at the beach. But I have to get up and go to work. That was just a part of… it was something that I enjoyed doing. It was an important part of my life. But it was different from many other guys who would hang out all night and go to the after hour places I had done when I was younger and before I got married.
And I must confess that even in those days I would do that too but I still felt a responsibility of family and felt like doing these other things.
The idea of being able to control my own destiny was the one that got me in a lot of trouble throughout my entire career because I was not averse to speaking to the guys that owned the clubs and other people in ways that they were not accustomed to being spoken to.
And it was not with disrespect it was just that I thought I deserved a certain amount of respect too. When I would play in a club like the Ambers, I would criticize Ralph Watkins. I would say, "The club is nice but it's really a drag. The dressing room here is just a little closet. When I play the London House, hey man it's in an office building. He has got an office upstairs. It is comfortable. We have got a radio and some records and they send up coffee and we can relax. You can then in between shows relax and get ready for the next show. Here, you know I am on stage… once I walk in the door, I am on stage until 4:00 a.m. It's okay I can do it but the other way is better."
He would say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." They don't want to hear that from… go play the piano man. Don't tell me how to run my club. Because I didn't bite my tongue I didn't always get some of the opportunities that the other guys that were not so outspoken got. Then too, they didn't feel, a lot of guys didn't feel that they could offer me the same kind of things that they offered other guys. I mean I demanded a certain kind of money. I asked for a Steinway piano. And in some cases since I couldn't force them to get a Steinway piano I would say… in one case for instance I told Morris Levy, I said, "Morris…" they had a Steinway but it had been really beaten up. At one point Slim Gaylord, I was working with Slim Gaylord who used to work with a big tall zombie glass of coca cola.
And I knew that one night that thing was going to go right into the piano. I would constantly be moving it and he would move back [laugh] because he worked in… he was a huge guy and he moved with big motions. His arms were long and everything. So sure enough one night right into the piano it went. Well it ruined the soundboard of the piano. The coke with all that sugar and all that stuff, and ice and everything. So I told Morris, I said, "Look the piano has been going for a while so this might be a good time to get a new piano." So he said, "Well what kind of piano should I get?" So I said, "Steinway." He said, "Well that's very expensive isn't it?"
We had a long conversation about it. I said… the way I finally sold him on it is I said, "You know you have got to… what kind of car do you drive? Do you drive a Cadillac?" He said, "Sometimes." I said, "You are aware of the value of a Cadillac

right?" He said, "Of course." So I said, "If you buy this years Cadillac and you keep it for four or five years and then you want to sell it as a second hand car as oppose to an Oldsmobile or a Chevy or something like that you can get much closer to your investment right?" He said, "Yeah sure, it's a Cadillac."
I said, "That's my point. This is a Steinway. Think the same way about the instrument because this beat up instrument that you have got… we are going to get a good trade in because it's a Steinway. Now if you will you know you can send someone or if you want to go, you can go with me." So he said, "I'll go because I want to see a Steinway."
So he went over to the Steinway Hall with me and I had set this up with a friend of mine there. I said, "Look I want two of the… another kind of piano, any other kind of piano but you know you guys get pianos in trades and so I want a couple of those because I want to play that for him first.
So this guy gave me some really awful pianos. I mean they were… and they were uprights. One was an upright and one was a grand. So I played the upright and said, "This is another kind of piano. I want you to listen to this." I said, "Now this is an upright and even this grand sounds better than the upright." So I played the grand for him. Then I went to the Steinway and the Steinway was gorgeous man. I mean you don't have to be a musician. It's like the difference between hitting a piece of fine glass and hitting the side of a table. There is that much difference.
So he said, "Yeah it does sound better." I said, "This is what you are getting and even though it might not sound this good when you trade it in, we will talk to the salesman. He will tell you what you can do." Because they have a list like second hand pianos… I mean second hand cars. You know what a second hand car goes for. They will tell you what a second hand piano goes for.
So he bought it. And from that point on we had a pretty good piano to play. But over the years it really got beaten up as any piano would with that kind… three different people playing on it every night.

HOLLY: Coming back to the period I am talking about in the mid 50's and not only were there musical changes but there were changes in society. You had the Emma Till incident in Mississippi. You had Rosa Parks in Montgomery and then in 1957 you had Brown vs. the Board of Education… 1954, I'm sorry. What were… this is a two part question. What were black audiences like with jazz and what was your motivation for writing an article about what you felt about Negroes at that time, knowing about the music?

Taylor: I was very concerned because none of the… at this particular time getting towards the end of the 50's jazz had moved downtown. I mean it was possible for most people of color to go to anyplace downtown and enjoy themselves and not be embarrassed as they had been in earlier years, in some places downtown.
52nd Street and the jazz places were Oasis in many places because there were… you

never knew if you were black if you were going to be embarrassed by going into some very swank place and you know have somebody just keep you waiting or just do something that made it obvious that you were not welcomed there. The would not say you can not come in here because legally they couldn't do that but they would find a lot of ways to embarrass you.

So if you were going out with a date you didn't want to go through all that. I remember taking my wife over to Jersey over to an amusement park. And we had ridden on all the rides and had all the fun and everything and we were on the way out and they were playing some nice music. When we came in the music wasn't of interest to me but when I was going out, it was late in the evening, the band was playing some jazz. We said hey let's go in there and dance.

So I started in and the guy told me I had to be a member. This was a public amusement park. So I asked him where do I get a membership? He told me over there. So I go over to this building that he pointed out and you know obviously he was just sending me away. So I go back and now I am furious. I have spent what little money I have entertaining my date and you know this guy is going to give me a hard time.

Well I am not a violent guy but I really was prepared to take him on. This is the bouncer type. So luckily for me my wife prevailed and said you know don't be stupid. But I am furious. And she said, "No never mind." So we went on. But I really… it was one of the rare occasions that I was just… the thing that infuriated me was that I'm southern and I am used to… I expect that. But here I spent you know almost all of my money, I barely got enough money to go home in your establishment and you are going to say I am not worthy of coming in and dancing. Hey I don't need that. I was very upset.

That was the climate as far as too many black people were concerned with too many things that we did. And in jazz one of the things that had happened is that jazz had moved to 52nd Street, to the village, to places outside of the Harlems of the United States, outside of the inner cities. So you know had a white audience. Most of my audience as of 1951 or '52 was basically white.

Now for little clubs like the Downbeat was very mixed. The Copa was not, that was basically white. The London House was basically white. In Detroit the Baker's Keyboard Lounge was basically white. In Cleveland, I forget… it was a place in the alley, I can't think of the name of the place but that was basically white. So most of the places I was playing… I was not playing for my own ethnic group.

I was very conscious of this because every time I would go to Cleveland or Detroit or somewhere, I would go to the area where their clubs were, the Bluebird or some of the other clubs in the area, the black communities and listened and see what they were listening too. And usually except for the Bluebird, they were listening to rhythm and blues.

This bothered me. I am saying why don't you have some jazz… Harlem as both. Harlem has jazz and R&B and everything else. Why don't you mix them up and I assume that it was because they didn't hear it… weren't hearing it on the radio, weren't

hearing it on records. There was a whole generation of people that had been born in the 40's and early 50's… were born in the 40's and were now going to nightclubs that weren't aware of this music or to the extent that it might appeal to them.
I really… I am an activist. If something bothers me I want to do something about it. It may or may not be effective but in this case, I wrote some articles. I started off by writing… *Negroes don't know anything about jazz and this is why.* I said these black newspapers should be writing more about it and covering… which they still don't. Black magazines should be doing more. Black radio should be doing more. And I tried to say I am criticizing you because I think these are some things, which is possible for you to do which you are not doing.

HOLLY: Now having said all that and written all that, what was the response from the black community?

Taylor: It was varied. Some people said you are right. Some other people said you are all wet, I mean we are doing that already. There were a whole lot of people that were defensive especially people on the radio. I mean guys on the radio… I almost got blacklisted by a lot of black disc jockeys because I was knocking what they were playing. And they said, "You know I love jazz but I can't make any money playing jazz."
So I would go to places where I had gone before and instead of having… Chicago and a couple of radio stations that had played me before, one of the disc jockeys, told me he didn't have time for me this time. I am in town for a month. However Sid McCoy and Daddy O'Daily were very friendly and they interviewed me but I mean a couple of guys really took exception to that. They said don't be putting us down.
And I wasn't. I was just saying I think you ought to do something different. And the very guy who didn't have time for me, whose name escapes me at the moment, used to put on… he ultimately went back to jazz and he ultimately… he put on some of the things with Sunny Stiff and the duo that they had, the two tenor players Sunny and…

HOLLY: Jean Ambers.

Taylor: Yeah Jean Ambers. So that was one of the things he did, not because I said do it but because it was feasible for him to do it at that moment in time. But this time when I came back to the London House… as a matter of fact, at one point not because of him at one point after I had written this, I started working. I got concerned about not playing for a black audience. I went to work at a black club. I blew my opportunity to work at the London House because they were in direct competition. I am trying to think of the name of this club. It was on the Southside. It will come to me in a minute.
It was like working in Harlem. I mean this was the hippest club… I loved this club. We would play in the middle of a bar and the guy who was the manager of the club

called himself the wiggler for reasons, which we won't discuss here [laughter]. So I knew I was uptown. And the whole idea of being in a place where people were so into the music, I mean they responded to every nuance of th4e music. Diana Washington came in and all the black entertainers came here because this was a wonderful place. It was like going to Small Paradise in New York. It was that kind of place.
So in this period the whole idea of what was going on, had a great deal to do with what you played, where you played and who you were playing for. This was just… I guess the reason I reacted like this, this was just prior to the period of discovery that we were entering with Dr. Martin Luther King you know which was coming up in the early 60's. We hadn't quite reached that point but it was fermenting you know just below the surface. And that was coming.
If you listened to some of the stuff that Cannonball [Unintelligible] was playing at that period, the tunes that he was writing that really preceded the country preacher in some of those things. He was really getting a soulful thing going along very early in his… and Ramsey was listening to people like Ray Charles and Stevie Wonder. One of the guys who was having a big effect on piano players was Ray Bryant because of the kind of funky thing that he did so well.
And Harold Silver was having hit after hit after hit because he had really gotten deeply into that at that point. So this was coming. And the interesting thing was that the audiences at that point were splintering. It was becoming an economic thing. So many people in the black community were not able to afford to come to some of the places that we were coming to.
I was going to have to address this very shortly in the early 60's when I created the jazz mobile because by that time and this is just a few years later, I mean it was just out priced. I mean there was no way… they couldn't come to see us in the downtown clubs. They couldn't afford it. And they couldn't get to the festivals and a lot of the other stuff that we were doing was prohibiting them from having the access that they used to have to the Duke Ellington's and the Count Basie's and the Miles Davis' and those people.

HOLLY: Also in this period, did you have any idea about the forthcoming of the so called rock and roll movement and the effect it would have on jazz musicians?

Taylor: No. I didn't have a clue that this was coming at us so fast. I was… after I left ABC Paramount I went to record for Capital Records. So now I am recording mainly for major labels, ABC Paramount, and I recorded for… after that I recorded for Mercury for a short time did a couple of things for them.
Jimmy Jones did some arrangements for me. And having done *My Fair Lady* I kept getting requests; okay here is the new Broadway show. Do another one. I didn't want to do that. I had already done it. Jack Tracey who was then A&R person for the Mercury company got me interested in doing a show… the music to a show called *[Unintelligible]*. It is a wonderful score. I mean the show didn't do very well but the

score was just beautiful. And I loved it and I said hey man write. I was going to do something similar to what I did with *My Fair Lady* because that seems to me to be a good thing to do with this particular music.
So the instrumentation is slightly different and the rhythm section is quite different. I had George [Unintelligible] drums on that. I was so pleased with the result of what we did with the show. Jimmy wrote some beautiful music. He scored some very lovely things for it.
Then I did another record for them, which should have been a hit, but for a variety of reasons it was not. It was called *Impromptu.* I wrote some stuff… I had heard Jim Hall and I just… when I was a kid I used to play guitar so I have an affinity for a good guitarist. And Jim Hall was different from John Collins or Kenny [Unintelligible] or any of the other guys that I heard. And I just liked what he did.
Unfortunately for me I got Jim Hall at a bad time when he was not physically well so he didn't play as well on that date as he played on some other dates that I had heard before and after. But he is still one of my favorite guitarists and is one of the great artists on that instrument in jazz.
Around that time I was doing… I did something else that I was extremely proud of and that is in 1958 I was asked to be the musical director of the first educational series on jazz that was ever done. So national educational television then was housed in the building of NBC here in New York. So we had access not only to the physical facilities but the musicians who were on staff.
And that is something else I should mention. From the 30's right up until the mid 60's… it began to filter out, you know it died off but generally speaking from the 30's to the mid 60's all the radio stations, the main radio stations, NBC, CBS and ABC and so forth had musicians on staff. So they were paid to show up and play any kind of show that was CBS or anybody was doing. So they were on staff. They played classical music. They played jazz. They played pop music. They played Latin music anything that was to be played, they were there to play it.
So when I went to NBC they had a staff band and I could choose the musicians that I wanted from the staff band. Now I didn't know that because this was NET that I also could have chosen more from outside, but they told me, well you have to choose from the staff. I said, "Well the staff can't do everything I want." There were a couple of guys on the staff that I wanted but other then that I wanted to do some… so I got some concessions even from the beginning.
My band included Doc Severson and Tony Scott and Jimmy Cleveland and Model Lowe and my trio, later but first I had Eddie Safransky and OC Johnson in the rhythm section. Our job was to play whatever was necessary to take jazz from it's beginnings to what was then contemporary jazz. So what we did, we had… Duke Ellington was our first guest. We had our host whose name was Gilbert Saldese. Our advisors and consultants were Leonard Feather and Marshal Sterns. So we were in good shape in terms of people who knew what the music was supposed to be about and people who were supposed to be in tune with us.

Gilbert Saldese unfortunately was not the best choice for a host because he felt the need to apologize for jazz for the whole 13 weeks that we did the show. And he felt… he really honestly was never convinced that jazz was America's classical music and that it was indeed something that was not only indigenous of highest artistic merit. He thought it was good. He thought it was nice but he didn't think it compared to the European classical music and other types of show music that he was more familiar with. So that was one of the problems that hurt in having him as the host for 13 weeks. But that notwithstanding, he did a very good job of bringing together some of the elements that we had. We had a great team. We had access to the best people, lighting people, the best sound people, the bets director, and the best technical people on the NBC staff. So our producer George [Unintelligible] and Perry Cousins Harper who was his assistant picked people who turned out to be the very best for us.
I mean the [unintelligible] from that show are so good I wish they would put a record out of those things because they are wonderful. I mean we had guests like Ben Webster, [Unintelligible] Smith, Aaron Culpine, Duke Ellington, Jimmy Rushing, Cannonball [Unintelligible], Lee Conitz, Bill Evans, I mean we had all kinds of folks on there. The 13 weeks was… it is still, and I say this because it's an unfortunate circumstance that I can say this, it is still the best series ever done on jazz on television. And that is just a terrible indictment of what has been going on since.

HOLLY: Was this the *Sound of Jazz*?

Taylor: No it was not.

HOLLY: What was the name of this?

Taylor: This was called the *Subject is Jazz* and it was produced at NBC for NET, the National Educational Television network. *The Sound of Jazz* was produced for CBS. Those were two… it was a series but the ones that we're basically talking about are two separate shows that were done on Sunday afternoon for CBS.
And so the idea of jazz on television is one that I really think the time has come to get back into doing that kind of presentation which educates as well as entertains an audience and brings them up to the level of people who listen to jazz very faithfully on radio. We have a very hip audience that listens to national public radio. A very hip audience that listens to American public radio. A very hip audience that listens to many independent radio stations that program all jazz or some jazz in their area.
Cable has done a good job of bringing some of the things that are available both to radio and to television. So there is an audience, which is already identified. It is not being exploited or even attended to by anybody who is doing jazz on a regular basis.

HOLLY: Would you say that 1958 was… using that series as a starting point, was that the year that you really decided to really go head first into education?

Taylor: Yeah, very much so. I had as early as 1949 or 1950 I had given lectures and been invited… some of my colleagues and some of my music teachers had taken advanced degrees at Columbia Teacher's College. And several of them had asked a professor there if he would not have me come and talk about some of my concepts about jazz education to them, these being music teachers from all over the country. He did and I began to do lectures both for the music educators, national conference on a regional basis and ultimately in 1958 just prior to doing this TV show, I along with Stan Kenton was invited to speak to the national body in LA. So just before I was to come and star the series I am invited to speak at the National Council… I mean at the National Convention for… Music Educators National Conference. This is a big deal. These are the major educators in the country.

Earlier I had attended a seminar at Yale where our task had been to restructure the music instruction in this country and make a presentation to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. And so this conference had done that. We were there for two weeks. They had music teachers, principals, composers all kinds of people and only two jazz musicians. They had invited Dave Ruebeck who wasn't available. They invited Duke Ellington who wasn't available; they invited several people who weren't available.

The only two jazz musicians who seem to be available at that particular time was Mercy Ellington and me. So we went. And together with some very insightful musicians, we devised… we made many suggestions. We made many recommendations, which we had hoped would be taken care of. By 1958 this still wasn't… nothing was going on. And even later in 1960's you know they still hadn't acted on it. So I was very disappointed.

At any rate, because of the going out to speak to them and I spoke on a morning session. Kenton had either spoke the afternoon before I did or… anyway he spoke before I did. After my speech I was in the restaurant commiserating with a friend who was a teacher and a musician and I was saying, "Man they gave me a pat on the head and told me don't call me. I'll call you." I said, "I don't need this from these people. This is ridiculous. I come out to the West Coast at my own expense because I believe in this and hey this is a real drag."

As I am talking I am overhearing someone expressing similar thoughts and in the next booth is Stan Kenton and he is saying the same thing. So we turned around and commiserated with one another. That was when Kenton went away and began to use his band as a workshop band and to do schools and to do really do all of the things that he began to do with his summer program and to start what ultimately ended up in the Music Educators National Conference, I mean the Jazz Educators National Conference. So it was the IHIE, International… first it was the National now it is International. But you know that really started… he was one of the people that really helped that get off the ground, that concept. I in turn came back to New York and began to write a lot more and began to do this series and to look for more things to do. I actually gave

Clark Terry the first opportunity to do his thing on television, to do the kind of educational things that he did.
I was asked to do a seminar, a two day seminar on television in Cleveland at a Cleveland television station, which would be taped and used there. I did. I put together a combo and Clark was my first choice as a trumpet player. And he said, "Man I can't do this. I have never done anything like this." I said, "Sure you can." And so we went out and he was one of the best people and the most articulate on the show. He expressed himself very well and in very clear terms and demonstrated what he was talking about. So it was very successful.
And it got him interested in doing more educational things and he has been doing that ever since. He is still one of the best clinicians we have out there. And I am doing a piece on him this coming Sunday as we speak on the Sunday morning show. That's tomorrow. Doing the educational things became… I began to look for ways to incorporate that in my work. I began to do radio… to do guests… I had done a lot of guest appearances on radio and television during this period.
When I was working at the Hickory House and other places there was always someone doing a remote. This was usually at night but since I was doing a lot of recording for major labels like, ABC Paramount and Mercury then I got to go on disc jockey shows and be interviewed and so forth. I got to know the people on both sides of the mike, you know the technical people. I was asked to guest host some radio shows and so forth. So I did that a little bit.
So in the early 60's I left… I only did two albums for Mercury and then I went with Capital. And I did… my first album for them was a big band because I had done so many band things that finally here is an opportunity to do a real big band, 18 piece band thing. So I jumped at it. I am now working at radio station… I have been doing a regular radios show by this time in the early 60's… I guess it was about '59 or something like that. I began to work on WLIB on a regular basis.
By the time I got to record for Capital records I am now working on a daily basis. I mean the guys has asked me… what happened was the [Unintelligible] scandal hit WLIB like it hit a lot of places and the guys who… I had been doing a Saturday show. The guy who had been doing a daily show was busted for [Unintelligible]. So right now he is out. They need somebody right now.
So the general manager/program director, who was the same person said, "I would like for you to do the daily show. Can you do it?" I said, "No I am working at the Hickory House and I have got an active trio." He said, "Well when you have to go out of town, you can tape it. We will get a guest or something like that. Are you traveling a lot these days?" I said, "Well not a lot, not as much as I would like." He said, "Well as long as you can, why don't you do this and we will work it out."
So as it turned out I began to… I stayed at the Hickory House for about 3 or 4 months because I was into long time gigs. I mean I would get a gig and we would stay a month or two months or whatever it was. It was possible to do it in those days.
So the radio station gave me on a daily basis, gave me an opportunity to really solidify

my financial state. What I did was I went to… when the guys asked me to do a daily show, I said, "Well I can't really consider that. I am working regularly." He said, "How much money do you want?" So I asked for what I thought was an outrageous amount of money. So he said, "Well I don't know." I said, "Well look I am working at night. I don't need to do this but you want me to do it so hey for this amount of money I will." The guys, "Well okay."

So he gave me the money I wanted. So I thought hey that works. So I went down and told John Povkin down at the Hickory House, I said, "John you know, I have been thinking. I am doing a regular radios show now. I mean I am doing this everyday. I really don't need to play here every night. So you know, you have to pay me a little bit more money because…" So he went for that too. So now I am in good shape. So I said all right.

This went on for a while. And I started to work, this is prior to my going with Capital records. So now I am with Capital records. We do this first big band record date. It is good. I got a turntable hit. I mean every… I am working at WNEW now. I have left… well what had happened is my jazz show was so popular at WLIB that we were… we were 1190 on the dial. And at 1130 on the dial was WNEW. So we were right next to them on the dial.

And I keep showing up in their polls when they were trying to see about their popularity, this guy from this tiny little daylight station keeps showing up. Who the hell is this? And so when they found out who I was and what I was doing, they said hire him. So they hired me away from WLIB at about twice the salary I was making. So I am doing all right. My family is in good shape at the moment. By now I have got two kids.

I am really thinking about what I am doing and the relationship of balancing this radio and playing. And so I am playing every night. I am playing… now a family really gets difficult because I am working… when I started as a radio announcer on a regular basis I had a large record collection anyway but it started growing by leaps and bounds.

I found that in order to do the kind of radio show I wanted to do, I had to listen to everything that I wanted to play so that I knew I could make the same kind of programming that I did when I played the piano. I mean I wanted to say well here is a saxophonist in the Ben Webster style. Here is another saxophonist in the Lester Young's style. Here is someone influenced by Benny Carter. I had to have all of these points of references to do the kind of programming and to say what I wanted to say about the music. And then I had to listen to everything. So I listened, I spent a lot of time listening.

That did cut into my practice time because I am listening seriously. But once I realized that I had to do it then I put that aside just like I put the practice time aside, so I spent X amount of time for listening, X amount of time for practice, playing, on the air, you know all of that was kind compartmentalized. But that really cut into my family time so my family suffered in that… at that particular period.

But my wide was very supportive and so things worked out okay. But now I am

beginning to see that there is some other stuff… Elvis Presley is very popular. And now that I am on the radio I am seeing what this rock and roll thing is about. I mean Elvis Presley is popular and there are some other groups that are being played on white radio in the general market and everything. And that is my radio competition.
So I said hey so what? So I am playing all of the hip stuff that I know and we're getting number like you… at one point on the radio I was double and triple spotting because… I mean that is three commercials, one back to back to back, like you see on television now. I was doing that on radio. And the reason was because everybody wanted to do my show. The reason for that is I was selling the products. I was a good salesman and people were listening to me and they were buying whatever… we had some strange products. We had father and son suits and all kinds of stuff, people who did different kinds of work for you. But it was working.
So now, I find that, okay I am doing okay but here is about '64… when did the Beatles hit do you remember?

HOLLY: '64.

Taylor: Was it '64? Okay I am now recording for Capital and I have got a couple of records out. So Capital promoted their performers. They would invite you to their openings and they would… disc jockeys and they made a big deal out of it. So I went to this Nancy Wilson opening down at the Waldorf. Big deal, I mean all the local disc jockeys are there. I am there as a disk jockey not as a Capital artist.
So I am sitting by a guy who is a record promotion guy for Capital at dinner. This is before the show. So he is telling me, "Oh man we have just discovered a group in Europe and when they come here they are going to be a smash because we are going to do the same thing… what we have got in mind, the company has been bought by EMI. And EMI has presented these folks to us. What we are going to do is to use the same techniques that they used to make Elvis Presley to make these guys. They are going to be sensational. We're going to get them on the Ed Sullivan Show. It's going to be something else."
So I said, "That's interesting. Who are they? He said, "A group of… it's an English band called the Beatles." I said, "Well that's nice." So the Beatles hit and I mean they hit. Boy it was just unbelievable the impact that they had on radio and records. Because what they did, they sold so many records so fast, they made so much money for the company that Capital records couldn't keep up with the demand. So not only was Capital using all of its pressing ability to get records out as fast as they could but they were getting all of the independents and anybody else that would press things up for them, just on the Beatles.
Now they had Frank Sinatra, Peggy Lee, Stan Kenton, Nat Cole just to mention four of their main sellers. They had Tennessee Ernie Ford, they had what's his name… his wife was named Ford, Mary Ford.

HOLLY: Les Paul.

Taylor: Les Paul and Mary Ford who had sold a lot of records for them. So they had a lot of big record sellers on the label. None of them could get their records pressed. They pressed nothing but Beatles. Now here I am with a turntable hit. I mean I am playing on WNEW and everybody in the middle of the road station of which there were many in those days was playing… whatever we were playing they played. So all over the country my records are being heard. Nowhere in the country can they buy them because they are not being pressed.
So I am going nuts. I am saying, "Hey man you know this is going to kill me because as of that time my career was highly dependent on records. I had been lucky. I had been successful with records. I had not had any hits but my records sold steadily and very well especially with ABC and those things. So I had a reputation for selling records and filling clubs.
But if I don't have any records I don't have anything to promote to get on and you know so I am in bad shape. SO I then had to regroup. That was when I decided hey I am going to do radio and I am going to sort of gear my… I know I have got all of these things, these live things on radio but I am going to use radio as my means to do what formally has been done or what other guys are doing with records.
That was a mistake. I mean it worked for me and it kept me working. It built a great reputation for me. I made a lot of money. I went into… I produced radio and television commercials as a result of being on the radio. Some of my clients were Colgate, Palmolive and Wonder bread and Pepsi Cola, Coco cola, Valentine Beer, Budweiser Beer. I devised a little thing that I did for Pepsi Cola where along with a woman who was sort of an associate, I guess she was a program director when I first went to LIB. We had a five minute vignette that started off with a Pepsi commercial. I said something and today the Pepsi showcase features Count Basie. You would hear a little Count Basie. I told a little bit about whatever it was he was playing, did the commercial and was out of there. And they slid that into all kinds of shows across the board. Pepsi loved it because instead of just having a plug or a commercial they had five minutes of Pepsi.
And things like that I was very good at. I mean I got all that kind of stuff going. And we did a 15 minute version of that for Budweiser Beer. The Budweiser Concert Hall. So these were the kinds of things… I was competition for rock and roll. And I did it not only with straight ahead jazz. My programs on WLIB not… when I got to WNEW that changed. On LIB I could play Cecil Taylor, I could play [Unintelligible] and did on a regular basis.
On Saturday I would play once… I had formats. I had a day of women in jazz. I had a day of… I had a format of things like take a number from 1-10. I would start with a solo and do a duo and then do a trio and do that and repeat until the time was over. So I had all these little gimmicks that I did. So people listened. What is this guy going to do next?

I was having a ball with records. I was hearing everything and my playing was growing by leaps and bounds because I was listening to stuff that I wouldn't have listened to otherwise and it really was affecting my playing. I mean you would hear it my work. So my love for Latin music… I was able to do whole shows of the Latin influence and do Macheto and do all the guys that I like. So all of this stuff is going on and I had determined that Beatles or not, if the records thing goes on it's face, I mean I have got kids who are going to Prep school now. We are talking college type tuition already, and you know they are not even out of prep school. So whatever I was making I needed. It was going… it was a very happy time in my life. I was feeling good. One thing significant happened though. Just before I went with NEW the… I got a call based on some of my earlier television work to be the musical director of a comedy show. It was a pilot for a comedy show that some people were interested in doing. So I said fine. We rehearsed for about a week and then we put the show on. We did the pilot.
The show was *That was the Week it Was.* I was really excited because in getting ready for the pilot they showed us tapes of this English guy who was funny. This guy did some really funny things. His name was David Frost. He wrote the thing and produced it and he had sold the idea to somebody here to do it as a series. I forget if it was NBC or somebody. I forget where they finally put on.
At any rate, one of the funniest things that he did while I was looking at the tapes that had been done already in England, this is just a bit that he had originated. You hear this beautiful music, it's a love song.
I mean the guy is playing *The Smoke gets in your Eyes* on a violin. It is like a violin serenading a loving couple. And you see this guy looking deeply into the eyes of his date and they are almost nose to nose. And he takes out a cigarette and he lights the cigarette for himself and one for her. And then the thing cuts to a shot of somebody lungs and you see the smoke going all through the… I mean it was an anti-smoking commercial… I mean bit back in the days when they were still running commercials for cigarettes.
So they never ran that in the early days of the show. But it was that type of humor that interested people with David Frost and what ultimately led to the show going on the air and so forth. But for me, by the time they got ready… we did the pilot… in the time they got the show sold and ready to go I was firmly ensconced at WNEW and they wouldn't let me out. They said, "You have a contract and we are paying you all this money and you are following William B. Williams so you stay here." So I did.
That contract cost me a couple of things that I wonder about now. At the same time the first big convention meeting of Africans and African Americans took place in Africa. The first cultural coming together happened around this time in the early 60's. Cultural awareness was becoming something very special.
So I was asked to join a bunch of people who were going to Africa and share jazz ideas and what we were doing in the African American community with people from [Unintelligible] and various places in Africa. I forget where it took place now but I couldn't go because of my contractual arrangements. It was too long and it was just not

possible for me to get out of NEW at that particular moment.
So I recommended Randy Weston and this is when Randy first went to Africa and he ultimately stayed there and did things. And I knew Randy would love it because when we were both recording for Riverside records, Riverside put out some African records, taped in Africa and we were both fascinated by these records and we talked about them a lot.
I was fascinated because I had never heard anything like that and I was thinking you know, a historical point of view. Randy was excited because he wanted to play like that. He wanted to use some of that in his music. It never occurred to me to use it in my music at that time. That was the first thing that hit him.
So we both gravitated… we used to talk about these things because he had been so highly influenced by Ellington and by Monk and this seemed to be a logical extension of that concept. And for him it was just… you know to go to Africa and to then participate in the way that he did was just a perfect thing.
So I was delighted to be able to suggest him and have him go. So it worked out very well and I listened to a lot of the things that he has developed since then and you know I am very proud to have been a part of that because it might have been different had he not… I am sure he would have gotten that information from somewhere but his music would have been slightly different had he not gone and lived there.

Randy Weston is a remarkable musician who has over the years taken the historical line from Africa that has been developed in the Americas and has done something very special with it. I mean he has gone back to the roots in way that few others have. As a matter of fact I don't know any other person who has done quite what he has done with the roots of the tree if you will. And his compositions and his playing, his approach to the music has been very inspirational to me and to many other people because he is very clear in his vision of so much of the aesthetic that goes into the similarities as well as the differences between African music and African American music.

In my own work, one of the things that I have thought about in relation to Africa has been the fact that we have so many things, which we have restructured, so many things that we have utilized in a way that is peculiar to North America, United States in particular. And so to be able to put those into a context in which the piano is voicing my feelings is something that I am coming to in a different way as right now. I am very pleased about it because it really is another look at some things that I was coming to grips with in the early 60's, late 50's, early 60's.

I thought about them one way in those days and I thought about the way that I wanted to utilize the African approach to melody, the kinds of things that I wanted to do rhythmically. And I began to experiment with those ideas in ways, which were different because I had experience when I was a younger man. I had other things that were important to me in those days.

Now in retrospect I look back at the same set of values and though I look at them in a similar way, I recognize that there are some differences. Perhaps that has to

do with getting older, or other experiences bringing other thoughts to mind in terms of… in those days I was concerned about the fact that I as the father, and the head of an African American family, could not control many of the things that I was concerned about as those things related to the economics, the health and welfare, the education and the lifestyle of my family.

Now having… both of my children have grown up and one has unfortunately passed away, the other one has just gotten married, I am reassessing the things that I was thinking about then in relation to my music. I always have believed that what you play is really what you are. I mean if you want to know who I am, all you have to do is listen to my music. It's there. I can't do that every night on every occasion and be dishonest. I mean whatever it is, good, bad, or indifferent that's who I am.

The same thing is true of my writing especially… it comes through more graphically in some of the lyrics but in the music those thoughts are foremost in my mind. I think a lot of things… when I perform and when I am trying to say something to people, I guess I go back to Ben Webster and Eddie South in particular, because those were two musicians that I knew I could watch them and [Unintelligible] Smith also would fall into that category and many others but especially those three for me. I watch them deliberately set out to have an affect on someone to say I am saying this to you. This is what I want you to hear. It was almost as if they were pointing a horn or a violin at that person. And the person would really react. And I want to do that. I have always wanted to do that on the piano. And sometimes I succeed.

I think that that's the kind of thing that in this gathering of things that are a part of who I am and what I play, it really… the period of the late 50's and early 60's was… appeared when I was putting all this on the table. I was thinking oh this is what this is and kind of getting a mature look at those things. It had taken me a long time to arrive at that point but that was one of the things… it was a life changing period where I just came to the realization of certain things that were important to me.

Brown: Well Dr. Taylor we have spent eight hours in your company and we have only gotten to this same period in time, the early 60's and obviously there are several more years of your career that we were not able to discuss in this session. I would like to say that I hope that we can come back and complete this oral history and hopefully film you at the piano and discuss some of the very things that you have brought up during the course of this interview and I hope that will be brought up later and especially to capture some of your compositional ideas and techniques and concepts at the piano.

So for this portion of the oral history, I would like to say thank you very much on behalf of the Smithsonian Institution and the Jazz Oral History program. Again, thank you so much for sharing your life with us today.

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CERTIFICATE OF AGENCY

I, Carol J. Schwartz, President of Carol J. Thomas Stenotype Reporting Services, Inc., do hereby certify we were authorized to transcribe the submitted CD's, and that thereafter these proceedings were transcribed under our supervision, and I further certify that the forgoing transcription contains a full, true and correct transcription of the CD's furnished, to the best of our ability.

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