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**DAN MORGENSTERN**  
**NEA Jazz Master (2007)**

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**Berger:** It's March 28th, 2007. I'm Ed Berger. I'm here at the Institute of Jazz Studies in Newark interviewing my good friend and colleague Dan Morgenstern. Ken Kimery is presiding at the technical aspects. This is for the Smithsonian Oral History Project.

Dan, we want to begin the inquisition with your earliest memories, but first, for the record, could you state your full name and your birth date and place?

**Morgenstern:** I'm Dan Michael Morgenstern. I was born on October 24th, 1929. I am presently director of the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers University's Newark campus.

**Berger:** Why don't you tell us about your ancestry, as much as you remember – your parents and even further back if you . . .

**Morgenstern:** It's a fairly complicated – but I'll try to be brief. My father was born in what was then the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Between the world wars it was Poland. After World War II it became the Soviet Union, but now it's Ukraine. So it had a scattered history. He was born into a Hassidic family, but not in what we generally think of as eastern European Jewry. We mostly think of what they call a stetl, which is a small

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town or a village. This was not even a village. It was just a collection of farmhouses, a very small spot on the map.

My paternal grandfather was the manager of an estate that belonged to a Polish noblewoman. So my father grew up in a rural atmosphere. Like most Jewish kids, he went to – very early on to a school where you learn to read Hebrew. So he grew up multilingual: Polish, Russian, Ukrainian. His father, unlike most Hassids, wanted him to have a formal Westernized education. He said, if you don't know German, if you're not – you will never get anywhere. He was one of three brothers – he was the youngest – and two sisters. He went to – then his father let him go to a Polish – what they call a gymnasium, which is like high school. He did very well there. Then he had agreed with his father that he was going to go to Vienna to a university and that he would study law, although he was not particularly interested in doing that. But he had promised his father.

When my father was about 17 or so, his father was killed in an accident. A horse went wild. There was a crash, and he was killed, which was a real blow to my father, because he was very close to him. He kept his promise to his father to study law. So when he went to Vienna in 1912 – he was 22 years old by the time – he was born in 1890 – he spent a couple of years at university. Then he was drafted and served in World War I as a junior officer. He reached the rank of first lieutenant actually. Because of his farm experience, the army put him in charge of buying horses. In World War I we still had cavalry. He served in Hungary and Serbia and all over the place there. When he was discharged he came back to Vienna and finished his law studies, which is actually a doctor juris in the old-fashioned European university. You study the history of law, and then you become an expert in Roman law and all this stuff.

So he got his doctorate, but he was really interested in theater. He wanted to become a playwright. He got a job working for the famous director Max Reinhardt, who eventually – as so many refugees from Hitler – came to the United States and did the film version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and some other stuff in the U.S. before he died. He was a major figure in early twentieth-century theater.

My father wrote a couple of plays. None of them got produced. They were not very successful. But he also began to write things, like freelance writing book reviews. So he became a journalist, spent some time in Berlin, and then came back to Vienna, where among other things he befriended the famous composer – or famous-to-be composer Alban Berg, whom I remember very well from my childhood.

He met my mother in 1925. My mother was born in Germany. Her father was Danish. He was a composer and conductor named Karl Von Klenau. Came from an old, originally German family. Came to Denmark in the early 16th century. His ancestors were – there

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was a general. He was a baron, but he didn't use the title. He was a modestly gifted composer, but very prolific, who wrote a number of operas. We'll get to him later.

He married my grandmother, who was the granddaughter of a famous man who played a role in nineteenth-century German history insofar as he became one of the first Jewish delegates to the German Reichstag and was an opponent of Bismarck's. He was elected several times from Frankfurt. He was originally – he had gone into business, but he acquired a newspaper, which was originally a fairly limited kind of business paper, but he expanded it into the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, which became one of the major German newspapers, and had a distinguished career.

He only had one child, a daughter. That was my great-grandmother, whom I still remember. She in turn married a man named Simon, who was a businessman, and had a number of children. One youngest son was killed in World War I. Another son went to the U.S. right after World War I. He got into the oil business in Texas and then he died at a fairly young age of a heart attack, apparently on the lap of a woman who wasn't his wife. There were two other sons who got involved in the newspaper. They ran the newspaper. One was the editor. The other was the business manager. Both of them wound up in the U.S. after the Hitler years. When the Nazis took over, of course they stripped my family of ownership of the paper. The paper, however, did continue until 1943. The people who ran it attempted to make it a still respectable paper, which was very difficult under the Nazis. Eventually they were closed down. In 1943 Goebbels cut them down.

My father – even before he met my mother he started writing occasionally for that paper as well as other papers. He was eventually hired by that paper as the Viennese cultural correspondent and served in that capacity for a number of years. He wrote quite prolifically. He reviewed theater, music, films – anything having to do with culture, and did some – he had a column where he could write about almost anything he wanted, so he wrote a lot about Vienna. He became very involved in Viennese culture – popular culture too. So he would write about a guy who was a bootblack or he would write about some local activities. He was very much attuned to Vienna and became very fond of that city. We'll soon see how that ended.

They got married. They met when my maternal grandfather Von Klenau was in Vienna. He was at that time – he was a champion of the Schoenberg school and was there to give some concerts of contemporary music. My mother, who was the oldest of four kids – three girls and one boy – and was closest to her father – he had brought her along. He had rehearsals. He met my father rather casually and said to him, “Why don't you take my daughter out for dinner or something? I'm busy. I can't take care of her.” So that's how that got started. They got married in 1928.

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My grandmother had bought a – she’s the one. Kleenow didn’t have any money. She had money. She came from a wealthy family. She had bought a place in the country that was near the Austrian border in Bavaria. It was an old, beautiful, large house that was – living quarters, and it also had an adjoining stable and a barn where you could – what they did in those days – you could process – harvest stuff. It had quite a bit of land attached to it. She built another house there, a smaller house, for the kids. There was another – still another place which was for the tenant farmer. So it was a fairly large operation. That’s where my mother was raised, also going to Denmark in the summers.

That’s how it happened that I was born in Munich, which was a city that I never saw until after being drafted into the U.S. Army, after my arrival here, and being stationed near Munich. I had never seen it before. So that is my birth place, but I never spent any time there. However, it was the nearest big city to my grandmother’s place, and my grandmother insisted that my mother stay with her. She was the first one of her kids to become pregnant and have a baby, and she wanted to have . . .

So that’s how I came to be born in Munich. But I was raised in Vienna. I remember quite a lot about that city, where I remained until the arrival of Mr. Hitler in 1938 – in March of 1938. I have to say a few things about that. My father lost his job on the German newspaper of course very shortly after the Nazis took over. So his income was reduced. We had a big apartment in Vienna, but we had to rent part of it out. I remember we rented it out to a cellist who was quite famous. He was a member of something called the Kolisch Quartet, which was associated with Schoenberg. He eventually – very soon, even before the so-called Anschluss when the Nazis came in, took over Austria – he immigrated to Israel. His name was Joachim Stutschewsky. He was a very nasty man who didn’t like children. He was not very nice to me. He took over half of our apartment, so I didn’t like him either.

When the Germans came into Austria, I had scarlet fever, which was at that time still considered a serious illness. They quarantined the apartment, because it was very contagious. So my father, who had been writing, among other things, anti-Nazi stuff, had learned through an acquaintance who was a businessman who was on both sides – he did business with the Nazis and he was also – he had told them a few years before – he said, “I found out that” – he liked my father – “you’re on the Gestapo black list, so if anything happens, you better be careful.” So my father had to get out. He got out on one of the last trains out of Austria and made his way to France, where he had been once before in the early ’30s and had friends there. He had to leave my mother and myself behind. My mother – because once you – Austria no longer existed as a country. It was annexed to Germany. So if you had an Austrian passport, you got a German one. But my mother was Danish by birth and she managed to do something – she was young and nice looking, and

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the Nazis were taking over all these bureaucratic positions and didn't know anything, so she managed to talk them into giving her a Danish passport. The Danish consulate was cooperative, I guess. She dumped me at my grandmother's place and went to Denmark and prepared things there. Then my grandmother, who was a Danish national by marriage and was free to travel – this is still '38. Things are not as they became later with closed borders. So we were able to get in Denmark. That was the last time that I saw my great-grandmother, on the way when my grandmother took me to Denmark. Her mother was very ill and was dying. We stopped at her house in Berlin, which was a big house built by a famous architect. It was destroyed in the war. I remember being a little frightened, because my [great-] grandmother was obviously in very bad shape. I'm eight years old, so I'm not accustomed to that.

I got accustomed to dealing with death for the first time that anybody close to me – when Alban Berg – who was a very close friend of my father's and whom I saw a lot also – was one of the few people in Vienna among my father's circle who had a car. It was a big thing. He had a green Ford, and he was very proud of it. He was apparently, according to his own letters, not a very good driver, but I don't know about that. I loved to ride in the car. Also sometimes my father would take me to soccer games. He and Berg were both big soccer fans. So I was very fond of Berg, because he was always nice to me, which wasn't – my father had a lot of friends. Sometimes he would take me – in Vienna, people at that time used to go to these coffee houses. My father would go every afternoon. In the morning he would write. He was working on his first novel. He would write. Then sometimes he would take me to this coffee house with him, which was a big thing for me. People sit and talk and read the papers. It was a special thing about Viennese culture.

Anyway, I remember when Berg died. He died of a blood poisoning. It was something that shouldn't have happened. He had an infection and had a boil on his back. It was not taken care of properly. Today, antibiotics would have taken of that in a minute, but in those days, they were still fairly backward medicinally. So he died at the age of 50, which he had no business doing.

I remember on my sixth birthday he gave me Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachmusik*, two 12-records. They were my first 12-inchers. I'd already become quite enamored of playing the phonograph. There was a phonograph at my grandmother's place in the country. My mother had one with a wind-up thing. I liked to do that. I had also started – not yet at that time – when I was seven I started violin lessons, unfortunately. I would have been much better off with the piano, but our piano was in the part of the apartment that had been taken over by the cellist. I used to like to play that, but I couldn't do that any more.

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Anyway, Berg gave me this thing. I really liked it. Then two months later exactly, almost to the day, he was dead. My parents were very upset about this. So I remember that as my first experience with someone close having died.

In Vienna my parents – they used to have these things like they have in most civilized times – they have concerts for young kids. So I would be taken to symphony concerts on a Sunday at noon or something like that. I remember I didn't like the conductor. He was heavy-set, his tuxedo didn't fit too well, and he always perspired a lot. He probably wasn't a very good conductor either. But also sometimes there would be non-classical. My first encounter, in retrospect, with anything resembling jazz was when Jack Hylton, the famous English bandleader who had something to do with the careers of Coleman Hawkins and Louis Armstrong, and I think he intersected with Benny Carter as well – anyway, he was like the British Paul Whiteman. He had a big show band. I was taken to this performance, which was in a place where they also had – it's a show place. I remember they had a big – in the ceiling there was a big rotating chandelier. The one thing that I remember about this performance was that there was a point where the lights went down and they had pin-spots on the band. There were these three musicians that came up front. It was a trombone, a trumpet, and a clarinet. The two brass instruments had sparkling mutes in their horns. They had the pin-spots on them, and then the chandelier was turning. It was a very interesting – just like an early, pre-historic light show.

What did they play? I later discovered that, what I heard there, I liked the music too. They were doing an Ellington medley. What they did there, that particular thing was *Mood Indigo*. They recorded this – I think a shorter version, where they do an Ellington medley. They did it so well that on a blindfold test Barney Bigard thought that it was the Ellington band. That would have been my first encounter with something resembling jazz.

When we came to Denmark, things began to move along in that direction with considerable emphasis. I don't want to say that when this happened that I immediately became converted to jazz, but Fats Waller was touring Scandinavia in the fall of 1938. He was giving concerts in Copenhagen. The concert hall was right near the first place where my mother and I lived in Copenhagen at a boarding house. She, by a stroke of luck – she walked by there and she saw the – so she bought tickets for us. Maybe she thought that it was something a kid would enjoy. So here I see this huge black man who is one of the first – I'd seen very few black people in the flesh. As far as fat was concerned, there was a lot of that. He did make quite an impression on me. He did a single. He was appearing as a single. He didn't have his band with him. The opening act – the concert opened with some Danish jazz musicians that he joined. Then they left the stage, and he sat down at the piano there and started to sing and play. It was terrific. I didn't understand what he

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was saying or what he was singing about, except a few words, but he had a lot of movement. It was something that made an impression on me.

My mother liked him a lot too. What she liked best was one thing that he did in that show. One of the songs – was it – that he called *Believe it Beloved*. That was on a record. We bought that. That was my first Fats Waller record.

I had, as I said earlier, liked the phonographs. I wasn't really collecting records, but as a kid – I can pretty well tell you what I started accumulating. This is the swing era. The swing era resonates in Europe as well. We were conscious of Benny Goodman, Duke Ellington, and things like that. Ellington visited Copenhagen, but the concert sold out in a flash. I didn't get to see him. I did get to see the Mills Brothers. I don't know if you would consider that jazz, but certainly jazz-related. I remember them doing *Tiger Rag*, which was a lot of fun, because the father – the brother – one of the brothers had died, John Mills, who was really the musical brains behind the Mills Brothers, but the father took over. He was the bass singer. He made this "vrooo – hold that tiger." That's what a kid would remember.

And the Hot Club of France with Django [Reinhardt]. I should have been most impressed by [Stephane] Grappelli, because I had started violin lessons again. That was interrupted when we left Vienna. But I remember Django more vividly, because he had tremendous rhythm. That's what communicated itself. He had that thing. Also, he looked more interesting than Grappelli.

After that, no more foreign bands, because the war broke out in 1939. By that time I was in a boarding school, and I clearly remember September 1st, when that came on the radio. The war had started.

**Berger:** Before we get too far into the war and that period, I think for the record you should state your parents' names, which I don't think we actually . . .

**Morgenstern:** I'm glad you said that, because I do want to – of course my father will pop up again when we – he – I was going to get to that. But my father's first name is Soma – S-o-m-a – Soma Morgenstern. Several of his novels were translated into English and published in the U.S. in the late '40s and early '50s. They're all out of print now.

My good friend Gary Giddins, who we will get to when we come to the *Down Beat* era – Gary is a great fan of one of my father's books. It's a Holocaust book called *The Third Pillar*. In his latest book, there is a chapter – in Gary's latest book, there's a chapter about that.

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My father's complete works were published posthumously in German not that long ago. It started in the early '90s. It was a total of 11 volumes. It was a major publishing venture, very well received; a small publishing house, but it got quite a lot of attention.

My mother's first name was Ingeborg, which is – that's a Danish name, but she shortened it to Inge. That's what she was known as. She also did some writing, but not in published form. She kept a diary. She liked to write little – when she was a very young girl, she wrote little stories.

**Berger:** One other thing that occurred to me – I always meant to ask you: what language did they speak at home, and what language did you grow up speaking?

**Morgenstern:** Language, of course, in my early years was German, although there was a smattering of Danish. My mother would sometimes – my father didn't understand Danish, but when we were at my grandmother's place, she would sometimes speak Danish with my grandmother or with one of her siblings, mainly if they didn't want me to understand what they were saying, but I picked up a smattering of that.

Once I – when I came to Denmark as a – young kids really do well with languages. Within three months I was in a Danish school. You pick it up pretty quick. Once the war broke out, I did not want my mother to speak German in public. If she ran into some of her friends in the street or something like that, and they started talking German, I would walk away from them. But, of course, I didn't forget that language.

In Denmark they teach you English very early on. You start in the sixth grade, and they teach you very well. In fact, I can clearly remember my first English lesson. In the book, there was a picture of a rabbit, and it said, "I can hop. I can run. See me hop. See me run. It is fun, fun, fun." I took it from there.

In Denmark almost everybody knows English, because in a small country – at that time especially, most of the – all the trading was done with Britain. There was a – you need to have another language when the language that you're native is not really exportable. So I didn't have too much trouble with my – I had three switches, but it worked out okay.

**Berger:** I think you were in boarding school in Denmark.

**Morgenstern:** Yeah, I'm in boarding school when the war breaks out, after that move. My mother – the boarding school that I went to – my mother wound up getting a job there. The guy who ran this school – it was what we would now call a progressive school. He was a very nice man, but a little nuts and a very bad businessman. It always had trouble. It moved once while I was there. It was outside of Copenhagen, not very far. My

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mother used to visit me, and when they got – he needed somebody to be a housemother, a supervisor of the operations that had to do with housekeeping, which is crazy with my mother, because my mother – when we were in Vienna, we were still, in spite of the fact that we had come down a bit when my father lost his position there, but we were still well-off enough to have – not a full-time maid, but I had nannies and my mother had a – there was a cook. She did – once a week, when she did the cooking, I was usually not very happy, because she wasn't a very good cook. But she learned later.

For her to – but she had gone to school as a young girl. She's still from a generation where – my grandmother was progressive in certain ways, but old-fashioned in other ways. She didn't send her to the university, but there was a well-known school for young girls from good families, where they learned all these things. It was run by a Swedish woman.

So she – this school ended in a – some day I'll write about that. It was quite a fabulous demise of the school. It had run out of money. Teachers were leaving. Then there was a very, very cold winter in Denmark. The winter of 1939 was a record cold. What happened – the main building where the school was housed – there were two, but this was the bigger one – all the pipes broke. Then there was no heat. I don't know where we got the water from. Everything – he couldn't afford to buy coal, so they started chopping up furniture. All the classes were held in one room where there was a fireplace. It was really like – in retrospect, it was probably very dramatic.

Another thing he'd done – he had hired girls to clean and do some housekeeping work from an institution for the feeble-minded. You can't say that anymore now. It's – what do you call it? Handi . . . there's a word for it, a euphemism.

**Berger:** Disabled?

**Morgenstern:** What is it? It's not disabled, but there's supposed to be a politically correct term for that. But let's face it. That's what they were. They were very nice. They were very sweet. But they were also very stupid. These poor girls had to deal with it. Everything was – there was ice all over the place. Then what happened was – the final explosive finish to that, which resulted in the place being closed down by the authorities, was that, because of this extreme cold, the sewer froze and burst, and there was this huge pile of frozen . . . in the back. That was the end. That was the demise of this school. Then we moved back to Copenhagen, and I went to a regular school there.

Let me get into the music part of it. During the war – the Germans occupied Denmark on April 9th of 1940, which was not too long after we'd moved back to the city. I remember my room had slanted – it was almost like a studio apartment. It had slanting windows.

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We're on the top floor, the fifth floor. It wasn't a very tall building. I remember waking up that morning, because there were suddenly a lot of planes in the sky, and looking up. There were the Germans. You could recognize them with that black cross that they had on the wings. They were all these German planes. They were dropping leaflets. My mother didn't want me to – this was very early in the morning – but I ran out into the street and grabbed one of these leaflets. They were – the big headline on the thing was a misspelled Danish word. It was obviously done by a non-Dane, and it was misspelled. It said "alert," *opråb* in Danish – it was supposed to end with a "b" but instead it was a "p." That was just the Germans saying that they were coming peacefully and that it was just – whatever. There wasn't very much – there was some border skirmish. Denmark is a totally flat country. The highest mountain is a couple hundred feet. There's nothing there. So it's basically indefensible. Where it borders on Germany, it's a very narrow strip. Totally – there were no fortifications or anything like that. There were a couple of skirmishes, but very quickly the Danish army – Denmark surrendered.

They also invaded Norway at the same time, but the Norwegians put up a fight. Also in Norway there was some – the British fleet was nearby there, so that, being a very mountainous country, there was a much longer period there before they were able to completely take over in Norway. Sweden was neutral.

So that was that. That was scary. But as we know, the Germans behaved reasonably well in Denmark for a while, because they wanted to show off Denmark as – what they called it in German was *Musterprotektorat*. It's a model protectorate. They called the countries that they occupied and violated, called them protectorates. But it didn't last very long, because there was a Danish underground, and of course for the Nazis to be on good behavior doesn't necessarily mean that they were really wonderful folks.

What's most significant is that they did not do anything against the Jewish population until the fall of 1943. During all this time in Denmark – Denmark was always – there was a nice bunch of local jazz musicians. I think the one who was internationally known, even at that time, was the violinist Svend Asmussen, who is still alive as we speak. Born in 1916. His birthday is around this time of year, so he's going to be 91. I saw him two years ago in Denmark, and he was still in wonderful shape, still playing. He's got a nice young – youngish girlfriend, so that helps.

There was quite a bit of jazz, good Danish jazz, and as was the case in any country that the Nazis overran, jazz became quite popular, because it represented something that was the antithesis of what they stood for. They didn't try very hard to suppress it. At one point in time, just around the time also that, as we will soon come to, they started rounding up Jews in Denmark, they also issued an edict against performing tunes by Jewish composers, but that was totally ignored by the Danes. They just simply have changed the

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titles of the things, but the Germans didn't know anyway. Actually the Germans, interestingly enough – Germany was the major producer of recordings in Europe. That is to say, they had the major pressing plants. For years, even after the Nazi takeover, German pressing plants were still pressing American music, including Jewish artists like Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw. It seems illogical. There was even an excellent reissue series of American jazz issued in Germany starting in late 1938. It ran until the outbreak, even a little past the outbreak of the war. So there were not – they really didn't know – the people who – there were some people in the cultural so-called establishment – nazi establishment – who had a little bit of knowledge of jazz. But aside from spouting a lot of invective and a lot of racist b.s., they really didn't have too much basic knowledge of it. So it continued to be performed even in Germany undercover. But in all the occupied countries, jazz became very popular during those years, and that included Denmark.

So I was naturally exposed to that and into it. But I was still not any – what I would describe as a – I had a nice little collection of records, and while I was in the boarding school, I had this little clutch of Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw and some Chick Webb. They had a summer school there with older kids. They had – on weekends they would have little parties, a dance. They would want to borrow my records, so I would let them borrow my records provided I could come along. I was like a prehistoric disc jockey, because I said you can't take my records; you've got to take me along with them. I had a crush on one of the girls. I was ten and I had a crush on a 16-year-old girl. A lot of good that did. But that was fun.

There was an older kid there, about maybe four years older – four or five years older than me, who was the first jazz collector I was ever exposed to. He was a little strange, but he would invite me to his room and play records for me. He was serious, but he was a collector type. Not very sociable. I was, but for some reason or other – because I had a little bit of jazz chops . . .

I then – what happened was that, when the fall of 1943 rolled along, one fine afternoon in October somebody rang our doorbell. I had just gotten home from school. I opened the door. This is just like in the movies. There was a young man in a trench-coat. He said, "May I come in?" He said, "I'm from the underground." Actually, a couple of my close friends and I, we had rather foolishly, I guess, considering the risk – there were – the Danish underground published these little newsletters, news-sheets that would come out once every week or once every couple of weeks, and surreptitiously distribute some of these things. So we were aware of the underground. Mainly the Danish underground addressed itself to doing things like blowing up railway junctions where the Germans were shipping stuff, but not – a few factories that were working for the Germans.

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There was one incident that I clearly remember that was the only incidence while I was in Denmark – there was some more trouble later, but – the only air raid. It happened on a sunny afternoon. This was in '43, but before – it was the summer, not the fall. My best friend and I, we had a – we were on the top floor of our building – we had a little balcony – terrace thing, and then you could take a couple of – just hike yourself up on the roof there. Air-raid sirens went off. So we ran out to look. Then we saw that there were planes. We had a very good view of this. It was a small number of British planes. The Mosquito was a very good twin-engine, fast fighter-bomber. They bombed Copenhagen harbor. It's a harbor city. There was a major manufacturer of some critical part used in war machinery. I don't remember what it was, but there was this factory there, which was right on the waterfront. This was an example of pinpoint precision bombing. It was quite fascinating to watch, naturally. Kids. I'm 13 years old. To watch that – it's like having a front row seat, to see the planes dropping bombs. None of them were shot down. The Germans didn't get up in the air until long after they were gone. It was a real lightning strike. It was in the late afternoon, so it was daylight. It was quite fascinating. That was the only time. There were air raids occasionally. Sirens would go off. But it's just planes flying over. Nothing really.

So now comes the time when this young man said, "May I come in?" Then he told us. He said, "The Germans – we have found out" – and much later it became known that there was a leak of this document that the Germans had when they listed everybody that they were going to round up that night. He said, "We have been prepared for this. We know exactly what to do. Don't be concerned. Please – one thing is very important. Don't tell anybody. We have. We will take care of it. Don't alert your friends or anything like that. Don't do anything. Don't worry about your possessions. We'll look after that too. Just take a very small bag, overnight bag of things. Don't worry" – it was after banking hours – "Don't worry about money." He gave us an address to go to. "In an hour and 15 minutes, go to" such and such an address. It turned out to be the very large and fancy apartment of some wealthy person in Copenhagen.

Then about – let me see. It was a total of – in our – what would turn out to be a group that was going to travel together – about eight or ten people. We were all instructed – we were given a certain amount of cash, about 500 dollars, or 500 kroner, I think, and told to pin that inside our clothing, not carry it in our pockets. That was for emergencies – and to buy train tickets to a certain little fishing town up on the top of – Copenhagen is on an island. It may be about an hour and 15 minutes train ride. So that's what we did. We were also told not to – don't stay together. Then, just like in the movies again, when you're coming – when you get off at the station, there'll be a man with a carnation in his lapel. You know. How do you recognize people? Wearing a hat upside down.

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But it became clear to us, on the journey, that there were far too many people on this train, including some people that I knew. There were friends of the family. There were too many people on this train. Clearly what had happened was that, in spite of being told not to tell friends and relatives, people had done that. As soon as we got off the train, there were people milling around, but we found this guy or he found us. He said, “Come on. We’ve got to get out of here. There are too many people here. The Germans are aware of what’s going on. So we’ve got to get you out.” So very quickly we’re taken by car to the home of a – in Denmark at that time – and I guess it’s still the case – there’s a big fishing fleet. Denmark is very close to Sweden geographically. In certain places, like the town that we would have left from there, it’s a very short distance. But in any case we were taken to the home of a fisherman and put up in the attic. There was a ladder. There was one of those trap doors in the ceiling. We were put up in the attic. That’s where they stuck us. It was okay, except that one man got hysterical. It was dark and we were there inside. Another guy punched him, so he shut up and later on apologized.

Then the next morning they took us individually by car back to Copenhagen. My mother and I were split up. She was concerned about that. I was still at an age – I knew that we were in danger and everything. We had already had rumors about what the Nazis were doing to people, although we didn’t have the full horror of it. But still, you get excited. They said, “We’ll get you back together. Don’t worry.” They took me back to the city. I was parked at the apartment of somebody I didn’t know. Danish people at that time were remarkable, because practically all of them – there were some Danish Nazis, but they were not taken very seriously, and there were very few of them. Some of them volunteered to go fight in the Russian front. That was a very stupid thing to do. But they were stupid. But the people were, in this situation, remarkably united in terms of doing things that in retrospect endangered them. But they did it in a very natural way, as if that was what people should be doing in that situation. So it was done – it was unceremonious. “Okay. You’re going to sleep over tonight. Tomorrow somebody else is going to – we’re going to find out where you’re going next, because you don’t want to stay around too long in one place.”

That went on for a couple of nights. Then, all of a sudden, on the third night, the place that I was dropped off at was my best friend’s house – apartment. Later, I discovered that his father, who was a very mild-mannered bank manager, was actually a fairly big person in the underground. So he knew that I was involved in this, and he thought that I should be with friends. So the last two nights I spent there. Then on the fifth night, I guess it was – the fifth morning, I was taken – told to go to a suburban train station, but in the other direction this time – not north, but south – and be there at 5:30 in the morning on the platform. Okay. So who would be there? But there was my mother. So we were reunited there. There was again the small group of people that we had been originally. But this time they took us south, and we left from a place that was much further from Sweden

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over water than where we were originally supposed to leave from. This time it worked. So I arrived in Sweden in mid-October of 1943.

There was a hairy moment, going across. Originally when we left it was bright moonlight, which was not good. Then it got cloudy and foggy. A small fishing boat, and everybody was down in the hold. The air was very bad. There were some old people who were seasick. I asked one of the crew – there were three people who were the crew of this boat – if I could come up on deck. He said, “Okay. Just be quiet.” So I was up on deck when they cut off the engine, because – it was very foggy – there was a German patrol boat in the area. You could see – on the water, when it’s quiet, you can hear very well. We could see the spotlights that they had, but they didn’t go far enough in the fog to make us visible. We just drifted for a while. Then we couldn’t hear them any more, and the captain said, “Okay. Turn the engine back on.” The people who were down there, except that they were told to be quiet, didn’t even know what was going on.

Then just maybe 45 minutes later, we were met by a Swedish open boat with a guy with a megaphone – a bullhorn. He hailed us, “Welcome to Sweden – welkommen to Swerigen,” which were some really nice words to hear at that point in time.

[recording interrupted]

Where were we?

**Berger:** In Sweden.

**Morgenstern:** We’re about to arrive in Sweden. The Swedes had been neutral. Because of that, there was some tension. They let German troop trains through to Norway, which the Norwegians never forgave them. But on the other hand, they were able to take in refugees from Norway and Denmark, which would never have been possible if they hadn’t maintained their neutrality. So in retrospect that was a good thing.

It was weird being in Sweden. We arrived early in the morning in a city called Trelleborg. They put us up in a place. They had mattresses on the floor. It was like some place you would be after a fire or a disaster. But they were very nice. They fed us. The Danish government in exile and the underground movement, they had taken care of establishing some kind of protocol there. But the weird thing was the first night – because we had blackout in Denmark, but there, lights were on, neon lights. It wasn’t a big city, but big enough to have a little section where there were movie theaters. We hadn’t had any new American films for more than three years. So it was quite a contrast.

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**Berger:** One thing before we get too far away from Denmark. Did you leave all your possessions and never were able to retain anything?

**Morgenstern:** The thing is – I was going to come back to that – when we came back in 1945, after the war in Europe ended, everything was just the way we left it. That was our friends, by way of the underground. Everybody had taken care of that. It was quite remarkable. We didn't lose anything. That is another aspect of what they did.

**Berger:** One other question: were you able to maintain any contact with your father during this time?

**Morgenstern:** This is a very good question. When my father – we should attend to him now, because once we arrived in Sweden, we were able to communicate with him again. When he arrived after many adventures in France, where the French were not so nice. We know that the French interned, when the war broke out, everybody of German and Austrian nationality as enemy aliens, more or less, regardless of whether they were refugees, Jews, communists, whatever. Just put them in internment camp. The first time around my father got out after a while through other writers. He had French writers – Jules Romain, who was very famous at one time, was one who acted on behalf of foreign writers who were being treated like that.

My father had applied for an American visa for all of us already in the early '30s, but he was on the Polish quota – because he was born in what had then become Poland – which was a mile long. So we never got it in time. He wanted to get out of Europe in the worst way already, for many years. Then he was – the visa never came through. America was still neutral. There was not exactly an open-arms policy towards refugees in the United States at that time. At one time he almost got the visa, but then he couldn't, because he had become stateless after the Austrian citizenship was wiped out. He knew he couldn't get a passport. So everything was like – I don't know what to call it – it was like a labyrinth. We got to one place, but then you couldn't get to another place.

So he was rounded up again. This time he and a whole bunch of other people were taken to the north most part of France. Finasterre, it's called. Way up there in a camp, which, in a certain respect, it wasn't anything like a Nazi concentration camp, but it was really a concentration camp, where people were herded together and penned in. The war was going badly for the French, as we know. When the Germans rolled over, with their – really just wrapped up the French army – the people – the French didn't have the courtesy to let the people in the camp out. No. The Germans came in. But it was the German army. It wasn't – they were ahead of the SS and the Gestapo. They had advanced so quickly that they had no instructions about what to do in a case like that. The commander of this particular unit seemed to be a fairly decent fellow who didn't want to get involved in this.

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So he called in the leaders of the various factions in the camp – there's Social Democrats, orthodox Jews, and communists. There were also real Germans, some of whom were Nazis who had been rounded up. A bit of everything. And Slovak. All sorts of things.

He told these people – he said that within the next 24 hours or so, the civilian authorities would come in and they'll issue you papers. This is what he had been told. But he didn't even have to wink when he was saying that. Anybody with sense would – at the moment; he didn't say anything about adding security or anything like that. So what happened – my father said the first ones to split were orthodox Jews. They were over the hill in no time at all. But the Social Democrats and the communists, he learned later on, had meetings and voted and decided what to do. But he was not attached to anything like that. He had a friend. The two of them decided just – he said, "Let's get out of here." My father spoke pretty good French. His friend did not. So he told his friend to keep his mouth shut. They made their way. Everything was in an uproar there. People were fleeing. French people were fleeing. There were German planes overhead. All kinds of madness going on. But they made their way, with a couple of narrow escapes, to what became – they wanted to get to the South and get out, get to Marseilles, and managed to do so. By then there was a French-German occupied zone and the Vichy. America was still neutral. My father arrived in Marseilles and went to the American consulate, trying to get this visa.

Meanwhile, very soon after that, there was a great American individual named Vartan Fry, who had taken it upon himself – he was a man of means and had taken it upon himself to go to Marseilles and try to get people out of there, get them into the U.S., in spite of the resistance by the State Department and local – the American consul in Marseilles at that time was not a very nice person in terms of being open to – but Fry managed to get a lot of people out. He helped my father too. The way to do things like that was there were various nation [alities] – there were consulates and there were passports that could be obtained for a fee. My father got a Honduran passport and made his way to Casablanca and then to Lisbon. By that time his visa came through. He got an affidavit from friends from the U.S. and made his way out on a Portuguese freighter that took on about ten passengers. It arrived in New York in April of 1941.

At that point in time, he was still able – while he was on the run, we didn't hear from him, because it was too dangerous for him to send us mail in Denmark, which was occupied. But when he arrived in the U.S., we did hear from him. We got a letter that he had arrived. So that was great news.

At the same token, we could write to him now. It would be censored. Then, until Pearl Harbor, we were able to be in touch. I remember still that my father and a friend of his got together. His friend had contacts in California. His friend was somebody who also

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had some money that he had access to once he came to America. So they bought a car and drove cross-country. I remember they stopped in Las Vegas. My father tried the slot machine. Lo and behold, he hit the jackpot, but he didn't know. He thought he had broken the machine. People were congratulating him. Not only that, but my father, who never learned to drive – when he came to live in California, in L.A., he had to do it. So he learned to drive. One of the last things we got from him, before the lid closed after Pearl Harbor, was he sent me – he knew that I was crazy about cars, which is ironic, because I never learned to drive. But anyway, he learned to drive, and he got a car. It was a 1939 Lasalle, which was a nice car. I was very proud of his picture of my father with his car.

**Berger:** How did he support himself?

**Morgenstern:** As a writer. There were people in California. First of all, his good friend whom he had traveled with was somebody who had – he had a porcelain factory in Austria which was taken over by his Christian partner, but they managed to tweak out money to him. Also my father had one good friend, a movie director named John Brahm, who is best known for a film noir called *The Lodger*, which is a Jack-the-Ripper film, which starred a good but unfortunate actor named Laird Cregar. I don't know if you knew him. Laird Cregar was a very gifted character actor who usually played bad guys, but he died very young. I forget how, but I think of natural causes. Anyway, that Jack-the-Ripper part he plays in *The Lodger*. It was one of his famous roles.

John Brahm is somebody my father had met when he worked for Max Reinhardt as a young man. We'll come to him later again, because he was – I'll get to that eventually. So he had friends in Hollywood, and he did some – he never did a screenplay, but he was looking at things and evaluating them. But he didn't like California. He always used to quote Fred Allen when asked what California was like. He said, "It's okay if you're an orange." He just didn't care much for it. So he went back to New York. He barely managed to eek out a living. For many years – when we arrived here in 1947, he was living in a hotel where he had lived for many years. He had a little room there where he could also – he didn't do much cooking, but he could make himself – he had a little hot plate.

Anyway, now I'm in Sweden. The first thing – again through my father – my father had a friend named Joseph Frank, who was the famous designer. He was an interior designer and architect. He designed furniture. He had gotten himself to Sweden even before the Germans took over Austria, and had a Swedish lady friend and lived in Stockholm. My mother was friendly with that woman also. They had been in Vienna together. So we came to Stockholm.

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Then they had – of course it was important to arrange some kind of schooling for me. I enjoyed it, not having to go to school. I could see American movies for the first time in a long time. There was a boarding school outside of Stockholm where I then was sent along with a bunch of Danish kids my age and some Norwegians as well. Fairly recently – you know that we're on this jazz research list on the internet. There's one Norwegian there who is part of it, Arne Neegaard. We figured – he's the one who first figured that out, when he heard about me. I was in that school with his father. His father was one of the Norwegian kids there. Didn't know him well, but we were there at the same time. So that's like one of those six degree things.

That school was – again, Swedish is a language that is very closely related to Danish. You can basically – it's pronounced quite differently, but the vocabulary, shared vocabulary, is about 70%. There are some words that are tricky because they have a different meaning in Danish and Swedish. But it's entirely possible to get by. Here I hooked up with – in fact it wasn't by choice, but just by cast of the dice. We roomed together. There were four of us in a room, two bunk beds. I got in with three other Danish kids. One of them was a jazz fan. He had managed to squirrel a phonograph. These are portable phonographs. We had a thing – he had it hooked up so that he could – you start it. You have a little lever where you start the turntable. If you wind it up, you have to tighten – he had a little thing where he pulled it from his bed and could start this thing in the morning. So when we had – there was a bell that went off, and we had to get up early. It was about 6:30 for breakfast, or something like that, to get a shower and breakfast. So he had this contraption hooked up. He had pretty good taste. That's how I was introduced to the Rhythmakers. He had *Bugle Call Rag* by the Rhythmakers on English Parlophone, a terrific record with Red Allen and Pee Wee Russell and a hot rhythm section. Those are some of the hottest records ever made. They're wonderful records. That was how we woke up. He had some other stuff, I remember. He had a nice Ella Fitzgerald, *Taking a Chance on Love*, which was a pretty new song then. He had some other stuff. That was nice.

The school was okay. I found out later that many of the Swedish kids who were there came from fairly good families. We knew that one girl who was there was the daughter of a famous actor. But there were a lot of kids from so-called “broken homes,” divorced parents.

The terrible thing about this school was that in Sweden there is a dish called lutefisk, which is also favored by Norwegians, but Danes won't touch it. Danes have good taste in food. It's a dried fish which is then softened up in some kind of sauce. It's horrible. It's like what was known in the Army – I don't know if you remember – in the Army, there was a breakfast thing, chipped beef on toast, which is known universally as ... a shingle. That was something like that. They served it once a week. On Thursdays they would

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serve this dish. I couldn't stand it. Even it smelled awful. Oh God. But there's some people who savor this.

It was nice enough. The school was okay. It had good teachers. I remember they had – my clearest memory from being there, aside from our little jazz stuff, was that, number one, I had a German teacher. I didn't need that, but you had to take languages. He was also our dorm whatever-you-call-it. He ran our dormitory there. His name was Meschger. He was a nice German refugee, not Jewish. He was a Protestant minister who had been anti-Nazi. One of the assignments was to write short story. I wrote a story that I was very proud of. It was about a lion, an old lion who had – you know. I was just a kid. I was 14 years old. Anyway, I wrote this story in German. He accused me of having plagiarized it. It made me very – that was very upsetting. I can still remember that. He was a bloody idiot.

That's one thing I remember. The other thing was that on the morning of the 6th of June, 1944, a teacher – we had class. I think it was an English class. Another teacher came in and said, "We've just had news of the" – that was D-Day. That was the invasion, the beginning of the end for sure. We never doubted that the Germans were going to lose, even when they were doing very well. You wouldn't let yourself think that. Then when Stalingrad came along – but D-Day was a very memorable morning.

Then the school – then shortly after that comes the summer break. So then I went back to Stockholm. Then, in the meanwhile, during that summer they arranged to open up a Danish school for what high-school age – by now, I'm almost 15. They opened up a Danish school in Göteborg – Gothenburg, as we call it – which is the second largest city in Sweden. That was nice, because the classes were very small. There was a nice bunch of kids and good teachers. We lived in a boarding house. They cleaned out all the Swedish guests and put us up with a teacher who supervised us, but he wasn't much of a supervisor. He was involved with one of daughters of the lady who ran the boarding house, and he was much too busy bedding her down to pay any attention to what we were doing. The reason why I bring that up is we were supposed – we had a curfew, but there was an adventurous guy who was a little older than me, who also had already started to do some drinking. He was a bad boy. He talked me into sneaking out. We couldn't go out through the front, but we were on the ground floor, so we could open up a window and climb out. We would occasionally – we didn't do this very often, but we would occasionally go out on the town. We would go to a place where there was some live jazz.

There was good jazz on the radio in Sweden. There was one guy who – I forget his name – who had one of those jazz talk shows where he would play certain things – have a theme. A little bit like *Jazz from New York*. That's a show that we do here on WBGO.

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Again, there was one kid in that Danish school – it was really a small number of students. There weren't many of us. I can't say offhand now how many of us there were, but I wouldn't think that we were more than a dozen or so. One was a pretty sophisticated jazz fan. But we didn't have any records. We went out and got – we didn't have any dough. Just barely subsistence. We got fed, but we didn't have any pocket money really. We managed to squirrel a little bit off. That's why, when I went out with this kid, we could at least pay for a beer.

We'd also go to one – I was crazy about the movies then. I was certainly into jazz, but not overwhelmingly so, but I was into movies. What I really wanted to be at that point in time was a movie director. There was another kid who was movie crazy. We would go and see – we were even interested in classic films. 1944. It had to be stuff from the '20s. At one time there was some movie theater way in the suburbs of Gothenburg – it was on a Sunday – which we thought was going to be Chaplin's *Shoulder Arms*. *Shoulder Arms* was his World War I comedy. It turned out to be a remake under that title with Bob Hope. We were terribly disappointed. We wanted to see this Chaplin film.

Interesting thing then also was listening to the radio, because that's what we constantly would do. They'll listen to BBC. Then there were all these strange stations that popped near the – in the latter – the closing days of the war in Europe, with stations broadcasting in Germany, broadcasting anti-Nazi stuff, and one claiming – there's one called Gustav Seigfried Eins, which was supposed to be renegade SS, broadcasting anti-Hitler stuff. That turned out to be fake. Later on we found out that was it was really the British who were doing that, but it was very convincing.

Then the war ended in Europe, V-E Day. Then we came back to – meanwhile, my mother was in Stockholm. Then we came back to find that our apartment was untouched. Everything was – including my little record collection. Then I hooked up with my jazz-minded friend from that Danish school, who turned out to have a very nice collection. I remember he introduced me to *Taxi War Dance* by Basie – I hadn't really heard much Basie before then – and a beautiful Sidney Bechet record called, alternatively, *Southern Sunset* or *When the Sun Sets Down South*. He had a nice little stash of things. I was beginning to broaden my horizons. I read a few books about jazz that were, in retrospect, not very good, but I also had met a very nice boy during the summer that I was between the two schools. That lady who was the lady friend of my father's friend from Vienna, she had a sister who was married to a rich Swede who had a country house and had a young son who was just about maybe slightly – maybe a little younger than me, but not much. Also had a very pretty older sister. They had a sailboat – a big one – that could sleep about four people, and went out sailing. But the thing about this kid was that he was a Benny Carter fan. He had a big picture of Benny Carter on the wall of his room. He introduced me to Benny. He had some of those European-made records of Benny. He

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pronounced it “Benny Cahrtahr.” I can still remember the way he said that. I lost touch with him. I have no idea what happened to him.

By the time I got back to Denmark, I was really – I had already begun to focus on coming to the U.S., because clearly my father would eventually be able to bring us over, which indeed he was able to begin to do by the time he became an American citizen, which was in 1946, after five years. I had been interested – I talked about the film stuff. I would go to see American movies. They had subtitles in Danish or Swedish, but I would try not to look at those and listen to the dialogue. What they teach you in Denmark and in Sweden is British English. I was more interested in learning American English. I read a lot of English books – that is to say, American books. Good stuff like Faulkner, Hemingway, Steinbeck, and Erskine Caldwell. I became – with my interest in jazz and also because of the Nazi persecution of the Jews, I became interested in the American race situation. There was a big fat book by a Swedish sociologist called *An American Dilemma*, which was about that, what was then called “the Negro problem.” Erskine Caldwell – there was a novel called *Trouble in July*, which is about a lynching.

I was also reading a lot of lesser literature, because I liked the slangy tone of it. There were murder mysteries. Not only better stuff like Hammit and Chandler, but also – there was a one guy who was also a movie screenwriter – I couldn’t think of his name – who wrote these real hard-boiled detective stories. They had a lot of slang in them.

My jazz interests began to blossom about the time that I came back to Copenhagen. There were things happening then. I went back to school. I also had a little job after school. I could make some extra money. “Extra” – make some money, period. I was a – and I can’t do this any more. I could do it so well at one time, and now after – but I do a half-way decent job. It was a clothing manufacturer. I would wrap these articles of clothing, put them in boxes, make them ready for shipping, and sometimes do some deliveries.

That enabled me to buy some records. There was a wonderful store in Copenhagen that was downstairs in an old part of town where they had a lot of – they still do – have a lot of used-book stores and antiquarian stores. This one had books and magazines, and it had records. They’re second-hand records. Of course we’re in the 78 era. That’s all there is. They had these bins stuffed, they were inexpensive, and you could get – in retrospect, there was a lot of good stuff there. The first thing I ever got on the Okeh label was *Black and Tan Fantasy* and *What Can a Poor Fellow Do?* by Duke, on blue label Okeh. I began to grope my way into various stuff.

One of the things – I had gotten the Muggsy Spanier Ragtimers record, *Relaxin’ at the Touro*, which is a beautiful slow blues. I picked up some other Muggsy things. I wasn’t hip to Louis [Armstrong] yet, but I did pick up – the first Louis record I got was – it was

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part of that German series I had mentioned earlier. It was on the German Odeon label, the Odeon swing thing. They specialized – it was taken off the English Parlophone Modern Rhythm series and so on – they specialized in putting different artists on each side. So the first Louis thing I had was the *Basin Street Blues* by the Hot Five, which was backed by something – I think it was *Freeze and Melt* by Eddie Lang. Not a very logical coupling.

The first artist I got into collecting was Ellington. By the time I left Denmark I had a little collection of Ellington records. There were other stores where they had specialized in jazz. They were mostly too expensive for me. But there was one very nice big music store where they also had books and even musical instruments. I would go there occasionally when I had a little extra dough and pick up some new records. There was a very nice clerk there who then encouraged me to buy a book called *The Jazz Record Book*. *The Jazz Record Book* was published in 1942. It was an offshoot of David Hall's *Record Book*, which was a big fat thing about classical records. It was edited by Charles Edward Smith, Fred Ramsey, and another guy – it had a triple name – Charles Paine Rogers. I don't know what happened to him, but he was a pretty good writer. He recommended that I buy this book which was horribly expensive. It was an American book, not used, new, and in Danish money it was quite – but he let me buy it on the installment plan. I was grateful to this guy, because it steered me. That turned out to be an excellent introduction to – it was roundly – I found out years later – lambasted by Barry Ulanov in *Metronome* when it came out in 1942. That review is the first shot fired in what became this protracted journalist, critical warfare between what eventually became moldy figs and progressivists. What Ulanov object to – there was a short, but not bad capsule history of jazz in front. Then there were several people who were favored by this team. The two that Barry objected to were Jelly Roll Morton and, in particular, Sidney Bechet. Apparently he had an aversion to Bechet's vibrato, which some people do. He constructed an aesthetic there that was opposed to what was in the book. But I think the book – if we look at it today, it's a pretty fair overview. Needless to say, they were somewhat biased towards New Orleans, towards what they considered the real founding fathers. But there's a very good comprehensive section on big bands, which includes a Jay McShann side, where they say that they think that this is going to be the next thing to come out of Kansas City. It doesn't mention Charlie Parker, but then again, Charlie Parker solos on these things. There's Art Tatum. They have certain things that they are critical of, but they include them: experimental stuff, like Raymond Scott. Anyway, this book had a considerable influence on me. I still have it, my original copy.

I didn't get to see much live jazz, but there was jazz on the radio. Asmussen was very popular then, but he had become a little more – he was almost like – at that point in time – like a Danish Louis Jordan, doing a lot of hip novelties. He made – he did some commercials films. When we went to the movies – I guess it was here too – they had commercials first. They had advertising. He had one where he played. There were

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occasional free things. Occasionally you could hear some outdoor music. I couldn't afford to go to clubs, and there weren't many of those anyway.

Then something big happened. That's not until 1946. That was the first American band to come to Denmark after the war. That was Don Redman's band, which was the last band that Don fronted. We know what a distinguished past he had. The band had a Danish connection. The band was put together primarily to perform for GIs in Europe, but because it had been put together with the assistance of the notorious Danish jazz Baron Timme Rosenkranz, whom I was aware of also because when he would be in Denmark, occasionally he would be on the radio. He was pretty well-known there. Timme had been instrumental in putting the band together, and so he also had arranged for it to perform in Denmark. This band consisted of mostly what were already veteran players, but also some youngsters. There was a 25-year-old pianist named Billy Taylor. I've become very friendly with Billy over the years, but I sometimes kid him about that, when he was a young kid playing the piano. The star was Don Byas, who, as we know, never came back. Don Byas stayed in Europe practically for the rest of his life. He did come back here much later and kind of sad, because nobody remembered him. There was a good trumpet player and singer named Peanuts Holland, who had been featured with Charlie Barnet. He also stayed in Europe. He stayed in Sweden. There was Butter Jackson on trombone. There was Ray Abrams on tenor [saxophone]. He was the other tenor player. A good drummer who died young, named Buford Oliver. There were two white guys in the band. They turned out to be the beboppers, although Ray Abrams had a little bit of that in him. That was a trombone player named Jack Carmen. I can't remember the trumpet player's name. They never became very important. The trumpet player also, I think he played with Boyd Raeburn for a brief while. They had some short solos on this one piece which Don Redman introduced as having been written especially for the band and for its tour. It was called *For Europeans Only*. Years later – somebody recorded one of the concerts – years later it came out on a Danish label, and I wrote a little thing. I didn't write the actual liner notes, but I wrote a little reminiscence of the band there. So that was called *For Europeans Only*, and that was by Tadd Dameron. He said, "There's a young man that you're going to hear more about." I mention this also because, not long after I came to New York I met a very pretty girl, who among other things was the first to take me to Harlem to the Apollo, where I saw Dizzy Gillespie's big band with Chano Pozo, and for that alone I should be grateful to her. She also – she took me to Harlem, because she had a little something going with a weird organ player named Doug Duke. That wasn't his real name. He was really Argentine. He was playing in a Harlem club called the Lenox Lounge. He had been with Lionel Hampton. He was a very interesting organist. Later on, years later, he wound up in upstate New York. After his death, a double-CD came out. He would play in a little club up there. It wasn't Albany, but somewhere near there. On a weekend, he would get people like Roy Eldridge, Charlie Shaver, and Teddy Wilson to

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come up and sit in with him. Somebody recorded some of that. That was how I first got to Harlem.

That got me off on a sidetrack. But this same girl and a girlfriend of hers who was also very good looking, they took me to the Royal Roost. That was my first night at the Royal Roost. The Royal Roost was called the Metropolitan Bopera House by Symphony Sid. It was the predecessor of Birdland. It was a downstairs place which had been a taxi-dance place on Times Square, right on Broadway, right about 47th Street. It had chicken in a basket. It was like a little slice of uptown, midtown. There was Tadd Dameron's band with Fats Navarro, Allan Eager, Kenny Clarke, and some other people. But because I was with these girls, and the girl that was the friend of the girl that I was with was there – we'd gone there because she was having some kind of thing with one of the musicians. So they came over to the table and sat down with us. They weren't particularly interested in me, except for Tadd, who was always a very nice man. He was the one who talked to me a little bit. He found out that I had just recently come over from Europe. Then I was able to tell him that I had heard this band, and I heard his piece, and that Don Redman had mentioned him. He was very excited about that, because he never got to hear this, and this was not long after, sometime in 1947.

That was the beginning of a pretty long friendship with Tadd. I saw him again – the last time I saw him, he was on his death bed. That was something that my European background could act as an opening to a musician. That turned out to be the case quite a bit later on, when I was able to befriend quite a lot of people who initially were a little suspicious of me. But when they found out I was not American-born – this was during a period when there was an unspoken thing that existed which had to do with acceptance of white people by African-Americans. They had to check you out a little bit. We'll get to that later on.

Anyway, I'm still in Denmark. This experience of catching this band was quite something. I went to two concerts. There were four. They were held in a big hall which was not an ideal concert hall. It was also used for sports events. But standing room only. It was just great. They had a wonderful production number on *Stormy Weather*. The singer with the band was an interesting lady named Innes Cavanaugh, who was really Timme's girlfriend. She was also – when they first met, she was a young black woman who had just recently graduated from college and was doing some work for the *Amsterdam News*. He eventually got her involved with the Ellington people. She did the liner notes for the first issue of the partial – the excerpts from *Black, Brown, and Beige* that were issued on an interesting Victor 12-inch album, which was not the kind of album that was common at the time, which was some fairly sturdy cardboard. It was reinforced paper. It was like a quadruple sleeve, because it had photos and things on both sides. She also did an interview – the only interview, I believe, ever done – with Tricky Sam Nanton

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for *Metronome* and an early Billy Strayhorn piece, also in *Metronome*. She and Timme continued to be a couple for many, many years. She had a club much, much later on. She had a club in Paris, in France, called Chez Innes. Then she also helped Timme with a place in Copenhagen, which I think was called Timme's Place. Neither of them were successful. She never made a big name for herself as a singer. She was very influenced by Ivie Anderson, but she was quite good. She had this big production number on *Stormy Weather*, with some of the band acting as a glee club and lots of percussion.

But the big hit of those concerts was [Don] Byas doing *Laura*. He was a wonderful ballad player, beautiful sound. That really hit home. Don [Redman] didn't do much playing. Did a little bit of playing, but was a very good front man. He also did some singing. He didn't have much of a voice, but he had a happy half-talking style. This was quite something to see, this band. It had a big impact on the Danes.

Bebop hadn't really raised it's head there in Denmark. I remember there was one store that had a – the records were on small labels, the early bebop records. They weren't imported by any of the major record dealers. But there was this one store that had a Dizzy Gillespie–Charlie Parker record. They would play it for you for the equivalent of about \$5. You couldn't buy it, but you could listen to it.

**Berger:** The audience for this – was it mostly people that actually knew who they were listening to? Or were they mostly – it was the novelty of seeing this largely black band playing jazz music?

**Morgenstern:** There had been a Danish audience for jazz before the war. As I said earlier, when Duke Ellington came to Copenhagen, that concert sold out in five minutes. So there was a core jazz audience there. There were also young people who were curious. These concerts were extremely well attended. Yes, there was a – during the war, jazz was quite popular. It was probably – not probably – it was more popular than it ever had been before. That was still residual. Of course it was also a novelty to have an American group coming to – there were jam sessions, which I didn't have access to. Oh, I forgot. I think – Tyree Glenn was in this band also, yes. Yeah, it had a lingering effect. That was in the fall of '46. That was pretty late in my European years. I left in April of 1947. There were no Danish ocean liners. So we went back to Gothenburg and left on the Drottningholm, a Swedish-American line.

[recording interrupted]

**Berger:** We're at the point where you've come to the United States. The first thing I want to ask you about is, now you're united with your father and how many years had it been?

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**Morgenstern:** I had last seen my father – we managed – he couldn’t get into Denmark, and my mother and I couldn’t get into France, which was probably a good thing, considering what happened later. But it was possible for my mother and me to visit my father in Paris in the spring of 1939 for about two weeks. That was the last time I had seen him. So it was eight years – almost exactly eight years. That’s a long time developmentally. When I’d last seen him, I was pre-teen. When I saw him again, I was in my late teens, a 17-year-old, which must have been pretty strange for him, to be presented with this person, groping around whether we should speak English or German or what. But it was wonderful to see him. We got along okay, although in thinking about it – and I’ve thought about it a lot – my father lived to be 86 years old. He died in 1976. He died in the spring of the year that I came to Rutgers. He never experienced that. He really would have liked that. There were times when he was concerned about what I was going to make of myself, and I think with good reason. We’ll come to that. But we had a good relationship, although I think that there were times, when I was still quite young – in other words, in the first couple of years of our being together – where he wasn’t quite sure how to – what shall we say? – direct me, or whatever.

The first thing that happened between my father and me was that I was still in this movie frame of mind, and I knew that he had friends in Hollywood. I knew about John Brahm, whom I had known in Vienna as a kid. My father said, “No way.” He said, “You’re not going to go to California, because you’re going to get the wrong impression of what this country is all about.” But he wanted to compromise. So he had – my father had been quite – my father was a man who – he said in his memoirs that if he had a talent, it was a talent for friendship. It’s true that he had been able to – of course, being cut off from most of his old friends in Europe, many of whom unfortunately did not survive the Holocaust and also the loss of – one thing that I haven’t talked about – maybe because I wanted to repress it, but it is very important in terms of what had happened to my father, in terms of his life – was the terrible impact of the Holocaust. He lost his mother. He lost his sister. He lost his brother, and others, but those were the closest relatives. There were others as well. My father’s mother, of course I knew in Vienna. He had – near the early stages of World War I, even before he was drafted, he had gone back to his ancestral home, so to speak, to more or less rescue his mother and his sister – the youngest sister – from what was then the very close threat of the Russians coming in and rolling over there. The Russians were notorious for their anti-Semitism and their pogroms. So there was a matter of bringing his mother and his sister to Vienna in 1914, which he did. She had lived there ever since. It was, unfortunately – my aunt, my father’s youngest sister, was really devoted to her mother and spent her life taking care of her – living with her and taking care of her. She was very fond of me, my aunt. I’m not sure that I was always all that nice to her. I had three aunts and a few uncles. They were stuck in Vienna, and it was not possible to get them out of there. My father’s older brother – he was the youngest. One

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brother was killed in World War I. Another brother was a harmless, nice man, who was a tailor. But the Germans killed him in Buchenwald.

When my father, after the war, found out in more detail about all the things that have happened – his mother and sister were first taken to Theresienstadt, which was, as we know, that concentration camp that the Germans had in Czechoslovakia, which was like – where they weren't killing people. It wasn't an extermination camp. But most people who were there were eventually shipped to Auschwitz. That's what happened to my grandmother and my aunt. Once my father found out about all these things, it was a pretty harrowing thing for him. In a way, he never completely got over that. One of the ways to get over it – he also had – it caused him to have a period where – he was writing in German. As a writer he had a wonderful style in German, which is one of the reasons why, when they published his works in Germany, they were so well received. He had a great command of the German language, which is a difficult language also in terms of its syntax, as we know, which is one of the reasons why most translations from German are not terribly good. In any case, he had such a revulsion against the language that for a while he found himself unable to write in German. He never – although his English was very good in terms of conversational English or being able to write a letter – it wasn't – as a writer, he could not transfer that from one language to the other. So he went through a period where he simply couldn't write. Then he – the way that he resolved, or the way that it resolved itself, was in writing this book *The Third Pillar*. It's quite short. It's less than 200 pages. It's written in an almost biblical style. I wouldn't call it a novel. It is more of a – it's almost like – I wouldn't call it a fairy tale, because it's very realistic in many ways, but in other ways it's not. It was his way of dealing with that experience, with the Holocaust. For instance, Gary Giddins finds it to be one of the most moving things that have been done in terms of literature, because it's very hard to deal with in a literary way.

My father was going through that at the time that I was reunited with him. I now know that he was going through, because he never was one to talk a lot about himself in terms of – my father was a terrific conversationalist. He was great in gatherings. As I said, he had a knack for making friends. He always had a large circle of acquaintances and friends. But he never opened up about what was going on inside of him. He very rarely told me anything about what he was working on when he was writing. So our relationship was always – it was good in many ways, but in other ways I think there was a time that, because we hadn't been together during a very important formative stage of my life, there was something that never really came together.

When my first son Adam was born, my father was absolutely delighted. He always wanted to be a grandfather. The fact is that he wanted a grandson. When my wife – when Elie was pregnant, he kept saying things like, "I hope it will be a boy." So he was

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absolutely delighted with that. Probably that was about the closest we came at that point. It was like I had done something that – it's not as if, when I started to write and when I became editor of magazines, yes, he said nice things, and he was proud of me in a way, but that accomplishment – I'm glad that he lived to see that. He unfortunately did not live very long after Adam was born.

Anyway, he said, "No, no, no, no Hollywood," but he did hook me up. He had somebody who knew somebody at what was called the *March of Time*. I don't know if you remember what that was. I'd better say what that was. Time, Inc., which had *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune*, also had a newsreel wing. *March of Time* was a weekly kind of what we would now call documentary, relatively short, because they were shown in movie theaters. In those days, you always had a lot of shorts before you had the main feature. You would have a cartoon. You would have a newsreel. You would have a travelogue sometime. You would have these one-reel comedies. There was a guy named Pete Smith who always had domestic accidents. There was Leon Arrow. There were all these things, and there was also the *March of Time*. If you know *Citizen Kane* – you remember that *Citizen Kane* starts with the guy who was the investigator who wants to find out about Hearst's life. He does look at a documentary about him, which starts out with, "In Xanadu, Charles Foster Kane built a" – that tone is the *March of Time*. That thing is a takeoff on the *March of Time*, which had this very sonorous . . . .

*March of Time* did a couple of jazz-oriented things. They did a little historical thing when the Original Dixieland Jazz Band was reunited in 1936. They filmed them. They had a thing about 52nd Street where you see Art Tatum at the Three Deuces. For some time, until we recovered some t.v. appearances of Tatum, that was the only thing of Tatum on film. There were outtakes, but it was frustrating.

The *March of Time*, they always picked a topic. It could be political. It could be non-political. It had this stentorian stuff. It was the only film activity that was rooted in New York. So that's why my father sent me there. So I just said, with this very nice man, what could he do with an 18-year-old kid? – oh, I went to high school here then. My father had friends who were not so terrific in terms of what they advised him. One was a nice lady who later became a professor at Brandeis – where I wound up after I was in the Army – named Marie Serkin. She said that even though I had almost matriculated in Denmark – some people said I should stay. I didn't want to stay and finish school. I wanted to come to the United States. That's where I wanted to be. So they sent me to this high school which I found out later on it wasn't a very good one in New York. It's called Harran High School. It's on Columbus Avenue and 59th Street. I couldn't stand it. It seemed so elementary to me, the whole system of what – I had been in a fairly advanced – almost what you call when you finish and you go – you're off to go to university. That's almost

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like being a college sophomore, a little bit like that. I couldn't stand this pap. I just left after three weeks. I left. It was terrible.

The only thing I was interested in was American. So I went to night school. I went to Washington Irving down on 14th Street. They had a thing where you could take a course in American history. I wanted to learn something about that, because I was pretty blank on that.

Anyway, he sent me to this nice man at the *March of Time*. He said to me, "There is something" – we are now in the fall of 1947 – he said, "There is something called television." He said, "That is going to extinguish what we're doing here." It was perfectly true. I think the *March of Time* may have lasted another year or a year-and-a-half. "It doesn't make any sense. It is also very hard for us to find any kind of entry jobs." I was meanwhile running to the Museum of Modern Art, looking at all their historical – cabinet of Dr. Caligari, and Metropolis. "But," he said, "obviously you're new here." But he was impressed with my English. So he sent me to Time, Inc. He sent me over to Time-Life. So I got a job there as a trainee working in the mail room and doing mostly internal stuff. It was like a glorified messenger. It was very interesting at the time, because things were really popping there. I even got – Whitaker Chambers, who became famous later on – there were a lot of people there. James Agee.

I also got involved in the Newspaper Guild. They had editorial employees and commercial. I was commercial. The Newspaper Guild – which was a pretty left-wing union – they're trying to organize that department. I ran for office. I didn't get elected, but I got 120 votes. My God. They were strictly routine. The people who voted for me only voted because I was on the left-wing slate. I got involved in left-wing politics. To tell you the truth, after the war in Denmark, the communists who had been active in the underground had a very good image. They had done quite well. Of course the fact that the Russians had beaten the Germans into the ground – all that resonated. I remember in Denmark going to the – there were Russian prisoners of war that, before they were sent back home, they were raising money as a – they had this chorus, the choir – you've been to Russia. You know they have wonderful singers. There were these Russians singing.

What happened in Denmark was like everywhere else, that whatever capital they had acquired for themselves by having done the right thing, after that awful non-aggression pact with Stalin and Hitler had redeemed themselves. Of course they eventually frittered that away by being so obedient to Moscow and doing things that were wrong in terms of whatever country they were involved with internally.

Anyway, I got involved with the Progressive Party, rang doorbells for Henry Wallace, and went to a couple of meetings, at one of which there was the guest speaker – it's a

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very informal – not too many people – was a young writer who had just published his first novel, named Norman Mailer, but I can't say that he was a very nice guy, even then. He was huffy. That's in my opinion the only good book that he ever wrote. *The Naked and the Dead* is a very good novel, and he'll probably – I think his reputation will rest on that. Everything else you can forget about, especially what he's doing now, writing about Hitler. He couldn't find anything better to do.

That's enough of that. Part of that was also Paul Robeson, who was a tremendously effective speaker. Going to Yankee Stadium and hearing Paul Robeson speak, that was quite an experience.

At Time-Life, there wasn't much jazz involvement there, except that the American Newspaper Guild had Sidney Bechet as a – they gave him some kind of award, and he performed for them. I got to know New York very well through this job, because I would go and visit the advertising agencies and newspapers and go see somebody like James Agee in Greenwich Village. I was making a pretty nice taste, so I could go and buy myself a weekly quota of records, and I could go to clubs on 52nd Street, which was, in those days, if you say the figure, it seems ridiculously cheap. You could buy a beer for 75 cents. You could learn to nurse by not pouring it from the bottle into a glass, where the bartender could see how much you had left, but by keeping it in the bottle and drinking from that, which is opaque. He can't see that you needed another one. I quickly learned also – advice from musicians – that if you bought your first – you bought a beer and gave the bartender a tip, he would leave you alone for the rest of it. You could stay there for hours, and he wouldn't bother you. So that was one thing that I learned. I also found out that when the weather was nice on 52nd Street, you could hear outside when you were standing in the street. You could hear, and you could hang out with the musicians at the White Rose, which was this bar around the corner. That was really cheap, and they had something called free lunch. Of course there is the old saying, there's no such thing as free lunch. But these bars used to have – they had some herring, pickles, pickled green tomatoes, and some kind of nondescript cabbage.

52nd Street was quite an experience, because even then, though it was clearly in decline already from its previous zenith, you could see Sidney Bechet at Jimmy Ryan's. Across the street at the [Three] Deuces could be Charlie Parker. I saw him there. It could be an all-star group with Gerry Mulligan, Kai Winding, and Allen Eager, or Brew Moore, actually. Erroll Garner up the street, and Billie Holiday once in a while at the Onyx. Amazing, amazing.

**Berger:** Dan, how soon after you arrived in New York did you start going to hear live jazz?

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**Morgenstern:** Like I said in my ten seconds on Ken Burns, most people, when they come to New York for the first time, they want to see the Empire State Building, but I wanted to see 52nd Street. That was the truth. I went down there, because I – it's not – New York is easy to find your way around, because the streets and the avenues are numbered. It's not like if you come to a place like – if you come to Copenhagen for the first time in your life, you have to have a map. I got there fairly – there was a Nedicks on the corner of 52nd and Sixth. Do you know what Nedicks was? Nedicks, you could buy an orange drink for a dime, and you could get a hot dog and an orange drink for 15 cents, a special. Neither of them were superb, but all right. The hot dogs weren't that bad.

The girl that I talked about before, who took me to the Apollo, I met her by way of – in left-wing politics in New York at the time, folk music was a big thing. You could say that one of the things that left-wingers achieved culturally in this country, they made a big contribution to American folk music. There's Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger and all that. Moe Asch, a one-man movement with Folkways Records. A friend of my father's, a nice woman, introduced me to her daughter, who was a pretty girl who was about a year younger than me, I think. So that was just right. She took me to one of these hootenanny things in the Village. Afterwards we went to someplace to get a bite. That's where I met that other girl. Her name was Fay Harrison. She was very glamorous. She must have liked me, because she pounced on me. That's how I got to know her. I found out later that, first of all, she lied about her age. She was actually younger than she made herself out to be. Also, she was using me as a beard for a while. I can't mention the musician's name, because he's still alive. But that was okay. We became friendly too. In fact he called me years later and wanted to know if I still knew where she was and if she was around. So that's how – she also got me onto 52nd Street. I still have one of those photos from the Deuces, where you could have your picture taken at the table. She introduced me to a little guy that was at Nedicks. He was standing there in a corner. She introduced me to this short, strange-looking guy named – everybody called him Face – his name was Nat Lorber. He was a trumpet player, but he never made any records. At the time he was a protege of Hot Lip Page's. Everybody knew Nat. His close friends would call him Nat, but everybody else called him Face. He did have – there's a picture on the wall of my office. He was the child of Russian Jewish immigrants who still spoke Yiddish at home. His father was a garment cutter. His mother was just a housewife. He was the eldest. He had a kid brother and a kid sister. At that time they lived in Coney Island, but he was born in Harlem. There was still a considerable – born in 1920 – there was still a considerable Jewish community in Harlem at that time. They then – he lived in all the boroughs, because he moved from Harlem to the Bronx when he was in his early teens, living in a project in the Bronx, where one of his neighbors, whom he said he would hear him practice. He would play *Sleepy Time Down South*. That was a guy named Milton Rajonsky. Who is Milton Rajonsky? Shorty Rogers.

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Nat was a – when he was a young child, he had pleurisy. It stunted his growth. He was not a dwarf. He wasn't abnormally short. But he was short. He had – in a strange way, his build, his physical structure, was almost like a dwarf, because the dwarves tend to have a large torso and a big head. He was a very interesting figure on the side of jazz that you don't hear about much. He pretty much taught himself to play trumpet. He did have some lessons from Charles Colin, who is a very highly respected teacher. Though Charlie at one point in time just said to him, "What you want to do, I can't teach you any more." He became enamored of – he discovered jazz for himself. By the time that he started really getting into that, they had moved to Brooklyn. He said there was a band in Brooklyn. It was a trumpet player named Tommy "Red" Tompkins. Made some records for Vocalion in 1936.

Some other things that he heard – he said there was a radio show that – who was the guy that was the first disc jockey and the first milkman? the famous – the one who sponsored the Randall's Island Swing Festival and that famous radio show with Louis, Jack Teagarden, and Budd Freeman. He's the progenitor of disc jockeys, because there wasn't – up until the early '30s, there really wasn't much playing of records on radio. It was primarily live music, much of it played in the studios, and then remotes – band remotes. He really started that. His name will come to me. Anyway, he did have a feature. He had a feature which I wouldn't have known about, except that Nat told me. It was called "Saturday Night in Harlem." He would play – for an hour play all black bands.

Then came the beginning of 52nd Street. The very beginning of 52nd Street is Prohibition, the Onyx being a speakeasy. But when it really opened up, the first attraction to make a name for the street was none other than Louis Prima, 1935. He had come to New York the year before. He had a band at the Famous Door with Pee Wee Russell on clarinet. He got a lot of press, a lot of publicity. That was really the beginning. So Nat – Louis Prima was one of his early heroes, before he discovered the real Louis [Armstrong]. He said he would stand outside and listen to Prima on 52nd Street.

Nat and I became friends. He knew a lot. He was not an intellectual, but he was certainly not unintelligent. He didn't have much schooling. He did go to high school, but he went to work rather early. He had jobs in factories, which he hated. He also at one time quite early in his life got busted for pot. Everybody was smoking pot. This is before the greening of America. Even today we have stupid laws. He did get himself busted. An extremely minor infraction. He wasn't selling anything. He just had a little stash and got involved in a thing where the cops came to a club. So he was in prison, like Mezz Mezzrow was. He said he was tested by a psychologist who was a Muggsy Spanier fan. He said they wound up talking about jazz instead of testing him. This was – it certainly caused his father, who was a very limited man, to consider him a hopeless case, but he was very close to his mother, who was a very sweet woman.

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He never – he managed by hook and by crook – occasionally he had some jobs. He had a couple of highlights. Joe Marsala hired him for a big band, even though he couldn't read music, because it was very – the parts were very easy. He got himself gigs here and there. He played in a band in Forest Hills with – Bob Thiele was then an aspiring clarinetist. Nat said he was pretty awful. Rod Cless was there as well, who was great. He had Dan Qualey, who was an Irish bartender who loved boogie-woogie and, because of his love for boogie-woogie, started a label called Solo Art which was the first to record Albert Ammons and Pete Johnson, as well as Art Hodes. He was the first – seemingly the first guy to take Nat under his wing. He was an amateur, semi-professional drummer – Dan was. He got Nat some gigs and was very nice to him. But then he moved to California. So that was that.

When I met him, he was sort of a protégé of Hot Lips Page, who even managed to get him some little gigs in Harlem. Nat was my Virgil, as I have said on several occasions. Whereas I had gone up to Harlem with Fay, that was one thing. But it was Nat who really took me uptown and introduced me to the after-hours scene. We had lots of discussions about the music. He knew records. He turned me on to records that you didn't see listed in books by the critics. Just recently Mosaic put out this really nice box of small-group Ellington stuff. In it, the notes are by Steven Lasker, who has nothing to say about the music. He's a guy who – he's an engineer and a discographer. But it's funny. When you read those notes, the only thing – when he says something about the music, he's quoting somebody else. In this case, he's quoting Cootie Williams about a record that he made with a small group under his name. This is the first time I've seen this quote from Cootie, who said that this is a really good one. "This is the way like I want to play." This is one of the records that Nat introduced me to, a thing called *Chasin' Chippies*, which is a terrific fast blues, wonderful. Needless to say, it does wind up – it climaxes, Cootie playing a lot like Louis Armstrong, which he always was wont to do.

Nat was an absolute Armstrong fan. It's through Nat that I wound up meeting Louis. First I met Hot Lips Page, who was about as close as you could come to Pops. It was again where there's always *cherchez la femme*, as the French say. Nat introduced me to a very nice girl named Jeann Failows – she spelled Jeann with two "n"s. I think she was the only one to do – who at the time was handling Louis's fan mail. This is around 1948. At the time he wasn't getting as much of it as he would just a few years later, but still a considerable amount. He had this form letter, so to speak, which was then about keeping regular. That was before Swiss Kriss. It would say something about Pluto water. Then it would have his signature on it. So she would get these letters. The ones that she didn't feel required for him to see them, she would put this thing in return mail. When she felt that it was something that Louis should see and that he might want to return to personally, because he was an inveterate letter-writer. He loved to write letters. So that

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wouldn't have been a hardship on him. But to look through all this stuff was a good thing for her to do and relieve him of that.

She was, needless to say, close to Louis. So that's how I first got my introduction to Pops. She knew Nat very well. He had a crush on her. She was the daughter of a dentist from the Bronx. She was a WAC. She was bit older than me. She was a WAC in World War II. You know what WACs are. She knew a lot about jazz. I don't know that I got to know Jeannie very well. I don't know who first introduced her to it. I think she got into it, as people did in the Swing Era, through dancing, in big bands. She had excellent taste. Later on, a little after – not long after I met her, she was running jam sessions, Sunday sessions at a club in Harlem called the Club Harlem. It was on 145th Street. She worked for a while for Musicraft Records, doing publicity for them. She was friendly with an interesting youngish black guy who wrote the first book about bebop. It isn't really a book. It's a little pamphlet. We have it. It's very rare, but we have it. She introduced me to him, but I can't remember his name now. Names are bad when you get old. I don't remember names. It will come back. She helped him with the publicity on that. We have letters from her in our file which I found years later, because we inherited the Musiccraft files through Jerry Valburn. When I went through the correspondence, all of a sudden I see letters signed by her. I didn't even know that she had worked for the label. She never told me that. She was quite a gal. She had a very close friendship with Louis which lasted until the end of Louis's life. She later became Jack Bradley's companion, Jack being the more or less "court photographer" of Armstrong. It was a tremendous collection of Armstrong material. It was not long ago acquired by the Armstrong archive in Queens.

I'm jumping back and forth. I would say that Nat was a critical element in my jazz odyssey. At the time Nat was also hanging out with another person. We became a triumvirate for a while. Interestingly enough, his name was Steve Tropp – T-r-o-p-p. He was a published poet. He's dead now, poor guy. Stevie was my age. He was born in Vienna. He came here in 1939, though, which was a good time. His father, whom I never met – I think he was gone by the time I left – he was a Reichian analyst, which may account a little bit for Stevie's craziness. He was an aspiring drummer. He had very good time. He never had the patience to learn proper rudiments, but he was very good on brushes. The most important thing for a drummer is to have good time. A little bit later on he did work professionally as a drummer for a while in of all places in Philadelphia with a band led by a baritone saxophonist named Pinky Williams, who did record – was the brother of Skippy Williams, whose main contribution to jazz history is that he was Ben Webster's replacement in the Ellington band before Al Sears. Stevie worked with Pinky in Philadelphia. During the period that he did this, at one time, for a week or so, Tadd Dameron, who was down on his luck at the time, was the piano player in the group.

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Steve and Nat and I hung out a lot together. This is during the time I'm still working for Time Inc. I'm the only one who is. I forget what Steve was doing at the time, but he wasn't making a lot of money. In fact the first time we met, he bummed a cigarette from me. He was one of my first acquaintances who spoke like a hipster. He was like a pre-["?"]. "Hey dad, you got a straight?" But as I say, he was a poet, and quite a good one. He does exist – there's a Folkways record that has him reading a few things of his own. Never made any real big waves, but he published a little pamphlet called *Mozart in Hell*. I can't quote my favorite line from it, because it's not even by today's standards probably acceptable on a Smithsonian interview. Not that it was pornographic in nature, but that one line was. It's about a mythical character called Herkimer the Hucklebuck King. Stevie was very inventive.

The three of us hung out a lot. That was during my days that I can now say that I was doing this to get deeply involved in the jazz life, but actually, as far as my parents were concerned, I was being – I was precariously on the edge of whatever. "Where do you go? What do you do?" Because we would live – I was working, but the other two – I guess they had a gig or something. But we would stay up all night. Sometimes we – once we took a walk from an all night – it was a painter who had a loft way down near the Battery. It was a beautiful loft. There were sessions. Zoot [Sims] was there. Then we decided we wanted to go visit this girl we knew who lived in the Bronx. So we walked from the Battery all the way up. We started out about 5 o'clock in the morning. It was a nice summer day. We walked all the way up to Fordham Road. We actually did. We had a little bit of help from amphetamines.

Those were the days. In retrospect, I can honestly say that I learned a lot from that, because we went to – the Harlem scene was terrific, hanging out with Hot Lips Page and going to places that a normal person would not have been going to.

**Berger:** Was Lips the first well-known musician that you got to know?

**Morgenstern:** Actually, pre- – well, simultaneously with my budding friendship with Nat Lorber, I also – the first musician who – aside from this little incident with Tadd Dameron that I described – there were two musicians, both of whom were guys who were involved in proselytizing for jazz. The first one was Art Hodes. Art was – that was at Jimmy Ryan's. Art was – he – we started talking. He wanted to know where I was from, and so on and so forth. He was very nice to me. That was around the same time at Ryan's that I first encountered some people that I eventually got to know very well, namely the Bob Wilber Bobcats and Dick Wellstood. Dick was the first one of these young guys that I talked to. Then, Wilbur DeParis. Wilbur DeParis at the time – this was before his New Orleans band. Wilbur had just organized some kind of what we would now call a jazz society. He was soliciting, putting together a mailing list and running these Sunday

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afternoon sessions at a place – it was a hotel in mid-town Manhattan, but I can't remember the name of it. It didn't last very long. Wilbur also cultivated me. In other words, he was very nice to me and put me on his mailing list.

Guys that I got chummy with – it was such a – you had such easy access to musicians. We didn't – Nat and I, we never went inside Nick's. We didn't even want to go there, because we weren't particularly interested in hearing the by-then not very interesting Dixieland that was being played in there, but the musicians would go across the street to Julius', which was a great neighborhood bar that had wonderful hamburgers. Sometimes, when we couldn't afford to buy them, the smell was – they had these great hamburgers, which came with a huge slice of – they specialized – I don't know where they got these big onions. The onion slice would be as big as the hamburger, and a very good bun. They had an interesting interior decoration. The ceiling was covered with dust, but the dust was held in place with some kind of – with varnish spray. It gave it a unique look. That's where all the guys, the Condon-type guys hung out there.

Then Eddie Condon's. I went there with Nat. That's how I met Eddie, who was a wonderful person. At Eddie's, if you had access, you would go backstage. The backstage at Condon's was downstairs. There's a famous photograph of Dave Tough with a cigarette hanging out of his mouth, with this sea of brick wall behind him. That's the musicians' hangout at Condon's. Underneath was – one flight down behind the bandstand, there was this little room there. That's where guys would sit and get high between sets if they couldn't do it upstairs.

Condon's would have Tuesday night jam sessions. Not Mondays, but Tuesdays. That's where – Lips would be a guest, and Emmett Berry. It would always be – Condon's would always have black musicians as the guests on that. Their intermission piano was Ralph Sutton and sometimes Dick Wellstood. The guys in the band – Wild Bill [Davison]. Toni Parenti was another musician who was always very interested in talking to people. He talked to me to tell me stories about New Orleans. Zooty Singleton was a very open, friendly guy that I got to know. So many.

The beboppers were different. There wasn't too much outgoing stuff going on there. But Brew Moore – Brew, who was from New Orleans – not quite, but he's from the South, and that's where he cut his musical teeth.

**Berger:** You said that, for example, you weren't going to Nick's too often, because the music wasn't all that exciting. Were you shaping your own tastes at the time? Were they leaning in any particular – would you go to bebop and straight-ahead things?

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**Morgenstern:** This is another thing that I owe to hanging out with musicians. There was this stupid warfare going on between traditionalists and progressives. But I found out very quickly that musicians didn't think like that. So, as far as Nat was concerned, he was probably the one who – I had heard Charlie Parker, but walking in on – the first time, walking into a club where they were playing bebop, it took a while to get adjusted to that. But on record, it was different. You could repeat stuff and listen and learn. Symphony Sid was important in this respect too, because Symphony Sid was the only d.j. at the time [who] played bebop on the radio. He was a proselytizer. Of course he was getting payola. It was minimal. But he really liked the stuff. He was prejudiced in a way, musically prejudiced. He wouldn't play anything beyond a certain – if you called him – we would do that sometimes, just to put him on. We'd call him up and ask him to play Louis Armstrong. "We don't play that kind of music. We only play the modern sounds." But he would play Erskine Hawkins. What was that . . .? In fact, that was his opening. It was his theme song for a while: *After Hours*. He played that. He played Louis Jordan. He played [Count] Basie – contemporary Basie, not classic Basie.

The thing is that you learned from musicians not to be prejudiced. Needless to say there were musicians who were limited in their outlook, but that was relatively rare. You would find musicians who did not approve of certain things that went along with a style like bebop, which would have to do with social attitudes and their economic consequences, as far as these musicians were concerned. But there were not musical prejudices. It was easy to glom on to Dizzy. Maybe a little harder but not much harder to get involved with Bird.

The first thing I ever heard on radio in New York was Dizzy Gillespie. The first night I spent in New York – that was in my father's room there on a – he didn't mind. He went to sleep. He had a little radio. In those days there was only AM, no FM. I thought, naive as I was, in New York there would be jazz on the radio everywhere. But I couldn't find any until I got to near the end of the dial on the left. There was somebody. I heard what – really, honest to goodness, the first thing I caught there, the music – it had already started – was Dizzy's *I Can't Get Started*, which if you remember, it has this very interesting background. He plays slow. He's playing – it's – the effect of it is dissonant. I knew the tune *I Can't Get Started*. I knew the Bunny Berigan record. That was known in Europe. I didn't own it, but I knew it. But what I heard sounded very strange to me. It sounded to me – even though I liked classical music. I had a bunch of classical records, and I'd listen to that as well. I knew modern classical music. It sounded weird to me. In terms of jazz, it sounded like it was off key. It didn't sound right. So that was my introduction to that – jazz in New York – was that, *I Can't Get Started*, in the middle of the night.

It was through the musicians that I was able to negotiate between different worlds, so to speak, and then also see that they were closely interrelated. I would go to Central Plaza or Stuyvescent Casino on weekends. You could go to Birdland when they had the – go to

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the Roost or Birdland when they had the bleachers, where all you would have to do is pay admission – you didn’t even have to buy a drink – and hear some outstanding modern jazz. That didn’t seem like a problem. I used to think that people who were doing these things like Rudi Blesh and Barry Ulanov, having a battle of the bands, where the traditional bands, by the way, always were rather badly chosen, so they were an easy knockout. Ulanov would have Fats Navarro, Charlie Parker, Lennie Tristano, and so on. Blesh would have – not that these were bad musicians, but you have Wild Bill Davison and Georg Brunis. It was primitive music. But these things seemed foolish to me. I enjoyed listening to Rudi when he had this radio program, “This is Jazz.” All right. The more the merrier.

**Berger:** I’m Ed Berger. It’s now March 29th, Thursday. We’re continuing our oral history interview for the Smithsonian with Dan Morgenstern. The presiding engineer is Ken Kimery.

Dan, we left off where you were familiarizing yourself with 52nd Street, hanging around with Nat Lorber, and meeting some of the musicians. You also had told us how you had an in with Louis Armstrong and you got to meet him. Maybe you could elaborate.

**Morgenstern:** That was of course a major event. But I should say, prior to that, I also had been hanging out in Greenwich Village with another group of – my boss at Time Inc. was a young man named Gordon Clark who was quite interesting. I got him interested in jazz, which he wasn’t too much acquainted with. He was an aspiring writer. I don’t know whatever happened to him. We lost contact. He introduced me to a Greenwich Village bar at that time which was very hip. It was an Italian restaurant with a big bar, on MacDougal Street – MacDougal and Thompson, called the San Remo. It was a hangout for people who later became relatively well known.

One person I met there was a young James Baldwin – Jimmie Baldwin. He was interested – my father’s first novel to be published in the U.S. had just been published recently. He had read that. We got to know each other. I had also met a very interesting young African-American musician named Lonnie Levister – Alonzo Levister – who was not a jazz person, although obviously he was acquainted with jazz. He lived in the Bronx on Kelly Street, which was near a club, the 845, which was fairly well known at the time. A lot of interesting musicians played there. I would often – we had a Friday night get-together at Lonnie’s apartment. At the time he was married to a young girl, a New York Jewish girl who was more or less the breadwinner, because then she was working at a doctor’s office. We had a routine on Saturday mornings – she worked Saturdays – I would call her and play on the telephone – I would play Muggsy Spanier’s *I wish I could shimmy like my sister Kate*, because she said that would cheer her up, having to work on a Saturday morning.

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Through Lonnie, I met a bunch of young black intellectuals, one of whom was very much involved with the – a little later he did join the Communist party. Then many years later he became a convert to – what's the evangelist?

**Berger:** Billy Graham?

**Morgenstern:** Yeah. He became a Billy Graham accolade. But that was another side.

Lonnie was a pretty good piano player. He would occasionally – very rarely he might sit in on a jam session. He had been to New England Conservatory. He was a talented composer. Lonnie's still around. He's older than me. He's now in his 80s. Except for a brief period, when he was associated with Charlie Mingus and made an album on Mingus's Debut label which has never been reissued, but one track was reissued in this big Debut CD package which reviewed the label. He was also later associated with Oscar Brown, Jr. He composed a number of short operas. He got a very nice review in the *Village Voice* from Gary Giddins many years ago when they were performed just a couple of times in New York and then did it again later. Unfortunately, nothing has ever happened with him, but there was one thing that he did do. He did some arranging and some work for Prestige. He did write a piece that was recorded by John Coltrane. It was called *Trane's Slow Dance*. Years later, when – I hadn't seen Lonnie in quite a while. I asked him – because this was after Coltrane's death. Coltrane had become this iconic figure. I said, "You must be getting some nice royalties for *Trane's Slow Dance*." He said, "No. I never . . ." I said, "You have to contact the label. They've got stuff in escrow for you." He did. Then he called me and said he got a big check. His stuff had been sitting there for years. So that was another aspect of my New York life.

I'll mention one more thing, which is, aside from 52nd Street, there were these weekend sessions at Stuyvescent Casino and the Central Plaza on what was then known as the Lower East Side. It is now – I don't know. Everything has been renamed. Soho, Noho, who know's what. It was still then essentially an old Jewish neighborhood. These two places were catering halls where, because of the Sabbath, they were free on Saturdays and on Friday nights. There were two guys who ran sessions there: Bob Maltz and Jack Crystal. Both of them died relatively young. Jack Crystal is famous for being Billy Crystal's father and Milt Gabler's brother-in-law. They were in a way very different persons, but they were interchangeable. Maltz had been an avid collector. He was a – his mother used to sit on the table and take tickets. She was the guardian. Bob had a tremendous gift for finding musicians who were then already old and some quite obscure, but known only for having recorded some stuff in the '20s. One time he put together a recreation of the Clarence Williams Blue Five. He had Ed Allen on trumpet. He had Cyrus St. Clair, who was a fairly regular tuba player there, wonderful old guy with a great face.

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Floyd Campbell on washboard, Buster Bailey on clarinet, and James P. Johnson on piano. That was an incredible thing to see in the late 1940s, early 1950s. It was already a chunk of bygone history. All sorts of people that he would have. He seemed to know everybody.

Then a few years later, after I got back out of the Army – we'll come to that later – when I was hanging out at the Copper Rail in mid-Manhattan, one day suddenly Bob Maltz came in and said, "Has anybody seen Art Blakey?" That seemed like such a change. But he was then also promoting some modern jazz concerts.

One night there was a special – Mezz Mezzrow, who was not very active then and who had already gone to France and briefly come back from there – of course I read Mezz's book, *Really the Blues*. That was another influential work in my jazz education. But I had never seen Mezz. Mezz was going to be there. And visiting New York was the grand poobah of jazz criticism, Hughes Panassié. Sure another, the three of them arrived together at the Central Plaza with Tallulah Bankhead, who was a great fan of Louis's and of Sidney Bechet. She wrote about both of them in various magazines. She did a very good piece on Louis. She was quite a character. They made a grand entrance. Mezz was beautifully attired in a three-piece suit. He had one of those old fashioned – he had a pocket watch with a chain, and the vest. He looked like a retired banker. He played – I remember that one of the numbers he played was *Black and Blue* – he played what was then the longest solo I had ever heard anyone play. This is long before the advent of the LP and Coltrane. He seemed to be playing for hours, never stopped. That was Mezz. He was truly a character, and I'm glad I got to – the only time I got to see him.

Panassié was a tremendously impressive looking person. Most jazz critics were not. There was nothing very impressive looking about Leonard Feather. Panassié walked with a cane. He was born with polio. That was one of the ways that he became so immersed in jazz as a very young person. Most people don't realize that Panassié started to write when he was 18. By the time he was 19 he was already famous in this very limited circle. He was an impressive looking man walking with a cane, with Tallulah in tow, and Bechet. Bechet was there as well. Bechet and Mezz played together.

One time at the Central Plaza, Bechet was featured, and the trumpet player, who I think was supposed to be – a lot of the swing-era, mainstream musicians had by then gotten involved in a more traditional environment, because there wasn't that much work available for their kind of music. I think it was probably Buck Clayton who was supposed to be the trumpet player. He was late. Nat was there and had his horn. So Bob Maltz said, "Play a set with Sidney. I'll give you ten bucks" or something. So he played a set with Bechet. Bechet was not at all – Bechet could be very nasty to trumpet players, but he was very nice to Nat, whom he knew from Jimmy Ryan's. In fact there's a photograph – in John Chilton's *Bechet* biography, there is a photograph taken at Ryan's of Bechet with

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his then-band there on the bandstand and the people standing around. Nat is in that photograph, but he's misidentified.

The Central Plaza was a memorable – there was a lot of wonderful music being played there. Fletcher Henderson came one night and played with a small group, reconstructed alumni. Jonah Jones was on trumpet. He had not yet made it with *Muted Jazz*. He was very little known. Gene Sedric. I forget who was on drums. Fletcher, he was already in the final stages of his life, but he was still a very handsome, elegant man, who, when he sat down at the piano, looked like he was leading a big band. Big bandleaders had this aura around them.

After I left Time Inc., and before I got drafted, my father got me a job which I didn't realize then – I was still too naive about most American ways to realize that was really a very hard job to get – my father was very friendly with Brooks Atkinson, the theater critic, veteran theater critic of the *New York Times*. Brooks used to take my father along for first nights, because he – as my father said later, for two reasons: one was that my father was somebody who understood a lot about theater, but it wasn't that Brooks would ask him anything; the other reason was that my father didn't talk a lot. Brooks had told him he would take people and they would blabber away. I think that my father was quiet unless Brooks wanted to ask him, because he had himself been a theater critic and knew the importance of concentrating.

Just as an aside, later on I remember my father telling me that he had just been to see a play. It was *I Can Get it for You Wholesale*. That marked the debut of – he said, "There's a young Jewish girl that I saw last night." He said, "She's going to be a star, no question about it." That was Barbra Streisand. So my father still really had a nose for that.

Through Brooks, I got a job – I left Time Inc. My supervisor was a very nice man. He said, "You shouldn't be – you're wasting your time here, because you're not going to get anywhere. They're not – what you're doing, you could stay here for years and you won't get into a position where you're going to be doing any writing or anything like that." So he fired me. He gave me a nice severance check. For the first time in my life I had several hundred dollars. That's when I went out on the town with my friends.

So it got me this job as a copy boy at the *New York Times*. That, I worked night side. I started work at 6 o'clock and I got off at 2 in the morning. There was still time to go. Clubs stayed open then until 3:30, 4 in the morning. There was a very nice jazz club right near where the *New York Times* was. *New York Times*, 43rd Street. This was on 47th in the same block there, in the Times Square area, called Lou Terrassi's. The owner was a trumpet freak. He always had small groups there headed up by trumpet players. That's the first time I saw Roy Eldridge, who had Dick Wellstood on piano and Zutty Singleton

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on drums, whom I knew. That's how I first met Roy. Charlie Shavers had a great little group there. That was when [Hot] Lips [Page] sat in with Charlie. I remember they played *Royal Garden Blues*. Lips hit a high note and passed out. He just slid down. He was leaning against a wall at the bandstand, and he just slid down. He revived very quickly, but everybody was concerned about him. Later on, he was sitting at the bar recovering. Big Sid Catlett was in the house. I remember, because I was right next to them. Sid said to Lips, "You've got to take better care of yourself." Strangely enough, just a few years later, both of them were gone. Sid preceded Lips.

Joe Thomas, who was a wonderful trumpet player, had a rare chance to lead his own group at Lou Terrassi's. I used to drop in there after work. Also Lou had Billy Butterfield. Speaking of bandleaders, one night when Charlie Shavers was there – not the night that Lips passed out, but on another night – Tommy Dorsey came in with a bunch of people. Tommy Dorsey was wearing a beautifully tailored double-breasted blue pinstripe suit. He looked – he was not a very big man, but all these bandleaders always looked larger than they really were. They had this aura around them. Clearly Tommy was very – Charlie was a great favorite of his. He hired him and fired him and hired him and fired him over a long period of time.

Big bands I got to see at movie theaters in Times Square. First run theaters had stage shows. I remember seeing a show with – Count Basie had broken up his big band, but put one together which later was kind of the nucleus of the second – what did Albert Murray call it? – the New Testament band. It was a show – that was the first time I saw Billie Holiday. It was Billie and Basie and the Will Mastin Trio featuring Sammy Davis, Jr. They were third on the bill.

I was working at the *Times*. That was interesting to watch all the things that were going on and some of the famous writers. Then this was – then the Korean conflict was underway, as they called it, and I was drafted.

**Berger:** Before we get into the Army, I think you should recount your first meeting with Louis Armstrong.

**Morgenstern:** That was not long before. I've written about that, so I won't go into too much detail, but it was a fascinating experience, because Louis was working with the All Stars at the Roxy. The Roxy was the biggest movie theater in New York aside from Radio City Music Hall. Radio City Music Hall is a movie theater, but it is really more than that. Roxy was enormous. I think it was built in the last years of the boom. When it opened, the Depression was already – the market had already crashed. It was a huge, huge place.

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Jeann Failows had asked Nat and myself to meet her at the backstage entrance there. We were going to meet Louis. Nat had met him before, but I hadn't. We went up. [?] was backstage. We went up. They had very nice backstage facilities. There was Louis's dressing room. Knocked on the door. The person who opened it was June Clark. June Clark had been a famous trumpet player in the twenties in New York. He and the great trombonist Jimmy Harrison were a famous brass team. Harrison worked with Fletcher Henderson. June Clark recorded very little, but he had a great reputation. Then he contracted tuberculosis, and he just stopped playing. Among other things, he was briefly – he was Louis's road manager for a brief time. Then he became associated with Sugar Ray Robinson and was Sugar Ray's right-hand man. Sugar Ray Robinson, incidentally, is the greatest boxer I've ever seen. I'm not a big fight fan. Nowadays it's garbage. But when there was still something to be said for boxing as a sport, Sugar Ray was tremendous. He had a nice club in Harlem called Sugar Ray's.

That was June. Then Louis came out in his bathrobe, a wet bathrobe with this thing on his head to keep his hair in place. Jeann introduced me. He greeted me warmly. He asked me a few things – that I had just recently – fairly recently arrived from Scandinavia. For a while also – after that, he always called me Dan, but he had a nickname, which was, he said "Morgenstern" and then he said "smorgasbord."

Meeting Louis was like – then other people came. Joe Bushkin, the pianist, came and brought a beautiful long-stemmed rose, which he said he had just come from visiting with Tallulah Bankhead and this a gift from Tallulah. Louis, he smelled the rose, [sniffs] he went like that. Then he looked inside. Inside the rose, he pulled out this beautifully rolled long joint that was a gift from Tallulah. A young photographer named Duncan Schiedt, who is now an old photographer named Duncan Schiedt – we know each other well, and we still get together, most recently at a Bix Beiderbecke event in Davenport – he took a picture of Louis smelling the rose. He didn't know what was in there, but I told him later.

Then Jack Teagarden, who was in the band, in the All Stars, came in to ask Louis a couple of questions about the show routine. I looked at Teagarden, who was then a legendary figure. Jack had an amazing – he had such a wide face. He looked kind of Indian with his straight black hair. But his very good friend, Pee Wee Russell, whom I got to know well later, who was very proud of the fact that he was part Cherokee – he said – once he said, "People say that Teagarden is – he's no Indian. He's a Dutchman." It's true. If you look at that face and you look at the great Flemish and Dutch painters from – Rembrandt and others – the portraits from the sixteenth century, there are faces that will remind you of Jack. He had great eyes. It was clear that he and Louis were – they had a very close thing going.

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Then it was time for Louis to take his nap. Louis had a wonderful talent which I learned later, for taking naps. That was one of the reasons why he was able to keep such a terrific work schedule. He was no doubt the hardest-working man in the history of jazz. But he could do it, because on a plane trip or on a bus ride, he could go to sleep just like that. As we know now, only recently there was something in the papers about how useful it is to take – recommending that people should take an afternoon nap, which Latins have known. The siesta is a tradition in Latin countries. He had this gift. I remember, years later, being on the bus with him, sitting behind him, and having a conversation. Suddenly his head went back and boom he was out, really able to sleep like that.

So it was time for Louis to take a nap. There was a partition there in the dressing room with a curtain that you could draw. He and June disappeared. June asked us to keep quiet, keep it down. Then we heard June whistle – he had a beautiful whistle – whistling Louis’s solo from *Sweethearts on Parade*. Then he came out and said, “He’s asleep.” That was like the lullaby.

Then Louis got dressed and came out, the whole routine of his. He was a stickler for cleanliness and already had all these things, his cotton balls and his handkerchiefs. Then he said – then the stage manager came, “Mr. Armstrong, 10 minutes.” So Louis told him to take good care of the three of us, of Jeann and Nat and myself. Make sure that they’re in a spot where they can see the show.

The show was great, but it was – the co-star, also on the bill, was Chico Marx, who was doing a single. He had a routine about – he was like an overgrown teenager. That was his stage presence. At the end, for the final number, they moved out an upright piano. Chico joined the Armstrong All Stars. They did *Waiting for the Robert E. Lee* and Chico did some of his famous piano playing. That was my first meeting with the great Louis Armstrong. From then on – the moment you met Louis, it seemed like you had known him forever, which in a way you had. We’ll get back to Pops later on for sure. I’ve written a lot about Louis. There’s nobody like him.

Then came Uncle Sam. Some of my friends said, “Take a bunch of benzidrine pills and you’ll be rejected.” I didn’t do that, although I did have a farewell party the night before I reported. So I wasn’t in the greatest of shape, not for my physical, but for going off to Fort Devons, Massachusetts. My Army career, a draftee – I was drafted in 1951, February 1951, and was sent to Fort Benning, Georgia, for basic training. That was – quickly you meet a few people and you start making a few friends. We did our basic training at Fort Benning, which was near Columbus, Georgia, which bills itself as the South’s most progressive city and was known to me only because I had learned that Ma Rainey, after she retired, in the last years of her life she bought a couple of theaters, including one in

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Rome, Georgia, and another in Columbus. So there was some footnote there to jazz history.

In any case, being in the South, that was an education in itself. I got to know a couple of people who were jazz fans. One was a guy from Brooklyn who was a – he worked in the garment district. He was a salesman for a line of women's dresses. He was quite a character. His name was – I won't give his real name, but Bill was his first name. We went – when you had passes, you went into Columbus, which sported a big record store on the main drag, but they didn't have anything really, except for a few big-band things and stuff that might have been on the Columbia and Victor labels, but nothing really. No Jazz at the Philharmonic, no Charlie Parker, nothing like that.

Then we had – the Army was still segregated, but near where we were stationed – we were attached – we did our basic training and I remained for the rest of my Army career with this outfit which was a National Guard Field Artillery Battalion that had been activated. It had been – additional people were added to this core of West Virginians. Most of our officers and all – practically all our non-coms were from this West Virginia National Guard. The additional troops came in part from the deep South, Mississippi and Georgia. The rest of us were from New England. So it was an odd mixture. But it was still – the Army was still segregated, although we had two – Puerto Ricans were not considered black and didn't consider themselves black. We had one guy, a very nice guy, named George Razario, who was – he was the same color as Louis Armstrong, but these wonderful laws, he was not considered to be "colored," as they said in those days.

There was a black unit not far from us. Even though we were not supposed to fraternize, Bill had made friends with one guy from there in one of the outfits. One of the things that Bill was into was, he was a fairly committed pot smoker. Of course that's not supposed to be done in the Army. In those days it wasn't yet as common as it became later, although it was very common in jazz circles. He had been told – his friend told him that there was a great record store in Columbus in the black section. Sure enough, we found it. It was called Dr. Jive. We went there on a Saturday afternoon. We were on a pass. That was a great place. They had all the 10-inch LPs. We bought some, because we had a day room there. There was nothing there to listen to. We had a good time.

Then we came back a little later. There were also – people were very friendly. We were the only white people there. Bill, who was a man of many parts, got involved in a crap game. What happened was, the third time we came back there, all of a sudden two white guys came in. They were dressed in suits, and they were wearing hats. They motioned to us. It turned out to be two plainclothes detectives. They told us to get in the car. They did allow us to take whatever we were buying there, but they told us to get in the car. Got in the back seat of this unmarked car. They drove us back slowly into the main section of

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town. While they were doing that, one of them gave us a nice lecture, with a pronounced Southern drawl, which I won't try to imitate. He said, "We don't care what you do where you're from." He said, "But down here" – he said, "we have certain ways of doing things." To make a long story short, he said, "If we ever catch you down here again, by the time we turn you over to the MPs, they won't be able to recognize you." So that was a little bit of education there.

Fort Benning – Charlie Barnett's band was among the visiting attractions. It was nice to see that. That was a six-month period that we were at Fort Benning. Then there was a big maneuver that was a simulated combat situation. We were – we had Howitzers, 96-milimeter things. My M.O.S. technically was that I was a cannoneer. I was supposed to take these shells and hand them to somebody who would load the thing, and then it was lock and load and you closed the breach, but actually I became the battery clerk. I had hoped – when I was in the Army, I had hoped that I would learn to drive, because when you live in New York, you don't have any opportunities to do that. But a first sergeant, he found out that I could type. He put me in the office as a battery clerk. I had to make out the morning report and handle the personnel files. We were all supposed to get driving lessons in the motor pool. When I was supposed to go, he said, "I've got 50 guys who can drive, but I don't have anybody except you who can type." He said, "Never mind." So I missed out on this opportunity, and to this day I have not become a driver.

I was eventually asked – we failed in this maneuver. We did very badly. We were not a great outfit in terms of doing combat. So they decided – we were a strange kind of unattached unit. We were not attached. We were not an intrinsic part of any division. We were like a freestanding unit, a little bit like the Institute of Jazz Studies was at Rutgers by the time Ed and I arrived here. So we were sent to Europe. That was a strange experience, because here we are. This is in the fall of 1951. I'm back in Europe. They sent us to Germany. The first stop was what was called tent city, because it was a place where troops were sent that were going to serve in what was then called the occupation army in Germany. They were distributed from there to other parts. It was called tent city because the Army quartered us in these huge, very solid tents, because the city was still – this is 1951 – it was nothing but ruins. It was the most fantastic kind of eerie thing to walk through there, because everything was bombed out shells of houses.

**Berger:** Which city was it?

**Morgenstern:** Mannheim.

Then we were sent to – from there we were sent to – we were assigned to the Seventh Army – nice patches – and were sent to what was known as the Munich Military Post Service Center, but it was actually Dachau. It was right outside of the small town of

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Dachau, not far from where the concentration camp had been. Where we were quartered, in very solid buildings, had been the SS barracks. So that was a nice note. I went once to see Dachau, which had been turned into kind of a museum, but I never spent any time in that small town. I had no eyes for that. But Munich was nearby. It was only – we were about a half hour's bus ride from Munich. Every time we had a pass or anything like that, we would go into Munich, which was a nice city. Even though Munich was the scene of the first attempted – the failed Nazi putsch in the 1920s, it was not a notoriously Nazified place. The Bavarians were not as heavily into that as the Prussians, whom they always disliked.

We found a place – I forget the name of it. The Golden something – which was a place that catered to GIs and a pretty nice band that was led by a drummer who was Yugoslav. He was a Serb, I think. Not a bad drummer. But it wasn't really a jazz band. Every band, everywhere in Germany that you went, even when they just had an accordion, what they played for GIs was *In the Mood*, was the one famous [Morgenstern sings the melody]. They all played that, sometimes really terribly.

I should mention parenthetically that while we were at Fort Benning, there were so many Southern guys in our – including the West Virginians, who were kind of borderline. A lot of guys had radios, and all they would listen to was country music, which I of course, as an already slightly snotty New Yorker, looked down upon. You were exposed to so much of that. There was a clear-channel radio station, I think out of Cincinnati. Clear-channel meant AM that had a long range. Day and night, as long as they could – they had to knock it off at a certain time – they were listening to this stuff, so I would be exposed to all that. Almost in self-defense, I'd start listening to it, paying some attention to it. I do remember the commercials for Hadacol, which were very funny. But you got to like some of it. One time, while still in Columbus, we went to a country fair. There was a band there that included a cornet player who sounded quite a bit like a Chicago Dixieland player. There's that Western Swing thing. I got exposed to Little Jimmy Dickenson and God knows what. I still have a little place in my heart for country music. It's not all bad. There's quite a bit of blues in it.

In Munich, the only place that had a real jazz band – and as I say, the Army was still segregated, although very quickly and while we were still in Europe, it was integrated – there was a club in Munich that catered to black GIs. They had a very good band led by a tenor player named Max Gregor. It recorded. They had an American – black American trumpet player named Sonny Grey who recorded with Dexter Gordon in Paris a little later on. I had one friend who was willing to go to this place with me, because we were not really welcomed by our fellow black GIs, because they probably thought – there was a thing about – everybody was – I should mention that before we came to Germany, on the way over on this ship, all the guys in my outfit were saying – my nickname was Drac.

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That was short for Count Dracula. There's two Italians, Inbimbio and Branfiglio. They were like a comedy team. One was short and the other one was tall. They had a great sense of humor. They said that my eyes were – they said that I had piercing eyes, and they reminded them of Count Dracula, so they called me Drac. That became my nickname. Anyway, all these guys were saying, you have to introduce us to the frauleins. But it turned out that the frauleins did not need an interpreter. They all spoke English perfectly well. But the thing was that – did you go? Were you looking for girls? or whatever – when they found out that we were there for the music, it was okay. So we did go there a couple of times.

His big number was *Night Train*. He recorded that, Gregor. He was a raunchy tenor player. It was a good band. It was a little big band, about ten pieces. The contrast between the place where we hung out and this place was quite remarkable, and also the quality of the dancing. The GIs definitely taught the German girls how to do some real good stepping.

A little later on I met a guy who was on leave. He was a GI. He told me about this great band in Frankfurt that played in an enlisted men's club in Frankfurt with a girl piano player named Jutta Hipp and a tenor player named Hans Koller, who was Austrian. He said that he – this guy had recorded them. It was true. He recorded them. The records were issued here on 78s on the Discovery label.

I took a three-day pass to go to Frankfurt anyway, because I wanted to see whatever traces there were of my ancestry there. I did find my great-great-grandfather's grave, which is a very impressive headstone. Years later I took my sons there to see that. I did go to that e-m club. There was Jutta Hipp and Hans Koller and a quartet. They were terrific. Everywhere else you would have some kind of fairly sophisticated German jazz. All the saxophone players were heavily into Lee Konitz. Lee was very popular there among sophisticated jazz players. It was interesting to see all these young Germans trying to play like an American Jew. Hans Koller was more into Stan Getz, who was also Jewish. Hans was a real good player. They had a nice rhythm section. Jutta was terrific. She later wound up coming here and had an interesting history. This takes us much further into recent times, but in this jazz masters program that we have here of jazz history and research, a young German woman named Kate Kaiser had Jutta Hipp as her masters thesis and did a lot of interesting research. I got to know Jutta – when I saw her in Frankfurt that was just a momentary thing. As a matter of fact, the night I was there was the drummer's birthday. You can edit this, right? You have editing possibilities. It was the drummer's birthday. Jutta, who was also – she had artistic talent. She was a very gifted cartoonist, and she also painted, as I learned later. Her birthday present for the drummer was a very realistic, well-made, replica of a penis, which he – when she gave to him there at intermission, I had gone up to the bandstand to introduce myself, and I

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wanted to talk a little bit to them in German, so I was privy to this. But you could see it anyway. He bounced this thing off his snare, and he caught it. That was the best live jazz I heard in Germany.

The Army was integrated during my term of service there. That was very interesting, because we still had a lot of prejudiced Southern guys. There was a lot of talk, “I ain’t going to eat with no niggers.” But it was handled very well by them. Our commanding officer was – the battery commander – battalion commander – was a lieutenant colonel from West Virginia. He was really – he was, frankly, mentally disturbed. Soon after he was taken off and kicked upstairs to a desk job. He had a reason to be, because he had been one of the people who was in that horrible – he was in the Pacific during World War II. He was in that Bataan death march, that awful thing. That deranged him. He thought that the Russians were about to attack us at any moment. We made up a song about him, which was quite ironic, but he took it seriously and was very moved – touched by it. His name was Colonel Jones. I remember once we went on maneuvers and came back from the field. He always had – on Saturday mornings he addressed the entire battalion. I remember his speech there. He said, “Gentlemen. There are saboteurs in our midst.” Silence. “On the way back from the field last week, somebody cut the fan belt on one of the jeeps.” Actually, the fan belt – according to the guys in the motor pool, it was just worn out. But he was sure that it had been – he was a nut case.

But the other individual battery commanders were very good, because they gave very straight-ahead talks to us in which they said that anybody who made any trouble at all would be hit with everything that they had in the military code of justice, so you better behave yourself. What happened was that there was very little trouble, even behind the scenes. There were a couple of tussles, maybe. The guys who came in – the black guys who came in – by then I had been moved into the personnel office. So I got all these paper things of the incoming enlisted men and noticed that – they had this Army IQ test. We were all scored. These people who were coming in all had pretty low scores. That was kind of scary. But as it turned out, these were very misleading, because the guys who came in, for instance, they ranged from a master sergeant who became the head of the motor pool, down to ordinary PFCs and privates. These guys turned out to be absolutely expert mechanics. That guy, the master sergeant, was a big fat guy. He knew everything there was to know about how all these Army vehicles worked and immediately got the respect of everybody who was working there. So it all worked out very well. There were only a couple of jazz fans among them.

Then I was discharged. I had reached the impressive rank of corporal and came back to the U.S. in one piece. Oh, I visited my grandmother who came to Denmark with us and was part of – also rescued by the Danes and was in Sweden and then returned to her place

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in Bavaria. So of course I visited there. I also made a brief visit to Denmark, where I hadn't been for a few years.

So that was my return to Europe, unexpected, and then back here. I had taken a couple of – the Army had these tests, so I did a two-year college equivalent thing, which I passed with high scores, and there was the GI Bill. In the meantime, my father, who among his friends had one of the founders of what was then a very new educational institution, Brandeis University, which was the first secular Jewish college at the time. Even though it was called Brandeis University, it did not have any graduate programs at the time. My father knew Ludwig Lewisohn, who had been a quite famous figure in American literature. By then he was already in his mid-60s and no longer on the cusp of things, but a very well-respected gentleman who also was a big fan of my father's writing and had written about him very favorably. My father, without consulting me, when I came back, he said, "You're going to Brandeis." I had wanted to go back to school anyway, because it seemed to me that I needed to do that, and also the GI Bill was something that I wanted to take advantage of.

**Berger:** Why don't we pick it up it up, when he changes the tape, with Brandeis after that.

[recording interrupted]

We were going to pick up with your enrolling in Brandeis without your knowledge.

**Morgenstern:** I came in the middle of the academic year. I had gotten out of the Army in January. So right after the winter break I arrived at Brandeis. It was very small then. The first class had just graduated. That was the class of 1952. They had just graduated the previous fall. It was still very small, about 700 undergraduate students, and a great faculty. I quickly made some friends. I was older. I'm 24 now, right? Yes, I'm 24. Of course that was a little more than the average age certainly of incoming freshmen, but there was quite an array of people there, some older, including one who had been a general in the Israeli Army. That was a friend who later became a professor at Harvard and was involved in a scandal where it turned out that his program had been secretly funded by the government. One of those things. He was a very impressive figure.

There were a few – there were not many African-Americans, but there were a few, including one who was a big jazz fan. There was a small core of jazz fans there. Not long after my arrival, maybe a year after, I found my way to the student paper. It was a weekly called *The Justice*. I wound up becoming editor of that.

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There was no jazz instruction at Brandeis, needless to say. It had a very good music department, with an all-star faculty of Harold Shapiro and the very gifted, excellent composer, who died very young, named Irving Fine. The titular was Leonard Bernstein, who came in once a week. He was known as the airborne professor, because he flew in from New York to give a lecture which was attended by practically everybody, because he was a brilliant lecturer.

We decided – this small core of jazz fans – that since there was money for bringing events to campus, that they should include jazz. By then I had discovered the Boston jazz scene. The main thing in the Boston jazz scene then was George Wein's Storyville. This is still a little before – the first Newport is 1954. He was still mainly a club owner. He had Storyville, and downstairs was Mahogany Hall. Two clubs. One was contemporary jazz. Then downstairs, Mahogany Hall was more traditional. There was always good stuff there. There was the Savoy. Next to the Savoy, there was another place which was a basically black club, where they had Sabby Lewis's band there. There was The Stable, which was pretty much the modern jazz place. The incumbent band there was led by a tenor player named Varty Haroutunian. He was very good, not very well known to this day. He liked the tune *My Mother's Eyes*. He used to introduce it by saying, "Now we'd like to play *My Mother Had Eyes*." On Thursday nights this group – resident quintet – which had a terrific trumpet player named Joe Gordon. As we know, Joe eventually got to be fairly well known and then moved to California. He was in Shelly Manne's group. Then he tragically died in a fire, one of those things where he fell asleep with a cigarette. It was awful, because he was a wonderful player and a very sweet guy. The piano player in the house – the house intermission piano player was named Jaki Byard. On Thursday nights they had the Herb Pomeroy Big Band. The first time I went in to hear them, I looked and I saw that in the saxophone section, there's this piano player, Jaki Byard, with a tenor. Of course he was a very good tenor player and also did some of the arranging for the band. It was a terrific band, very good. A great trombone player named Gene DiStacio, who became a dentist, and Lennie Johnson, who later went with Basie, a high-note trumpet player. Herb was a very good leader who later became a fixture at Berklee for many, many, many years. So that was a nice hip place. There was quite a bit of jazz activity there.

At Storyville, that was the first time I saw Dave Brubeck, because he was making his East Coast debut. This was a night where I had hoped – it was a Monday night. That was the off night. Brubeck was supposed to open the following night, on Tuesday. But on Monday it was going to be Frankie Newton on a rare visit to Boston, who had been pretty much of a fixture there. Nat Hentoff has written very movingly about Frankie Newton. Frankie Newton was one of my favorite trumpet players, having been introduced to his music by Nat Lorber. I had practically every record that Frankie Newton made. I had seen him once in the Village at a place called the Calypso. It was a West Indian restaurant

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that he frequented. He wasn't playing at the time. I just saw him. He was this very tall, interesting looking man. He was supposed to play that night, but when we arrived, George announced that unfortunately Frankie Newton was not able to come and instead the band that was going to make its debut the following night had volunteered to play. So that was the first time I saw Brubeck and got to hear that group. Of course, like everybody, I was very impressed with Paul Desmond.

We decided that we wanted to bring some jazz to Brandeis. So we went to George Wein. Stan Getz was coming in. He had a very good group then with Bob Brookmeyer and John Williams. We said to George, "Would it be possible?" He said, "Sure." We would want to do it on a weekend anyway. He said, "Saturday afternoon. You negotiate with the leader. It's fine with me," because some clubs have this thing in their contract that you can't perform within a 50 mile radius or whatever.

We talked to Stan. He said okay. We made him an offer. It was probably a fairly decent offer. In preparation for that, I wrote some – that was when I started writing about jazz. I had a longstanding hatred of most of what I read in the jazz press, where there were such wonderful things as – I remember, while I was in Germany, I would read *Down Beat*. Of course I was reading these things. I wanted to see what was coming out, but most of the time I really got frustrated, except for a young writer who had been – who's byline began to appear in *Down Beat*, named Nat Hentoff. I remember reading, while I was in the Army, in *Down Beat* there was a terrible article about Duke Ellington, about how Duke should throw in the towel. It said, "Ellington is a gross old man." What was he? He was in his early 50s. There would be a kicker headline on the cover, saying "Bechet Plays like a Pig: Michel Legrand."

Anyway, I wrote something about Stan Getz. That was my first published piece. I'd written some letters to the editor. So we brought Getz in. I must say, the band, they gave a great concert. It was very well attended. But they were in and out. There was no great warmth there. Subsequently, as I will tell you, I got to know Stan quite well. They played well and it was nice, but there was no great warmth exuding from this group.

Then the next thing we did, which was in 1955, Art Tatum had a trio at Storyville. I really wanted Tatum solo. Guitar and bass – it's a fine – but I wanted to hear him himself. So we propositioned him. That turned out to be something that he immediately responded to. So we made sure that we got the best piano on campus and had it tuned to a T. I wrote a piece about him. The concert was terrific. Machito was in town, and he came. Father O'Connor, who later became the famous jazz priest, he was there. Tatum played wonderfully. Then when we took him back to Boston and thanked him profusely, he then said – and this was something that I think jolted me and gave me maybe in the back of my mind the thought that I might want to get involved in this kind of thing – he said, "I

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want to thank you, because this is the first time I've done a solo concert all by myself." What he meant by that was that he had of course performed publicly solo piano before, but always as part of a program where there were other attractions. 1955 is a year before his death. It's astonishing.

The next day – this was a Saturday – the next day – they had a thing at Storyville on Sunday afternoons where they would have both groups from both clubs, and they would end with a so-called jam session – it so happened that the attraction of Mahogany Hall – he was there for about a month or so, and I saw him more than once – was Sidney Bechet. They had a terrific band down there, with Doc Cheatham on trumpet, a very good local drummer, Buzzy Drootin, Claude Hopkins on piano. But in this case the jam session was Bechet and Tatum playing together. I remember they played *Lady Be Good*. Tatum played some stride that you wouldn't believe, and Bechet was absolutely wonderful. So that was my debut.

One of the co-instigators of this jazz on campus was a guy named David Immelstein. We became good friends. David was very talented in different ways and a very good writer, but unfortunately, nothing ever happened for him. We were a good team there and continued to do things together later.

When I left Brandeis – like I said, I was editor of the paper, and I wrote some more about jazz. One of the things that brought Nat Hentoff, who was *Down Beat's* Boston correspondent then and had a very good radio program on a brand-new FM, where he played everything from Monk to Bartok – we brought Nat out to give a talk about jazz. He did very well. Then I showed him some of the things I had written. He said, you should continue to write. I then got a job at the *New York Post*, back in the same position that I had been in at the *New York Times*. I was a copy boy at the *New York Post*. You start on the bottom. But very soon I was promoted to editorial assistant in the drama department, which mean film [and] music. That was still the cover name of it, because the guy who held that job had been drafted. One of the – during my copy-boy period, a guy who then a night-side rewrite man was Pete Hamill, who later became famous. While I was there, Billie Holiday was on her deathbed. These things were happening. Bill Dufty, who was also on the staff, who had done Billie's biography with her, was writing a serial piece about Billie. It was all very exciting.

I got to do my – I was doing stuff like the neighborhood movie column, and I was dealing with all the press. That's how I got to know all the press agents who were pestering everybody, including some of the jazz people. That's where – one of the people I got to know that way was Ivan Black, who represented a lot of jazz artists and also the Village Gate and other jazz clubs. He was a very nice man. He was not cut from the same cloth as most of them.

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I did get to cover a Randall's Island jazz festival. That was a byline piece in the *New York Post*, a review of a Randall's Island concert. I had – when I resumed my – I had been in New York during the summers during my Brandeis years and remained in touch with my New York friends.

We are now approaching the time when – I was also hanging out at a club on Times Square called the Metropole, which was a huge, long, extended place with a bar that ran the length of the establishment on one side, on the left, and little booths and things on the right, but it was mostly a stand-up place. The bandstand was above the bar. It was quite unique. It was this long stretch. It had mirrors on both sides of the club. The only way that a band could be placed on this bandstand was one instrument at a time, so they were lined up like when the cops are looking at, "Which one is it?" There were two pianos, because they had two bands at night. The drums were set up. So it was really – the only way the musicians could have eye contact with each other was because there were mirrors. That was a unique setup.

They had music practically around the clock. They started at three in the afternoon with a trio, which at the time that I recall there was made up of Tony Parenti on clarinet, Zutty Singleton on drums, and various piano players, including Dick Wellstood and a terrific guy named Fitz Weston. These are all people who are not too well known. Don Fry, who had been at Jimmy Ryans'. Then at eight o'clock the two bands started. The incumbent band for a very long time was Red Allen, whom I already knew well from the Central Plaza–Stuyvesant Casino days. Red had this band with Buster Bailey, J. C. Higginbotham, and for a while, Cozy Cole on drums. The piano chair varied. Red was a great entertainer, though he had a frustrating habit of starting to play – he would start to play what was potentially a really wonderful solo and then he would be playing [Morgenstern sings a phrase] and then he'd say, "Hey, good my man." Somebody would come in that he knew.

The band had a great routine called *Kiss the Baby*. There was a live recording made at the Metropole on Bethlehem. I don't think it's ever been put on CD. Red does *Kiss the Baby* there. The couples at the bar or in the booths, he would pick on them and he'd say, "Hey man, kiss the baby. Kiss the baby. Then there was a refrain.

This was right smack in the middle of the Times Square area, so the clientele was a mixed bag of people who were – there were jazz fans, but there were also tourists, and people who came in to have a drink. The bartenders were terrific. They knew how to take care of 50 people at one time.

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The other band was – for a long time, whenever they were not touring with Jazz at the Philharmonic – no less than Roy Eldridge and Coleman Hawkins. On Sunday – Saturdays and Sundays, there would be, in the afternoon, instead of the trio, bands as well. So there were times when, if you came in at four o'clock on a weekend afternoon and wanted to stay until four in the morning, you would hear a lot of music and you hear some really great musicians. Very often Charlie Shavers was there for quite a while. I remember one night when Dinah Shore came in, looking very glamorous. Twice a night, there was the so-called jam session, where both bands would play. They would do *The Saints*. Each one of the horn players would sing a chorus and then play. The only one who never sang, always refused to do that, was Coleman Hawkins. Coleman Hawkins did make a record in Europe where he sings. I had been looking for this record for years. I got to know Coleman quite well, and I found this record. I acquired it. I told him that I had acquired this. He said, "Oh, you got it, did you?" I said yes. He said, "Well, break it." It's called *Love Cries*. It's a great tune of his own. He sings very passionately. But at Metropole, no way. Anyhow, they decided to play – what song would they play for Dinah Shore? Guess what, they played *Dinah*. Roy was the first guy that I ever encountered who played flugelhorn. He'd been in France, and he brought back this flugelhorn. He played flugelhorn, and Charlie was on trumpet. They had a terrific battle on *Dinah*. That was one of the great moments at the Metropole. But there were lots of great moments.

Across the street from the Metropole was a bar called the Copper Rail. That's where the musicians would hang out between sets. Sometimes there would be guests. Joe Glaser did a little bit of booking there, so sometimes – there was the Woody Herman band all lined up across that bandstand, where all the guys were looking at – "What are we doing here?" Crazy, but it sounded wonderful in there. Then for a while they had an upstairs room as well, where Sonny Rollins played once. So it was very lively.

The Copper Rail was a great place to hang out and meet lots of musicians, because not only the musicians who were working at the Metropole would hang out there, but also some of the people who frequented Beefsteak Charlie's, which was another bar. There was a bunch of musicians' bars. In those days you still had the studio scene in New York. So there were a lot of musicians in the Times Square area where the studios were. There was Jim and Andy's. There was Junior's. There was Beefsteak Charlie's. And there was the Copper Rail. They all had slightly different – although some people frequented all of them, or several of them – they were different in a way. All of them had their good points. The Copper Rail had big and inexpensive drinks. So did Beefsteak Charlie's, but Beefsteak Charlie's was a bit more raunchy than the Copper Rail.

What happened at the Copper Rail was that they had – the way that the place was set up, they had booths, and they had a counter opposite the bar that lent itself to a food service. The guy who worked there, a very nice black guy, big guy, had a girlfriend who he

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claimed was a great cook. He talked the owner into experimenting with installing her there. Her name was Della, and indeed she was a fabulous cook. She made soul food that you wouldn't believe. The reason why I know it, I had become acquainted with soul food in Harlem, but I wouldn't consider myself an expert, but people who were experts, certified that she did some of the best stuff they ever had. So she became a permanent installation there, and that began to attract people who had never been to the Copper Rail before. A lot of musicians came and hung out there. Dizzy [Gillespie] also.

Dizzy worked at the Metropole once. Charlie Shavers called him to sub with him. That was a night that the band included Tony Parenti. So there was the unlikely combination of Dizzy and Tony Parenti playing together. It worked out perfectly well. Diz was – Diz could do – after all, he was, as Louis called him, an old fox.

Anyway, the food was sensational, and people would come in. I remember once – I experimented. She had all kinds of terrific things. Smothered pork chops. Chicken and dumplings, out of this world. But sometimes, something I had never tried before. She had made some stuff with pigs' ears and pigs' tails. I was eating that. I was sitting on a stool there on the counter and Ben Webster came in. I had gotten to know Ben quite well. Ben came, and he looked over my shoulder. Then he picked me up. He was very strong. He picked me up. He said, "He's eating pigs' ears."

That was the place where I really got to know some people that I became very friendly with, including Roy Eldridge and Coleman Hawkins. Roy – I had started – I met Stanley Dance, the English critic, who was in town for a stretch of about a month or five weeks or so. He was still living in England. He eventually moved to the U.S. This was in 1958, I guess. When I was working at the *Post*, before I got into the editorial assistant position, I was on night-side, so I was free in the daytime too, and musicians used to invite me to recording sessions. So when Stanley was about to leave, he pulled me aside at the Copper Rail, and he said, "Listen, Dan. You're around the musicians all the time, and you seem to" – he said, "*Jazz Journal*" – which he had been writing for for years – "*Jazz Journal* has lost their American correspondent and they would be delighted if you would send them a news column once a month." He said, "They can't pay you, but you can get books and records from Britain that you won't be able to get here." Then – which was what convinced me – "and it'll be good for the musicians." So I decided to give it a try. I enjoyed it a lot, and I also got some nice compliments from the guys. Then Nat Hentoff, who was then involved with Martin Williams in *Jazz Review* – they had started a magazine – he had a column about jazz in print. He said some nice things about me, and then he recommended me to *Down Beat*. At the time the editor was Don Gold. We arranged to meet. Don came in from Chicago, and I met with him. They gave me an assignment. My first assignment for *Down Beat* was to do an interview with Milt Jackson, whom I didn't know and who was not a very easy interview. I asked several of

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my musician friends. But the fortunate thing was that he was recording for Atlantic, and *Down Beat* arranged for me to attend the session. He was recording with Coleman Hawkins, whom I had at that time already befriended. In fact, Coleman did a very big thing for me in terms of establishing me in the musicians' circle. Coleman was known for never buying anybody a drink. It's not that he was cheap, but he once explained it to me. He said, "You buy somebody a drink. Then they buy you one. You wind up drinking more than you really want." But he was noted for not doing that. We had become friendly. Coleman had this big, booming voice. Even in a noisy bar you could hear him over the crowd. His voice really carried. He said to me, "Danny. What are you drinking?" Everybody turned around and looked. That was like my initiation.

Anyway, Coleman was recording with Milt Jackson. I had a little bit – he could see that I – after the session, when I started talking to Milt, that Milt was – he didn't know me from Adam. Who is this guy? I was not – I couldn't say that I was an experienced interviewer by then. So Coleman came over and just put his arm around and said, "He's okay." Then Milt opened up. I remember the main thing that he told me was, I had known – somebody had hunched me to the fact that he was a great cook and a big eater, so I talked about pancakes. Somebody had told me that he once ate 36 pancakes. I asked him whether that was really true. He said it might be.

So I started doing this stuff. The other one, they wanted me to do Roy Eldridge. This was a little bit like Coleman, also. I asked Roy if I could an interview with him. He said, "Well, let me see. I'm busy. When I come back." Finally one day at the Copper Rail, he came over to me and he said, "I've been checking you out," and he said, "and we can do the interview."

I was still with the *Post*, and I was doing this stuff for *Jazz Journal* as well. One big piece – the first big piece I did for *Jazz Journal* was "A Night at Birdland," which was a tribute to Lester Young. That's a piece of mine that's in my book, and it's been reprinted a number of times. It was quite a night there. That was probably still, I think, in the way I feel about my own work, one of the best things I ever did. It was red hot, because I came home that night, right after that, and I just sat down and wrote this thing.

Through that I got to meet Lester, whom I had not – I had seen him a few times, but I'd never gotten to talk to him. But Willie Jones, who played drums with Lester at the time, had read this piece. Willie was an interesting guy from Brooklyn. He was interested in community work and working with kids. So he was up on stuff. He read this piece, and he showed it to Pres. Willie told me. He said, "Lester read your thing, and he would like to meet you." Lester was at the Five Spot – what turned out to be his last New York engagement. I remember he had a piano played named Valdo Williams from Canada. He made a record for Savoy. One of the pieces – I think it was *Three Little Words* – Valdo

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was an experimenter. He got lost in his solo. So Lester went over to him, and he said – the Five Spot was a small club, and if you were sitting close to the band, you could hear – he said to Valdo – while he was playing, he said, “Don’t give up. Don’t ever give up.” It’s great.

After this – the Five Spot, the old Five Spot, the original one, didn’t have a dressing room – the musicians – there was the kitchen, which wasn’t very busy. I don’t remember whether they had any food. I think that by law they were supposed to have something if people asked for it. There was Lester. He was very sweet. One of the things I had been doing with this piece was to say that there were all kinds of rumors about him, but that he was still very much there. He asked me about myself. I told him. He asked me if I ever played an instrument. I told him about the violin. Then he said, “I heard a violinist back somewhere in the Midwest in the 1920s.” He said, “It was the greatest I ever heard.” Then we talked and talked. Finally he said, “When I come” – he said, “I’m going from here. We’re going to Philly, and then I’m going to Europe. I’m going to Paris.” He said, “When I come back” – he said, “I’m at the Alvin. You know the Alvin.” Of course I did. He said, “When I come back, let’s get together.” Then the last thing he said to me, “Don’t forget now. That’s a date.” That was not – that was the next to last thing, because then I – the kitchen, there was a step there, a step up or down, depending on what side you were on, and when I left, I turned around, just to look at him and wave, so I hit my foot against that step and floundered a little bit, so Lester said, “Don’t stumble now. You might fall.” That’s the last thing I ever heard him say, because the next thing was that I was awakened by a phone call about four o’clock in the morning. There was this guy, Gene something-or-other, from the *Post*, who was a night-side guy and not very sensitive, as most of these people don’t tend to be. He called me. He says, “Hey, Dan.” He says, “Lester Young just died. What can you tell me about him?” Pres had come back and died at the Alvin right after he came home from the airport. So that was my brief acquaintance with Pres. He was something else.

**Berger:** Dan, do you want to mention your early interview with Ornette Coleman?

**Morgenstern:** Ed, I’m glad you did that, because I was just going to come to that, because that goes along with my leaving the *New York Post*. I had a champion at the *Post*, who was the night-side managing editor, Alvin Davis, who was then involved in a power struggle with the day-time managing editor, who was a nasty specimen named Paul Sand. The publisher was Dolly Schiff – Dorothy Schiff – who was a – she was somebody who took a hand in the paper. Some publishers keep their hands off editorial, but she was so inclined. As a matter of fact, while I was there, Jimmy Wexler was the editor and the *Post* had been supporting Harriman in the election for Governor of New York State. Harriman was re-running as a Democrat. Up until the day before the election, suddenly she insisted that the *Post* come out for Nelson Rockefeller, and she did that.

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Wexler had already been in a shaky position, because he was drinking, and people knew it. So everybody thought the next day that he would resign, because that was a terrible thing for her to do. But he didn't. That way he lost all the respect that people still had for him.

Anyway, Al encouraged me. He knew about my jazz writing, because he was a jazz fan, and I showed him stuff. So when Ornette Coleman opened at the Five Spot, I was there on the second night. He said, after there had been some publicity about Ornette, "Why don't you interview him?" So I did. I got a pretty nice interview out of it. Al wanted to run it, but since he got off in the morning, Paul Sand spiked it. We say that in the newspaper game. Nowadays everything is on computer, and it's very quiet. I was at the *Star-Ledger* a couple years ago. You go walk into what we called the city room. You don't hear anything. There used to be the clattering of typewriters, and you could hear the stuff from the printing thing, with the linotype machines, and the clatter of the stuff that churned out all this, what we now would call xerox. But now it's quiet as a mouse. Anyway, there would be a spike on the editor's desk. Stuff that wasn't going to run, you take the paper, the copy, and spike it. So Paul Sand spiked my – it would have been the first interview with Ornette to run in a daily newspaper. I didn't salvage it. I should have.

Al eventually left the *Post*, shortly after I left, and went to the *New York Times*, where he had quite a good career for a while. Then he also unfortunately died prematurely of a heart attack.

I then got an offer, suddenly, from *Metronome* magazine, to join their staff as associate editor. Their staff was very small. I knew that *Metronome* was in bad shape, because in 1959, the last issue, the December 1959 issue, was produced and printed, but never distributed, because the magazine went into a stage of suspended animation. The photo editor at the time was a very good photographer named Herb Snitzer, who felt that it would be sad for the magazine to just disappear like that. It had been run into the ground by the family that owned it. They had no business sense at all. It had at one time been second only to *Down Beat* and perhaps even more influential in certain ways, certainly during the period of the rise of bebop, when Barry Ulanov and Leonard Feather were instrumental in proselytizing for that music. But it had gone downhill. Herb persuaded his uncle by marriage, who was an ex-musician – his name was Robert Asen. I tried for years to convince Brian Rust to make this addition to his discography, because I found out that Robert Asen indeed was the unidentified tenor and clarinet player on a recording for Gennett by Dink Rendleman and his Alabamians, a not very famous band that recorded for Gennett in 1926 or so. I had no reason to disbelieve Bob, and I gave that information to Brian Rust, but he never entered it. That was Bob Asen, who was a very nice man, who was then the co-owner of a pioneering enterprise. It was an electronic servicing company. They serviced electronic equipment, which was more or less in its infancy. Herb

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persuaded him to buy the magazine, which was available, I think, for very little money. It was revived in June of 1960, so there was a sixth-month period where *Metronome* did not publish. They retained the same editor, Bill Coss. He was a nice man, a syntactically somewhat wayward writer, but good, long experience in the business, but had a drinking problem.

To make a long story short, I had become friendly, though a girl I had met named Nancy Miller, who was then working for Art Ford, who was producing this television show, the weekly television show on channel 13 out of Newark, which was then educational television, called “Jazz Party” – “Art Ford’s Jazz Party.” Nancy was only 19 years old. A beautiful girl, with very long black hair. An aspiring photographer, and sort of a pre-beatnik. She had become friendly with Art. He put her in charge of getting the musicians. These were mostly people that were the people that I was friendly with. So she would come to the Copper Rail. That’s where I got to know her.

Where was I?

**Berger:** *Metronome*.

**Morgenstern:** She was friendly with Bob Perlongo, who was the associate editor. Bob went down, along with Bill Coss, because I guess they were considered to be too close. Also, Bob was a poet who used to go for long walks in Central Park and maybe not get back on time to a desk. Bob eventually ended up being the editor of a very good quarterly published by Northwestern University for many years. Bob recommended me as his replacement.

Bill Coss’s replacement was a very strange guy named Dave Solomon, who had come to *Metronome* from *Esquire*, where he wasn’t in the editorial department, but in a promotional position. Dave was a very bright guy, very good writer, full of ideas, and deeply involved in the whole movement that we might call the Beat movement. He wanted to make the magazine into – while he wanted to retain a primary jazz focus, he wanted to include literature. I was brought in to beef up the jazz quotient, because Dave did not feel that comfortable. He had a cornet. He kept the cornet on his desk. He was able to play pretty accurately the first part of Bix Beiderbecke’s solo on *I’m Coming Virginia*. He picked that up. [Morgenstern hums]. He was full of ideas, and we got along fine. He did all kinds of – *Metronome* during his tenure published William Burroughs, who was totally unknown at the time. Hadn’t yet published *Naked Lunch*. He published a poem by Jack Kerouac. He published something by Henry Miller. One of the things that we did that I’ll never forget is that Lennie Bruce was a jazz fan. Lennie had done something for *Playboy*, I think. Dave and I went to visit Lennie in his hotel room there at the Hotel America or whatever in Times Square. It was just like it’s been described in

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Lennie's biographies. We sat with him. He free-associated about jazz. It was pretty good. We wrote it down. Then we let him look at it, and we published it. That's how I got to know Lennie Bruce, and I got to hang out with him for a while, which was interesting.

That was Dave. I don't want to get too deeply into that, because it would take too much time. Dave did manage to get himself out of his job. Bob Asen was a very patient publisher, and he didn't mind all the experimentation. What happened was so weird in retrospect, because it was so – it was nothing compared to the stuff we published inside the book, but it was on the cover. Both Dave and Herb were into photography. We ran a photography column. Also, Joe Goldberg was doing a movie column. There was a photographer who had done some Coney Island photography. On it was a stripper who was outside the tent, advertising her wares, but not really stripping. She was just wearing a bikini. It was a nice photograph, sort of artistic, a little chiaroscuro, but nevertheless clearly certain physical features were visible. When this issue appeared – at *Metronome*, we were barely hanging on to a circulation that was under 10,000. It was just gradually easing its way up, but one of the core things that was still there were all the library subscriptions. *Metronome* was an ancient magazine, and some of them probably had been there since the early 1900s. But as soon as this cover appeared, we suddenly got a huge number of cancellations from high school libraries, who said that that was an unseemly thing. Dave might have been able to survive that, but he also did some rather undiplomatic things at the office. He was given his walking papers. He wanted me to resign in his wake, but I didn't. Maybe I should have, out of loyalty to him, but I think what he did was irresponsible – not that cover, but the other stuff that he did, which I don't even want to talk about. Later on he got himself involved with Timothy Leary. He was one of the people who had a hole drilled in his skull, poor thing. Then he got himself in trouble in England, and he was in jail for a very long time, which shouldn't have happened. Then he came back here, and I lost contact with him. That was an unfortunate thing.

Anyway, I brought the magazine back. Suddenly I was editor of what had been a major jazz magazine. Had a very good staff of Herb and a wonderful – we had a great art director, Jerry Smokler, who later became an award-winning art director of *Town and Country* and did album covers. He was also taking saxophone lessons from Ornette Coleman, who had started hanging out at our office. He had a lot of trouble then, because everybody in his band – and I can say that now, because they're all – Charlie Haden has confessed this – Ornette was the only non-junkie in this band. They were giving him a lot of trouble, so he would come to us and hang out. We'd commiserate with him.

I brought the magazine back to a full jazz focus and really had a good time doing that, but then we were presented with a very shocking event, which was that our publisher, who as I said was very patient and had done this as a tax loss – it was a tax write-off for him –

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his position changed drastically, because one of his major clients – I forget what company that was, but they were responsible for about 65% of his business – had presented him with an ultimatum: either he would become their exclusive representative or else they would take their business away from him. He and his partner decided that what they would have to do would be to go along with this. So that changed his position. He was no longer an independent operator. He was a branch of another enterprise. It changed his tax situation. He came to us. Our December issue was completed and ready to go on press. He was saying that, under the circumstances, it shouldn't be published. We pleaded with him, let us do this and also let us at least put – it was all we could do at this short notice, to put in a little editorial saying this might be the last issue of the magazine, and try to give us an opportunity to see if we could find somebody who would take it on. That was that.

One of the things about the *Metronome* period was that, prior to my arrival, Bill Coss had the brilliant idea to suggest to the Museum of Modern Art that they do jazz concerts in their sculpture garden. This had started in 1960, right along with the revival of *Metronome*. One of the memorable concerts there was one that was headed up by Teddy Charles, but included both Booker Ervin and Booker Little, both of whom had far too short careers, both of whom I did get to know. Booker Little died so young that it was a tragic thing. We did a piece on him in *Metronome*. We did a trumpet issue which included a gathering in Central Park that was inspired by Jean Bach's *Great Day in Harlem* – not Jean Bach. It subsequently became Jean Bach's *Great Day in Harlem*. The *Esquire* photograph. We brought together a whole bunch of trumpet players, including Nat Lorber, who showed up too late along with Kenny Dorham. So the two of them had a special little shot on the editorial page.

These concerts continued. I became one of the main producers of those in the second year. It was a wonderful setting. These were Thursday evening concerts, and the sculpture garden was a great forum for that. They set up a few – a clutch of chairs for press and invited guests, but the rest of the people were standing up, which they didn't mind doing. There were one-hour concerts. We had a pretty free hand, although there was a – we had to deal with the museum's people, who were snooty, but okay.

Several of the things that happened there were recorded. I remember still one of my earliest enterprises was a group – they recorded for Argo. It was headed by – I forget – but the bass player, who arrived early – at that time, the now-reconfigured sculpture garden had this huge female Gaston Lachaise sculpture of a woman with a remarkably large behind. He came in. He had his bass on his shoulder. The first thing he saw there was this. He said, "Man, dig those hocks."

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This way we were able to introduce a non- – not the usual audience to the artistry on display at the Museum of Modern Art. We had some great moments there. I'll get back to that later.

After *Metronome* died – we tried. I tried Norman Granz. I thought he was somebody who might be able to buy this magazine. But you know Norman. He didn't really like jazz writing. That's one thing that we did share. So he didn't bite, and the thing went down. We did publish that last issue. Looking back on that, that was the most freedom I ever had as an editor to do things that I wanted to do, and I think we did a pretty nice job on that mag. Jerry Smokler's the best art director I ever worked with.

What happened then was, I was bitten by the bug. I was not going to go back to some non-jazz activity. I did support myself with: (a) unemployment insurance, (b) freelance work, (c) something fell into my lap that tided me over for a while and for which I also was able to employ my secretary at *Metronome*, a very pretty young girl whom I hired right out of college, named Sarah Green, who eventually, after *Metronome*, became Orrin Keepnews's secretary at Riverside Records and then had a fairly long tenure working in various ways in the jazz environment. She helped me with this. This was a translation of Joachim Berendt's enormously successful – originally in German, but already translated into other languages – *Das Jazzbuch*, which here became *The Jazz Book*. It wasn't hard to translate. I got to know Jo through this enterprise, and we became friends. He was a shaker and mover on the German jazz scene and well-known internationally as well. So that helped.

Then I was approached – my old friend Stanley Dance, who had by then settled in the U.S. with his Canadian-born wife Helen Oakley – Helen Dance, who was a wonderful lady – he had gotten himself involved with Bob Thiele – who was a veteran record producer, who as a very young man and a wealthy youngster whose father was involved with – owned Baker's Chocolates – had started a magazine called *Jazz*, which then suspended publication when Bob was drafted in World War II and served in the Coast Guard. So it existed for less than – I think just 1941, 1942. About – what is it? – about five issues, or something like that? He wanted to get back into that business, but he didn't want to be publicly identified with it. He wanted to restart this magazine called *Jazz*.

Bob, who had been married a number of times to singers and others, had a girlfriend named Pauline Rivelli who wouldn't marry him, because she came from a very strict Catholic family, and he'd already been divorced five times or something, so no way, but it was okay for them to live together, I guess. As I very quickly realized, I was there to groom Pauline, who had no journalistic experience. He wanted her to do that. But I was willing – more than willing to do it, because it was something that would certainly be

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helpful to my career. It was fun to start a magazine, which it really was, starting a magazine, even with Bob as the non-credited actual publisher looking over my shoulder.

He was then producing for Impulse!, a label that had been started by Creed Taylor but was very quickly taken over by Bob. Of course he is very famous for his involvement with [John] Coltrane. He was an active producer. He didn't actually tell me what to do, but there were certain artists that came within our purview, and there were certain writers that he was interested in. It still gave me enough elbow room to be a respectable enterprise.

I edited this magazine for a little over a year, maybe a year and a half or something. I'm not quite sure now anymore. Pauline was my managing editor. She was a quick study. She was a bright girl. Eventually I quit, because, first of all, I could see that that was going to happen anyway and it would have put me in an awkward position. We'd become co-editors. In any case, Bob was beginning to interfere too much for my taste. I just said goodbye.

Very soon after that I got an offer from *Down Beat* to become their New York editor. In between, my college friend David Himmelstein and I had produced a concert series called Jazz on Broadway. There was a wonderful little theater, which was actually called the Little Theater, on Broadway, which had been used as a television studio but lain fallow for live performances and was owned by a conglomerate of people with very little experience in theater. They were represented by a law firm that included my friend David Himmelstein's father. David's father also was the lawyer of a somewhat well-known person named Jilly Rizzo, who was one of Frank Sinatra's closest friends and also owned a club in New York called Jilly's. David had become friendly with Jilly. Jilly had a girlfriend who was a big jazz fan. So it was really – behind the scenes, it was Jilly who was bankrolling this enterprise, which we called Jazz on Broadway, which began with a huge success, but like T. S. Eliot, it started with a bang and ended with a whimper. We started out with Earl Hines. This was something that both David and I had been wanting to do, because Earl Hines, a marvelous pianist who had been in the shadows, so to speak, for many years in San Francisco working in a club where he headed a band that really wasn't his cup of tea. Then Stanley Dance had made a series of records for an English label named Felsted, which included half an Earl Hines LP, which was not produced by Stanley himself, because it was done in San Francisco. But that's neither here nor there. It included – although it was done with a quartet and not ideal as a showcase for Earl – it included a piece called *Brussels Hustle*. Earl had been to Belgium. That had a solo which was just stunning. It was an astonishing, phenomenal display of piano imagination and technique. So we're thinking, we've got to get this guy to New York. That's what we decided to do as our kickoff. This was in March of 1964.

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What happened was that we called Earl. We had Stanley Dance help us. Stanley was all for this. Stanley later on thought, like some people will with the passing of time, that it had been his idea, which it was not. It was our idea, but we enlisted him, since we didn't know Earl, to help us. We called Earl. Earl said, "People wouldn't want to come to hear me play solo piano." We tried to convince him, but insisted on a rhythm section, and he insisted also that there'd be at least one other – a horn player. We knew Budd Johnson. We got Budd Johnson, who had worked with Earl's big band. We got a nice rhythm section for him, which was Ahmed Abdul Malik, whom I had first met in 1947. One of the first live bands I saw was at a left-wing union dance where Randy Weston had the band and Ahmed was the bass player. So he was on bass. Oliver Jackson was a brilliant young drummer whom I had met at the Metropole. That had been a team with Eddie Locke, who was another fine young drummer from Detroit, who had become part of Jo Jones's entourage. He introduced them to Roy Eldridge and Coleman Hawkins, and it went on from there.

We did persuade Earl at least to do the majority of this program as a soloist. The hall could only hold about just under 400 people. It was packed. In fact, there was such a demand that we added a midnight concert. Some of the people who were there – one of them was an enterprising engineer who had done a lot of work for radio stations, named Jerry Valburn, who also was a pioneer – I wouldn't call him a bootlegger, but he was pioneer at issuing private recordings, so to speak. Jerry said, "I've got to do this. I've got to do this." So he ran off and got himself some recording equipment, and good that he did it. He recorded the second concert. Mort Fega, who was there, was then a big disc jockey – jazz disc jockey – in New York. He wanted to issue this on his label. He had a new label called Focus. Bob Thiele recorded Earl with Elvin Jones on drums and Richard Davis on bass for a new label that he was starting called Contact, because he couldn't do it for Impulse!, so he did it that way. So Earl had a tremendous few days in New York. But most of all, he got tremendous press. John S. Wilson in the *New York Times*, who was not prone to doing a rave, did a rave. Whitney Balliett – that of course came out a bit later – but Whitney went into ecstasy about Hines. This is one of the things that I am very happy about, that I was able to midwife – along with David Himmelstein, to midwife Earl's return to the limelight, because after that, the rest of his life, he had a wonderful career, making more recordings, I think, from then on, than what he had ever done before, all over the place, really being restored to his position.

Earl as a person was someone that I never got close to. I'll tell you frankly, as a person I wasn't overly fond of him, but neither were a lot of my musician friends. I remember Roy Eldridge coming back from a tour in Europe of an all-star group that included Earl and telling me that he was the worst person to work with. And Coleman Hawkins told me – David and I also engineered something to do with – a television show with Earl Hines and Coleman Hawkins. They had recorded together many years before. After the show

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was taped, we also – Don Schlitten, who was another person, and Ira Gitler. There were four of us, David, Ira, Don, and myself. We were known as the JJJ, which was short for the Jewish jazz junkies, which didn't mean that we were – we were jazz junkies. Certainly we weren't junkies. Don was a producer for Prestige and then eventually had his own label. Ira, a veteran jazz writer, but to me, Ira is to me always more of a fan than a critic. He also got me into hockey, but that's another story. We did a lot of things for Earl. We got him in the Village Vanguard along with Roy Eldridge and Coleman Hawkins. That was recorded for Mercury, Limelight, two albums.

By then I was doing quite a bit of liner notes. Don got me started on the liner note thing, but Bob Thiele also. My editorial job at *Jazz* was unpaid, except for perks, but the perks included doing liner notes for Impulse!, of which I did quite a few. So I had gotten into that game.

Going back to Earl, I remember Roy telling me that one of the things was that he had a featured solo on *I Can't Get Started*, which was ironic that that was the name of the tune, for which Earl was his pianist. He said Earl would play these tremendous introductions but then, he said, "He would never cue me in." It's an elementary thing. When you're finished [Morgenstern imitates a flourish], whatever you're doing, then you go "boom" and suspend for a moment, and that's where the guy comes in. Roy said, "He never let me in. He always kept me" – it was infuriating. Earl was a very egocentric person, in spite of the fact that he wanted to surround himself with a showbiz element, which he insisted on doing right to the end. But as a soloist, he's really incomparable, and I'm really proud of the fact that I had something to do with getting him back onto a roll.

Right after that, just around that time that we were doing this concert series, for which we did Lucky Thompson with an octet, and Randy Weston with a fairly large band, and Coleman Hawkins and Ben Webster, which Ben really copped, because Coleman was already starting to drink a little too much. Ben, who was wont to do that as well, was sober as a judge and played like an angel – he really copped on that concert.

But we were too inexperienced producers. We paid the guys too much. We couldn't have paid Earl Hines too much. He certainly earned it. But we wound up in the red. Whereas we had planned two things that would have really been successful. One was to bring Muddy Waters and his band in from Chicago, which had not been done by then, which we managed to do the following year at the museum, at Jazz in the Garden. And Johnny Hodges leading a group of his own, which he had never done in public in New York, with that little band that he had. They never did play in New York. Jilly, in a very nice way – he had bankrolled this. He shut us down before we could finish with these last two things. It was very good experience.

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At that time also I had then joined *Down Beat* as New York editor, starting in March of 1964. My boss was Don DeMicheal, who is somebody that I would really like – I wish I had the time to talk about Don, because Don is an unfortunately neglected figure who hasn't been given his dues either as a writer and as an editor. He was also a fine musician. He played vibes and drums. He was a terrific drummer and a good vibes player. Has recorded, and also had been seen on television.

Don was someone from whom – I had pretty much been on my own in both my editorial positions, because Dave was not somebody who could do anything for me jazz-wise and Bob Thiele was just somebody who could try to tell me who I should be featuring in the magazine. Don was somebody I learned a good deal from. He was an excellent editor, and he was one of the most fair-minded and decent people in this strange business. It was absolutely 100% ethical person and really a terrific guy. He eventually resigned the job. He was brought in by Gene Lees, who came out of Louisville, which is where Don was from. Don was a baker's son and worked in the bakery for quite a while. He got married much too young. It was not a good marriage. He supported himself by working in the bakery and as a musician and also going to college relatively late in life and getting a degree in sociology. Gene had met Don on the Louisville jazz scene. Gene was the classical music critic for the *Louisville Courier*. So when Gene got this job at *Down Beat*, he brought in Don as his managing editor, because he didn't feel sufficiently secure in his knowledge of jazz, which was substantial, but still, he was insecure about it. Don eventually took over.

Don decided to leave at a certain time because he – as I could well see after I had served for a while in that position – he'd just had enough. There's a lot of pressure. He became editor of a trade magazine for ceramics, which had nothing to do with his emotions, and he went back to playing music as much as he could get gigs. Then, unfortunately, he contracted cancer, and the end came much quicker than any of us had anticipated. It's a great loss for me both personally, and it was a loss to the jazz community. He was a terrific man, Don DeMicheal.

*Down Beat* – I became the editor, because Don decided to leave. That involved having to move to Chicago. I tried to argue the point that the editor should be in New York, because that was where most of the jazz stuff was going on, but the publisher and owner, John Maher, who was known as the old man – I could talk about him for a long time, but I won't. He was quite a character. He insisted that it had to be in Chicago, because that's where he also could keep tabs on what was going on. It was interesting. Like most – by then, I considered myself a New Yorker. I didn't want to go to Chicago, because I figured – but I got to love Chicago. It's a great city. There are lots of – physically I lucked out. I got an apartment right near the lake. I could walk by dipping – there was an underpass right near my street there. I could dip under Michigan – Lakeshore Drive and come out

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on the other side. There was a beach right in the center of town. You could go to the beach. Where else can you do that? Right next door to where I lived there was a famous Frank Lloyd Wright building, the Robie House I think I was. Later I moved a little further away from there. It was very cold in the winter.

Also, Chicago had a thriving, lively jazz scene. There were wonderful perks at *Down Beat*. You go to the London House opening. London House had some of the best – they had a wonderful roast beef. That prime rib was out of sight. They had a very good – they had a Green Goddess salad dressing – it was made with avocado – which was great. Then there was Mr. Kelly's, which was run by the same Marianthal family. George Marianthal ran those clubs. Excellent food, excellent entertainment. There was Rush Street, where there was still quite a bit of jazz. There was Joe Segal, who was like a one-man bebop movement. He's still around, God bless him. There was the South Side, which is Chicago's counterpart of Harlem, but very different, because Harlem had gone – I must say that the Apollo was a great place to go to. Like seeing Duke Ellington at the Apollo was quite an experience. But Harlem had not – was far from a jazz center. By the time I left New York in 1967, there wasn't very much going on there at all. But in Chicago there was still a lot going on.

Also, another thing that was going on was the AACM, which was then just budding out. That was the Association for [the] Advancement of Creative Musicians actually, not Music. You had the Art Ensemble. You had Richard Abrams, whom I got to know well. He was a terrific guy. Richard, after I got to know him a little bit, came to my apartment to listen to James P. Johnson. He wanted to find out a little bit more about him. Richard was the guy that Woody Herman called when his pianist was not available. Richard came and filled in. I saw him with Woody Herman at the Plugged Nickel. So he was an all-around guy. I also served with him as a judge at several Notre Dame jazz festivals and found out that he was a fair-minded guy that was no way stuck on avant-garde stuff, but very open to everything.

That whole movement was very interesting. It was focused around the University of Chicago area, rather than on the South Side, just like Amiri Baraka and Archie Shepp were not about to import avant-garde jazz to Harlem. They were laughed off the street. In Chicago that stuff went well with certain elements in the community, but mostly with the kids at the university. That's where they had their audience. Then they went to France and Richard came to New York. There was lots of stuff going on. The South Side, they had a lot of nice, more like old-time jazz clubs with tenor and organ stuff.

Putting out the magazine every two weeks was quite a job, but it was very interesting. I had already become aware of the fact that in order to do something like that, you have to expose yourself to all kinds of music that you normally – from the standpoint of a fan,

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you go to a club because there's somebody you want to hear, but when you're a professional involved in jazz journalism, you jolly well go because you have to go. You've got to check out what's going on. So I had to open myself up to a lot of music that I normally would not have exposed myself to and learn how to deal with it and even to – very often it was an enjoyable experience.

This was also the era of very noisy music and light shows. I think while I was still in New York – or was it when I came back to New York? – there was the Fillmore West [*sic*: East], where you would go to hear Miles. You walk in, and after you took two breaths you'd be loaded, because the whole place was like the back end of a water pipe. In Chicago there were a couple of places. I'd go hear Buddy Rich's band in a rock club where you had to sit on the floor, and there was incessant light strobe stuff going off. But it was interesting.

Putting out the magazine every two weeks was not easy, mainly because the old man – they kept chopping away at the staff in order to reduce overhead. Whereas Don had had Pete Welding as an associate editor, and also Pete could do some layouts and be an art director. Then when I came in, I had a great guy named Bill Quinn, who was one of the few – that leads to an aside – we were always conscious of the fact that there were very few black writers who got into writing about jazz. You couldn't blame them, because it's not a very lucrative thing. But also, it was in a way a pity that there wasn't more of that. At *Metronome*, we did bring in the then LeRoi Jones. I think I worked harder on a big article that he did for *Metronome* – which later became the foundation for his first book, *Blues People* – than on anything else that I'd ever done. We really worked together on that. Published the first articles by A. B. Spellman. But it was hard to find black writers.

Bill Quinn was an exception. He was also a very good editor as well as a good interviewer – fine interviewer and writer. Bill was with me for quite some time, until he went over to *Playboy*, who could pay a lot more than *Down Beat*, and also then wound up editing a newsletter for the Democratic Party. He went to Washington. Then I lost touch with Bill.

His replacement, whom I was able to hire, was Larry Kart, who was terrific. Larry, a fine writer and a very sensitive guy. Larry also broadened my musical horizons in various ways, because he had very wide tastes and really was a superb listener. So we had a good relationship.

During this time *Down Beat* decided to cut back from coming out twice a month to going back to a monthly. This made sense from two standpoints. It was hard to get enough advertising to justify two issues a month. It was also very hard for us, with a very small staff, to put this out. So we were happy about it. It got a slightly larger page count in each

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issue as well. There were certain things about – *Down Beat* was a much more professional publication than anything else I had been involved with before. It was a self-supporting enterprise. The old man was quite experienced. He had acquired the magazine many years before. He had been the magazine's printer. That was really his business. He was in the printing business. He started printing in 1936. About 20 years later, he acquired the magazine because, as he said to the then owners, "You boys owe me so much money for printing that you might as well settle with me. Give me the magazine and we'll call it even." That was how he became the publisher. He was a character. He was not – he has a reputation. There were certain people who worked for him – Gene Lees could not stand him and has done a lot of bad-mouthing of him. But he wasn't – you have to understand old man Maher, where he came from and what his attitude was. People like Gene thought that he was a racist. He wasn't, really. He was a lace-curtain Irish from Chicago. He had worked his way up. He started out as a printer's devil. You've got to take buckets of slugs coming out of the linotype machine. Then he'd gone to Oklahoma as a young person when there was an oil boom there and made some real money. Then he came back and bought the printing plant that he had been working for and became a major printer in Chicago. He eventually got the job of printing all the State of Illinois documents, which was a tremendous boon in itself. But *Down Beat* was his feather in his cap. That's what made him somebody who, when he rose to the position where he became a member of the Union League Club, which he was very proud of – he was a very sharp dresser. He had tailor-made suits and great hats. *Down Beat* was – because Maher Publications, aside from *Down Beat*, didn't have any – also, he liked to deal with the instrument manufacturers. I liked him.

Unfortunately, during my tenure very early on, he was not in good health, and he died of a heart attack. His son, who had no experience with this at all – he knew the printing business, but they had split up at one time and didn't get along personally. He took over the magazine. He's gone now. He wasn't a bad guy, but he was not terribly bright. I had a hard time with him. He brought back – actually, the old man had brought back Chuck Suber, who had a long history with *Down Beat*. Chuck had the title of publisher when he was actually the advertising manager. Chuck always had trouble with separating editorial from advertising, which is something that the old man – he warned me when he brought back Chuck. He told me to keep my eyes open for that. So he knew. He was smart. Chuck also had a great role that he had played in bringing *Down Beat* into the jazz education field. He did a lot to promote jazz in high school and colleges.

I had the feeling by then – I had a new – Larry had left. Larry went to the *Chicago Tribune*, where he eventually became the editor of their book section and also reviewed jazz and other – cabaret. So I got Jim Zantor, who was very different from Larry. Larry was an intellectual. Jim was not. Jim's background – he was an excellent musician. He had done most of his professional playing in an Army band and was also a terrific – and

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this is very important – he was a terrific mechanic. In other words, he could do – we had very close deadlines. We had a lot of detail work to do, and he was an expert at that. He was also a good writer, and he knew music. So that was another lucky stroke, that I always had somebody that I could rely on in this work.

Then what happened was that I tried to get myself into a position, because I worried about having a clash eventually with this new owner-publisher. So I tried to persuade him that I should go back to New York. He had seen the correspondence in his father's files, between myself and the old man, about why I was trying to say why the editor should be in New York. I was worried that my record collection, my books, and my furniture – I would have to ship that back to New York at my own cost if I didn't go – Chuck was also quite happy to entertain the notion of my not being there, because I would then have less impact on whatever he wanted to finagle. The thing was that, as long as Jim was in Chicago, I could be in New York, and we could do things on the telephone. There still – this is before fax and before the internet. So it's primitive. We had to do things – in order for me to see galleys, they had to be sent by – what do we call it? – special delivery. That was the fastest way you could do stuff then. But it did work out.

Meanwhile, in my personal life, I got married while I was still in New York. My first wife moved to Chicago with me. She was very helpful in getting everything set up there, but our personal relations were deteriorating. So I was – in Chicago, I was back to being a bachelor. Lenore left pretty early on in my Chicago period. When I came back to New York, *Down Beat* – the new publisher was cheap. He decided that there didn't need to be a New York office. They closed down the New York office and said that I should work out of my apartment and they would pay half my rent. So that is the way it worked out.

Then the tragic thing happened that – well, I don't know whether tragic, but that was – Jim Zantor left, because he had an offer to become head of the copy desk at the *Chicago Tribune*. So this is a nice job, and I certainly couldn't blame him for taking it. Then they said they would hire somebody good to take his place. What happened, though, is that they put out some advertising in various schools. They wanted to try to find some young journalism graduate that they could get on the cheap. They wound up hiring a guy who was an imposter. He was a sketch. This was absolutely unbelievable. I got a call one day from Chuck Suber, who said, "Dan, we've found the man. He's a great guy. He's a musician, and he's a writer," and he's this and that and the other. Then he put him on the phone. He said, "Say hi to Jim Schaffer." I pick up the phone, and I get this guy, "guh." What am I going to say? I know nothing about him. I very quickly found out that his knowledge of jazz was exceedingly limited. He did play a little bit of rock-and-roll drums. He talked a good game. I hadn't met him face to face yet, of course, but in going over galleys on the telephone, he didn't know how to spell Thelonious Monk's first name. He didn't know how to spell anything. I could see that this was a disaster brewing.

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Then they sent him to New York to meet me. He is the first person I ever met face to face, other than seeing them on the street, who wore platform shoes. He wore platform shoes. He was altogether dressed in a very non-Brooks Brothers manner. He turned out to be – he was personable, but I would have sized him up very quickly, but obviously the brain trust in Chicago didn't. He was slick in many ways. He claimed also that he had done work as a television producer. He had really done nothing, but he did talk a good game. I tried my best to work with this man. I had been back in Chicago since late 1970. This was, I think, 1972 or something.

Also, there was more and more editorial pressure from the cabal there of Jack Maher and Chuck Suber. It started out; they killed a piece that Willis Conover wrote. It was already in page proofs. It was already laid out. I got a call, because there was something in it that they found – I forget. It was totally stupid. So I already decided then that I was going to quit. Then I told them that I wanted to leave. They said; please give us time to find a replacement for you. So I stupidly said yes, and I stayed on. It wasn't until, I think, the spring of 1974 that I was able to extricate – because I had a certain amount of loyalty to the magazine. I didn't want to see the magazine turn into – Schaffer had all kinds of ideas. He put color on all the – remember that? *Down Beat* had – he soaked the pages in color, so it was hard to read the type. I had to watch everything like a hawk to see that nothing got in there that was really like – also, I would hear from – the first thing – they sent him around to talk to people in – as I said, the separation between editorial and advertising was becoming blurred. They sent him – I got a call from my – I wouldn't call him a friend, but my acquaintance, Bob Altshuler, who was quite a topic in himself, who then had a big job at Columbia as the head of press and publicity. He called me up, and he said, "Dan, who is this guy Jim Schaffer? What is his story?" He said, "He comes to us at a conference as the managing editor of *Down Beat*, and what he says when he introduces himself, he says, 'Gentlemen. What can *Down Beat* do for you?' People look at each other." I could go on. But in any case, Jim eventually got himself removed from *Down Beat*. But he did a longer run than I had ever anticipated. I have no idea what happened to him after that, except that sometime after he left *Down Beat*, I got a call from him. I believe I was already at Rutgers. He said that he was producing a television series on jazz and that he wanted to do an interview of me, and he wanted to do it in front of Lincoln Center. He offered to pay me. So I said okay. I went, and sure enough, there he was. He was dressed a little more conservatively than at our first meeting. He actually had a small crew of people with this thing. I – believe it. Whatever it was, it never materialized, and I have no idea what happened to this man. In any case, that was the end of my *Down Beat* period.

**Berger:** We're going to probably have to leave the Institute for the next session, but I know that we wanted to cover – skip ahead to the NEA Jazz Masters award, because they'd like to include that now.

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[recording interrupted]

Before we leave *Down Beat*, I just wanted to ask you about your – particularly when you became editor, you're now in a position as the establishment, possibly, in the view of some of the musicians with whom you had a different sort of relationship. How did that affect you? What sort of change emerged? Also, I wanted you to deal a little with – this was a turbulent time, as far as musicians feeling that they were being exploited and taking a more vocal position. So could you deal with those two issues?

**Morgenstern:** My years at *Down Beat*, which stretched roughly ten years, '64 to '74, those were interesting times, as the Chinese say. Probably the most pressure that I had was from the people who saw themselves as the champions of the avant garde, which identified itself at that time with civil rights, which was somewhat specious reasoning, I think. But what was going on was very interesting.

Prior to my arriving at *Down Beat*, there was that great debate between Abbey Lincoln and Ira Gitler, which I chimed in on. There's a long letter to the editor which drew a beautiful letter, personal letter, to me from Nica Koenigswarter, the Baroness. I tried to steer an even course. Probably the most dramatic confrontation, if we can call it that, which was basically verbal, was for a get-together that was instigated by Don DeMicheal when I was still in New York, was for the *Down Beat Yearbook*, which we were publishing then, which was a very good supplement to the magazine, which the publisher stupidly never agreed to include in the subscription. They could have included it at a slightly higher rate. As a result, this very strenuously produced and sometimes very interesting publishing never achieved any visibility comparable to the circulation of the magazine.

Be that as it may, this discussion included the following: Cannonball Adderley, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Cecil Taylor, uninvited, the drummer from Philadelphia – what's his name? Oh boy. He had a big reputation as an avant-garde drummer. He just showed up and included himself – and Art Delugoff, and me as the moderator, and Archie Shepp. How could I forget Archie Shepp? – the most verbose spokesman of the avant garde. We had – Don enlisted Amiri Baraka – still LeRoi Jones then, but right on the border – as a columnist for *Down Beat*. We had an array of columnists that I inherited from Don. It had Martin Williams, Nat Hentoff, and Baraka.

Then, when we got into covering rock-and-roll, which was another thing that happened very dramatically – when I took over as editor, that was the point at which it had been decided that the magazine had to include rock-and-roll in its spectrum, which was mainly due to pressure from advertisers, not so much the advertisers of instruments, who chimed

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in on this a little bit, but the fairly considerable advertisers of things like guitars, for one, guitar strings and other accessories, amplifiers and synthesizers. They pressured to open the magazine to that. It was a problematic thing, but I think we managed to finesse it pretty well. We had very few – they threatened cancellations. Very few of them came through from subscribers. We managed to balance it pretty well and pretty soon, almost imperceptibly, got rid of more and more of the rock-and-roll coverage that we had started with.

The people who – in that discussion, that became rather shrill. It wound up with Cecil Taylor accusing Art DeLugoff with never booking him, and then asking him for a ride downtown, because Art had a car, and Archie Shepp accusing *Down Beat* of all kinds of vile things and then asking me for twenty bucks. I don't know. I had made the mistake – which I'd done with some previous discussions – of getting some – a little bit of hooch to wet the whistle. Some people had a little too much of that. It was a pretty lively – Cannonball had to leave early, so he finessed the thing. I remember, I started out with a quote from Max Harrison, which I thought was a rather good quote to start off the discussion, but Cannon nipped that in the bud by saying – he said, “Max Harrison is British, so what does he know about jazz?” That's a good way to start off.

My greatest support in this discussion was Rahsaan, whom I liked tremendously. Rahsaan was a terrific person. He had this huge stick which was a walking stick with a big carved head on it. When things got out of hand, he would slam this thing on the desk, and he'd say, “Let the man talk. Let the man talk.” Boom. So that imposed some kind of order. It was a memorable example of non-communication, shall we say.

But there were all these – later on, a little later on, when I had come back to New York, there was something called the Jazz and People's Movement, which addressed itself to getting more representation for jazz on television. The tactics that they used was to do sit-ins at the tapings. They managed to create enough of an uproar to get themselves represented on various major shows, including Ed Sullivan, which in my opinion turned out with a totally wasted opportunity insofar it was a matter of getting everybody who had participated in this into the act, so musically speaking it was a total shambles that even – I would like to see this again, but I think even the most dedicated jazz fan would have had problems with this. There was Charlie Mingus. There was Archie Shepp. There was Rahsaan. There was I don't know who else. And it was only about six minutes or so. Man. You had to be the ultimate jazz connoisseur to understand what the heck was going on there, whereas if they had done something straight-ahead and simple that would communicate to at least some percentage of the millions of listeners – viewers that they had there – it was a – then they had this wonderful discussion on the [Dick] Cavett show, which consisted of Andy Cyrille, Cecil Taylor, and Freddie Hubbard, and had some idiotic statements, like somebody – I think it was Freddie – who said that Coleman

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Hawkins was wrapping packages in Queens. Coleman Hawkins lived on Central Park West. He had a beautiful apartment. He had a Chrysler Imperial sitting in the parking lot. He had a closet full of expensive suits. This was stupid stuff. It subsided very quickly. There's very little of that left. Just a couple of years ago Andy Cyrille was here. We've always been nice friends since then.

It was a passing phase, but it did impact on things that had to do with the magazine. What we did was to give voice to these points of view and try to answer them. It didn't result in any kind of – nobody burned down the *Down Beat* office or anything like that. But you would get funny things. Very early in my association with *Down Beat*, I would have musicians – not anybody I knew well, or anybody who for that matter was particularly well known – saying to me, “Hey, how much does it cost to get an article in *Down Beat*?” It doesn't cost anything, if somebody feels like doing an article on you. Those are minor things.

Another thing that I learned was that you couldn't do as much as people would think that you could. When we put Jaki Byard on the cover, it didn't do much for Jaki. I thought maybe it would, but it didn't. The only concerted effort that I made – I made a concerted effort to see to that Louis Armstrong was treated with more respect than he was by the critics at that time. I made a concerted effort to give a lot of space to Duke Ellington, who was also not being given the recognition that he merited. And I made a concerted effort to see to that Dexter Gordon, who still spent most of his time in Europe at that point in time, whenever he had a record released in the U.S., that it got a really good review.

I don't think that this had much of an impact. I know that the one thing – and I should mention that is the one thing that I am really proud of at *Down Beat* – was something that we did right after I got back to New York in 1970, I guess – was to put together a birthday issue for Louis Armstrong. Everybody still thought that that was his 70th birthday. So did he. Maybe it really was. I'm still not convinced that that baptismal certificate is really a hundred percent proof. But whatever.

What we did was to – I must say here that one of my secretaries there – there was a girl named Jane Welch from Buffalo. She did a terrific job of getting statements from all these people. We all worked on it, but she really did a good job. We had about 80 statements, birthday wishes from musicians across the spectrum, including everybody from – there was Stan Kenton. There was Sun Ra. There was of course Bobby Hackett. There was everybody. It ran the spectrum. The only sour note – of all of them, the only sour note was Archie Shepp, who had to come up with something – it's nice to see Louis Armstrong getting recognition, but what he was really saying, Archie Shepp should get some of that recognition too. Anyway, it was a really wonderful bouquet to deliver to Louis. I sent him an advance copy. I got back this letter which I quoted numerous times,

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which said, “I received the magazine, and it knocked me on my ass” – which is the greatest compliment that I’ve had in my career as an editor.

Let’s get back to what you wanted there.

**Berger:** I think you’ve answered that. Just any possible change in your personal relationships with musicians now that you were in this perceived position of power.

**Morgenstern:** Probably my relationship with musicians didn’t really suffer. I think Rahsaan Roland Kirk was being used by these Jazz and People’s Movement people at that time as a figurehead, but he was smart enough to know that that was happening and certainly didn’t do anything to our friendship. If there were people who were resentful, then it didn’t really matter that much. Certain things that happened, maybe I’ve – there’s one thing that I regret now, which isn’t really – it is with the Museum of Modern Art concerts. We wanted to make room – when I got with *Down Beat* it was – the Museum always wanted somebody’s sponsorship in addition to the Museum. They didn’t want to be held responsible for what was going on there. *Down Beat* was fine. We of course wanted to represent a fairly broad spectrum of the music, provided there was something that we thought people would enjoy. I knew we had to do something for the avant garde. I had wanted to do somebody like Cecil Taylor. But it was pre-empted by a visit from the then-married – I don’t know if they still are – Carla Bley and Mike Mantler descended upon me in the New York office and practically bludgeoned me into – they did it at a good point in time, when they knew that the whole season hadn’t been booked yet – to get me to book their – they had an orchestra, and also on the side – that’s what really did it for me, because I liked them – Roswell Rudd and John Tchicai, they had a group. It was a quartet with Milford Graves on drums. So I booked them, but I – it was the only concert of several seasons that we had – I’ve lost count of how many seasons we did – by the way, let me say that my father terrifically enjoyed these concerts. My parents would come to a lot of these. That’s when my father, who never had been exposed to a lot of jazz, but he really got to like some of it. Even I took him to an Ornette Coleman concert, not at the Museum. I wanted to see what he had to say about that. He said, “He gets what he wants.” Anyway, that concert was the only one where people walked out. People walked out, and quite a few of them.

Later on, I did a very positive review of a Cecil Taylor concert. Cecil said to me, afterward, he said, “That’s all very good and well, so far as that’s the [ ? ], but how come you didn’t hire me, but you hired some of my pupils.” That was true.

So actually, no. On a personal level, I don’t think – I had very little in the way of bad vibes. But in terms of public expression, yes. There were people who attacked *Down*

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*Beat*. The only attacks came from letters to the editor, but they were not from musicians. They were from people – the great unwashed.

**Berger:** I think we should move into your connection with Rutgers. So, after you left *Down Beat*, you freelanced and then you also worked on the book *Jazz People*.

**Morgenstern:** What happened was after I left *Down Beat*, I fortunately had established enough of a reputation so that I managed, because I had married again. 1975, which was the year after I left *Down Beat*, my first child was born. My son Adam was born in September 1975. So I did have a family to support. I had gotten a contract to write a book with the Danish photographer Ole Brask. It was Ole's then girlfriend, who was then involved in the publishing business, who got this contact for us. So he was – what I should say, he was the senior partner, and I had to tailor things to Ole's needs in terms of whom he had photographed and whom he was going to photograph. Ole was a nice guy. He made his living being a cameraman for CBS television, which he made quite a bit of money on, but he didn't want people to know that. He wanted to be an artist. We did this book together, which was published by Abrams. That was the first time I was sent – they had a budget, and Ole didn't want to do that – so they got me hooked up with a press agent and sent me on a tour promoting the book. Actually two tours which took me as far afield as California, Florida, and Boston. I was on – the ABC show that came out of Boston was "Good Morning, America" I think. I was on with Billy Eckstine.

Oh, speaking of television. While I was in Chicago, there was a wonderful guy named Bob Kaiser, who was a television producer at the local station, WTTW, in Chicago, a PBS station. He got the idea that we should do a show together and call it "Just Jazz." These would be half-hour shows. He was a sophisticated jazz fan and a terrific guy on the basics of good television. So we did this series. We decided to start out with – the pilot program would be Coleman Hawkins and Roy Eldridge, but I hadn't realized what bad shape Coleman was in. When he came to Chicago, I was stunned by his condition, which really had deteriorated, because when I talked to him on the phone, his voice was still there, he wanted to do it, and he sounded great. Then I had sent my friend Sarah Green, whom I had mentioned earlier, to pick him up and take him to the airport. She called me, and she said, "I don't think he can make this." That was when they were still at the house. Then he insisted on doing it. When he arrived at the airport, they brought him out in a wheelchair. I don't want to go through all this. But we managed to do the show. Roy really carried it. We also had Barry Harris on piano; we had a good local rhythm – drummer and bass player. So a program came out of it, but we didn't feel that it was what we wanted to start with. Then Coleman went back to New York. Pretty soon, before the show was even final edited, he went and died. So this was the last thing he did. In addition to the show, we did a live – a concert with him and Roy the following day in Chicago. That was the last thing he ever did.

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We did do a series. The series came out pretty well. Dexter Gordon was visiting. So we did him. Don Byas was visiting. So we managed to do him. We did Bobby Hackett and Vic Dickenson with Don DeMicheal on drums. I got Don on the show. We did Erroll Garner, which was difficult because of – I like Martha Glaser very much, but she is a demanding person. But she wasn't there. Erroll was a dream to work with. A wonderful show.

How did I get into this? Because I was saying something about television.

**Berger:** You were talking about traveling around and *Jazz People*, the book.

**Morgenstern:** Going around, having this press agent, and doing television shows and radio. It was a big deal. That book did not become a best seller on account of that, but it went back into print in a paperback. It was a very handsome book. I didn't like the cover, and neither did Ole, for that matter, but they – we had a much better one originally with just a clarinet with hands on it, but instead they put this cheesy picture of Benny Goodman and Red Norvo on it. Red had a big belly. It wasn't very appealing. But that's the marketing business. You can always rely on them to do something clever.

The book was a good workout for me. The editor insisted on getting more text than had originally been anticipated and wanted me to do a capsule history of jazz. We managed to get Benny Carter into it.

Then I also did some teaching. My friend Chuck Israels got me to sub for him at Brooklyn College for a semester, teaching a jazz history course. Then my friend Martin Williams, who had been teaching jazz history with Peabody, recommended me to take over for him, because he was too busy at the Smithsonian to do it. So I would go down once a week to Baltimore, get some crab cakes, and do the thing at Peabody, which was nice. Then I also did a summer at NYU, which I think Gary Giddins got me. So that looked good on a resume, I guess, but I never did one actually.

During my *Down Beat* tenure, I had become friendly with some people at Rutgers. There was a concert series taking place at Carnegie Recital Hall and at Rutgers in New Brunswick called "Jazz: the Personal Dimension." That was being booked by, jointly, Rutgers and Carnegie Hall. There was a very nice man who was running Carnegie Hall then. I can't remember his name. He's gone now. It involved two people from Rutgers who had also been instrumental in starting the first scholarly jazz periodical, which was then known as the *Journal of Jazz Studies*. Those two people were Will Weinberg, who was the head of the – director of the Rutgers Institute of Management and Labor Relations and was a great arbitrator and a great jazz fan, who, along with Dave Cayer,

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who by then was the head of the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at Rutgers. The two of them had been instrumental in persuading Mason Groves to bringing the Institute of Jazz Studies to Rutgers.

I had gotten to know them. I was on the advisory board of the magazine. They were consulting with me very kindly about “Jazz: the Personal Dimension.” Around that time I also, I think, met Ed Berger’s father, Morroe Berger. I was on some panel at Princeton University with a cast that included Ralph de Toledano, Ahmed Abdul Malik, and Benny Carter. Quite a [?]. De Toledano died recently. His obituaries mentioned very little about the fact that he was a pretty good and sensitive jazz critic who wrote jazz reviews for the *New Leader* for many years and also did a very good early jazz anthology. They mention more about his political involvement.

Then suddenly out of the clear blue sky one day I get a call from Bill Weinberg saying, “I’d like to come see you.” So I invited him to dinner. He came. Then we sat him. He said, “How would you like to come to Rutgers as the director of the Institute of Jazz Studies?” Totally unanticipated. My only acquaintance with the Institute at that point in time was that I had been brought there along with some other people in the jazz community to take a look at it when it was still in the basement of Dana Library and had not been at Rutgers for very long. I think one of the people who came with me there was Orrin Keepnews. We were shown what was essentially the Marshall Stearns collection there. I must say that we were not terribly impressed with the way it was set up at the time.

By the time – needless to say, I accepted this offer, since I was – frankly, I was piecing together a living doing what I was doing, but it wasn’t anything that I was secure about being able to sustain at the level necessary in the long run. This sounded wonderful. I saw that the collection by then had grown, and it was in a much better surrounding. Also, when I came to see it, I met Ed, who had been hired as a part-time curator of the collection. In fact, as it turned out, Ed and I were the starting team there. So it clearly was a matter of very quickly getting Ed on a full-time basis, which we accomplished. It’s happened that the two of us got along pretty well. Then we managed to enlist – there was a volunteer. We were down the hall – down the hall was the music department. We were still in a building called Bradley Hall. In the music department, there was a young man who was a music major named Vincent Pelote, who had made himself available as a volunteer at the Institute.

We could talk a lot about what went on there. We managed – by hook and by crook we managed to expand our staff. We managed to get a grant to do some cataloguing of rare acoustic 78s, for which we were bequeathed, I guess you could say, a librarian from Rutgers in New Brunswick, who was a cataloguer named Marie Griffin. The thing about

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Marie was that she was as enthusiastic about cataloguing as we were about jazz, but her colleagues were not quite as enthusiastic as she. So they were not too unhappy about – frankly, about getting rid of Marie there. She came to us. She was just wonderful, because she caught on very quickly to the essentials of jazz discography. She had a great head for this sort of thing. She was a tremendously energetic lady who also was a wonderful social director. She and her husband had a – they were in a Rutgers country club thing at New Brunswick. So we had an annual pool party. By then, pretty soon I had two kids, and then there was the other thing. She was very good in that respect.

We got this grant from NEH, which was important. Then we managed to – with the help of somebody in personnel, who was a jazz fan, we got a – there were still some Great Society programs. We got a secretary who Rutgers didn't have to pay, because she came on what was called . . .

**Berger:** SETA.

**Morgenstern:** . . . SETA, which was a training program for – she was from Jamaica. She was a charming person who, again, caught on quickly. She had a great telephone manner. She was good at taking messages. She was well organized. Jeanette. She was very good in that position.

We got Vincent a scholarship to go to library school at Rutgers. He became a librarian. We eventually – we were a freestanding unit at that point in time. We had an advisory board. It included Larry Ridley, whom I had known for a long time before coming to Rutgers and who certainly should get credit for being one of the people who was involved in getting me here, because he was on the faculty in Livingston College and was the first to start a jazz program at Rutgers. So we had an advisory board. But we didn't have enough of an acquisitions budget. But we moving along by hook and by crook.

Then something very good happened. That was that Rutgers got a new university librarian. Prior to that, neither the music department or the libraries were interested in us. This new librarian, whose name was Hendrik Edelman and who a Dutchman by birth who had grown up on the Voice of America and Willis Conover, he immediately wanted to make the Institute part of the library. He was the first one to get us some money. Eventually we became part of the library. This has been very good for us, especially after the librarian at Dana Library, which is where the Institute now is – when Lynn Mullons became the librarian here, we gained a great supporter. One of the things that happened during Ed and my more than 30 years here is that an extension to the library was built and that we were included in the plans for that with a facility that was specially constructed for us. We had a very nice architect who happened to be an Iranian, but who was a jazz fan, and so was his associate, so it wasn't too difficult to work things out with them to get

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an appropriate facility. That was a great step forward. It also gave us more visibility within Rutgers itself and with the outside world. There was a very nice piece done by the then *New York Times* jazz critic Peter Watrous on the Institute with a photograph of me with a bunch of instruments. We have a big collection of instruments that belonged to famous musicians.

The collection has grown, I would think, by now at least six-fold from the time that Rutgers received it from Marshall Stearns. I don't know if I have spoken enough about Marshall. I think I did early on say some things about Marshall, but Marshall was of course one of the great original jazz scholars who made a great contribution to jazz scholarship when it was in its infancy, and whose collection, which he incorporated as the Institute of Jazz Studies in 1952 and kept in his home on Waverly Place in Greenwich Village, is the basis for what now is the largest collection of jazz materials under one roof anywhere. It's been a most rewarding experience for me to be associated with this institute. When I come to look at it, it's frightening. I look back – it's almost – it's not quite half of – it's about half of my professional life, isn't it? Yeah. I guess so. [?] better for somebody. I was able to sublimate my collecting instincts. By the time I came here, I had collected myself into 5,000 78s and 12,000 LPs, but that's dwarfed by this collection here, and a lot of it has been incorporated here. I've gotten rid of it myself. It's been a great stretch of time here, and I couldn't have done it at all with Ed, first of all, and then Vincent, who's been – the three of us have been together for the whole stretch here, and a number of other people who have passed through the ranks, and people who are here now, and all the people who have donated materials – the relationship that Ed had established with Benny Carter, which has been a tremendously rich experience for Ed and, by association, for me, and then a great boon to the collection, also in terms of Benny's establishing the Carter-Berger Research Fund. So many things. And it's great for me to be relieved of the branding as a jazz critic, which is something that I – an application that I never liked, because I – even during the years that I was active in that field, I didn't see myself primarily as a critic, but more as what I have recently been branded as, which is a jazz advocate.

**Berger:** Speaking of which, what a good segue. We want to talk about your recent award and inclusion in the great NEA Jazz Masters program. Can you talk about what that meant when you heard the news, and something about the ceremony?

**Morgenstern:** I was very surprised and honored to be the fourth person to be included in this relatively new category in the NEA Jazz Masters – what shall we call it? . . .

**Berger:** Pantheon.

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**Morgenstern:** . . . pantheon, which has, until about five years ago, only consisted of musicians. But they decided to add a category called “jazz advocate,” which is named for A. B. Spellman, who just retired about a year ago from his 30 years at NEA in the jazz program there. My predecessors were, first, Nat Hentoff, who after all is an old mentor of mine. Then it was George Wein, who we don’t need to say – everybody knows who George was. I intersected with George too. It was George who made it possible for us to bring Art Tatum to Brandeis, and of course I had a long association with Festival Productions, including going to Europe in 1967 on an incredible tour with them, which really gave me some insight into what it takes to do stuff like that from a standpoint of logistics. George and his long-time partner Charlie Bourgeois made a great contribution to the music. Then John Levy, who started out as a very good bass player and then, while he was with George Shearing, became Shearing’s road manager, then decided to go into management, and started managing people like Joe Williams, Nancy Wilson, and Cannonball Adderley, and who was 92 when he received this honor and is in terrific shape. You would never believe that he was that old. Mentally, everything 100%. Then it is little old me. I really was surprised, and needless to say, I didn’t say “No thanks.”

In the ceremony, everything was beautifully done. I was happy in a way too, because I was in on the ground floor of the NEA jazz program. The late Willis Conover was a one-man movement to get jazz included in what was then the rather new arts endowment, which had no place for jazz. Memorably, Peter Mennin, who was the head of the music panel, said, “Jazz. That’s a music played in nightclubs.” Therefore – but Willis went patiently behind the scenes and managed to put together a small of people, including Dizzy Gillespie and the late John Gensel – Pastor Gensel. I forget who else. Orrin Keepnews and myself. They gave us a crumb tossed from the table, \$5,000 to apply to jazz. We decided, instead of giving out ten \$500 grants, we would give it all, a lump sum, to one person, because that would be more effective in terms of publicizing it, and also in how little it was. So we gave that to George Russell. Then it grew from there. It has become a very respectable program that has funded an endless amount of jazz activity. Dana Gioia, who is the current chairman and who’s responsible for expanding the Jazz Masters, is a terrific guy. He’s just been – at this point in time, he has been reappointed unanimously for another run as chairman of the NEA. His brother, Ted Gioia, is a jazz musician who has written a very good history of jazz. So he knows what it’s all about.

I’ve been lucky. I’ve had a long life, and I’ve been able to make a living and a life out of involvement with something that I really love, and still do. The moment that I would think that I would get bored with listening to this great music, I would quit. But I still get a kick out of it.

Thank you for selecting me for what is also an honor, being part of this oral history project. Thank you, Ed.

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**Berger:** Thank you for being present for the easiest interview I've ever had to conduct.

(transcribed and edited by Barry Kernfeld)

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