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GERALD WILSON
NEA Jazz Master (1990)

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Brown: Today is Monday, February 15th 2010. We are conducting the Smithsonian National Endowment for the Arts Oral History Interview with composer, arranger, trumpeter, band leader and elder statesman of the fine art form of jazz, Gerald Wilson in – not far from his home – in Los Angeles, California. A beautiful sunny day, and we have with us Gerald Wilson in person and – vivacious as ever – good afternoon, Mr. Wilson.

Wilson: Good afternoon to you, Anthony.

Brown: Oh, thank you. So, this is being conducted by Anthony Brown and Ken Kimery. And um, as I was telling you just a year ago, we were here, literally here, uh, interviewing Snooky Young, because he had been honored with the Jazz Masters – NEA Jazz Masters Award, which you presented to him at the awards ceremony, correct?

Wilson: Yes, that's correct.

Brown: So, when we were conducting the interview he was talking about the good old days, and of course you came up quite often in his interview. As a matter of fact he was talking about, "Well fellas, we gotta end this interview 'cause I gotta go practice 'cause I gotta go work with Gerald Wilson's band!" So here you are, 91 years old. You've played with virtually everybody who's of any great importance in this art form and you are still continuing to create music. So

let's talk about your band. You have a band here in Los Angeles, a band in New York, but Snooky plays in your LA band, is that correct?

Wilson: Yes, Snooky plays in my LA band and of course Snooky plays with the – all the bands that are in town [laughs] everybody wants Snooky in their band. And rightly so, because he's actually – Snooky's one of the greatest lead trumpet – jazz lead trumpet players that I've ever met. He's fabulous, a fabulous young trumpet player…

Brown: Young trumpet player… [Laughs]

Wilson: …Yeah because when I met him, and I just have to say this, I joined the band that he was in – Chic Carter's band, I'm sure he mentioned Chic Carter's band. And uh, the night I joined them in Saginaw, Michigan, um, I was amazed when this little guy who weighed about 120 pounds at the most went out on the floor to do a special number, and after he finished playing this solo, to end it up he ended up on a double B-flat and just held it as long as you wanted him to hold it. I had never met a young trumpet player so well equipped, um, with the trumpet as Snooky was.

Brown: Now you said he was, um, an exceptional lead trumpet player. You as a trumpet player, what is it that makes a lead trumpet player exceptional?

Wilson: Well in the first place, the lead trumpet player has to have a great embouchure, that is, great range on the trumpet – he has to be able to play because all of the lead is always higher than all the second, third or fourth trumpets. So, you gotta really have a great range to play. Also, your intonation is another thing that's so very important. Snooky has that too. In fact, he just has everything that goes with playing the trumpet. He's a wonderful trumpet player. As you know, you couldn't possibly stay on the *Tonight Show* for 30 years unless you're really somebody, you know…

Brown: …right…

Wilson: …and he – he did exactly that.

Brown: Mm-hm. So, let's talk about, um, your bands. Now, you've had a band here in Los Angeles since 1944 off and on but you started your first band in mid 1940s…

Wilson: 1944, actually.

Brown: Mhm.

Wilson: November of 1944. I'll tell you how this happened. That was my – my ambition was to be a band leader, I wanted to be a band leader. And um, I would do things that a band leader has

to do, you know, I would um, try to remember the music and, and I have to know the things so I could tell all of the guys, so I just studied real hard about being – being a leader. Um, the band that I had um, was just – fell into my lap. I was rehearsing a band that a great – one of our greatest vocalists ever in the world who was featured with Duke for many years, I'm talking about Herb Jeffries. Herb Jeffries was gonna front a van, and we were gonna go on this brand new club on Los Angeles Street and um, first street in Los Angeles. And um, so I had plenty of music, so Herb said, "Gerald, put a band together for me." He was gonna front the band and everyting. I say, "OK fine, that's good." So I got the band together, selected all of the people who would be in the band, and then I rehearsed them – and getting them ready for it. But about um, a couple of days before we were to open, herb got a job in Paris, I understand, and he left. So the owner and the booker for the – for the club said, "Well Gerald" he says uh, "You're going to have to take over the band." So I said, "Well, that was my life's ambition" and it just dropped in my lap. [Laughs]

Brown: And you've been carrying it in your lap ever since. So now you got two bands…

Wilson: Yeah.
Brown: You got the LA band – talk a little bit more about the LA band. I know you're still active

Wilson: Yeah, well, listen, you know I'd like to tell you just a little bit about that first band…

Brown: Okay.

Wilson: …Okay. We opened up at Chef's playhouse, this is a big club downtown. We played down in the room where they had big shows – had chorus girls and acts and singers alike. And then up in the lounge - they had a lounge which was upstairs, Ed Heywood's famous group was playing up there. Ed Heywood was one of the greatest jazz musicians ever, and his group was one of the finest groups. So he was upstairs. So we played there, my band was very good right from the beginning, it was good. And we played the Orpheum Theater, we played all of the big places that you could play here in Los Angeles. And then we took off to Salt Lake City. I had played there with Jimmie Lunceford's band at the Rainbow – not the rainbow rendezvous, but the Jay Jones rendezvous. He hired me there for 13 weeks. We stayed 13 weeks in Salt Lake City. We went directly from salt lake city to Boise, Idaho where we stayed in the ballroom there for two weeks, then we wandered to St. Louis, Missouri. We played in a place called Jordan Chambers' Riveria Club. This was a big night club, it held about 1200 people could get in there. It had big shows and everything. I played there with my band on that trip, and um went right from there to Chicago and then got to Chicago and were bogged down for a moment.

You're supposed to have your contracts in to the union in Chicago, um I think it's two weeks before you come in to town, and I didn't have that. So I – the job – I was supposed to go on at the Rumboogie Club in Chicago. I had to give that up, so I had a couple of – few weeks off, and

while I was there, I met an old friend of mine named Rochester, who was with the Jack Benny Show, and he liked me, and he liked my band and he said, "Don't worry about anything, Gerald, we'll straighten you out." So he gives me money to take my band on back to Los Angeles. So we went on back to LA, okay. Then we started out again and we come back. This time, everything was cool because I opened at the Apollo Theater in 1946, April the 12th. And I followed Duke Ellington in the Apollo, and Jimmie Lunceford's band followed me! Now I had been with Jimmie Lunceford's band. And by the way, at this time – by this time, Snooky, who had been with Count Basie's band – he quit Count Basie's band to join my band! [laughs]

Brown: [laughs]

Wilson: So Sweet – Sweets Edison asked Snooky, said, "You gon' – You gonna leave Count Basie's band to join Gerald Wilson's band?" Snooky said, "Yeah" [Laughs] So Snooky joins my band and we – but we had a going – by the way, I'm sorry I don't have the first records we made at that time, and you'll see why I said that, because my band was powerful. We were – I was the first band to actually record Dizzy Gillespie's *Groovin High*…
Brown: Hmm…

Wilson: I recorded *Groovin High*, and I had stuff in there that no other band was playing because I had already got into harmony that was quite deep. And when you hear my *Groovin High*, you'll understand why I am saying that. And uh, Snooky stayed with me, we went on, and then we went back to this club in St. Louis. This time, it's Ella Fitzgerald, and we were together. We're together there in this big club. So we're playing there, and every Monday night they have what they call a battle of the bands, on Monday night. Okay well Ella and Louis Armstrong had made records together, so they, they – on that Monday night, I had to battle both of them, with my band. I battle Ella and [laughs] Ella and Louis Armstrong. But as I said, as I said we had a tough band, so we – it's not the idea of who won the battle, it's just the idea that these are the people that I'm with now. I'm already booked to go back to the Apollo Theater. I'm – I did ten weeks at the El Grado in Chicago; the show was built around my band. And the chorus girls were dancing to music that I had recorded with my band. And at this time my band is doing so good, I been saying that I'm on top, really. I'm really on top. Because shipman says you coming back here, and Gerald will bring you back two or three times a year, so you'll be coming back to the parlor, you know. And all the places I went to. But I realized at that time, that now I'm too fast – I'm going too fast here. I need to study some more music. I've got to stop and study. So I had already bought a home here in Los Angeles, I went to come back to my home with this band in my van, and my bookers wanted to kill me. They already had me booked, they had me booked with over one hundred-thousand dollars worth of contracts, and Mercury Records just to sign this – the guy, he was a manager of the, of the um Mercury Records. He was married to one of the Andrews sisters, and his name was, um, Berle – Berle Adams, Berle Adams. Just to sign, they give a three-year contract with Mercury Records, you know with three albums a year. I say this is too much, I can't handle this, this is too much. I've got to – I've got to stop and study some more…

Brown: What inspired you to have to go back and study?

Wilson: Well I'll tell you, the things I wanted to do. The things I wanted to do, I needed more studying and I was – I was branching into harmonies that I had introduced to jazz. For instance, while I was with Lunceford's band, one day I introduced a chord called the thirteenth with the augmented eleventh. And this became the ending chord for everybody. Everybody copied that one chord then. And when I wrote it for Duke and them, I wrote out the – I wrote that one, but then I threw in another one that I had been playing with, and I had learned – I'll tell you how I got to this thing in a minute, but I had learned something about harmony that I had never known before: how to get eight-part harmony. See, all the bands are playing mostly four-part harmony. The only time they did five notes is when they get a ninth chord, or throw an eleventh in, so you were – but you could – that's just the one chord. But a group of notes that um, you put together – and you can just on and on. You don't have to stop. So I learned that from a guy in Detroit that played with um, he had been with McKinney's Cotton Pickers. In fact, they all were with Mckinney's Cotton Pickers. And um, so there was a guy there named Harold Wallace. I will always talk about Harold. He write good, Harold. He didn't even write a score. He'd just start writing a first trumpet, second trumpet, third trumpet, first trombone, no score. So I said to him one night at the job, I said, "Harold," I says, "Can you give me some tips? I'm trying to learn how to write and I want to write." So He says, "Look Gerald, I'm gonna tell you one thing." He says, "Learn your three diminished chords." Okay we only have three diminished chords. There are twelve notes, and that's what we use. We use a twelve-note system. We have twelve different notes in that system. So I didn't pay it any attention. I was told by one of the guys in the band I said, "Man I asked Harold to help me with my writing, and know what he told me? Learn my three diminished chords!" I said, "I know my three diminished chords already, you know?" So I didn't think any more about it.

Until a few years later, when I came home, and – and I'm fooling around and I thought about what Harold said. "Learn your three diminished chords." So I started fooling with the three diminished chords. And all of a sudden – no matter where you play the diminished – the three diminished chords together, it sounds good, it doesn't sound bad at all. But there are two that get together, that get together that gives you eight part harmony. That's why you hear my band, and you hear my brass shout down on nine – eight, nine – now I'll go nine and ten! I'll throw other notes in – and when you hear that brass, it makes a band that's playing four-part harmony – you can tell that um, they're missing a lot. They should be in here, and knowing how to do this. And so that's – Harold Wallace paid off in the end. I studied my diminished chords, and I tell every guy, "Study your three diminished chords and find out if this–" I show most of the guys what it is too, by the way so I want them to know. And um, so that's what I'm doing now with that.

Brown: Okay. Ken just handed me the um, publication of *Yard Dog Mazurka*…

Wilson: Yes.

Brown: 1941. It's co-composed, it's got Roger Segure on there.

Wilson: Okay, okay I'll tell you how that happens. Roger Segure was a fine young writer who was with the Lunceford band. He was also – wrote for Louis Armstrong, and for many acts. He actually wrote at – he was actually working with a lot of the acts and people out of the Joe Glazer office. Okay he was with the Lunceford band now, doing some writing. So I liked Roger, so I went over to his house one evening, we was just talking about stuff, and um – so I said, "Roger, I'm writing – I'm doing an arrangement of *Stomping at the Savoy"* you know? He said, "Oh yeah you are?" I said, "Look I want you to hear my introduction, tell me what you think about it." So I sat down at the piano, and I played the, you know "bump, bump" [sings the rhythm of the introduction to *Stomping at the Savoy*] and so he said, "Gerald, that's really great." He says, "Why don't you – why don't you just um, repeat that and then write yourself a bridge, and you'll have a number, and it'll be your number." So I said, "Okay" I thought about that, I said "Okay, that's a good idea, Roger" So I write myself a bridge and we'll make this – so I said – after I did that, um, I told Roger, I said, "Roger, I wouldn't have – I didn't think of that myself." I said, "You know, if you hadn't told me that I wouldn't have done that." I said, "But, I'm gonna give you half of the number." And I did. That's why you see his name there he still gets the royalties – he's dead now. He's not only, by the way, he's not only a fine um, musician, and he was also – became a big man here in the education system here.

He was like the headman in the Los Angeles School system. He was a smart, smart guy. And um, so Roger – So I took it and um, we played it and Jimmie Lunceford played it, and it became a hit for Jimmie Lunceford's band. So that's how it even got it's name. I said, "What are we – what are you gonna name it?" Roger said, "Gerald, why don't you name it *Yard Dog Mazurka*?" Now why am I going to name it *Yard Dog Mazurka*, you know? But I said "Okay Roger, is that what you want? Fine that's it." And we became really good friends, and remained that until his death. He died right here in Los Angeles, but he was a fine writer. And that number is also on film over at Warner Brothers. They were gonna put that in a number, but we didn't see – the Jimmie Lunceford Band– a lot of people didn't know this, but we could outdraw any band. There was no band that could outdraw the Jimmie Lunceford band. You know why? 'Cause they could do so much. First of all they had the man who would become the number one jazz arranger the year I joined 'cause I replaced him. His name was Sy Oliver. I know you heard of Sy Oliver…

Brown: Absolutely.

Wilson: He went on – he was going to – to join Tommy Dorsey. So Sy, who was my dear friend when I was in school in Detroit, and I see in Detroit all the kids that I ran around with, we were all musicians going to Cass – we were at all of the dances that all of the big bands played. Another thing about Detroit, Michigan which makes it so valuable, you see in Detroit, Michigan, there were no segregated schools in Detroit, Michigan when I went there. And there were people who had graduated years before I got there, so they had never had any segregated schools in

Detroit. There were so many places for freedom for blacks in Detroit. They could go to all the big theaters downtown, they could go to Belle Isle, one of the finest parks in Detroit. It's still there, you can just look right across the river into Windsor, Canada. So, anyway, the thing about Detroit was good for me and um, the school I went to was good for me because um, they taught so well and they were second only to Julliard.

Brown: That was Cass Tech…

Wilson: Cass Tech.

Brown: …High School.

Wilson: It's still there now, however they've just moved into their brand new building a couple of years ago now, because we were right downtown – we didn't have a campus, you see. At lunch time we just had to go up on the roof. We'd go up on the roof, we could look over into Tiger Stadium almost from where we were. But Detroit, it gave me so much, but what they gave me was, I had to – it was music all day. You couldn't get into the school unless you could already play your horn when you got there, or I wouldn't have been a trumpet player. You had to know how to play the horn good, you had to know how to read music good, not just spell through, is what we call it, not spell it, you know? You gotta know how to read it. And so I passed all those tests, and what was so good for me was, I had some low grades in geometry and algebra from Memphis, so they say, "Well Gerald, we're gonna have to put you back to the ninth grade. And I would have been graduating the next year, I had had three years of high school already. But when they said that, I said, "Oh well that's great, now I can stay here and study music for four years." [laughs]

Brown: So let's put it in historical perspective. You said you had arrived earlier, before we began the interview, that you arrived in Detroit when you were sixteen. So you being born in 1918, that makes it about 1934…

Wilson: Yeah.

Brown: …and you're saying that it was completely desegregated already. It was already an integrated system in Detroit.

Wilson: There were no – there were no segregated schools in Detroit. None…

Brown: We're talking about the thirties or before.

Wilson: We're talking about – hey that's right. Like I said I met guys that had graduated before I got there. Yeah, no segregated schools in Detroit. Everything was different in Detroit. I checked out all of this stuff when I was doing my latest album which is called *Detroit.*

Brown: Which we're going to talk about, of course.

Wilson: Yeah.

Brown: Okay, let's go back – um go forward now to when you decided you wanted to study more. What did you do? How did you turn down these recording contracts, all these gigs? So what did you do?

Wilson: Alright I'm here now, back into um, back into Los Angeles. I have a mentor I call – one of my mentors is a man I'm going to bring up. I don't know if you know his name was Phil Moore.

Brown: Phil Moore?

Wilson: Phil Moore.

Brown: Phil Moore.

Wilson: Now Phil Moore was so sad that people didn't know who he was. Phil Moore was - he's a black writer, he's a pianist, he plays piano. He was Lena Horne's accompanist and her coach for years. He worked already, he was working at MGM, he was working for Nathanial Schilkret. I'm saying names that go way back, now. Phil was my mentor because I met him when I was with Jimmie Lunceford. He liked me, and when I quit and I came back, he liked my trumpet playing. I used to make many of his dates with him and Calvin Jackson. I don't know if you've heard of Calvin Jackson. You ever heard of Calvin Jackson?

Brown: Mm-hm.

Wilson: Okay, well he was – he was working with them and by the way, he was working for the first man or the second man that came to pick me up and record. His name was Albert Marx. Albert Marx was from New York. He had Dizzy Gillespie. He had Sarah Vaughan. He had Musicraft Records, he owned Discovery Records, Trend Records. He was a big rich man. And he was a wonderful guy, but, so what I studied when I got back with Phil – I'm right back again now with Phil, I'm playing trumpet with Phil, and Phil is talking to me and Phil is putting me into where I want to be. Now I knew all about classical music, my sister was a classical composer, my mother was a music teacher, she taught music – and she taught all of us she started me out when I was four years old on the piano, just like she did my brother and my sister.

My sister was her prize, my mother wanted her to be a classical pianist and she was that and was hoping she would follow it as a career, however she later dropped it and became a housewife and a mother of ten kids. And they all live here almost, now. They're my nephews and my nieces.

But um, my point is that Phil um, I'm back with Phil and Phil had given me my orchestration book – his orchestration book. He said, "Look Gerald, here's a book, I want you to get this book – now you go through this book and read it good." It's a book called "Orchestration" by Cecil Forsyth. This tells you what every instrument we have to work with – tells you what this instrument can do and what it cannot do. So he's telling me to get onto this, which I did.

In the meantime I'm hanging with him all the time because I'm going by his home and he's really taking me on into another world, too because he takes me to the world of Stravinsky. Stravinsky, okay I had never heard of Stravinsky, you know what I mean? But, hear him close – but when I heard this music, and that kind of meant, wow. I heard Rachmaninoff, and all the three B's, Brahms, Beethoven and Bach. I know all of that, my sister plays all of that – you know – she was great on it. But anyway, so now I'm really studying, I'm into the classic. I'm not studying anything but the classics now. I want to see if there's anything I can do, find, hear something that I can do something with. And uh, so I run across some things that paid off for me later on. Um, after I would go to the Navy I would get to go into some other things. So if you want to go from there – that's what I was doing the time I was studying. I was studying nothing but classical music all that I could see of this. See if there was anything there that I want to do in jazz, you know. And that's what I did. And um, it paid off for me.

Brown: Phil Moore. P-H-I-L M-O-O-R-E?

Wilson: Yes, now let me tell you this last thing about Phil now that I'll talk about. Phil, okay Phil, - as I said he was working for MGM. He was working for Columbia. He was working for all of the studios. This guy could write so good. He had done so many records with Cal – big stuff. Then Phil left and in fact he was – he wanted me to go with him. He was gonna go to New York. He was going there he said, "Gerald you come on go, I'm gonna open up a café society. He had a group called Phil Moore Four. And he was gonna make the Phil Moore Four and One More. Now I have a picture of them by the way, a picture of us Irving Ashby was playing guitar in this group. You know him? Irving Ashby?

Brown: No.

Wilson: Oh, Irving Ashby he became a member of the um Nat King Cole Trio. Yeah he became the guitarist after Johnny Moore…

Brown: Oh, Johnny Moore left, okay.

Wilson: Yeah, you see – and I worked with Nat King Cole, myself. We played engagements here, we played Lincoln Theater, he liked my band. In fact, both of those guys – this is really something for history. The Jimmie Lunceford Band gets to town in 1940 when I'm with them in 1940. And so, Phil Moore and Nat King Cole are out at our rehearsal. Out in the Casa Manana in Culver City, which was the old Sebastian's Cotton Club. This is where Les Height's band – and I

played with Les Height's band, by the way [laughs] but anyway, Phil was going to open up at New York, he said, "I'm going to take you to New York with me, Gerald." He said, "It's gonna be Phil Moore Four and One More opening up the café society." Yeah okay fine. But that was in the meantime, everything dropped into my lap, Herb Jeffries wanted me to get together a band that he's gonna front, playing my music, you know what I mean. So I was gonna go – I stayed. I didn't go with Phil. But I want to tell you Phil went on to New York, got himself an apartment in Carnegie Hall, where he stayed for years, see he was writing for everybody, writing for everybody.

The guy was really one of the great writers I had ever known. When Duke Ellington did Cabin in the Sky out here at MGM, I was in that band that had to replace Duke. See Duke and them had to leave. And it just so happens that they couldn't do another scene that they were supposed to do in that, so they had Rex Stewart was here, he had left Duke, Barney Bigard, who played with Duke had left Duke. They were all in town and Phil did the music. And you would swear that Duke Ellington wrote that music, because – and to make it more authentic, he's got Barney Bigard and Rex Stewart there, you understand what I mean? So that's the kind of guy Phil was. And he stayed that way a long time, Phil. Finally Phil just…and Diane Carroll, they had all these big people and big shows there, and he was conducting, Phil was the conductor and everything. But then he came back home and he opened up a place out on Sunset Boulevard, and it's called For Singers Only. For singers only. And that's all he did was coach singers [laughs] that's all he did. But this guy, he did it all. His son later ended up being my pianist in my band too, by the way.

Brown: And his name was?

Wilson: Phil Moore the third.

Brown: Phil Moore the third?

Wilson: Yeah, yeah.

Brown: And where was Phil Moore originally from?

Wilson: Phil originally was from… where did he tell me he was from? I think he was an adopted kid. He was an adopted kid and I think he came from Seattle. I think he came from Seattle to here. They came – the family he was with, the ones who adopted him. And they lived, they lived in a white section. They looked white. I guess they were, but we have a lot of people – black people – there are a lot of black people who are practically white, you know. And so, that was the situation with Phil there. Um, and he's a wonderful guy. He's a guy that should be mentioned, and I'm mentioning him now. As I said, one of the greatest – and opened the door. He opened those doors there…

Brown: I'm wondering about his training. How did he get to be so versed in the classics and then be able to also operate in jazz?

Wilson: Well, he was – he was a fine pianist. He was a fine musician. He could play – he could play anything. I mean, he could play anything, you know and as I say, Calvin Jackson was a monster. He had written for – some numbers for Jimmie Lunceford when I first joined him, and I knew. And I played on his thing, the other day, Calvin. Calvin was a great writer too. Calvin had written – he had written a big thing on *Rhapsody in Blue* that they did at NBC here in Los Angeles. And I was in the band there, Calvin knew me. And it was Calvin who actually – and Calvin by the way wrote over fourteen movies for MGM. He wrote them all, well wrote all the music for – man, the music director was George Stoll. So in nineteen hundred and about fifty-eight I guess it was, they were doing a movie and Calvin – they had a scene that was to be done, and they said – Calvin said, "Look. The man that will do this scene for you, his name is Gerald Wilson." And I got a call from MGM. They asked me to come out and interview me – George Stoll. And I went out, George interviewed me and they took me in a room where they showed the film, and they put on this film where Yvette Mimieux and George Hamilton, they come out of this motel, where they had pumped her with a lot of whiskey, she's you know out of her mind there. They're in this motel – and then when they come out, the motel is right on this – on the freeway, except there's a sidewalk here – when you come out of the motel, there's a side walk there where you can walk, but then the next thing is the freeway. And cars are going like this [snaps] you know? Going like that. And then they walk down this freeway. He's trying to get her – get her back to wherever she's gotta go, and so they said, "Can you do this scene Gerald?" I said, "Yeah I can do that scene." But I knew what they wanted, they needed something that had – it had to be – and that's where, that's where I introduced my eight-part harmony. I remember when they came in there, I had the brass be hitting that, and it was – it made it. However, I did more scenes than that one, by the way. I ended up doing about four or five of them. Okay. Am I moving too much in here?

Brown: Well, [indistinguishable talking between Brown and Kimery] Well you know, your career, spanning eight decades [laughs] is – we could be here for the next two weeks and not capture everything. [laughs] and we're…

Wilson: Yeah, because after that I got a call from the guy who wrote *Laura*, you know who that is? David Raksin?

Brown: Mhm.

Wilson: David Raksin called me.

Brown: Right.

Wilson: David come by – "Gerald come over my house" I went over to his house and he was doing *Love Has Many Faces.* It had Lana Turner and Cliff Robertson. And um, he said, "Look Gerald, here's the number" He had written a number already. He says, "Gerald, can you orchestrate this number for me?" I said, "Yeah I can orchestrate it for you." I orchestrate it, it's in the movie I got paid for it – I still get paid for it. Then Nat King Cole, Nat King Cole gets big. Nat – Nat and I are good friends. As I say, he – they were both – Phil Moore and Nat King Cole were at – the day we came here into town to open up with Jimmie Lunceford's band. So Nat King Cole, now I'm playing with him. I'm playing with him at the – he becomes big. I'm playing with him at the Lincoln Theater, I do the Lincoln Theater with him, then I go down, I do the Avadon Ballroom which is downtown here in Los Angeles, the Avadon was a nice ballroom over on – on spring street. And um, so I was working with Nat. So I – everything worked out good for me, working with these kind of people, and knowing Nat like that um – they helped me out a lot. And I went on and I had the music at universal with Nat King Cole. I had two – I had two or three numbers in the movie there. We did um, with Jimmie Lunceford, we did *Blues in the Night*. We did *Blues in the Night*, and, my *Yarddog Mazurka* is on the film now. I mean, they got it on the film now.

We were gonna – we were supposed to go back and do another scene but as I explained to you a little while ago, Jimmie Lunceford band, we could outdraw any band in the country. There was no band that could outdraw – because we could do so much. Not only did they play – play good, play good music, but we did all kinds of things that you wouldn't believe. For instance, things like we'd be playing Sy Oliver's um, *For Dancers Only*, you ever heard that number? Okay. Well *For Dancer's Only* – there's a place where the trumpets they would go on – they're playing and right at – we make this thing we make a figure that was, "dun dun dun dun dun" [sings part of the song] when we hit that last note – you see there's three trumpets that go up in the air, twirling and then snatch it out of the air, you know what I mean? And people go crazy, man. They – I mean, they see that happening, you know just to see these guys do that, it's unbelievable. And when we're doing that the trombones, they – they shoot up their slide. They shoot their horn up their slide. And in the meantime, the saxophones up there moving, move – so when you see the band, you didn't just see a band sitting up there playing, they were doing everything. Then they have a quartet and a trio. Sy sang in the trio and in the quartet. And I had had vocal music at Cass tech. I took over his part I – I replaced him, I sang in the quartet and the trio. [laughs] So when you see the Lunceford band, man you really seeing something, and they were really too much, I'll tell you.

Brown: Who arranged all those kinds of things? The choreography and the show and those kind of stage um…

Wilson: Well you know, I don't – that I don't know. They were doing that when I saw them, you know? Like I said, I first saw Jimmie Lunceford in Detroit when I was in school. And I was lucky because Sy Oliver put a chair beside him, and I'm a school kid, "Come on up you can sit beside me" he put this up on the bandstand. Jimmie Lunceford's up there, you know he had this

long baton about this big, but he didn't – he didn't use the baton like that, he would get the baton then he – he would – so he's directing but he's not holding the baton. But I don't know how all this stuff happened. I think that a lot of people contributed the things – you had an idea, that was the band to do it because Jimmie Lunceford, he'd sure take your idea. And by the way, we don't want to put him down, he's a fine musician, plays saxophone, flute, guitar. He could write and arrange, he had been in New York, he had played with Elmer Snowden's band in Washington DC, so he had paid his dues and he had taught at the school where I attended in Memphis, Tennessee, Manassas High School.

Brown: Manassas?

Wilson: He taught there, but not when I was there, of course, but long before I was there, he taught there. And um, so Jimmie Lunceford, as I said was a fine, fine leader. And he died very young, you know he was born in 1900, died in 1947. Yeah, I saw him – I saw him two days before he died. He came by to see my band at the Elk's club where they had a ballroom. I was playing there that night, he and Joe Thomas came and talked with me and he went on up to Seaside, Oregon where he was to play. He died while he was signing autographs up there.

Brown: Wow.

Wilson: Yeah. 'Cause Jimmie Lunceford was a fine man, a fine man.

Brown: Well you have a tremendous regard for him, and you said that – you have tremendous regard for Jimmie Lunceford, and you said that was the top band. What was so significant about him as a bandleader that maybe you learned from him?

Wilson: Well, um. As I said – first of all, Jimmie um he – he had lots of arrangers he didn't just have – first he had Sy Oliver. What he did was – he had the man who was taking over that year as the top arranger in the world of jazz. That's – that's now, what's his name? Fletcher Henderson was of course that man at that time. There were of course other great arrangers around too, you know. You had the great Jimmy Mundy, you had Ed Randall, Earl Hines, Bud Johnson who's Keg Johnson's brother. These were all good writers, and all the bands had good writers. Um, Chick Webb they had Edgar Sampson.

Brown: Edgar Sampson, that's right.

Wilson: Edgar Sampson who wrote many big numbers for Benny Goodman and played sax, played great sax. And speaking of playing in his band, I played with Chick Webb's band after he had died two nights in Los Angeles. He died – Ella knew – I knew Ella already, you know, I used to go up to the Savoy and go and listen to him all the time. And um, as I said, Jimmie Lunceford was well respected, and I want him to be with the other bandleaders. Duke Ellington of course was always that top man, now that's the man that was the top man. He was my idol.

The Duke Ellington's band was different from anyone, and um I met Duke when I was in school. He was a nice man, I mean, you know – 'cause we, we were kids, we'd go up to these people, I'd go up to him, you know, "Mr. Ellington," you know, the guy's nice to you, you know. Then he'd know later on that I had joined Jimmie Lunceford's band, then later on I was with Count Basie's band, you know.

So Duke – but then in 1947 now, I received a call from Duke Ellington. This is 1947. This is the year after I had, um disbanded my band, remember? And um, Duke Ellington called me one morning at six o'clock in the morning and said, "Gerald Wilson." You know, I said, "Yes?" "This is Duke Ellington. Gerald, I need a little help from you" "What can I – how can I help you?" you know? He says, "Well I need two arrangements on two of my numbers." His compositions, one was called *You're Just an old Antidisestablishmentarianismist*, the other was *You got to Crawl Before You Walk* which was written supposedly by Harry James, Duke Ellington and um, who else wrote this – somebody else was in on this – these were three big bandleaders had gotten together and they gonna do some stuff. So they had written this number called *You go to Crawl Before you Walk* which featured Ray Nance on the vocals. So I said, "Okay Duke, when do you need them?" He says, "I need them tomorrow at two o'clock, for Columbia Records." I said, "Okay, you got it." You know? Next day I was there, ready to go a two o'clock [laughs] you know, so we did them, did the records and everything and I um, went down to get my money for the arrangements, you know and the band's gone. They're gone out of town. They left town, you know.

So I didn't see – I didn't see Duke for about, oh a few months, and I joined – I joined Count Basie's band in 1948. So '48, we get to Cleveland, Ohio where we were playing a dance there that night, and um Freddie Green – we went to a game that day to see the baseball team there and Freedie says, "Hey Gerald, Duke's in town. He's over at the theater, the palace theater." I say, "Oh he is, is he? Okay good." I say, "We go right by there when we leave here." So we went by there. We went back – went backstage and we called, we told them we wanted to see Duke Ellington, said who it was and Duke said, "Yeah!" Duke saw me, gave me a big hug and everything so and so and I said, "By the way, Duke, I never did get my money for those arrangements." He said, "Oh you haven't gotten your money yet?" I said, "Nope." He said, "Okay, you'll get it right now." He said, "Sully!" He called the manager come, he paid me off right then, he paid me off then. The next – you know the next time I heard from Duke Ellington? Was nine years later. Nine years. [laughs] So it's about six o'clock in the morning. He is now with Capitol Records, he's gone from Columbia. He says, "Gerald I need some help today" I said, "What – how can I help you? What do you got going?" He said I got a couple of numbers here I got to get arranged." And they were two popular numbers. One was a number written by Charlie Chaplin called *Smile*. The other one was called *If I Give my Heart to you*, another pop tune going at that time. And so I said, "Okay, Duke" Now at this time, my wife had become my copyist.

When I was living in San Francisco, um for three years, I was doing a lot of writing up there. And I told my wife, I said – she had a night with a pin, like she could do things with a pin there. I said, "well look, you just put down what you see on this paper I'm giving you now. Can you get that down?" She was doing all of my copying now. So I said, "Okay Duke. When do you need these two numbers?" He said, "This afternoon at two o'clock. For Capitol Records. At two o'clock." [laughs] So, I said, "okay Duke we'll be ready." At two o'clock I was there. I took Buddy Collette, you know Buddy Collette, Buddy Collette drove me over there to the studio on it's where KSJ used to be. That was now Capitol Recording Studios, and I knew all the people down in Capitol because I had been working for Capitol Records at that time. And for other artists – I had Bobby Darin – had an album with Bobby Darin, Barbara Dane, um let's see who did I – Nancy Wilson was my – I had made Nancy Wilson's first hit for her.

But anyway, two o'clock I was there ready to go. And I made two of the best arrangements I ever made in my life. I don't see how I could write so fast – and they're the two, when I want to hear – when he hears his band play this I know he was set because they are playing and they are perfect about this time, they got all these great guys there and I'm in the trumpet section, by the way. I'm in the trumpet section. Duke was up conducting, I'm in the trumpet section. So he was giving me a chance to do many things that I wanted to do, that I always wanted to do – one day I'd like to play in Duke's band so I played – then he took me up the coast with him. I did about – they did about eight concerts, and I was up there – Louie Bellson, you know all of them – I had some great times with Duke. I love him, he's still my idol. He's still my idol, he's – he's another thing. And his band – you know how his band was – he finally got Willie Smith. You know Willie Smith, with the Lunceford band. Well you know, you'd probably say well what would Johnny Hodges say about that? You know what I mean?

Brown: Johnny was gone, so what could he say?

Wilson: No, but he was back now. He was back. He came back into Duke's band. He went away for about six or seven years, yeah and then he went back. He went back, see and there he's got Willie Smith. See, the whole Lunceford band really played for Willie Smith. Willie Smith was Avant Garde. Willie played – he could play higher on the saxophone that any alto saxophone player could play at that time. Now they play all up that, but that was commonplace with Willie. And Willie would never miss anything. He never – and Duke said, when he got Willie Smith, his saxes were now like the way he wanted. He stayed with Duke three years before he left him. But um, Willie played with some white bands. He played with Charlie Spivak's band, then he played with Harry James for about fifteen years, all that time, yeah. But Willie, as I said, Willie can play with anybody 'cause see, back in those days with Lunceford, we'd go into town, you know we'd go in the big city, we can't get any rooms or anything, you know it's hard looking for a room. Willie would go to a big white hotel and get himself a room and go to bed.

Brown: 'Cause he would pass it? 'Cause he looked – he was very light skinned.

Wilson: Willie – Willie was white.

Brown: He was white?

Wilson: No, he – he was white but he was black.

Brown: Right. Okay.

Wilson: His sister was brown-skinned. I met his family. His sister was brown-skinned but Willie was white. He joined Charlie Spivak and nobody – and he joined Harry James. Harry James called himself integrated, he wasn't integrated, his band – he had Tizol and Willie [laughs] and they played with Harry for about ten years then they left Harry and they both went back to Duke. See, they both went back to Duke. But anyways, no Willie he was a wonderful, wonderful man. He was in the Navy Band too. Yeah, he was a man in the navy band too.

Brown: I know that Charlie Parker said that – Charlie Parker actually said that Willie Smith was an influence on him.

Wilson: I'm sure. Well Willie was avant. I mean, he didn't play like any other alto sax player. We had some tough alto sax players. But um, Willie was in another class. However Charlie Parker, of course, you know, nothing to say about Charlie, he's – you know.

Brown: [laughs] I want to go back to that first assignment that – that Duke called you in '47 and said, "I want you to arrange these two numbers, and I want them tomorrow at 2 pm," or whenever it was. How did he get you that music? 'Cause he's calling you at six o'clock in the morning, and that's giving you maybe the rest of that day and part of the next morning to get that music done.

Wilson: Yeah, I had – well I had to have the lead sheets…

Brown: …right so he got them to you okay.

Wilson: ...he got them to me, yeah he got them to me. Yeah they were in town, they were playing in Culver City. They were playing at the – Casa Manana had been Sebastian's Cotton Club. That's where Les Hite played for years. Yeah, Les Hite has good bands too, by the way. And I've been lucky – been lucky because, see I met Dizzy Gillespie in 1937. 1937 Dizzy came to Detroit. He stayed in Detroit for three months with Edgar Hayes' band, they played – and Dizzy and I became friends…

Brown: …That's when Klook was in the band…

Wilson: …because we were both sitting down at the piano talking about chords. He was gonna write, he could write, and then I was going to – we just became good friends. Then, in 1938 I joined Jimmie Lunceford, and then what's his name – Dizzy was the first one to come and greet me. He said, "Come on Gerald, I'm gonna show you the ropes of New York, now come on." Takes me down to a place called Ms. Collins. He said, "If you aint got any money come on down, Ms. Collins will feed you, put your name on the book. If you aint got a room, come on down to Ms. Collins' she had room." He was showing me how to make it in New York. And Dizzy and I became friends and – bigger friends than we were. And I later – I later wrote for Dizzy and I played in Dizzy's band. I played in Dizzy's band in 1950. We were with the band that nobody ever heard, but we had the biggest tour that year. I mean we – we started out big, we played the Apollo. We went to the – Dizzy was the big man too by the way, 'cause we had – supporting him with acts, Sammy Davis, Jr. We had him on the show. We played – started at the Apollo, went to the Howell in Washington, the Royal, then on into Detroit, Michigan where we played the Forest Club, and we played – Chicago we played the Silhouette. Man I wish you could have heard that band, now let me tell you what was going with that band. The lead alto player was John Coltrane. The second alto playing was – now what's the name – the brothers, the

Brown: Heath? Was it Jimmy Heath?

Wilson: Yeah. Little Jimmy Heath was second alto

Brown: So they're both playing alto instead of tenor?

Wilson: Yeah, okay. Paul Gonsalves is playing tenor. Al Gibson – Al Gibson, you know who Al was. Al played with Cab Calloway's band. He was a fine um, baritone player. But Dizzy had played with Cab too you know, so he knew him from that. And that – that was us and oh yeah Jesse – Jesse Powell, another tenor player. That was that and then they had Melba Liston, they had, um Matthew Gee, another trombone player. Then they had – the trumpet section was Elmon Wright, that was Leo Wright's son, Elmon Wright, and Willie Cook who played with Duke also, who was first with Earl Hines, by the way. And myself, that was the trumpet section and Dizzy of course playing everything. Then you had Al McKibbon on bass, John Lewis was on piano and Specs Wright was on drums. Man, that was some band, I'm telling you. This band was fright – it was frightening, it was frightening. And um of course then that's when Dizzy went on – and we finished the tour and that's when he broke up the band and got a small group. Because Dizzy, you know with a big band you can't make an awful lot of money, you know what I mean? But with a small group, Dizzy Gillespie can make himself some money, which he should, he deserved it. He deserved it, and – knowing those guys was just unbelievable, you know.

Brown: Was Gil Fuller still arranging at that time?

Wilson: Who?

Brown: Gil Fuller. Was he still arranging?

Wilson: Gil Fuller was, yeah.

Brown: So did you meet Gil? Did you get to know Gil?

Wilson: Oh I know Gil, oh yeah I knew Gil real well yeah Gil was – he was with Les Hite's band. See Dizzy and – and Gil Fuller played with Les Hite's band. So when – when Les Hite came back to California, Dizzy and Gil Fuller didn't come back, but they had a whole book full of Gil's arrangements, and that's when I went and joined Les Hite's band. Now, you're gonna want to hear this now. This is about Snooky Young, he's back on the scene now. Look here. Snooky Young comes out to join Lee Young, whose brother Lester Young is coming to join his brother on sax, and they're all going to open up this club in Los Angeles with Billie Holliday. See, Snooky comes in, he rehearses with them, and so I'm with Les Hite's band now, I've joined Les Hite's band. Snooky comes up to our rehearsal, [laughs] Snooky says, "You know Gerald – you know Gerald I don't like to play in them small groups, you know" I said, "You don't?" He said, "Yeah, I like to play in big bands." I said, "You want to play with Les Hite?" He said, "Yeah" See he didn't even join – he didn't even play with them. He came over to Les Hite's band. [laughs] Les Hite's man – he was like – Les Hite had been here in the '30s. I heard him in the '30s when I was – before I came to California. And he always had a good band. He played saxophone. And at this time he had a big tour all the way from Los Angeles on up. We went – we got on the train here and we stopped off in Fresno and Oakland, on into Oregon and into Washington state, on into Vancouver.

We go on a good, good tour, and the lady that ran the band Ms. – what was her name – she owned a brewery called Strolls brewery. She was rich. And I mean at the end of the week, man they're paying off – go see who's making money, he's drawing people. They all knew about him out here on the west coast. And we had a great tour with him, Snooky was with him. So we made this great tour with Les Hite. So we get back, and we get back here change the – Les Hite's going to – disbanded his band. Benny carter called me, wanted me to – I knew Benny, I used to go see them rehearse when I was with Luceford. He had his band in New York, I'd go out – 'cause I liked Benny, he played the trumpet, he played the sax – Benny called me, he said, "Hey Gerald I want you to join my band." Meanwhile he had just finished doing *Stormy Weather* and all that stuff, you know. And I – so I said, "You know what, Benny?" I said, "I heard your band, and your band is a nice band, but," I said, "You need a whole trumpet section." So he said, "What you got in mind, Gerald?" And JJ Johnson was in the band, there were some great players in there – JJ Johnson – so I said, "you need a whole trumpet section," he said, "Well what you got?" I said, "I can bring you a whole trumpet section." I took the whole trumpet section out of Les Hite's band, which was fabulous. We had four trumpet players that all could play, I mean they could all play. And I got to say, I take them all to Benny Carter's band. And this is the time that Benny Carter heard his music like he'd never heard it before. We could play his hardest

number like it was nothing, you know what I mean? And Benny was – he was so happy with that band. He was just really happy with that band.

Brown: Great.

Wilson: That's about…

Brown: Okay, well, you know we want to make sure that we capture what you've been doing um, in the last, um seven, eight years since the last interview. Remember we were talking about having Katea Stitt having conducted the oral history interview back…now you got a band in New York, you got a band in Los Angeles. You're still putting out – you're still writing and arranging music, you're getting Grammy nominations, you're getting recognized internationally for your music, and you're still continuing to put out top drawer, A-plus music. So what is the key to your longevity?

Wilson: Well, you know like I said, music is my whole life, you know. I've been in it since I was a kid. My mother, as I said, started me when I was four. And the love of the music – I love the music, as you said I have seven Grammy nominations, I have two um, lifetime nominations from the Grammy people. Um, and I was um, also a member of the Blue Ribbon Group for Jazz at – see they have a special group for jazz, and I was a member of that group, in other words. And as I said, I never won a Grammy, and I couldn't – I couldn't wonder why and I was sitting – sitting there with these guys, you know and I said maybe they're gonna give me a Grammy some time or other, you know. And then when I did the theme from Monterey, they gave me two Grammys – they gave me two Grammys. One, best band, one for the best composition. And um, I got that – my own company there that had me at that time. That was the MAMA label, that was the MAMA label. And they had the bright idea of putting an album out called *Count Meets the Duke*. And um, that was the Count Basie Band, and they – the Count Basie Band won, of course I didn't win. How you gonna beat out the Count Basie Band at that time? They're just – the whole world was the Count Basie Band. That's the one that was so very, very popular. But um, however that's all – you know, you can't win them all and maybe you can't win any.

But once you're nominated, you are a part of the competition. You are a part of the competition and let's – we'll get to where we are now. I got this nomination from the one that I want – that means so much to me, the one that won the NAACP Image Award. And I'm nominated this year for the best album of the year. I may not win, but three other people – three or four other people will lose too [laughs] so I won't be the only one that loses. So, you know, that's alright. But I'm saying, for what the NAACP has done for me, I have reaped their benefits, and I have had people – see my band is the first black band to ever walk in the front door of the Flamingo Hotel. Who ate – my band was the first band to eat in the restaurants and the coffee shop. My band was the first blacks to ever gamble in Vegas – on the Vegas strip. Now the NAACP did all of that for me, because they are the ones who had just signed the contract with the Flamingo and the other hotels on the strip, that there would be no more segregation on the strip. Now I had worked in

Vegas many years. I worked there with my own band, I worked there with Cab Calloway. I worked with Cab Calloway – he only had a trio, and me. One trumpet, and him – we were doing the same numbers that he does. You know what I mean? *Minnie the Moocher* and all the – all the stuff that he does. I'm playing trumpet with his group. But that's another great thing – meeting Cab Calloway. He helped me out a lot, too and helped me get where I am and um, so I'm lucky enough to be with people like that.

Brown: Well um, so…

Wilson: …You want to get on from Stitt…

Brown: …oh no you're doing fine here. I mean, um you talked about um the Monterey. Now, you've written several compositions for Monterey festival to – to commemorate various anniversaries.

Wilson: Yes.

Brown: Now um, when I look back, just looking at the last ten years, you had three CDs that came to great prominence. *In My Time* from 2005…

Wilson: …yeah…

Brown: *Monterey Moods* from 2007 and of course now *Detroit* 2009. Now *Detroit* – well first of all, what I wanted to ask you was, what year was that when the NAACP finalized their contract with the strip?

Wilson: That was 1960. 1960.

Brown: Right, so I know Lena Horne talked about not being able to be admitted, so all that took place before that, so once 1960 came, the barriers came down?

Wilson: Yeah, yeah. Well you know, when I played there with Cab – Jack Entratter, he's the one who had the sands, and the – the dunes. They were more, you know – I went there – for the NAACP I had to drive with the president of the NAACP from Pasadena, he lived in Pasadena, he was the president of the NAACP there. Sammy Davis and I were to play this big thing for the NAACP. Sammy decided about a week or two before that he was not going to be able to make that. So they were – the NAACP said, "What can we do, Gerald?" I said, "well look, let's go down and talk to Sammy. I know Sammy, I had Sammy on my show." The first show I played in the Orpheum Theater here with my band – this is after – my first band, Sammy Davis was on my show.

Brown: Was this with the Will Mastin trio?

Wilson: Yes, the Will Mastin trio. That's right. So I knew Sammy very well. So we drove to Vegas, we went to the sands, and I got through the door and I said, "We're here to see Sammy Davis." So the guy was very nice – Jack Entratter's reputation was a nice man about those kinds of things. He took me on back to Sammy's room, Sammy and I talked, I said, "Sammy, look. The NAACP is depending on you to be there for this thing. Don't let them down." Sammy said, "Alright Gerald." I said, "Okay." So we went on back – we went on back from Vegas there, Sammy came on in, we played the big thing for them at the – out here at the um, Hilton, Merv Griffen's hotel, you know, out on the – what's the name of that – what did they call it? Big hotel – Hilton. Was it something Hilton?
Wilson: Yeah, that's right.

Brown: Yeah, it was a Hilton, it was a Hilton Hotel. I came on back, we did the show. Sammy Davis, the people were happy, and Sammy was happy that he had done it too. I told him, "Don't let the NAACP – they're working for you now." Because I read all that stuff, keeping up with the history of it, and the NAACP started up back in the 1800s. And the Urban League, too. I played for them, I played for them free. I played for – I said I wasn't going to speak to them anymore because I hear – I played for them – see they've been having this thing with the NAACP for a long time. I played the one they had with little Michael Jackson when he was a little kid. When he was like that, I remember I talked with him, and the kid was amazing. I guess he wanted to – he saw me up there leading that band, they had – I had all this music. See they had to have a lot of music to bring the people on. I had plenty of music of all kinds. Well like, when they brought on Ricardo Montalban. See and I'm into – I'm into Mexican music myself. When I played the music behind him, he was amazed. I mean, he was thrilled to death with what I brought him on with, you know what I mean?

So then they called me up the next day, the NAACP. They said, "Gerald, okay we want to sign you up right now for next year. I said, "Fine, great." You know. And then, someone called me up the next – a few days later and said, "Well no Gerald, we're not going to have you next year." And I said to myself, what's wrong with these people? They said I charged them too much. I said, "How could I charge them too much?" The – The agent from local 47, I told him, "pay the band. You don't have to charge them for the music I played. I played – you don't have to pay me, either. I don't want any money from them – I never charged them to play anything that I've ever done – so I said, "These people treating me like that, I won't ever speak to them again." And I never did until Saturday. Until Saturday, I was really mad, you know. I mean, hey this was wrong, I thought. But when the called me, they called me this year and said, "You," you know, "we chose you for the album of the year, is that okay with you?" I said, "I'm delighted. I'm delighted, I'm thrilled." This is the organization that's helping out – trying to help out people. They've been doing it all these years. I've even knew about them before I left Mississippi, yep. So anyways that's that.

Brown: Yeah well, like I said, we could be here five weeks and still not get everything. But I want to talk about – because you're still active, you're 91 years old, your still leading bands, you're still writing music. Now it's – you recorded – you released a recording *New York, New Sound*. Is this the beginning of your New York band? Because you've been running – you've been leading bands in LA for over 60 years, off and on – well maybe even 65 years – and then all of a sudden you formed this band in New York. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Wilson: Yeah I can tell you about that because I can tell you that um, do you remember what year that *New York, New Sound* was?

Brown: Um, that's why I wanted to bring my computer because I had…

Wilson: That's alright, well what's happened – what I'm asking you is this. Because um, I was getting ready to retire, you understand? I had. I don't realize how old I was at that time – if I knew the year we did that. But Sticks Cooper called me. Stix Hooper called. I knew Stix very well. He had – in fact I had met them the day they got to Los Angeles from Texas.

Brown: Hm. The Jazz Crusaders.

Wilson: I was playing – I was playing with Buddy Collette's quintet. We were playing down on Hollywood Boulevard at a place called Jazz City. So this group comes into town called the Jazz Crusaders. So Buddy invited them down that night, same day they got into town, they come on down to the club. These guys come down to the club, they got Joe Sample, they got um, what's his name, he played the flute and the sax. Oh you know him

Brown: Well I know Wilton Felder, um Henderson? I'm thinking – I might be getting these folks mixed up. Anyways.

Wilson: Yeah. Well what I'm saying – these guys came – they had a great group. They had these fine numbers that they could play real good. So we became friends. During that period – during that time, there were times when I needed a drummer, Stix came over and played with my band. Also brought Buster Williams with him. You know Buster Williams?

Brown: Oh, sure.

Wilson: He brought Buster Williams with him, they're both playing in my band. We're playing down on um, Memory Lane, that club down there. So we were all big friends. So Stix called me and he said, "Hey Gerald, you know what I'm doing some stuff here with, um Mack Avenue Records. How would you – I want to record you." So he had recorded, I think he had recorded Kenny Durrell there, he had recorded Oscar Bischell. A lot of guys around town and Louis Van Taylor who plays with me now, still plays with me. And so they were all playing – and so you know I said, "Yeah fine Stix, I'd like to do something," You know. As I said, I was getting ready

to retire, but I said, yeah nothing is gonna happen, you know I get a lot of things that people said you know, and it never happens. But Stix called me back and said, "look we're gonna record" so he said, "What do you want to do?" I said, "Well, we were gonna record here, see I was getting my band all together. I had my band, my band was together more or less. So I said, "Check out the unions tell them we're gonna be making a record for Mack Avenue Records.

And so my contractor, who is still my contractor, his name is Ron Barrums. Ron said, "I went down to the union, and the union says you can't record with them." He said, "They're not signed with local 47. Mack Avenue Records." So I said to myself, "Okay, well it's alright with me, you know." Stix said, "Well look Gerald. Let's go to New York and record." I said, "Okay, well you know Jon Faddis?" I said, "Well get him the contracts and tell him to get us a good band and everything," you know? And we got Clark Terry on – Clark Terry on that album, you know. And we did the album. And – now you know, Stix is a very smart guy. Stix was the president of NARAS at one time. He was the president of NARAS, and we got a nomination for the record – you know what I mean, we got a nomination for it. Anyway, that's when we started going to New York. Then all of a sudden, Stix was out. He wasn't with the company anymore. He wasn't with the company anymore. So they called me, they said, "your new producer will be Al Pryor" Do you know Al?

Brown: Oh yeah.

Wilson: Okay well they said, "your new producer, Gerald will be Al Pryor." So Al – Fine I'm gonna go on, I talked with Stix. I said, "Stix I'm gonna go on," and he says "Yeah, go on" I says, "I'm just – they're nice to me, so thanks to you, you brought me here," that how – how I got here. And so I went on, you know, and we started recording. And that's caused me to start writing a lot, like you said. I've been writing so much music. Just last year alone I – the Detroit festival they – they commissioned me to write their 18th anniversary, okay. Chicago, they also commissioned me to write another number for them. I had already written one for them I call *State Street Sweep.* Okay, so then the Monterey Jazz Festival called me up to write their 50th anniversary. So I had three to write in one year, commissioned – all commissioned piece, you know. So that keeps me writing, so that's what I'm doing. I don't have any time to write for any singers or anything. [laughs]

Brown: I wanted to put a little footnote in here. I'm looking at the sequence of the um – the serial numbers on some of the Mack Avenue records. So I would say that *New York, New Sound* came in about 1999, maybe late 1998, 1999 was when that one was recorded. And then you got the Grammy nomination for that one.

Wilson: Yeah.

Brown: Yeah and then – so it looks like – like Duke was writing *Far East Suite*, *Latin American Suite*, you know and you're writing the same things, but you're writing about cities in America.

Wilson: Yeah.

Brown: And these are all cities that you have a lasting and ongoing relationship with.

Wilson: Right, yeah.

Brown: Of course, you know we talked about – of course *Detroit* is your latest one, but you know we could go back to Chicago, where you spent a lot of time.

Wilson: Yeah.

Brown: Monterey, where you were always a featured artist at the Monterey Jazz Festival. What was that like, working at the Monterey Jazz Festival?

Wilson: Oh that was a thrill, you know. I didn't – you know the Monterey Jazz Festival started in 1958, right? Well I didn't get to go there until five years – but I knew the guy who started it.

Brown: Jimmy Lyons?

Wilson: Yeah, he was working for NBC back in the forties. Back in the forties they were doing things called "Jubilee" and they would – we would make records – we would do concerts over here, and they would send it to the guys in the service, they sent it all around to the armed forces. So Jimmy Lyons was that man. So Jimmy – I did two with my big band, and I did one with – I had a small group for about a year and a seven-piece band. I did one with a seven-piece band for Jimmy Lyons. So I knew he was gonna call me some day for the Monterey. So he did, he called me in 1963 – 1963. And that was when my band was doing good. Miles Davis was on that with his group. That was with the tough group with Herbie Hancock and Williams…

Brown: Tony Williams…

Wilson: …Tony Williams on the drums. That tough band, yeah. That tough band. But I had made – I had made Miles' number a hit, see *Milestones* was not a hit. He recorded it in 1958, I didn't record it until 4 years later. Right away I made it a big hit. He played it at a little medium swinging tempo. I played it as fast as I could kick it off. And then he started playing it as fast as he could…

Brown: So you inspired that in Miles?

Wilson: Yeah, and then I picked up *So What* next. He did it like, you know, boom, instead of playing it like he did. When he did *So What*, I did it as fast as I could kick it off, and then he started doing it the same way. So then we had become really – I knew Miles before then. Now I

knew him when I was with – with Illinois Jacket. I played with Illinois Jacket for about a half year, six months when I came to New York. I was just in New York hustling, you know, trying to make it. But anyway, Miles and I became friends. He come everywhere we play to hear his numbers. I did *Freddie Freeloader,* [laughs] and then Miles, he would get mad. He'd tell all the trumpet players and go, "Look man, you're not supposed to play any notes that are represented by the black keys in the bridge." That was the deal he did for *Milestones.* I said, "Tell him to tell Cannonball and John Coltrane that." [laughs] 'Cause they had already recorded it and played all of them. No this isn't that, they were supposed to play nothing but the white notes. White keys on the bridge.

But anyway, we became great friends and remained that way until his death. Until his death, yeah. He called me up he said, "Gerald, send me your trumpet" Man, give you my trumpet for what? [laughs] You know, that's when he was – that when he was husky, he's boxing. I sent him my trumpet, he sent a guy over to my house. My wife – I said, "give it to the guy" – he took it on back. Then the next morning he said, "Hey Gerald come on down here to the main street gym, I – you can come get your horn. He's down there boxing, he's built, plump, you know, real healthy. Real healthy, yeah. Yeah, I like him. I like him.

Brown: So when this was going on, was this – about what year was this?

Wilson: Well that would have been – let's see, as I said I recorded this stuff in 19 – I played it at the Monterey Festival. That was our big – that was our hit record. *Milestones* was our hit record too. I had Joe Pass – Joe Pass and all those guys in the band at that time. Had a heck of a band. My *Blues for Yenya* was popular, that was in – see I wrote the first – second jazz waltz ever written. See the first jazz waltz ever written was about Fats Waller.

Brown: *Jitterbug Waltz*.

Wilson: It was called the *Jitterbug Waltz*. There's none other – you will not find another jazz waltz until you find *Blues for Yenya*. *Blues for Yenya.* And then that paid off my studying – studying classical music. See I used four bars of a great – of a great Armenia composer

Brown: Khachaturian?

Wilson: Aram Khachaturian. I just took the first four bars out of the Gayane Ballet Suite. And everything stole that four bars. It wasn't mine, it didn't belong to me, but every – Delco batteries, all kinds of commercials all – and now, Wells Fargo, you'll hear it in Wells Fargo's new one. It's all the time, you're gonna hear it all the time. You'll hear commercials on it. Well I learned so much from studying Khachaturian's music – that toccata, which was a monstrous number, see. And then my band and I got – my wife, my second wife.

Brown: Josephina?

Wilson: Josephina, who's Mexican. She um, introduced me to her culture. You know, I'm down at the bullfights every week, you know? I'm down at bullfights and I'm hearing that sound, and then I write this one number for one of the bullfighters, a young bullfighter I saw. He was 19 when I saw him. His name was – His name was Jose Ramon Tirado. So I wrote this number called *Viva Tirado*. And man, this – and what really put the cap on it – this was a mild hit for us, for jazz, man. But this rock group, called El Chicano, they made a record on it. See I'm over at the Notre Dame, along with Ray Brown and Oliver Nelson, we're all going to Notre Dame as judges, you know. So we're – I'm at the hotel in Chicago, I had stopped there on the way to Notre Dame. And I hear this – I hear this number, you know, [sings his song] I say, "Hell, that's my number." You know, and they're playing it every hour. And at every hour, they're playing this number. And so I called Albert Marx, who was my – I told you he was my producer at that time. He took me over, really, Albert Marx. I called him I said, "Albert, you know there's a group playing my number here on –" he says, "Yeah, it's straight. Everything's alright. No problem. They signed in, you know." Okay. Then, a little bit after that, I hear it again – my daughters, my daughters say, "Hey daddy, you know there's a man, who's playing your record now, and his name is," um, he was a rap – a rap singer. What was his name? His rap – I can't think of his name. But he was rap – man, this guy sold so many records. I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it. And Albert, see Albert Marx – Albert published all of my music, see.

There's a price, you don't get something for nothing, you know. There's a price, but, man all of a sudden it was a big number, it was my biggest number. I've never had a number like that. Not like that. Duke, I did a number called *When I'm Feeling Kinda Blue*, see *Feeling Kinda Blue* was a hit at the 1967 Monterey Festival. I read about it. Duke played his new creation. This was the way they tell me he announced it, when he played it, "out newest creation. This is a little rock number I wrote" you know, it's a rock number. I wrote it for – for a catholic nun called sister Judy, you know I had some words to fit in, you know, "When I'm feeling kind of blue, and I don't know what to do, I just think of sister Judy and everything's alright" [laughs] you know what I mean? So Duke's playing at Disney Land, he says, "Gerald, hey you got something we could play?" I said, "Yeah, you know I got a little tune. How do you like it?" You know. So I took it over to the band. He loved it – he loved it. He played it and then he called me he said, "Hey Gerald, I got a great idea," Duke. He said, "We'll get Billy Strayhorn write some lyrics, and um, then we'll have a – then I'll record it with Ella Fitzgerald." And um, they named it *Imagine My Frustration*. So *Imagine My Frustration*, I was on the record – I was at the record place, you know. [laughs] So they recorded it, and of course that was one way that Duke could get back and start repaying me for what he didn't do before, you know. Like the checks were nice checks coming in all the time with Ella Fitzgerald and Duke Ellington. They said – I heard them doing on – it live in Stockholm, you know and they people – but like I said he – he played it at the '67 Monterey, and he didn't say my name. And he never put my name on any of the stuff I wrote for him. Duke didn't give me any credit on the new stuff – on the stuff I did when I started, he didn't give me anything. Didn't give me any credit at all.

But now they put out the big box. See I have my big box, and he has a big box. But in my – in the big box it says, you know, it – it's got all these write-ups in there about – they got a little booklet that goes – a big booklet that goes with it. And to do *Smile* and *If I Give My Heart to You*, Duke called on the, what did you call it? The sure hand of Gerald Wilson. [laughs] And then the mambo when that was popular, you know. I was living in San Francisco. So Duke comes to San Francisco and um I had written this number called *Mambo Americana*, you know. And so Duke heard it and said, "Hey Gerald listen, I need a mambo number, you know. What can you do?" So he wanted to do a pop number. He said, "What would – let's do the *Isle of Capri*. But we can play all of yours, all of what you got in front." [laughs] They played all of my – the way I played my *Mamba Americana*. And then he called it *The Isle of Capri.* [laughs]…for Duke Ellington was in that book that I had written for Capitol Records.

Yeah, I don't know – the Columbia Records, I don't know – I don't think that stuff in there – the stuff I did on Columbia. And I don't know why, but – and I told you, I found out this thing for eight-part harmony, you know? And I laid that down. First I laid it on him, just one chord. Duke, he needed to be updated on *Perdido*. He wanted, "Hey Gerald, update *Perdido* for me." You know. See the original *Perdido* was like [sings melody from *Perdido*] you know what I mean? Very, you know, very – it was a good number, it was Juan Tizol's number, too by the way. So I said, "well, Duke we're going to put some tempo on this fella," and then I laid a few of those chords on the eight-part harmony on him. And Jimmy Jones, you know – you know Jimmy Jones?

Brown: Mhm.

Wilson: The piano player who worked with Duke. He said, "that chord here, that's a double diminished. That's a double diminished." You know?

Brown: He nailed it though, huh. He recognized it.

Wilson: He nailed it, he recognized it, right. "That's a double diminished." That's what Jimmy said. Now what they didn't realize about the double diminished, is that you can um, you can do so much with it. You can just go – I can go anyway I want to – anywhere I go and it's correct. And those things – and studying, trying to study, that helped me a lot. See I had wanted to write for the movies, I had wanted to write for television, and I got my breaks for that. I told you, I got my – I wrote for the MGM, did work there. And then um, what – I was trying to think of what I wanted to tell you. Oh, yes. See Zubin Mehta – now all of my things hadn't been done, I had my last – my last goal I had set for myself, I said, "I want to write for symphony orchestra."

Brown: And Zubin Mehta was the director at that time for the LA Philharmonic.

Wilson: And that's when – that's when um, that's when Zubin Mehta wanted to honor black composers. Black composers. So they had Ray Brown, the bass player – he's going to be the

coordinator. He's going to tell him the black composers that who – which should be there. Okay, and he had me on there, he had me on there. And he had – I'm not gonna call people's name now, 'cause I'm not naming any people here, but he – he lined up some guys that I would have said, too, you know. I would have said them, myself. So Oliver Nelson and I went to the University of Utah together, where we stayed for a week, where we both rehearsed with the band, played your music with your band at a concert. So I'd come in – we'd come in at the evening after we'd leave the school, and I had started writing my number for Zubin Mehta and for the philharmonic, you know. So he said, "what is that you're working on, Gerald?" I said, "listen, this is a number that the Los Angeles Philharmonic is going to play," and I said, "there are some other black composers there," and I said, "I wonder, why isn't your name there? Because I know you had written a number for the Richmond Orchestra, in Rochester." You know? I had heard a number that he had written, and it was for a number with the Eastman-Rochester Philharmonic, whatever they call that. And um, so I said – but I was – "Your name wasn't on that list, why is that?

You should have been there 'cause I'd heard your number, the one you wrote." He said, "Oh, I don't know, but anyway, who's there?" I told him, "Well so-and-so is one," he said, "well he won't be there" so I said, "Well so-and-so is one," he said, "well he won't be there." "Well so-and-so," "well he won't be there." I said, "Well what are you talking about? He said, "they're not going to be there." So I told him the – named all the names that had been named, he said, "no they won't be there." So here we're going, man and all of a sudden – all of a sudden these guys are dropping out like flies. All of a sudden, I was the only one left. The other black composer was a girl, and she was from Philadelphia. Her name was Margaret Bonds. She was a classical writer, she was – she made it. They called William Grant Still to be on the thing, because they need some more black composers. So in the meantime they introduced me to William Grant Still. William Grant Still who knew who I was, because he not only wrote classical music – he wrote, he writes like Beethoven and Bach. That's who he sounds like when he writes his classical music. But he also writes jazz, too. He writes arrangements – popular arrangements of Artie Shaw's *Frenesi*. He wrote that arrangement for Artie Shaw. He wrote some other jazz stuff. He could write jazz, too. He played the oboe.

But anyway, that night – so they brought in him. Now I met him and he knew who I was, like I said. Now in Los Angeles, right off of La Brea and um, the street next to it, there was a fire station that has now been dedicated to William Grant Still. It's like a – what do you call that – it's a culture center. And William Grant Still – he just met me. I mean he knew who I was in the jazz world, but he had met me in person. But to see me – when he heard my number that night when Zubin brought his hand down, he was amazed at my number, and he – he just told me how much he liked it. That when he – now they give out awards. I got the first award from his culture center for my number that I wrote for – then I wrote four other orchestrations for the Los Angeles Philharmonic. That they played. I thought they might now – they had one on the 76 – on July 4th's thing.

Brown: Mhm. Bicentennial?

Wilson: Yeah. One of my orchestrations was there. See with this big gospel choir, a two hundred boy's choir, that they took to Tel Aviv, where he has the Israel Philharmonic. I got the program from him and everything. But my point is that, that was my last thing, that philharmonic – and Phil Moore, that's when I said Phil sure told me what to do, and how to do it. So when I write for strings, for pop music, like I did when I wrote for Nancy Wilson, on the strings for her, and other people too, you know I knew what to do with them, because that book – he told me, "read it completely through" you know. So anyway, that was the whole deal then.

Brown: Well let's go back to the concert at the – probably at the Hollywood Bowl?

Wilson: The first one was at the music center. Then the one at the Hollywood bowl was the '76…

Brown: That was the Bicentennial.

Wilson: Yeah, that – what was that celebration, three hundred years, or what?

Brown: Bicentennial, that was two hundred years.

Wilson: Bicentennial, yeah that number they played that number that I did for the um, for the philharmonic, and then they used to have this big – they used to have this big gospel contest every year. Gospel people come from everywhere. You know, so I had written these numbers – these gospel numbers with the choir, orchestrated them for the philharmonic. So the philharmonic, they won. They won – my number won at the forum. At the forum, they'd have it at the forum every year. Yeah,

Brown: Well these accomplishments, if we're talking about Zubin Mehta, we're talking – that's got to be sixties, seventies at the latest, 'cause William Grant Still is still alive, right?

Wilson: Yeah.

Brown: You said this was your goal back then, but that was forty – thirty-five, forty years ago, so you're still going. Do you have any goals that you want to accomplish these days?

Wilson: You know, I finally got to the – you know I wrote for Sarah Vaughn, I wrote for um, Ella Fitzgerald. I did over sixty orchestrations for Ella Fitzgerald, plus a whole album she did with me and my band. Um, I had written for Nancy Wilson, I did over twenty – over twenty-five sides with Nancy. I had her first hit. I had her first hit.

Brown: Which was?

Wilson: Which was *My Foolish Heart*. See, now a lot of people won't remember that number because I was now working for a man by the name of Buck Ram. Buck Ram who was a bandleader at one time, who wrote *Twilight Time*, he wrote a – a popular hit number. And so Buck Ram wanted me to work for him. He had The Platters, okay. So Buck Ram wanted to be working with me, and um, this is when I had to start moving up um, financially, I had to start to try to move up. Now I had owned my first home, which I gave to my first wife, and everything. So I had to start – so Capital called me and said, "Gerald we got this young lady here named Nancy Wilson." And they put down three albums then, they said, "we can't give them away. What would you do with them, Gerald?" Now I'm with the – I'm now working for Buck Ram, The Platters. I see the way things are going. I said, "The first thing I'd do with Nancy Wilson, I'd put a big string section behind her and put a lot of triplets in the piano." And it did a – popular tune, *Foolish Heart*. That was her first big hit. Then we did *The Seventh Sun*, that was a blues number. Did it with strings – did it with strings, you know. And I did a lot of stuff for her.

Then finally they said, "Look Gerald," Now my band – now my band is moving up now, we're moving up. They said, "Okay, Nancy Wilson got to do a whole album with your band. Okay, with your band. And then do a section where you do it with strings." So we get – we got to Chicago, and um, go up to the club there in Chicago and listen to Nancy sing, and um they choose a number that they wanted to do, they chose the numbers, I didn't choose any of the numbers. And then, when it was time to um – so um, when it was time to do it with the band, you know, my band was – my band was hot. A lot of people thought Nancy was my daughter. I have a daughter named Nancy Jo. Nancy Jo Wilson. A lot of people thought she was my daughter. We did this, and that album was a hit right away. Right away – and to show how strong we were, we sold out the Shrine Auditorium. Then the next night we went over to San Francisco and sold out the Masonic.

Brown: Mhm. That's a big hall.

Wilson: Sold it out – sold it out I mean, you know. And the band is hot, my band is doing good, and so things began build for me then – building right up again, and all of a sudden, I was just writing for so many people, I hardly, you know – didn't know what to do.

Brown: Were you working with John Levy while you were – interfacing with John Levy when you were…

Wilson: John Levy – John Levy, he did – I didn't – he was her manager, and um, he recognized – he knew me. I had met him when I was in the Navy. He came there with Stuff Smith. He was the bass player for Stuff Smith. And he came there – to the Navy to entertain there one time. But we were always good friends. John I knew – I saw him with George Shearing – George Shearing in New York. And then my days with Count Basie came on the scene in 1948, that's when I joined Count – guess who I replaced with Count Basie? Snooky Young. [Laughs]

Brown: [Laughs] Well now that you bring up Snooky again, like I said, it's like this. It's like a double helix. You're gonna be crossing paths all the time [laughs]

Wilson: [laughs] Yeah. So Count Basie is in town at the Lincoln Theater, see. So Snooky leaves the band. Count calls me up and says, "Hey Gerald, look here. Can you – can you come up here and finish the week here with me at the Lincoln Theater? Snooky just left, had to go back east." And he said, "he'll be back with us when we get to Chicago." And I said, "Well yeah. Yeah I'll do that. I'll go with you, Count." You know. Okay, Count is such a smart man, you know, Count Basie's smart – I lived in Count Basie's home with him nine weeks in his home, in his home. Well I was doing some writing for him, though however. But anyway, Count – I go in with Count – we leave, we leave, we go – got to get back east – so Snooky's supposed to come back in Chicago, you know. We get to Chicago, we're at the Regal theater. Snooky don't show up, you know. So Snooky's not there. Okay, well I don't know what's happening there. By that time, things are happening. Basie's got to have music. He said, "Gerald, you got to do, I want you to do a number, we're gonna feature one of the dancers, Joe "Ziggy" Johnson. I don't know if you ever heard of Joe Ziggy, have you?

Brown: No.

Wilson: Well Joe "Ziggy" Johnson was one of the great um black, what do you call them – producers. You know, they produce the dances and – they called him Ziggy because Zigfield, you know. So anyway, they got to have this number that they're gonna be featuring on his show, this dancer, *Dance Ballerina Dance.* They got to have the music for that. I have to make the arrangements, you understand. They – we do that, we go on into – okay, here comes the next thing. Count Basie is getting ready to do his first concert in Carnegie Hall with his own band. Now he;s been there before, but he's been there with Benny Goodman, you know. But he's never – his own band. So he's got his plan what he want to do. "Okay Gerald, I'm going into Carnegie Hall. I want you to do me a suite. Call it the royal suite." Call it the royal suite because Count Basie loves to play poker. The royal suite is of course all hearts. See all the heart's king, queen, jack, ten.

Brown: Ace.

Wilson: Yeah, how many we got?

Brown: We got the ace, king, queen, jack, ten. The royal straight flush.

Wilson: Yeah, we got ace – yeah ace, king, queen – there's five, right? That's the name of the suite. "The Royal Suite" which of course will have to be composed by Count Basie and Gerald Wilson. [laughs] But that's commonplace. That's commonplace, that doesn't bother me at all, that's the way it is. So we get that done, then we had to clean up a few things that I think I did

um, what's that number they call in the – one of the popular numbers, I did a new arrangement on it. I did a new arrangement on it – so I had to do quite a bit. I had eight numbers on it – out of sixteen numbers played at the concert. I had eight on the concert. So right now Count's got me working like mad. And then they go on into the Strand. Now, they're dancing – they're this big show, they're also doing some other things like *Basie Bongo.* See, *Basie Bongo* this is a number I wrote that they dance on. The chorus girl dance on. And so all of this stuff is happening at the same time, and as far as work is concerned, boom, right into the Strand theater. Sixteen weeks. Sixteen weeks – Clark is now in the band, Clark Terry. So Snooky didn't come back but Clark Terry came in. Jimmy Nottingham, you know Jimmy Nottingham? Basie's got a powerful band. Then we went in and we recorded for Victor, Victor records. So it was a great time with Count – Count Basie, I loved every minute of it. And after, even after he came back with the band that became so popular, you know the one I'm talking about. They came to Los Angeles, Snooky's back in the band. Snooky's back in the band so Basie said, "Well," You know he's a funny guy. He said, "well I want you to come back in the band. Come back in the band with us" you know. And I said, "Yeah, I want to go, I love the band" you know Marshall Royal, we're buddies, we had worked with Phil Moore. You know the days I told you I worked with him – we worked with Phil together a lot. And his brother – his brother is a trumpet player.

But anyway, we go and um, and Basie – my wife said, "no, no" I'm not gonna leave her with these three kids and go back out on the road, you know. My wife said, "no." He told my wife at the palladium, they were playing at the palladium the night I'm supposed to, you know I'm supposed to get ready to go with them. And my wife – he told me he said to my wife, "I'm gonna take him away from you," you know. She said, "No, you're not." She said, "No you're not gonna leave me here, I'm not gonna raise these three kids by myself like this." But I didn't go back, but anyway, I love Basie still. I love him.

Brown: Well you know, throughout your career you worked with some of the greatest bands in the world. You talked about Les Hite, Count Basie, Dizzy Gillespie, you were, you know – Jimmie Lunceford, all these – you know, so what would you, as the band leader now – still working as a band leader, what kind of advice or suggestions or recommendations, what would you tell a young bandleader, what do you feel are the keys to your success, both on the bandstand and administratively?

Wilson: You know, I would think that – the first thing I would say, of course, I would tell the – you know your music comes first. Be sure to – to um, be sure to be true to yourself with your music. You want to be the best you can be, because jazz is nothing to play around with. And today we have musicians that are so good, that it's unbelievable how good they really are. And that's the first thing. Be true to your music, be sure that you are doing the right thing for you with your music. Then another thing is to be honest. As a bandleader I'm an honest person. I paid my men – you'd be surprised the money I paid my men. You know, whereas I could be giving them – okay I got a band, I carry about twenty, twenty-something people now. I could be – I'm playing here tonight, and I'm paying you six hundred dollars. Every man in the band for tonight

– for tonight's work, you're gonna receive six hundred dollars. I could cut into that if I'm a slick – not slick, but if I'm a good businessman. I know – hey I could get you for four hundred, baby. 'Cause tomorrow night I'm gonna give you six hundred more on the next job. Do you understand? I just left you with a recording date. A recording date – I mean, plus all the rehearsals, you don't rehearse – see all the big bands, they don't rehearse – they rehearse on the road, playing their music, and then they're – no, you get paid to rehearse the music you're gonna record, do you understand?

Brown: Mhm.

Wilson: Be honest. And not that you're being – but this, because it's honesty and you want to do the right thing. Do the right thing, okay. Now I'll tell you about something here. It's not good for me to tell, but it is good for me to tell. See Snooky and I, when we were with the Lunceford band – see the Lunceford band – the Lunceford band is managed by Irving Mills. Duke Ellington was managed by Irving Mills. All the Mills Blue Rhythm bands. Irving Mills, he managed them all, right. Okay, Jimmie Luncford's band went out on the road and they would play. And all they would get would be money for their room – money for their room and for their food and everything. But while he would pay them this other money, they put this money in here and bought their contract from Irving Mills. That's what the Lunceford band did. Do you understand? Okay now when we got to Boston after Snooky and I are in the band, we'd been in the band now for about oh I'd say maybe a year.

We're in Boston, and the band's mad. The band, they have a meeting there. They were having a meeting, because he hadn't come through. Now that you're making money, where's that money that you're gonna give us? You understand? He hadn't come up with it. He hadn't said anything about it. So they had this meeting and they invited Snooky and I to be there, they said, "Hey you in the band? You guys come on and be here." So they did all that talking and they said, "okay Snooky, what you have to say?" Snooky was always – Snooky don't talk a lot., you don't catch him talking a lot, unless you know you're fooling around. Snooky looks up and says, "Gerald, what you got to say?" I said, "Well I'll tell you. What would you do? I'll tell you what to do. Tonight, he's sitting on the bus now waiting to go to Narragansett" where we were going to play. I said, "you tell him go play the job by himself tonight." "What?" I said, "That's it. Tell him. See what he's gonna say. He's sitting on the bus now. Call him in here." We call him on the bus, said, "Look, you haven't come through with what you promised. You go play the job by yourself tonight. We're all ready to quit. We're all ready to go now. Everybody's ready to go." You understand?

Brown: Mhm.

Wilson: He got on the phone right away and called his manager who's now Harold Loxley. Man, that Harold Loxley – good guy, nice man. He says, "give it to them." Now all they asked for that night was a five dollar raise per night, see. This means that the guy whose already making fifteen

dollars a night, he's gonna be making twenty dollars a night. Snooky and I, we were the youngest in the band. You start at the bottom. We were only making eleven dollars a night. But now we were gonna be getting sixteen. He said, "give it to them. You got it. You got it." Okay, so now things were smooth. We're getting ready to record, see. Okay, Snooky and I decide, I said, "Look Snooky, we don't want to keep hassling with this thing – with Jimmie Lunceford" I said, "but as far – I want the same money as every guy in the band's getting when you make records." That's what I want. Snooky said, "That's what I want too." [laughs] So Jimmie Lunceford, he gives us a – he gives us an ultimatum. "Anybody late in the morning – record day starts at eight o'clock. Anybody that's late, you will be fined fifteen dollars." You know, okay, alright. Snooky and I, we're standing at the hotel there in New York, you know. It's eight o'clock, we're still at the hotel room. So the phone rings of course, "okay, you're gonna be fined, you know. You should have been down here at eight o'clock. I told you last night." I said, "We're not coming. I want the same money that every guy in the band's making." To make records. Snooky and I are standing alone. He had to come up with it right then. He had to come up with it right then.

Brown: Y'all played hardball [laughs]

Wilson: We really played hardball. That's some hard ball. Sometimes you have to play hardball.

Brown: Yeah. But along those lines, you as a band leader, one of the hardest things to do is to let somebody go or to fire somebody. How did you deal with that unfortunate situation – when you as a bandleader have to get rid of somebody, either have to fire or let him go. How did you handle that?

Wilson: Let me see, I fired – I had to fire one man in my lifetime.

Brown: Only one. Out of all the bands?

Wilson: Fire him. To actually fire him. That was very recent. This was a young man that I – that I – I'm not gonna recall his name because – but he plays a great trombone. Plays a great trombone. And um, now he's with my band, you understand what I mean? He's on me, we're getting ready to play the bowl. We're playing big things, everything we play is big now. In fact, started out, we did one, two, three, four, five…and then, we were playing on one of the concerts, and this guy, he blows his – he's blowing his horn, he gets into the microphone with his big trombone, and he's blowing – and he's messing up, he's cursing the guys in the trombone section. "You're messing up Mr. Wilson's music, you're not Mr. Wilson's right." I said, "Hey man, these guys are playing – what are you doing? You're gone. You're out, you're finished in this band." I said, "you're finished." And even so, we were going into the bowl, where – Hank Jones and me. Hank and Gerald, Gerald and Hank on my 90th birthday. Big, big moment, the bowl – big, big moment. I even gave him this night's work, I said, "here, now I'm giving you this night's work, so you know – but you're out. You are out." And I – I hope he gets himself

together. I don't know what's wrong with him, you know. I still don't know what was wrong with him. Young kid, I like him too. He can blow like hell. He really – okay.

Brown: Okay, well we're gonna pick it up from there. I want to talk about – more about your band. I know you talked a lot about the other band, I want to talk about your band. You know, you started talking about – that's unfortunate, but you only had to fire one person out of sixty-five years? Damn.

Wilson: Fired first – I had a little trouble in Chicago with my band. I had a little trouble in Chicago with my band – we were playing in the club.

Brown: When are we talking about?

Wilson: Well this is – we're talking about 1946 – we're talking '46. So, look here. So now we're out on the road – now I got a young band out on the road. Now when I played at the El Grato – see I could only get scale for my band, that's all I could get. But scale was good money, and so, okay, we're there. And now we're moving. We're moving to these big clubs, you know. So we're playing and some guy comes up to say, well I'm making plenty money now. I'm making big money, you know? The man, he was right here. Every week he would come back and brings me these um, nineteen checks. One of them's mine, it's the scale, and I don't get any more, I'm just getting scale – what I get. But, since you're coming on like that, this is not a cooperative band, you know – this is not a cooperative band, and so I had to let the guy go. I had to let the guy go there. I got Marl Young, you know Marl Young? I got Marl Young to come in and help me finish out the date there in Chicago. Well I had to – I let this guy – let him go. Yeah he thought I was making – I wasn't making any money. But the money was yet – still to come, you know.

Brown: Just a little while ago, you mentioned about how some of the players now are so good, they're so good, but I look back on some members of your band. You've had some great players, you've had Jerome Richardson – but one that comes to mind, only because his mentor died recently, and that was Hale Smith, but I'm talking about…

Wilson: Hale? Yeah I know Halle.

Brown: Yeah, I was asking about him. But Hale had a – had a real prize, or star pupil, and that was Eric Dolphy.

Wilson: Yeah.

Brown: So when you talk about great players, I was just wondering if you could reflect on Eric's tenure with the band, and what you thought about Eric.

Wilson: Oh, you know, Eric was more than just a great musician to me. He's more like in my family. He knows my three daughters, he used to come over to my house all the time. This is when I would be on the road – when I would be on the road, like I was in Vegas with Benny Carter when they opened the first inter-racial hotel there. And Eric – Eric go by, take my wife to the market – take my wife to the market, he had a car – he was like in the family. I'd go over to his house all the time, I know his mother and father, they're wonderful people. And um, Eric – you know, Eric was a great musician, he could play what you want. Now I have a record that Eric is on – I have a record that Eric is on, and you can hear him playing lead alto. Then you can hear him playing his flute, you know what I mean? Yeah, and he can play, you know, he can really play. And then he got his break with Coltrane – and when I go to New York City – now I didn't say anything about Ray Charles, see I wrote the first country western albums – I wrote the first country western albums. You know, you hear those sounds – I wrote – those are mine, I should have had all those Grammys for the music, but he took them. Those are – that's my music. He asked me, everybody asks me, "well how did working with Ray Charles, how did you get with him, and what did –" I said, "Yeah, I went over to his house, and that day, he sat down at the piano, and he played about eight bars. And then he says to me, "Gerald, my wife and I, we've got to go and take care of some business. Can you stay here with my kids until I –" He's got some other kids too, "can you stay here with my kids until we get back?" I said, "Sure fine," you know. [laughs] So he goes on away, and he comes back. I leave, I go home. He don't know what I'm gonna have when I got here in New York City with this bag of music. He don't know what's in there. The only thing he knows – the one he played eight bars, and I put it down in the arrangement.

Then, all the other numbers they had picked – He don't know what they – he just – that's it. Those are the big hit records. I should have had the Grammys for that music. He took it – he took it. I should have had Grammys for the music. He still got the Grammys for the performance. But all of them, *Don't Tell me your Troubles*, I got troubles of my own – all of them, yeah. Then on the second one – the second one, the second volume, Gil Fuller did two numbers, and he had Benny Carter do two numbers. I did the other four – I did four numbers. That's on the second volume. But then all in between, I did other things – for the Raelettes, I did a lot of music for Ray Charles. We were good friends, we – Jimmy Scott, you know Jimmy Scott? We did albums with him with strings and everything, and Ray's playing the piano.. That's when we had our first – he had never said anything to me about – I used to hear him jump on guys, you know – and we were doing this number, see with Jimmy Scott. And we had already put about four on the thing, and then we went into another number, we started this other number and he jumps up from the piano, "Hey Gerald, there's a mistake on here" I said, "Okay, I wrote all the music you're playing here tonight, I know every note in it. Whatever it is, there could be a mistake, we'll check it out." I didn't – you know, I didn't back down off of him. And all, like I said, I wrote all the music that we played tonight. You know, I know what's there and he didn't say another word. He sat back down and he didn't say another word. I wasn't gonna take it – I wasn't gonna take it all from him, you know what I mean? But he's a good – I said, like I said – Ray Charles is a fine musician, and he's a brilliant man – a brilliant man, that's blind, and I know what that's

like, I can imagine what that must really be like, because I have macular degeneration. See, I can't even see you.

Kimery: I'm not here.

Wilson: You're not there. I got macular degeneration, see and I don't know what's gonna happen – my doctor – it happened to me in Chicago at the festival. Yeah, my wife and I are walking down Michigan boulevard, broad day sunlight, beautiful day and I'm walking down the street, and all of a sudden, I look and I can't see. I can't see anything. We get back to the place, to the hotel and I can't see at all. I can just barely see a little bit. I know where the band is, and I don't – see I don't use my scores when I conduct 'cause I know all of my music. So the lady – the stage manager, I said, "you just lead me to the mic, let me talk, and I know where to go – where to stand and do my stuff to conduct the band." My doctor operated on me, and um, so he says – he put it back together, the detached retina. He had to operate on me and put it back together, see and um so I know – I know what it is to be blind. See, I can do this – I can see you for a second, you know what I mean? But then it blanks out, you know what I mean. So I know what it must be like to be blind. And Ray Charles, he's the blindest guy – he reads prayer, he reads the songs – the words that he's got to sing, you know.

This guy is a fabulous musician, I love being with him. I flew with him in the airplane. He's smart as a whip – he's smart as a whip. We got in a storm – in a storm, we were supposed to land in LaGuardia, they said, "No you can't come in, you got to come in through Newark." And so Ray is working the controls, talking to the guy in the tower. You know, he's done all this stuff – he's a smart man. Smart man. And I still love him. Now another guy, his manager, Joe Adams, see Joe and I came up together, see they used to – in the Lunceford Band, Joe and his brother used to hang with us, just hang out with us. Joe wanted to be in the business. Joe was the first black disc jockey in Los Angeles. He was taught by a man by the name of Al Jarvis. Al Jarvis had big program from KFWB. Big, big program. And everybody liked Al Jarvis, he played jazz music – 'cause we even – the Lunceford band even recorded a number called *Jiving with Jarvis*, *Jiving with Jarvis*. So Jarvis, he taught Joe how to do that. Joe became the first black disc jockey – and he became famous, he became famous. So he got a TV show on channel 11. I had the band, I had the band, my band. I was over here conducting the band. Joe was in front of the camera, like he was conducting the band. [laughs]

Brown: [Laughs] That's ghost conducting, there.

Wilson: Yeah, right? So Joe, okay. So it was good. So we were on television for thirty-something weeks – thirty-something weeks. We had a good show. We had all the stars, all of them wanted to be on that, Clark Terry, Count Basie, Lena Horna, Stan Kenton, you name it, we had them. Everybody wanted to be on that show. So I'm there, you know, with the show, okay. So Joe – then Joe gets in this movie with Frank Sinatra, *The Manchurian Candidate*. Okay, so now Frank Sinatra likes Joe Adams. Frank Sinatra now owns Reprise Records. Joe – Joe wants

to be a producer, and an A&R man too. So, he goes, he says to Frank Sinatra – what he does is, he lets Joe produce an album with Al Henley. I do all the music – I do all the music. You know, the band, the big orchestra and everything. I meet Frank Sinatra, he's really nice, man – he's really nice. I'd seen him since he was with Tommy Dorsey years ago, you know, he was a nice man. And so I did that album for Reprise with him. And Ella was on Reprise. I did a whole album with Ella. A whole album – we did a bunch of stuff, *I Heard it Through the Grapevine*, all kinds of crazy stuff, *Sunny*, all those funny hits. [laughs] So then Joe – Joe has been good for me, Joe has been very good for me, and he lives right up the street from me, you know you picked me up today, he lives right up the – you see Joe, he was – he and his brother were used to money. His father was a big rich man. Yeah, he was one of the owners of Gold Furniture, a big furniture store in Los Angeles. So they're used to money, I think they came from either Texas or Oklahoma – they're used to money. And Joe still – still big guy, he became Ray's manager. He didn't even sign a contract with him, he really trusted Joe – and now he's suing Joe, the family's suing Joe. You hear about that?

Brown: No.

Wilson: Yeah, I think the family's suing Joe or something there. I don't know what it is that's going on. But anyways, that's not important.

Brown: Well I want to go – I want to turn back to – I know I mentioned Hale Smith, but you know – as a composer you can do that without – you know you can do that from home, but you seem to still be thriving as a composer. So I just wanted to talk about your relationship and/or place among African-American composers. Now when you mentioned William Grant Still, of course we all know him because of *Afro-American Symphony*, but there are other composers who are younger than you are, or maybe even your contemporaries. And the people I'm thinking of are George Walker, we mentioned Hale Smith…

Wilson: George Walker, ooh, he's so good.

Brown: …And there's TJ Anderson, you know TJ Anderson? He's at Duke University – TJ, TJ – yeah well he's – that was his last position. And the other person is Ollie Wilson, do you know Ollie Wilson?

Wilson: Yeah, 'cause I was at Duke a couple years ago, yeah I did a concert with that band.

Brown: Yeah, TJ would have been there, 'cause when Hale Smith died, TJ wrote a memorial.

Wilson: Yeah, John – the guy's name is John Brown. 'Cause he's head – like I said, "Your name is John Brown?" [laughs] Yeah well I was down there, yeah they were really nice, real nice.

Brown: And how about Hale Smith? Talk about…

Wilson: Hale Smith – well Hale – I met him, you know I talked with – he liked my work, and I liked his work. He had done some work with Eric Dolphy, Eric Dolphy introduced me to Hale, Mr. Hale Smith. He just died, huh.

Brown: Yes, back in…

Wilson: That's so sad. He was nice, he was nice.

Brown: Yeah. And you mentioned George Walker, also.

Wilson: George Walker, now I heard his music, man. That's a black composer. They sure should have had him, because he really was in another world. He's in another world, and um, I wish I had a chance to meet him. Is he still living?

Brown: I believe he is, because I used to see him at Rutgers, when I was at Rutgers, he was there. I'm thinking of another composer, how about Ulysses Kay?

Wilson: Ulysses Kay? Yeah. Ulysses Kay, a very fine writer. I like him, yeah I like him. Now this record that I have now

Brown: Detroit?

Wilson: Yeah. See the first number is called *Blues on Belle Isle*, but that's honoring – I said what I'm going to do this time is I'm going to honor the people that inspired me and helped me get where I am today. So the first number, *Blues on Belle Isle,* is for Duke Ellington. In 1927, Duke Ellington did a number on his record – he had a record in 1927 that has a chord structure of *A Minor Blues*, but then the second chord goes to a C chord. What happens there is blues uses the one, four, five, you understand what I mean when – that's the chord structure. One, four and five. Okay, this is minor blues, so we're gonna get this – we got this one which is E, right? Then we go to the one, we do the third, we do the fifth, you know G# and then B-natural, but then the next chord after that is this C right there. The first chord is E-minor, but then that second chord goes to C, and you'll hear that in Bubba Miley's *East St. Louis Toodleoo*. And you can also hear it in *Black and Tan Fantasy*, which is also Bubba Miley's, you understand? So that – I'm honoring Duke Ellington there. The second number is titled *Cass Tech.* That's where I went to school. The third number is, what – let's see, you don't have the new album, do you?

Brown: I don't have it with me, I'm looking at – there's a Lomaline? No, sorry that's the wrong page. *Blues on Belle Isle, Cass Tech, Aram?* Oh, *Everywhere, Aram?* I'm talking about *Detroit*.

Wilson: Oh, they're in different positions.

Brown: Oh, okay.

Wilson: Yeah, but those are all numbers. *Everywhere, Miss Gretchen.* Okay. Well here – see, I wanted to bring in, if you notice, *Cass Tech* says – it tells you on the record. One of my favorite young composers is Benny Golson, see. Benny Golson. That's his number, not his number – but I took some of his chords, put them here, put them there, and added a lot of things – you won't recognize it, really, but I'm telling you this is where the number got its chords, from Benny Golson. Benny Golson, and if you want to know the number, it's called *Along Came Betty*. You'll just hear a little bit of that – but then I got a lot of other things happening in the number, but that's to honor him. And it says that on the record – in the booklet, in the booklet, it says that. And then after that is *Detroit* – well the way you – the next one is *Detroit.* Now Detroit, I have to – the way I go about it – how do I go about composing? First I'm gonna say, Detroit, Detroit, Detroit, Detroit. It's beautiful. Detroit is beautiful. It's magnificent. Love is here, freedom is here in Detroit. Well all of that's the truth. Freeom is – as I told you, I got my freedom and everything when I went to Detroit, that's what I had been looking for. Okay, so Detroit, I got into Detroit – now I narrate this when I play it in person. When I played it this year – now my band plays it here, but a band from Michigan, that's a band – they played it in person, and they got – listen, the musicians are so good, man I wish you could have heard the in person performance. We did all of the things that we do – that we do on the record, but there's a band in Detroit doing it with me. The bass player, um Rodney…

Brown: Rodney Whitaker?

Wilson: Rodney Whitaker, really good, yeah. Well he gets the band, he gets the band together for me there, you know, so they played. Man, they played so good. And I narrated. As we'd be playing, I'd tell the people, like I'd tell them, "okay now, I'm going to talk to you about it here, but here you got to read my lips." You understand? Like when the president said read my lips? And then I do it, I just – I went – I won the prize. They had a – someone else could have won this prize I won in Detroit this year. There's a whole placard from Detroit Michigan that – okay, so that takes care of that. What else do we have on the – oh, *Everywhere*. *Everywhere* is a monster piece. That's a monster piece, I mean it's [sings part of *Everywhere*] got a heck of a thing – first of all it's got a chord structure that is quite unique, quite unique. And the guys play good. And you notice I carry Komasi with me. Komasi was a student at UCLA, and I heard him play, I got him right away. I took him to New York with me when I was with Stix. See, Stix – after we did the first album, then we played in Birdland. So I brought this kid with me. I told him, "I'm gonna bring this kid with me." So I bring this kid from – so we're there, thank Frank Wess, we got Frank Wess there. We got some bad guys there, and so everybody's wondering what this guy's going to do, you know. This kid, man when he blows, I'm telling you, he has no problem whatever. He – his father's a saxophone player who studied – I saw his father for the first time, about a couple of weeks ago, and he says, "All that stuff my son is doing, I didn't know he was even listening to stuff like that." But I took him – like I said, I told him "When we finish this first ensemble chorus, here's what I want – I want you to play this melody first, before you start"

because he can move. I don't know any saxophone player who can move like him today. You know, I mean fast, fast. So anyway, that takes care of that. Oh, and *Aram*, that's another – I dedicated that to Aram Khachaturian years ago, years ago I dedicated it to him. And I studied his music, man yeah.

Brown: You talk about these young students. You've been an educator, and I would say a cornerstone of jazz education ever since you first entered the academy. Um, what do you feel that's important for a young student to learn about jazz to keep the tradition alive at this point?

Wilson: Well as I said, we have so many fine young musicians that are doing things today, that have their own groups, of course. I think the really great, great hands, I mean – we passed it, we haven't talked about all of these guys like Herbie Hancock, and Wayne Shorter, and all those heavy – these are heavy guys, really heavy. There's no doubt about it. And so, the young ones that are new coming on, I don't know many of them, but I hear their records. I hear their records, and there are a lot of fine records that I hear. Freddie Hubbard, who became one of the finest composers that we got, I mean Freddie Hubbard wrote some great music. And of course, he went on to play like, you know, like Freddy played. Um, Wayne Shorter. The same thing with Wayne Shorter. There are other people, who can I – of course Coltrane did some fine – I planned to do something with some of his music, and I might – I plan to do *Naima*. I want to do that one. And um, I'm sure he was helped by his wife. She – I think she's from Detroit…

Brown: Alice? Yeah, I believe so.

Wilson: Yeah, where's she from – she's from Detroit.

Brown: So many good people from Detroit.

Wilson: Yeah, well you know, she know's – you know, they know how to do these chords, they have these chords, and I wonder, why these are like that, but there's a reason to have these certain notes in this chord. You know, so I studied that – I studied his music, I studied Coltrane's music, and Alice. And incidentally, I like Robbie Coltrane. He's a fine player, he's a fine player. He doesn't play like his father – he plays like Robbie, he plays like Robbie. As I said, there's so many fine musicians now. As I said, I don't know all of their names, but I listen to the radio all the time, and they play them all them all, they got…now, I had my radio show for years.

Brown: Right.

Wilson: Yeah, I had, and my school, see I had the largest class in UCLA. In the whole school I had four-hundred and eighty students in my class. That's a lot..

Brown: You were teaching the history of jazz, right?

Wilson: History of jazz…

Brown: So where do you start when you say "history of jazz"? What's your first class? What class, what is the subject in your first class when you taught history of jazz?

Wilson: My first class?

Brown: Uh-huh.

Wilson: The first class, okay, we started with Buddy Bolden. Buddy Bolden played the trumpet. He was also a composer, right?

Brown: Uh-huh.

Wilson: Now, so what did he composer? Well, he composed a number called *My Bucket's Got a Hole in It*. That's a song about life, you know, everybody knows they's had a bucket. Bucket's got a hole, most of them going to get a hole in it. You put a little rag in there or something, you know, and stuff it. *Make Me a Pallet on the Floor*, a pallet on the floor, that's just put some fabric down, a quilt. Not blankets or what, you know, blankets too, but quilts you got 'cause we talking in the old days, you know, everybody they have blankets. So it's about life. Also he wrote a number man, and it's honor the ballroom that he played in, Buddy Bolden played in. Now Buddy Bolden played in a ballroom called the Funky Butt Ballroom. Now, that's a hell of a title. But it's also a heck of a number, now if you don't know that number I'm going to tell you how it sounds, I know that [sings melody]. See Jelly Roll Morton and them were like fifteen years old at the time, they were going around listening to Buddy Bolden [sings]. "I think I heard Buddy Bolden say, Funky Butt, Funky Butt, take it away" [sings]. You know, and so, that's a heck of a number, I mean, you take, when you just take that melody alone forget about. Also it tells you that the word 'funky' was not, was already made popular in those days, not the days of rock came in, they started saying 'funky', you know. So Buddy Bolden. Pops Smith, who plays the bass, wrote a book on jazz, and he said, "Oh Buddy Bolden, all Buddy Bolden could play was the blues."

Brown: Were you talking about Pops' Foster?

Wilson: Pops Foster, the bass player. Well, he's right. If you can't play the blues you can't play jazz. Now, don't think you can play the, play, play jazz and not know how to play the blues. If you can't play the blues you can't play jazz. 'Cause jazz is the folk music of black people, the blues, the folk music of black people. It's the story of their lives, the days of their suffering. They were slaves for two hundred and forty-nine years. Two hundred and forty-nine years. Now, how did they get there? How did they learn how to play a trumpet, a clarinet, a violin? It had to be that after two hundred years it wasn't going to be like it was. The slave owners, they knew that they had this way of singing about their life, you know, the [inaudible] [laughs], they know this.

So they gave them a trumpet, taught them how to read the music, to read the music, the European music. Taught them how to read these different instruments then when they play something that they just playing for themselves they play, they playing something called jazz. And you can believe, you can believe that it started in New Orleans. Now, I don't say that it didn't happen, that it wasn't happening in New York 'cause James Reese…

Brown: Europe.

Wilson:…was black. And if was black he had the same genes and everything as every black people, you know what I'm saying.

Brown: Uh-hm.

Wilson: So any black person, that's their music. So it's lik classical music is the music of the white man, I mean, it's their music. Country music is white, they got a thing going there, the Grand Ole Opry. They say, "Hey, we play the blues, too." They do play the blues.

Brown: Well, Jimmie Rodgers was singing the blues with Louis Armstrong, so…

Wilson: Yep, so they played the blues, too. So, but the point is that what we say is that you got to play the blues if you're going to play jazz. Now, when my class I don't have to right away they know 'cause tomorrow night they can come and see me perform. First of all you can open your book, you open your history books. If my name isn't in your history book, you off base, if my name isn't there. Now, I'm not saying this to brag, but my name is mostly everywhere in them important books, you know what I mean. And it's followed me right up to this day. Now, I've outlived most everybody [laughs]. I'm ninety-one, the only other guy older than me that was still working was Benny Carter. Benny was ninety-six when he died. He was ninety-six. But my point is this, if not, I enjoy teaching the history of jazz. Then I start talking about Jelly Roll Morton, everybody talking about Jelly Roll Morton. Duke Ellington said, "Jelly Roll Morton, Jelly Roll Morton, all he could do was brag about himself." Yeah, but you copied him. He copied Jelly Roll Morton playing the piano. Earl Hines, all of them had to copy Jelly Roll Morton. Scott Joplin, whose the king of ragtime, was a classical, he studied classical music. His music is classical, ragtime music was classical, and Scott Joplin was the best there was, he was the best there was. And he could write it, he went to college. This guy was something else, you know. And he made plenty of money, he made plenty of money, he was rich like everything. The only thing that happened with him was that he wanted to write an opera. So he wrote…

Brown: *Treemonisha*.

Wilson: *Treemonisha*, *Treemonisha*. Then his backers say, "Look, man what are you fooling around with this opera stuff? You making plenty of money, you rich now." The man wanted to do this, so he produced it himself and lost most of his money. And then his last thing that

happened to Scott, of course, is that he had syphilis. He had syphilis, and in those days they didn't have any cure for it and of course he died in Bellevue Hospital there, you know. But his music was superb. When you listen to, in fact I plan, I think this is going to be one of my projects before I die. I'm going to write up one of Scott's numbers. I think I'll probably do the one that's, that was so popular, which is *The Entertainer*. Yeah, The Entertainer, I might do *The Entertainer*. You know, yeah, I might do *The Entertainer* because I can, see I can do it and put all these modern chords and then not take away, not take away from what he's got there. Still not taking anything away from his music. And then right now I'm working on a number, *Claire De Lune*. I'm going to do *Claire De Lune*, and I'm doing it up. And I'm going to have some chords in there, it's going to be a little. But Debussy, we got to thank Debussy, his *Claire De Lune* gave us that minor nine, gave us that minor nine, you know. And we need that, we need that. I mean, so I got a lot of things, now you wonder how I do it. I can't even see to write, I can't see no print, that's impossible. I have a grandson, all these albums you talking about there, the one you're talking about, all I do is, my grandson plays the guitar, he, his father's a guitarist, his father's…

Wilson: Anthony?

Wilson: Huh?

Wilson: No, no, that's my son.

Brown: Okay.

Wilson: That's my son, he can write too, by the way. He can write like mad. Just left, he just leaving town for Australia, him and, what's her name?

Brown: Diana Krall?

Wilson: Diana Krall, yeah. But my grandson, grandson's father is one of the greatest blues guitarists around. That's Shuggie Otis. See, Shuggie Otis is my…

Brown: Is he your step son? How does…

Wilson: No, he, no…

Brown: 'Cause I thought that was, I thought Shuggie was Johnny Otis's son.

Wilson: No, Shuggie is Johnny Otis's son, yeah, yeah.

Brown: Okay.

Wilson: Yeah, but see Johnny's son married my daughter. He married my daughter, see.

Brown: And her name?

Wilson: Huh?

Brown: Her name?

Wilson: Her name is Terry, I named her after Clark Terry

Brown: Okay.

Wilson: You know, well that's a middle name, you know, we named her Terry. She know Clark and them, they all used to come, Dizzy. They come, when Dizzy come to town, he would think to come, he would come to my house playing with my daughters, Terry the same way. These all my good buddies, but like I said, now all I do now is. Now, he can play the guitar, you know, Shuggie's son, he play the guitar. He can write himself, in fact, he's writing his first orchestration now for a jazz orchestra. But all I do, man, is boom, first trumpet, quarter note tied to an eighth, boom-boom-boom. Dot, eighth rest, so and so and so, I tell him everything he puts on that paper.

Brown: Does he write it out by hand or is he using a …

Wilson: He does, no, no, he does it by hand, does it by hand, does it by hand. He did all, the ones you talking about there, the one that we have now that, the new album that's out. So I'm lucky that I got this grandson that is into it, my son is in, he can play and he started when he was like seven years old. Started it and I was surprised, you know, he wanted to be a musician, you know. And I went over to the school he was going, they had a little band, he was the guitar player, and what's this guy, he's so popular in rock music. He, oh, what is his name? He's a drummer. He's a big man, big man I the business. You'd know him if I could think of his name.

Brown: Where is he based, here or in New York?

Wilson: No, he's from California, they were all in this school together along with Quincy Jones' son went to this little school. Uh, Cher, her daughter went to this little school. They called it education, early for education, something for early education, off of Lauser, right off of Lauser Indica, right off of Lauser Indica, yeah.

Brown: That was probably where Benny Golson's daughter went too 'cause he was talking about going to school with all these other kids but anyway. Go ahead…

Wilson: So, no, I was saying, that's about it, like I was saying, my son he, his name Lenny Travis.

Brown: Oh, Lenny Kravitz.

Wilson: Lenny Kravitz.

Brown: Okay.

Wilson: Okay, see they were all in this thing, I think Lenny was the drummer and my son played the, 'cause they had a little band. Well, I went to the concert, my wife and I, went over there and I, "He's serious." So I got him a teacher, I got him, I got him a, my son, grandson. And I loved the way that this teacher taught him, he taught him how to play first. He didn't start him on scales. He taught him, I head this, I heard my kid, this is after a few weeks he had been with this guy and there was something that he called Stills and Nash.

Brown: Crosby, Stills, and Nash.

Wilson: Yeah, those, that group. This was a thing that had pretty guitar part in it, so he came, I was sitting down, he was playing. I said, "That's that number, Crosby, Stills, and Nash." And then it's intricate, you know, he says, "Yeah, yeah, that's what it is." So he taught him how to play first then he got into all the scales. Then he went to all this school, he had all these good teachers. He went to the Harvard School. You know where the Harvard School is here?

Brown: Mm-hm.

Wilson: They have a high school here, it's called the Harvard School. It's out on Coldwater Canyon. Yep, and he had a good, Mr. Margolis. He was a good teacher, I met him and everything, and like I say, he's got a good teacher, that's what he needs, he needs a good teacher. And he got him, Mr. Margolis. Then he went over to the Crossroads School. That's one of the far out schools. You understand what I mean? He went over, he's, then he went to Bennington.

Brown: Vermont.

Wilson: He graduated from Bennington.

Brown: Milford Graves is up there.

Wilson: Well, yeah, he's there with Milford and them and he's there. And so he's in the meantime he's doing so good he had gotten angry at me because I was doing a record date when he was sixteen. And he got really angry, you know, "I want to be on this date. I want to play on this date." I said, "You think you're ready to play with us on." He says, "Yeah." You know, so on the next album I made I put him on it, I put him on it and he did great. But like I said, he had good teachers and like you said, he was up there in Bennington. Lucky he had an uncle who

lived in New York so every week I told him, "Well, look you go to New York every chance you get and you go around where all the jazz is being played and you go meet people." Now he's as well known in New York as he is in Los Angeles where he was born. You know what I mean? And he did that and this is what he has turned into be now, he's with Diana Krall and he does a good job. He can play anything, I don't' know, you know, nothing too hard for him, nothing too fast for him. You know, so he's good. And then that's what's happening with him, but like I say, he writes good too, writes good too, yeah, they commissioned him to write a number the night they honored Hank and me at the bowl.

Brown: Great.

Wilson: He wrote it and called it, what did he call it? Didn't he name something, Gerald or something, GW, I don't know what it is. No, Eric Dolphy…

Brown: Eric Dolphy, GW, right.

Wilson:…he wrote GW, but he got a name for it. So anyway, I'm lucky I got, you know, kids that I'm glad they…

Brown: Well, listening to you talk it seems like, and of course Ken and I are the beneficiaries of that, but that your generation has produced so many great educators and mentors and models for me and Ken to come up. For example, you're a composer, performer, arranger, and you're and educator. You know, that group of folks is very small but very influential. One person that comes immediately to mind is David Baker and of course you probably, I don't know if you've seen this picture, but that's you and David…

Wilson: Oh yeah, David, yeah.

Brown: So you are among, and George Russell…

Wilson: Oh George, yeah, I know George…

Brown:…you have all shaped our generation of musicians.

Wilson: Yeah, I know George. Yeah, I went to, I was at the New England Conservatory for a week, they had a good band. We played and then they called me right back we did a thing that broadcasted, it broadcast to Europe. From, with the band from, what is that, the old college, where George was, what's the name?

Brown: New England?

Wilson: Yeah…

Brown: Yeah, New England.

Wilson: New England Conservatory, right, right, yeah.

Brown: So…

Wilson: David Baker, David Baker is something else.

Brown: Well, yeah, straight out of George Russell, so…

Wilson: Yeah, George.

Brown: And then they went and take, but you all have, like you know, like Kenny Burrell at UCLA and then bringing you in. How did that happen?

Wilson: Well, see I was at…

Brown: Northridge.

Wilson:…UCLA before Kenny came in.

Brown: See, they called me, see Kenny used to come out every winter and he would do a class called "Ellingtonia" and that is all he would do. Then when he became head of the jazz part, I was already there, I had taught summer school for a couple of years there and my class, everywhere I go my class get bigger and bigger. It started out it had about twenty something and like at Northridge, say for instance, they had thirty some people in that class when I took the class over. When I left the auditorium was full, I think they hold about two hundred and eighty. Then I went to Cal State over in LA, Cal State. And they had a band over there and they had eighteen in their class, when I left the auditorium was full. You know, like two hundred and ninety or something. You know, everywhere I go that would happen then when I went over to UCLA, I'm trying to think how I got over there they called me about teaching summer school so I went over and there was an African kid from Ghana and he was my TA, we do everything, make up, make up the test, we do everything.

But the class kept getting bigger and bigger, I did that for about three summers, you know. And then Eddie Meadows and Leonard Reed, I mean Leonard Feather. They both had this class I took over before the trombone player that played with Glenn Miller had it. What's his name? See, there was a guy that played trombone with Glenn Miller and he had this class at UCLA and it was a big class. So then I got that class and I had five hundred and fifty students in it. The fire department made us cut it down to four hundred and eighty because they was sitting all in the aisles and everything [laughs] you know. So everywhere I go, but then they like the way I teach

the class because I try to keep it entertaining, you know. It's really a great story when you tell the story of these guys, you know, and like everybody, this man is Jelly Roll Morton, I told you what Duke said about him, "Oh, Jelly Roll Morton wasn't nothing." He copied Jelly Roll Morton piano and then what's-his-name, oh well, Mary Lou Williams. Yeah, Mary Lou said, "Oh well, he was nothing, you know, Jelly Roll Morton is nothing, you know, he is nothing." In other words, they didn't think anything of him. Jelly Roll Morton says that, first of all he could play better ragtime than anybody but besides Scott Joplin.

Now Scott Joplin's gone, you know. Scott's gone, but Jelly Roll could play all the rags and he could play them better, they said, than Scott Joplin could play them. Then they said, this is what Jelly Roll said, "One Sunday afternoon I decided that I was stark tired of playing." See ragtime is played the same way every time, it's written, it's played, anybody, that's why they had it in the drug stores 'cause people could come in and buy the music. Buy the ragtime music and go home and play it. Anybody could play ragtime because it's all written out. You understand what I mean? Jelly Roll Morton say he was sick of that he's going to play the ragtime but all of a sudden he's going into it improvising. You dig? So they get made at him about that and Jelly Roll to prove it that he was the most popular musician around. There have been more words written about Jelly Roll Morton than any other jazz musician even the ones that are alive.

Brown: Do you think it's possible that some people have been less supportive of Jelly Roll because he seemed to harbor a lot or racism against darker black people? For one thing, and for secondly he claimed "I'm the inventor of jazz"?

Wilson: Yeah, he said, the way we know it.

Brown: Right.

Wilson: As we know it.

Brown: Right.

Wilson: He didn't say that he invented jazz but that he invented jazz the way we know it.

Brown: Well.

Wilson: And, you know, I go along with it because when you hear some of the stuff that Jelly Roll is playing in there you just give him a good listen.

Brown: Oh, I do.

Wilson: So he's long before Duke Ellington. Okay, Duke Ellington was born in…

Brown: 1899.

Wilson: 1899 and Fletcher Henderson was born in 1898. And Jelly Roll Morton was born in 1865. Yeah, 1865. Kid Ory was born in 1886 and the trumpet player…

Brown: Buddy Bolden?

Wilson: No, no, the other one.

Brown: Louis Armstrong?

Wilson: Huh?

Brown: Louis Armstrong?

Wilson: No, no.

Brown: King Oliver.

Wilson: King Oliver, King Oliver, see, King Oliver, eighteen. So at that time, you know, these guys were already, they were listening to Buddy Bolden. That's who Jelly Roll Morton and them were listening to and now, Jesse I don't know about Jesse in that story, although he married a Mexican woman. He's in a Mexican cemetery here in Los Angeles, Calvary, for years they said it was Evergreen but it's not Evergreen he's in Calvary. In fact, I had planned to go out to his gravesite. I could have seen him if I had gone to see him but by that time he was my favorite musician. My brother and I had his records, his early records. See, the first record was made by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band.

Brown: 1917.

Wilson: Then it wasn't until three years later that they let a black make a record. Kid Ory they let make a couple of sides, a couple of sides. But as I say, King Oliver and Jelly Roll made a number together, *King Porter Stomp,* which by the way the reason it's named, and *King Porter Stomp* was the biggest jazz number. If your band didn't have an arrangement of *King Porter Stomp*, you were not in. *King Porter Stomp* is one hell of a composition. It's, I plan to write it one day. If you hear, if you hear what's-his-name arrangement, Fletcher Henderson arrangement for Benny Goodman, and you hear this great number, it's unbelievable. I know the number 'cause we used to play it, we used to play it, we used to play it, I played it with Gloster Current's band. It opens with a trumpet solo, it opens with a trumpet solo, yeah. I'm telling you, it's really something.

Brown: We only have a few minutes left.

Wilson: Okay.

Brown: Unfortunately, and like I said, we could probably go on for another four months but I'm looking at this picture of you and David. And you're wearing the NEA hat, Jazz Masters hat.

Wilson: Yeah.

Brown: So you received yours in 1990…

Wilson: Yeah.

Brown:…and then last year you awarded your good buddy Snooky…

Wilson: Snooky, right.

Brown:…Young with his. And then this year you awarded Bobby Hutcherson with his.

Wilson: Yeah, now let me tell you about that.

Brown: Oh, well, what I wanted you to tell me is what does that award means to you, or what significance does it have?

Wilson: Oh, okay. Well, it's something that I never dreamed that I would get, I'll tell you that. But one day I looked into the mail and there was a letter that said I had won this award and then I didn't hear anything. The next thing I heard was, I didn't hear anything, the next thing I went to the mailbox and there was a check for twenty thousand dollars. Now they're giving twenty-five. You understand what I mean? But there's no nothing, no big deal, no big thing that they have now…

Brown: Ceremony.

Wilson: Yeah, ceremony, that started when Horace Silver got his, he was one of the first that they did, that they did at the IAJE got in on the scene. And he was the first 'cause I remember when Horace, when we became good friends he moved to California. We became very good friends, Horace. Now that's one of my favorite composers, too. And he's one, and not only that he's the guy that fixes so all the other groups, he wrote a book on how to arrange for trumpet and sax, two horns, two horns. And he showed me his book, he wrote this book, he wrote his own biography, this is before he had his problem. And all of that happened to him in a short time we became great friends. We were in ASMAC together. ASMAC, John Clayton is the president of ASMAC. ASMAC is the American Society of Music Arrangers and Composers. I tell you the likes of who you'll repeat. You know Van Alexander?

Brown: Oh yeah, we interviewed him last year.

Wilson: Oh yeah, Van.

Brown: Oh yeah.

Wilson: Okay, Van. You know, you know David Rose?

Brown: Um-hm, know the name, sure.

Wilson: David Rose.

Brown: Of course.

Wilson: David Rose, well David Rose was top man in Hollywood. He wrote [sings], *Holiday for Strings*. And he wrote some other, I love, beautiful numbers, beautiful guy. I saw him many years when I still with Jimmie Lunceford. Yeah, these are, so to get in there you figure you're getting into a really sophisticated group. See? So I, they had invited me many times to join, the only two blacks that were in it was Benny Carter and Quincy Jones. So Billy May, when Billy May became the president of ASMAC he called me, he said, "Look Gerald, you got to be, you going to be in ASMAC, now you got to do it now, I want you to do it now." And so I joined ASMAC and I felt great, I was in there with guys like David Rose was one of my favorite and I found him to be such a nice person. The first thing we did was, let me tell you, they used to have a big party every year. So John Williams, he's in there, John Williams. So we had, we were going to honor John Williams. See? So we all had kazoo…Hotel and everything. So everybody had, they got all this music stands up there and everything, you know, and so then all of a sudden it's time for us to do a big thing, see. So we go up and all the guys go up and sit down in front of the music stands, you know, and reach in their pockets and pull out their kazoos. And then we did Star Wars. And what's that one about the lost arc?

Brown: Oh, *Raiders of the Lost Arc*?

Wilson: Yeah, yeah, and we do all of that, doing it in harmony, you know what I mean? Broken up, man, and I enjoyed being in that. And now I can say, John is the president of it now, so many things have changed. Like the Local 47, I made the motion, see now, there were other guys doing things, we were all doing things walking around getting white musicians to sign a petition to do, you know, to have no suffering locals, you know what I mean. So I being from Detroit, as I said, Detroit they're locals already, you know, just like I told you about the school they're locals already integrated. But I, so we did that getting these petitions see, so I joined Count Basie, and I go away, I come back and I say, "How you guys doing now?" I walked around with Red Callender and Buddy Collette, you know. And so we getting these people to sign this and I came

back after the road with Count and I say, “Well, how things going now with the amalgamation?” He said, “Well, you know, nothing is really happening now Gerald, it’s kind of in limbo now, you know.” So I said, “Okay.” So I knew a lawyer from Detroit that I met when I was going to school, he had moved to California, his name is Calvin Porter, Calvin Porter. I said, “Calvin, you know, we’ve been trying to amalgamate these unions here and we’re just not having any luck.” He says, “Well, look.” I says, “We walked around and we got many names signed on this petition by white musicians who say, “Hey, they don’t care about being integrated.” You know, he said, “Well, no, here’s what you got to do Gerald.” He says, “What you’re telling me now it’s obvious they never have a quorum, something that’s going wrong there at the union. There’s something wrong going on.” He said, “There’s never a quorum, so they just do whatever they want to do.” That’s why guys were unhappy with the union, we had an agent who was real nasty to the musicians and another one who was always harping on them, you know, about the dues and stuff.

So I told Buddy Collette, I said, “Look, Buddy.” Buddy was playing in my band, we were rehearsing for a show that I was doing. I said, “Buddy, Calvin Porter told me what to do and I’m going to tell you what to do.” We get all our guys together, we got all the guys now, now what we want to do is slip in on a general meeting. Wait for the general meeting, slip in there, don’t let anybody know you’re coming and you wait until they say “new business.” And Gerald, he wrote down what you say, Gerald you get up and you raise your hand when they say “new business” and you make a motion that there will be a special meeting called for the specific purpose of amalgamating Local 767 to Local 47. And that’s what I did. Now, and from that day on [boom], it started happening. Now, they did, okay, we brought in Benny Carter, Benny was living in Los Angeles now. We were going to take Benny, Benny is one of our people that we were for, that we want, you now, so we want Benny there and we want Marl Young. Marl was from Chicago, he wasn’t even, they were not even there on this day when this thing happened. But we wanted them there and we got them there, and from that day on [boom] I moved to San Francisco, saved that three years, when I came back my card was already, probably didn’t have to pay on fees or anything and everything, and it was all over. But Calvin Porter told me what to do, I told Buddy what, this is what we’ve got to do now, and we did it and it worked.

Brown: Well, all I can say is thank you so much for doing that, you know, what we’ve been able to hear in these last three hours is the story of somebody who is obviously had a profound and lasting affect on what we now know is America’s art form, jazz. Ladies and gentlemen, Gerald Stanley Wilson, ninety-one years old, has kept this music alive, he’s kept it at the highest integrity, he’s kept it at the highest level of virtuosity, he continues to this day to compose, lead an orchestra, to arrange and inspire. Gerald Wilson, on behalf of the Smithsonian Institution and the NEA Jazz Masters program I want to thank you so much for sharing some portion of your life today, for inspiring us with your deeds and your words, and above all your music and your heart. We want to thank you on behalf of the American people for your contributions to making our country a great place to be.

Wilson: Well, Anthony, thank you so much for having me here today and along with…

Brown: Ken Kimery.

Wilson:…Ken, thank you so much for having me today. I hope that I can still continue to try to do my best, that's what I'm going to try to do and you do the same because I've heard your work, it's really fine Anthony. And Ken, you a musician too, right?

Kimery: I am.

Brown: Yeah.

Wilson: What do you play Ken?

Kimery: Drums.

Wilson: You play drums? Okay, well, you know, same for you, and the best with whatever you do. I hope that you, all of your endeavors will be very successful and the things that you want to do. Just, I can tell you one thing, you just have a burning desire to do what you want to do, and it will happen.

Brown: Okay.

Wilson: It'll happen.

Brown: Alright.

Wilson: It'll happen, yes, I'm very religious, very religious. My mother played in the church, she played in the school, I was in church everyday when I was a kid. I stopped going after I left home [laughs] and I don't go to church, you know, I haven't been to church in a long time, but I respect it to the highest, I respect it to the highest. And I pray that God will let everything that I want happen, happen, and it usually happens.

Brown: Well, you must be doing something right all along because you're still here doing what you want to do, and what you love to do, and you still are bringing so much joy to people in this life. So thank you so much Gerald Wilson.

Wilson: Thank you, thank you, I appreciate it.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]

(Transcribed and edited by Matt Buttermann)