



Smithsonian  
National Museum of American History  
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Funding for the Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Program NEA Jazz Master interview was provided by the National Endowment for the Arts.

**EUGENE EDWARD “SNOOKY” YOUNG**  
**NEA Jazz Master (2009)**

**Interviewee:** Eugene Edward “Snooky” Young (February 3, 1919 – May 11, 2011)  
**Interviewer:** Anthony Brown with recording engineer Ken Kimery  
**Date:** February 24-25, 2009  
**Repository:** Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution  
**Description:** Transcript, 126 pp.

**Brown:** Today is February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2009 and we are conducting the Smithsonian National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Oral History interview with Snooky Young in his home in Los Angeles. Snooky Young is known as a trumpeter and he is 90 years young as of February 3<sup>rd</sup>. Is that your correct birth date Snooky?

**Young:** February 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**Brown:** 1919?

**Young:** 1919.

**Brown:** [laughs] Ok. What was your full name when you were born?

**Young:** My full name was Eugene Edward Young, Jr.

**Brown:** Named after your father?

**Young:** Yes.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



Smithsonian  
National Museum of American History  
Kenneth E. Behring Center

**Brown:** Where was your father from? Where did your father come, what was his hometown?

**Young:** My father's hometown was Dayton, Ohio

**Brown:** Ok, so he was born and raised in Dayton?

**Young:** He was born and raised in Dayton.

**Brown:** And your mother's name and where was she from?

**Young:** My mother was from Virginia. I don't remember the name of the city or anything, but I know she was from Virginia. Her family moved to Ohio, I can't tell you too much about that because it was before I was born. So I do know that my mother was from Virginia.

**Brown:** Ok, ok. Do you have, did you have, or do you have any brothers or sisters?

**Young:** Beg your pardon?

**Brown:** Brothers or sisters?

**Young:** Yes, I have. There was seven of us in my family, four boys and three girls. My oldest brother was Granville, Granville Young. I was the second, no I wasn't second, my sister was second, Mary-Louise, and then I was third; Eugene Edward Young. The fourth child was, was it Ursabelle? I think it was Ursabelle. It's hard for me to remember of my sisters and brothers now it's been so many years. Ursabelle and then Jimmy; James Young. And then my youngest brother was Don Young. I think that was all seven of my sisters and brothers.

**Brown:** Judy, go ahead, you can make an addendum.

**Judy Andrews:** Joanne...

**Brown:** Joanne.

**Judy Young:**...was the baby.

**Brown:** Joanne.

**Young:** Thank you. Joanne was my youngest sister, that was the last child that made us seven, I missed...

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** And I wasn't counting either, so it's ok. Do you remember where you were in Dayton, Ohio. What neighborhood, where in Dayton, Ohio you grew up? What part of town in Dayton, Ohio?

**Young:** In Dayton, Ohio most of my people lived on the west side. West side was the Negro neighborhood mostly. The other side, you know back in them days, it was very, people, it's hard for me to explain that. But most of the Negroes lived on the west side, the east side and other parts of town was. How can I explain that? Well, west side was where most of the black people lived, now I'll have to put it like that. East side, west side, the north side, south side; but the west side was where I was raised, where I was born on the west side.

**Brown:** So you would say you grew up in a segregated society?

**Young:** Yes.

**Brown:** So you went primarily black schools, black churches...

**Young:** Right.

**Brown:**...you had your own black stores...

**Young:** Very good., all of that is true, exactly what you said, that's the way I came up. As I got in the seventh, and eighth, and ninth, they started, how can I say...

**Brown:** Integrate?

**Young:** Integrating, exactly. Going to other schools, but I never did, I stayed on the west side, I went to Dunbar High School. They had some great teachers there, I thought. Francois, was the musician teacher at the school, Clarence Francois, you might have heard of him. The coach for the school, he was very famous. Well, I can't think of his, all of a sudden, you got me; you're catching me wrong now. I'm trying to remember things that happened when I was a kid and it's not easy to recall that. Maybe it will come back to me in a few minutes. Clayton! No, not Clayton. Stan, Stanley, Slauton...Slater was his name! He was kind of a famous football player or something back in them days at the college or something where he went to, and there was a few other good teachers there. Well, I can't recall them now, but Francois was the main one, the music teacher, he was very good, Clarence Francois.

**Brown:** What did he play?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** He played piano. Well, that's what he played; he played piano. Well, he was a music teacher there at this school and he took a likening to my brother and me. My brother also played trumpet.

**Brown:** Granville?

**Young:** Yeah, Granville. How did you know his name?

**Brown:** You told me. [laughs]

**Young:** I told you? No I didn't! But you hit his name right. Granville, was my older brother, he was a better trumpet player than me. And the school that we went to, well he was older than me, I was like three or four years younger than him. So, anyway, him and Francois—the teacher at Dunbar High School—they didn't make it together, they didn't relate and my brother quit the school. He like was in like the tenth or eleventh, or whatever grade he was, but he quit school. Francois was, I was like in the seventh or eighth grade, and Francois took a likening to me 'cause he seen something in me, that I didn't realize what he saw. But he put me in the high school band, and he tested me, he tested all the musicians, and come to find out that I was better than all the kids in the high school. And so he put me in on first trumpet, and I was like in the seventh grade, and there was the other kids much higher than me, but he put me on first trumpet. And that was one of the ways that I had kind of, I kind of went up 'cause after I got in like the seventh, eighth, or ninth grade, Wilberforce a college. Wilberforce College, you know about that college.

**Brown:** Mm-hm, uh-hm.

**Young:** They started hearing about me and they put me in that band, Wilberforce Collegiates, and I was in. Beg your pardon?

**Brown:** No, go ahead.

**Young:** I was in like about, I was in like the ninth grade then and they wanted me to come over to Wilberforce. Françoise told my mother, "Don't let him go to Wilberforce because if you do, they don't treat the kids in high school like they do the college kids." And my mother believed him and she didn't let me go. And he wanted me over there at Wilberforce; I wished it that had happened. Well a couple years later I ran off from home, I really did, and that's the way I got out of, I was like in about the tenth grade, I ran off from home and I joined a band that you just mentioned, Chick Carter.

**Brown:** Chick Carter, ok, before we get to Chick Carter, before we get there, lets go back and look at your early music training. You come from a musical family, correct?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** Right, right.

**Brown:** Can we talk about your father and mother and the instruments they played and the family band?

**Young:** Well, my father, he taught my mother how to play guitar and banjo because he was a guitar and banjo player. And there was a few bands that wanted him to come out on the road, but he wouldn't go out with them. I can't think of the name of the bands now, but they were big bands that traveled, like McKinney's Cotton Pickers, that type of band was after my father. But my father wouldn't leave home, he was good enough, but he wouldn't leave home. So he taught my mother how to play guitar and banjo. As I recall they had a family, I had an uncle that played guitar and bass fiddle I think. So they had a family band, I was too young to know what they had, I mean, but they played and did different things. But it was a string thing, all strings.

**Brown:** What was your uncle's name?

**Young:** My uncle?

**Brown:** That played the bass.

**Young:** My uncle...Uncle Guy. Guy Williams. My uncle Guy and my uncle, he was a half brother; Guy Williams was a half brother. But my other brother was Elpanzo; he played, oh man I can't think of this now. He played guitar and banjo and harp. They had a nice group, they even traveled around. This string group, that's really when I was like five or six years old, so I don't recall too much about that.

**Brown:** Did you play a string instrument also, the zither?

**Young:** Did I?

**Brown:** Yes, did you?

**Young:** Yes, I did play a string instrument now that I think about it. I don't even remember the name of it, you play it on your lap and it had a whole lot of strings on it.

**Brown:** Zither?

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** Zither.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** Yeah, that's what it was. That was the first instrument I played. Zither. It's zither?

**Brown:** Um-hm.

**Young:** Is that the...

**Brown:** Long with strings?

**Young:** Yeah, all strings and it was built like a harp, I mean.

**Brown:** Yeah, or dulcimer, I don't know if they called it a dulcimer or a zither, I'm not sure. Dulcimer or zither?

**Young:** The zither...

**Brown:** Zither, ok.

**Young:**...that sounds familiar to me.

**Brown:** Ok, lets go with the zither.

**Young:** See now, this goes back. I don't remember everything that happened in my lifetime. But I did play, I started out playing, that was the first instrument I played. That was before I played the trumpet.

**Brown:** How did you come to play the trumpet? Because of your brother Granville?

**Young:** Well, my brother started playing trumpet first. I had anther brother that wanted to play trumpet and I said, "No, I don't want to play trumpet if he's going to play trumpet." I said, "I want to play trombone." But it didn't happen that way. I got a trumpet anyway and that's how I started playing trumpet. And my oldest brother was playing, he was like three or four years older than me. He was, in fact, my brother used to sing and dance and play his horn and he did all kind of funny kind of dance, and he was a comedian like, Granville.

**Brown:** Did he perform with your parents in their band?

**Young:** Yes, he did, he performed with the family band. It was two trumpets, Granville and myself. My father played saxophone and my sister played piano, Mary Louise. Now, I haven't mentioned her yet, but she was a piano player, she was a very good piano player. We didn't have a drummer at that time, so we hired a guy to play drums for the family band because we used to play dances and things in Dayton, Ohio and we used to

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



play for different affairs, the family was that good. We used to play for dances at the Cotton Club, was a club, a bar room that was Cotton Club, that was the name of it. I don't have any reason why it was named Cotton Club. But that was the name of this ballroom, Cotton Club. And the bands, big bands used to come to town and play in this club, it was a pretty big club, I mean, not club, a ballroom, it was a pretty big ballroom.

I remember one time our family band was playing a dance in the ballroom and you'll never believe who I'm going to tell you came in and wanted to join the family band and my father wouldn't let him—Roy Eldridge. [laughs] My daddy wouldn't let him come and play against me and my brother. And we was playing, he went in the back of the hall, took his horn out and started playing, [laughs] that's the truth. Roy Eldridge was something else man, he was a great trumpet player. He went on to be the boss; you know what I'm saying. But he came through that town when me and my brother was still, he wasn't that much, he's older than me and my brother, but not that much. I'd say at least ten or fifteen years, that's about all, at the most. You see what I'm saying?

**Brown:** Yeah.

**Young:** But my brother could play, my brother was very good jazz player. He imitated, not necessarily imitated, but he copied, no well now—he loved Louis Armstrong, I'll put it like that. Most all trumpet players back in them days, Louis Armstrong was the boss and everybody was trying to play like Louis did; that includes Roy Eldridge also.

**Brown:** What kind of music were you playing in the, I know you said jazz, but do you remember any of the tunes or any of the songs you played in the family band?

**Young:** We just played regular...

**Brown:** Pop tunes?

**Young:**...popular tunes. Like the regular tunes, I could have been *St. Louis Blues*, it could have been, oh I can't think of the tunes. Regular tunes like *Stormy Weather* and back in them days those tunes were...

**Brown:** So the popular tunes...

**Young:** Popular tunes...

**Brown:**...of the day?

**Young:** And it was a lot of popular, *Confessin'...I'm Confessin'* [sings melody]. *Confessin'...I'm Confessin'*. Well, a lot of things like that, we used to play them, my dad used to sing and play, he played good saxophone. And he was good...

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** Which one, alto, tenor; what saxophone?

**Young:** Alto.

**Brown:** Alto, ok.

**Young:** Alto, he played alto.

**Brown:** Now, your father, was that his profession? He was a professional musician?

**Young:** Oh, my dad was a professional musician, yes he was.

**Brown:** That was his only job? A musician?

**Young:** Well, that was his only job. He wouldn't leave home, so he did other work 'cause there wasn't that much money in music for the professional men, any time, they would have two jobs. You see what I'm saying? They would play, but then they would have other jobs that they did. And so that's what my daddy did, he played; play at night with his family band. And then he played at night with orchestras around. What is it?

**Brown:** I don't know, but if it's bothering me, I don't know.

**Young:** He's trying to bite me. You got it, no you didn't, you missed him.

**Brown:** You get him? You're faster than me. [laughs] We're getting this all on tape. [laughs]

**Young:** He was right on the thing. Well, I'll be darn. [bang] [laughs] I think you missed it twice!

**Brown:** [laughs] I think I did, too.

**Young:** Don't hit him no more! [laughs] Boy, that thing is something else. Where did he come from?

**Brown:** [laughs] He's a big fan! He's a gnat, a little gnat, a little gnat. Dang, he'll be coming after me now.

**Young:** I'm glad it ain't but one.

**Brown:** Well, you go ahead and talk if he's on me, go ahead. [laughs]

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)





**Young:** Well, I'm glad it ain't but one. 'Cause if there was more than one...

**Brown:** Well, he's on me, he's not on you, you go ahead.

**Young:** ...we'd be in trouble.

**Brown:** So, we got up to, so let's talk about Chick Carter. That was your, that was the first band outside of your family band.

**Young:** Yeah, Chick Carter.

**Brown:** Talk about Chick Carter.

**Young:** Well.

**Brown:** What did he play?

**Young:** Chick Carter didn't play. Chick Carter was, he sang and danced and did things like that, and he was a good-looking cat.

**Brown:** So he kind of like Cab Calloway kind of guy.

**Young:** Yeah, exactly! I'm glad you hit that nail on the head. [clears his throat] Excuse me.

**Brown:** [whisper] Sorry I hit him. [laughs]

**Young:** But he, he didn't do, but he was like Cab Calloway in other words. He conducted the band and he was the handsome cat and all the women was after him like that was after Cab and them kind of thing.

**Brown:** So, Chick Carter band, how big was the band?

**Young:** How big was the band?

**Brown:** Yeah.

**Young:** Well, it was a big band, but it wasn't that big back in them days. He had three trumpets, I think he had maybe four or five, I don't know if he had five saxophones or not, 'cause five saxophones came later in big bands. And more than three trumpets, there was three trumpets in that band. A lot of the time there wasn't but two trumpets. But three trumpets, we talking about...

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** Chick Carter.

**Young:** Chick Carter, yeah, there was three trumpets, and I won't tell you the trumpets players in Chick Carter's band. I thought I was going to tell you.

**Brown:** Well, Gerald Wilson was one.

**Young:** Well, Gerald came in later.

**Brown:** Oh, ok.

**Young:** At the beginning it was, Kale...Hale...Hale was his first trumpet player. Hale, he was the first trumpet player until I got in there. And then he had someone, he used to mess with mouthpieces so much. He wasn't good 'cause he was always trimming mouthpieces. His sound would never stay the same. He was a good player though, but he messed with mouthpieces. He never did, it got so, his sound would be like [buzzes lips]. I mean, it would. And I came in there and I even wound up playing the first trumpet. He played some of the jazz 'cause he was, and the women all liked him, he was a handsome cat. But it was one of them kind of things, you know what I'm saying? He was good looking, but he wanted to play, but he kept messing with mouthpieces. And it really, you can't mess with mouthpieces with trumpet, trumpet is a funny instrument. I've played darn near the same mouthpiece now that I started out with. I had them made over, I had a couple mouthpieces, but they were just about like the ones I started out. So that's why I was able to do everything I've wanted to do, and I can still do it, oh yeah. I play with a band right now that's top band, you know, Clayton-Hamilton. Is there any band out there any better than that band? You see what I mean? And so, I feel good about that because the other day I turned ninety years old and I didn't know that I would still be playing at ninety. And a whole lot of guys don't still play at ninety, and it ain't an easy thing to do—especially trumpet. [unison with interviewer]

**Brown:** Trumpet. [laughs]

**Young:** Especially trumpet!

**Brown:** Especially trumpet!

**Young:** Because you lose your teeth. Oh man, I don't even want to go into it, but I'm knock on wood, I hope I can still play.

**Brown:** Lets go back and talk a little bit more about Chick Carter. How did you get in the band? Were you recommended?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** Chick Carter's band, there was a lot of good guys in that band, came out of that band. Tizo Miller. Curtis Miller, he went with somebody else, Tizo. Eddie Berg on drums. You just remind of Eddie, something about you reminds me of Eddie Berg. He had a great smile, a great everything, but he could play man. [shoo] He could play. Eddie Berg. Tweedlin' Beard on bass. He got pretty good but I mean he didn't get all the way to the top, but he was very good; he should have, but he didn't. Not all good musicians didn't make it back in them days, you know what I'm saying. Whole lot of people don't get on big time. I don't know why, but they should, but they don't, I can't explain that.

**Brown:** Do you remember how old you were when you joined Chick Carter's band? How old you were, how old?

**Young:** How old was I?

**Brown:** Yes...because you left home, you said, in the tenth grade you left school.

**Young:** I must have been, I went with Jimmie when I was nineteen, so I must have been fifteen or sixteen years old when I went with Chick.

**Brown:** And how long were you in Chick Carter's band?

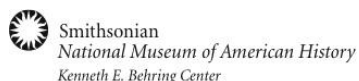
**Young:** I was with Chick Carter's band, well we did pretty good, the band got all the way to New York—then we played Apollo, I don't know—but the band got to New York and they got stranded. You know, back in them days, things happened to them. We stayed around that town for quite awhile before we could do anything, I don't think we played the Apollo. We thought we were going to play the Apollo but it didn't happen. We went on to Boston and played a club in Boston. What was the name of that club? Ray Perry was playing, oh man, you making me think of some things that I.

**Brown:** We can come back to that, we can come back to that. So you played a club in Boston and then did you stay in Boston or did you then go back to New York or what?

**Young:** No, we stayed in Boston because we played a club in Boston, a famous club. I don't know how it happened but the band got in this club and we played this famous club in Boston and we was there for about a month because it was a place where bands came and stayed about a month. After that, well the band I don't think we still never did get to the Apollo. We should have, and it was good enough to get to the Apollo but I don't think the manager and whoever hired didn't get the band into the Apollo Theater. Because that makes you back in them days, you played Apollo. All the bands go in there and play the Apollo they go on up, you see. That happened with... What's that trumpet player from college had that band? From down south had a big band?

**Brown:** At that time?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** He was a famous trumpet player, too. He was down from, the band was from Alabama. And it was Alabama State's but they went onto New York and played. What was that trumpet player's name?

**Brown:** I can't remember.

**Young:** I can't believe it, I can't. He was good, too. He had range and he had about, he was. Was it Alabama, no, Alabama State? No, it wasn't. You've got to know it.

**Brown:** Yeah, I know...

**Young:** I will come back to me, it'll come to me.

**Brown:** Ok, ok.

**Young:** Anyway, where were we?

**Brown:** We were talking about the Chick Carter band that you guys were stranded in New York; you got the gig in Boston, never got to play the Apollo.

**Young:** No, we never got to play the Apollo. That's when that violin player, famous violin player, joined Chick Carter's band. And he went onto play with...

**Brown:** Not Eddie South?

**Young:** No.

**Brown:** No.

**Young:** Keep on naming because you got to name him.

**Brown:** [uh] Dang. [laughs]

**Kimery:** Stuff Smith?

**Brown:** Stuff Smith? Stuff Smith? Stuff Smith.

**Young:** No, not Stuff Smith. Now you've done named two, now he was just as good as them two men you named. He was a little younger than they were, he also played saxophone and violin.

**Brown:** Man, [laughs] now you've got me. [laughs]

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

**Young:** How can I not call it? You call. Oh, that's a shame, I can't think of these people.

**Brown:** Well, don't feel bad, I can't either.

**Young:** Who?

**Brown:** I can't either.

**Young:** He played with, he came to California and joined. Who's band did he play with? The band came, he was a drummer, and had that big band that left and went to New York. He was from California, the drummer.

**Brown:** Lionel Hampton?

**Young:** Lionel Hampton. He played with Lionel Hampton for a short time before he passed...

**Brown:** Hm, violin.

**Young:** ...but he came to California, but he was good.

**Brown:** But he was in Chick Carter's band, he joined Chick Carter's band when you were in the band?

**Young:** Yeah, he joined Chick Carter coming out of Boston, he was from originally from Boston. And he came with Chick Carter...

**Kimery:** Joe Kennedy?

**Young:** Who?

**Brown:** Joe Kennedy? Joe Kennedy?

**Young:** Joe?

**Brown:** No.

**Young:** Joe?

**Brown:** Kennedy?

**Young:** No.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

**Brown:** No, ok.

**Young:** Is that a white fellow you mentioned?

**Kimery:** No.

**Young:** Because that sounds like a white man's name. Joe Kennedy, you said? No, that was not him. Joe Kennedy. No, I'll tell you his name because he and I were good buddies, I can't think, I just my mind is doing things to me at times and then as soon as we get through talking he'll come, here he comes.

**Brown:** Well, we'll come, maybe this will come back to you, we'll plug it in tomorrow.

**Young:** Good.

**Brown:** Ok.

**Young:** Because he...

**Brown:** Yeah?

**Young:** Go ahead.

**Brown:** Well, again, so you're saying that this violinist joined the band, you're still in the band. Now... [cough] Are you playing consistently with the Chick Carter band? This is what you're doing from the time you left high school up until you pretty much you're going to go join...

**Young:** You see, we played consistently in Chick Carter's band because in them days there was all kind of little clubs that the bands would play in and the band was playing, we wasn't making nothing. You'd make eighteen or nineteen, twenty dollars at the most. That's very good if you got that. But the bands played all the time, there was bands that there were a lot of bands like that, that didn't quite get up to the big time, but they, some of them should have. Chick Carter's band should have but they didn't make it, I don't know why. And there was a band in, was it in Columbus? No, Cleveland...Columbus. And they had a lot of good guys in that band, and that band didn't make it either to the big time. You know this band. Poor me, go ahead, go ahead, I don't know.

**Brown:** Ok, so you were in Chick Carter's band, and then is your next big...

**Young:** Beg your pardon?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** I said, after Chick Carter's band is that when you joined Jimmie Lunceford's band?

**Young:** Well, Chick Carter's band, I played with Chick Carter's band and Gerald got in, Gerald Wilson got in Chick Carter's band. We was in Dayton and we played a battle of jazz against...

**Brown:** Not Jimmie Lunceford, another band? Not Jimmie Lunceford's band?

**Young:** No, it wasn't Jimmie Lunceford's band, it was another famous band but it wasn't. It was like that college band I was talking about a few minutes ago. Chick Carter's band had a battle of the bands against that college band and there was a trumpet player that had that band out of that Alabama; 'Bama state... 'Bama state college. What was that guy's name had that band? He was a big cat and he...

**Brown:** Trumpet player, damn. Yeah, it's just not ringing a bell, I'm sorry. Anyway, there was a battle of bands between them.

**Young:** Yeah, a battle of bands, and we battled that band in Dayton, Ohio and that was the last band that Chick Carter's band played because something happened, we didn't have any jobs after that. And Gerald stayed around in town, the next thing he knew he was gone to Chicago to join Jimmie Lunceford's band, Gerald Wilson. He left that town, he left Dayton and he went to...

**Brown:** Chicago.

**Young:** Went to...

**Brown:** Did you say Chicago to join Jimmie Lunceford's band?

**Young:** Oh, where did he go to join, was it in... yeah, Chicago I think it was, and he joined Jimmie Lunceford.

**Brown:** How was it, what was it like? Do you remember when Gerald came into the Chick Carter band? How was his playing?

**Young:** How was Gerald's playing?

**Brown:** Yeah.

**Young:** Gerald was, his playing, Gerald was a good player, he was a good soloist. And I played first and Gerald played, Gerald could play first but he didn't have no high range and certain arrangements he couldn't play because certain first parts it goes up, you

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

know. And Gerald couldn't do that, didn't do that. So in Chick Carter's band Gerald played, he didn't play no first, I played the first. And then he got with... what did I say, Jimmie Lunceford. He replaced... he replaced the guy who wrote a lot of music for Jimmie Lunceford...

**Brown:** Sy Oliver... Sy Oliver.

**Young:** Sy Oliver, there you go. He replaced Sy Oliver, but Sy Oliver wasn't no lead trumpet player either, but he did a lot of arrangements. The lead trumpet player, Gerald replaced Sy Oliver, I went in Jimmie Lunceford's band and replaced the first trumpet player, Eddie Tompkins.

**Brown:** Right. Ok, so how come you replaced him? Why did Eddie Tompkins leave the band?

**Young:** Why did he?

**Brown:** Why did you come into the band? Why did Eddie Tompkins leave?

**Young:** Eddie Tompkins, that's a good question. That is a very good question. Eddie Tompkins walked off of the stage in Washington, DC from the band and they never knew why he left and he never came back. He walked off of the stage in Washington, DC and Gerald Wilson said, "I've got a trumpet player who could come and play, replace Eddie Tompkins." Gerald told him about me and Jimmie Lunceford went to school with a funeral man in Dayton that had a funeral parlor and everything; used to tell Jimmie about me. And so that helped me to get in that band, repeating this man, his friend and when Gerald went to bat and said, "Got to get Snooky, Snooky can play first trumpet." Between those two men I got in that band and I went in there and I knock on wood, I made it. It wasn't easy going in Lunceford's band coming from nowhere because Lunceford was, you know what I'm saying, it was a top band and they had everything, they played, they did everything.

**Brown:** When you say it was tough, was it because the other musicians they didn't treat you well? Or was it that the work was so rigorous or demanding? Why did you say it was tough working with Jimmie Lunceford?

**Young:** Why did I say it was tough when I went with?

**Brown:** Yeah.

**Young:** Well, coming from where I came from it would be tough for anybody going in Jimmie Lunceford's band because Lunceford's band was top band, and they played everything and they did everything. And what I mean by that is they played theaters, they

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)





played everything; coming from where I came from I hadn't done any of that. So Lunceford's band was, well it was just one of the sharpest bands on the road, they had seven uniforms. And they had trunks, I don't see how they did that back in them days. They had, we had exactly seven uniforms, and when we played theaters we had a morning suit to wear with striped pants and, you know what the morning suit is. We changed, we played four shows a day, we changed uniforms for every show. Can you believe that? I can't believe that either, Jimmie Lunceford's band, but it was a sharp band man. Duke Ellington was sharp, too. But Jimmie Lunceford, I think Jimmie Lunceford came up and did a little something to Duke's band so far as dressing and everything is concerned because Duke was sharp. His band, I don't know if his band had seven uniforms or not, but I know Jimmie Lunceford's band did because I was in there.

**Brown:** And I'm sure the pay was much better.

**Young:** Beg your pardon?

**Brown:** The pay?

**Young:** The pay?

**Brown:** Um-hm, in Jimmie's band?

**Young:** Jimmie's band, not much better than what? Much better than what, what I was making?

**Brown:** Chick Carter. [laughs]

**Young:** You mean what I was making? You better believe it! [laughs] That's going on big time, when you get in that situation, you get on big time. But the big time back in them days, it was during depression, 1939 and that was during depression. If you made, if I made, I think Jimmie Lunceford paid you ten dollars a night and if you worked seven days you got seventy dollars. Now that was a lot of money back in them days, so we generally worked, we always worked five or six days a week every week. And we did one night stands every place, it would be nothing to have one night stands for the whole, every day. I wish I had my, I got some records to show you some of the itineraries of Jimmie Lunceford's band, all of those bands did that back in them days. And when the band sat down for a week at a theater or play a week at a, well they play a week at a ballroom. The bands felt great, it felt great to them to sit down for a week and not doing them one night stands every day all over. But that makes you though, man. That really makes you, I mean, musicians was better in them days I think than they are nowadays, you know.

**Brown:** I agree, I agree.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** You see what I'm...but that's the reason though, you know. I don't think, it's too bad that they don't have a situation like that now where they have big bands and a lot musicians go out and play in them bands and get the knowledge of playing music because they don't have, I don't think they have that nowadays. Do they? You can tell me because I don't know, I'm not up to what's going on now.

**Brown:** They don't have that anymore. [laughs]

**Young:** See, well then you answering exactly what I'm talking about. If they did, you see, there was a lot of good bands on the road back in them days. Cab Calloway, Jimmie Lunceford, Count Basie...what's that? Name some of them bands.

**Brown:** You've got Hampton. You've got...

**Young:** Hampton.

**Brown:**...yeah, you've got Earl Father Hines...

**Young:** Yep, that's right.

**Brown:** Yeah...you...shoot...

**Young:** The band out of Chicago.

**Brown:** Well, that was Father Hines, right?

**Young:** Yeah...

**Brown:** Yeah...

**Young:** Father Hines.

**Brown:** Right.

**Young:** And there was one band that had a woman that played so good, Andy Kirk.

**Brown:** Yeah, Andy Kirk, yeah, Mary Lou Williams.

**Young:** Mary Lou Williams, you see what I'm saying?

**Brown:** Right.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** All them bands.

**Brown:** And you mentioned McKinney Cotton Pickers.

**Young:** McKinney Cotton Pickers. Well, see now, my daddy, the man that taught me was supposed to go into McKinney Cotton Pickers. But that was another band back in them days, you see, he was a trumpet player. Ed Saunders, they wanted him bad in that band and he would not leave Dayton. I'll never understand that, but some musicians who just didn't want to go on the road. My daddy was kind of like that, too. He was good enough to go on the road but he never did. My brother went back home after playing with Floyd Ray's band. And Floyd Ray is from California. He went back to play with Floyd Ray, he went back to Dayton, never come out again. Never played with another big band. When I went with Jimmie Lunceford that same year, that's what I'm talking about. He came out here with Floyd Ray. You've heard of Floyd Ray, haven't you?

**Brown:** Um-hm.

**Young:** That was a good band, he also had, Floyd Ray also had singers, four girl singers. He had a great band, man, Floyd Ray did. He almost got to the top, he should have got to the top, but some people, some of them back in them days get right there and something happens.

**Brown:** What about like Les Hite?

**Young:** Who?

**Brown:** Les Hite?

**Young:** Les Hite.

**Brown:** Another one.

**Young:** That was a good band, I came out to California and joined Les Hite's band.

**Brown:** Well, you said Floyd Ray, reminded me of other California.

**Young:** Right, yes.

**Brown:** Yeah...yes.

**Young:** Les Hite was a good band, man. When I came out, quit Jimmie Lunceford, and finally Gerald, we both quit the same year in '42. Gerald came to California, Lester Young and Lee Young formed a band and they knew I was in Dayton so they wanted

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



Snooky Young in that Young band. I came to California to join Lee and Lester Young's band and somehow I didn't want to play in a small band. I swear to God, I didn't want to play in a small band and I joined Floyd, I mean...

**Brown:** Les Hite.

**Young:**...Les Hite.

**Brown:** Ok, lets go back. Lets go back to when you were still in Jimmie Lunceford. Did you record before you got into Jimmie Lunceford's band?

**Young:** Did I record?

**Brown:** Um-hm.

**Young:** No. We did record, but I don't think it was ever; Chick Carter did some recording but I don't think it ever came out or anything. It never did hit the air or anything. So the only first time I recorded really would be with Jimmie Lunceford. And that tune that you mentioned...

**Brown:** *Uptown Blues*.

**Young:** *Uptown Blues* was the tune that made me, that was my solo and that was a funny thing, I knock on wood. That put me up there, man, *Uptown Blues* did, and I don't know how it happened. But I wanted to play, people that I idolized and wanted to blow was Roy Eldridge and them cats, that what I wanted to be when I went in Lunceford's band. But I wound up being a first trumpet player, so I said, "That was where I was supposed to be anyways." Because I didn't, well, for some reason I didn't go through all the stuff you have to go through to study changes and all of that stuff, I didn't go through that. I wasn't on that level, I wanted to play and I wanted to play first trumpet. And I wound up playing first trumpet. I learned some changes and did some things, but I think jazz players have to know all of that stuff. You know what I'm saying. They better know, or else you can forget it. [laughs]

**Brown:** [laughs] But you definitely learned enough to be able to solo...

**Young:** Oh, I learned enough...

**Brown:**...and solo and have a distinctive...

**Young:** You see, I played what I wanted to play...and well...I played what I wanted to play. I didn't really want to be a soloist in those bands and things and I wind up being the first trumpet player. So most first trumpet players don't play no solos anyway, maybe one

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

tune a night or something. You see, so that's the way I wound up. But it didn't bother me because that's where I was best at. I fact, when I was a kid my brother did all the soloing and I played...well he played the first trumpet then because I was too young to really play, because he played the first, but he did all the jazz playing, my brother did.

**Brown:** So there were some other tunes on that recording, during that, how about *Twenty-Four Robbers*?

**Young:** Say it again.

**Brown:** *Twenty-Four Robbers...Twenty-Four Robbers*. I know there was a solo on there, I was wondering if that was you. Or *Blues in the Night*?

**Young:** *Blues in the Night*. Yes.

**Brown:** Did you solo on any of the other recordings during that session?

**Young:** You played a lot of solos in them bands, but I can't recall a lot of tunes, and you only played eight, ten, or twelve bars back in them days because...it was all just on a recording, you didn't play, very seldom did you feature the whole thing, I mean, you see what I'm saying.

**Brown:** Right, right. Why, whose decision was it for you to solo on *Uptown Blues*? Who was the bandleader?

**Young:** That's a good question; I think Jimmie Lunceford was, because I think, yeah well, I tell you how that possibly happened now that I think about it. Gerald Wilson, myself, and Paul Webster...they gave it to me because I played better solos, not better I won't say that either, but I, how can I explain that because they didn't give it go Paul, they gave it to me, told me to play. And they didn't give it to Gerald; it was just us three trumpets in them days. I don't know why they gave it go me because...

**Brown:** They made the right decision though. [laughs]

**Young:** I think so. I think they, I really do, I think they made the right decision because that became one of the best things that I ever, well not one of the best things that I ever did, but more popular. I recorded with all the bands—Count Basie—all of the bands and everything, but it was never like *Uptown Blues* for some reason.

**Brown:** So did Jimmie keep this as a feature for you?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** Yes, in fact, he made that into a theme song. He made it because he used to have another theme song he played, I can't think of it, but anyway he turned that into his theme song.

**Brown:** So you joined the band in '39, you do your first recording that got you, that made you a star, let's say that.

**Young:** Well..

**Brown:** Why not?

**Young:** I don't know when, does it say when it was recorded?

**Brown:** 1939.

**Young:** Well, that was the year I went in the band.

**Brown:** It says here that, "Uptown Blues was recorded on December 14...December 14, 1939.

**Young:** Ain't that something, that was right after I joined the band. It said December because I joined the band like...December 1939, wow. It must have been, read that again.

**Brown:** It said, "*Uptown Blues* was recorded on December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1939."

**Young:** October?

**Brown:** December.

**Young:** December, 1939...December, 1939. If I joined the band in '39...that's, I joined the band in '39. So, September, October...what month?

**Brown:** December.

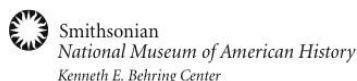
**Young:** December, yeah, after I was in the band about three months then, because it was like October, November, December...around that time is when I joined that band.

**Brown:** Ok, ok.

**Young:** And, so, yeah, I'd see, I'm thinking about '40, so that was in...

**Brown:** December, yeah. So it was December '39? So, in a couple weeks it would have been 1940.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** Yeah, that's the way it was, yep, that's when I joined that band that year...yeah, '39.

**Brown:** Became a star right away. [laughs]

**Young:** [laughs] Well, I tell you what back in them days, when we get to New York there was always a lot of jamming and blowing going on and so, but I was scared to go out and blow. I was just, when you're nineteen you're scared to go out when you hit New York, you know what I'm saying. Some guys its, I wasn't one of those guys, some guys was really going, I was never one of those guys.

**Brown:** That's probably why you're still here at ninety years old. [laughs]

**Young:** [laughs] Maybe so. [laughs] But I was, in fact, I didn't go out and jam in New York, I was just scared to jam, I don't know why. But that...

**Brown:** What about Gerald or Paul, did they go?

**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** What about Gerald or Paul Webster, did they go out and jam?

**Young:** Gerald?

**Brown:** Gerald or Paul Webster, the other trumpet players...

**Young:** Oh, Paul Webster...

**Brown:** Yeah, did they go out and jam?

**Young:** Paul did, I think, but you see, the band didn't stay in New York long. We wouldn't be in there no time before we'd be back out on the road. And so, there was the place where they hung out. You know the name of the club, the place where they hung out in New York and jammed?

**Brown:** Minton's?

**Young:** That's it.

**Brown:** Ok, they got Minton's. You've got Monroe's Playhouse, you've had a couple places, but Minton's was the one uptown.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** Yes.

**Brown:** Yeah.

**Young:** You see, I went into them places but I never would take my horn out, I was scared. I was, that was the way I was, I was introverted I guess, and I was too scared to go out and blow, and some guys wanted to go out and blow, you know. But I wasn't one of them kind of guys. Like Roy used to look for people...

**Brown:** Go cut 'em...[laughs]

**Young:** Yeah, Roy would look for people. [laughs] There was some other guys like that too, and they would run into them places where guys would jam, they'd be waiting on you to come in there, and if you come in there thinking you going to get something out, that's tough; Roy was a bad cat, man.

**Brown:** So you stated earlier that your influences were Louis Armstrong. Louis Armstrong was a major influence when you were first learning to play trumpet.

**Young:** Yes.

**Brown:** Then Roy Eldridge was another influence. Who were some other people you were listening to you felt influenced your sound?

**Young:** Dizzy Gillespie. [laughs] Me and Dizzy was good friends.

**Brown:** So you met him? When did you meet Dizzy?

**Young:** I met, huh?

**Brown:** When did you meet Dizzy?

**Young:** When did I meet Dizzy...how did I meet Dizzy. I met Dizzy, Dizzy and I did a lot of thing together. When I come to, I was in New York and Dizzy took a liking to me before he got to be Dizzy, I mean before he got the name. He had the name, but he wasn't Dizzy Gillespie yet. You know what I'm saying? He hadn't made those things that made him Dizzy yet. And I used to run with Dizzy before he got to be Dizzy.

**Brown:** When he was still with Cab's band?

**Young:** Yeah, that's right...

**Brown:** Ok.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)





**Young:** ...when he was with Cab's band. See I was with Jimmie Lunceford, and he was with Cab's band and we used to kind of hang together and everything...and it was other trumpet players I used to be hanging with. I wish I could call their names, man, they were good trumpet players in them big bands, you know them, too. I can't think of nobody's name.

**Brown:** Well, lets go back and look at your time with Jimmie Lunceford. You said you joined in '39 but you left in '42.

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** And you and Gerald Wilson had about the same length of tenure, correct? You were in the band about the same time, because he was already in Jimmie Lunceford and then you joined. Then who left first?

**Young:** You say what?

**Brown:** Who left first, you or Gerald? Who left in '42.

**Young:** Boy you hit some of the greatest questions in the world. You know, Gerald Wilson and I left the same day. The same day and we left for the same reason, we was the lowest paid men in Jimmie Lunceford's band. We went, Gerald went to him and asked for us to give him a raise, you know give us; Gerald was writing and doing different things for the band. I was playing first and Gerald was singing in the quartet, and everything. We was really, we kind of took the band up from where it was. Gerald wanted Lunceford to give us some more money, pay us like you paying the rest of the guys, we was the lowest paid men in the band. Gerald asked for some money, I didn't, Gerald asked for some money, and so I said, "Yeah, me too!" [laughs] He never would give us no money. So we put in our notice, I don't think he thought we was going to quit but we walked off of that bandstand in Detroit, Michigan the same night. And the guys all just broke down, Willie Smith and Jimmy Crawford and all the guys, they were just so upset with this.

Jimmie letting me and Gerald go because we kind of, you know how we did, the band was hot, man. We helped to make that band hot and the older guys in the band they kind of dug us, I know they did because Joe Thomas and... Trummy Young and all them guys in that band. They just, I tell you what they didn't stay in the band six months after that and they had been in that band all of them years. Six months later mostly, like Willie Smith left. Now, Willie Smith was the Jimmie Lunceford of that band, in other words, he was the, Willie Smith was conducted, he did everything, rehearsing, he was the bandleader.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** Was he what they called the straw boss?

**Young:** Straw boss.

**Brown:** So Willie Smith was the straw boss for the Jimmie Lunceford band?

**Young:** Yeah, he was the straw boss and he was... Willie Smith, he was a nice cat, Willie and I was really good friends. Willie, I loved Willie, he loved me too. When I went in that band he used to call me a kid when I went in. I was a kid, under them, you know what I mean. Willie Smith...you about ready?

**Brown:** That's ok, go ahead, finish your thought on Willie, go ahead because...

**Young:** Willie Smith was, well he was the straw boss of the band...

**Brown:** Right, I got you.

**Young:** And so Willie Smith and Jimmy Crawford, Dan Grissom. Dan was a good singer you know, Dan sang.

**Brown:** *Ain't What You Do...*?

**Young:** What? What did you say? [laughs]

**Brown:** "It's the way THAT you do it!" [laughs] No, we're going to go ahead and stop now, we're going to come back. "It ain't what you're doing, it's the way THAT you do it." [sings]

**Young:** Oh, that was a great band, man.

**Brown:** Ok, this is tape two of the Smithsonian NEA Jazz Oral History interview with Snooky Young. Well, we talked about, you talked about Diz, you knew Diz before he was Diz, or known as Diz. But we didn't talk about how you got your name, Snooky. [laughs]

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** Because Diz got his name...

**Young:** That's right.

**Brown:** How did you get your name Snooky?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** I got my name when I was a little baby, I don't know how I got my name Snooky. I haven't the slightest idea, one of my aunts started calling me "Snooks." And as time went on it stayed Snooks, finally it got, I don't know when it went to Snooky, but it finally went to Snooky. But I haven't the slightest idea; I think it was an aunt who named me Snooks and it went on. They used to like me and when I was a little kid, my aunts, a couple of them, really liked me as a little kid.

**Brown:** I'm wondering, since you were a junior, they couldn't call you Eugene or Edward, because that's your father's name. And maybe, I don't know, I'm just, I don't know...

**Young:** Well they called me, when I first went in school, they called me Eugene. But that didn't last long – Eugene Edward Young. Well I think I was called "junior," not in school, but at home sometimes. Junior they would call me. But that didn't last long. I can't tell but I do remember being called Junior, some.

**Brown:** [laughs] Okay, but your professional name "Snooky," that's what you, that's what you stuck with, "Snooky Young," your professional name.

**Young:** Well, after I got, uh... Snooky Young, that got to be, after I got in...uh, got out of Chick Carter's Band and different bands and things, Snooky Young, this went together. You know, Snooky Young, they didn't just say Snooky, they said Snooky Young. So it kind of went together, that's how I got to be Snooky Young, I think.

**Brown:** [laughs] Okay, now let's talk about your last name "Young," because we're going to be talking about Trummy Young and you're going to be leaving Jimmy Lunceford to go join Lester and Lee Young. Are you related to them, do you know of any relation, direct relation or indirect relation?

**Young:** No, I'm not related to Lee Young, I'm not, Lee Young and Lester Young are brothers. And I'm not related to Tremor Young. Yeah, Lester young's I'm not related to them in any way. No kind of way.

**Brown:** Okay, okay, so let's, we're going to bring it back up to when you were still in the Lunceford band right before you left the Lunceford band. I want to talk about another individual, Booty Wood, who was with you in the Chick Carter band. Can you talk about Booty, Booty Wood?

**Young:** Booty was never got in Lunceford's band.

**Brown:** No, in, in, excuse me, in Chick Carter's Band.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** He went with, He left with...well anyway, Booty and I was, we was in high school together in Dayton, Ohio, at the Dunbar High School. Teacher was Francoise, Clarence Francoise. And so, we was in the band. We was a, we was a, a kind of the main ones in the band, Booty Woods, myself, who else was? There were some more guys who was kind of important, in that high school band, because we turned out to be the guys that kind of led the band, in other words. Booty, and myself was...we were very good friends, close friends. That's about the best I can say about that, uh...unless there's something else you might want to ask me.

**Brown:** No that's okay, seems like you might cross paths with him later on because he played in Hamp's band. I don't know if you played in Hamp's band together with Booty Wood. Did you play in bands together with him later?

**Young:** No, I never played in Hamp's band when Booty was in the band.

**Brown:** Okay, okay.

**Young:** But he might've been after me, I mean, in Booty's Band, because there were so many years in Hamp's band. I don't know if I was before Booty, I think I was. Yes I was before Booty in Hamp's band. But I don't play when Booty was in Hamp's band.

**Brown:** Okay, I just wanted to bring him up because he's from Dayton, Ohio as well. Booty is from Dayton as well, so I was just trying to mention all the people who came out of Dayton with you. Who grew up with you in Dayton, so Booty was one.

**Young:** Which ones come out of Dayton?

**Brown:** Yeah, that's all I'm saying. Booty Wood would've been someone who grew up, or was in Dayton with you?

**Young:** Well there was Booty, uh...Curtis Miller, Curtis Miller was named "Tizo."

**Brown:** Right.

**Young:** They nicknamed him "Tizo," and that was Curtis Miller "Tizo." And who else was out of Dayton...well Lady Bird wasn't out of Dayton, out of Springfield. Just the same as Dayton, he lived out in Dayton all the time. Lady Bird, I can't...you got any other guys you want to ask me about from that territory?

**Brown:** No that's okay, let's go back to Jimmy Lunceford. You guys, uh...where we left off is that Gerald had gone to ask for a raise, Jimmie said no, so you guys left in Detroit. Then what happened?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** Well, we left in Detroit...

**Brown:** Let me interrupt you. Sorry, let's go back and talk about your relationship with some other members of Jimmie Lunceford band.

**Young:** What?

**Brown:** The other members of Jimmie Lunceford band, like you knew Jimmy Crawford. Can you tell me about Jimmy Crawford? [laughs]

**Young:** Oh Jimmy Crawford, man, he was just beautiful man. Jimmy Crawford, a great drummer too. He wound up playing, after I left Lunceford, after it was over, he started playing in all the theaters, doing theater in New York. He stayed in the theaters for years, playing for the shows and things, Crawford was a nice man, beautiful cat.

**Brown:** Uh, okay. So then in Detroit you and Gerald leave the Jimmie Lunceford orchestra. Then what happened, what'd you do? That would've been 1942? Is that correct, 1942 is when you left?

**Young:** 1942. When I went on home to Dayton, Gerald went...Gerald went to California. Now that's when Gerald went to California, because he was married to one of the Dandridge sisters. And they were from California. Gerald was married to Vivian I think her name was Vivian.

**Brown:** And that was Dorothy Dandridge's sister?

**Young:** Yeah the Dandridge sisters. Vivian, Dorothy, what's the big one's name? [laughs] Well, anyway, the three Dandridge sisters, Gerald was married to one of them. And he went on to California 'cause that's where his wife lived. And I went on, I stayed in Dayton for a little while. And then I decided that I was going to go to California and join Lee and Lester Young. They wanted me to come, they wanted me to join, to have the Youngs, to have a band together. It would've been a good band too, but I went, I went to California. I joined them, I didn't join them, I went to California to join them. And for some reason, I wasn't mentally with the band and everything that was going on in that band. Because there was a lot of things going on in that band, with Lester and, what's the tenor player's name.

They was doing a lot of stuff man, I ain't going to mess with a lot of things they was doing. But it wasn't, it just wasn't my thing. I thought it was, and they thought so too, Lee Young, Lester Young, Snooky Young, they were going to try to get Trummy Young, but it didn't happen. I tried for a few minutes for a little while, I rehearsed with the band and everything, but I wound up not liking the band and then I joined Les Hite's band in California. That's exactly what I did. And Gerald Wilson was in Les Hite's band, so me

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



and Gerald was good friends anyway. So Gerald and I, Gerald helped to pull me over to Les Hite's band really, because he said, "Snooky just come on over and meet this band." And we had been in Lunceford's band together. So I just automatically went with Les Hite's band and I stayed with the band for quite a while. Anything you needed to, want me to...

**Brown:** Well it says here...that you went on tour briefly with Count Basie's band in June '42. Did you go on tour with Count Basie's band in June of 1942? Well, when they came to Dayton, when Count Basie's band came to Dayton, did you perform with them?

**Young:** Let me think, let me see now. Yes, I was in there in '42. Oh, I think...yes, that's when they came through and I, and I think they needed a trumpet player because...what's his name? Buck Clayton...

**Brown:** Buck Clayton was ill.

**Young:** Buck Clayton had to have his tonsils out or something. So I went and stayed with the band till Buck Clayton come back. Because they asked me would I come and join the band. And I told them I'm going to replace Buck Clayton, that ain't my chair. They said don't worry about it, come on in the band anyway. Because Buck Clayton was the soloist in that band, Buck Clayton and Harry Edison, you know what I'm saying. So but I'm a first trumpet player, so they wanted me in there anyway. So I went on the road with them for about a month till Buck Clayton got well and came back. So then I went back home, that's when I went back home and went on to California.

**Brown:** Okay. So in California you went, you worked with Lionel Hampton and Les Hite and Benny Carter as well. Did you work with Benny Carter's band?

**Young:** Yes, I did. I cannot put that together. I went back home and I played with Benny Carter. I can't...Benny Carter...I was out on the west coast when I joined Benny Carter's band. I went on the west coast and was playing with Les Hite's band. And Les Hite's band wasn't playing that much. And I think Gerald Wilson and myself and two other trumpet players joined Benny Carter's band. A Complete trumpet section went in Benny Carter's band. And we stayed in the band for quite a while, but that's what happened there.

**Brown:** Uh huh, okay. So you made a couple of films, one in nineteen, you made some films, a short film; 1941 with Jimmie Lunceford called *Blues in the Night*.

**Young:** Yes.

**Brown:**...and then you also made another film with Basie called *Choo Choo Swing*.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** What?

**Brown:** *Choo Choo Swing...Choo Choo Swing, or Band Parade.*

**Young:** I'm not understanding that word you're saying.

**Brown:** *Choo Choo Swing.*

**Young:** *Choo Choo...*

**Brown:** *Swing...Swing.*

**Young:** Queen?

**Brown:** *Swing...Swing.*

**Young:** *Swing?*

**Brown:** *Swing.*

**Young:** *Choo Choo Swing?*

**Brown:** Uh-huh.

**Young:** I don't remember that at all...

**Brown:** ok.

**Young:**...I'm sorry.

**Brown:** That's okay, that's alright. And then, according to this, that was in 1943. That was with Basie's band, *Choo Choo Swing*, made a film, short film.

**Young:** *Choo Choo Swing* was with Basie, you said?

**Brown:** That's what, yes.

**Young:** Yeah, it was a short film, that's why I don't remember it. Yeah, *Choo Choo Swing* probably was. Okay...I didn't think it was with Lunceford. *Choo Choo Swing*, I was with Basie when I was recording thing. Yeah. *Choo Choo Swing*, that's a funny thing, I don't remember that at all. Did somebody sing on it or something?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** I don't know, I haven't seen it myself, I don't know. [laughs] But now I'm looking again, so it says you went back to Basie in June of '45. Is that correct, you went back and you were with him from June '45 to January 1948, is that correct?

**Young:** Say that again?

**Brown:** That you performed with Count Basie's band from June of 1945 to January 1948? Were you with Basie's Band at this period?

**Young:** Yes. What did I do after that? You said from '45-'48?

**Brown:** Yes, you were with Basie's band, is that correct?

**Young:** Yes. That's right. But is that when I went into the *Tonight Show*?

**Brown:** No, we're talking about Count Basie's band.

**Young:** We're talking about Count Basie's band?

**Brown:** Yeah. From 1945-'48, so it would've been right after the war.

**Young:** Trying to figure out what I did '48, '49. I don't see, I can't. You got a...I was in Count Basie's band from '45-'49?

**Brown:** According to this to '48, from 1945-1948.

**Young:** 1945-'48.

**Brown:** But this might not be correct.

**Young:** It might not be correct, Is that what you say?

**Brown:** Yeah, it may not be correct.

**Young:** Yeah well I see, it's hard for me to bring that together, to put that together.

**Brown:** Okay. So let's just go, and you're in California from 1942...uh...no let's say late '42 and then you're working with various bands, we've already mentioned Les Hite, Lionel Hampton's band, Benny Carter's band, and then according to this biography, then you rejoined Count Basie.

**Young:** Yes, that's right, and I stayed in Count Basie's band until I went on the *Tonight Show*.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)





**Brown:** Oh, ok.

**Young:** When I recorded then I stayed with Count Basie...till...till...I stayed with Count Basie till I went on the *Tonight Show*. I never played with anybody else other than Basie, and I stayed with Basie and then I went on the *Tonight Show*. What year did I go on the *Tonight Show*?

**Brown:** Well here it says in 1962...

**Young:** '62 that's right.

**Brown:** Ok. So there's a gap in the early '50s, did you go back to Dayton and lead your own band?

**Young:** Yeah, when?

**Brown:** It would've been after, it would've been sometime [laughs] that's a good question, sometime after '48.

**Young:** You say...

**Brown:** After you left Basie's band in '48, did you go back to Dayton at that point?

**Young:** Oh boy...did I go back to Dayton? Where did I go?

**Brown:** It says you led your own group with Booty Wood and you had Slam...

**Young:** And I what?

**Brown:** You had your own group with Booty Wood and Slam Stewart

**Young:** Yes.

**Brown:** And that was in Dayton?

**Young:** Yes, that was in Dayton. What year was that?

**Brown:** It doesn't say...but umm...

**Young:** Yeah, that's got to be...hmmm...Slam Stewart, yeah.

**Brown:** So that would've been in the early '50s, I guess. It doesn't say exactly.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

**Young:** Yeah, it has to be. When does it say anything about the Flame Show Bar?

**Brown:** It doesn't say anything about the Flame Show Bar. Tell us about the Flame Show Bar, it doesn't say anything, it doesn't even mention it.

**Young:** Well, I opened the Flame Show Bar.

**Brown:** Please tell us about the Flame Show Bar. [laughs]

**Young:** Oh, I wish, I'm sorry I mentioned it...[laughs]. Well I think, Slam Stewart was in my band then.

**Brown:** Right, with Booty Wood.

**Young:** Slam Stewart, Eddie Berg was in the band, and when I got ready to go to Detroit Eddie Berg stuck me up and wouldn't go. I don't know why. And I had to open up the Flame Show Bar, and I had to get a drummer in Detroit, Michigan. I forget that boy's name, and who it was now. But it was a good drummer in Detroit, and I got him and put him in my band it worked out; Slam Stewart, myself...I think Booty Woods was in my band then, and Trummy Young. Only Trummy...Booty Woods...

**Brown:** Booty, yeah, Booty, trombone.

**Young:** Trombone.

**Brown:** Yeah.

**Young:** I think that's who was in the band. Oh man, but that's how, we opened it, I opened the Flame Show Bar. I was there until the union made me get out and said, "You can't stay no longer because you're not a local musician." And they wanted a local musician in there and so I had to, the union put me out but it wasn't the band, because we was really, the place was like this every night. There was many, I was in there I think eight or ten weeks and every two weeks they'd have a star, one of the stars, top singers like...

**Brown:** Billy Eckstine, maybe?

**Young:** Who?

**Brown:** Billy Eckstine? No?

**Young:** No, not Billy Eckstine, but the girl...

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** Sarah Vaughan?

**Young:** No, not Sarah Vaughan, but...

**Brown:** Billie Holiday?

**Young:** Billie Holiday. Billie Holiday...what's that chick player, or was a man that played piano that stand up and played, and sang and played? He was very good, he was famous, man.

**Brown:** Nat "King" Cole?

**Young:** Who?

**Brown:** Nat "King" Cole? No?

**Young:** No, it wasn't Nat "King" Cole. He was a, not Nat "King" Cole. Nat "King" Cole never did come. But I forget now the people that they had in there but they had top show people like Ella, Ella Fitzgerald was in there one time because Ella came in with her, her husband came in with her. Ray Brown was married to her then. That was a nice gig, man. I hate it because the union, because we were doing good in there, but he union put us out, said, "You can't play here no longer." They wanted to put a local band in there because the place was doing so good, you see, and they didn't want no, but that's what happened.

**Brown:** So what happened after that, after you left that gig?

**Young:** What did I do? What did I do? What did I do?

**Brown:** Did you go back to Dayton?

**Young:** Yeah, I went back to Dayton...I played, I went back to Dayton, I played in a club in Dayton. Slam came back with me and we played in this club and I don't know what happened, but I didn't stay in there very long. But the boss lady started liking Slam Stewart, the man joined who had this big fine club, his wife started liking Slam. And Slam was, you know, I said, "Oh, no." His wife fell in love with Slam. She was a cute little old woman, too. But she fell for Slam, that didn't last long, it wasn't long before we was out of there, man. The husband got hip to it; his wife had fallen in love with Slam Stewart. I can't remember what happened back in them days but it wasn't too long before I was back on the road with Basie, or I don't mean Basie, yeah, Basie. I started to say Lunceford, not Lunceford, but Basie. There was some good times back in them days, but some strange times, too. Strange things happen, man.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** Was there a reason why you went back to Dayton? Was there any issues with your family or anything? You know, when you left, you spent a lot of time in Dayton after you had already been with Jimmie Lunceford, after you already had performed with Basie, you still went back to Dayton.

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** Was that for family reasons? Or for what reason did you go back to Dayton instead of going to New York or staying in California?

**Young:** For some reason I didn't, I went back to Dayton, my wife, my family...

**Brown:** Ok.

**Young:** ...we were all in Dayton. But the family I moved my family out of Dayton when I went back with Basie within that time and so then I moved my family, me and my wife stayed tight together, we're still together. And I never had no problems with my wife and when I be on the road and everything. Well, finally I moved her onto New York and my family and finally we bought a home in Bayside, Long Island and we stayed there for quite a few years and then I moved to California after the show, the show left, Johnny Carson left New York and came to California, and Doc Severinsen asked me did I want to go. I said, "You better believe I want to go, I love California!" He said, "Do you want to go to California?" I said, "Man, that's one of the places I wanted to be." And so I left New York. A lot of people couldn't believe I was going to leave New York. And so they said, "You going to leave New York?" I said, "Yes, I'm going to leave New York," and I left New York and I never did go back. I never went back, I mean to leave, you know.

**Brown:** Right, right. So lets talk about your time with the Basie band.

**Young:** My huh?

**Brown:** The time in the Basie band before you joined the NBC orchestra. So that time you were with the Basie band in the late 50's. From about '57...the time you were with the Basie band...

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** ...in the late 50's.

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** Lets talk about that, about the people you were with because I know you had a good relationship with Sonny Payne.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** Good what?

**Brown:** Good relationship with Sonny Payne, the drummer.

**Young:** Oh, yeah.

**Brown:** We're going to talk about some of those relationships. [laughs]

**Young:** Sonny Payne and I [laughs], Sonny Payne and I was very close, man. He and I was good pals. Poor Sonny, I'm sorry he's gone, man, I imagine you are, too. You know, Sonny was a hell of a drummer, you know that?

**Brown:** Oh yeah.

**Young:** Sonny Payne, man.

**Brown:** Throwing those sticks up in the air.

**Young:** Yeah, oh he was something else, man. Sonny Payne and I used to drive, he bought a, he had a, what did he call it now. He had some kind of car and we would travel on the road in his car instead of riding on the bus and everything. We'd go from the gig in his, I think it was a, what did he have...

**Brown:** Chrysler Imperial?

**Young:** I think it was, that's right. How did you get that? That's what he had, a Chrysler Imperial.

**Brown:** That's what drummers drive.

**Young:** What did you say?

**Brown:** I said that's what drummers drive, Chrysler Imperial.

**Young:** That's what drummers...

**Brown:** That's what drummers drive. [laughs]

**Young:** Well, he had a Chrysler Imperial and we would get through the gig and we'd hit the road to the next town wherever we was going to go, Sonny Payne and I. Sonny Payne...the trumpet player, Thad Jones.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** That's the first time you met Thad was in the Basie band? Is that the first time you met Thad Jones, in the Basie band?

**Young:** No, that wasn't the first time I met him, the first time I met Thad was in Detroit when I had my band. That's before it went back in and before he went with Basie, before he got with Basie, because Basie, we was in Basie's, the new band he had put together. Thad and Gerald... Thad... Joe Newman... Wendell Culley... Thad, Joe Newman, Wendell Culley and me. That was a good trumpet section, good friendly trumpet section, we all liked one another real well. Marshal Royal didn't like what was going on in the trumpet section because poor what's-his-name was set up and nod out on the bandstand and Marshal Royal would turn around and holler at him. What's his name? I just mentioned him, just called him...

**Brown:** You had Thad Jones...

**Young:** No...

**Brown:** You said Wendell Culley...

**Young:** Wendell Culley. Wendell Culley was set up and Wendell was older than everybody else and Wendell Culley would be after awhile Wendell Culley would nod out. He wouldn't be using nothing, or he might be drinking a little or something, because he wasn't on no dope or nothing, I know that. But he was just a few years older and he would kind of nod out, he would get up and play and everything, it was one of them kind of things. And Marshal turned around and hollered at him one time, hollering there, "Hey Wendell, wake up! You so-and-so and so-and-so." Wendell Culley got up from the band and walked off and we never seen him again. That's the way he left the band. Ain't that something?

**Brown:** That's another one of the Eddie Tompkins stories.

**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** It's like the Eddie Tompkins story, just get up and walk out. [laughs]

**Young:** Yeah. Wendell Culley got off the bandstand and walked off. Wendell Culley was a sweetheart, man. You talking about a nice man and he could play. He played just like he was, he even wanted to play *Li'l Darlin'*. He was just so, I don't see how anybody could turn around and holler at him.; Marshal Royal did.

**Brown:** Marshal Royal?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** Marshal Royal, he was one of them kind of people. He turned around and hollered at poor Wendell Culley. Wendell Culley packed up his horn and walked off, and he never seen him again.

**Brown:** So what was it like working with Count Basie? How was he as a bandleader?

**Young:** How as who?

**Brown:** Count Basie as a bandleader.

**Young:** How as Count Basie?

**Brown:** As a bandleader, yes. As a bandleader, as a leader?

**Young:** Oh, Count Basie, he was a nice bandleader, man. He was, well...that's a good question. Count Basie was a nice cat and he was, he always had a manager or something with him that used to kind of run things. But Count Basie used to be in the know of what's going on, too, but he would let this other guy run things. But Count was a good cat to work for and if he, Count liked me, we were close. So I don't know if he was close with everybody, but if you're close to the person. He and I got along like two brothers or something.

A couple times when I left Basie, he didn't like it, but I left and I came on back. I left Count Basie's band one time and went and joined Gerald Wilson's band. And Count couldn't believe it, he said, "You going to leave my band?" "Yeah," I said, "I'm going to go to California." Well I loved California anyway, and so I [laughs] left Count Basie band and came to California to join Gerald Wilson's band. I stayed with Gerald Wilson's band until we played out here a few clubs and things and the band went to New York, played the Apollo. And come back and played Chicago and then they played the last job was in St. Louis. What's the name of that club in St. Louis where everybody played? Famous club back in them days. Yes, you do.

**Brown:** [laughs] It will come back.

**Young:** Yes, you do. But anyway the band played and the...Gerald's band broke up there because Gerald went back and he wanted to go back to school or something, and I went back and joined Basie. Basie let me back in the band just like that.

**Brown:** Now, the first time you were in Basie's band you ended up replacing Ed Lewis as the first trumpet?

**Young:** You say?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** The first time you were in Basie's band. Were you replacing Ed Lewis as the first trumpet?

**Young:** When I first went in Basie band?

**Brown:** Yeah, was Ed Lewis the first trumpet?

**Young:** Ed Lewis was the first trumpet player.

**Brown:** Okay.

**Young:** When I first went in there, I went in there and replaced...

**Brown:** Buck Clayton.

**Young:**...Buck Clayton...

**Brown:** Right.

**Young:**...just for...

**Brown:** One month.

**Young:**...while Buck had his tonsils out. That's the first time. And the next time I went in the band I went in the band playing first trumpet because they knew I was a first trumpet player anyway. I came out of Lunceford's band playing first and so they, I told them, "I don't want to play Buck Clayton's chair." I said, "He plays a lot of solos and different things." "That wasn't my thing," I told them. They said, "Come on Snooky, come on play it anyway." So I played, and when I didn't want to play a solo Sweets was in the band, he'd play it. You know what I'm saying? It was one of them kind of things, so I didn't have no problem being in it for that month.

**Brown:** One of the things about your sound is the way you use mutes.

**Young:** One of the things, what?

**Brown:** The way you use mutes; the plunger mute and the cup mute. The way you play trumpet, with a lot of mutes.

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** Did you learn that or was there somebody who helped you to get that sound?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)





**Young:** That's a good question, too. I started, I don't know why I started doing that. I started doing that because I wanted to sound different than some of the other trumpet players in the band and I got used to playing with the, there was a cup mute, sometimes I used a plunger. But then I switched from plunger to the cup mute because the cup mute had a kind of different sound. That's the way I play now, with a cup mute with a plunger style, you know, just like I would use a plunger, but it's a mute. I don't know exactly, the reason I did that was that I was trying to find when I played in the band and things, when I played I wanted to sound different than the other guys. Very few guys are, Sweets and Joe Newman, and them cats, they would just play open horn and blow, so I wanted to sound different. And that's how I started playing with the mute and things, and it worked for me, it really did. In fact, I don't know how to play without the mute now. [laughs]

**Brown:** Well, today you and Clark Terry are the main keepers of that tradition, that mute tradition, you and Clark.

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** Do you hear anybody else coming up who has that sound like ya'll have?

**Young:** Coming up? Well, if he is I don't know who it is. [laughs]

**Brown:** Okay. [laughs]

**Young:** I'm not, I know what you saying...Clark Terry, I didn't copy Clark and Clark didn't me, he got his own thing. Clark has one of the baddest sounds because I know it. Am I right?

**Brown:** You right. [laughs]

**Young:** He can play, man.

**Brown:** You sure you're right.

**Young:** He can play, he can play, [laughs] he play both horns. Clark Terry is something else. I hope he gets out of, you know he's sick. I hope he comes out of that. He probably will come out of it too, I hope so anyway, man. We just lost another great man...

**Brown:** Louie Bellson?

**Young:**...Louie Bellson. We just lost him, we just losing so many good people now, man. Louie Bellson, Thursday. Are you going to be in town Thursday?

**Brown:** We're leaving Thursday morning.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** You're leaving Thursday morning.

**Brown:** Yeah, but we hope to catch it, because I leave in San Francisco. So they're going to do a service for him in San Jose.

**Brown:** Oh, they are?

**Brown:** Yeah, because that's where he lived. His last house was in San Jose, so I want to go to the service there.

**Young:** Well, I'm going to try and make his funeral here...

**Brown:** Thursday.

**Young:** Thursday.

**Brown:** Right, five o'clock, I think.

**Young:** Yeah, five o'clock. Four o'clock showing...

**Brown:** Right.

**Young:**...five o'clock, you know. So I'm going if I can get somebody to go with me, I can't go by myself. I'm going to try and get somebody to go with me, that's why I mentioned it to you, were you going to be in town.

**Brown:** If we would be here we would go together. [laughs]

**Young:** I know we would, I know we would. That's too bad that you're not, and he's a drummer just like you.

**Brown:** We did the interview with him also.

**Young:** You did what?

**Brown:** We interviewed him as well, the same way we're doing you...

**Young:** You did?

**Brown:**...we did, yeah, about five, four years ago.

**Young:** Oh yeah, he's a great cat, man. Beautiful person...

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** Beautiful, yeah, big heart, big heart. All heart.

**Young:** All heart, man, he's such a beautiful person. I loved Louie, I used to work in his band.

**Brown:** That's right, you did play.

**Young:** I played in his band, man. He's Louie, I played in his band, it was five trumpets in there. Now, I'm going to name the trumpets. We had a little thing where we, the name was; Stew, Shew, Blue, Cool—I can't think of that last one. Stew is...Cool is...Blue is Blue Mitchell, Snoo is Snooky. Cool...oh, wait a minute. It was quite a thing, man, we had, all five of us had a name. I don't know why we got into that. But it was a heck of a trumpet section; we enjoyed playing with one another. Now what was; Stew, Blue, Woo...I can't call the guy's name. The lead trumpet player was the big cat now that's still around. Stew...Shew...Bobby Shew.

**Brown:** Bobby Shew, ok.

**Young:** He's still around.

**Brown:** I believe so...Bobby Shew, yeah.

**Young:** Is Bobby still around? Bobby Shew, that's who I'm talking about. He got to be real big now.

**Brown:** Ok, yeah, big guy.

**Young:** Bobby Shew, Stew, Blue—Blue Mitchell. Stew, Cool and Shew—but anyway.

**Brown:** That was in Louie Bellson's band, the five trumpets?

**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** Was that the five trumpets in Louie Bellson's band you were talking about?

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** Those were the five trumpet players, is this correct?

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** In Louie Bellson's band?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** There was five trumpets in Louie Bellson's band.

**Brown:** Yeah, ok.

**Young:** That was one of his bands he had, he had a lot of bands. But I don't think he had a better band than that one. [laughs] He might have had, but I don't believe it. We had a good time playing the trumpet section, it was just something else, they got along so good. That's what make s a band, oh man, when you got guys that get along they'll play, you know what I'm saying. If they play, if you got good happy men in the band, they'll play, man. I'm sorry, but I just believe that. If you get some cats in the band that's kind of, it ain't going to happen.

**Brown:** So when you were with Count Basie you felt that everybody was there for everybody?

**Young:** That was a happy band. That band that I'm talking about, the last band...

**Brown:** With Louie Bellson?

**Young:** No, I'm talking about...

**Brown:** No, you're talking about the last band with Count Basie.

**Young:** Yeah, Count Basie...the five trumpets was Thad Jones, me, Wendell Cully passed so they got...who did they get in place of him? They didn't have five trumpets.

**Brown:** The only had four trumpets.

**Young:** They had four trumpets.

**Brown:** Yeah, they had four trumpets in Basie's band, right.

**Young:** Joe Newman.

**Brown:** Ok. You, Joe Newman, Thad...

**Young:** And...what's that trumpet player that used to? Albert Aarons. Albert Aarons—double 'a', Albert Aarons. Myself...

**Brown:** Joe Newman, Thad, Albert Aarons...Thad four.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** That was a good trumpet section. They worked together good, when musicians like one another and can talk, that was a good trumpet section.

**Brown:** I know there is a story about you and Sonny Payne's Chrysler Imperial in Atlantic City. [laughs] What happened?

**Young:** Well...Sonny Payne, when we was in Atlantic City, Sonny Payne used to when we get through playing at night, Sonny Payne would let it go. He would go on and get high, man, I mean high, and he was too high to drive. He had a brand new Imperial so I told Sonny, "Give me them keys, you ain't going to drive that car tonight as drunk as you are." He gave me, he didn't care, he gave me the keys because me and him was close. We didn't stay at the same place, that's the only problem. He stayed someplace near where we were at this bar, I took the key and went over where I lived. The next day Sonny Payne got up and was wondering where his keys was and where his car was and he didn't know, he had no idea. So he called the police and told the police that his car was stolen. And so they believed him and so they looked for him, they looked for his car.

Well, anyway, we had to play, this was in, we had to play not an evening show, an early show and we had to play an evening show. So I was on my way to the early show with the uniform and everything on, I thought Sonny would be because Sonny lived was right near where we played, where he was staying. So the cops was looking for that car and they pulled me over and when they pulled me over got me out and everything. I said...they had me, had they're guns and all, had me standing up and everything. I said, "I didn't steal this car." I said, "This car belongs to the drummer in Count Basie's band. I say, "I'm a trumpet player in the band. He was drunk last night and I took his car, I'm going to the gig now." They did not believe me, they took me to jail. [laughs]

They took me to jail and so...I went before the judge and everything. I told the judge, I said, "This car is not a stolen car." I told the judge that, I said, "I'm a trumpet player with Count Basie's band that's working at this club, such-and-such-a-place, this is the drummer's car. He was drunk last night and I drove his car." Well somehow now the judge believed me because he kind of seen us with the uniform I had on and everything so he called the place where we was going to play and he asked Count Basie, "Is your trumpet player named Snooky Young and does he play in your band, and so-and-so-and-so?" Then they asked him all of that and he told the judge, "Yes, that's my trumpet player." And the judge let me go. Told the policemen, "Let this man go, this man ain't no thief, let him go."

Well, they let me go, so I got back to the, get to the gig where we were, well they done played he first gig without me. Oh, we had to play the evening gig, so I got up and I went got together and relaxed and played the evening gig and everything. But when it was over Sonny Payne and I was getting ready to leave, it's over now, I forgot about it and everything. Basie saw us, me and Sonny Payne leaving and he hollered out the window

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



when he saw us leaving getting ready to go to the car, he says, “Snooky, ain’t you had enough of Sonny Payne yet?” [laughs] I said, “Wait a minute, he’s right.” [laughs] I had completely forgot about it, you know what I meant, it’s over then, four hours later and everything. Well, that’s the end of that story, but that’s what happened.

**Brown:** But you still remained friends?

**Young:** Yeah, well, he...I went on with him but I didn’t. I thought about that, you know, what Basie said. “Ain’t you got enough of Sonny Payne yet?” That’s a true story, man, Sonny Payne. Sonny Payne was something, he was a nice cat, oh boy. Sonny Payne used to smoke, he used to, he did everything, that ain’t on the thing, is it?

**Brown:** Don’t worry about it?

**Young:** Good. He did everything. He was just a happy-go-lucky cat, man. I don’t think he ever married, ever married, he was one of them happy people. I mean, you know, just partying and partying and partying. I used to run with him but I didn’t go through that, what he went through, I used to try to hold him back and get to the gig and everything, you know. That’s the way I was, I used to...I liked them, I was a few years older than Sonny, not that much, but I was a little older than him and I tried to clue him in and straighten him up. Couldn’t straighten Sonny up, man. Sonny Payne used to ride horses, he did everything, he did, man. He was one of them kind of guys, we’d get into a town and he’d go and put on his outfit and go ride horses. I said, “Man, I’ll never get on a horse.” [laughs] Do you do that?

**Brown:** No.

**Young:** You ever tried?

**Brown:** Yeah, I have.

**Young:** You have tried?

**Brown:** Oh yeah.

**Young:** Well, Sonny Payne used to be, well, he was into that.

**Brown:** Well, ok, so you’re talking about when you were with Basie you used to get to ride in Sonny’s car to go from gig to gig...

**Young:** Yeah.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** ...but, you know, what was it like traveling with Lunceford's band? How did you get around? Did you go by train? Did you go by car? When you were doing because you did a lot of different gigs.

**Young:** In Basie's band, in Lunceford's band we went by train, buses, I don't think we ever flew—if we did I don't remember. But we went by plane, I mean by bus and train a lot. Back in them days planes hadn't got that popular, I mean for bands and things yet.

**Brown:** Right, yeah, because it's still 1940, 1939, 1940. So what about in Basie's band? What I'm trying to find out, was touring comfortable for you in these bands?

**Young:** Basie wasn't too happy about flying. He wasn't happy about flying at all. Most of the time he wouldn't fly, that's the way he was. Does that kind of answer your question?

**Brown:** Um-hm. So you were still traveling by bus and by trains even when you were with Basie's band until, correct? That's how you got around? You said that you drove, that you...when you...when the rest of the band was either on the bus or the train, you got to ride with Sonny in his car?

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** But the rest of the band was traveling on the bus or a train?

**Young:** Basie's band...a lot of times we would take a train, we'd take, we'd have a whole Pullman porter, the band would have a whole car.

**Brown:** Just like Ellington's band?

**Young:** Just like Ellington's band, yeah. And we would have that whole car to ourselves, you know. But I don't know if I'm answering your question though.

**Brown:** That's it, you'd traveled by bus or by train.

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** But not by cars, because then if you're like a not a real hit band, you're still traveling with cars...

**Young:** Certain towns, certain places we would be we would, Sonny would drive his car, like going to Washington or going to Chicago or some place that wasn't too far—we would travel like that sometimes. But Basie didn't like for us to do it because he was always afraid we wasn't going to get there. See? And then one time we didn't get there

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



and Basie was, he was pretty upset because the drummer and his first trumpet player weren't there, what kind of band is that, you know what I'm saying.

**Brown:** A lot of trouble there. [laughs]

**Young:** You're drummer ain't there.

**Brown:** [laughs] No drummer, no first trumpet.

**Young:** That was something else, that happened, that happened one time, boy. But we finally got there late and Basie was [shoo]...he wasn't just pissed at me, I mean, jived at me, he was mad a Sonny really because Sonny was the reason for it, you know.

**Brown:** Was Sonny the only one who would drive separately from the band?

**Young:** Most of the time he was the only one, he was the only one, nobody would...Sonny had his brand new car, so e wanted to drive his car, you know. But he was the only one. You could drive if you wanted to with the band, some of them bands, and if you had to go close or something the leader wouldn't mind. But most of the time they didn't want guys driving, you know...

**Brown:** No, I understand.

**Young:**...getting to the gig. They ain't going to make it, a lot of times they ain't going to make it.

**Brown:** Now you said that Count Basie was the artistic director of the band but he had somebody else, he hired somebody else to take care of other things in the band? You said that about Count Basie?

**Young:** Count Basie did what?

**Brown:** He hired someone else to help lead the band, maybe not artistically, but maybe like a...you said there was somebody else who helped Count Basie run the band?

**Young:** No, Marshall Royal used to conduct the band a lot.

**Brown:** So he was the straw boss for the Basie band?

**Young:** Yeah, he used to conduct the band a lot. And there was another guy that used to, he was a white guy, he used to write arrangements and things, he used to conduct...

**Brown:** Could that be Heal Hefti?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** No, not Neal Hefti. This guy is dead now, he used to write, he was a big guy—played piano. Oh, what's his name? Oh man...

**Brown:** So he was like the staff arranger for the Basie band?

**Young:** Yeah, he used to write arrangements and he even played in Basie's when Basie wasn't there, a couple times Basie had something to do, and we would play the gig with him, he piano player.

**Kimery:** Is it Ernie Wilkins?

**Young:** Who?

**Brown:** Well, he said a white guy...

**Kimery:** Oh, ok.

**Brown:**...so not Ernie Wilkins.

**Young:** Who?

**Brown:** He said Ernie Wilkins, but you said it was a white guy...

**Young:** Oh, yeah, a big white guy played, he was from California. He had a band out here at one time...

**Kimery:** Billy May?

**Young:** Who?

**Brown:** Billy May? Billy May?

**Young:** No, not Billy May. Name another one because you're close, it wasn't Billy May. And this guy was...he even had a band with...what's the drummer's name, got a band now, big band now out here, played a lot of Basie stuff?

**Brown:** It's a drummer?

**Young:** Yeah...

**Brown:** Led by a drummer?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** Yeah, he's a drummer, he's...oh, heck. He just lost his wife last year. He's very popular, he's a drummer, he's got the band. He plays a lot of, he plays Basie's music...he plays Basie band. I played in the band for a long time, I played in the band for a long time, the band is still going. What's the popular band here? Are you from California?

**Kimery:** Originally. Well, I'm trying to think. You...

**Brown:** A drummer. Not too many drummers leading bands these days.

**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** I said not too many drummers leading bands these days.

**Young:** Yeah, it's a drummer here, you got to know, you a drummer, you've got to know who this is.

**Brown:** Well the only person I'm thinking of is, I mean, you've got...

**Young:** He's a...

**Brown:** Because it used to be Mel Lewis...

**Young:** Who?

**Brown:** Mel Lewis, I know that's not the band...

**Young:** No, not Mel Lewis.

**Brown:**...he's gone, he's gone now, I know.

**Kimery:** Butch Miles?

**Brown:** Butch? Yeah, well Butch played in Basie's band. Butch Miles?

**Young:** Butch Miles, he's not white.

**Brown:** Butch Miles is white....

**Young:** Butch Miles?

**Brown:** Butch Miles is white. He played in Basie's band. I think, I don't know if he came in after Sonny...

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** This drummer never played in Basie's band.

**Brown:** Oh, ok, so...

**Young:** He's got the band out here now.

**Brown:** Dang. I don't know, are we at time? We can take a break and we can research it?

**Young:** Butch Miles is white, what made me think he wasn't it, I remember Butch Miles.

**Brown:** Yeah.

**Young:**...slipped my mind.

**Brown:** Maybe you're thinking of Buddy Miles. [laughs]

...

**Brown:** Ok, this tape three of the Snooky Young Oral History interview. And we're going to pick up with the tail end of the Count Basie time, that you're with Count Basie the second time. And we're going to talk a little bit...like I'm looking at the *Complete Atomic Basie* from 1957. And I wanted to, here are some of the musicians that were with you on this recording; Thad Jones, Joe Newman, Henry Coker—oh excuse me. Trumpets; Wendell Cully, Snooky Young, Thad Jones, Joe Newman—four trumpets.

**Young:** Yes.

**Brown:** Trombones; Henry Coker, Al Grey, Benny Powell...[shoo] killers. Reeds; Marshal Royal, Frank Wes—[shoo] love Frank, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Frank Foster, Charles Fowlkes. And then rhythm section; Freddie Green, bass; Eddie Jones, of course Count Basie on piano, and Sonny Payne on drums.

**Young:** Ok, now in the reeds, no...

**Brown:** In the reeds...

**Young:**...in the reeds section, name the reed section again.

**Brown:** The reed section; Marshal Royal, Frank Wess, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Frank Foster, Charles—Charlie Fowlkes.

**Young:** Charlie Fowlkes, right.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** Right. That must have been a band.

**Young:** That was a good band, man. You're talking about a, that band was, it was really, was he, it was a funny thing, that band they like one another. Everybody liked, there was no enemies in that band. And that band, it's a funny thing, they just, sometimes the band would play and Basie we'd play the first, lots of the time you'd play concerts most of the time, and the first half of the concert Basie would kind of say, "Well, cats it didn't happen." You know, one of them kind of things. And then the second half of that same night the band would light up and it would be...he would be happy. Most of the time the band was like that all the way, but if there was ever a time when the band wasn't please him, he would let you know. "Come on fellas, the things ain't happening and they ain't clicking." You know, and then that band would strike up, man, it was a hell of a band, believe me. That was one of the best bands I believe I ever played with, that particular men you call, it was [shoo]. This band I'm playing with now is like that also...Thad...I mean...

**Brown:** Clayton-Hamilton?

**Young:** Clayton-Hamilton's band. That's quite a band. Have you heard that band?

**Brown:** Oh, yeah. I know John.

**Young:** What do you think of that band?

**Brown:** [laughs] Top! The top.

**Young:** I'm glad I asked you that...

**Brown:** Oh, yeah.

**Young:**...because that band is...and I played in them other bands. I think this Clayton-Hamilton band is good as that band we just through talking to.

**Brown:** Really?

**Young:** Yes.

**Brown:** Well, that's saying something.

**Young:** Huh?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** That's saying something if you're saying that any band is as good as this Basie band.

**Young:** That's what I'm talking about. This band, when it fires up, you feel the same spark in this band that happened in that band. That's true.

**Brown:** So that was, we were talking about the band in 1957, but by 1962 you, did you leave the band? When did you leave the band?

**Young:** '57 to '62, now what did you say about that?

**Brown:** So I'm saying when did you leave Count Basie's band? And why? If you had these kind of cats there and everybody getting along, what happened?

**Young:** The reason I left that band. I'll give you two guesses. Would you have left that band if the *Tonight Show* had offered you a gig?

**Brown:** [laughs] Yes.

**Young:** You see what I mean?

**Brown:** What's the other reason?

**Young:** If the *Tonight Show* offers you a gig and you living in New York City...offers you a gig to leave and come, would you leave that band?

**Brown:** Yes.

**Young:** You see what I mean? That's why I left, that's when I left the band. And that was the reason and my good friends in that band, I started saying, "No man, I ain't going to leave this band." And Thad Jones and Frank Wess, or something, said, "Go ahead Snooky, go on, man." They insisted that I leave because I started changing my, "No, I ain't going to leave." That band was so good, that band at that time, and it was so together, and so Frank Wesss, Frank Wesss, Jones ... a few of them guys they said, "Go ahead now Snooky. Check it out. See what's happening." And I did, and I never went back. I was there from '62 to '92.

**Brown:** Wow.

**Young:** See what I mean?

**Brown:** Wow.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** That's, that's pretty good.

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** That's pretty good.

**Brown:** So who was in the band when you got in the NBC Orchestra, NBC Band, who was in that band, the *Tonight Show* Band?

**Young:** *Tonight Show* Band? Let's see, Clark Terry... Jimmy Maxwell ... I can't think of these other two guys, I'm seeing them, but I can't call their names... I can't call their names, I'll just hold you up trying to think ...

**Brown:** It's ok, it's alright.

**Young:** But they're very good trumpet players. It's just too bad that... what's his name... Johnny Frosk.

**Brown:** Johnny Frosk.

**Young:** Johnny Frosk. And there's one other one that I can't ... see I haven't played with them since all them years.

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** Johnny Frosk is, I'll tell you who use to, use to come and play on that show some time... [laughs] He was a famous trumpet player too... white, famous trumpet player.

**Brown:** Before Doc?

**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** Before Doc Severinsen?

**Young:** Yeah, not before Doc. Yeah, oh you mean before Doc became the leader?

**Brown:** Right.

**Young:** Not, not... yeah, maybe so. Once he, maybe, he was a very good first trumpet player.

**Brown:** Not Bill Berry? No, he didn't play first.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Kimery:** No, lead trumpet player.

**Young:** Bernie Glow.

**Brown:** Bernie Glow.

**Young:** Bernie Glow, who I was trying to think of.

**Brown:** Yeah, Bernie Glow.

**Young:** Bernie Glow was a hell of a first trumpet player man. You know...

**Brown:** So they were good cats, there were good guys in the band. You got along with them.

**Young:** Yeah, he use to play, he use to be one of the men that would play in the band cause they, they called a lot of men in, but Bernie Glow was one of the men that use to play in the band. He was something else boy, beautiful cat too, man. Bernie and I were very good friends. When we lost Bernie that was too bad, I kind of... Bernie wrote up a big article on me about my trumpet playing and our friendship and everything. And, that's before he got to be famous, when I first met him. That was back when I was back with Basie's band, in... it must have been in the 50's he was talking about. Bernie Glow wrote an article in a magazine about Snooky Young. He was quite a man, man.

**Brown:** So, you're with this band, and is it satisfying? Is the work ... I mean, after having left Count Basie is the work satisfying, are you happy playing in this band? We know the money's good, but is the music good?

**Young:** You say... I'm misunderstanding.

**Brown:** You were working with the Count Basie's Band, the band was like this, tight. How was it working with the *Tonight Show* Band?

**Young:** How was the money?

**Brown:** Well we know the money's good, we know the money was good.

**Young:** The money was good.

**Brown:** But what was the band, how was the camaraderie, the relationship among the musicians in the band?

**Young:** You're talking about in Basie's band?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

**Brown:** No, no, no. In the *Tonight Show*.

**Young:** Oh, the *Tonight Show*.

**Brown:** Yeah.

**Young:** Well...

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** That's a good question. [laughs]

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** Because when I went in there, they wouldn't, you know they said, "Who is this coming in here." You know, one of them things. And so, but Doc Severinsen and Clark Terry... they were all real close and so they were the top men of the band so the other guys it didn't matter if they didn't accept me. I mean, what's the first alto player, just died not too long, used to write music and everything. He just recently passed.

**Brown:** Alto?

**Young:** He wrote and arranged, took Doc's place, I mean, who's place did he replace? He was the leader of a band.

**Brown:** Alto player...

**Young:** Yes you do. He was the leader. Sometimes when Doc wasn't there he would be the leader and he would be so square looking ...

**Brown:** Oh yeah. Who was that?

**Young:** He would be so square looking and Johnny used to make fun of him. And Doc was a, you know.

**Brown:** Yeah, I know, I can see him, but I can't remember his name. I can see him.

**Young:** Tommy Newsom.

**Brown:** Tommy Newsom.

**Young:** Tommy Newsom.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)





**Brown:** Right.

**Young:** Tommy was a great cat, man. He was a sweetheart of a man. But he was just so ... and Doc [laughs] and Johnny used, Johnny used to pick on him, man.

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** Johnny did everything.

**Brown:** [laughs] Right. Tommy Newsom, that's right...

**Young:** Because he wouldn't be dressing up like Doc, or anything, he would just come in, he was very square in other words.

**Brown:** That's right, I remember now, yeah. [laughs]

**Young:** But it worked. It worked, you know. I didn't bother Tommy. Tommy was, I loved Tommy, man. Me and Tommy got along like two brothers. We really did, man. And his wife, so sweet, I used to go out to his house and you know, hang out with them. It's too bad we lost Tommy, man. I haven't seen his wife since he passed or anything, but I think of her anyway. She's a very sweet woman. Tommy was... you couldn't beat Tommy, man. He was as nice as he looked. You remember seeing him on television. He was just so plain, man.

**Brown:** [laughs]

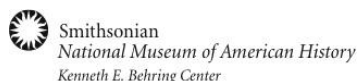
**Young:** And just down to Earth. [laugh] He was something else.

**Brown:** So that was your gig and then you got, you were able to be a founding member of the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis. So here you were working with Thad in the NBC Band and then Thad forms another band with Mel Lewis, or forms a band with Mel Lewis and you were with that band.

**Young:** That band you're talking about. Let's see who formed that band? I played in the first band when they first started because me and Thad was like that coming out of Basie's band. We were like brothers. So when he and Mel Lewis formed that band I was playing the *Tonight Show* and they asked me would I come play in that band. I said, "Are you kidding? You know I'm going to come, Thad!"

**Brown:** [laughs]

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** You know, Thad and I was roommates and did everything together. So when he formed that band, that turned out to be quite a band, man. That band, I'm sorry but, ain't no band I played that band, I'll tell you that!

**Brown:** That's right.

**Young:** And I've played in quite a few bands since then.

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** And I ain't never played with no band, this band don't out play Thad and Mel Lewis's band, Mel Lewis playing drums and Thad playing the trumpet and flugelhorn and conducting out there. And Thad was something else, man. Great guy, man. Thad, I don't know, I don't know why we lost Thad, man. Thad wasn't that old or anything. He did few things that were probably against his health or something. Because he was a pretty strong guy, he was strong, you know? He wasn't no weak guy by no means, but I don't know, just like his brother still living, Hank.

**Brown:** Hank.

**Young:** Hank is still around. And his other brother played drums.

**Brown:** Elvin.

**Young:** Elvin, I don't see, we lost Elvin, I don't see. Elvin was tough too man.

**Brown:** Um-hm.

**Young:** Well, you're a drummer.

**Brown:** Um-hm.

**Young:** What do you think of Alvin? [laughs] Enough said, enough said. That family was something else. Thad, Elvin...

**Brown:** And Hank. [laughs] And Hank.

**Young:** And Hank, you know, Hank was playing in that band when it first started, but I don't know, he didn't stay it long. I don't know why he didn't stay or anything, I have no idea, but he was in that first band. He was in that band, man, Hank.

**Brown:** So it was no problem to be in the NBC Band and also be in the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Band...

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

**Young:** No...

**Brown:** No conflict, no problems?

**Young:** No problems, see, Thad and Mel was at the studio at CBS I think it was. Was it CBS?

**Brown:** NBC?

**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** NBC?

**Young:** No, NBC was...

**Brown:** Was where you were.

**Young:** Where I was.

**Brown:** So, CBS.

**Young:** CBS.

**Brown:** Okay.

**Young:** And Thad and I think Mel was there, but Thad was there. Hank was so busy man, no telling where he was.

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** [laughs] And that's the truth. He's still busy man. He's still... Hank is, Hank is ninety years old too. [laughs] I thought, I didn't know me and Hank was the same age. I didn't know I was as old as Hank, that's what I meant to say.

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** I thought Hank was older than me, but he ain't. Hank is ninety years old this year also.

**Brown:** [laughs]

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** [laughs] Well... boy. But that was a good band. Thad and Mel formed that band and they asked me, "Snooky would you come play with this band?" and I said, "Sure Thad, you know I'm going to play with that band." And when I had to leave New York and leave the band Thad and I, we just was almost in tears because I was leaving New York to go to California. I had to, you know what I'm saying. I hated to leave that, that's the one thing I hated to leave in New York, other than that, I didn't mind leaving New York. New York didn't bother me. It bothered some people... but I never went back. A lot of people, let's see John Ritson came out here, he went back to New York. A lot of guys go back to New York.

**Brown:** Benny Golson didn't go back. [laughs]

**Young:** See they go back.

**Brown:** He went back and then came back out again. [laughs]

**Young:** Yeah, they come out here and stay for and then go back. Well, it didn't do that to me. I'm glad too, knock on wood. I've always liked California. Something about California that I liked, maybe it's the weather. [laughs]

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** But, it's so much nicer.

**Brown:** How about the weather, how about the people?

**Young:** The people. Yeah, I like the people in California. People in California, so many people are *not* from California.

**Brown:** Right, [laughs] right.

**Young:** You know what I'm saying. So, so that made it nice. I like California, I like the way it flows, you know.

**Brown:** You were talking about... you were singing the praises of the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis band and you were singing the praises of the Clayton-Hamilton band, both of these are co-lead by drummers. Let's talk about the Mel Lewis band, how did that work with two leaders, co-leaders, Thad and Mel, how did that work? What was the dynamic of working in a band with two leaders?

**Young:** What was in the band that did what?

**Brown:** What was it like to work in a band that had two leaders?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** Oh, well, thank God. Both of those bands, those two leaders, they dig one another, and so there was no problem with that. I know what you're saying, but there was no problem with Thad and Mel in New York City. They were, they handled... and this band Clayton-Hamilton, there's three leaders in that band, John Clayton, Jeff Clayton...

**Brown:** Oh his brothers also, okay. And then...

**Young:** And, Jeff Hamilton.

**Brown:** Hamilton, okay.

**Young:** See, the two brothers and then Hamilton. They run the band, it's very good, very smooth and there's no problems. I haven't seen no problems in this band, and I've been in this band since it first started. I was in this band from the first rehearsal. I was in Thad Jones and Mel Lewis's band since the first rehearsal. So, I've been lucky that way, you know what I'm saying.

**Brown:** M-hm.

**Young:** To be in a band that's... you know, starting out, and see it climb up to the top. Thad and Mel's band was, I'd seen it, and they had other guys moving in and out of that band, because that's New York for you. But, some of the main guys, the rhythm section stayed. What's what bass player's name? He was from, oh he was good, man. He was from... Snooky, can't think of nobody. He was such a nice man, too...

**Brown:** Richard Davis?

**Young:** That's it! That's it! Richard Davis. He was, Richard Davis, where is he now? He's teaching some place.

**Brown:** He's teaching I believe at the University of...

**Young:** He's not in New York...

**Brown:** He's in Wisconsin and Madison, somewhere up there.

**Young:** Yeah, Richard Davis, man. That was another nice man, man. Very nice, most bass players are like that, you know, and Richard was like that. Richard was a nice cat and easy to get along with. Richard... anyway.

**Brown:** So, again, I think what I'm trying to say is, let's go back and we think of the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis band, this is one of the first bands that's co-lead, you know, you

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



got a trumpet player and you got a drummer leading a big band. Before that you had, either Count Basie as a leader, you had Jimmie Lunceford as a leader, you had all these other single leaders, this is the first time you're working with a co-lead big band. Was there any difference when they have two leaders of a band?

**Young:** I guess it was different, but it didn't... you kind of wondered who, who was the boss in the band like that, I mean, you wondered, but it's not one of those guys is was the leader, that's the funny thing. Thad Jones was the leader that Mel Lewis and Thad Jones's band, Thad Jones was the leader. Mel Jones...

**Brown:** Mel Lewis.

**Young:** Mel took the business and everything, but the leader was Thad. That's the same thing in this band. The leader is John Clayton. Jeff Hamilton, they do business and Jeff... but the leader is John Clayton. Now, I hope that isn't saying the wrong thing about the men, you know what I'm saying.

**Brown:** No, but it clarifies the roles that each person is playing as a leader.

**Young:** What did you say?

**Brown:** I said, this clarifies the role that each person plays as a leader, one sounds more like an artistic director and the other one sounds more like a managing or... administrative director. So one seems to have, like in Thad Jones, seemed to be more the artistic director of the band, he would make all the artistic decisions, where as maybe Mel Lewis handled more of the business and not so many of the artistic decisions of the band. Sounds like that's what you're saying also about the Clayton-Hamilton band. That John Clayton is the artistic director. He's the creative force, or the main creative force, and that Jeff Hamilton handles the business and is supportive in that role.

**Young:** That's true.

**Brown:** Okay.

**Young:** That's right. That's about the way it is.

**Brown:** Okay.

**Young:** John puts a lot of stuff on Jeff and on Jim, I mean you know, he don't do everything, but he don't have to he's got three leaders. You see what I'm saying, there's three of them. So, that takes a lot of weight off of him. I never thought about that, but it does. Because I know Jeff does a lot of things, Jeff, Jeff Hamilton I'm talking about, he

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



takes a lot of... they all three handle the band very good, and it runs good, it runs easy, the business... the business part of the band.

**Brown:** Was the business also in the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis band? Was the business together? Was it good?

**Young:** Yeah, well it's been long, it's been so many years, I've got so many years that have passed between them, I don't remember everything, but it was very good like that too. Mel, Mel did a lot of the pencil work. Thad did other things now that I think about it. Mel was...

**Brown:** Handling the business.

**Young:** Handling the business, and I could be wrong about that, but I don't think so.

**Brown:** Well, that was what you experienced, that's what you witnessed.

**Young:** Yeah, that's what I experienced when I was there.

**Brown:** So then the band is been told that the *Tonight Show* is moving to Hollywood, is leaving New York, moving to Hollywood, the *Tonight Show*.

**Young:** You say...

**Brown:** I said, in 1972 the NBC says that the *Tonight Show* is going to move to Hollywood. Is that correct? That's how you got out to Los Angeles?

**Young:** She leaving New York ...

**Brown:** To come to Hollywood ...

**Young:** Come to Hollywood ...

**Brown:** In 1972?

**Young:** Well I'll tell you, it was kind of a strange feeling, and I felt that it, I kind of felt that, you can't leave New York without feeling something, you know what I'm saying, but it worked out for me. It worked out for me because I loved California. And then, I had a lot of friends out here. And Doc and I were good friends in New York, and when I came out for the Show and he's the leader and everything, it made it kind of simple for me, easy for me to... I didn't have to worry about the business end of it and everything, you know. So, in other words I was happy about leaving... I was happy about leaving New York. You could be not happy leaving New York, because I know some guys that

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

went back to New York. So, if they went back from California to New York they must not have been happy or they wouldn't have gone back. You see what I'm saying? I've never had a desire to pack up my bags and go back to New York. No, never and I don't think it will ever come, I mean that feeling to leave California.

**Brown:** Well you're a family man, you have a family. Let's talk about when you got married and how many kids etcetera.

**Young:** I got married [laughs]... I got married, let me see...

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** I got married the same year I joined Jimmie Lunceford's band...

**Brown:** 1939. [laughs]

**Young:** 1939, that's when I got married, and me and my wife is still together, we never had no problems.

**Brown:** You were only twenty years old. [laughs]

**Young:** My wife, God bless her, she had a stroke about four or five years ago on one side of her and so she would be... my daughter looked just like my wife. My wife would be over but she can't move. It's just too bad too, but she's still living.

**Brown:** And, what's her name?

**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** What's her name? Her name?

**Young:** Her name is Dorothy.

**Brown:** Ah, ok.

**Young:** Her name is Dorothy. Dorothy and I were born on the same street in Dayton, Ohio, February. I was February 3<sup>rd</sup>, my wife is February 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** Two years apart.

**Brown:** Ah. [laughs]

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)





**Young:** That's the truth, and me and my wife, we're still together. We started going together when we was in high school. And, we got married, finally when we left and went on the road, I came back and said, "Well, we'd better get married now." I was in, who's, I was in Chick Carter's band when I married my wife.

**Brown:** Oh.

**Young:** I was still in Chick Carter's band.

**Brown:** So you got married before you turned twenty. You must have been like...

**Young:** Well I was in Chick Carter's band until I went with Jimmie Lunceford.

**Brown:** Right, so...

**Young:** And I went with Jimmie Lunceford at '39, I was with Chick Carter's '36, '37 right in there '38 something, right in there. I didn't playing with... I played with the Wilberforce Collegiates and different things but that's, I can't remember everything, but that's what happened during that time. I got married in '39.

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** Me and my wife... we stuck together.

**Brown:** Seventy years...

**Young:** Stuck together.

**Brown:** Seventy years...

**Young:** She stuck with me. [laughs]

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** My wife stuck with me. We had this one argument one time, this was in Cleveland. I was getting ready to go on the stage and my wife was mad at me and she slapped me and I was getting ready to go out on stage I said, "I'll be back, I'll get you when I come back." Because the bell had rung for you to go on the stage well, you got to go, and I came off and everything it was over and I had forgot about it. But my wife holler, she got a letter for me, it was a letter from some girl who wrote me [laughs]. So my wife, she got this letter, boy did she... pow. I'll never forget that. I'll never. I was in Cleveland. [laughs]

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** My wife, poor girl. I feel sorry for her. I didn't think nothing about this girl writing this letter to me, she wrote a letter. [laughs]

**Brown:** And your children, your children, what are their names?

**Young:** My children?

**Brown:** Um-hm.

**Young:** You met my daughter Judy. My son was named after me, Eugene Edward Young, I lost him.

**Brown:** Was he named Eugene Edward Young III?

**Young:** The third, that's right. Eugene Edward Young III that's what we used to call him Eugene Edward Young III, and I lost him about four or five years ago, and then my youngest daughter, I have three children, and my youngest daughter... I forget how old my children are, because I had these children years ago, my kids are probably as old as you. How old are you?

**Brown:** Fifty-five.

**Young:** Fifty-five, well, my oldest daughter is way older than you.

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** Judy, I was 20 years old when she was born so she's got to be 70 if I'm 90.

**Brown:** Um-hm.

**Young:** And my other, my youngest child might be your age, maybe...

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** [laughs] Yeah... Do you have any children?

**Brown:** M-hm.

**Young:** How many?

**Brown:** I have two girls.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** You got two girls.

**Brown:** Um-hm.

**Young:** Oh, well that's nice.

**Brown:** Both musicians.

**Young:** Both musicians.

**Brown:** Singers.

**Young:** Singers, oh that's great. My kids were musicians too, my daughter played the piano and, my son, he played, but, he played trumpet and... what else did he play... but he didn't turn out to be a musician for some reason. My son turned out to be a horticulture, whatever that is. He worked in all that kind of stuff out there and that kind of stuff. He loved that. He never did really did go for music, I'll never understand that. [laughs] He never went for music. He could play the trumpet though, he played in high school. He played, well he played, he played most of the time he played when he was growing and he played pretty good, he could play, but his heart wasn't in it. And if your heart ain't in music, you know, you a musician...

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** You know exactly what it is. Is he a musician also?

**Brown:** Um-hm. [laughs]

**Young:** What you play?

**Brown:** Drums. [laughs]

**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** Drums. [laughs]

**Young:** He's a drummer? [laughs]

**Brown:** That's what we've got to ask you about, Sonny Payne, Jimmy Crawford. We've got to know! [laughs]

**Young:** Oh yeah, you're both drummers, well that's great man. That's my son.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** You got grandchildren?

**Young:** Grandchildren.

**Brown:** Do you have grandchildren?

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** Are there any musicians there?

**Young:** My grandchildren... my grandson, he doesn't play music, he wants to play so he got a trumpet. I gave him a trumpet. He jive at me like he's going to play. He ain't never going to play the trumpet, but he got my trumpet. I asked him to give me my trumpet back...

**Brown:** [Laughs]

**Young:** He won't give me my trumpet back, but he ain't going to play, I know it. He's a pretty good guy though, he's... I don't know what he's into, he works for NBC I forget what he's into... I don't know what he's into. Business, he's into business. And my other granddaughter... what I'm saying, but she didn't stay in it either, and my youngest one she was in it, she's a model and does things, we've got pictures of her. She's very... but she's... I don't know what to say about her, she's smart though.

**Brown:** Ok. [laughs]

**Young:** She went off to college, she graduated, and she's into something. She's very nice looking. She look like a stick, but she built good and she...

**Brown:** Like a model.

**Young:** Yeah. She's...

**Brown:** Ok, well I think what we'll do is, we'll go ahead and end now and tomorrow we'll pick up from the *Tonight Show* on.

.....

**Brown:** Today is Wednesday, February 25, 2009, we are at the home of Snooky Young, trumpeter, and 90 years young veteran of the jazz world. We are conducting the Smithsonian National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Oral History Program interview at his

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



home in Los Angeles conducted by Anthony Brown and Kenneth Kimery and this is day two of the interview with Snooky Young. So, Snooky, how you feeling today?

**Young:** I feel pretty good today.

**Brown:** Great, great.

**Young:** I feel a little better than I did yesterday. What I mean by that is, we got one day out of the way, you know what I'm saying.

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** So, I hope we can get through this day okay.

**Brown:** [laughs] Well you're looking good it seems like we're going to be able to get through it, you sounds good, you feel good?

**Young:** Good.

**Brown:** Yeah, okay, alright. So, yesterday we talked about everything from when you were in Dayton up until you got the job with the *Tonight Show* band and then when they came out to California in the '70s. But before we pick up the chronology there, I just want to talk about a few things like your recordings, Ken gave me, I don't know if you've seen this, this is Count Basie recorded live in Stockholm, I think it's in Sweden, in 1962, have you seen this video?

**Young:** I think, yeah, I was with Basie then.

**Brown:** Yeah, you're in that video, oh yeah, you're, oh yeah. As a matter of fact... I actually have it here, but I'm not sure if we should do that, but there's great footage of you doing a, maybe we'll, I'll probably pick this up and I'll take this up at the end when we start to move the video camera around. What do you think? That might be more advisable? Yeah?

**Kimery:** Yeah, probably.

**Brown:** Okay, so we'll do that later, so I won't do that now. I just want to show you some of the footage of the film of you performing with Count Basie

**Young:** Oh, okay.

**Brown:** But, we'll do it later.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** Ok.

**Brown:** Ken says it'll be better when we take the video around

**Young:** Alright.

**Brown:** So we'll do that later. But, I want to talk to you about some of your recordings, because you recorded with so many people, I just wanted to, even if you don't remember exactly what happened in the studio, but let's talk about playing in Johnny Hodges band.

**Young:** Who?

**Brown:** Johnny Hodges, Rabbit, Johnny Hodges from Duke. Yeah, talk about that. You recorded with him.

**Young:** You know, I don't remember recording with Johnny Hodges.

**Brown:** There's a piece that's called "Don't Sleep in the Subway."

**Young:** Beg your pardon?

**Brown:** Well, [laughs] that might be a tough one. Okay, how about George Benson?

**Young:** George Benson?

**Brown:** Yeah.

**Young:** Yeah, I recorded with him.

**Brown:** Do you remember that?

**Young:** Not really.

**Brown:** Ok.

**Young:** I did. I remember the name when he was just, what year was that?

**Brown:** It doesn't really say unfortunately.

**Young:** It doesn't say, but he wasn't really up there yet, you know, when I recorded with him, you know what I'm saying, he hadn't gotten to be a big man yet like he is now.

**Brown:** Right. How about Oliver Nelson?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** What?

**Brown:** Oliver Nelson.

**Young:** Oh yeah, Oliver Nelson. I recorded with Oliver. Me and Oliver were very good friends. Let me see how that happened, when it was.

**Brown:** Do you remember when you met Oliver? When did you meet Oliver Nelson?

**Young:** I met Oliver Nelson when he lived in New York City before he moved out of New York to California. And, in fact, I think my daughter bought his home in New York, when he moved to California. I was working with him a lot around New York and when he told me about it and I told my daughter, see if you want to buy his home, you know, so she did and, well, you know... she bought his home and he moved on to California, he moved out of New York and moved to, that's when went to California. That's about the best I can tell you on that, unless you want to ask me something else about it.

**Brown:** Do you want to talk about Oliver as a person?

**Young:** Beg your pardon?

**Brown:** As a person, how was he as a person, Oliver Nelson?

**Young:** Oliver Nelson was a beautiful man. He was a very nice person, that's all I can say. I worked with him and did a lot of things with him because he was a great arranger. And when he left New York and came to California he got into the studios and movies and different things, finally when I moved to California I worked with him a couple of times because we both were busy. It wasn't too long before we lost Oliver Nelson, back during that time, but I did work with him. We were good friends. Let's see, I think he was playing with Count Basie's band, what band was it? Did he play with Basie for a while?

**Brown:** I don't have that on record.

**Young:** You don't have that.

**Brown:** Yeah.

**Young:** Well I'm trying to think what band it was where I worked with him. Maybe it was a band... no, I can't recall. I wish I could.

**Brown:** Okay, how about Charles Mingus.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** What did you say?

**Brown:** Charles Mingus.

**Young:** Yes.

**Brown:** Did you, you knew him, correct?

**Young:** Yeah, I knew Charles Mingus. I worked with him quite a bit. I played with him, I did some recordings with him. Mingus had a group in New York, and I worked with that group for a little bit because I was very busy doing other things and I couldn't spend too much time with that group because, you know, you can't do too much, too many other things. And I was busy, but I worked with him as much as I could, Mingus, and I recorded with him. He and I was pretty good friends also.

**Brown:** What did you think of his music.

**Young:** Oh, his music was something else. He was very difficult. He wrote some strange things you know.

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** I made a thing on him with a recording... oh I wish I could tell you the name of it, but the introduction I had a whole introduction and everything, and it turned out to be a pretty big thing, the introduction, and you don't have any idea what that is, do you? What tune or what?

**Brown:** No, was it something you recorded under your own name? Was it on *Horn of Plenty*?

**Young:** No, it wasn't *Horn of Plenty*. No, it wasn't, *Horn of Plenty* was ...

**Brown:** That was yours.

**Young:** That was mine.

**Brown:** Right.

**Young:** This was a thing of Mingus's. He wrote, he wrote a big band thing it was. And...

**Brown:** Oh, was that at the Carnegie Hall concert?

**Young:** Beg pardon?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** I wonder if that was the Carnegie Hall concert. Anyway.

**Kimery:** *Epitaph?*

**Brown:** Was it *Epitaph?* *Epitaph?* Was that the piece, the large piece?

**Young:** Yeah, what did you say?

**Brown:** *Epitaph.*

**Young:** That could be it. I don't...

**Brown:** Did Mingus conduct it or was it after Mingus died? This piece you're talking about, was it while Mingus was still alive?

**Young:** Oh yeah.

**Brown:** Okay, okay, so it probably was... I'm just trying to think, maybe the Town Hall concert?

**Young:** It could be, yeah.

**Brown:** Because I know Clark Terry was on the Town Hall Concert...

**Young:** Clark Terry, yeah.

**Brown:** And Eric Dolphy.

**Young:** Yeah, that's right.

**Brown:** And then Clark did a song called *Clark in the Dark*. Wah, he used the mute, wah, it was a Mingus tune, it was a killer, yeah I think that was probably it. Yeah, and then also, Mingus yeah, I remember *Reincarnation of a Lovebird* had all that stuff from Charlie Parker in the beginning and then it would come into the tune.

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** Yeah, so anyway how about, I'm thinking of somebody else. How about B. B. King, you recorded with B. B. King.

**Young:** Yeah, I made some recordings with B. B. King. He would call me in to, I wasn't with his group or anything, but he would call me in to record with him. And I did that

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

two or three times, I don't know how many times I did, but I did it more than once. B. B. King, I recorded with him.

**Brown:** Let's talk about your long friendship with Gerald Wilson. We know it goes all the way back to when you were in Jimmie Lunceford's band.

**Young:** Yes.

**Brown:** Or maybe, I think Chick Carter, did we talk about Chick Carter? Was he in Chick Carter's band together? No?

**Young:** Yes he was.

**Brown:** Yeah, okay, so you now you're 90 years young and you're still playing with somebody you started playing with when you were just a kid.

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** That's a long relationship.

**Young:** It is. And we're just as close now as we were then.

**Brown:** What's the key to such a close relationship?

**Young:** [Laughs] That's a good question, how can I answer that? I don't know...

**Brown:** Well, let's say a lot of respect, mutual respect. Mutual respect, you respect one another.

**Young:** Oh yeah, we have mutual respect for one another, that's true, that kind of helps, and then Gerald, Gerald helped me a lot. He was instrumental in getting me into Jimmie Lunceford's band.

**Brown:** Right, right.

**Young:** And we had played in Chick Carter's band and we had done some things, but Gerald had come out of Cass Tech in Detroit and he had a lot of, music and things for people for beginners and different things in other words, a lot of music from the college. And he gave me a lot of that, and it helped me in reading and becoming a stronger reader I believe that. You know, because I hadn't... the way I come up I didn't have the musical background like he got coming from the college and everything. You see? And that really helped me, and afterwards when he got into Lunceford's band well he told Lunceford about me, got me in, and just moved me on up, that's the way it happened. It's hard for

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



me to explain that because what we did, like when we were with Chick Carter's band and everything, we use to practice and fool around on the horn and everything... I think, well actually I could play as good as Gerald did I mean, and he just come out of college and everything, but he had a different, he had more background than me in other words, that's hard to explain, but that's why he's such a great writer today. He had a very strong background, musical background. I never had that. I wish I had got that, because I might be following up the line then. You know what I'm saying.

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** Like, like Quincy or some of the guys I played with that played music and went on to become band leaders, like Gerald Wilson even. He was a side man and went on to be, he turned out to be a big, big, big man, as a leader, you know. But I never had that in my mind, I never wanted to be a leader. I had a little group for a little while, but I really didn't enjoy that because that was forced on me, some people said, "Come on we want you to record and do some things with a group." But I never did, I wasn't really into that, becoming a leader. I think it's all in your mind, you know. That's the way I look at it. If you want to be a leader, go on and be a leader. I never wanted to be a leader, and I know a lot of guys who are like that. Sweets, he never wanted to be a leader. Frank Wesss, well Frank Wesss, well [laughs] but see what I mean? Different people that I've worked with and played they could've been leaders and things but they didn't, I mean... like that little guy it was out at, Wilberforce and played in my band and got it so, he could write man, he was in Jimmie's and Count Basie's band and wrote a lot of good stuff in the Count Basie band played tenor saxophone.

**Brown:** Frank Foster?

**Young:** Frank Foster. See what I mean, I can't even think of people and he and I were like this together. I helped him up, I helped Frank Foster up, but Frank Foster, he turned out to be quite a musician, great writing.

**Brown:** Because he's leading the Count Basie Orchestral now, or he was.

**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** Frank Foster is leading the Count Basie Orchestra now.

**Young:** He is?

**Brown:** He was.

**Kimery:** Not now.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** Somebody else took over? Okay.

**Young:** He might have done that.

**Brown:** He was, yeah previously.

**Young:** He might have done that for a little while, but I didn't, too many years have passed. Thad Jones I think led the band for a while, Count Basie's band. It was several guys that did.

**Kimery:** Grover Mitchell.

**Young:** Who?

**Brown:** Grover Mitchell. Grover Mitchell. Grover Mitchell.

**Young:** Grover Mitchell. Well now see, Grover Mitchell was never in the band when I was in the band, but Grover Mitchell he did some leading, is he leading that band now?

**Brown:** Do you know who's leading it?

Well you know, you were in that band as you were talking about Frank Foster, you were in that band called the New Testament, the New Testament Count Basie Band, right? The band in the '50s and the early '60s.

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** And that's where that footage comes out, now were you in the band before Frank Foster got in the band? Or you said that you helped Frank a little bit coming up.

**Young:** That's a good question. I think Frank got in the band, in that new band, and I think I came in the band, I think... yes. I think, man that's a good question.

**Brown:** Let's talk about some of other guys in that Count Basie band. We talked about Sonny Payne already. What about Eric Dixon the other tenor saxophone player.

**Young:** Eric Dixon was very good, very nice man. Wonderful man, I used to kid him a lot. I forgot what, we had a kidding thing going on between, but I can't remember what it was, I wish I could tell you because it was a funny thing. We used to [laughs] some kind of name I wish I could think of, but Eric Dixon, he was a nice man, man. Good cat. Beautiful man.

**Brown:** And you talk about Al Aarons.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** Who?

**Brown:** Al Aarons, the other trumpet player? The trumpet player was you...

**Young:** Al Aarons?

**Brown:** Yeah, you, Thad Jones, Al Aarons, and Sonny Cohn.

**Young:** Sonny Cohn. Well, I remember when Sonny Cohn came to the band and I remember when Al Aarons come to the band. Who did Sonny Cohn? Oh, that's when the trumpet player that, what's his name said something to and he got off and left.

**Brown:** Oh, right, you said that Marshall Royal said something to him and he got off and left.

**Young:** [laughs] I don't know if you should put that on tape.

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** But he did that.

**Brown:** Yeah, we talked about it.

**Young:** Yeah, we talked about that. What was his name?

**Brown:** I talked about Al Aarons and Sonny Cohn. Sonny Cohn.

**Young:** Yeah, but I was saying, when Sonny Cohn came to the band I was telling you who he replaced.

**Brown:** Do you remember who that was?

**Young:** I just got through talking about him. We just, that Marshall said.

**Brown:** Right, yeah, I don't remember.

**Young:** That old man was so good. That old man, what's his name? He played "Little Darling"? Wendell Culley.

**Brown:** Wendell Culley, Wendell Culley.

**Young:** Wendell Culley.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** Right, so, Sonny took his place?

**Young:** Yeah. Sonny Cohn replaces him. Because he walked off the band stand from that thing, and don't know where he went. He left the band just like that. Then they got Sonny Cohn. Sonny lived out in Chicago I think it was. Wasn't Sonny from Chicago?

**Brown:** I don't know, I'm asking you. [laughs] There's not a lot about a lot of these guys, like you know Al...

**Young:** Yeah, he was from Chicago.

**Brown:** Okay, Sonny Cohn.

**Young:** And they got Sonny Cohn and then Al Aarons, who did he replace?

**Brown:** But that was a strong trumpet section. That's in this video we were talking about earlier. But the four of you are killing. You, Thad Jones, Al, and Sonny.

**Young:** Sonny.

**Brown:** Great. It's great, great.

**Young:** That turned out to be a good section. The guys liked one another and they played together. That's what makes a section. When guys like one another and will play together, you see what I'm saying?

**Brown:** Um-hm.

**Young:** You take a section where you got some guys in there that don't like one another they ain't going to play together. They can't play together because they don't like one another. That's the funny thing, that's the way I feel about music. I could be wrong.

**Brown:** No, I think you're right. [laughs]

**Young:** Yeah, I do too. Because I could be wrong about that, but I don't think so because there are guys in there, they used to tell me things, I'm playing the first trumpet, I don't make no difference. Thad was telling me things... Sonny Cohn and things, you know, and I could tell them things we could tell each other things, and we would do it. That's what makes a band, man. That's what makes a trumpet section; because, you can't... trumpet is a difficult instrument anyway. A lot of people don't know how tough the trumpet is. Trumpet's a tough instrument. I believe it's tougher than your drums.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** [laughs] I believe it too!

**Young:** [laughs] It don't have to be, I'm just kidding.

**Brown:** [laughs] I believe it!

**Young:** Man, and Sonny Payne man, I loved Sonny Payne. Did you like Sonny Payne's work?

**Brown:** Oh man, oh yea. [laughs] It's phenomenal.

**Young:** He was phenomenal, man. You know what I'm saying. Yeah, he'd do everything. And, it would come out!

**Brown:** Right! [laughs]

**Young:** He was something else, man.

**Brown:** Yeah.

**Young:** I loved Count Basie's band, man.

**Brown:** Yeah.

**Young:** Count Basie. Count was such a nice man too. Count was a, I liked him as a band leader, as well as any man I've ever played with, any band leader I'm talking about. Count Basie, he was nice, man. Count Basie used to have a good time too, he did everything too. [laughs] But, he took care of business though, I mean, you know. But, Count Basie was, I used to hang with him a little bit. Not a lot, but I used to hang with Basie a little bit when I played in his band. So the guy didn't pay that no attention, and you know, when you run with the leader for a little while. I did the same thing with Lionel Hampton. Lionel Hampton he'd take me to dinner, "Come on Snooky, I'll take you to dinner." He'd take me to dinner, I had to pay for the dinner. [laughs]

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** After we'd have dinner Hamp, Hamp was a strange man, I had to pay for the dinner. I said, "Wait a minute Hamp, you took me to dinner." He said, "Oh I'll give it to you, I'll take care of that." [laughs] Lionel Hampton's something else, man.

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** His wife, what was her name?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** Gladys.

**Young:** Gladys. She didn't give him no money.

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** He didn't have... Lionel Hampton didn't have no money. He'd take you to dinner, you going to pay for that dinner. I did it a couple times and I said, "I ain't going to do dinner with you no more!" [laughs]

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** And that's the truth, man. I liked Lionel Hampton. Hampton was like a kid really. I mean, he was, he was just like a kid. He wasn't like a, you know, a big man, running the band like that. That wasn't it, Hamp was like a kid. And he could play and loved his band and everything, man. But, he was like a kid really. And I'm telling the truth I ain't talking about, God bless the dead, I'm just talking about, I worked with him and I know I wouldn't say anything wrong about anybody.

**Brown:** I don't think there's anything wrong with staying eternally youthful.

**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** I said, I don't think there's anything wrong in staying young, staying young at heart.

**Young:** Oh yeah.

**Brown:** I think you young at heart.

**Young:** Oh yeah, well, that's a good thing you said, young at heart.

**Brown:** [laughs] Snooky young at heart!

**Young:** I believe in that too man, stay young, and play, man, stay young, and you've got to practice a lot too, man.

**Brown:** Did you practice yesterday?

**Young:** I didn't and I ain't got the chance to, when I got in I didn't have time to do it, but I generally practice a couple hours.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)





**Brown:** Everyday?

**Young:** Everyday. I put in two hours. And, I might do more than that, it's just depends on how I feel, but mostly I do two hours, and that will keep your chops in shape if you have to go and play a gig, you see?

**Brown:** What do you practice? Long tones? What do you start with? What's your practice routine?

**Young:** I practice long tones.

**Brown:** That's the first thing you start doing?

**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** When you pick up your horn to practice, what do you do? What's the first thing you do?

**Young:** First thing I do? I blow on my mouthpiece and blow on my mouthpiece and get my embasure set, and I might do that for 10 or 15 minutes... to get your embasure set. Then I'll start playing long tones, out of a book, I've got a book.

**Brown:** Do you know by whom, or the title?

**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** The title of the book? Is it your own book or somebody else wrote it?

**Young:** Somebody else book, and I can't think of the name of the darn book, but it's a, anybody can get the book, and it's a whole lot of long tones and they range, you don't play high at all in this two hour thing. But, there's other books I've got for it, I've got all kinds of, I don't believe in that, I don't play that.

**Brown:** So you start practicing your long tones out of a book.

**Young:** Yeah, I've got a couple of books and they've got the guys playing stuff that you, I can't even know some of the notes they got on there.

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** And I say, "What the heck is that?" You know, well that's just me though, because I'm... maybe, there's plenty guys out there might be doing it. Maybe that's for them, but it ain't for everybody I'll put it like that.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

**Brown:** Okay. So you get your embasure ready first 10 or 15 minutes then you start practicing long tones, how long do you practice long tones?

**Young:** It takes, the practice, I wish I had brought the book I could've shown you, it's better than me trying to tell you, but it'll take me an hour, two hours to play this long tone thing, program, long tones. And I'll set the, the...

**Brown:** Metronome?

**Young:** Metronome, yeah. I'll set it at like 72. And that's very slow. And when I finish I got to think and I'll play and I'll move the metronome up to 100. And I'm finished, but that's about two and a half hours, two hours. And, you got to, you got to get used to doing that and when you let it be, how can I say that? Let it be something that you do, that you do everyday, and don't let it bug you or anything, get used to doing it and feel like you should do it. And it will set your embasure, because embasure, trumpet embasure is really something, man. And some guys, this is not for, what I'm saying now is for young guys coming up. It's best if he practiced horn everyday. Long tones all up, you know... and if you do that everyday, then after you get through doing that then you can play whatever you, you'll notice your lip will do anything you want it to do. That's after you do you routine, the routine, then you can do whatever you want to, I do that a lot of times afterwards. I'll play some songs, I'll play rays. I'll go up to high F's, G's, A's. I can do that and it don't bother me one bit. The only problem I have now is my hearing, I've got a hearing problem, and it's kind of, it's kind of difficult to play now, but I still play with two bands. And they don't think I'm too, they don't hold it against me they want me to come and play with them, you see what I'm saying? Gerald Wilson's band and John Clayton, Clayton-Hamilton Band. Those are two bands on the west coast.

**Brown:** Still working with Gerald Wilson.

**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** You're still working with your buddy Gerald Wilson.

**Young:** Oh yeah, I still work with Gerald, me and Gerald's very close man. I still work with Gerald. Gerald and I, we were like brothers really because we go back to...

**Brown:** So far back, back to Chick Carter.

**Young:** That's right, we go back to when we were coming out of our teens.

**Brown:** Right, right.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** And that's a long time.

**Brown:** And you're both here in Los Angeles.

**Young:** Yeah, well see, funny thing. When we left Jimmie Lunceford...

**Brown:** He came...

**Young:** Gerald came to California, it wasn't too long before I came to California.

[TAPE CHANGE]

**Young:** ...bands and things, and this was the state, I was down in Florida I was every place. I don't care for Florida, the weather and things, I like California. I don't mean anything about... I'm talking about the weather and everything that's what I really meant when I said I didn't care for, I really didn't like the weather in Florida though because it gets too hot and too something...

**Brown:** Humid.

**Young:** Humid, that's what I'm trying to say.

**Brown:** Yeah.

**Young:** California used to, didn't be like that. It's getting kind of strange now though. [laughs] Don't you think?

**Brown:** Global warming. [laughs]

**Young:** It's changed, but when I first came out here, what I'm talking about, there wasn't no such thing as humid. It was so beautiful, man. But it's changed, I think the whole world has changed, you know, and its too bad though, but California's not bad though, the humid it doesn't bother me because I'm from the east where humid is... where are you from?

**Brown:** I'm from here.

**Young:** You from here?

**Brown:** Yeah, San Francisco. [laughs]

**Young:** You from, well see? You from here, so you really don't know what I'm talking about.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** No, I do, but...

**Young:** You don't.

**Brown:** I do.

**Young:** Where you from?

**Kimery:** I'm from here.

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** You're from here. See?

**Brown:** [laughs] But we've lived all over. We lived all over. We both lived in Germany...

**Young:** If you lived in Ohio in the summertime...

**Brown:** No thank you. [laughs]

**Young:** Night or day it's so hot, it don't change during the summertime and different things. They have times when, it don't change, the weather just, I don't know, and Florida's like that.

**Brown:** Yeah, yeah.

**Young:** California it ain't like that. California's out there. That's why I come to California, I love California.

**Brown:** I got, I understand that. [laughs]

**Young:** That's why I come to California.

**Brown:** Well, you were associated with the *Tonight Show* Band for thirty years.

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** Thirty years. A friend of mine asked me to ask you about being Doc's safety net for the high notes.

**Young:** About what?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** That you were Doc's safety net, if he couldn't make those high notes you were there to hit them for him. Is that correct?

**Young:** No, I never had, no, that's a...

**Brown:** No?

**Young:** I never had to hit no high notes for Doc. Doc had...

**Brown:** No, that's what I'm saying, if he couldn't hit it you were there to get it if he didn't get it. No?

**Young:** No.

**Brown:** That's not true?

**Young:** No, Doc was, [laughs] Doc had some chops, man.

**Brown:** Okay.

**Young:** That's one thing I'll say about Doc. Now, I did a recording, not a recording but I think it was Dizzy, did the *Tonight Show* in California and it was a song where he played a solo [sings] and something like that, he didn't have the chops to do it and I did it for him.

**Brown:** Okay, good now you set the record straight.

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** Okay.

**Young:** I did it for Dizzy, but that was, Dizzy's chops were probably off or something because you know Dizzy, you know, you didn't have to do nothing for Dizzy, but on this particular thing Dizzy was on there and it was a tune we played and I remember the thing [sings] I had to hit that note, I forget what it was, 'F' or a 'G' or something like that. That's what it was, other than that, you didn't have to hit nothing for Dizzy either.

**Brown:** [laughs] Okay.

**Young:** Dizzy was cool, man.

**Brown:** [laughs] Okay.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

**Young:** Me and Dizzy very close. In fact Dizzy bought a mouthpiece of mine way back in New York before he really got to be Dizzy Gillespie, I mean famous Dizzy Gillespie, you know what I mean. And I loaned him my mouth piece, and he finally gave it back to me two or three days before he gave it back, but he gave me my mouthpiece back.

**Brown:** Okay.

**Young:** Yeah, because we play same type of mouthpiece just about, Dizzy and I used about the same kind of mouthpiece.

**Brown:** So even though you were thirty years with the *Tonight Show* Band, you still were performing with other bands all that time. For example when you were in New York you were working with Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Band. When you came out here, what did you do, you rejoined Gerald Wilson?

**Young:** Yeah, well see, it's a funny thing. When you do the *Tonight Show*, you would do it in the daytime and early and it would be over, and that's when I would go and play with Thad and Mel in New York. I mean, and the same way out here in California. You could go to work in the afternoon by five or six o'clock you through. You through work, and you done did the rehearsal and everything and the *Tonight Show*, it's over. You always have time to go to some place else in the evening and play. You see what I'm saying?

**Brown:** What time did you start in the day?

**Young:** In the day?

**Brown:** Yeah, what time did you start?

**Young:** You start, I think the rehearsal was three o'clock. Three, four, five, six, you rehearsed. The rehearsal would be three to four. Then they have... how was that? You would have about an hour off then you come and do the Show, and the Show would go for one hour, no longer, it would go one hour. You'd be through with the Show at least, with the rehearsal and the Show and everything in about four hours. That's what The *Tonight Show* was, it was four or five hours. I think it was you go to work at three o'clock and you rehearse for one hour to four, you have an hour off for lunch and you come back and do the Show for one hour and it's over with. It's always like that.

**Brown:** Everyday, well five days a week, right?

**Young:** Yeah...

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** Five days a week...

**Young:** Five days a week. It was always like that. It was like that in New York, it was like that here. And you have time off to hang out in between, after the rehearsal. The rehearsal would go like this [snaps] and you'd better be able to rehearse them acts and things that'd come in there, and they kept musicians that could do that. That could play the acts... musicians, it was a tough job man, believe me.

**Brown:** And did Doc conduct all the rehearsals.

**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** Did Doc conduct all the rehearsals?

**Young:** Oh Doc would rehearse the band and conduct the band, and then when Doc wasn't there Tommy Newsom would be it...

**Brown:** Tommy Newsom, okay.

**Young:** But, it would be the same thing. They would rehearse the act's music, the act's. And some acts come in there with some tough music and some acts it was just, one time and you go it, but you know. But, it would be, it was nice, it was difficult too. It was good, but you had to be able to do it. All of the musicians, all of them was, had to read that music, and had to be able to play that music, whatever they brought in, and they brought everything in, all kinds of music in, you know what I'm saying. All kinds of acts and different things, you had to play it. And if you couldn't they'd get somebody else, they'd get somebody else. And they wouldn't rehearse, they'd rehearsed the music then run it two to three times at the most.

Doc and Tommy Newsom, they were very good musicians, man. They would rehearse the band and they knew what was happening. They had a sheet, you know, the big thing and they knew exactly what was happening. They'd rehearse the band, take the band, and then they'd stop the band and they'd say, "I want you to do so and so and so and so and so and so... or do something, hold it down a little, bring it up." They used to do... it was very nice, man, I enjoyed working with them. When I got to New York for the first time on the *Tonight Show*, Doc Severinsen and Clark Terry pulled my coat, to do what was happening, because they were there, had been doing it. So they got me in the band, but I don't care how much you know, how good you are, when you first go in there it's difficult, very difficult. And, I'd hate to be a drummer, [laughs] because the drummer's just by himself, you know what I mean. There're four trumpet that's different, four sax, five saxophones, four trombones, but for a drummer, the bass, y'all got it tough, man.

**Brown:** [laughs]

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** You know what I'm saying. And, if you can't read... it's tough.

**Brown:** So Ed Shaughnessy was the main drummer, right? For the *Tonight Show*?

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** So he must have been a monster for...

**Young:** Beg your pardon?

**Brown:** I said, he must have been a monster reader...

**Young:** Oh yeah.

**Brown:** And could do everything.

**Young:** Oh yeah, and he was, man he didn't miss nothing.

**Brown:** Okay.

**Young:** He was very good. Ed Shaughnessy. In New York they had... could you remember the guys they had in New York? They had the drummer... Sonny, no not Sonny Payne, but...oh man...

**Brown:** Drummer right? We're looking at the drummers. Mel Lewis...

**Young:** No.

**Brown:** Dennis Mackrel?

**Young:** Who?

**Brown:** Well Mel Lewis or Dennis Mackrel? John Riley? Am I looking at the wrong one? Hang on, no that's, no sorry, sorry, sorry no, I'm sorry, sorry, that's I'm sorry...

**Young:** Not on the *Tonight Show*.

**Brown:** Sorry that was me. Let's see, Jack Sperling, or Shelly Mann, Louie Bellson?

**Young:** Now, they were on...

**Brown:** Or Grady Tate?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** Not New York.

**Brown:** New York would be, how about Grady Tate?

**Young:** Grady Tate, that's who I was thinking about.

**Brown:** Okay.

**Young:** Grady Tate. Now we had worked together, what band was that? Ah Snooky, Grady Tate, you know Grady Tate?

**Brown:** Yeah, I don't, yeah I know who he is.

**Young:** He's tough man.

**Brown:** Oh yeah.

**Young:** He's tough, Grady Tate, man. Did he play with Basie? Who did he play with?

**Kimery:** He recorded on Oliver Nelson's stuff.

**Brown:** Yeah he was on Oliver Nelson, he played a lot with Oliver.

**Young:** Oliver Nelson?

**Kimery:** Yeah.

**Young:** Maybe it was Oliver Nelson I'm thinking of, Grady Tate, Oliver Nelson Band. Well, anyways, I worked with Grady, Grady Tate and I we real good friends, man. Grady's about your size and we was just about the same size and we used to, oh man. Grady Tate, he's a great cat, man. He's still around, you know. I'd like to see him, I haven't seen him in years, but we were very good friends, man, and when he came on the *Tonight Show* that was really something man. He came on in there and *did it*, he came on in there and *did it*, man. He came behind... because they had to have two or three drummers; one didn't do the same thing everyday they had to have, what's the guy's name, the big guy we just mentioned, played drums?

**Brown:** We got Louie Bellson, you had, who did I mention, Louie Bellson, I mentioned...

**Young:** Louie Bellson didn't do the *Tonight Show*.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** Okay, Jack Sperling or Shelly Man? Jack Sperling was in, in a...

**Young:** They did other shows, they didn't do the *Tonight Show*...

**Brown:** Okay.

**Young:** Everyday. What's his name? Damn it.

**Brown:** Not Louie Bellson, though, huh? Not Louie?

**Young:** Ed Shaughnessy!

**Kimery:** Oh, Ed.

**Brown:** Yeah.

**Young:** Ed Shaughnessy, Grady Tate, it was another drummer, he didn't stay there though that did the show in New York, NBC I'm talking about, but Ed Shaughnessy and Grady Tate turned out to, but there was another guy who was on there, but he didn't stay, I don't know why. But, when Grady Tate came on there, you see they wanted a band that could get away from the, the what's it's name style, they wanted a band to swing more and play not so... what is it I'm trying to say... so commercial like, not commercial, but they wanted the band to swing, and when the band came to California it swung.

**Brown:** Is that because Johnny Carson liked Jazz? Is that why he wanted the band to be more jazz like, because of Johnny?

**Young:** That's what I'm trying to say. He wanted it to be more jazz like, because the show turned out to be like that. And finally when it came to California it became even more so because Doc had the band and he kept, he wanted cats in there that played jazz. Good musicians you know what I mean. He didn't want them legit guys in other words, he didn't want that. See, he wanted jazz musicians and that's what he got, and that's what that band turned out to be, man.

**Brown:** Did you have much contact or interaction with Johnny Carson?

**Young:** Did I have what?

**Brown:** Much contact with Johnny Carson, did you?

**Young:** [laughs] Yeah, but, Johnny now Johnny, he used to kid me a lot, he made a few jokes about something I wish I could think of what it was, it was about Snooky. I can't but, Johnny he treated me nice. He treated all the guys nice. Every now and then he

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

would come over and hang with the musicians and he would come sometimes and set up on the, because he wanted to be a drummer [laughs]. And when we would be rehearsing something he'd come over and set up on the drums and we'd play something just doing, you know, but it wouldn't last long and we would never do it on the show. But, Johnny wanted to be a drummer. [laughs] He wanted to be a drummer, but when he gone on sit behind the drums, he wanted to be drummer [laughs].

**Brown:** [laughs] I understand.

**Young:** He wanted to be a drummer, but he wasn't a drummer [laughs]. He'd come over there and set up there playing the drums, but it was fun though. Johnny Carson he was a nice cat man, to the band to the musicians and everything, he really was. That's why we got along so good, Johnny was very friendly with the musicians and everything.

**Brown:** Buddy Rich came on the Show a lot, I remember seeing Buddy Rich, Buddy Rich on the *Tonight Show* a lot.

**Young:** He came on the *Tonight Show* and he was, he was a good, fun guy too, Buddy Rich was. He would come on the *Tonight Show* and we would play and I worked with Buddy Rich quite a bit off the band stand, I did. And Buddy Rich, he liked my trumpet playing. He liked my first trumpet playing, that's what he liked about me. And you know Buddy Rich didn't read no music, you know. Buddy never read a note in his life, but he didn't have to read. He was the best drummer that'd been through here, you know, in a sense you know what I'm saying. You're a drummer, you know what I'm saying.

**Brown:** No, we all respect Buddy. What was it like, since he didn't read, how did he rehearse, how did you play?

**Young:** You know, funny thing, he would come and tell the band to play the tune down without him. Then he would come up and play right afterwards and that would be what he did. That's the way he did it. He'd tell the band, "Play the arrangement." He would come up, didn't have no music, didn't put no music up there, and he would play it, man.

**Brown:** Just one time?

**Young:** One time. He would do it.

**Brown:** And there'd be no drummer, or there'd be another drummer?

**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** Would there be a drummer playing or no drums?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** I'm trying to think now if there'd e a drummer playing.

**Brown:** But, anyways it only took one time.

**Young:** Only took one time.

**Brown:** You just ran it down, top to bottom, he listened to it, and then come up and play it?

**Young:** He had the band to play the whole arrangement, one time, and he'd come up and play it man, and it'd be just like... he was something else man.

**Brown:** People said he was hard on his own band.

**Young:** Well, he was tough on some men, man, for some reason, he was. That's why I say, he and I got a long, I never had no problem with him. He liked me I guess, because he never did say anything to me, never did. I can't say a cross word he gave me, but Buddy Rich did give some guys some cane, man. And I know it, I heard about it, but I wasn't one of them, you see? So, I don't know what to say about that, you know. I couldn't say nothing nice about him if he'd done something to me.

**Brown:** Right. [laughs]

**Young:** You see what I'm saying?

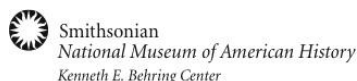
**Brown:** Okay. [laughs]

**Young:** I couldn't say nothing nice about him, as great as he is. If her had done something, he never did cross me up, man, but he did do some things to certain guys, I don't know what the reasons were, that's not my problem... and I have no idea what it was. And he would get rid of guys too. It must have been something he didn't like about them personally, I don't know what is was. You're a drummer, have you ever heard anything about what might have happened?

**Brown:** Just the same as you, that several of his members had some real difficulties with him, or he gave them a lot of difficulties. He could be hard on his people.

**Young:** Yeah, right. He was quite a man, man. I was so sorry when we lost him. When he got sick and, went away from here, he didn't, there was something about that, he went away from here just... if I'm right, it wasn't like he got sick or anything. He just said, "Well, see you later, I'm gone." One of them type of things. That's the way he left here, man.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** Well, we just lost Louie a few weeks ago. Louie Bellson, Louie Bellson. We just lost Louie Bellson.

**Young:** We just lost Louie Bellson, and I was trying to get somebody to take me to the funeral Thursday...

**Brown:** Right, it's tomorrow.

**Young:** And I can't find nobody. Because I can't go myself, I can't drive. I can drive, but I don't know where I'm going and everything, and I don't know where it is. I wish you were still here. You're going to be leaving, though.

**Brown:** Yeah, we have to leave in the morning.

**Young:** You got to leave in the morning. That's too bad, too. Louie Bellson's funeral is tomorrow, I still got a chance, I might call my close friends, I called and asked them, but they... Ira Nepus is out of town with Clay Jenkins, trumpet player that plays in John Clayton's band. And so, he said he's sorry but he can't do it he's working, he's out of town. So I'll find somebody I hope. And, my daughter's sick, she can't take me, you know. She's got the flu, that's too bad too, she's got the flu, you know.

**Brown:** So when the *Tonight Show* Band, when Johnny left then the band ended, then that was the end of, when Johnny Carson left the *Tonight Show* that was it.

**Young:** You know, when Johnny Carson left the *Tonight Show* that was the last night for Doc Severinsen and the *Tonight Show* band. We left the same night. We didn't play the next day, or anything. When Johnny Carson did his last show, *Tonight Show* did it's last show because Johnny and Doc and Ed McMahon was a three, they had a... they had a thing and we knew it, the band knew that that was it. They just said, "Sure is a drag to have to give up a gig like that," but that night, that was it, never did another *Tonight Show*. They called me back to do a couple, for some trumpet players who wasn't there, but it was with the new group that was there, and I didn't want to, I did it, but I just went on in and, make the bread, you know what I'm saying. I didn't want to play with that new age band and everything.

**Brown:** Did you have enough advanced notice?

**Young:** Did I have what?

**Brown:** Advanced notice that the band was going to end?

**Young:** Oh yeah, we knew, we knew that was the last night when Johnny left, we knew that the *Tonight Show* band was leaving and we left right then.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** Were you prepared for that? Did you set up other kinds of work so that you didn't, so when you left the band you had some work?

**Young:** Oh yeah, back then there was a lot of work in town and different places and different things, in fact I was with the band I'm with right now.

**Brown:** In '92?

**Young:** Yeah, started getting popular and moving and different things. And so I did... Jeff...

**Brown:** The Clayton-Hamilton band?

**Young:** Clayton-Hamilton band, and then we started doing different things. And so, most of the musicians were busy anyway. You know what I'm saying?

**Brown:** Got you.

**Young:** Some of the musicians, all the musicians weren't, but some of the musicians were busy doing other things and so when you left there, it didn't bother you, financially it didn't bother you.

**Brown:** So, you were ok.

**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** You were ok.

**Young:** Yeah, I was ok.

**Brown:** Okay.

**Young:** Yeah, I was okay I started playing with, and we were doing a lot of studio work, recordings and different things, and a lot of things was happening, and that's not happening now, I think it might be happening, but the other musicians are taking over, you know the younger guys or what have you, because we were all busy, man.

**Brown:** Time, time?

**Kimery:** Yeah, we can stop here.

**Brown:** Okay. We'll go ahead and stop, we'll take a break now.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** You going to take a break?

**Brown:** Yeah, we went almost an hour. It's going by fast now, huh?

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** You're having fun, you're having fun. Time flies when you're having fun.

**Young:** Are we working?

**Brown:** Oh, we working. That was one hour and we have two more to go, we'll be done.

**Young:** Oh great, man, great. I hope...

**Brown:** I can leave you the address...

-----

**Brown:** Okay, this is day two of the Snooky Young oral history interview...

**Young:** Is it on yet?

**Brown:** Yeah we're on now, go ahead, well I'm going to talk for a little while. While we were off mic, while we were off mic I asked you a little bit more about, we were talking about your practice routine. We were talking about your practice.

**Young:** My practicing?

**Brown:** Yeah, your daily practice, your routine, and you were saying you were saying things that you had hoped that a younger trumpet player would benefit them, so what was important for me, is that you talk about what you still do at 90 years young to prepare yourself to perform.

**Young:** Yes.

**Brown:** So regardless of whether it's a ten year old or a seventy year old listening, its still Snooky Young who's been playing trumpet for eighty-five years telling you how he keeps his embrasure together.

**Young:** Yeah, how to keep your chops up.

**Brown:** Right, keep your chops up.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** Embrasure's the same thing, and the best way to keep your chops up is to practice everyday. And some people, I don't know, they can't see that, but if you don't practice you won't have a good embrasure, because you can't play like professional guys and symphony guys and everything, they must practice. I don't know, but I just got a feeling, they have to practice to keep their chops up to play that music, because that music I think it just as difficult as jazz music. Because, it is just as difficult and you have to play it and have a good tone.

Tone is very important and if you don't practice you can't have a good tone, you see what I'm saying? You can't have a good tone on a trumpet if you don't have no chops for it and you're not playing it everyday and get you lips set for it so you can have a good tone, tone is very important. It's more important than anything. The tone and being able to play, see? And I was just thinking I want the young guys who are coming on, that are starting to learn how to play to realize that, realize that fact, the more you practice the more you sound, you get a good sound, you get a good tone... To get a good tone and a good sound you have to get your muscles and things working for you. You can't have it, it won't happen for you if you don't. Some guys you can see and you can hear missing notes and doing different things, that's because they don't practice, see? And if you practice and you've got your chops up, you ain't going to miss nothing, you will not miss. But if you don't keep your chops up and keep your chops together, you will miss. You will miss little things.

Trumpet is a funny instrument, I'm sorry, it ain't like reeds or something. You have to do everything with your lip, and if you don't practice, if you don't stay with your horn if you don't stay with the horn everyday and you keep your chops in shape, you ain't going to play, not good, you'll play, but because you won't have a good tone, tone is another thing, to have a good tone on the trumpet. It is. You know, some people don't have a good tone, all tones ain't the same. They are not the same, and they're very important. Them symphony guys, they got big mouth pieces and big tones and things and they've got to practice too. They got to practice because if they don't they won't have no embrasure, and the big mouth piece and everything to get the big sound, see?

**Brown:** Whose tone do you like?

**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** Whose tone do you like? Whose trumpet tone do you like, besides Snooky Young. [laughs]

**Young:** I don't... you asked me a question there that's kind of difficult for me to answer because...

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)





**Brown:** Well then, let me say it this way, who would you recommend a young student to listen to, to get a good tone, let me put it that way, besides Snooky Young?

**Young:** You know, well see, the funny thing, when I came up I used to listen to Louis Armstrong. I liked his sound and his tone, and then again there was another guy that came along behind him was Roy Eldridge. I liked his sound and his tone. Dizzy came along and I liked Dizzy's tone.

**Brown:** You liked his tone?

**Young:** Yeah, his tone and his sound, see these guys, but they had to practice and play to be as great as they were. That's getting back to what I said, if you practice and get great you'll have a good tone, tone has got to come with it, you see what I'm saying? Tone...

**Brown:** How about some of the next generation, how about folks like Clifford Brown or Lee Morgan?

**Young:** Great, Clifford Brown had a great sound, man, and he had a big sound, a big mouth piece too. He didn't have no high range or anything, but he would go up to a certain high, but he wasn't going up for them altissimo notes and things, that wasn't his thing, he didn't have to go up after that, but he had such a big pretty sound, he had a big mouth piece and practiced and kept his thing and he could move over that horn now, so you've got to have chops to do that. So, that's very good what you mentioned, he had a beautiful sound.

**Brown:** Did you hear Freddie Webster?

**Young:** Freddie Webster had a good sound. Freddie Webster and I were good friends. Freddie Webster... [laughs] we kind of had a... well how was that? He followed me into Jimmie Lunceford's band, but he couldn't play what I played because he didn't have the sound that I had, but he had a big sound and everything, but he couldn't play first trumpet, but he followed me into Jimmie Lunceford's band. But, see? Freddie Webster, I don't know what to say about him. He did too many bad things, that's why he went away from here so young. He did too many bad things to his system and everything. He was a good trumpet player and he would have been a great trumpet player hadn't he had all of these things that, you know... it's too bad, I don't like to talk about that.

**Brown:** How about Fats Navarro? Fats, Fats?

**Young:** Fats Navarro, it's too bad, he went away, Fats had it man, he had good range, and [laughs] good solos, Fats Navarro was something else. I think Fats might have did something too that took him away from here so young because I don't know why he went away from here. Do you know?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** I think he died young of tuberculosis.

**Young:** Tuberculosis?

**Brown:** I believe so.

**Young:** Yeah, well see, I knew he went away from here very young. And he was a big guy too. He wasn't little or anything. I forgot how he went away from here, its too bad he went away but he was a great trumpet player. He didn't get to be great, he died before people got to know him. But he had it, but he didn't make it. You know what I'm saying, the popularity and what not.

**Brown:** But then there was someone who did become real famous that we haven't mentioned yet, and he's Miles Dewey Davis.

**Young:** Who?

**Brown:** Miles Davis.

**Young:** Miles Davis? [laughs] Well, Miles got, well Miles... I don't know what to say, ain't nothing to say about Miles, Miles did his thing, man. He finally turned out to be a hell of a trumpet player, but he did his thing, he played his horn down like this. Trumpet players have never played, I don't know no player that played with his horn down like this, trumpet's suppose to be up like this, but Miles never did it, Miles played down here, but he played. He had his own thing, Miles had his own style, his own thing, and it worked for him. I would say that wouldn't work for anybody else, but it worked for Miles and he played and it got, but Miles he must have had a lot of things in his mind like chops, I mean like cards and all that stuff, he knew all that stuff and he played it and he didn't have to worry about it, anything like tunes and things, he knew it.

**Brown:** Does this say Basie?

**Kimery:** Yeah, lead with Basie.

**Brown:** Okay, so how about Al Killian?

**Young:** Who?

**Brown:** Al Killian, Al Killian?

**Young:** Yeah, Al Killian.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** Or Ed Lewis?

**Young:** Uh-huh.

**Brown:** Ed Lewis.

**Young:** Ed Lewis?

**Brown:** Um-hm

**Young:** I replaced Ed Lewis. I replaced Ed Lewis and the only way I replaced Ed Lewis, I think his age got him out of Count Basie's band. And Ed Lewis was a hell of a first trumpet player, but I worked beside him for a long time when we played in Basie's band and Ed Lewis was still in there, but I guess, knock on wood [knocks on wood], I guess I must have been lucky to replace Ed Lewis to take his place in that band, because that band that's when it got to be, how can I say? It put swing back into, not back into it, into it. And then it was another band called, what's that white band, swing suppose to be the world's greatest...

**Brown:** Benny Goodman?

**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** Benny Goodman?

**Young:** Benny Goodman and...

**Brown:** Stan Kenton?

**Young:** And who?

**Brown:** Stan Kenton? You talking about the old big bands?

**Young:** Yeah...

**Brown:** So you have...

**Snooky:** But see...

**Brown:** You have—oh, go ahead.

**Young:** Benny Goodman he got the reputation of being the world's greatest swing band, but he was not. To me, the swing band was Count Basie. Count Basie put swing, but

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

Benny Goodman got the credit. Now see, a lot of people may not, you might not hold that against me, you might hold that against me, well do you understand what I'm saying?

**Brown:** He's a drummer, he's going to understand swing.

**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** He's a drummer, he understands swing.

**Young:** That's what I'm talking about.

**Brown:** He understands jazz.

**Young:** He understands jazz and swing. Well see, but I think there was a racial thing there that put Benny Goodman above Count Basie, he was suppose to be the king of swing, he was not the king of swing. Count Basie's band was the one with Jo, Jo, Jo, Jo, Jo...

**Brown:** Jo Jones...

**Young:** Walter Page, Freddie Green, and Count Basie. That was the world's greatest...

**Brown:** Rhythm section.

**Young:** Rhythm section.

**Brown:** Um-hm. Swing.

**Young:** And I got in that band when that rhythm section was in there, I played in that band with that rhythm section, that was the world's greatest rhythm section, but the word got out that, what's his name, was the king of swing, so what are you going to do? You know what I'm saying? But, he wasn't the king of swing.

**Brown:** How about Al Killian?

**Young:** I hope that won't be held against me by telling the truth. [laughs]

**Brown:** I think history will prove that you're absolutely correct.

**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** I think history proves that you're absolutely correct. If people go back and they listen to Count Basie's records and they listen to Benny Goodman and they say which

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

band swings the hardest, they have to say Count Basie if they have ears, they have to say Count Basie. If they only look at the bands and they have some racial problems they won't say it.

**Young:** That's right, there was a racial problem. If you put them two bands on the band stand Basie's band would have swung them clean out of the joint. Back in them days...

**Brown:** Oh yeah, back in the day...

**Young:** Walter Page, **Jo Jones**, Freddie Green and Count Basie. That was a... there was something about that, that put them guys together when they separated Basie still had it, but, that was the greatest rhythm section. You was going to ask me about somebody else

**Brown:** Al Killian, Al Killian.

**Young:** Al Killian. Al Killian, we lost him, I know him. I didn't work with him, but I know him. Al Killian, he was a great high note trumpet player, he was a great high note trumpet player. It's too bad that he died when he did, because he didn't get the reputation that he should have got, because he would have, he had a great high note range. He was in Basie's band, he was in Basie's band. Al Killian, and I think Al Killian got killed, Didn't he? Yes he did, I think he got killed. Al Killian was, he was, well some people do the wrong things man, I think he did the wrong thing and he got wasted. But Al Killian was... go ahead.

**Brown:** No, no, go ahead, Al Killian...

**Young:** That's like the trumpet player that Jimmie Lunceford had before... before the one that played with me. He was the one that started playing high notes "Rhythm is Our Business," the trumpet player... See, Al Killian came along and back in them days them guys, there was guys that were high note men and Al Killian was one of them, but the man in [sings] "Rhythm is our business... he's the guy that hits them high made you think he's in the sky." [sings]

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** What's his name?

**Brown:** Hang on...

**Young:** He was in Jimmie Lunceford's band...

**Brown:** Right.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** He really started something.

**Brown:** Well let's talk about the guys in Duke Ellington's Orchestra, we haven't talked about Duke Ellington at all, like Cat Anderson or Cootie Williams or those guys.

**Young:** [laughs] I can't talk about Cat. [Laughs]

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** I don't want to talk about Cat. [Laughs]

**Brown:** Ok, ok, ok. I think you've said enough. [Laughs] But, let's see, so... Gerald Wilson replaced Sy Oliver and you replaced Eddie Tompkins.

**Young:** What?

**Brown:** Gerald Wilson replaced Sy Oliver...

**Young:** Yeah, but that...

**Brown:** And you replaced Eddie Tompkins.

**Young:** Right, but before this.

**Brown:** Before them, let me see, you had Paul Webster.

**Young:** Before Paul Webster.

**Brown:** Whoa. [laughs] That goes back before 1935.

**Young:** That's back when I'm talking about.

**Brown:** Wow.

**Young:** Steve.

**Brown:** Steve.

**Young:** Steve was the high note trumpet player. He's the one that played "Rhythm is Our Business." And that kind of helped make Jimmie Lunceford famous. Steve played "Rhythm is Our Business." [Sings] "Rhythm is our business, rhythm is what we sell. Rhythm is our business, rhythm is what we sell. Steve he's the guy that hits 'em makes you think he's in the sky." [sings]

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** Steve, man.

**Brown:** Ok, hang on, hang on, we're going to get Steve. Hang on, we're going to find out the Steve you're talking about. Damn.

**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** I said, we're going to get him. But ok, what about Cootie, what about Cootie Williams?

**Young:** What about who?

**Brown:** Cootie Williams, Cootie Williams.

**Young:** Cootie Williams.

**Brown:** Or Bubber Miley.

**Young:** Cootie Williams, he was a very strong trumpet player and he played way over here on the side of his mouth. Cootie Williams, well, he was something else and Duke Ellington's band, man, Cootie was, man. He was, Cootie and that other little old trumpet player in Duke's band. Used to dance and get up and...

**Brown:** Oh, are you talking about Ray Nance?

**Young:** Ray Nance, that's right.

**Brown:** Right.

**Young:** Ray Nance...

**Brown:** And he played violin too. [laughs]

**Young:** And he played violin. Ray Nance, man. He was a nice cat, man, but he fooled around with some wrong stuff and took him away from here too. Ray Nance, Ray Nance and there was another trumpet player in Duke's band... Cootie Williams, Ray Nance...

**Brown:** Bubber Miley early on.

**Young:** Who?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** Bubber Miley, Bubber Miley.

**Young:** Bubber Miley, but that's way back.

**Brown:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Young:** Bubber Miley, I don't know too much about Bubber, Bubber was something else. I wish I could tell you something about Bubber Miley, but I can't, all I can tell you is I remember that name, Bubber Miley. He must have been a good...

**Brown:** Yeah, he was the plunger.

**Young:** Plunger man. And then Cootie came in and took that away from him, because Cootie come in and play that plunger thing, man, he was something else. Cootie played way over on the side of his mouth when he played, but he could play, man.

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** Cootie...

**Brown:** How about some of the other trumpet players that come up in the '50s like Lee Morgan?

**Young:** Well, Lee Morgan didn't live long. Lee was good, he would have been here. He would have, people don't know how good Lee was going to be. See he died before he got... what did happen to him?

**Brown:** Somebody shot him.

**Young:** That's right, something happened to him, about a woman.

**Brown:** H-hm. A woman shot him.

**Young:** The woman shot him?

**Brown:** Um-hm.

**Young:** See...

**Brown:** [laughs]

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)





**Young:** He was on his way, man, but he got wasted. He was on his way. He wouldn't have, I don't think he would have blown anybody out, but he'd be right up there with all the cats like Roy and some of them guys... in that bracket, in other words, is what I'm trying to say he would have been if he lived, because he was well on his way, he was very young man when he got wasted. He got killed. That woman killed him. I forget how that happened.

**Brown:** It was either his wife or a jealous girlfriend one of the two. I think his wife might have found he was...

**Young:** It was his wife or it was some woman. It was something like that.

**Brown:** And shot him. I think it was at Slug's.

**Young:** Right in the joint!

**Brown:** Right in the, on the band stand! [laughs]

**Young:** Yeah, Wasted him, man.

**Brown:** How about Woody Shaw.

**Young:** Who?

**Brown:** Woody Shaw. Did you hear Woody Shaw before he died?

**Young:** Woody Shaw?

**Brown:** Uh-huh.

**Young:** I know the name very well, but I don't know too much about Woody Shaw. He was a good trumpet player too, I heard. I knew him, I never heard him play, Woody Shaw. Who did he play with?

**Brown:** Well, he was with Art Blakey, he was with the Jazz Messengers and then...

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** Yeah, so he played a lot, and then he was his own leader since the early '70s so...

**Young:** Yeah, he was a good, if he had lived he would have been well known too.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** How about, we just lost Freddie.

**Young:** Who?

**Brown:** Freddie Hubbard. We just lost Freddie Hubbard too.

**Young:** Oh, Freddie Hubbard was, he got famous, he got up there, Freddie Hubbard was something else, man. But he was a wild dude too. [laughs]

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** I was on a couple things. [laughs] Well anyway, over in Europe we were going down the street late at night going to some place to jam and the hookers and things were walking down the street and Freddie started messing with them and everything. And they wanted to mess with him, man. And I tried to, I said, "Oh, don't bother him, don't pay him not attention." And they were going to gang up on him and mess with him, you know, because he was messing with them as they were walking down the street. This is true... And I got him away from them a little bit and was afraid I might get hurt, you know, because them girls they don't care about you none, and Freddie was messing with them walking down the street, poor Freddie. But he was, Freddie was a wild cat.

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** He... there were two sides to Freddie, he was a nice cat and everything, but then there was another side to him, when he got to drinking them booze and everything he got wild. Some people are like that, and Freddie was like that, man. When we were, this was over in England, we was in England, late a night we had got through playing wherever we was and we was going to a club that everybody goes and hangs out late at night.

**Brown:** In England? Ronnie Scott's?

**Young:** That's it, that's it. And we was going to that place and, boy we just barely made it, I'll tell you that, because there was seven or eight of them girls and you know, you can't mess with them, they chicks own the streets, man. They know what they doing. [laughs]

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** I said, "Don't bother him!" I said, "He's drunk. Don't..." They were drunk, they were trying to waste him, man. I said, "Don't pay him no attention." Because he was high, you know. But we finally made it on to the club and then we jammed all the rest of the night. [laughs]

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** [laughs] But as far as what you were talking about as far as tone and sound Freddie pretty much had it all, huh?

**Young:** What?

**Brown:** You were talking about tone and sound on the trumpet, Freddie pretty much had it all. I mean, he had all the facility, Freddie.

**Young:** Freddie?

**Brown:** Yeah, yeah. He had, like you were saying, a trumpet player has good...

**Young:** Freddie Hubbard.

**Brown:** Had good sound...

**Young:** Oh yeah...

**Brown:** Good tone...

**Young:** Freddie had a beautiful sound, he had a sound of his own. He had a good tone and he had a beautiful, Freddie could play that trumpet, man. I'm sorry, Freddie, ain't too many could beat Freddie Hubbard playing. Freddie Hubbard, had a beautiful sound, it's too bad that he got, near the end, when he went away from here, he could hardly play, his chops was all messed up, which was a real drag, you know. Freddie was much younger than me. I still got chops, I'm just saying that for a reason, you know. Your chops don't have to leave you if you take care of yourself, and Freddie did too many bad things, man, but he could sure play. Freddie and I were good friends, we were good friends. One time Freddie said, "Man, I can come on the *Tonight Show* and play, I could get on there, I can play that stuff." He used to kid me a lot, you know, when I was doing the *Tonight Show*, but he thought about doing that type of work. He said, "I can do that. I can..." He used to kind of needle me a little bit about being on the *Tonight Show*, we used to do different things in New York, and he used to say that to me, "Oh, I can do that." I said, "Well, man, come on and do it!" But he never did but he... What were you going to say?

**Brown:** I guess it takes a certain personality, right, to be able to do what you did. You have to get along with a lot of different people, you've got to play a lot of different kind of music...

**Young:** Yeah...

**Brown:** So, not everybody could do what you did.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

**Young:** Well, see, that's another thing what I was talking about, is getting along with people, getting along with the leader and the different things. If you don't get along with them people, they ain't going to keep you in there, the ones that's on top, is the ones that, the business heads, they going to get rid of you, I don't give a darn how good you are. And some musicians have that problem, and I think maybe what's his name might have had a problem like that, I'm not sure now, but I'm just saying, you've got to be able to get along with them. I've worked under Doc Severinsen, Johnny Carson, and different people and they got along, they liked me, they got along with me. Well, I guess I'm just a regular person. Well see, some people are not, and they think... I don't know what they do, man, they do the wrong thing, and some guys, I know some guys get fired out of those bands and things, I know several musicians that they let go in the *Tonight Show* Band, I can't think of their names right now, but I know two or three guys that was let out of there that was in the band. And they weren't brothers. You know what I mean.

**Brown:** Um-hm.

**Young:** And it wasn't that, the reason they let them out, see? It's just, you have to be, I don't know, you just got to kind of toe the line a little bit and be down to earth, and you can stay on them jobs and things. I stayed on that job for a long time and I didn't have to do no, you know, pulling no whiskers or anything on that job, I didn't have to do it. I just come in, be there, and do what I was suppose to do. Be on time... Some guys used to come in just when the time the show to hit. The leaders don't like that, when you come in and you rush in to get to your seat to get ready to play. The leader would like for you to be there already set up and everything, but guys would come in like that. They would come in and rush in late and everything, but the leaders they look at them real strange, you know. So... they want you there.

**Brown:** So, when you left the *Tonight Show* Band in '92, oh let me talk about a film clip that's on the internet, it's of your birthday party and you have a celebration I think it's in 1989 they're celebrating I think it must be your 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. And you come out and you sing, you come out in front of the band and you sing "T'aint What You Do It's The Way That You Do It"

**Young:** Oh, you mean with the *Tonight Show*?

**Brown:** Yeah. Do you remember that? When you came out front for your birthday?

**Young:** Yeah, in front of the band. Well, see, that song...

**Brown:** [laughs] That's Jimmie Lunceford.

**Young:** That song was from Lunceford's band.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** [laughs] Right.

**Young:** And, what's his name wrote an arrangement for me to do, who wrote that arrangement... might have been Tommy Newsom, but he wrote this arrangement, I told him what I wanted to do and everything and "T'aint what you do" that, they knew I was from Lunceford's band, that tune is from Lunceford's band. [Sings] "T'aint what you do it's the way that you do it." [laughs]

**Brown:** So you sing it—did you sing with the Lunceford band when the Lunceford band, did you also do some of the back up singing there too?

**Young:** Say it again?

**Brown:** When you were with Lunceford band did you do the back up vocals with him as well?

**Young:** You know, it's a funny thing, I never got to sing a vocal with Jimmie Lunceford, there were so many other guys in there singing, when I got in there. Gerald sang, Joe Thomas sang, Willie Smith sang all of them guys sang, I never got to sing one tune in Jimmie Lunceford's band, and I could sing, but I never got a shot and I wanted to, but I didn't said anything. You know, I was new in the band, I was the kid in the band, I was the youngest man in the band when I went into Jimmie Lunceford's band, so I couldn't tell them what I wanted to do or anything. If I had've they probably would have done something, you know, but I was just scared to tell, "Well I'd like to sing a song or something." I could sing as good as any of them other guys could sing. [laughs]

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** Trummy sang.

**Brown:** Trummy.

**Young:** Willie Smith.

**Brown:** Sy Oliver sang. [laughs]

**Young:** All of them sang, man. [laughs] And, Gerald Wilson sang with the trio and the quartet, but see Gerald replaced Sy Oliver and Sy Oliver sang. When I replaced Eddie Tompkins, Eddie Tompkins didn't sing.

**Brown:** [laughs]

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** So, they didn't never try to give me no songs, but I could sing. I wanted to sing too man, but it never happened.

**Brown:** But, when you got on the *Tonight Show* Band then you got to sing...

**Young:** Yeah, when I got on the *Tonight Show*.

**Brown:** And you got to go out in front and sing a solo and play, so it made up for all that time from Jimmie Lunceford. [laughs]

**Young:** Yeah, that's the funny thing, now, funny you were thinking that or say that. But I never got to sing or do anything, but when I was a kid I used to sing at home with my family band and do different things, but when I left and got on some other kind of time, singing was something else, but I never forgot it though, you know that I could sing. I used to sing and kind of and dance and do different things.

**Brown:** [laughs]

**Young:** But I never did get to do it. There was a... like Ray Nance used to sing and dance and play. I was like "Shoot, I could've been on Ray Nance if they..." But I never got the chance to. Because I could dance man, I could dance, I could do the time step, all of that stuff I know the steps and things you know.

**Brown:** Where did you learn it? Where did you learn it?

**Young:** I don't know... I don't know. I was a kid and I learned how to dance. I used to play on the, oh I know how I learned that, I used to play a family band went on the road with a show called the...

[CD5 TRACK#10]

**Young:** Oh, no, I can't think of the name of that my family went on, but they used to, what they did was, the Brown Skinned Models, I think it was the Brown Skinned Models was the name of this show. And our family band went on this show and they was dancing and everything and I learned how to dance from them, playing there, I learned how to do the time-step, break-over-the-top... all of those is steps I'm mentioning now.

**Brown:** How about buck-and-wing?

**Young:** Who?

**Brown:** Buck-and-wing.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** Buck-and-wing? Yeah, I can do that! I can buck-and-wing, I can do all that, that was very important back in them days, the buck-and-wing. Shoot, and I used to do the...

**Brown:** The hucklebuck?

**Young:** The who?

**Brown:** The hucklebuck?

**Young:** Yeah, the hucklebuck. [laughs] Yeah, man, I...

**Brown:** Did you tap? Could you tap as well?

**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** Could you tap-dance?

**Young:** I could tap-dance, yep.

**Brown:** Dang.

**Young:** I could tap-dance, yeah, time-step. I was a pretty good tap-dancer, yeah, I could do the whole thing. I had a whole routine I could do, the over-the-top and all of that, that's the like when you head and your dance, you're over-the-top, you know that's the end of your thing. Then you dance [sings rhythms]...see, that's called over-the-top. That was your last step you would do and you end up, I could do all of that stuff, man. See, I was a good friend to the dancers...what's her name...the brothers?

**Brown:** Nicholas brothers?

**Young:** Nicholas brothers, that's right. See, I was very good friends to the Nicholas brothers, especially the little one, he and I used to run together and everything. I learned how to dance and I'd do dance, I wasn't near as good as them, the Nicholas brothers was something else, but I could dance with them. I'd do some of the steps and things that Nicholas brothers, you hit the nail right on the head. How did you?

**Brown:** Well, Nicholas and Fayard...

**Young:** How did you know that? That's exactly what I'm talking about, the Nicholas brothers. And the one, the two Nicholas brothers was...

**Brown:** Fayard is one.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** Fayard, Fayard Nicholas.

**Young:** Maynard and...

**Brown:** Fayard.

**Young:**...that's the big one, that's the oldest one.

**Brown:** Fayard.

**Young:** And the youngest one was Maynard...

**Brown:** Because he was still alive, the youngest one was still along for a long time.

**Young:** Maynard, and, man uh...Nicholas brothers...

**Brown:** I think it was Fayard and um....

**Young:** Nicholas...

**Brown:** Harold!

**Young:** Harold!

**Brown:** Harold was him.

**Young:** Harold Nicholas and Maynard.

**Brown:** Fayard. Fayard.

**Young:** Fayard! Fayard. Harold Nicholas and Fayard, that's right, man. I used to...

**Brown:** Hanging out with them.

**Young:** We used to run together, man, we about the same age. So they, we just lost the last one...

**Brown:** Um-hum, that was Harold.

**Young:** A couple years ago we lost him.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** So can you talk about your relationship with Jeannie and Jimmy Cheatham?

**Young:** Well...

**Brown:** When did it start?

**Young:** I started playing with Jimmy and Jeannie Cheatham, Jimmy and Jeannie Cheatham, I started playing with them, in fact, I got them on the *Tonight Show* one time. And they came on the *Tonight Show* and I played with them on the *Tonight Show*. That was a good act, I mean, they had a good thing, she sang the blues and he played the trombone, yeah he played trombone and he wrote music and he had a little thing together and I worked with him. I helped them out a lot because me playing in that group, I think it was...what was it...trumpet, trombone. I can't, was it a saxophone? Yeah, well it was about a seven or eight piece band. But it was a tough little band and she played the piano and sang a lot of blues and different things. Jimmy Cheatham, did you ever hear that group?

**Brown:** Not that one, no. On Record, I heard them on record but not live.

**Young:** You never saw them live?

**Brown:** Never saw them live, no.

**Young:** Did you ever see them?

**Kimery:** I did. I lived in San Diego...

**Young:** You say?

**Kimery:** I lived in San Diego...

**Young:** You lived in San Diego? They lived down there.

**Kimery:** Yeah, and I know Jimmy and Jeannie, and of course, Jimmy past away a few years ago.

**Young:** Yeah, Jimmy. Did you know them?

**Kimery:** Yes.

**Young:** Good, well, that's great then.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Kimery:** Yeah.

**Young:** That was a good little group, man, I played with them, and so it really got to be good because we had...what was the saxophone tenor player's name? He died, he was, something happened to him, and he was young, he could play, too. Well, anyway. Oh, that tenor player...he was in Los Angeles, he was in what's-his-names band for awhile...was it...Jimmy Cheatham and...oh man, I can't. I sure hate it because I can't call his name because you knew him, too. He was good, he was, but he played saxophone and he was a nice cat, beautiful cat. But he died, something happened, he had a, he had an intestinal thing and he would be, and he lived for a little while afterwards but then he died. He was a good saxophone player, was it he played alto and tenor...or which one was it? Oh, man, but we had a good group anyway, man. Him—this tenor player—that's who I'm talking about; tenor player, me, and Jimmy Cheatham. And there was...was there anybody else? There might have been another horn, I can't remember. But we just played the blues, man. And it was a good blues group because she played the piano and...I wish you had it, I wish you had a thing on that band because all of the people in that band, I think the drummer is still living.

**Brown:** Do you remember who was in the band? [off mic]

**Young:** She passed, no, he passed.

**Brown:** No, he...right. I think two years ago.

**Young:** Jeannie is still living, but Jimmy passed. Oh, that was a nice group, man.

**Kimery:** The drummer that we saw with Albert Mangelsdorff in Munich, called him "Iron Man", from Detroit, he played with Jimmy and Jeannie...

**Young:** I didn't understand, what you was talking to him, but...

**Brown:** I didn't understand either...[laughs]

**Kimery:** He was the drummer from Detroit...

**Young:** He was the drummer with who?

**Kimery:** The drummer with Jimmy and Jeannie was from Detroit.

**Young:** Yes.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Kimery:** And I can't think of his name but he...I saw him a few years back in Germany where he was playing a duet with trombonist Albert Mangelsdorff. He was known as "Iron Man" also, that was his nickname...

**Young:** You say he's ninety years old, almost?

**Brown:** His name was "Iron Man"...

**Kimery:** Nickname.

**Brown:** Nickname "Iron Man," his nickname. His nickname was "Iron Man."

**Young:** I'm not understanding that word, I wish I was.

**Brown:** "Iron Man."

**Young:** Huh?

**Brown:** "Iron Man," that's his nickname, "Iron Man." Like iron, like steel, iron.

**Young:** Yeah, that's right...say that name again, say it again.

**Brown:** His nickname...

**Young:** His nickname...

**Brown:**...was "Iron Man...Iron Man."

**Young:** See, I can't get it, some words I just can't get.

**Brown:** Iron is like steel...

**Young:** Iron

**Brown:**...but iron, iron.

**Young:** Iron.

**Brown:** "Iron...Man"

**Young:** Iron Man.

**Brown:** Yeah. Like steel, like steel...

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** Iron, “Iron Man.” That’s alright, that’s alright.

**Young:** That was the drummer in that band, is that what you’re...

**Brown:** That’s his nickname, yeah, that was his nickname.

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** And he was from Detroit.

**Young:** I can’t remember, I can see him now, too. That was a good group though, I mean, it was different, it was mostly blues and things. We did it and got on the *Tonight Show* and we did a few nice things and made some nice recordings. I don’t think I did the last one, but I think I did...this tenor player I was talking about was in that band, oh boy, I can’t think of him. Well, I wish we could, I wish you had a thing about that group because that was a nice group, man. She lost, he used to manage it and everything, but she lost her husband. But I don’t know whether, is she still doing anything?

**Kimery:** No, she had a stroke.

**Young:** She had a stroke?

**Kimery:** Yeah. I saw her a little over a year and a half ago in San Diego, she was in a wheel chair.

**Young:** Just like my wife, my wife had a stroke. Boy, just hope you don’t have a stroke, boy. It just stopped my wife. She’s had a stroke now for about five years, the whole half side of her body is like this...the other side is alright, but she can’t move. That’s a shame, man, I didn’t know she had a stroke, she had a stroke. Well, I guess she, it’s kind of hard living without her husband that made it a little rough for her because he handled all her business and everything. When she lost him I know it took a lot away from her, it had to.

**Kimery:** Yeah.

**Young:** Because he used to manage everything, did everything. What’s his name?

**Brown:** Jeannie? Jeannie Cheatham? What are...

**Young:** Jimmy...

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** Jimmy and Jeannie Cheatham.

**Young:** Yeah, Jeannie is the lady...

**Brown:** Um-hm, Jimmy.

**Young:**...his name was Jimmy Cheatham. And she's Jeannie Cheatham.

**Brown:** So, we were talking about other trumpet players. Did you ever want to play with the Ellington band? Or was there a band that you didn't get a chance to play with that you...

**Young:** Who?

**Brown:**...Ellington, did you want to play with Duke's band? Did you ever want to play with Duke's band?

**Young:** Duke's band?

**Brown:** Yeah.

**Young:** It's a funny thing, I wanted to play with Duke, and Duke wanted me to play with him because he...I was playing with...who's band was I playing with...I think I was playing with Count Basie. And he told me to go home and stay for two weeks, he said he didn't want to take me out of that band. He said, "You go home and stay for two weeks." Said, "You quit the band and go home and stay or two weeks and I'll come and get you."

**Brown:** That's what Duke said?

**Young:** That's what Duke said, that's Duke's words. [laughs] I didn't do it, actually I didn't want to leave Basie to go with Duke. But I always wanted to play with Duke, but that was the one thing he said. Duke wanted me in that band, he needed a first trumpet player, and he wanted me in the band and said, "Now, I'm not going to take you out of Basie's band." That's the way Duke was, he said, "I ain't going to take you out of Basie's band. But you quit the band and go home and stay for two weeks and I'll come and get you." That was the end of that. I wasn't going to quit Basie, in fact, I was having a good time in Basie's band anyway. I didn't want to go into a band where have to get used to everything and be accepted into the band and all of that again, and I was having such a good time in Basie's band because we was Thad Jones, and...me and Thad and Joe Newman, oh we was having a good time, it was like this, the band was like that. I wasn't going to leave the band anyway, even if he had took me out of there to come and join his band because I didn't like some of the men in Duke's band. They wasn't my kind of guys for some reason, I mean, they was guys would sit on the bandstand and turn away from

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



each other and do all kind of things like that. They never would be friendly, they was turning their backs...and Duke didn't pay it no attention, he didn't care what they did. But there was guys in Duke's band that would do things like that. Johnny Hodges was kind of strange, too. They had their own way though; you know what I'm saying. They was very, I don't know, I can't say, they wasn't swing cats, they wasn't...I don't know what to say about them about that band, the personality in the band was so strange...Cat.

**Brown:** Ok.

**Young:** I worked with Cat in a band, me and Cat was gambling, Cat lost all his money so he said, "Hey Snooky, let me have some money." I said, "Ok." I think I gave him ten or fifteen dollars, something like that. I asked him for my money and he say, "You better get out of here, get away from me." I asked him for it a couple days later, I say, "Give me my money, I get [inaudible] money, you better get out of here, I ain't thinking about you." That's what he did, that's the kind of cat he was, Cat was strange, man. But he never got no more money from me. [laughs] He never got no more money from me, man. He was strange, man.

**Brown:** What do you think about any of the young trumpet players today?

**Young:** Who?

**Brown:** Any of the young trumpet players today? Any of them catch your ear? Anybody that make you sit up and listen?

**Young:** There some good young trumpet players in line, in what's-his-name's band, in Jimmy's, I mean in Clayton-Hamilton's band. There's three or four good young trumpet player in there and there's another young trumpet player from, I can't think of his name...it's Winston, Winston Bird. Do you know Winston Bird?

**Brown:** Um-mm [no].

**Young:** He's a good young trumpet player. He's got chops [shoo]. These cats, I don't know where they get these chops from now-a-days. There must be something different about these chops because they all whistling up there, I say, "Wow." I like some of the young trumpet players. And I can, I tell when they blowing and when they sound good, I like them, you know, I like to see the cats blow, have another batch coming along, you know, another Louis or another Roy coming up, we've got have. You know what I'm saying. The should anyway.

**Brown:** Another person who is, you know, like you say altissimo...

**Young:** Who?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** Altissimo player is Maynard Ferguson, did you know Maynard Ferguson?

**Young:** Altissimo player...

**Brown:** You know, plays in the high notes, like Maynard Ferguson.

**Young:** Yeah.

**Brown:** Did you know him?

**Young:** Oh yeah, I know Maynard. Maynard, he was something else, man. Maynard played more than the trumpet, he played several instruments. Maynard, man, we lost him, didn't we?

**Brown:** Um-hm.

**Young:** Not too long ago. Maynard, he was a hell of a trumpet player, man. He was up there, he's one of the highest trumpet players ever. He had it, man. When he had his band and everything Maynard was something else. I don't know where he got them chops from, but he had them. He was a good, Maynard was a nice cat, I knew Maynard. We talked a lot, we like one another, whenever we went across one another; as trumpet players, you know, but Maynard was a nice cat. I think he was, anyway, I wasn't in his band or anything. He had to be though, man, because as nice as he played and everything I believe he was a nice cat.

**Brown:** So, here we are in 2009, last year...last year he received a NEA, in 2008 [speaking to Mr. Kimery], that's what I got here.

**Kimery:** Uh-hm.

**Brown:** So you received your NEA Jazz Masters...Jazz Masters...NEA Jazz Masters Award.

**Young:** What about it, what did you say?

**Brown:** You received it last year.

**Young:** Yeah, I was on it last year, in like October/November, right in there someplace, onetime. What was it?

**Brown:** You received the Jazz Masters Award, was it in January? [speaking to Mr. Kimery]

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Young:** No, I went to New York, to the...

**Kimery:** New York, yeah, in October.

**Brown:** Oh, so just recently?

**Kimery:** Yeah.

**Brown:** Ok, alright.

**Young:** I went to New York for...

**Brown:** To get the award?

**Young:** Yeah, to get the award, and that was like...October or November, right in there someplace.

**Brown:** How was that? How did you feel about receiving that award? How did you feel about being, receiving the award?

**Young:** Well, I was surprised to get it because after awhile they wait until I'm ninety years old [laughs]. No, I'm just kidding. But it was very nice, man, I really appreciated getting the award. I got it, lets see, there was...what's that trumpet player's name? He got it, me...and the trombone player. Have you got the list of the names of the men who did it this year, who got the award?

**Kimery:** It was...

**Young:** The trumpet player, the trombone player...the trumpet player is...oh heck, he's a young cat but...oh man, I wish you had the names of that...

**Brown:** Yeah, I wish I did, too.

**Kimery:** Well, George Benson got it.

**Young:** Huh?

**Kimery:** George Benson...

**Brown:** George Benson, guitarist, George Benson got it.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)





**Young:** George Benson? Yeah, he was one. George Benson, yeah, George Benson. Isn't that something, we can't think of these people's names.

**Brown:** All of us got memory loss.

**Kimery:** Jimmy Cobb.

**Brown:** Oh, Jimmy Cobb.

**Young:** Jimmy Cobb, Jimmy Cobb.

**Kimery:** Yeah, the records...reengineer, did all the stuff in Hoboken.

**Brown:** Oh, Rudy Van Gelder.

**Kimery:** Rudy Van Gelder.

**Young:** Who?

**Brown:** Rudy Van Gelder.

**Young:** Rudy Van Gelder, well, he had a club, I mean he had a...

**Brown:** Recording studio.

**Young:**...recording studio way in New Jersey. Rudy Van Gelder, myself, the guitar player...

**Brown:** George Benson, Jimmy Cobb...

**Young:** The trumpet player...

**Brown:** White or black? White or black, the trumpet player, was he white or black?

**Young:** He's black.

**Brown:** Black, younger than you. Young, no, older, older cat. Who is even up, I can't even think of any trumpet players who...I'm just thinking like Clark Terry, but it wouldn't have been him.

**Young:** No, it wasn't Clark Terry. He's a trumpet player around your age.

**Brown:** Oh, really.

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

**Kimery:** Yeah, I'm drawing a blank here.

**Brown:** Yeah, if he's getting a Jazz Masters Award he should be older than me. But anyway, you felt good about the award, you felt good to get the award?

**Young:** You say what?

**Brown:** What does the award mean to you? What does the NEA Jazz Masters Award mean to you? Does it mean anything?

**Young:** Well...I can't really answer your question because I didn't understand every word you said.

**Brown:** What does the NEA Jazz Masters Award mean to you?

**Young:** Well, it was a great award, I mean, to receive that I think it is, it's a nice honor to receive the National Endowment of the Arts Award. A lot of the guys all had to make speeches and different things, but I didn't because I had my problem and they talked to me, but I had somebody close by to tell me what they were saying. It worked like that pretty good but it was very nice, I have to say I'm glad that I was accepted into the National Endowment of the Arts. See, because my name is not famous like some of these other musicians, what I did was play first trumpet for all of these things, for the studios, for NBC, for Thad Jones band, for the band I'm playing with. So a lot of people don't know what a first trumpet player does, so that was nice that it was acknowledged like that, you see what I'm saying.

**Brown:** So what would you tell somebody a first trumpet player does? What would you say your job is as first trumpet player?

**Young:** What do I think?

**Brown:** What is the job of a first trumpet player?

**Young:** Boy, I'm having a hard time today. I heard better yesterday than I am today. I mean, for some reason I'm missing the main words you're saying in there. You say what?

**Brown:** What is the job of the first trumpet player? What does a first trumpet player do in a jazz band, what's his job? Because you have a soloist...

**Young:** You do play some solos, but the first trumpet player's job is to, is just to, that's a very good question, I mean, to put words to that, the first trumpet player's job...well, I

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



tell you it's not easy to be the first trumpet player, or the first alto player, or the first trombone player. To be the first, you lead the band, you see...

**Brown:** Or the section...

**Young:** Yeah, and the guys got to follow you and if you and the first trombone player and the first alto player think alike in a band, they're the leaders of the section. And so if them guys think alike and play together, the band is going to come together. It's hard to answer that exactly, I mean, as far as I'm concerned to put words to that, because it's not easy.

**Brown:** I think when you said you're the leader of that section, that you're the leader of that section, that's important, because you're the lead trumpet...the leading trumpet, you're the leader of that section.

**Young:** Yes.

**Brown:** Right, and everybody follows you, you set the pace, you set the example and everybody goes with you, is that correct? Is that the role of the first trumpet?

**Young:** Yeah, they got to follow you, they have to follow you and play with you. That's getting back to some of the things I was talking about before. If you got men that don't play with you, or think what you playing is the lead and they won't play with you. See, that's what I was talking about before, about playing together and thinking about what that man is doing or if you playing the second or third or fourth trumpet, and you playing you got to blend with this man, and if you don't blend with this man and if you don't blend with him it ain't going to work.

**Brown:** Is our time up, we've got a little bit of time, should we? [speaking to Mr. Kimery]

**Kimery:** Yeah, we've got about thirty seconds left on this tape here and then I'll have to change this out.

**Brown:** Ok. Alright, well, we're getting towards the end. This is it, we're almost finished.

**Young:** Say?

**Brown:** Almost finished.

**Young:** Almost finished?

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** Yeah, what we're going to do now is we're going to go straight to the tour now? We're going to start? [speaking to Mr. Kimery]

**Kimery:** Well, this is still running, do you want to?

**Brown:** Oh, this is still running?

**Kimery:** Yeah.

**Brown:** Well, we can still talk then, we can just...do you want to say anything else? This is going to be in the Smithsonian Institution, people are going to be able to come and listen to Snooky Young talk about his life for now, forever. Is there anything you want to leave for anybody who listens to this recording about your life?

**Young:** Well, Anthony, to tell you the truth, that's got to be, that's kind of a tough question. If I had thought about it that I was going to have to answer something like that, maybe I would have written something down and had a nice thing to say. But I just appreciate...I don't know...it's kind of tough for me to answer that. I enjoyed being accepted into the award and for them to appreciate what I have done through the years and I can't, I just think it is so nice to be one of the people elected because there must be a lot of musicians down through the years that haven't been elected. And I'm just honored to be one of the musicians, seen what I have done, or what I have tried to do.

**Brown:** Well, let me say what I think is so significant about your contribution. And that is, Snooky Young, you have set a standard of excellence from the beginning of your career, you have been a leader in your role as a trumpet player and you have maintained this for so many years at this high level. I think that that's why they honored Snooky Young, that's why Snooky Young needs to be captured, that they need to know who Snooky Young is. Sure, you didn't have the same name as Dizzy Gillespie, but look at the standard of excellence you have maintained from nineteen, well, you started playing at five, so that would have been nineteen, from...[break in tape] people need to recognize and will now recognize. That's why you, I believe, you were honored. You have played so many different styles.

**Young:** Right, you know, I certainly...

**Brown:** And you played with so many different people...

**Young:** I certainly appreciate this...

**Brown:** And you could get along with so many people that you could do all these things. I think that that's why Snooky Young has to be recognized because this is important. It's not just about being a star; it's about this consistent maintenance of excellence and to set

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



a standard. That's why I believe that Snooky Young has made a valuable contribution to American music.

**Young:** Well, Anthony, I certainly appreciate that and what you're saying, it wasn't easy to do. And I appreciate you appreciating, or being able to tell me what I have done, or what has been done so far as my musical ability is concerned. It wasn't easy by no means, and I just want to thank you for saying these things, what I had been through because I did go through a lot. And at the beginning I was afraid, but I then I grew out of that as I got older, because I went into it as a kid, which is very good. It's good too to go in when you're very young and if you grow with it, it's just like a tree growing from a little plant on up. And if you, you know, if you're into it and you like it, I was into music, I come from a musical family, and so...well, that...

**Brown:** Well, against all those odds, against, you know, the country when it was young at the turn of the century in 1919 when you were born. That you then picked up the trumpet at age five and now have been playing the trumpet for eighty-five years, and anybody in the music business when they hear the name Snooky Young, they have a good feeling, they know that that's a man of integrity and they know that's a man who is a true artist; that's what I believe about Snooky Young.

**Young:** Well, I certainly appreciate that. I appreciate that so much.

**Brown:** But that's what you created, that's your career, that was your life. I'm just trying to see, I'm just trying to say back to you out of gratitude out of somebody else who participates in this music, as does Ken, that you have set a standard that we all can aspire to because of your creative ability and your humanity, that everyone in this business says that Snooky Young is a man of virtue and a man of integrity, and he can play that trumpet.

**Young:** Well, I certainly appreciate that and I hope that I have passed some of that on to the younger people who are coming up, I really mean that.

**Brown:** I believe you have Snooky.

**Young:** I hope I have and I want to thank you for everything actually.

**Brown:** Well, I just want to say we thank you Snooky Young for everything that you've done to give to us, such wonderful music over all these years and that you continue to this day to do what you've been doing for all these years, and that is something very very special.

**Young:** Thank you. I hope I can continue...

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)



**Brown:** We all hope you will continue...

**Young:**...because it's so much fun, to me, to play music. It really is, it's a lot of fun to play music, and it's kind of tough too, you know. You a musician, so you know what I mean, but I enjoy playing music and I'm going to continue to play as long as I can.

**Brown:** Thank you Snooky Young.

**Young:** Thank you.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]

(Transcribed and edited by Matt Buttermann)

For additional information contact the Archives Center at 202.633.3270 or [archivescenter@si.edu](mailto:archivescenter@si.edu)

